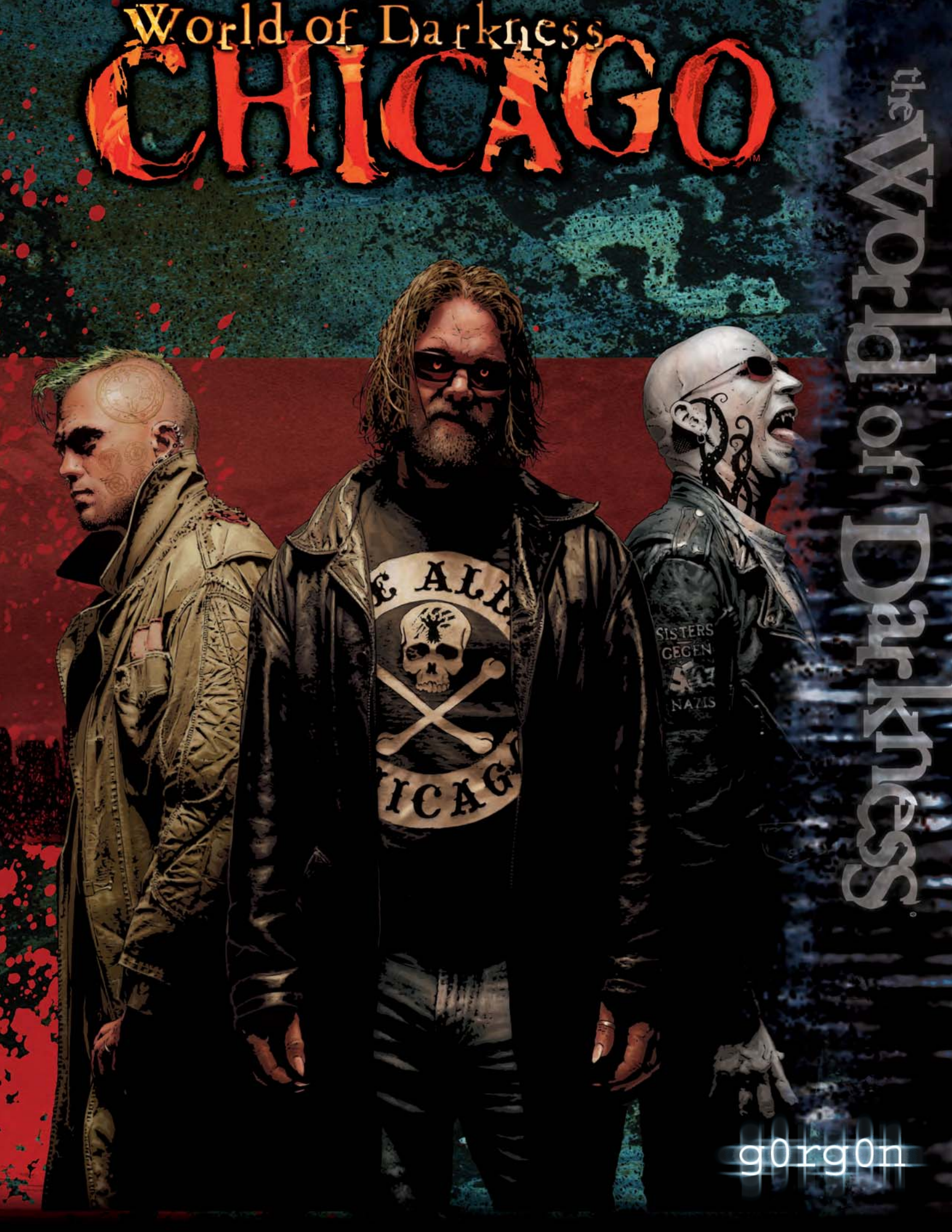
World of Darkness

CHICAGO

the World of Darkness



g0rg0n

Chicago isn't corrupt.

It's passionate,

genuine,

willing to do whatever it takes

to be the city it wants to be,

and corrupt.

Maxwell, Vampire Prince of Chicago

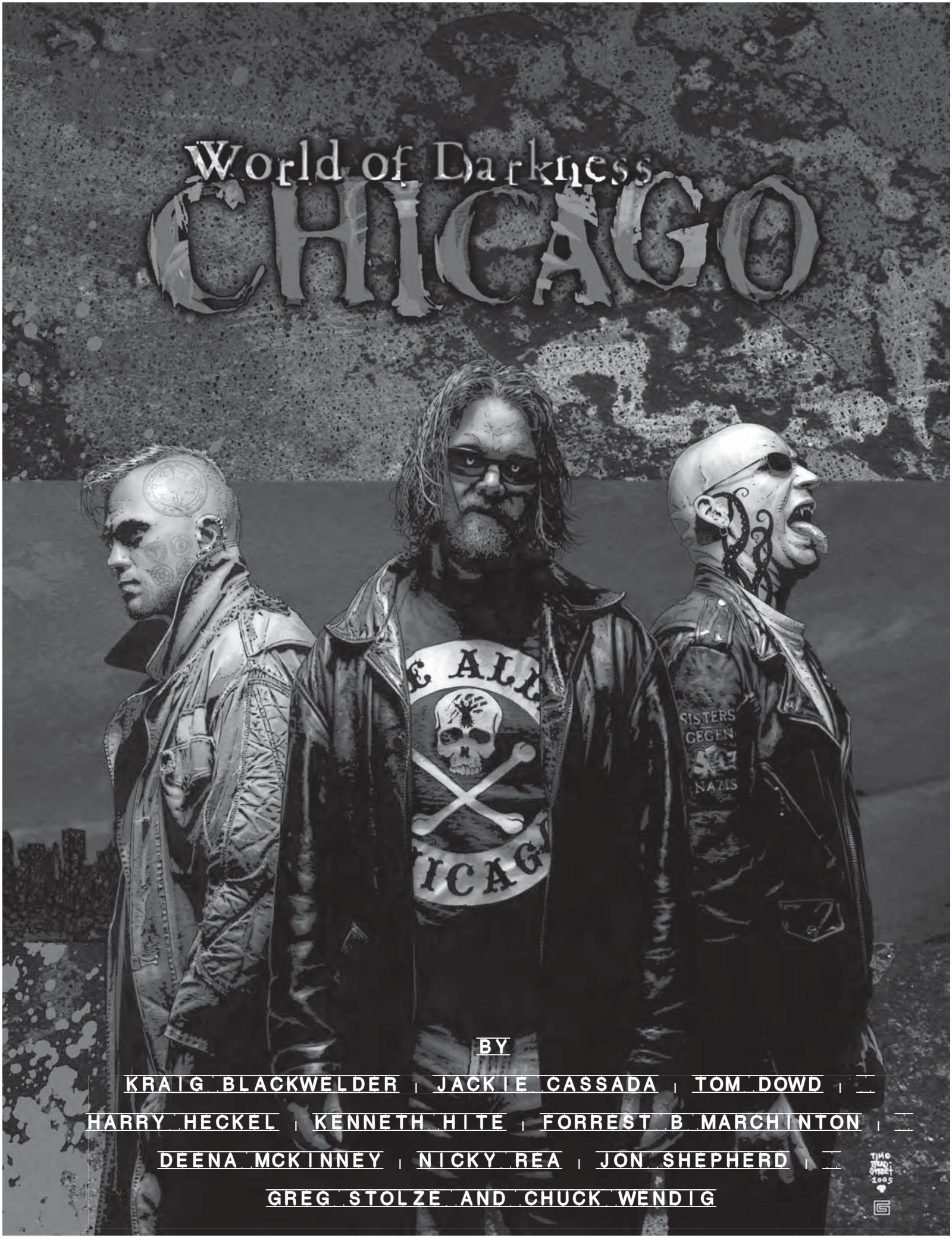
This book includes:

- Guides to the history, geography and politics of the Windy City, twisted to suit the mysterious World of Darkness
- A huge collection of new game material, including dozens of complex and surprising characters, new threats to face and three complete stories to play
- Numerous ways for characters from any World of Darkness game to interact and collide. This book is a fully compatible supplement for Vampire: The Requiem, Werewolf: The Forsaken *and* Mage: The Awakening

For use with the World of Darkness Rulebook

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BY

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Precipice

Oliver Redding woke up in a hurry. He'd had a peculiar dream.

He'd dreamed that a plane had crashed in his backyard, a two-seater prop plane. The Reddings lived in Naperville, and there was a small airstrip only a few miles from their house. In fact, the airstrip was in the middle of Aero Estates, where homes had small hangars built in the back, like garages, for the residents' planes. But his dream hadn't involved Aero Estates.

In his dream, the plane had crashed, but there hadn't been a sense of fire or impact. Instead, when he went out the back door to investigate, he'd seen a long trench, a deep hole, with the plane's tail sticking out of it. As he'd come closer, the plane had vanished or, perhaps, simply ceased to matter, as things do in dreams. The hole in the ground had been what mattered. He came closer and saw how deep and dark it was, it went down a long way, beneath his house ....

He woke up and frowned.

He tried to go back to sleep. He rolled onto his stomach, but it made his back uncomfortable. He lay faceup but that seemed forced and unnatural. He closed his eyes, but they only felt right open.

The night before, he'd dreamed of finding a small door below his basement stairs, a new door he'd never seen that nevertheless looked old and dusty, a sturdy metal door with bolts and a lock. He'd opened it, and inside had been some kind of secret military installation from the '50s, stored food, old rotary dial telephones. There had been something else in there — people maybe? — he thought he remembered a woman's brassiere, hanging over the back of a chair, but the details had faded in the morning, as dreams will.

He got up and drank a cup of water in the bathroom. He went to the next bedroom, his son Ian's room. Ian was three and was sleeping as if boneless.

Oliver went back to bed, but his wife was snoring. He poked her, woke her briefly and asked her to stop; she apologized and they were quiet for a moment before she started snoring again.



With a sigh, Oliver picked up his pillow and went to the basement. They had a makeshift den/guest room down there: the futon folded out.

It had been a rainy spring, and the sump pump was going, but, unlike his wife's raspy breaths, Oliver found the gurgling sounds soothing, almost musical, unpredictable and uneven, but somehow possessed of an implicate order, like music or language. He lay on his side on the futon with his hands under his pillow, and now it felt right to close his eyes. He lay there and stopped thinking as the sounds of the water almost made sense ….

✘ ✘ ✘

The next morning, Oliver got up and drove for 20 minutes to the Naperville train station, where he got on an express that took him to the Loop in half an hour. From the central terminal, he had a 15-minute walk to his office. He considered himself lucky to have such a quick commute.

While Oliver was on the train, he passed Drew Regan, who was driving in to work on I-88. Oliver and Drew belonged to the same health club, though Drew was making more money.

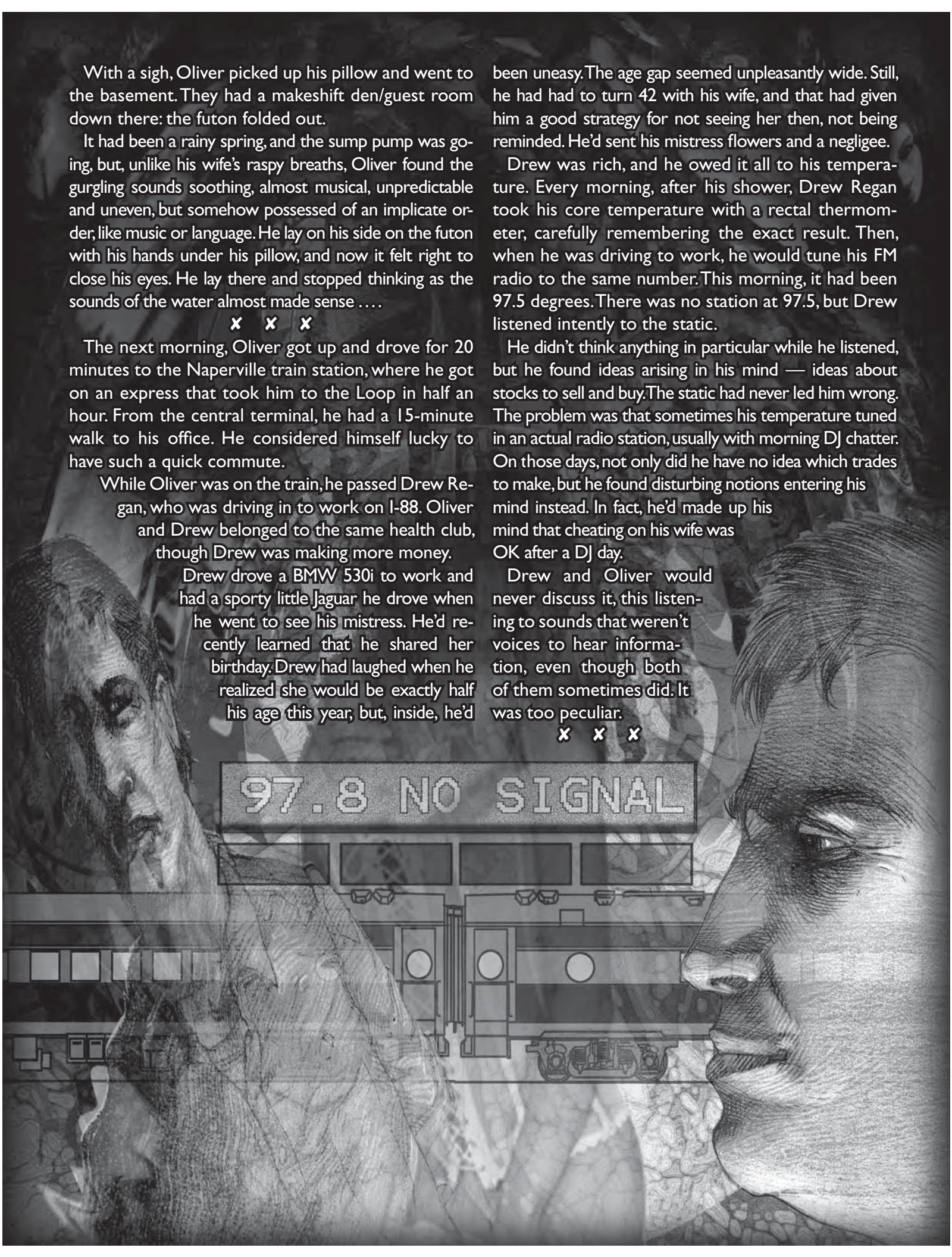
Drew drove a BMW 530i to work and had a sporty little Jaguar he drove when he went to see his mistress. He'd recently learned that he shared her birthday. Drew had laughed when he realized she would be exactly half his age this year, but, inside, he'd been uneasy. The age gap seemed unpleasantly wide. Still, he had had to turn 42 with his wife, and that had given him a good strategy for not seeing her then, not being reminded. He'd sent his mistress flowers and a negligee.

Drew was rich, and he owed it all to his temperature. Every morning, after his shower, Drew Regan took his core temperature with a rectal thermometer, carefully remembering the exact result. Then, when he was driving to work, he would tune his FM radio to the same number. This morning, it had been 97.5 degrees. There was no station at 97.5, but Drew listened intently to the static.

He didn't think anything in particular while he listened, but he found ideas arising in his mind — ideas about stocks to sell and buy. The static had never led him wrong. The problem was that sometimes his temperature tuned in an actual radio station, usually with morning DJ chatter. On those days, not only did he have no idea which trades to make, but he found disturbing notions entering his mind instead. In fact, he'd made up his mind that cheating on his wife was OK after a DJ day.

Drew and Oliver would never discuss it, this listening to sounds that weren't voices to hear information, even though both of them sometimes did. It was too peculiar.

✘ ✘ ✘



Drew left the expressway under the post office — the road actually went through the building — and he passed the massive Harold Washington Library Center. In the library, Dawn Rozas was frowning at a shelf.

Dawn had been a librarian during her working years and now, at age 71, was a library volunteer. Even when she wasn't volunteering, she spent a lot of time at the library. Her husband and children were dead.

The other night, Dawn had worked until closing time, and she remembered shelving a book about the Great Chicago Fire. It had looked interesting, but she had waffled about whether she wanted it or not and had decided in the middle of the night that she did, that she should get there first thing in the morning to check it out. But now it wasn't on the shelf. She was sure she'd put it there herself right at closing time, but now it was gone.

She frowned, thinking, That's odd.

✘ ✘ ✘

John Mott saw Dawn frowning at the shelves, but he didn't spare her any thought. He, like Oliver, had spent the night alternating between sleeplessness and disturbing dreams. Luckily, he had a midmorning appointment with his psychologist.

Dr. Trice listened as John described his dream of crows and crescents and blood in the Bachelor's Grove Cemetery, then asked how John's date last Friday had gone. When John confessed that it hadn't gone well, Dr. Trice suggested that perhaps dreaming of the Bachelor's Grove Cemetery indicated some fear of dying alone. They spent most of the session discussing John's self-esteem and strategies for being okay with himself, instead of needing a co-dependent relationship to give his life meaning.

When John was gone, she tore a piece of paper off her notepad — she didn't want her message to leave an impression on the pages beneath — and wrote "It is imperative to hit the Bachelor's Cemetery before the Equinox."

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Tyreese Cowan, bicycle messenger, didn't like the job. He was okay with being a bike messenger, but he did not like the specific job of delivering Dr. Trice's message, because it was midmorning on a bright day and he was pretty sure the address would fall in the shadow of the Sears Tower. At first, Tyreese had laughed at the bike messenger superstition — that the Tower was a jinx, that bad things happened to messengers who rode in its shadow — but he'd seen some weird shit and, frankly, he preferred to be safe and not sorry. But he got a higher percentage off point-to-point deliveries, his shoes were wearing through where the nylon rubbed his toe-clips and his rent was a month overdue.

He got the envelope and delivered it, and, as he rode back to pick up some airline tickets, he got doored by a tourist coming out of a cab. He flipped over the opened door, twisted in the air and made an agonizing four-point landing on knees and elbows.

✘ ✘ ✘

The cab driver just drove away. He was not a contemplative man, but if he had any philosophy at all, it was "Fuck those asshole bike messengers."

✘ ✘ ✘

The cabbie's next fare was a man in a hurry. He'd gotten paged that his wife was in labor, and he needed to get to the Northwestern Medical Center at top speed. "She's three weeks early," he told the cabbie. "That's not critical, but, you know, we were both still working."

At the hospital, he was told that the baby's heart rate had begun to plunge after each contraction, and they were performing an emergency C-section.

Numbed, he got into a paper suit and mask, slipped blue booties over his shoes and was led into the delivery room just in time to hear the child's cry. He winced away from what they were doing to his wife and watched them efficiently clean white and red matter off the infant.

"It's a boy!" the doctor said.

"And my wife, she's . . . ?"

"Mama's doing fine, Mr. Stokes. Would you like to cut the cord?"

With trembling hands, he did. Then he frowned.

"Um, doctor . . . what are those, um, under . . . ?"

"Those look like blisters, but they aren't," the doctor said. "They come off on their own. See?" He gently reached gloved fingers under the squalling newborn's scrotum and picked off what appeared to be black or yellowish sores. "They peel right off. Perfectly normal." He wiped them in a paper towel and tossed them in a bin marked "biohazard."

No one saw that inside the bin, the sores sprouted legs and began, tentatively at first but then with more determination, to crawl toward the neck of the plastic liner.

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"You like, completely missed it," Wanda Miller said to Yolanda McKay. "Mrs. Stokes went into total labor, right in the middle of civics class."

"Ohmigod, is she okay?"

"I don't know. She sent Billy Warner to get the assistant vice principal, and then she just, like, took off."

"She was really big and pregnant, wasn't she?"

"Oh yeah, she was ready. I hope that baby's okay."

"Me, too."

The two girls worried for about five minutes. Then Yolanda pushed away her half-eaten tray lunch and said, "Y'know what's weird?"

"Huh."

"I got this MP3 player? Like, it was supposed to be new? But there were already a bunch of songs on it."

"Yo-yo! Is that all you can think about? Mrs. Stokes could be having her baby right now!"

"I know, but you know… we'll hear about it tomorrow, right?"

"I guess." Wanda shrugged and looked at the MP3 player. "The same thing happened to my cousin. That happens when people return them, and they just repackage them without blanking them. Was there anything good on it?"

"The new R. Kelly, but listen. Sometimes? When I play that song? There's like, this little bing-buzz sound, like when a computer logs on the Internet? Listen." Yolanda handed Wanda one earpiece, and they covered their open ears to block the lunchroom rumble.

"I didn't hear anything."

"It didn't do it that time."

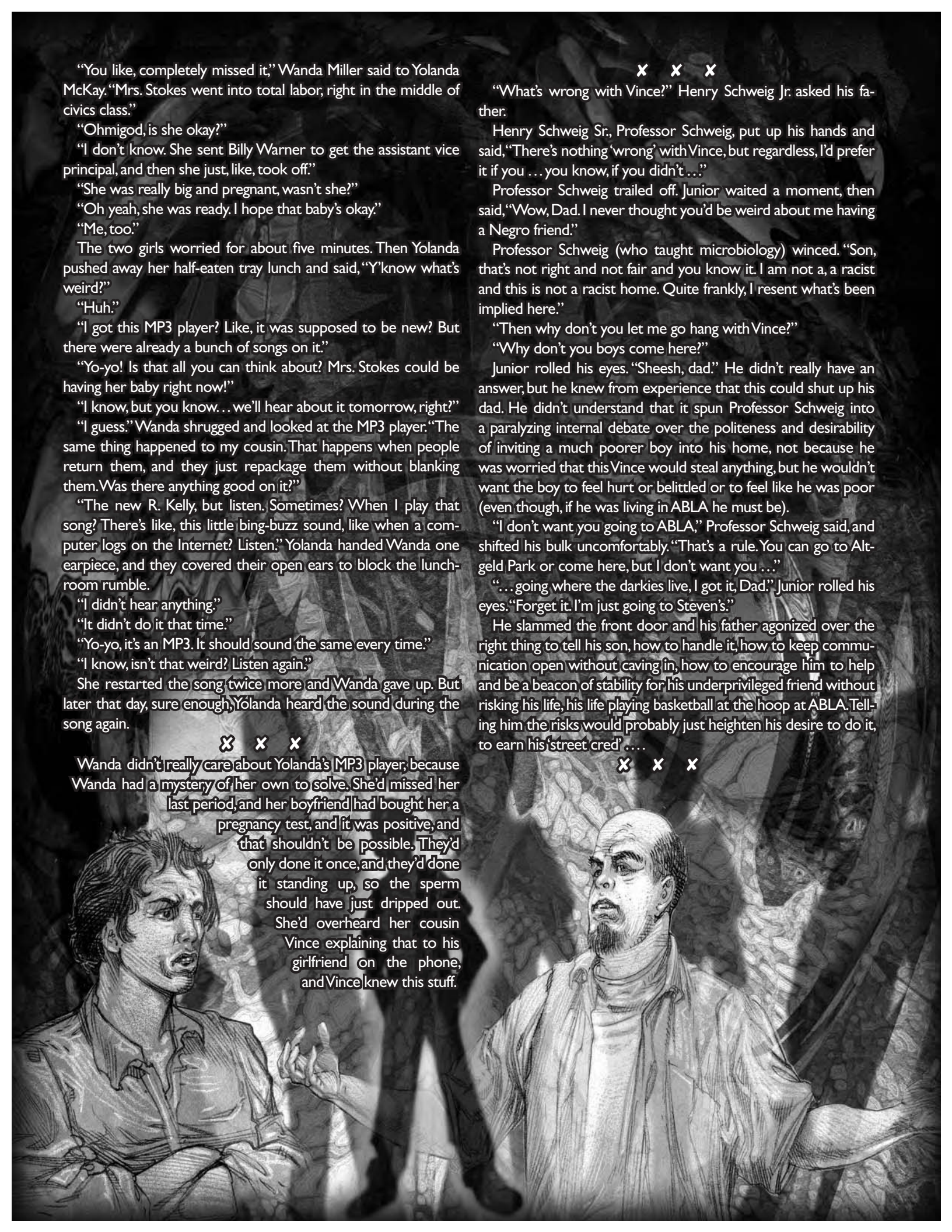
"Yo-yo, it's an MP3. It should sound the same every time."

"I know, isn't that weird? Listen again."

She restarted the song twice more and Wanda gave up. But later that day, sure enough, Yolanda heard the sound during the song again.

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Wanda didn't really care about Yolanda's MP3 player, because Wanda had a mystery of her own to solve. She'd missed her last period, and her boyfriend had bought her a pregnancy test, and it was positive, and that shouldn't be possible. They'd only done it once, and they'd done it standing up, so the sperm should have just dripped out. She'd overheard her cousin Vince explaining that to his girlfriend on the phone, and Vince knew this stuff.



✘ ✘ ✘

"What's wrong with Vince?" Henry Schweig Jr. asked his father.

Henry Schweig Sr., Professor Schweig, put up his hands and said, "There's nothing 'wrong' with Vince, but regardless, I'd prefer it if you … you know, if you didn't …"

Professor Schweig trailed off. Junior waited a moment, then said, "Wow, Dad. I never thought you'd be weird about me having a Negro friend."

Professor Schweig (who taught microbiology) winced. "Son, that's not right and not fair and you know it. I am not a, a racist and this is not a racist home. Quite frankly, I resent what's been implied here."

"Then why don't you let me go hang with Vince?"

"Why don't you boys come here?"

Junior rolled his eyes. "Sheesh, dad." He didn't really have an answer, but he knew from experience that this could shut up his dad. He didn't understand that it spun Professor Schweig into a paralyzing internal debate over the politeness and desirability of inviting a much poorer boy into his home, not because he was worried that this Vince would steal anything, but he wouldn't want the boy to feel hurt or belittled or to feel like he was poor (even though, if he was living in ABLA he must be).

"I don't want you going to ABLA," Professor Schweig said, and shifted his bulk uncomfortably. "That's a rule. You can go to Altgeld Park or come here, but I don't want you …"

"… going where the darkies live, I got it, Dad." Junior rolled his eyes. "Forget it. I'm just going to Steven's."

He slammed the front door and his father agonized over the right thing to tell his son, how to handle it, how to keep communication open without caving in, how to encourage him to help and be a beacon of stability for his underprivileged friend without risking his life, his life playing basketball at the hoop at ABLA. Telling him the risks would probably just heighten his desire to do it, to earn his 'street cred' ….

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The abandoned apartment in ABLA overlooked the basketball court where Vince and Henry Junior shot hoops, but the man inside was not looking out the window.

He was in the bathroom, where he had installed a new towel rack about a foot above head height. Gripping the towel rack, the man ground his pelvis against a hole in the cheap plasterboard, a hole into which he had placed some human meat. Periodically, he would pause to pour some blood on his erection from a paper cup by the sink. Flies buzzed around a carved corpse spoiling in the bathtub, and the shells of dead beetles ground and crackled under the man's bare feet.

The man was one of Chicago's 13 active serial killers, and he saw nothing peculiar at all about his actions.

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Detective Clark Flavell, who had investigated the first and fourth of the serial killer's crime scenes before the case got handed off to a task force, chewed his lips and flexed his fingers around the grip of his pistol. His skin tightened; he felt it in his nipples, his balls, his scalp. They were about to get Bill Pitch.

"Go," he hissed, and the battering ram smashed the door open. Clark had four cops in riot gear with him, seven more had the house surrounded, and this time, this time Pitch was going to get it. Bill Pitch had shot Clark's friend Andre dead, and Clark hoped Bill'd resist, he wanted to see Pitch go down with a gut shot.

"Go!" The SWAT officers tore through the house and then Clark heard Pitch's voice.

"Macbeth, act four, scene one, line 78," he said, and Clark felt a chill. He'd done this last time, Pitch had, when Andre died, how . . .?

Clark opened fire as Bill Pitch walked through a doorway. Tall, with ropy muscles and a long goatee, Pitch had a thick book in one hand and what looked like a 10-pound sledgehammer in the other.

"Macbeth, act four, scene one, line 79!"

The other cops started shooting too, and Clark watched the book twitch, holes blossoming in the rich leather cover.

"Macbeth, act four, scene one, line 80!" Pitch cried as he swung the hammer into a SWAT man's knee. The officer had been firing a Colt M6351 submachine gun at point-blank range, but Pitch was somehow unharmed and then the hammer was exchanged for the wounded man's gun, it was just like last time, how had Clark possibly forgotten?

"Get down!" Clark cried and tackled one of the other cops.

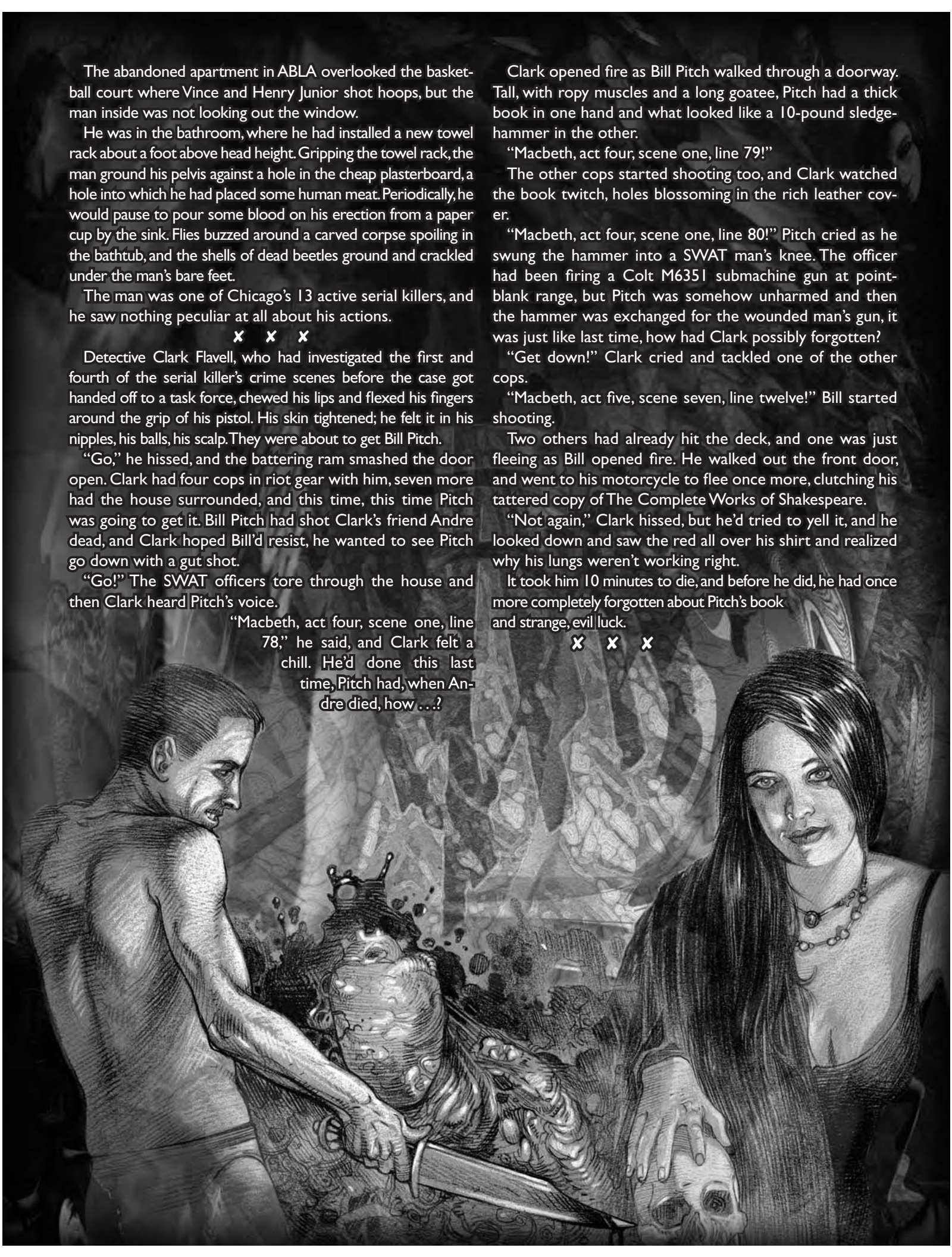
"Macbeth, act five, scene seven, line twelve!" Bill started shooting.

Two others had already hit the deck, and one was just fleeing as Bill opened fire. He walked out the front door, and went to his motorcycle to flee once more, clutching his tattered copy of The Complete Works of Shakespeare.

"Not again," Clark hissed, but he'd tried to yell it, and he looked down and saw the red all over his shirt and realized why his lungs weren't working right.

It took him 10 minutes to die, and before he did, he had once more completely forgotten about Pitch's book and strange, evil luck.

✘ ✘ ✘



At St. Patrick's Church, the secretary answered the phone with polite neutrality but soon put her hand to her mouth and said, "That's awful! Oh, it's just . . . just awful."

It was Emma Flavell, trying (through her tears) to make arrangements for her husband's funeral.

"Father McMillan is hearing confessions right now, but I'll tell him as soon as he's done."

In the confessional, Earnest McMillan was nodding, nodding as one of his congregants tearfully confessed to just hiding the neighbor dog's body after hitting it, instead of telling the owner, whom she had long disliked for letting his dog run around free, crapping everywhere anyhow. She could only get a dim impression of the priest's movements through the screen, but she could tell he was nodding, especially when he said "Mm . . .hm," or "I see."

"I think you need to tell this man, and apologize," he told her gently, while privately thinking, This confession should be worth about sixty bucks.

When he was done, he had to comfort the church secretary while she told him about Detective Flavell.

✘ ✘ ✘

Driving on Lower Wacker Drive, One-Leg Roger was on the phone in his car, while his driver honked the horn.

"Yeah, big bouquet. The biggest. Like for a horse race winner. Yeah."

He folded his phone and winced. One-Leg Roger was a criminal, but the people he worked for were so rich and connected that he might as well be legit. He'd had a business association with the dead detective and wanted to do right by the survivors.

One-Leg sighed, looked at the lengthening shadows and contemplated mortality. He did that more and more, ever since losing his leg. He told people he'd been in the Gulf War (which was true, though he'd fought in the first one and not the second), and he told people he didn't like to talk about losing his leg (which was also true), and he let most people draw the wrong conclusion, rather than tell them that it was his own fucking fault because he'd been driving drunk through the Gold Coast at 1 a.m.

He winced as an icy weariness, a dull ache, washed through his missing leg. They'd told him about phantom pains, phantom itches, but they'd said they would go away, and this didn't. All different pains, sometimes burning, sometimes jolting deep shocks, sometimes an icy, agonizing chill. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason to it.

It would be a week and a half before he realized he felt icy where the Chicago River crossed La Salle, and burning near Randolph and Dearborn, and lancing impacts around the 2100 block of North Clark.

✘ ✘ ✘



One-Leg's florist was Donna Covallo. They'd been lovers, before she got married, and he still threw business her way.

That night, Donna's eight-year-old son Ricky lay in bed wondering if it would happen again, listening. He looked at his digital clock and hoped it was too late, that it wouldn't happen, but then he heard it.

Noises. Noises from the wall.

At first he'd thought something was inside the wall, but now he was pretty sure they came from the other side of the wall, from inside his parents' bedroom. Just vague movement noises at first, but he knew they'd build up and, right on schedule, they did. He bit his lip and waited, wishing it hadn't started but, now that it had, wishing the next part, the worst, would begin so that it would be over sooner.

Then the thudding, the horrid rhythmic sounds like when he punched someone or someone punched him, but over and over and then his mom's voice, not saying anything but making sounds, strange sounds, was she crying? Laughing? Something that was both? He couldn't tell, but he knew he was crying, and he huddled under the covers, afraid of what his parents were doing or what they were, he had no idea but whatever it was made him deeply, deeply afraid.

✘ ✘ ✘

After Ricky Covallo had cried himself to sleep, his next-door neighbor Ian Redding cried himself awake.

"What is it? Hey, take it easy son, what's wrong?"

"Daddy! Daddy!"

Oliver Redding put his arms around his boy and stroked his back, saying, "Hush now. Hush. Just a bad dream."

"It was scary! I saw it! I saw a scary monster!"

"Just in your dreams son. Shh. There are no real monsters."

"It was here!"

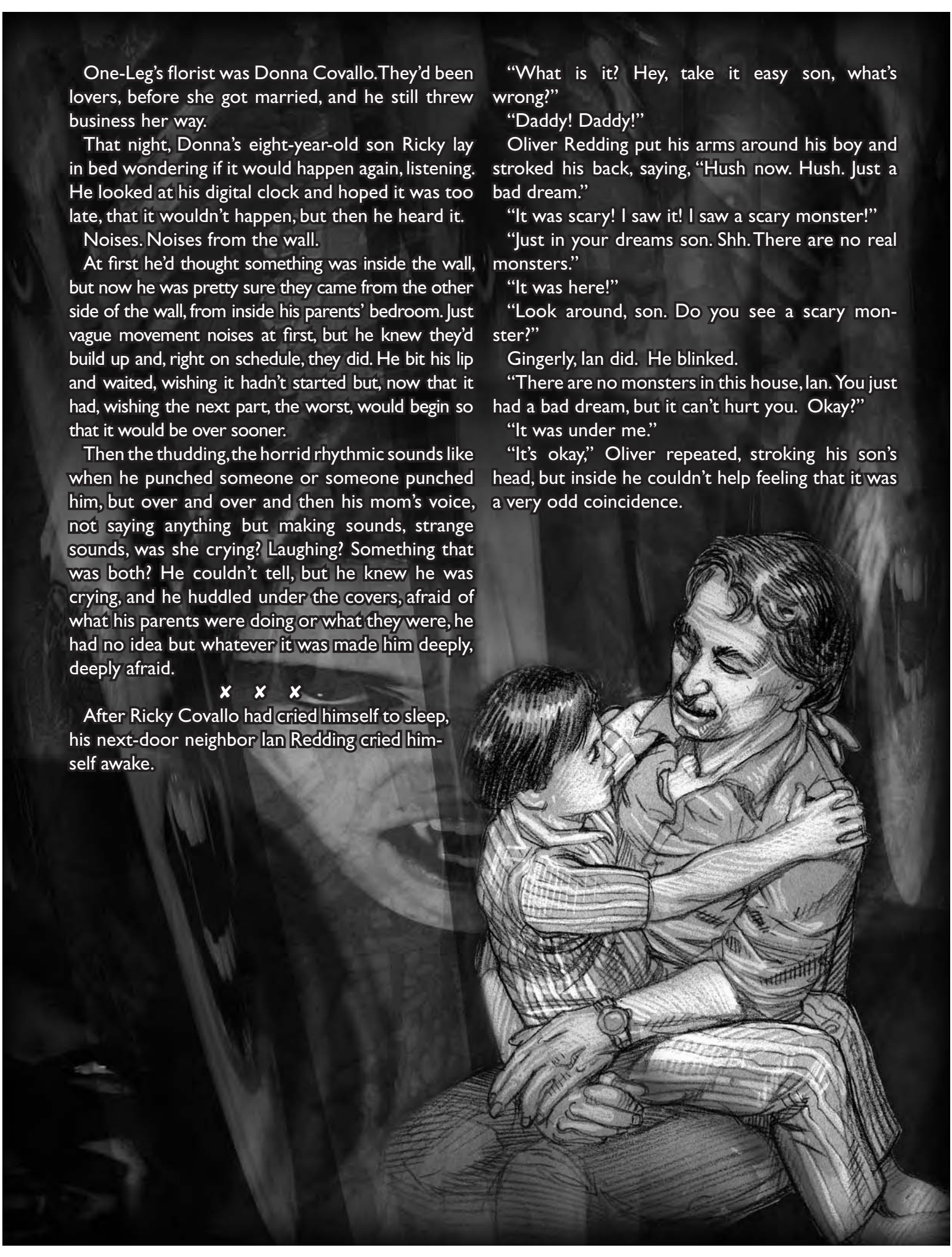
"Look around, son. Do you see a scary monster?"

Gingerly, Ian did. He blinked.

"There are no monsters in this house, Ian. You just had a bad dream, but it can't hurt you. Okay?"

"It was under me."

"It's okay," Oliver repeated, stroking his son's head, but inside he couldn't help feeling that it was a very odd coincidence.



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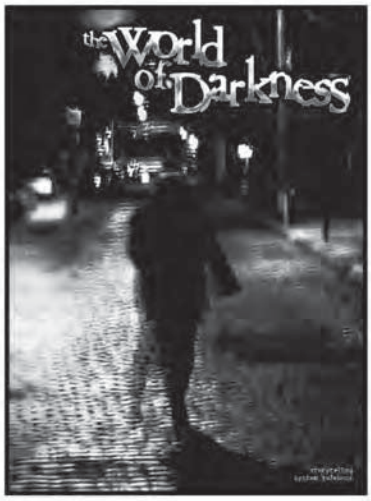
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For Use with the World of Darkness® Rulebook

Special Thanks

Years ago, White Wolf released a book called *Chicago By Night* that inspired some of the first crossover chronicles and a series of follow-up books. You might say that original guide to the Chicago of the World of Darkness sparked imaginations, but that's not quite right. That book was the fuel. The spark came from the imaginations of countless game players. They — you — light up the ideas. Thanks for coming back to set Chicago on fire again.

A companion book of novellas, called World of Darkness: **Chicago — Three Shades of Night**, is also available from White Wolf Publishing. The interconnected stories in that book show Chicago in action from the perspectives of Kindred, Uratha and the Awakened alike. The authors of those novellas deserve special thanks for helping out on this book, too. Janet, Myra, Sarah? Thanks again.

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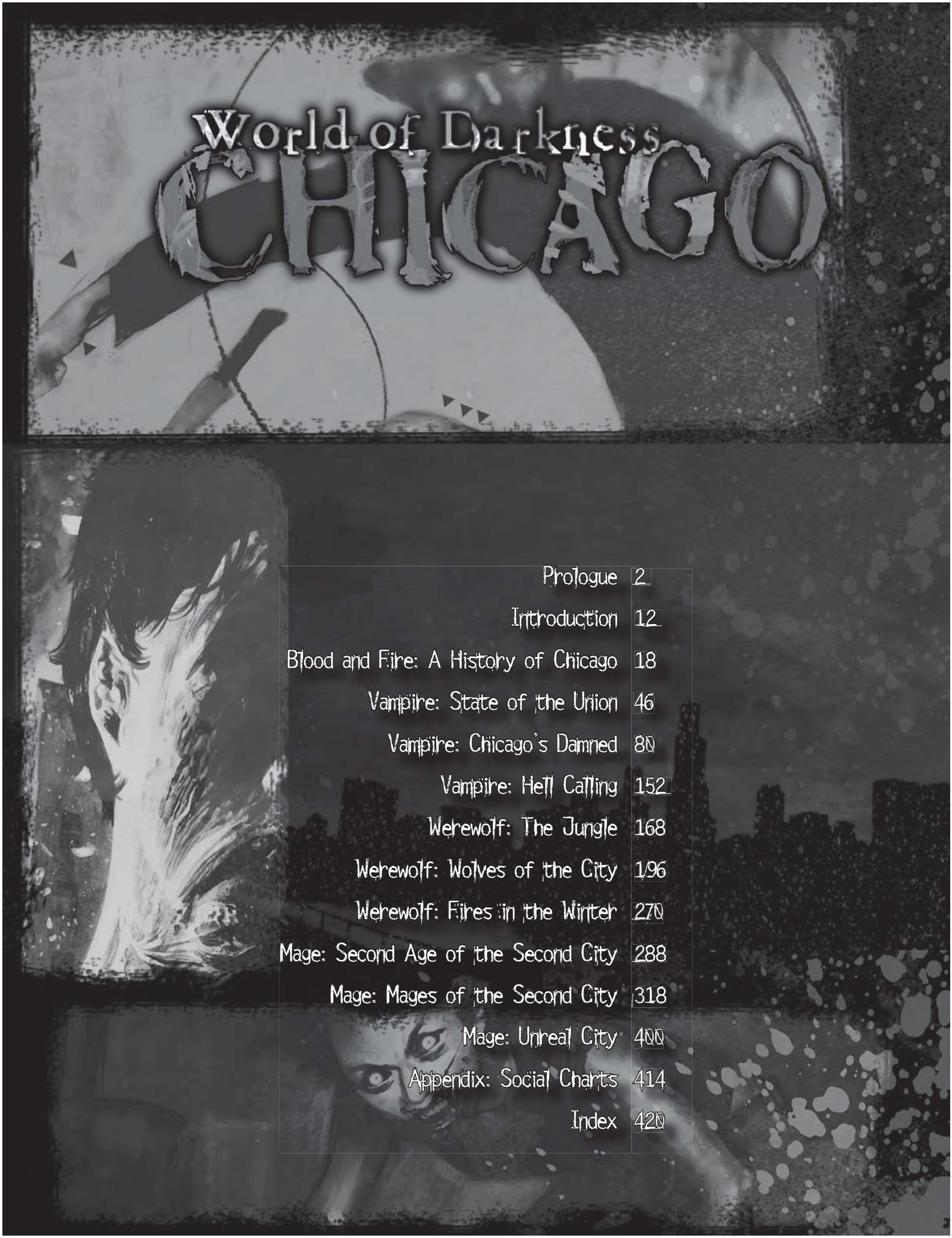
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Introduction

I was on the prowl for a cross-section of urban thought, using no one method or technique. I was aware it would take me to suburbs, upper, lower, and middle income, as well as to the inner city itself and its outlying sections . . . . It finally came down to individuals, no matter where in the city or its environs they lived.

–Studs Terkel

Chicago isn't about a sprawling midnight city of blood and corruption secretly infested with murderous vampires. This book isn't about a city infused with passion and rage and history given frightening forms that clash in brutal battles. **Chicago** isn't about a layered city of intrigue caught between the secrets of its past and the mystery of its future. Rather, **Chicago** is about all those cities.

Chicago isn't a vampire city with some werewolves in it or a city of magic plagued by the undead. Chicago is a complex, multifaceted city populated by characters of every extreme, every ethnicity, every social class and every curse. Some of these characters are undead, some are shapeshifters and some are the heirs to Atlantis, but that is not what **Chicago** is ultimately about.

Chicago is about individuals existing side by side, sometimes in peace and sometimes at war. **Chicago** is about complex relationships and unseen connections. It's about the way unique characters must share the World of Darkness.

Theme and Mood

Chicago is a living, complex city, always at conflict with itself, always growing wider, taller and older. No one theme or mood can define a city like this. There's room in The City That Works to explore any themes and moods that are right for your chronicle.

At the same time, **Chicago** the book has been created to bring certain themes and moods to mind. When seen from afar through the informed eyes of a reader in on the city's supernatural secrets, patterns emerge.

One major theme of **Chicago** is: "The supernatural is everywhere." Whether everyone knows it or not, those walking the streets are just one shocking night away from the paranormal truths of the World of Darkness. Even the creatures that are themselves supernatural are closer to the occult unknown than they think. Every night sees the city touched by some supernatural force, being or plot. Vampires steal blood off the streets. Werewolves fight, kill and die in the cracks of the city, forgotten by mortals. Mages creep into the city's secret places to plunder artifacts and awareness from the mysterious dark.

A second major theme is "collision." With so many creatures, stories and plots always moving forward in the city, like traffic rushing too fast up Lake Shore Drive, collisions are inevitable. Vampires looking to cement their stations in the Danse Macabre collide with each other. Vampires looking for escape from the sun and from mortal hands collide with werewolves lairing in the same secure holes. Werewolves collide with each other in defense of their homes against the Pure. Mages collide with werewolves at sites of mystic power or find themselves negotiating with the same spirits for supernatural power. Mages collide with the unexplained phenomena that surround, feed on and haunt the mortal world. Not all collisions are accidents.

Whatever happens, like cars on the Dan Ryan Expressway, traffic resumes. Things move forward.

The prevailing mood of Chicago in the World of Darkness is "us versus them," but not in the binary way that phrase suggests. While the city is, and has been, home to all manner of political, cultural, economic and physical

clashes — unions versus management, blue collar versus white collar, mobs versus police — the conflict that defines Chicago in the here and now is always changing. The sides in the battle are always shifting, allying themselves with new strangers, old enemies and shaky friends. One night you may be us, and the next you may be them.

This is not to say that Chicago is a city at war, like it was in the nights of Prohibition. Quite the opposite. If a war is a drawn-out conflict over a single matter, that doesn't describe what's going on in Chicago at all. Chicago is a city of countless small, personal battles going on every night: the battle for this street corner, the battle to save a sick child, the battle to escape a corrupt company, and a thousand others. A war is followed by relief and peace, but in Chicago every battle is followed by another one somewhere else, bigger or smaller, overt or covert but happening all the same.

Conflict brings opportunity, for players and their characters alike. A conflict gives characters a chance to change their ways or the world they inhabit, to side with us or them, to make a new selection of enemies and allies. For a player — and especially the Storyteller — conflict is everything, it's the drama and it's the story. Just remember that not every battle is to the death and not every conflict makes someone your true enemy. Sometimes you side with the Kindred whose blood you share against the mage you fear, but sometimes to work with a like-minded werewolf against the vampires who want to undermine the safety of your territory. Who do you help? Who do you oppose? Who do you owe tonight and who will you owe tomorrow?

How To Use This Book

Through this book, you'll cover a lot of ground, meet a lot of new characters (and maybe some familiar ones) and catch a glimpse of the city's darkest secrets. Don't get lost.

This book is divided into three main parts, centered on each of the "big three" supernatural character templates of the World of Darkness: vampires, werewolves and mages. Each part is then divided into three chapters. Before you get to all that, though, you'll find an overview of Chicago itself, as the city looks to the mortals who live in the World of Darkness.

First, you'll find the **Prologue** and this **Introduction**.

Next, take a look at Chicago's **History and Geography** in the World of Darkness. Why do they call it the Loop? What started the Great Chicago Fire? What are some of the noteworthy neighborhoods that might serve as the settings for your stories? Look in here. This is your primer.

After that, each of the game lines, **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Werewolf: The Forsaken** and **Mage: The Awakening**, makes its mark with its own three chapters about the Second City. Though each of these chapters is unique, highlighting the locations and history and characters important to the beings' own kind, the three chapters for each supernatural type follow the same general format:

Chapter One is an overview of the city. Inside, you'll get a look at noteworthy places and events from Chicago's supernatural history and modern day. This lays the groundwork for the complex personal relationships and conflicts that define the city's supernatural societies.

Chapter Two examines a huge ensemble cast of characters currently residing and working in Chicago. From the highest seats of power to the lowest gutters sticky with blood, Chicago is filled with surprising and varied characters. But look carefully within these chapters, and you'll find that maybe Chicago's not quite as big a city as it seems.

Chapter Three presents a story for that game, set in the city of Chicago. What better way to understand what goes on in a city than to see it in action and take part? These stories could all be a part of one colossal (and city-shaking) chronicle, or they can each be played through alone. Strictly speaking, characters created using any of the World of Darkness game books can take part in any of the stories in this book; the challenges may be too much for a character that's out of his element, but great stories can be told about overwhelming disasters and terrible failures, too.

Story Seeds

Throughout this book, you'll find numerous ideas for stories set in Chicago, set off in sidebars like this one. Some of these stories involve interactions between vampires, werewolves and mages. Other stories stick just to the creatures of one type.

Most of the information you find in these sidebars is only assumed to be true if you choose to run the story suggested. Thus, some of these story seeds may be contradictory — don't let that confuse you. If you don't use that story seed, then it's simply not true.

The Other Eight Million

The population of Chicago proper is almost three million people, but, if the larger metropolitan area's population is included, the total rises to almost 11 million. The city thought of as Chicago might just be the lakeside metropolis, but it can also include all the collar counties and suburbs out along I-90, I-94, I-55 and beyond. That's a lot of people.

And yet, for the most part, this book is concerned only with the centermost portion of the megalopolis — the areas that might be considered "downtown" or adjacent to it. The heart of Chicago is where the real action is in the World of Darkness, where the resonant power of this world-class

city is strongest. For vampires, it's where hunting and hiding is easiest. For werewolves, it's where the spiritual skein of the city needs the most policing. For mages, it's where the mysteries have the deepest roots.

For a century or more, the supernaturals of the Chicagoland area have collected near the lakeshore, beneath the skyline, despite the territory available to them in the outlying suburbs. This has as much to do with idiosyncracies of a supernatural existence as choice. If a vampire, for example, wants to attend the Prince's court, she's better off not keeping a haven so far away that she gets caught in traffic near dawn. Vampires, werewolves and mages certainly do exist in the outlying population, but they may get a reputation for being on the edge of society if they remain outside the heart of the city.

For Storytellers and players, this satellite population is fertile ground, ready to be planted with story seeds or new characters. The suburbs can be as integral to the Chicago experience as you like. Perhaps the characters are young and inexperienced rulers of a new territory — the pack, coterie or cabal to be reckoned with in their little corner of the city. They might be something akin to supernatural colonists, settling the suburban frontier in an effort to grow the influence and authority of their tribe, order or covenant. Or the suburbs may be a desolate, banal wilderness, where the sheer volume of mortal eyes and the relative difficulty of continued anonymity is just too difficult for the hidden societies of mages, werewolves and vampires to thrive.

On the other hand, the vast stretches of expressways and parking lots and forest preserves and office parks may be the background from which new characters emerge. The Storyteller might ask players to describe the "state of the union" in certain satellite villages as part of their character histories. Thus, Chicago is "on stage" and the rest of the metropolitan area is "back stage"; only when characters come on stage can they play a part in the drama. In this case, the suburbs are the land of the prelude.

If nothing else, the Chicago that lies outside **Chicago** is the mounting bracket you can use to install this city into your World of Darkness and the filter through which all other aspects of the setting must pass to reach your chronicle. Take the city in this book, wrap it in a suburban sprawl that plays up exactly what you want out of the game and then let the two slowly mix.

Who Reads This Book?

Anyone. Everyone. Players and Storytellers alike can read this book without spoiling anything for themselves (though Storytellers might ask players to avoid the stories). Even most of the story hooks in this book can be read by players without ruining any endings.

Remember, though, that once you've read **Chicago**, you have a vast array of information that the characters described herein do not have. The vampires and Uratha of Chicago have not read this book, and things may look considerably different from down on the street where your characters dwell. Players and Storytellers should work together to determine what characters do and do not know from this book, what they can believe for sure and what they might regard as rumor or an outright lie.

This freedom of information facilitates stories and chronicles in which characters from one game interact with characters from another. Werewolves and mages all live in the same Chicago, after all, and just seeing how they've settled into their own nooks and turfs and social games can tell you a lot about where to find stories that cross the imaginary boundaries between games.

Crossovers

In **Chicago**, the word *crossover* is something of a misnomer. A crossover suggests that one character is crossing the boundary into another character's world, but Chicago doesn't belong to any one character or character type. Rather, Chicago is a city of a million tiny crossovers, of vampires accidentally pursuing prey onto the turf of a werewolf pack and of werewolves accidentally tearing up the site of a mage's investigation.

This book doesn't detail the channels through which characters can interact across game lines and it doesn't show you which characters are about to crossover into another game. The potential for a crossover encounter is everywhere. Any character could collide with any other character by getting off I-94 at the wrong exit or picking a fight with the right Contact. Crossing over into the turf of another character (and, by extension, another World of Darkness game) is easy, too easy, and, in Chicago, even somewhat common.

The catch is this: Often, the characters that are crossing over don't know they're crossing over. Not at first. Kindred don't usually walk up and introduce themselves as vampires, not even to mages and werewolves. Mages don't necessarily oppose the schemes of a werewolf because "he's a werewolf and I'm a mage," but for more human and personal reasons, like "I don't want to lose my house and his crusade's going to hurt me and my neighbors." A mage might not even realize which werewolves know each other and which are enemies, while a vampire might not realize that the enigmatic Mysterium he's caught on to is a well-known body among his Awakened neighbors.

Understand that encounters between the supernatural character types — all of whom have good reason to minimize the profile they present to the mortal world — are seldom large-scale and almost never based on motives installed into them during the Embrace or the First Change or the Awakening. Vampires do not automatically hate werewolves, though *that* vampire might automatically hate all werewolves. Think about it, what sort of opinion would you form of a person who hated everyone of a certain, inherited ilk? That's an easy opinion to form, but the root of crossover motives in the World of Darkness are more complicated and more interesting — more personal.

Finding Crossover Possibilities

One way to find crossover potential is to look at the traits two characters have in common that might lead to an encounter between them. Two characters with a lot of dots

in the Occult Skill might visit the same bookstores, for examples. Characters with Specialties in Crafts and Drive might know the same auto mechanics or even already know each other socially but not know they're both touched by the supernatural. Any point of similarity can be exploited in this way — similar ages, common languages, shared Contacts — because all you're doing is looking for inspiration or a point of connectivity between two fictional lives.

Once you've found a common trait that you like, identify where the dramatic conflict might be between these two characters. The conflict might pit the two characters against each other or it might affect them both from the outside. The two occultists, for example, might both want the same rare book that's turned up at the shop to facilitate the study of Crúac or piece together a lost Life rote. On the other hand, they might be compelled to work in tandem to protect the shop from a mortal on a crusade against witchcraft or to investigate the mysterious disappearance of the shopkeeper. Finding a conflict to import into the relationship is easy — the sidebars in this book are full of sample conflicts to use.

If you're looking to create long-term crossover connections between characters, something to last longer than one or two stories, take a close look at a character's Merits. That mage's Allies in the transportation business might include werewolves protecting Union Station. That vampire's Contacts at the museum might be mages. With the veil of mystery over everything in the World of Darkness, even your own character might not realize it at first when a member of her Herd Awakens.

If nothing else, remember you're entitled to add to and revise the characters in this book. You can find inspiration for stories and character connections in the game mechanics and traits herein, but it's the stories that really matter. Give the characters human, relatable motives for their actions and you'll lubricate the crossover experience.

What This Book Is Not

This book is not real. This book is not true to life or the way Chicago is "underneath." This book is not a travel guide.

Plenty of other books can tell you what Chicago is really like. Plenty of other books can give you the facts. Plenty of other books contradict what you'll find inside this one.

This book presents a stylized, exaggerated version of Chicago — a version darker, more divided and crazier than the real city. If you're familiar with Chicago, some of the liberties taken in these pages might surprise you or even make you angry. That's fine. What's in here should get you riled up, ready to get involved and take charge and explore the city the way you want it to be.

Injecting doses of realism into the city is easy to do, but the amount of realism that's right for one chronicle — or one story! — may not be right for the next. So the final decision about how much realism to add back into the city is up to you, the players and Storytellers creating characters and telling stories that live in the city. For exciting drama and great suspense stories, it's more important to have realism in the moment, in the imagery, details and feel of the individual scenes, than it is to have realism in the deep background.

Master of the City

With that, the city is yours. The characters who reside here are your characters. The fate of Chicago lies at the end of the stories you set there.

Although this book assumes that most of the relationships in Chicago are personal and most of the interactions between its supernatural characters are complex and secret from mortal society, when the gates open up and the race begins, all bets are off. In your World of Darkness, Chicago might take on a very different look. If you want to shake up the city and create something outlandish or bizarre with the raw materials in this book, do it.

Here are some ways you might shake things up:

City of Imbalance

It has been 10 years since Chicago looked as it is presented in this book. The fragile balance between the supernatural forces in the city has been lost, and one breed of inhuman creatures now outnumbers the others dramatically. The question is, which supernatural creature dominates the city in this crossover-heavy chronicle?

Vampires

The Kindred have gotten the tendrils of their influence into the aldermen who control their districts, the banks that mortgage their sanctums and the families who keep their homes. The Prince is now the undisputed supernatural lord of Chicago. His court is attended by werewolves and mages alike. His haven is protected by carved alien runes of Atlantis and snarling, hissing spirits shackled in the yard by Lupine rites. Mages and Lupines only get land if the Prince gives it to them. From the Regent of Magic to the Lupine Sheriff, this is a society defined by Kindred custom.

Werewolves

The city is overwhelmed by a secret war between the Pure and the Forsaken. All the petty squabbles of covenants and orders fade as the divisions of the Uratha absorb everything. Vampires and mages serve either the Pure or the Forsaken, for their own reasons. Werewolves hide out in safe havens maintained by vampires and, in bloody skirmishes, recruit mages to join their packs. Meanwhile, spirits sneak into every corner of the city, going after Uratha, Kindred and mages alike.

Mages

The Consilium is the *de facto* authority for all supernatural creatures in the city. The Forsaken and the Kindred have representatives on the council, but no leaders of their own. Legal hunting grounds for vampires are few and tightly regulated by the Guardians of the Veil. The Uratha must report all loci and spiritual confrontations to

the Consilium. The mages make regular surveys of their inhuman neighbors and task them with supernatural investigations as a kind of labor-rent. In the background, however, cells of the Seers of the Throne are drawing near a magical assault that will ruin mages, vampires and werewolves alike.

City of Despair

The streets are crowded with the huddled homeless, with empty-eyed addicts and with terrified gangsters clutching guns beneath their jerseys. At night, the city is little more than small pools of orange light breaking up the rainy shadows of giant, black skyscrapers. By day, the humidity fogs streets packed with sweaty, sticky mortals choking on the fumes of endless traffic. Murderers outnumber police officers. Bodies lie rotting on the stoops of buildings for hours before anyone calls them in.

Every group of supernatural creatures is an enemy of every other — every coterie has a Prince, every pack is a tribe. Even mages know next to nothing about the powers, strengths and weaknesses of other creatures. The unknowable, one-of-a-kind horrors that stalk the streets at night and swoop down out of the thundering skies are the greatest threat to mortals and supernaturals alike. This is the World of Darkness with the "darkness" dialed all the way up and "crossover" dialed all the way down.

City of Ash

Chicago's on fire. The Great Fire has been awakened, and the city is burning anew. A million die. Kindred society falls apart when 90% of the population is lost. The ranks of the Forsaken are halved — no one's sure who's alive and who's dead. Mages, believing this is the start of another arcane war, flee in droves. The city's supernatural population shrinks almost to nothing.

The chronicle begins the next day. The characters find themselves in a city of ruins, with everything they had burned to ash. Yet the city is theirs to shape, if they wrench it away from a small number of other monstrous survivors. With their societies in ash, the supernaturals may find that their greatest threat comes from mortals. This post-apocalyptic set-up can involve as much or as little crossover as the Storyteller likes. Maybe all the vampires have been destroyed, and Chicago is now a city of nothing but mortals, mages and werewolves. It's time to begin again.

In the Novels

Beginning with *A Hunger Like Fire*, we have released a number of stand-alone **Vampire** novels set in the Chicago of the World of Darkness. These novels feature many of the characters you'll find in the **Vampire** chapters of this book, such as Persephone Moore, Duce Carter and Solomon Birch. They are great examples for Storytellers and players alike, demonstrating how individual characters with different personal goals and methods might collide to create thrilling stories.

Many of the characters in the novels *don't* appear in this book, however, and not every character in this book has played a role in the novels. This is another way that the novels demonstrate how to tell stories in Chicago. Add your own characters, gloss over or ignore the ones you don't need and focus on what's important to *your* story. You can set your chronicle in a version of Chicago in which *A Hunger Like Fire* and *Blood In, Blood Out* have taken place, or you can set your stories in your own version of the city and use the novels just to inspire yourself.

This book sets the stage for the city. The novels show just one way the play might unfold.

Resources

To tap into the character of a city, players and Storytellers need more than facts and exciting ideas. The following fiction and non-fiction sources provided examples for our writers to follow, as well as raw inspiration.

Books

Countless books have been written about the history and character of Chicago. Some of them are true and some of them are good. In general, finding a quality history of Chicago is easy once you identify what it is you want to know about the city. Likewise, finding good novels set in Chicago (while different than finding good Chicago fiction) is easy when you know what writers you like. The following books are listed for their use as inspiration and reference for potential players and Storytellers in a Chicago chronicle. Many other excellent books about Chicago are out there.

James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating and Janice L. Reiff (Editors), *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*—Every city should have one of these (though London's is better). Just what it sounds like, this is a voluminous tome of Chicago facts, packed tight as a cattle-car and dry as ash.

Lorraine Johnson, *Chicago (Eyewitness Travel Guide)*—This DK Travel Guide provides a visual shorthand for Chicago facts and locations. What this book lacks in atmospheric presentations it more than makes up for in detail, despite some startling holes in its coverage of non-tourist sites. Think of it as a book of visual aids.

Erik Larsen, *Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*—By pairing the tales of renowned architect Daniel Burnham (whose name is all over Chicago) and prolific, acidic serial killer H. H. Holmes, Erik Larsen tries to contrast an economic and artistic boom in Chicago with a moral

drought. Ultimately, it shows how big and little stories intermix to create fascinating history and proves that even a surreal mansion loaded with deathtraps and stalked by a monster can be made less interesting than intellectual conflicts over architecture and city planning, depending on how you tell the tales.

David Gerrard Lowe, *Lost Chicago*—Photographs, etchings and sketches show you the Chicago that was, ready to be reborn in your own idealized version of the city in your own World of Darkness. Bury some of these lost structures underneath the city mortals see or make them into ghostly settings in the Shadow Realm. This book will help you understand why Daniel Burnham and John Wellburn Root are sometimes thought of as mystic gurus in their own right (see the **Mage** story "The Unreal City," on p. 400).

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*—A story of utterly mundane and grotesquely bloody horrors in the meat-packing dungeons of 19th-century Chicago. It's out of date now, unless Chicago's poverty and sanitary conditions are merciless and corrupt in your World of Darkness, but you'll find lots of timeless details to use for vivid settings and spirits drawn from Chicago's soot-gray history. Also worth a look for its depiction of Lithuanian immigrant culture in the city.

Studs Terkel, *Division Street*—Studs Terkel uses street-level examples to get at great big cultural issues and in this book he does it all on Division Street in Chicago. This is a book about experiences in and of Chicago, rather than its history, but you'll have a good sense for the city all the same when you're done. Yes, this book is almost forty years out of date (and hard to find) and, yes, it's still insightful and relevant.

Film & Television

Many well-known Chicago movies are missing from this list. While *The Blues Brothers*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *High Fidelity* all offer good looks at noteworthy Chicago locations, they don't tap into much horror, mystery or magic. This isn't to say that such films can't inspire Storytellers in great ways. The television series *ER*, for example, has a history of employing Chicago locations and actors to good effect, and can be a great source of gruesome imagery to inspire Storytellers, but the chaos of the emergency room shows how circumstances can lead to unlikely meetings of very different characters. Imagine what the bustling midnight shift might be like in a Chicago hospital in your World of Darkness.

Each of the following movies offers a look at Chicago that Storytellers can learn from:

Backdraft (1991)—Besides the Chicago scenery, this movie shows how a mundane thing can be made sinister through personification. In this case, it's fire. Look at the ways this movie characterizes fire, then imagine how that kind of willful fire might come across in a world of complex and sometimes dangerous animism.

Candyman (1992)—This supernatural horror tale in the famously violent projects of Cabrini Green provides a great mix of spooky modern atmosphere and urban folklore. Cabrini Green isn't quite like this anymore, but in the World of Darkness it certainly could be.

Flatliners (1990)—Stylish, gothic and vague, this modern-minded movie pits well-educated med students against the unknowable forces of death around the University of Chicago. It's easy to see this movie as a psychological encounter with subtle ghosts, but think of the talented cast as a cabal of Free Council or apostate mages obsessed with the Arcanum of Death and it takes on a different tone.

The Fugitive (1993)—Tension and desperation play out all over the Windy City in this wintry gray Chicago movie from Andrew Davis. Watch it for the Chicago texture and learn how to make a small story feel big. This movie has some real Chicago faces in it.

Road to Perdition (2002)—Take a look at this underappreciated drama for a great example of emotionally charged power plays, territorial politics and the ways nepotism and loyalty complicate every feudal society. The brilliant Conrad L. Hall creates a quintessentially Midwestern backdrop, from farmlands to penthouses, while Sam Mendes shows you a dozen ways to handle characters wrestling with their own morality.

Stir of Echoes (1999)—Though overshadowed by the release of *The Sixth Sense* that same year, this solid ghost story is nicely creepy in its own way. Filmed in and around Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, this is a great look at working-class horror affecting ordinary people without any knowledge of the occult. Kevin Bacon gets haunted in Chicago again.

Websites

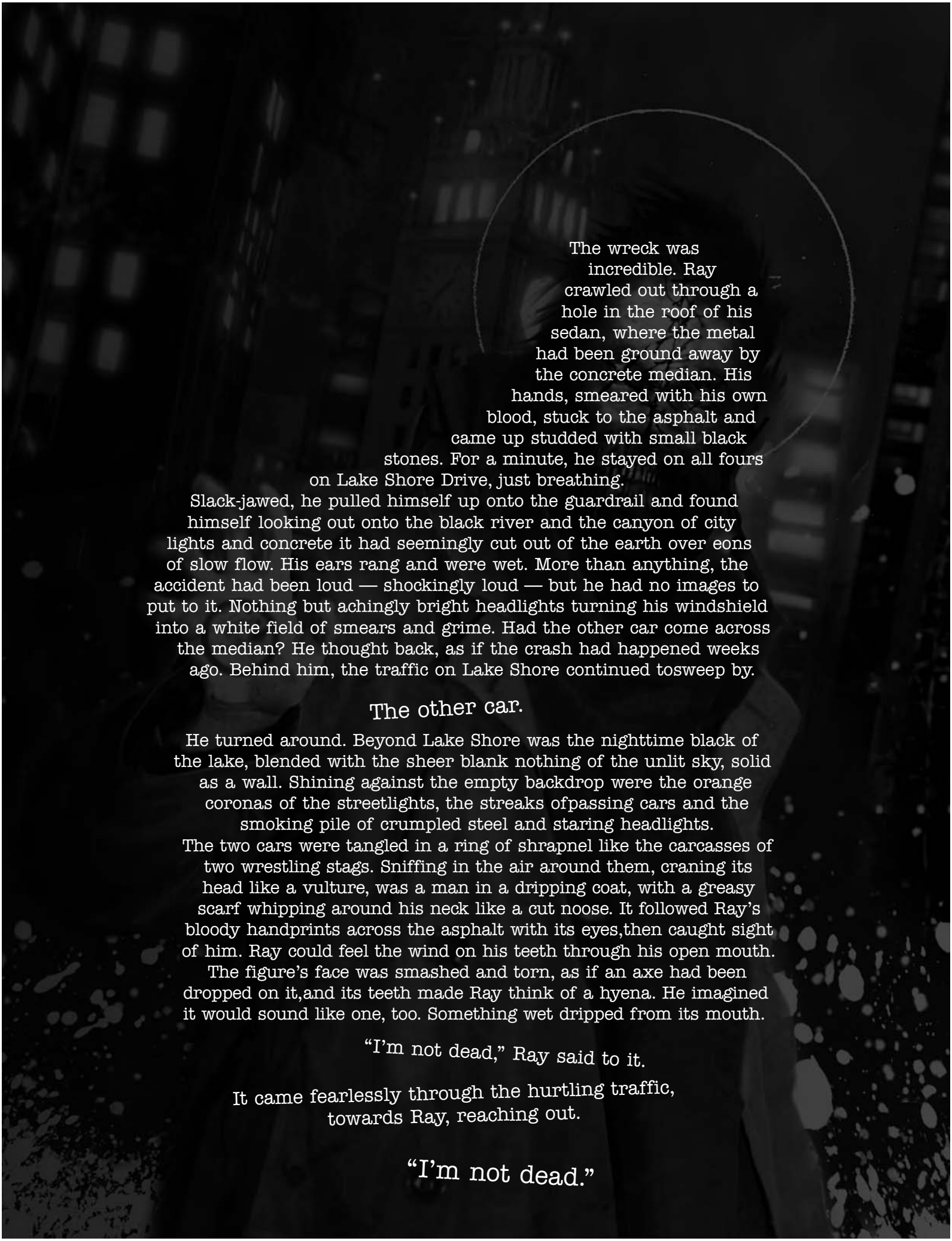
Chicago is an ever-changing city. No reference material can keep up with it as well as the Internet can. The following sites may be of use to players and Storytellers of chronicles set in Chicago:

The Encyclopedia of Chicago Online (www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org) — maintained by the Chicago Historical Society. The CHS has put a fantastic collection of multimedia exhibits online for all the World Wide Web to see. This site is a wealth of images and background information about the Chicago that was or, in your chronicle, may still be.

City of Chicago Home Page (www.cityofchicago.org) — maintained by the City of Chicago. The official website for the city is clean, bland and loaded with information. Nothing here will shock the visitor, but this is a good place to get some facts straight.

ChicagoCrime.Org (www.chicagocrime.org) — developed and maintained by Adrian Holovaty. This easy-to-understand site blends public police records with Internet maps to create quick guides to robbery, arson, murder and more in the Second City. Select the neighborhood you want and find out what crime went down where. Searchable by crime, too.





The wreck was incredible. Ray crawled out through a hole in the roof of his sedan, where the metal had been ground away by the concrete median. His hands, smeared with his own blood, stuck to the asphalt and came up studded with small black stones. For a minute, he stayed on all fours on Lake Shore Drive, just breathing.

Slack-jawed, he pulled himself up onto the guardrail and found himself looking out onto the black river and the canyon of city lights and concrete it had seemingly cut out of the earth over eons of slow flow. His ears rang and were wet. More than anything, the accident had been loud — shockingly loud — but he had no images to put to it. Nothing but achingly bright headlights turning his windshield into a white field of smears and grime. Had the other car come across the median? He thought back, as if the crash had happened weeks ago. Behind him, the traffic on Lake Shore continued tosweep by.

The other car.

He turned around. Beyond Lake Shore was the nighttime black of the lake, blended with the sheer blank nothing of the unlit sky, solid as a wall. Shining against the empty backdrop were the orange coronas of the streetlights, the streaks ofpassing cars and the smoking pile of crumpled steel and staring headlights.

The two cars were tangled in a ring of shrapnel like the carcasses of two wrestling stags. Sniffing in the air around them, craning its head like a vulture, was a man in a dripping coat, with a greasy scarf whipping around his neck like a cut noose. It followed Ray's bloody handprints across the asphalt with its eyes,then caught sight of him. Ray could feel the wind on his teeth through his open mouth.

The figure's face was smashed and torn, as if an axe had been dropped on it,and its teeth made Ray think of a hyena. He imagined it would sound like one, too. Something wet dripped from its mouth.

"I'm not dead," Ray said to it.

It came fearlessly through the hurtling traffic, towards Ray, reaching out.

"I'm not dead."

Chapter One: Blood and Fire: The History of Chicago

"Chicago is a city of contradictions, of private visions haphazardly overlaid and linked together. If the city was unhappy with itself yesterday – and invariably it was – it will reinvent itself today."
–Pat Colander

Old History

Before European settlement, the area now called Chicago was a primeval bog on the banks of the vast lake the natives called "The Great Water." The area's most numerous inhabitants were the Potawatomi Indians, but it was a common trading site and travel stop for Indians from the Ho-Chunk, Kickapoo and Winnebago tribes as well. Legends claim there was something special about the area. Archeologists have borne this out by finding an extraordinary number of strange symmetrical earthworks and ritual mounds in the area, the significance of which remain unknown and has probably been lost.

The word "Chicago" means either "striped skunk" or "pungent leek" in the language of the Miami and Illinois Indians. The name was apparently applied to the marshy mouth of the Chicago River because of the heavy presence of leeks there.

For hundreds of years, the area remained quiet and largely uninhabited. Then the white men came, and the blood began to flow — and it's been flowing ever since.

Fort Dearborn: First Blood

In 1803, the same year the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase, an army captain named John Whistler came to the area the Indians called Chicago and built Fort Dearborn, named after Thomas Jefferson's secretary of war. South of the palisaded fort were merchants and weaponsmiths attached to the fort to keep the soldiers supplied with guns, ammunition and other necessities. To the north were a few scraggly trappers and traders with assorted ties to the Indians, the British and the French.

Fort Dearborn was a risk, a military operation in hostile territory, and it wasn't going to be long before hostilities reached a violent climax and seeming conclusion.

After an extended period of escalating aggression, the hostile Indians attacked the fort in August of 1812, slaughtered the residents and burned the fort to the ground. The thick, rich blood of innocents splashed across stones and dirt and seeped into the ground, and the flames and billowing smoke rose greasily to the heavens to announce the annihilation of the white settlers.

According to the tales of the Indians, something in the area changed on the day of the Fort Dearborn Massacre.

Something that had been quiescent in its bindings stirred in its sleep.

Already things were going wrong.

The site was abandoned by the United States for four years, and largely returned to its natural state. The area was too strategically important to the settlers, however, and another wave arrived in 1816 and built a second Fort Dearborn. Larger and more secure than the first fort, this one became the core of a burgeoning city that took its name from the river it sat next to: Chicago.

The Beast Awakens

Driven by the steady westward flow of settlers and the city's opportune placement on a major waterway, Chicago grew quickly. It got its first bridge and drugstore in 1832, and incorporated as an official town a year later.

Trees were falling, and wooden buildings were going up at an astonishing pace.

The Union Stock Yards opened in 1865, and Chicago's slaughterhouses grew at a phenomenal rate, starting a trickle of blood from the city that would swell to a torrent in later years. One poet called Chicago the "butcher to the world." As the decades passed, the intimate connection between spilling blood and making money would only grow stronger, and that legacy would long outlast the city's stockyards.

Chicago was a workingman's town that still had a feel of the frontier to it. When the town's citizens weren't working, they liked to drink, gamble, visit whores and, of course, go to church on Sundays. Even in the early years, Chicago was known for its crime and rampant vice, and had a reputation throughout the United States and Europe as a wicked city. Newspapers would daily announce the latest sensational crimes, and they were legion. Compared to other cities of the day, Chicago's many dens of vice of all sorts were blatant and unapologetic. Many of these establishments, called "the Patches," were located along the banks of the Chicago River, and the Chicago Tribune described them as "places of the most beastly sensuality and darkest crimes."

This reputation only fueled the city's decadence. Criminals, charlatans, prostitutes, pushers and predators of all description, lured by the city's lawless image, came from across the United States to take part in the city's booming economy in whatever way suited them best. These news stories had an impact on the type of people who sought out Chicago, and ultimately shaped the city by luring a certain lawless element. That would explain a lot about Chicago in the years to come.

And hot on their heels followed an army of moralists, preachers and two-bit prophets ready to save the sinners' souls before the city fell like a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah.

They failed.

Mr. Maynard's Failed Exodus

By the first years of the 1870s, the chorus of voices complaining of Chicago's wickedness was beginning to gain some volume. One of these voices was that of Jeremiah Maynard. Depending on whom you listen to, Maynard was either a man of unusual insight or a lunatic. He talked frequently of the dark forces at work beneath the city's façade of normalcy and claimed to have evidence of a grand conspiracy against humankind. He raved about the machinations of "godless cabalists," "beasts that hide behind men's faces" and other, darker creatures that hid in Chicago's shadows. Some listeners thought he was using colorful metaphors. Others believed he was telling the literal truth — as he saw it, at least. And some claim to have seen the horrors Maynard was talking about with their own eyes.

From 1866 to 1871, Maynard built a small following through a combination of revival preaching, anti-corruption activism and sheer charisma. Among those who might be called his followers was a small handful of influential men, including General Phillip Sheridan, Maynard's commander in the Union Army.

In the spring of 1871, Jeremiah Maynard and a couple of trusted intimates left Chicago to secure a route westward to found a Zion of their very own, free from "infernal manipulation and the wickedness of weak men." His plan was to return to Chicago in the fall, to spend the winter making an all-out assault on the forces of darkness, proving their existence to one and all, and then to depart for New Zion the following spring.

It never happened. Within a week of Maynard's departure, members of his "flock" began dropping like flies. Some died of disease, others from accidents and others still wound up as victims of the city's burgeoning violent crime rate. Those who survived this series of unfortunate events grew quiet about what they had learned about the world from Jeremiah Maynard, and most disavowed their former "guide" entirely.

Unsurprisingly, all of Jeremiah Maynard's alleged "evidence" of the dark conspiracy was destroyed by the Great Fire a few months after he left town. Some claim this was itself part of the conspiracy. Others call it an easy out for Maynard's erstwhile followers.

Jeremiah Maynard himself dropped out of history about a month after he left Chicago. It is assumed that he met his fate while looking for his new Zion, but there are no official records of his death.

The Fire

On the night of October 8, 1871, there was a strong northerly wind blowing across Chicago. While hardly noteworthy in Chicago, in this case the wind proved to be disastrous. A barn in the southern portion of the city caught fire around 8:30 in the evening. With the wind fanning the flames, fire lunged through the city's tightly pressed wooden buildings at an astonishing rate. For 36 hours, the flames raged through Chicago, destroying more than 18,000 buildings over nearly four square miles in the heart of the city. It was as if the fire were hungry and wanted to glut itself.

The common lore surrounding the fire is that it was caused when a cow kicked over an oil lantern, but that tale has been frequently challenged and the truth of the situation remains unclear. Whatever the case, Chicago was not the only place to experience fires that night. All across Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois, blazes seemed to erupt spontaneously at approximately the same time.

In recent years, scientists have suggested that these fires were caused by a swarm of incoming meteorites, but, in the 19th century, the more commonly held belief was that the Great Fire was the old-fashioned wrath of God brought down on a city that wore its wickedness on its sleeve.

The chaos and horror of the fires were greater than anything the United States had seen. Even years later, survivors of the fire would talk in hushed tones of the absolute and terrifying loss of reason that afflicted so many of Chicago's citizens that night. Thieves trying to loot evacuated homes were shot and tossed into the flames to be counted as fire casualties later. Likewise, any number of long-time grudges, lovers' quarrels and vicious business rivalries were settled the same way. Blood spilled. Bodies burned. The chaos — and the death toll — would have

been much worse but for the presence of General Phillip Sheridan, the Civil War hero and ranking military commander in the area, who instituted martial law and returned a modicum of civilization to what had rapidly degenerated into a frenzy of madness and mayhem.

The Truth About Jeremiah Maynard

Humans who know too much have a habit of disappearing. With regard to his conspiracy theories, Jeremiah Maynard was right on most accounts. He knew the names, habits, accomplices, vices and locations of half a dozen of Chicago's more *interesting* residents, including two vampires and a wayward occultist. Maynard had evidence, which he had cached in four different locations around Chicago for safety, that he intended to show to many people when he returned from his westward jaunt.

All four places burned in the fire.

How much Maynard really knew about Chicago's nocturnal denizens will never be known unless he somehow stashed away additional evidence outside the city; but if he did, it hasn't shown up yet.

Rebuilding

When the fire was all done, a solid third of the city — its densely settled heart — had been destroyed. Where another city might have been crushed, Chicago's momentum saw to it that the city not only rebuilt, but grew stronger. The Devil, they say, protects his own. A wood shantytown sprang up in the space of days to house builders. Other cities and a handful of other nations gave aid to help make the new Chicago bigger and better than the old.

It was a resounding success. From 1837 to the time of the fire, Chicago had grown from a town of 1,000 to a city of 325,000, and was barely beginning to fulfill its destiny. Like the phoenix rising from its own ashes, Chicago rose again, and took the opportunity to expand and beautify itself as it did so. With the backing of millionaires, world-renowned architects and an army of highly skilled builders, Chicago's rebirth, at times, seemed to unfold far faster than anyone would have thought possible. Still, any hopes that Chicago had been purified by the flames were never realized. Without even much of a hiatus, the city's vice pits surged back to full strength, fanned by the winds of power, lust and greed. Rootless, unanchored young men and women heard that Chicago was the place to make money, through a variety of means, and they swarmed to the city in droves and played their own parts in the rebuilding.

Within a year, there was little evidence a fire had ever taken place. Over the course of the next two decades, the city's population tripled, and Chicago eclipsed Philadelphia as the second-largest city in the United States.

Dangerous Knowledge

Chicago had no library before the fire. As a gesture of international good will, the government of England donated 17,000 books to the city to help establish the first Chicago Public Library. Some of those books were predictable classics of science and literature — Plato's *Republic*, the plays of Shakespeare and the like — but a handful of the donated volumes were strange, unsettling books that England donated solely to get English soil. Foremost among these was the allegedly damned *Codex Tenebrael*, which contained all manner of esoteric lore concerning angels, demons and the summoning and banishing thereof.

According to one city father, "I would sooner place a phial of prussic acid in the hands of a young person than allow him access to the contents of this ungodly book." The library's administrators initially fought to keep the book on the shelves, but, in the face of sustained pressure from an array of churches, the library relented, and the tome was auctioned to the highest bidder for the staggering sum of six thousand dollars — enough to buy many, many other books. The librarians, having learned their lesson the hard way once, worked in tandem to ensure that none of the squeamish church-goers so much as saw any of the other books of "esoteric knowledge and exotic spirituality," and many of those tomes remain in the library's special collections even today.

New Thought

By and large, young Chicago was an intensely pragmatic city, and not prone to flights of fancy. Millionaires and visionaries had the luxury and leisure time to dream, but the vast majority of its inhabitants were concerned with the concrete needs of the day, a few earthy entertainments by night and not many higher concerns. Religion, mainstream or otherwise, was not generally a pressing concern, but as leisure time increased, so did interest in less-immediate, more spiritual topics. By the end of the 1870s, Chicago had a number of major churches to preach to its burgeoning masses of workers. The city had also become a hotbed of alternative spirituality *and* the birthplace of a new religious philosophy, called New Thought.

According to the tenets of New Thought, a regimen of diligent meditation and ascetic living could grant a person abilities akin to magic. Adherents of this "metaphysical religion" rarely seemed to gain the requisite insights, although the movement's leaders were clearly capable of spiritual feats that, to the layperson, were indistinguishable from magic. Ultimately, those miracles performed by the leaders of the New Thought movement may have been *too* remarkable. The miracles were so far outside of the realm of possibility that most of the public thought they were old-fashioned frauds, and New Thought remained a relatively offbeat, if remarkable cult — the public never embraced it, despite its miracles.

Tyrants and Anarchists. Haves and Have-Nots

Chicago was already a city of millionaires, of powerful men with big egos and far-reaching agendas in search of profit by any means. As it happened, Chicago was also a city of the common workingman, trying to make a living by making the millionaires' plans come to pass. The two were at odds almost from the very beginning. The workingman had a better life when he was paid more for his work; the wealthy owners made more profit when they paid their workers less. All the power was in the owners' hands — until the workers unionized; at which point they had a powerful tool for demanding fair wages. Time and time again throughout Chicago's history, owners did what they could to crack down on unions, including bribing judges and hiring criminals to intimidate and kill union activists. For their part, the unions did what they could to fight back against the oppressive power of the owners, including unionizing workers throughout the city and aligning themselves with radical political movements like the anarchists. That dynamic led to violence on many occasions, the most lethal of which was the Haymarket Riots of 1886, when thousands of workers went on strike in order to reduce the work day from 10 hours to eight — while daring to ask to be paid the same wages. The violence started with strikes and picket lines and grew more heated until there were riots, police crackdowns, shots fired, bombs thrown, blood flowing into the dust, dozens dead, sham trials and executions for crimes that had never been committed.

When the riot was over, Chicago had cemented its reputation for being a home of corrupt police and radical anarchists, both of which the city sheltered and would continue to shelter through the golden age of American industrialism.



The World's Columbian Exposition

If Chicago needed any sort of grand statement to crow its rising status among American cities, the city got one in 1893 in the form of the World's Columbian Exposition. Hailed as the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World (albeit a year late), the Exposition was (and remains) the largest World's Fair any city has ever produced. From the day of the Exposition's opening to its close, 28 million visitors strolled through the "White City" of the Exposition, an astonishing number given that the population of the United States was only 63 million.

The Columbian Exposition established Chicago as a city of great resources, boundless energy and solid ideas. This World's Fair was the ultimate manifestation of Chicago as a powerful force in a booming America. If Chicago's geography placed it at the heart of America, the Columbian Exposition placed the city at the heart of America's cultural identity and dreams for the future.

All was not as it appeared to be, alas. Even as Chicago was experiencing its grandest moment, the city was also experiencing one of its darkest, though only one man knew of the ghastly crimes that were taking place. Some who claim that Chicago is a cursed city point to the fact that even the city's most brightly shining moment was tarnished by the ghoulish deeds of Herman Mudgett. More commonly known by his pseudonym, H.H. Holmes, Mudgett lured dozens of people, many of them young women, back to his "murder castle," where he subjected them to horrible tortures before killing them and disposing of their bodies in the quicklime pits, acid vats and a crematorium in the basement.

Once again, the city's hunger for blood made itself known, and, once again, mortal hands were only too willing to do the bloody deeds the city demanded of them.

Tarnish on the Golden Age

Blessed with an unusually resourceful citizenry and ample funds, Chicago seemed mighty indeed. By 1900, there seemed to be nothing that the city couldn't achieve. Certainly, the city faced some challenging times — the waste of the city (garbage, sewage and the effluent produced by the city's industries and stockyards) was proving difficult to get rid of. Dumping it in the Chicago River had seemed to work initially, but when trash, sewage and human-sized clots of animal blood began washing up on the beaches, the city had to come up with a better way of dealing with the waste produced by its booming success.

With a nigh-demonic craftiness, the city would find a way to surmount this obstacle as well.

The River of Blood: 1900-1920

Chicago did come up with a better way. In 1900, after many years of discussion, an unheard-of expenditure of money and a great deal of work, the city of Chicago succeeded in subjugating nature to the city's will and reversed the flow of the river the city was named for. It was a moment of nigh-unbelievable hubris, but hubris was hardly a stretch for Chicago.

With the Chicago River no longer emptying into the lake where the city's drinking water originated, the river could be used to dispose of all manner of waste, including all of the increasing output of blood from the stockyards. Hundreds of animals were killed and butchered in Chicago's slaughterhouses every day, and truly staggering quantities of blood and offal were dumped into the river.

As the river went, so went the city of Chicago. The river was flowing backward, choked with blood and animal remains. The city itself became a bloody place, out of touch with the natural flow of the world. The years following the subjugation of the river would not be as kind to the city as the years preceding it.

A handful of self-defined spiritualists, sensitives, seers and others tried to draw attention to what they called "the spiritual consequences" of the river's reversal, the mass slaughter of animals and the unprecedented pollution problem, but they were written off as attention-starved, mentally unbalanced and, worst of all, enemies of Progress. Jehovah might have had his token defenders, but Money and Progress were the only two gods really worshipped in Chicago on any large scale, and those gods were not kind to the heretics of the faith. The meatpacking industry was among the wealthiest and most powerful in the city at the time, and the meatpacking companies would not brook slander, even by the lunatic fringe. The companies' agents saw to it that these spiritual deviants were bribed or threatened until they shut up or left the city. The remaining dissidents found the retribution of the meatpackers to be swift and brutal. It would not be the last time that industry squelched activism in the city of Chicago.

Big city-shaping projects were very much the order of the day in the first years of the 20th century. These years also saw Chicago dig an freight railway system beneath the Loop to allow deliveries underground through the sub-basements of key buildings. The tunnels served a number of purposes, including mail delivery and garbage removal. While the underground freight system was a work of genius for a few, brief years, the prohibitive cost of operating the trains in the tunnels combined with a rash of disappearances ultimately led to the entire system being closed and sealed off from the surface world in the late '50s. In the '60s, the electrical cabling, tracks, locomotives and train cars that had remained in the freight tunnel system were sold for scrap. Not much remains today but fragments of derelict steel and fiber-optic telecom cables, yet many buildings in the Loop are still connected by an underground network that few even remember exists.

All in all, the years between the Great Fire and the beginning of Prohibition were good ones that would later be seen as Chicago's Golden Age. It would all be downhill from there.

The Lawless Decades: Prohibition and the Mob

The constitutional amendment outlawing the creation, distribution or sale of alcohol went into effect in January of 1920, and the next 13 years saw Chicago earn a reputation for lawlessness unrivaled by any other city in America. Prohibition undermined the law, turned organized crime into an American empire and resulted in the corruption of hundreds, if not thousands, of police officers, judges and politicians. Bootlegging and bloodshed went together like gin and olives, and the number of murders committed in Chicago started climbing as soon as booze was outlawed.

With the beginning of the Prohibition era in 1920, Chicago's vice dens took on a new life. Even those citizens who normally steered clear of shady operations were inclined to stop in for a drink from time to time. The law itself had started to seem pointless, punitive and arbitrary.

The mob, already making a fortune from Chicago's gambling and prostitution operations, was only too happy to include the distillation and smuggling of alcohol on their list of underground businesses, and bootlegging became one of the most lucrative rackets. Initially, it seemed like there was enough crime and vice to go around and a number of gangsters earned their notoriety in the brothels and speakeasies of Chicago. But two factions went to war over Chicago's lucrative bootlegging industry: the Irish mobsters of the North Side, and the Sicilians on the South Side. The Irish produced mob leaders with names like Bugs Moran and Dion O'Banion. The most notorious of the South Siders was none other than Al Capone.

For the duration of Prohibition, blood and hooch alike were flowing freely. Violence between gangsters and police was almost as pronounced as violence between rival crime gangs. Chicago's land was baptized with the blood of hundreds of mobsters, from the floor of the auto garage where the St. Valentine's Day Massacre took place to the sidewalk in front of the Biograph Theater where the FBI gunned down John Dillinger.

Chicago's crime organizations had a serious advantage over the mob in most other cities: Chicago's gangsters had the political machine of the city on their side. Judges, aldermen, industry captains and City Hall potentates had learned that it was much easier to employ gangsters than to oppose them. The rise of labor also contributed to the success of organized crime, and the boundaries between labor unions and crime gangs were porous, where they existed at all.

Weird Chicago

After long enthralling the rich and curious of London and New York, the intrigue and mysticism of theosophy and the spiritualist movement was only just taking root in Chicago in the '20s. The exotic wisdom of the East was slow in getting to Chicago to any noteworthy degree, compared to those other cities, but when the spiritualist movement finally landed it made an undeniable impact. The New Thought movement saw another surge in popularity. Secret societies of theosophists and other like-minded groups met weekly to conduct séances, share experiences and "tap into the wisdom of the Divine." Some of these societies were only "secret" as a marketing gimmick, but evidence suggests that some really were clandestine operations trying to avoid confrontations with high society, the press and outraged pious churchgoers.

This last group included at least one name that raised eyebrows: Dion O'Banion. Though a gangster and a known murderer, O'Banion was a devout Irish Catholic who made it his business to know other people's business, especially when it came to religion. He had a reputation as being a dogmatist who disapproved of all manner of mysticism, spiritualism and all other brands of what he loosely called "heresy." Still, it's clear that he had a love/hate relationship with "heresy" that he never did resolve, occasionally to the detriment of his judgment. O'Banion dedicated many of the last years of his life to a crusade against what he called "the vampires infesting the city." Some have claimed that this was a colorful reference to corrupt politicians in the pocket of the Sicilian mob; others claim he actually meant vampires in the literal sense. Either way, O'Banion's crusade against theosophy and "vampires" became moot when three Sicilian mobsters walked into his North Side flower shop in 1924 and shot him twice in the throat, once in each cheek and once in the heart.

The Curious Structures of Mr. Guilford

One of the most curious of Chicago's architects was a man named Andrew Guilford. Throughout most of the 1920s, Guilford was an inexplicably fashionable architect for a certain subset of Chicago's landed gentry. His homes, while beautiful and unusually sturdy, weren't particularly original, and certainly didn't seem so at the time Guilford was designing, in the wake of the much-better-known Frank Lloyd Wright. The appeal of Guilford's designs, it has been surmised, stems from the fact that they were unusual without being too radical, just different enough to appeal to Chicago's burgeoning bourgeoisie. The key feature shared by all of his later buildings were strange (and technically illegal) secret rooms; each Guilford design had a hidden room that, in one way or another, captured the essence of the rest of the house. One enthusiastic critic praised the secret rooms as being "the architectural equivalents of Fabergé eggs." Historians have been arguing for decades now what the intended purpose of these rooms was. Some historians have suggested that they were rooms for illegal distilleries, private home speakeasies. These extra chambers are often surprisingly spacious and extraordinarily secure; nearly all are located under the building's foundation and lack windows.

Many of these buildings were later destroyed, either through the usual churning of construction through Chicago neighborhoods or through the more direct hand of the government that alleged (in more than one account) that Guilford houses were often owned by "bootleggers, communists, atheists and other persons of questionable character."

Prohibition, including all the misery came with it, was only the first of several blows to the city from which it never fully recovered. The second of those blows came in October of 1929 with the crash of the stock market, which ushered in the worst economic disaster America has ever seen.

The Great Depression

The Depression hit Chicago hard. Since the Great Fire, the city had fancied its progress immune to the setbacks that plagued other, lesser cities, but Chicago quickly learned oth-

erwise. Many of its vaunted millionaires were rendered penniless by the Crash of '29. Worse, much of the city's wealth came from agribusiness, and, with the Midwest becoming an enormous dustbowl, there was no wheat for market, no corn for the cattle and no money flowing into the city. What did flow into the city were young, unemployed men and women looking for a way — any way — to make money.

By this point, the rich, ornate buildings of the turn of the century seemed like sheer folly, monuments to hubris. Such luxuries were far outside the reach of the common man during the Depression, even in a city that loved the common man as much as Chicago.

Chicago's crime rate skyrocketed. The ability of money to motivate people toward questionable behavior varies in inverse proportion to how much people have. The rich could afford to have ethics; the poor man was stuck doing what he had to in order to survive. And, during the Depression, very few people had money, so Chicago, already a known haven for mobsters, whoremongers and vice peddlers of all description, became a city of desperate individuals all too eager to do desperate things.

Even as the city was falling prey to a hundred blights, Chicago pretended it was still the city it was in its heyday. The World's Fair of 1934, called "A Century of Progress" tried to recreate the wonder of the Columbian Exposition of 1893, but lacked the money, the aesthetics or the sense of wonder of that previous fair.

The Destruction of Grandeur: 1940–1960

For a few brief decades in the '20s and '30s, progress and decay hung in perfect balance in Chicago. Its industry and commerce were barely keeping pace with its crime and dissolution. Though crime-ridden and corrupt, the city found itself in a state of equilibrium, neither gaining nor losing ground.

The '40s were another story.

In the '40s, the hybrid vigor of the preceding century abandoned Chicago. The real consequences of the Great Depression set in. World War II sapped the resources of Chicago just as it did the rest of the country. Blacks moved to Chicago's South Side neighborhoods in record numbers, and rather than integrate with "those people," whites fled to the bland safety of the suburbs. Property values bottomed out; within a decade, the formerly affluent South Side became an extensive ghetto.

Upon the soldiers' return from the war, thousands of families gave up the dangers of urban life altogether in favor of the bland safety of the booming suburbs.

As the city's wealthy citizens got nervous about the increase in crime and poverty in the city, law, order and "progress" became the key words of the day. Chicago's land prices plummeted. Many of the iconic buildings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, private castles built by self-made millionaires, saw their glory days fade into the past, and, one by one, the buildings wound up falling to the wrecking ball. It was as if the stern present had gone to war with the beautiful, decadent past.

The Crusade of the T-Men

The activity and excesses of Chicago's criminal underworld were so notorious and so well covered in publications around the world that, by the 1940s, legends of Chicago's wickedness eclipsed every other fact about the city. There was nothing people wouldn't believe about Chicago. It was known to have establishments of the most decadent sorts, from speakeasies to opium dens to dance halls for homosexuals. Every sort of lurid, exotic crime was presumed to take place there, from white slavery to serial murder. Two agents from the Department of the Treasury almost convinced a few people that Chicago was infested with cabals of unseen enemies that ruled the city by night (not unlike Jeremiah Maynard, 70 years before them). These agents were remarkably persuasive and had a number of people believing their disturbing tales. During the agents' uncontrolled (and largely unauthorized) hunt, they burned down a number of residences they claimed were being used as "dens of unnatural disease" — a term they never were able to explain with any clarity — and caused headaches for several local politicians. Luckily, the T-men were exposed as unhinged loose cannons before causing any lasting damage, and the department re-assigned them to separate offices in Nebraska and Wyoming, where they spent the remainder of their unremarkable careers.

The Devouring of the South Side

The '40s through the '70s saw the city grow larger and more segregated. While affluent, white baby boomers were growing up in the few good neighborhoods of the North Side, the South Side was falling to the dark forces of despair and horror.

By the '70s, the tides of entropy had slowed their constant lapping at the neighborhoods of the North Side — most of them, anyway. The same was not true of the South Side. Many American cities reached their nadir points during this decade, and Chicago was no exception. Most of the urban renewal tactics undertaken by the city in the '50s and '60s, particularly on the South Side, had failed, and blight covered most of the South Side like a cancer on the city's geography.

A handful of small ethnic enclaves survived these decades untouched by the South Side's corruption by adopting a vigilant, almost xenophobic approach toward outsiders. These enclaves' siege mentality resulted in a few horrific incidents of vigilante justice, but also preserved their communities, keeping them all but untouched by the passage of time.

The vast majority of the South Side, however, became a no-man's land avoided even by the police. Consequently, the worst in human nature (and inhuman nature, in some cases) reigned ascendant over any of the South Side's residents who were too poor to escape. Only reports of the most extreme atrocities — mass murders, large-scale white slavery operations or, on one occasion, a studio set up to produce snuff films

— were enough to get the police to intervene, and then only if they weren't paid to mind their own business.

By the '80s, it would have been difficult for things to get any worse on the South Side, and then the times changed.

Recent History

The '90s were kind to Chicago. The robust national economy buoyed the city enough that even some South Side neighborhoods started to enjoy the benefits of gentrification. Buildings that had been run down tenements for decades were bought, gutted and rehabilitated into housing for Chicago's growing affluent class. The Loop once more became a residential neighborhood, instead of the sterile toiling place it had been for decades.

The city still has its poor, but the soaring property values are slowly conspiring to force the poor from the city so wealthy, college-educated workers can take their place.

Chicago has begun a financial recovery from its long ailment, but the city has not shaken the corruption that many now feel has eaten its way to Chicago's core. Money still speaks louder to the city's judges, politicians and police than the quieter voice of ethics, and that allows things to happen in Chicago that should be unthinkable in the core of the "wholesome Midwest."

The residents of Chicago, however, have grown blind to the corruption around them, and dark deals that would raise red flags in any other city now go unopposed, allowing any number of underground elements to operate within the city with little or no opposition.

And yet the city grinds on.

Geography

It's *the* American city. Plopped down in the middle of the country, in the core of the American heartland, Chicago has immense symbolic value, not all of which is necessarily good. Yeah, like the old mayor said, it's the City That Works, the city of American potential, the setting for innumerable Horatio Alger novels and, lest we forget, more wholesome, down-home Midwest values than you can shake a stick at.

But, with any bright light, there's bound to be a shadow. As Nelson Algren said, "Chicago is an October sort of city even in spring." Chicago casts a long, dark shadow, from its blood-soaked abattoirs and mob ties to its contemporary gang violence, record-breaking murder rates and ubiquitous political corruption. Darkness radiates from the city's silent, corroding and despair-drenched rust belt factories and from its miles of crack-blighted ghettos. As one journalist wrote of the city in the '30s, "In all the seven seas and the lands bordering thereon there is probably no name which more quickly calls up thoughts of crime, violence and wickedness than does that of Chicago." And some of the things lurking in Chicago's shadow are stranger and uglier still.

Chicago, like any city, has its fair share of rumors percolating through the grapevine. No, make that *more* than its fair share of rumors. The city has rumors the way the Himalayas have rumors, the way Loch Ness has rumors. Every part of the city seems to have its local phantoms and urban legends. Hauntings are so common there are whole books full of them and guided tours of afflicted sites for the foolhardy. Heard any good stories lately? The poor slobs in Chicago have. They get to live them.

And while everybody hears these bizarre, disturbing, little friend-of-a-friend stories, nobody ever actually follows up on the really heavy, honestly frightening ones. Why would they? Who would do it, the police? In what mythical spare time are they supposed to go chase the boogie-men and pink elephants? And, in a city that's already hurting for revenue (pay no attention to the city's recent financial scandals please, and, by the way, we're raising your sales *and* property taxes . . .), just what budget line item would that fall under? And cops, in particular, seem to learn one lesson early on that keeps them from looking around too much where they're not wanted: the more you crane your neck, the more you expose your throat.

Then there's that *other* reason that nobody investigates: they don't really want to know what they might find. Like people everywhere, Chicagoans like to think that their city is basically wholesome and good. So long as things stay in the realm of rumor, Chicagoans can pretend that those disturbing creatures, places and events don't exist. But once people start looking into the stories too closely they have to acknowledge a few disturbing truths, making it just that much harder to maintain their rosy, bourgeois, normal model of the world. Everybody *wants* to think their city is wholesome and good. In Chicago, that just happens to be more wrong than in most other places.

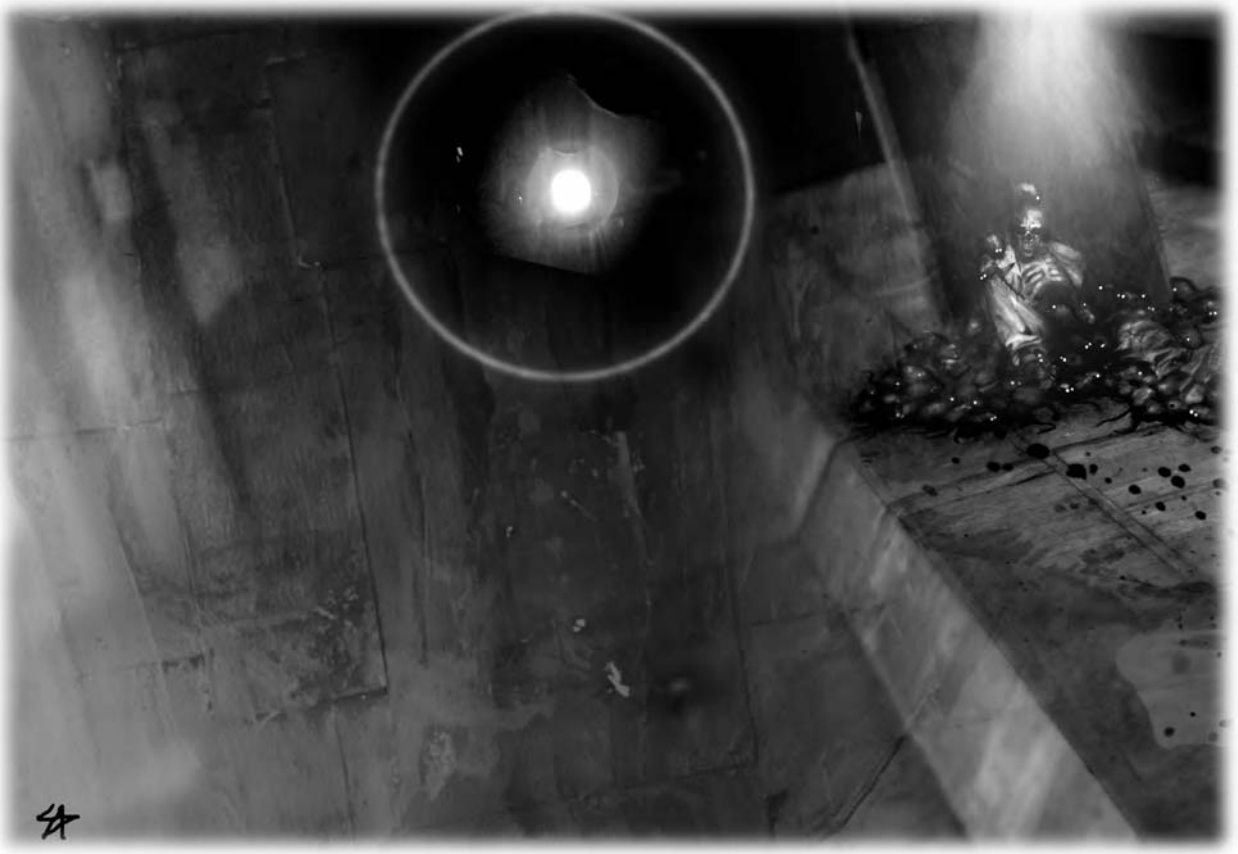
The Lay of the Land

Chicago, the largest city in Illinois, sits on several miles of the Lake Michigan shore. At its core is the Loop, Chicago's busy downtown. South of the Loop, the city fades into the poverty and desolation of the South Side. North of the Loop the city is densely settled with residential areas punctuated by more commercial neighborhoods, extending all the way up to the city's northern border. Nearly all of the city's hip or desirable locations are located within a mile or two of the lake. The farther west you travel, the blander the city becomes until it fades into the western suburbs, the bedroom communities with little history and less character, where the city's mid-level managers, accountants and bureaucrats live. Connecting all of these areas is the city's public rail system, the CTA, commonly called the el.

The El

Chicago is known for its train system, the el or "L", which is short for elevated train, even though two-thirds of the system's tracks are below ground. The el has over a hundred miles of track and carries passengers to all parts of the city, including both major airports and 40 suburbs.

The square elevation platforms that the tracks sit on are a familiar sight all over the city. They're enormous, crude affairs of rusting metal that slice through neighborhoods like knives.



One of the first lessons new residents learn after moving to Chicago is to avoid the el at night. The el is fine during the day when it's the province of bankers, lawyers and secretaries on their way to and from work. By night, though, say after 9 P.M., the el steadily becomes a no-man's-land where vagrants, gangs and criminals have free reign. Teams of transit cops make their rounds of the trains, usually with dogs in tow sniffing for drugs or explosives, but any criminal who's paying attention can figure out their routines and evade them with a little effort.

If the el system were a neighborhood, it would have the highest murder rate of any neighborhood in the city. Pushing victims onto the tracks as a train approaches is a popular form of murder in Chicago. El service comes to a screeching halt several times a year as the transit police suspend train service long enough to gather parts into a body bag and spray the blood off the tracks.

The actual elevated tracks may be prone to violence, but underground, the el just gets — weirder. Only two of the several train lines, the Red and Blue lines, go underground and become subway for long distances. Both of them have to go deep underground at points to avoid building foundations and the like, and the deeper the tunnels go, the stranger things become, at least according to the guys who maintain the tracks. There are abandoned subway stations in the el, and if you know where to pay attention, you can glance out into the darkness at the right time and see the dead station flash by. The names of these abandoned platforms — Coyne, Westlake, Sallas and North Arcade — are, for a myriad of reasons, notorious among a certain sector of Chicago's urban explorers and lore buffs. There are dozens of stories, and sometimes conflicting records, of why these stations were closed in the first place, what people have found there since and the dark things that are rumored to take place there even now.

Sallas, for example, (one of the two abandoned stations on the Blue Line that runs from the Loop to O'Hare Airport) was abandoned because it was inundated with rats. Not just a few rats (which all subway stops have in abundance), but teeming swarms of rats so thick you couldn't walk through them. The city initially tried fumigating the place, but new rats just came in and fed on the remains of the old rats and developed some kind of immunity to the gas used by the exterminators. After a bum passed out on the platform and got eaten alive, the city closed the station permanently. The stairs down to the platform have been paved over and where the old aboveground entrance used to be there's a newsstand. Rumor has it that the abandoned platform is still rat central, but rumor is all it is.

Another of these lost stations has reputedly become the setting for inexplicable gatherings of people who claim to feel "a tugging at my soul" that calls them to gather in the darkness of the old subway platform. Those who make their way here don't know why they have come; they just arrive and wait around, uncertain about why they've been called there, and, after a while, they just disperse. Which of the four closed stations is the setting for these gathering varies from telling to telling, but those who *really* want to

get there can usually find the station, despite the barriers the city has put in place to prevent such things.

The other rumor that sometimes goes round is that one of these stations is used by the city as a dumping room for old evidence from "freako cases." It's the weird stuff that the cops don't want the public to know about (or acknowledge themselves), just a locked room in the closed station with aisles and aisles of old boxes full of the most bizarre things the Chicago police have encountered (and don't want to keep in the precinct station) — a ball sewn from a man's skin, a box of desiccated ears from an unsolved string of killings in the mid-'80s, a ring that drips real blood when worn (though not the wearer's) and other oddities.

The lost stations have been removed from the system maps, of course, like felonious offspring being discreetly erased from the family tree. The names live on in urban legend, obviously, but the actual whereabouts of the stations is largely forgotten by mainstream Chicagoans. Only transit repairmen, historians and urban lore-masters know the exact location of all four lost platforms.

Getting to these stations is an endeavor in its own right. As a general rule, subway stops on the el are between a quarter- and a half-mile apart, and the only way to get to the lost stations is to get off at the closest functional station and walk through the subway tunnel to get to the next stop, all while avoiding rats, the electrified third rail and, of course, oncoming trains. If you know the timing of the trains, you're likely to be fine. Barring rush hour schedules, running the distance between stations usually takes less time than it takes for the next train to come, provided you're a fast runner. If you don't know how often the trains are running (or how fast *you* can run), you're a good candidate for becoming a transit death statistic. Most of the subway tunnels originally had safety alcoves every 15 feet or so for the safety of repairmen working in the tunnels, but many alcoves have been filled in with pipes and wiring that have been added since the subway was first built.

Despite the dangers involved in getting there, the allure seems to be enough that several people every year make a subterranean pilgrimage to at least one of the abandoned stations. If they actually find what they were hoping to find, nobody knows, but one would hope so, because at least one person disappears or dies every year while trying to make the trip.

The Loop: Where Money Changes Hands

The Loop is Chicago's downtown, where the really tall buildings are. It is the rich, gray urban core of the city, the center to which all other neighborhoods orient themselves. The area is called the Loop because the el tracks make a big loop around the downtown area, effectively wrapping it in a rusty iron ribbon. All in all, the Loop encompasses one fairly solid square mile of skyscrapers, all of which are trying to grab a little more heaven than their neighbors. The Sears Tower, not long ago the world's tallest building, is here, as is the Hancock Building, presiding like royalty over Chicago's skyline.

The Loop is ultimately a place of cold, hard commerce. It's a place where winning is paramount, and success means reaping the biggest profits. In the cold glass and concrete canyons of the Loop, life is reduced to binary terms: profit and loss, one's and zero's, winners and losers, the quick and the dead. From the savage free enterprise practiced in the trading pits to the shark-smile meetings in corporate boardrooms, the bottom line is determined in neat ledger columns: if you're not generating revenue, you're a liability. And woe unto those who add to the red ink.

The long-time mob presence in Chicago has given the Loop a peculiar claim to fame: there are more human remains in the foundations of these buildings than anywhere else in the world. The problem is so pronounced that the police are expected to be present any time an old building is being demolished, so there's someone to take possession of the remains that are uncovered when the foundation is excavated.

Whatever the mob may be putting in the foundations, it's big corporations that fill the rest of the buildings in the Loop: world-class companies with money and prestige to spare. Chicago started off as a center for meatpacking and agribusiness, but the city has long transcended its roots and moved on to other opportunities: advertising, aerospace, banking and a myriad other businesses now bring money pouring into the city. The Loop is Chicago's financial *raison d'être*, the main site of commerce in the entire state of Illinois. Many of those who work here are among the wealthiest people in the country: CEOs, presidents, executive vice-presidents and the like swarm into the Loop every day, working in tandem to bring prestige and, most of all, profits to the companies they serve.

Chicago's Loop is a hub in many ways beyond the financial, as well. It is the scheming spider at the center of many large webs. Any bus or train that goes through the Midwest stops in the Loop. The train station is a grand old building, one of the last great classic train stations. Most of the trains, from Amtrak to the Metra commuter rail, go underground in downtown Chicago, so as to keep the ugliness of the tracks out of sight. Before Chicago's track squeamishness, however, the city used to have huge, multi-acre exposed train yards busy bringing people in or taking them away. In the modern era, the trains are kept underground. Still, in recognition of the older, wealthier clientele that rides trains, the stations are surprisingly pleasant and clean.

In sharp contrast, the enormous Greyhound bus terminal is a nightmarish place located in a dark, ugly corner of downtown that was made available through urban renewal in the '60s. Unlike the more genteel trains, buses are almost exclusively for the young and the poor, and there's no shortage of such folks coming to Chicago or leaving, once they've been chewed up. Summoned by the bustling urban siren song, hundreds of runaways arrive in the Loop every year like tribute to a hungry god. And, for its part,

Chicago sends them a dark welcoming committee of parties delighted to accept their share of the bounty.

The Chicago River

Flowing through the heart of the Loop is the Chicago River, perhaps the most tainted and unnatural waterway in the United States. The twisted, slow-moving Chicago River has branches and tendrils meandering all through the Chicago area, including the North Branch, the South Branch and the Main Stem. The modern Chicago River also incorporates 52 miles of constructed waterway.

Before 1900, the river emptied into Lake Michigan, where the city's drinking water came from. Unfortunately, the city's sewage emptied into river. This was a problem. So, in 1900, the city of Chicago and state of Illinois, in an act of nigh-unthinkable hubris, spent a staggering 40 million dollars to reverse the flow of the Chicago river, sending it flowing backwards, toward a canal that led to the Illinois River and, eventually, to the Mississippi. In the West Loop, the Chicago River branches into several spurs, all of which go meandering off on their own convoluted paths through Chicago and its suburbs.

There are those who say that something went terribly wrong with Chicago the day the river changed direction, that humankind's ability and willingness to meddle had finally outstripped wisdom completely, that the spirits of the place had been so deeply offended that they became angry and twisted. The first day the river changed direction, there were hundreds of maelstroms, the combined din of which sounded like a gagging giant. A number of long dead, unidentifiable bodies bobbed to the surface of the river *and* the lake, presumably from the old City Cemetery. On Lake Michigan, rogue waves washed away several fishermen and a woman walking along the beach with her three children. Inexplicably, these events were seen as nothing but curiosities, and the people of Chicago went about their business as usual, oblivious to the subtle changes and feeling nothing but pleased with themselves.

Once the river no longer emptied into their backyard and people didn't have to smell the stench of sewage and dodge the turds on the beach, they stopped caring entirely about what they put into the river, and it became a combination sewage system and dumping pit. Everything was fair game for the river.

The meatpacking plants were among the worst violators. From 1893 to 1933, there was no year in which fewer than 15 million animals were butchered in Chicago's abattoirs. Hundreds of pounds of spoiled meat and gallons of blood from the slaughterhouses poured into the Chicago River every day, and the viscous, rusty brown river took everything away. At times, the blood was so thick that a scab formed over the top of the river thick enough for birds and squirrels to run across. A number of drunks tried the same thing and fell through, becoming just a bit more rotting meat in the water.

And when other, heavier industries came into Chicago, they pumped their trash, their arsenic and mercury and lead compounds into the river as well. Out of sight, out of mind, after all.

Some of the refuse got washed away as intended. Some of it was too heavy and sank. The rotting meat absorbed all the oxygen out of the water and smothered any fish that hadn't been killed by chemicals, and the Chicago River became an entirely lifeless waterway. The Environmental Protection Act of the 1970s forced the city to clean up the river enough that it could support life again, and aerators were used to put oxygen back in the water. Many said that it was too late, though, that the river had been forever tainted. They're probably right. To this day, there are stretches of the Chicago River that bubble quietly from the gasses released by decades-old rotting meat, causing those who live in the insanely expensive condominiums alongside the river to affectionately call it "Bubbly Creek."

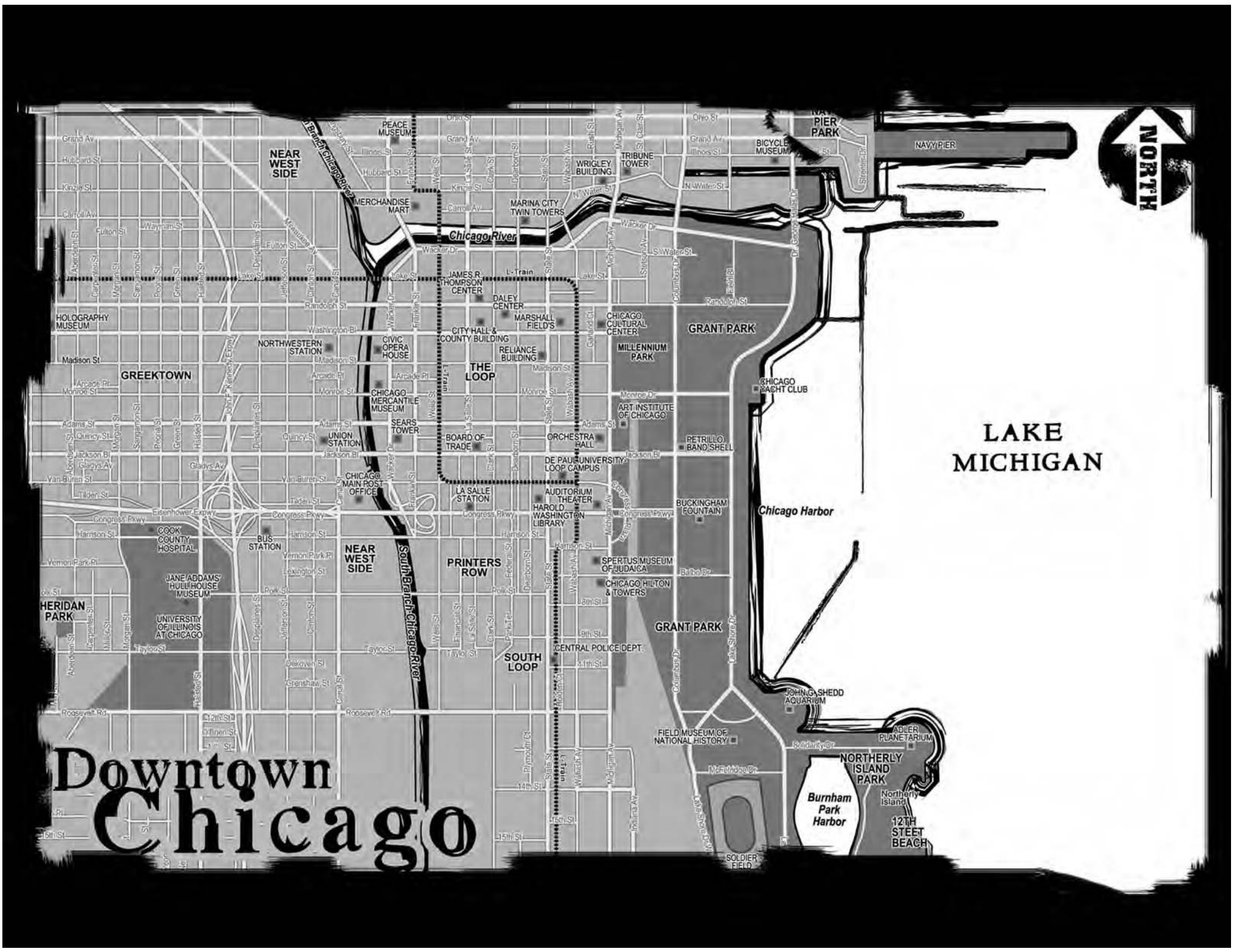
There are those who say that the Chicago River now taints everything it touches, both physically and spiritually. There may well be something to that. It's quite evident that the branches of the river wend their way through the most egregiously blighted and "off" sectors of the city, but Chicagoans have grown so accustomed to the ugliness of poverty, conflict and decaying industrial infrastructure that they never seem to notice.

There was a time, two or three decades ago, when the waters of the Chicago River were so polluted and foul that they were toxic to any sort of fish. The river was as sterile as bleached bone. That is no longer the case. There are now some species that seem to have adapted to life in the river, though this isn't necessarily the positive sign people want it to be. Any fish capable of surviving in the Chicago River, and there aren't many of them, has had to mutate in order to do so. And those poor, hungry fools who eat those fish are unlikely to live long enough to bear any offspring. And it's probably better that way.

Navy Pier

Jutting out into Lake Michigan like the city's turgid phallus is Navy Pier, a tourist trap of international proportions. If people see only one thing in Chicago, it's likely to be the Pier and its exhibition halls, museums, theaters and mall stores. The big advantage of Navy Pier? Nothing really ever happens out here. Hundreds of cops work tirelessly to see to that. Navy Pier is entirely sterile and devoid of substance, like one big real-world episode of Sesame Street, a Potemkin village set up by the Chicago Chamber of Commerce to assure small-town tourists that cities aren't the scary, filthy places they've always heard about. Instead, people get to stroll arm-in-arm by the big ships that are moored here, licking ice cream cones and feeling, probably for the only time in their lives, like they're in a Norman Rockwell painting.

Cops aren't the only ones making sure Navy Pier stays tourist-friendly. The concessions stands and the Pier's one high-end restaurant are managed by the Stephano family, one of the major mob families left in Chicago, and it's in their best interest to see to it that Navy Pier has a fun, hospitable reputation. Anybody causing trouble on the Pier, especially trouble that might make it into the media, had best pray that the cops find them before the mob does. They take the protection of Navy Pier *very* seriously.


Downtown Chicago
NORTH
NAVY PIER
NAVY PIER PARK
BICYCLE MUSEUM
TRIBUNE TOWER
WRIGLEY BUILDING
PEACE MUSEUM
NEAR WEST SIDE
MERCHANDISE MART
MARINA CITY TWIN TOWERS
Chicago River
North Branch Chicago River
JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER
L-Train
DALEY CENTER
MARSHALL FIELD'S
CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER
GRANT PARK
HOLOGRAPHY MUSEUM
CITY HALL & COUNTY BUILDING
NORTHWESTERN STATION
CIVIC OPERA HOUSE
RELIANCE BUILDING
MILLENNIUM PARK
GREEKTOWN
THE LOOP
CHICAGO YACHT CLUB
CHICAGO MERCANTILE MUSEUM
ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
SEARS TOWER
UNION STATION
BOARD OF TRADE
ORCHESTRA HALL
PETRILLO BAND SHELL
DE PAUL UNIVERSITY LOOP CAMPUS
LAKE MICHIGAN
CHICAGO MAIN POST OFFICE
LA SALLE STATION
AUDITORIUM THEATER
HAROLD WASHINGTON LIBRARY
BUCKINGHAM FOUNTAIN
Chicago Harbor
COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL
BUS STATION
NEAR WEST SIDE
PRINTERS ROW
SPERTUS MUSEUM OF JUDAICA
CHICAGO HILTON & TOWERS
JANE ADDAMS' HULL HOUSE MUSEUM
HERIDAN PARK
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO
GRANT PARK
CENTRAL POLICE DEPT.
SOUTH LOOP
South Branch Chicago River
JOHN G. SHEDD AQUARIUM
FIELD MUSEUM OF NATIONAL HISTORY
ADLER PLANETARIUM
NORTHERLY ISLAND PARK
Burnham Park Harbor
Northerly Island
12TH STEET BEACH
SOLDIER FIELD

The South Side: Bastion of Despair

Once, in the early decades of the 20th century, the South Side was Chicago's affluent core, full of the conspicuously rich strolling down its avenues and boulevards in front of lavish Victorian row houses. Sixty years of steady decline have brought a drastic change to the South Side. Today it comprises several square miles of gang-infested ghettos. If someone were looking for a handy one-word descriptor for the area, "squalid" works nicely, as does "dangerous." All that's left of the South Side's rich heritage is street after street of beautiful stone Victorian homes that have fallen into graceless ruin. These once-beautiful homes are now rat-infested, run-down and abandoned. Many of these have already been deemed dangerous and demolished (because they're collapsing or for other, less explicit reasons), and these places have been the setting for many, many crimes, from theft and extortion to rape and murder.

A good 70% of Chicago's murder rate gets racked up down here. To most Chicagoans, this means "stay out." To criminals, it means "come here to do your dirty work." The South Side is a playground for the desperate and malicious. Missing persons, when they're carefully chosen, aren't missed down here for a long time, and can easily go unmissed. Unless circumstances insist otherwise, the cops are likely to attribute most South Side deaths to one of four categories: drug deals gone bad, gang violence, poor pimp-whore relations or domestic disputes gone too far.

The farther south and west you go in the South Side, the worse things get. The farthest southwest neighborhood is Riverdale, and it's so polluted from the heavy industry of the early 20th century that it's no longer safe to live there, although the desperately poor still do.

The squalor isn't absolute, evenly divided or inescapable. Small, manicured neighborhoods exist on the Near South Side that are bastions of civility, order and commerce within the larger blightscape of the South Side. The neighborhoods just south of the Loop are rapidly becoming chic, and many have made the transition from dangerous to edgy to hip in record time. Other neighborhoods in the area, such as Bronzeville and SoLo (South Loop), have developed stable commercial districts and are showing signs of making a comeback. If enough money flows in, anything can happen. One significant crime wave is all it would take to drive these neighborhoods back into despair for another decade, but their luck seems to be holding for the moment.

This development isn't without consequence. The wave of gentrification is driving the poor farther south and southwest. Throughout the grim and ugly expanse of the South Side, one can find tiny oasis neighborhoods where the residents have kept "undesirables" (and, somehow, a range of other urban blights) out of their neighborhoods. These enclaves — working-class ethnic neighborhoods, mostly, with residents from Poland or Romania or the Czech Republic or multi-generational ties to the region that transcend race and income — exist for a few square blocks here and there throughout the South Side, a time warp to the late '50s, where children play in the street into the gloaming and people sometimes forget to lock their doors and live to tell about it. These communities are tight. If someone goes missing, people notice and they take action. Predators take their chances when they wander into these tiny enclaves. Vigilantism is still considered an Old World virtue down here, and more than one would-be burglar or rapist has been shot, stabbed or beaten to death while walking down the quiet tree-lined streets of these neighborhoods without so much as a single witness — or at least any who will come forward. Given the wealth of easy and unquestioned goods elsewhere, most of Chicago's criminals would rather ignore these enclaves in favor of easy pickings.

And the residents intend to make sure that it stays that way.

Anabethika Jackson

She lives in an old brick house in the depths of Englewood that was built for a wealthy family in 1889 and has since fallen from grandeur into decrepitude. Four women, 11 children and a few occasional overnight guests share the house with a swarm of big brown roaches and several large rats. The wooden porch is about to fall off the house because the bolts that attached it have rusted through, but nobody knows how to fix it and nobody has any money to fix it. Soon they won't have a porch.

Anabethika is 35. Her son LeBraun is 19, and he hangs with a bad crowd. She used to love him so much. He was her little jewel, the only thing she had to remember his daddy by after those gangbangers executed him, but, over time, she's seen LeBraun do bad things — not just dealing crack, he was doing that when he was twelve, but *really* bad things.

Sometimes, when things are really bad, LeBraun brings his friends back to the house. They don't have any teeth at all, and she can't understand a word they say, but her son — the son she wanted to do better in life than she did — can understand them perfectly. Sometimes, they need a little flesh from her or the gals. Not a lot, they never want much, just enough to gnaw on. Just enough to hurt. And they come with gifts. Gifts of sweet, blissful crack that make her feel so good that the rest of her life seems like hell. And, sometimes, they even bring money.

And so Anabethika and the other three women let her son's friends pull out their strange, curvy knives and cut off short strips of skin and scar tissue and maybe a little muscle underneath in exchange for a rock large enough to last a day or two.

Anabethika has a hard time telling days apart anymore, but LeBraun first brought his friends over a few weeks ago. She and her three friends all wear thick, blood-soaked bandages around their arms and legs, because there's not much left but bones anymore and what there is looks infected. One of the gals has been talking about letting them have her titties; one of them has a lump on it the size of a golf ball anyway. It won't be much longer until there won't


NORTH
Elmhurst
Berkeley
Bellwood
Oak Park
Maywood
GARFIELD PARK
UNITED CENTER
Ogden
Michigan Av
NAVY PIER
Eisenhow Expwy
290
Hillside
Forest Park
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-CHICAGO
LITTLE ITALY
Chicago Harbor
Oakbrook Terrace
DOUGLAS PARK
PILSEN
SOLDIER FIELD
MEIGS FIELD
Westchester
Broadview
CHINATOWN
McCORMICK PLACE
Cicero
88
Oak Brook
Tri-State Tollway
La Grange Park
Chicago Zoological Center
Riverside
Berwyn
Sportsman Park & Hawthorn Race Track
COMISKY PARK
BRONZEVILLE
55
BRIDGEPORT
MORTON JR. COLLEGE
ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Brookfield
LAKE MICHIGAN
INTERNATIONAL AMPHITHEATER
La Grange
Lyons
Stickney
Adlai Stevenson Expw
Forest View
ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES
Clarendon Hills
Hinsdale
WASHINGTON PARK
MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY
Robert Kingery Expwy
CHICAGO MIDWAY AIRPORT
Summit
94
ENGLEWOOD
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
JACKSON PARK
Countryside
90
Indian Head Park
Hodgkins
Hyde Park
KENNEDY KING COLLEGE
Archer Av
Bedford Park
Oak Woods Cemetery
SOUTH SHORE
South Shore Dr
55
RAINBOW PARK
294
Chicago Skyway
Willowbrook
Burr Ridge
Justice
Bridgeview
87th St
Evergreen Park
90
Burbank
Hickory Hills
Oak Lawn
CALUMET PARK
CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY
PALOS FOREST PRESERVE
Palos Hills
MORAINE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Worth
Chicago Ridge
57
Merrionette Park
PULLMAN HISTORIC DISTRICT
Lake Calumet
Calumet Park
Alsip
Blue Island
Wolf Lake
South Chicago
THE LOOP WHERE MONEY CHANGES HANDS



be anything left of any of the gals, and then they'll have to ask the children to start giving too.

LeBraun hangs with a bad crowd. But at least he takes good care of his mama.

Chinatown

Chicago has two Chinatowns. The one people know and think of as "Chinatown" is a small neighborhood of 11 square blocks located on the Near South Side, centered on the corner of Cermak and Wentworth, not far from the lake and the convention center. Isolated from the rest of the city by a formidable tangle of rivers, railroad tracks, expressways and some of Chicago's worst ghettos, this Chinatown is a place of despair and resentment masquerading as a place of exotic fun for the purposes of attracting customers. Most residents of Chinatown feel like they're in an Asian-flavored theme park. They'd love to drop the happy Asian "we love you long time!" shtick, but if the rest of the city stops coming down to buy lucky bamboo, cheap Asian knickknacks and *kung pao* chicken, they're screwed, because it's a crappy neighborhood and nobody would venture down there otherwise.

Plagued by bad schools and a deteriorating neighborhood, those with the resources to flee Chinatown are doing so in droves, leaving for other neighborhoods and other cities. Those who remain are, by and large, those who have resigned themselves to dying in Chinatown: older, non-English speakers, many of whom are illegal Chinese immigrants smuggled in and lacking legal recourse.

Hemmed in as it is, Chinatown has some of the worst *feng shui* of any neighborhood in the city. Some might call that ironic; Chinatown's residents call it the product of several decades of racism. Since the Chinese first established a presence Chicago in 1890, any time a neighborhood had to be sliced up or relocated to build a new road, railroad track or government building, the Chinese got the short end of the stick. That — and the fact that Chicago's two main tongs (Chinese crime syndicates) couldn't stand to operate in the same neighborhood — is why Chicago has two anemic Chinatowns instead of one robust one.

The stronger of the two tongs, the On Leong Tong, controlled Chinatown and brought in money through prostitution, gambling and the distribution of heroin. In the early '90s, the FBI crushed the On Leong in a major crackdown on organized crime, and, while this was probably a good thing, it left Chinatown without even the wayward direction that the tong provided.

The weaker of the two tongs, the Hip Sing Tong, established itself near the North Side neighborhood of Uptown, but the so-called Chinatown North is little more than an echo. As much Vietnamese as Chinese and occupying just four blocks of Argyle Street, this Chinatown more a demographic anomaly than a neighborhood, and certainly isn't a tourist trap.

Kuei Ren Yin

Yin Ren Kuei was once Chinatown's premiere importer of rare herbs for cooking and medicine. That was its repu-

tation in the city and throughout most of Chinatown from the '20s to the '60s. A few denizens of Chinatown also knew that it was one of the more reliable sources of opium, thanks to the On Leong Tong, and from the '50s through the '80s, the family running Yin Ren Kuei was among Chinatown's most prosperous.

When the FBI gutted the tong, Yin Ren Kuei was no longer able to find an opium distributor and had to fend for itself. The Kuei family had grown so used to the extra money brought in by the opium that it had let the store's normal business lag, and even the boom times of the '90s weren't enough to bring it back to the prestige it had enjoyed decades before. So, at the insistence of his shrewish mother, honorable Mr. Robert Kuei and his extended family began to specialize in more *exotic* items, which they sold out of the back room of their main store on Wentworth Street. It started with shark fins and tiger penis bones, but, in time, they found that Chicago's more "cosmopolitan" customers wanted even stranger things. And so the Kuei family went out and obtained them, through any means necessary.

Now those who need animal brains, dried stillborn fetuses, monkey's paws or similarly rare items can get them; they just have to slip the Kuei family a hefty bribe and pay the exorbitant prices asked. Repeat customers can make a trip to Chinatown and tour the Yin Ren Kuei warehouse in hopes of finding what they're looking for; if they just show up, their luck is hit or miss, but if they call ahead, the warehouse can usually obtain anything the customer needs in under a month.

The Kuei family, headed by the matriarch Xiumei and her eldest son Robert, includes Robert's five brothers and three sisters (the youngest of whom just turned 60), their 23 children and innumerable grandchildren. All members of the family are expected to work in the family business, and many are active in places as far-flung as Africa, Tibet and Brazil obtaining goods that their customers can find nowhere else.

For the Kuei family, the darker Chicago gets, the higher their fortunes soar, and things are only looking up.

Englewood

If there's a bleak, cursed core to the South Side's urban blight, it's got to be Englewood. One of the city's most prosperous neighborhoods, even during the Depression, the arrival of blacks and the ensuing "white flight" saw opportunities, property values and, ultimately, the area's population plummet. Neglect and property abandonment soared through the roof, and the once-beautiful Victorian buildings that lined the streets of Englewood became listing, sagging sentinels bearing witness to a level of crime, addiction and despair rarely, if ever, seen in this country.

Englewood is a tangle of overgrown lots, abandoned multi-family homes, open-air drug markets (marked by shoes dangling from power lines) and boarded-up garages. Plenty of good people live here, unable to escape the sucking gravity of poverty (and the blood-sucking monsters attracted to it). Englewood's reputation is so bad, however, that it stains surrounding neighborhoods and attracts foul souls looking for a place to get away with evil.

The Devil in His Englewood Castle

There are those who say that Englewood's ruin is actually the result of slow but inevitable "psychic backlash" from the depraved torture killings committed by Herman Mudgett (more popularly known by the assumed name H.H. Holmes) in the last decade of the 19th century. Mudgett was the first known serial killer in America, and one of the worst. He built his home in Englewood with the unflinching intent to turn it into a temple to torture and murder. Mudgett built trap doors, hidden staircases, secret passages, gas chambers, vivisection labs, rooms without windows, and doors that opened onto brick walls and sudden steep drops. He built his house to be the perfect stalking ground where he could hold, torture, kill and dispose of his victims with no one else being the wiser. Mudgett killed his victims only after tormenting them, mentally and physically, in ways that only a trained doctor could. Some he burned to death, others he gassed, others he vivisected. No fewer than 50 people ended their lives in what became known as "the murder castle," although the total number is impossible to determine since the acid vats, quicklime pits and crematory in the basement gave him redundant means of disposing of corpses. He is also known to have sold a number of skeletons to medical supply houses for a tidy sum of money.

Mudgett was eventually caught and tried. As his trial unfolded, it became clear that his home in Englewood was a place of nightmares. The police and reporters catalogued its every morbid feature. The Chicago Tribune published floor plans. The bizarre and undisputed haunting taking place in and around the house made it the most haunted and shunned place in the Midwest.

When the house was sold, it was hoped that its reputation would begin to dwindle. The new owner, however, planned to transform the place into a museum of murder. The community did not approve. On August 19, 1895, a series of explosions resounded throughout Englewood, and the murder castle burned to the ground.

But that was still not the end of it.

For more than 30 years, the lot lay vacant. No one wanted to build on a site with such a notorious history. Worse, the site was a magnet for seekers of the bizarre. Spiritualists, criminologists and psychiatrists alike were compelled to visit the lot where the murder castle stood, and all but the least sensitive of them sensed the darkness of the place with such a keenness that they wouldn't go back.

In 1938, just before the neighborhood imploded, the Englewood post office went up on the spot where the murder castle stood. The hauntings, while lessened, are still common enough that turnover of postal workers there is the highest of any post office in the United States.

In the last three years, a medium named Elena Vokac has become obsessed with the notion of *strengthening* the hauntings through mystical means in order to bring the peace to the area once and for all. Other spiritualists think she's insane and watch her efforts with a mixture of dread and anger.



Hyde Park: An Oasis in Hell

Trapped in the otherwise nightmarish South Side are the University of Chicago and the bubble of relative sanity that surrounds it: Hyde Park. With its highly educated and relatively affluent community, Hyde Park is the largest continuous break in the slums and ghettos of the South Side. The neighborhood's relationship with the university makes Hyde Park a sort of outer keep around the Ivory Tower. Hyde Park is a cultured, tolerant, hyper-civilized neighborhood that places heavy emphasis on knowledge and intellectual ability, and boasts the greatest number of bookstores per capita (*good* book stores, not those chains that sell nothing but cheap genre paperbacks) in the country. Hyde Park is among Chicago's more picturesque neighborhoods. The streets are immaculate, the homes are in good repair and the people are friendly, but it's hard to miss the fortress mentality that neighborhood residents suffer from. There's a hint of fear just under the surface, a bit of hyper-vigilance, a hair trigger fight-or-flight response that visitors can pick up on after just a few moments of conversation. Residents visibly jump at loud or unexpected noises, especially near the edges of the neighborhood where it's harder to pretend that they're not living in an artificial oasis kept intact by constant patrols by police and private security guards. Psychologists have diagnosed hundreds of cases of post-traumatic stress disorder in Hyde Park, and some children show symptoms by the age of seven. And the cause isn't particularly mysterious.

From time to time, especially in the summer, the denizens of the wilder regions of the South Side drive into Hyde Park at night with their windows open and their huge subwoofers set to window-rattling volumes. They drive slowly through Hyde Park in an ominous procession as pedestrians flee the streets and parents run inside with their children and lock the doors. Ultimately, these parades are more about dominance than actual threat, but it helps to reinforce the roles of the South Side wolves and their Hyde Park sheep.

The University of Chicago

If there is a homeland for the painfully brilliant, it is the University of Chicago. Its gray Gothic buildings seem to act like a siren song to intellectually brilliant and socially maladjusted students. The U of C is "blessed" with some of the finest Gothic architecture in America. Combined with the Chicago's cold, gray winters, that architecture makes the University of Chicago campus one of the grimmest, starkest places in the city for about four months out of the year, and, year after year, the school comes in last in a ranking of social skills and party opportunities. At the same time, the sheer intellectual capacity of some of its undergraduates outstrips that of many graduate students at lesser schools. The driving hunger for knowledge has landed both students and faculty of the U of C in bizarre circumstances on more than one occasion. Without a doubt, there are topics about which one can know too much for one's own good. Many who would study such dangerous topics attend the University of Chicago. It was at the University of Chicago that Enrico Fermi developed the atomic bomb. Other, less famous scholars have also made dangerous discoveries down here, and not all of them have been scientific. With brilliance and obsession so common and wisdom in such short supply, bad things are bound to happen. In

1924, two University of Chicago students named Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, for example, became obsessed with what it might feel like to take a human life. It's difficult to say what led them to their fascination, but they gave in to it, and 14-year-old Bobby Franks died at their hands. Other students take to occult dabbling, and the results can be more disturbing, although none of the rumors can be substantiated. Campus police are required to undergo HUS (Highly Unusual Scenario) training in order to deal with some of the bizarre circumstances they may encounter in the course of their duties.

Nestled into the U of C campus is the Oriental Institute, which houses a world-class collection of ancient Near Eastern artifacts. Many invaluable objects recovered from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia are on display for the edification of those who care to see them. Tablets and manuscripts over 5,000 years old are kept in the vaults, only partially translated. While most of these are simply documents pertaining to trade and taxation, some of them appear to be religious or magical in nature. Two of these incredibly old and valuable texts, the *Apotheosis of Thoth* and the *Gate Incantation of Erishkegal*, were stolen in the fall of 2002 under extraordinarily mysterious circumstances, so other partially translated tablets and scrolls are now kept in high security vaults.

The Ridge and Pullman

These two well-known South Side neighborhoods have reputations that run somewhat contrary to that of the South Side in general. The Ridge, located about as far south of the Loop as Evanston is North of it, is another term for the neighborhoods of Beverly Hills (or just "Beverly") and Morgan Park, the emerald isle of Chicago's South Side Irish history. The Ridge is an area packed with handsome, old-fashioned buildings, Victorian mansions and municipal buildings, Prairie-style houses and a medieval castle. This is also the highest ground in Chicago. For the most part, the chain-link jungle of the South Side keeps visitors out of this largely residential area, but folks do come down to visit the so-called Irish Death March — the endless series of bars and pubs lining Western Avenue.

The historic Pullman District is the original company town. Begun in 1880, it was a wholly artificial community commissioned by George Pullman to house his employees and their families. It was a compact and controlled little town, with its own shops and restaurants, all recycling Pullman's money through his workers and back to him. It was also a famous disaster. Following a fiscal depression, strike and riots, the community crumbled into poverty and ruin. After his death in 1897, Pullman was buried in a bunker to protect his corpse from retribution and vandalism. Today, the neighborhood's a National Landmark District with museums, a park and lots of iconic architecture remaining from the old days (because the neighborhood never got the influx of new money that would've led to new buildings).

These are also, by many accounts, two of the most haunted regions of Chicago. The spaces between streetlamps are prowled by shades and spirits, ghosts lurking in the shadowy windows of old houses. The parks and landmark buildings that aren't host to the restless dead are infused with the furious or miserable resonance of railroad workers and widows who died poor in the shadow of a rich man's tomb. Even if the people of Pullman and their ghosts can forget the past, the neighborhood itself might be unable to do so.

The South Suburbs: Industry and Entropy

The urban blight of the South Side doesn't just stop once you leave Chicago proper; the blight infects the landscape for miles. On a low-traffic day, the south suburbs are no more than a half-hour from the heart of the Loop, but they're a world away in every other regard. Calumet City, East Chicago and Gary, in Indiana, are towns haunted by the ghosts of past industry. Derelict steel mills stand rusted and silent in mute testimony to boom times long past. Along the lakeshore, the last of Chicago's heavy industry — steel mills and oil refineries, for the most part — exist side by side with crumbling Victorian mansions and ramshackle houses hastily erected in the '50s and '60s to house those who couldn't afford the brick bungalows that are more common in the city's more prosperous neighborhoods. This desolate no-man's-land extends from Chicago's city limits all the way down to the Indiana border and beyond, where it finally peters out in a seedy zone of strip clubs, abandoned homes and undeveloped land on the other side of Gary.

Zoning regulations are haphazard down here. There is no order or sense of a civic plan. The streets are not cleaned, so litter accrues in empty lots and gutters overflow in the spring when the first rains can get to the sewer because of the thick layer of dead leaves, fast food packaging and plastic grocery bags. Streets are lined with old, derelict cars that nobody ever seems to find the time to tow away. Churches, bars, ramshackle private residences, open land and the ubiquitous adult bookstores all mingle in close proximity to one another, and nobody seems to notice.

The south suburbs are the urban equivalent of a back room or storage locker, where Chicago hides all that is unfit to be seen in the city proper, a holding pen for ugliness and despair. It's the gutter where Chicago's losers wash up, with the lowest standards, the bleakest prospects and the cheapest rent. If your situation gets any worse than this, then you're probably already dead and in Hell.

If the Loop is Chicago's premier setting for world-class business transactions, the south suburbs are the place to go for the under-the-table, hush-hush deals. Need to dump some industrial waste, cheap? Need a telltale body disposed of in the rendering plant, no questions asked? Need to put a contract out on a union organizer? A business rival? Your wife? This is the place to do it. The roadhouses in and around Calumet City and Gary have acted as incubators for some of the foulest deeds perpetrated in Chicago. Whatever evil you need committed, there's someone down here desperate, hungry or strung-out enough to do it — for the right price, of course. Many state their fee in dollars; others want payment in grams of drugs like crack or crystal meth, and others seek even less orthodox remuneration such as bones or the hair of children. And should one of these hired thugs go missing or wash up dead on the beaches of Lake Michigan — and they frequently do — there's always another lost soul where that one came from.

The North Side

North of the Loop is mile-wide border running up Lake Michigan to the northern limits of Chicago. This busy expanse of land is where much of the life (and nightlife) of Chicago takes place. Much of this area is densely populated with residential communities linked by well-lighted commercial strips. In the several large neighborhoods crammed into this area can be found Chicago's primary concentration of up-and-coming 20-somethings, bohemian enclaves, young families and established yuppies. This is where they work and play, drink and fuck, live and breed. There are some who say that while the Loop is the center of Chicago's financial existence, the North Side is the center of Chicago's *life*.

The Gold Coast

Full of upscale housing and posh boutiques, the Gold Coast is a wealthy neighborhood running along the lakeshore on the Near North Side. It is one of the most popular residential neighborhoods for the well-to-do, and has been since the '20s. More millionaires cluster here than in any other neighborhood in the city, and the shops and restaurants in the area show it.

From the '50s to the '70s, the neighborhoods around the Gold Coast fell into blight, and the Gold Coast became an island of affluence in a sea of poverty and crime. While decades of skyrocketing property values have made the entire Near North Side into a desirable residential neighborhood, small pockets of blight, micro-slums, remain in the area, and a stranger to the neighborhood could easily stumble from a street lined with posh boutiques into a gang-ridden war zone.

The grimmest and most reviled of these blighted zones, a public housing development called Cabrini Green, is slowly being disassembled, its residents being moved elsewhere as the city slowly demolishes Cabrini's blasted and despair-ridden buildings. For decades, Cabrini Green was a haven for drug dealers, thugs and crime. It was a small, violent fragment of the Third World dropped into a tony Chicago neighborhood. The obvious disparities were resented by both sides. The Gold Coast rich hated the Cabrini Green poor. The poor, in turn, intimidated the rich. Their malice was, for the most part, for show. The crime rate in Cabrini Green was the highest in the city, but it was mostly Cabrini residents preying on Cabrini residents. Anything else would have triggered a police response of unimaginable proportions. The rich were less amenable to pulling their punches, and, in time, the collective voices of the many millionaires who lived there proved loud enough to get the city to evict the unsightly poor from their neighborhood, and the slow disassembly of Cabrini Green began in the late '90s and continues today. Luxury car lots now glow across the street from the projects — *have* meets *want*.

North Avenue

North Avenue runs perpendicular to Lake Michigan — which is to say it runs east-west — a few blocks north of the Loop. Not all that long ago, North Avenue was a light-industry corridor in the middle of the city. After the area went into a brief decline, it came back as a haven for 20-something yuppies. Small condos with large price tags went up, seemingly overnight, all through the '90s. Now North Avenue boasts a range of yuppie superstores such as Crate and Barrel, Pottery Barn and Home Depot. It also boasts the best upscale dance clubs in the city. Traffic slows to a crawl on weekend nights as clubs sporting names like Cro-Bar, Exit and Circus overflow with 20-somethings wanting to drink, dance and hook up. These clubs are ground zero for those who really *want* to see themselves as decadent (in a trendy sort of way). Young, pretty people in hormonal overdrive can be talked into just about anything without a great deal of effort.

Some of them have paid for their malleability. A handful of people disappear every year from the North Avenue clubs and aren't seen again. The Chicago River, which runs near the club district, is inevitably searched, but rarely with any success. Many others disappear for several days or weeks and show up with memory loss and anemia, both attributed to the party drugs that have become increasingly popular in recent years.

Boystown

As with any large city, Chicago has a sizeable gay population and a neighborhood that is, functionally, the city's main gay ghetto. The stretch of Lakeview bordered by Belmont to the south, Addison to the north, Clark to the west and Broadway on the east is called "Boystown" for reasons that are perfectly clear when you pass through the area, especially on a weekend. Boystown is one of the two main concentrations of Chicago's gay community and a relatively posh neighborhood of stylish boutiques and trendsetting coffeehouses, and it's common to see same-sex couples walking down the street holding hands and kissing without fear of stares or verbal assaults that would be more likely just a few blocks away. Boystown centers along a strip of North Halsted, a busy, thriving commercial center that stays busy into the early-morning hours with bars, theaters, dance clubs, sex clubs and upscale restaurants. What the North Avenue strip is for guys looking for girls, the North Halsted strip is to guys looking for other guys.

Clark and Belmont

If you believe what you read on the Internet (and many people do), you'd think that the neighborhood surrounding the intersection of Clark and Belmont is some sort of sacred Zion for every goth, punk, rivet-head and teenage reject in the country. The message is there for those who are looking for it: anyone who really wants to get out of their podunk prison of a hometown is only a Greyhound trip and an el ride away from a world of peers just as individual as they are.

To a degree, the tales of a goth-punk New World — tiny though it may be — have at least a kernel of truth. The piercing shops, tattoo parlors, clubs, clothing and leather shops, hair salons and even restaurants around the intersection of Clark and Belmont cater to the darker brands of youth counterculture. The neighborhood does both edgy and rebellious well. It's the yuppies and mundanes who don't quite fit in here.


NORTH
Arlington Heights
ARLINGTON INT'L RACE COURSE
Mount Prospect
Northwest Hwy
FOREST PRESERV
tate Tollway
GLENVIEW NAVAL AIR STATION
Northfield
Winnetka
Glenview
Wilmette
Rand Rd
Northwest Tollway
BUSSE FOREST PRESERVE
Des Plaines
Des Plaines River Rd
Morton Grove
94
Edens Expwy
Skokie
Evanston
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
LAKE MICHIGAN
Park Ridge
Niles
Northwest Hwy
Sheridan Rd
Arlington Heights Rd
Elk Grove Village
90
Lincolnwood
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY
Rogers Park
CHICAGO O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
190
Rosemont
90
Milwaukee Av
Lincoln Av
Edgewater
Wood Dale
Harwood Heights
ROSEHILL CEMETERY
FOREST PRESERVE
Norridge
GRACELAND CEMETERY
Lake Shore Dr
94
90
LINCOLN PARK
Bensenville
WRIGHT COLLEGE
WRIGLEY FIELD
Belmont Av
Milwaukee Av
John F. Kennedy Expwy
Belmont Av
290
Franklin Park
River Grove
THE BRICKYARD
Logan Square
Boystown
CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Addison
Des Plaines River Rd
Fullerton Av
DE PAUL UNIVIVERSITY
LINCOLN PARK ZOO
294
Old Town
Northlake
MAYWOOD PARK RACE TRACK
Bucktown/ Wicker Park
North Av
Gold Coast
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HOME
Greektown
Goose Island
NAVY PIER
North Chicago
Oak Park
Michigan Av



For kids used to being the only freak in their hometowns, the sense of shared identity can be incredibly powerful.

And, every year, hundreds of runaways (and recent graduates, for that matter) arrive looking for a place that will accept them and, like newly hatched baby turtles making a mad dash from beach to ocean, having left home for what they imagine to be the more enlightened streets of Chicago. But, also like newly hatched baby turtles, they face a small army of predators lined up to devour them before they reach their destination. There's no shortage of those who would, in whatever way, take advantage of the kids who flock to this goth Mecca — on Sunday mornings, stoops and alleys are littered with empty bottles and spent visitors with nowhere else to crash. From the moment they get off the bus, new arrivals are given ample opportunity to make a friend for the night, expand (or implode) their consciousness with hot, new designer pharmaceuticals or take up a new career in the sex trade. Those without contacts in the city are likely to have a tough time of it. The lucky ones make it up to Clark and Belmont and get hooked up with the Obsidian Sanctuary.

The Obsidian Sanctuary

Operating out of the hip Belmont and Clark neighborhood, the Obsidian Sanctuary is an organization, largely composed of Goths and straightedge punks, that forges its members' shared sense of identity into a philosophy of radical individualism and group cohesion. Depending on who you talk to, it's a demonic cult, a gang of fascist street thugs or a sophisticated paramilitary operation. Those on the inside describe it as more of a mutual aid society that teaches its members urban survival skills (like self-defense and "street smarts") and instills an ethic of self-reliance.

Some people write off the entire group because it warns its members about threats as nebulous and fantastical as vampires and witches. Overall, though, the Sanctuary has a reputation for doing more good than damage to its members.

North Clark Street

Another major north-south thoroughfare along the North Side, Clark Street, actually runs at an angle, up and away from Halsted. The Clark Street corridor boasts nightlife of another variety that makes it popular with vampires. A long, busy stretch of Clark Street, from Fullerton (2400 North) to Irving Park (4000 North) sees two subcultures collide, albeit peacefully: gritty urban counterculture and baseball fans. Several underground/counterculture clubs and shops line Clark street, from the inveterate dance club Neo at the southern end, to the Alley, a thriving mall for goths and other disenfranchised subcultures, to the Metro, the city's main venue for goth, punk and industrial acts on the northern tip. Also at the northern edge of Clark Street is Wrigley Field, Chicago's immensely popular and most recognizable ballpark.

The North Suburbs

Famed for being wealthy, the North Shore is one big bedroom community for Chicago's wealthiest citizens. Chicago proper ends at the enormous Calvary Cemetery. Property values make a dramatic jump north of the cem-

etery, where the suburb of Evanston begins. The locals think of Evanston as a part of the city proper, but the facts of life there — and features like its own police force — prove that Evanston is a community apart from Chicago.

Starting at Evanston and extending most of the way to the Wisconsin border, the wealthy North Shore is the antithesis of the blighted suburbs south of the city. These towns are wealthy, quiet and peaceful. Some say *too* peaceful. There's a portion of Chicago's population that sneers at the wealthy North Shore and claims (quite vociferously) that today's peaceful suburbs are tomorrow's anorexia deaths, family slayings and incest statistics. Whether or not that assertion is true would be hard, if not impossible, to determine. A thick veil of media silence blankets the area, muting any hint of scandal in all but the most extreme cases of mass murder. This media shield is considered one of the many incidental luxuries of the rich, and it lays thick across the north suburbs of Chicago. The police, too, are hesitant to intrude on the privacy of the very wealthy unless they're called by an activated security system.

Evanston is best known for being the home of Northwestern University, regularly cited as the best university in Illinois and one of the top ten schools in the nation. It is a private university and, unsurprisingly, the preferred institution for the favored and brilliant scions of wealthy families.

Going north from Evanston takes you so the slightly richer town of Wilmette. North of Wilmette is Kenilworth, per capita the richest town in America. Going still more northward you arrive at Winnetka. Wilmette, Kenilworth and Winnetka are all populated by Chicago's doctors, lawyers, CEOs and by a number of independently wealthy members of the leisure class. Those who find power or privacy intoxicating are likely to congregate up here.

Many of the homes in these three suburbs, especially the largest gated estates near Lake Michigan, are incubators for trouble, obsession and madness. More than one bored North Shore matron has found that dabbling in spiritualism can lead to a very dark place. People with too much money, too much solitude and too much time on their hands don't always seek out trouble, but it's the way to bet.

The North Shore's Quiet Dread

With so much latitude and privacy, it would be more surprising were there not individuals, indeed entire families, going quietly awry behind their tall, wrought-iron gates and lavish, landscaped estates. The orgies and month-long drug binges are, predictably, the most common — and most tedious — allegations leveled at the very wealthy, but that's hardly the extent of their libertine antics. Some of the bizarre acts rumored to take place in the quiet, walled mansions of the North Shore elite are truly jaw-dropping. The most egregious of these excesses make their way into the rumor mill; most do not. The following are among the few rumors that have made their way through the thick curtain of silence that rings the North Shore into Chicago's gossip mill in the last several months:

It was a third-rate scandal three years ago when Richard Wakenight, the patriarch of the large and politically connected Wakenight family, stopped giving money to his church, and, again three months later, when he denounced the church and Christianity in general as a bastion of "thieves, liars, hypocrites and bastards." Since then, he's been turning his opulent estate on the banks of Lake Michigan into a religious retreat for what would most diplomatically be called a non-mainstream religion. Those whose property abutted Wakenight's responded by putting in tall adobe walls and hedges to put as much distance between them and their neighbor as possible. His family thought that this "Cathedral of the Emerald Sun" (as he called it) had a following of one until he showed them the old, old books he had learned about it from. And then the flagellants began showing up and whipping themselves and each other into ecstatic trances, flinging blood all over the walls of what used to be the dining room. Now the sense of dread that flows from the Wakenight estate is almost palpable. Neighbors as far as a block away claim to have nightmares every night involving feelings of terrible guilt, ghastly acts of atonement, and always, always, the hideous green sun overhead . . . .

Simone Calzaretta, the former model and spokeswoman for the Salvation Army (before the drug overdose) has long been known (by those who pay attention to such things) to drive down into Boystown a couple times a month to hire male escorts to play with her and each other in the privacy of her enormous Kenilworth home. For years, she had a reputation of being these hustlers' only female client — not to mention the kinkiest and most generous. In the last year, however, many of the young men who get into her chauffeured Bugatti never seem to make it back down to Chicago afterwards. The number of missing is up to five, and she's finding it hard to make new friends in Kenilworth *or* Boystown. Lucky for her, Chicago's a big city and she has lots and lots of money to throw around.

Eleanore Addison, the bored trophy wife of a wealthy neurosurgeon, found that dabbling in spiritualism was a delightful way to wile away the hours in their cavernous Winnetka mansion. When she found that her entreaties to the spirits actually worked, all other interests fell by the wayside. The spirits she spoke with would do favors for her, so long as she returned their consideration by interacting with the physical world in ways they could not. At first, the spirits asked only small favors: Plant a small tree of a certain type in the yard. Walk to the lake and throw in a child's toy. As Addison became accustomed to asking for larger favors of the spirits, they asked more of her: Spill the blood of three cats in the basement. Shave your husband's hair off while he's sleeping. Burn it and bury what remains by the oak tree in the backyard. Her husband now thinks she's certifiably insane, but he's hesitant to take any action, because he's seen with his own eyes some of the wondrous, terrible things her "friends" can do for her, and he's terrified.

Extracurricular Activities

The scions of the wealthy North Shore families are all but destined to grow up to be the leaders and magnates of the next generation. Their uncommonly well-funded schools certainly facilitate that kind of outcome. So why, then, do unmarked white vans swarm around the most elite



schools and take a couple hundred of these star pupils to a classified research facility for an hour every afternoon? And is it just coincidence that these same students wake up most nights with horrifying nightmares? And if something untoward is going on, why aren't their parents putting a stop to it?

The one reporter who actually saw fit to investigate this strange set of circumstances died of a massive heart attack. That was an unexpected development, given that he was only 34.

The Natural World

Chicago's landscape is hyper-urban. The Midwest is largely flat and seemingly featureless, so little or nothing competes with the creeping brick-and-mortar grid that is Chicago. Both the county and the city seem to balance their budgets with property taxes, meaning that only the wealthiest can afford to have land that isn't developed and making money. Private parks, therefore, are rare outside of the North Shore. The typical Chicagoan has three options for experiencing anything resembling nature: the parks, the forest preserves and the lake.

The Parks

Chicago's architects and, more recently, mayors have long had a vision of Chicago as a city of parks. When Chicago first incorporated in 1837, it took as its motto *Urbs in Horto*, meaning "City in a Garden." The city has taken that motto very seriously over the years. Parks stretch along the vast majority of Chicago's lakefront. The first of the city's major parks, Lincoln Park in the Gold Coast neighborhood, was established on what had originally been the city cemetery. Most of the bodies were exhumed and moved to other cemeteries when a physician named John Rauch pointed out that the sandy soil and proximity to the lake made it highly likely that decaying bodies would leech into the lake, which was the source of the city's water. Since then, the city has been building a green ribbon of parklands along the lakeshore.

Most recently, Mayor Daley added to the city's parkland in a move that was among the most bizarre and scandalous of his administration: bulldozing Meigs Field, a small city-run airport located along the city's lakeshore. Without telling anyone (including the airport's operators or the FAA), Daley sent in big machines to destroy the landing strips in the middle of the night, "for homeland security reasons." Once the area is turned into parkland, it will complete the swath of green running along the lakeshore.

Though Chicago's parks are extensive, they're largely abandoned during the cold winter months. Even during the summer, the parks close at 11:00 P.M. to prevent "unauthorized use." The regulations do a good job of repelling law-abiding citizens. Nobody else pays much attention. Once the police close the gates and make their sweep, people pour back into the parks on foot and continue with their unauthorized activities, including some very odd cultic

rites, cruising for anonymous sex and camping out. Those passing through Chicago in the summer without money for a hotel room can usually find a spot in the park that's quiet and dark enough for sleeping. If they're lucky, they may even wake up the next morning.

The Forest Preserves

In 1913, an architect and Freemason named Dwight Perkins proposed leaving large tracts of forest, prairie and wetlands in and around Chicago untouched, to let them stay green and inviolate. This was a radical idea in an era when the subjugation of nature was still seen as a good idea, but Perkins was a strangely persuasive man. His proposed map, which included over a *150,000* acres of land around Chicago, placed the forest preserves in a seemingly haphazard pattern around the city. The popular rumor is that Perkins laid out the forest preserves in a mystically important configuration, but nobody seems to know what it's supposed to do.

For the most part, the current uses of the forest preserve are much less mysterious. Jogging paths and picnic tables are common developments. The forest preserves aren't all fun and games, though: they're under much less supervision than the parks, and bad things do go on there. Hikers and joggers find dead animals — dogs and cats, mostly — with disturbing frequency. Many of the animals are impaled, decapitated or otherwise mutilated, and some of them have symbols carved into their skin. Some have been exsanguinated. In 1999 a group of hikers found the body of Daniel Christophori — a Northwestern graduate student of mathematics — buried in a shallow grave. His eyes and his hands were missing, and, like the animals before him, symbols had been carved on the body. The FBI has been unable to decipher the symbology or even determine the alphabet used in the carvings, but they do seem relatively certain that whoever killed Christophori is likely to kill again unless brought to justice.

The Lake

Lake Michigan is the main reason for Chicago's existence. By providing a key waterway to the continent's interior, the lake allowed the city to become a major commercial nexus in the center of the United States. Lake Michigan plays the same role in Chicago that the ocean does in coastal cities, prompting yet another of Chicago's myriad sobriquets: the Third Coast.

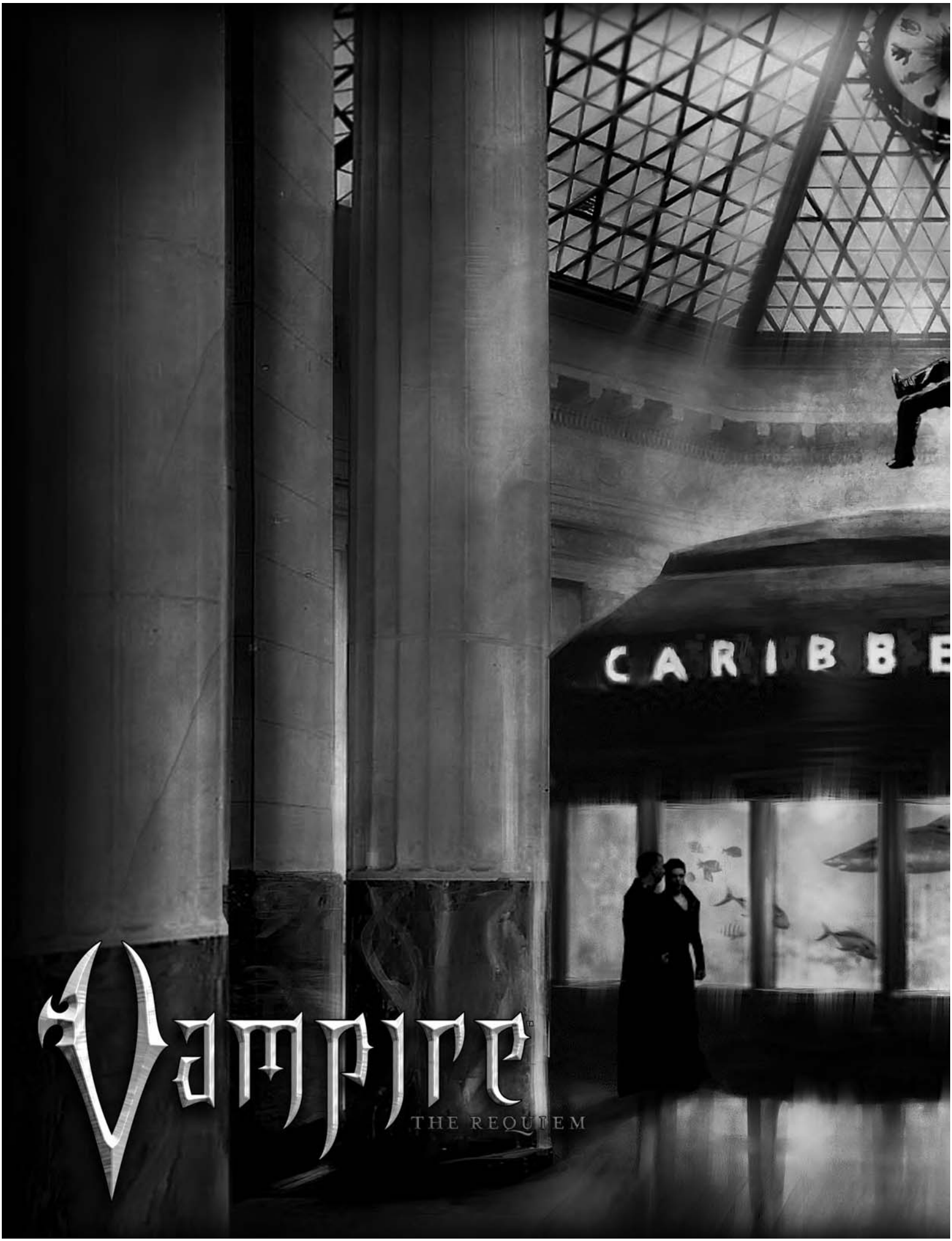
Chicago is designed around the lake, squashed up flat up and down nearly 50 miles of lakeshore. In a landscape that lacks mountains or any other noteworthy geological features, the lake is the one and only element of the terrain that makes any impression. While people in other places use compass directions to get their bearings, Chicagoans calculate where they are by their position relative to Lake Michigan, even if they're nowhere near the water.

The city used to use the lake as a dumping ground until garbage, rotting meat and sewage started washing up on the beaches. There are still those who use the lake to get rid of items they don't want to leave lying around, like bodies. Every year, several bodies wash up along the beaches of Lake Michigan and the banks of the Chicago River. A minority of these are suicides. The bodies that dumpers really don't want coming back get dropped farther out in the lake, and only after being incorporated into a large chunk of concrete.

Bodies on the beach used to be big news; now they don't even make the first three pages of the Tribune anymore. There are still things that do. Around January of 2001, plastic baggies began washing up on some of the city's downtown beaches. In itself, that wouldn't be newsworthy, but the bags themselves contained fragments of fresh bone and children's teeth. Since the first baggy was found, over 20 more have washed up, and police still don't have a single lead in the case.

Close to Chicago, the lake is largely domesticated. The big storms of fall and winter used to gnaw away at the shore with large waves, but enormous concrete blocks and boulders keep the lake at bay these days, with the exception of freak occurrences — which still seem to happen with a startling frequency. Every now and then, rogue waves, more properly called seiches, rise up and carry a person (or two) away, but that only happens once every few years. Along Chicago's coastline, the lake is shallow and relatively warm. Swimming and boating are common in the summer, although *E. coli* outbreaks have kept many of the city's beaches closed in recent years.

Further out, Lake Michigan can get treacherous. At its deepest point, the lake is nearly 1,000 feet deep, and at those depths, the lake takes on some of the dangerous characteristics of the ocean. During major storms, strong southerly winds have been known to generate waves 20 to 25 feet high, and there's no shortage of shipwrecks on the lake's sloping, canyon-like underwater cliff-edges, for exactly that reason.


CARIBBE
Vampire
THE REQUIEM


AN REEF

State of the Union

> Chicago was a town where nobody could forget how the money was made. It was picked up from floors still slippery with blood.
>
> —Norman Mailer, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*

Perhaps more so than the werewolves and the wizards, who see the city through spiritual eyes and mystic lenses, the Kindred exist in a Chicago that doesn't look so different from the one that mortals see. Vampires, after all, shadow mortals. The Kindred stalk where the living stroll, hunt where the mortals play and kill where the mortals live. The places vampires frequent are often frequented by mundane folk as well.

The following overview of Chicago through the eyes of the Damned is exemplary rather than exhaustive. Vampires presumably do (and certainly can) lurk in any neighborhood and nest in any ward. There are certainly minor Elysiums to be found outside those mentioned here. Particular cliques and coteries frequent their own miniature Racks outside those mentioned here. Individual Kindred have patterns of existence and deeply rooted opinions outside those listed below. This is not how Chicago looks to every vampire, but the ideas that follow are likely to be commonly known even among Kindred who do not agree with them. Exceptions abound.

The Loop

After dark, the Kindred come out to prowl the night-black alleys of the Loop, to enjoy its aged and stable sky-rises and hunt in the shadows at their feet. They stalk the wide sidewalks in the sodium-orange glow of streetlights and flirt in the wood-walled and mirrored hotel bars near the lakefront. They meet with blood-addicted bankers on the asphalt plains of empty parking lots and bite the throats of tourists beneath dripping fire escapes in tall alleys packed with rain-slick trash bags.

The Loop is the center of downtown, home to the Board of Trade, courthouses, the Sears Tower, banks, big business and that big Picasso statue. The Loop virtually deserted at night, but the Kindred still claim it and insist that visitors (Lupines, sorcerers and others) respect the Damned's purview. Outsiders are expected to ask permission from the Prince or his representatives before doing anything within the Loop that a mortal couldn't do. This is largely a formality, at least in the short-term. There are no vampire police patrolling the area, so unwelcome acts (violence, occult rituals, settlement) are seldom quickly opposed. But the Kindred eventually find out about everything that goes on in the Loop, and then slowly put the screws to those who are unwelcome. Thus, some part of the Loop might be in the hands of werewolves or mages tonight, but it all goes back into Kindred hands later on.

Even with wizards and monsters laying claim to much of the Loop, no single supernatural faction controls the Sears Tower, though urban myths say otherwise. Urban myths paint it as a black dagger in the back of the plains memorializing the conquest of the American West, a tombstone for the native werewolves of yesteryear, an antenna the wizards put up to catch intelligent radio signals from outer space, a monument built by the Freemasons to curse the undead and a hundred other insane ideas. The Ordo Dracul acknowledges the Sears Tower's influence over the lives and Requi-

ems of all in its shadow, while the Invictus says the Sears Tower is just a remarkable and gaudy symbol of mortal futurism. Most Carthians dismiss the mystic rumors as Acolyte scaremongering while some Acolytes back away from the Sears Tower, making weird hand gestures and muttering about things that were old when humanity was young. Some among the local Sanctified say the Sears Tower is haunted and doomed, a modern Tower of Babel that God Almighty will smite on some future night to punish humankind for its greed. In truth, no one knows for sure or wants to find out. The Sears Tower doesn't seem to bother the mortals much, though.

Union Station has been werewolf territory for years, which is why many Kindred lackeys and nomads who visit the city come in via el trains or private cars and vans. The massive, sunless stretches of tunnels that branch off from the station are more commonly considered open turf, however, though vampiric tunnel-rats claim stretches as their own. To this night, no Kindred can be sure why the Lupines keep their finger on the train station, but the lack of reliable access to outlying trains goes a long way towards keeping undead nomads in check. Kindred looking to ride the rails out of, or into, Union Station may have to negotiate with the werewolves to do so. That alone is a good reason for the Lupines to keep their scent on the place.

The courthouses and banks and centers of fiscal power that tower around Union Station are where wizards and Kindred vie for influence and sometimes meet to conspire or deal. The ancient symbolism built into so many of the Loop's structures is either pleasing or beneficial to mages, or so it seems to some vampires. The occasional interactions that occur with mages in the nighttime quiet of the financial district often take on a tense tone of psychological banter and social sport, rather than outright conflict. The Kindred can get the money, power and blood they need from the financial district without going through mages, and there's enough of all three to satiate vampires and wizards alike. But mages and vampires like to keep their secrets to themselves and *that* is sometimes enough to get one prying into the other's business.

The Kindred have been dripping like oil into the power structures of the city for decades, and they are not going away easily. Their direct lackeys — ghouls, blood-addicts, people tweaked and trained with Majesty or Dominate, well-paid lawyers and simple victims of blackmail — outnumber the mages and their allies in most cases. On the other hand, mages are awake in the daytime, during *business hours*, so they can do a great deal of work directly, without puppet proxies. That's a considerable advantage in the eyes of many vampires.

But, of course, no one wants a war. The Loop may be a treacherous place to visit on many nights, but no one wants it to become utterly dangerous every night. So the vampires and the mages and the werewolves angle and scheme, so all responses are proportional, so the tides of influence ebb and flow and the polite fiction remains in place that "the Loop belongs to the Kindred."

Meanwhile, the 800-pound gorillas in the corner, the faction that drifts out of the Sears Tower with mindless ease, are the ones who really rule the Loop. They are the ones who outnumber the Kindred's toys by hundreds to one: the mortals. The Loop truly belongs to them, though their reign is such that few truly realize how close they come every night to the evil watching jealously from the shadows.

The Shedd Aquarium

The beautiful Shedd Aquarium is located on the shore of Lake Michigan, atop a concrete and stone tongue that dangles out from the grassy lawns of the Museum Campus. The campus, which is also home to the massive and renowned Field Museum, stretches out between Lake Shore Drive and the water. The grounds are separated from the Loop by the whole width of Grant Park, though footpaths run beneath Lake Shore Drive to connect the Museum Campus with the park. The view of the Chicago skyline from the campus — and the Shedd in particular — is famously magnificent. The view certainly evokes a sense of surveying one's domain.

The Shedd, like the Field Museum, is build in the faux-Greek Classical style that personified the grand temporary buildings of the World's Columbian Exposition, held on this ground in 1893. The aquarium's spacious marble interiors and modern, labyrinthine aquarium galleries are host to Elysium on the first Sunday night of every month. Under a variety of aliases, the Kindred rent out the Shedd after it closes to the public and meet for their monthly court — the premier place to see, be seen, plot and scheme. The Mistress of this Elysium is Justine Lasky , and she's charged with keeping an eye on the Shedd during off nights as well.

The Shedd usually closes before sundown, and even during the winter months, it's never open more than an hour after sunset. As a practical, public Elysium, it's lacking a bit in accessibility and subtly, but makes up for it in style. Marking the Shedd as Kindred turf is more a symbolic gesture than a practical one — it's an unusually high-profile building for creatures of such secrecy as vampires.

For Chicago's other supernatural denizens, the Shedd is officially off-limits, but one can get permission from Lasky fairly easily. Her gracious attitude in the midst of a pompous court of arrogant corpses makes her grant of admission feel like a personal favor, though the cost of such a favor is virtually nothing to Lasky. If there were any kind of disturbance or, worse, violence involving a visitor approved by Lasky, it's unlikely that the Kindred of the court would blame her. She has connections at all levels of Kindred society and is well respected both in Elysium and in the city at large. A defiance of her largesse might anger the Kindred more than

a defiance of the Prince's authority. It is sometimes more advantageous to be respectful of the manager than the owner, after all.

The Palmer House Hotel

One of Chicago's oldest, most glorious and certainly most storied hotels, the Palmer House is regarded with a fearful respect by the area Kindred. Those in the upper echelons know it's supposed to be a sort of "über-Elysium" — a no-fire zone not only for Kindred, but for those scary-ass Lupines and black magicians as well. The boldest Kindred still feel they can feed there, but most don't go there unless they've *planned* to attend a summit with a shapechanger or a wizard. Those détentes are few and far between.

The lower rungs of Kindred society don't even know that much. They hear you should stay the hell away from the Palmer House if you know what's good for you and, since most lower-rung Kindred can't afford the hotel and would look desperately out of place, it's easy advice to follow.

The one vampire who does seem completely at home there is Prince Maxwell himself. He's got a suite there, and the rumor is that he meets with the Others once a month to conspire and connive. Some say the meetings he hosts involve the worst sort of ancient scariness that old monsters love. Maybe he splits a baby with the werewolves and some Devil worshippers. Maybe he secretly Embraces more young things like Persephone Moore.

Technically, feeding rights in the Palmer House belong to Prince Maxwell, but he's publicly stated at least once that any Kindred may feed there so long as he or she is "discreet." Some ugliness a year-and-a-half ago clarified that to include "non-fatal." Even though the transgressing vampire was exceptionally clever in cleaning up and concealing his murder, Prince Maxwell still punished him. He's not expected to emerge from torpor any time soon.

The Discarded Image

Justine Lasky operates this small and antiseptic watering hole in the heart of Chicago's shopping district. It's not in her name — she's got an "owner" named Tina Bortz (Lasky's ghoul, who's been hit with such a potent treatment of Majesty and blood addiction that her brain is pretty much like gum with the flavor chewed out) and a clueless daytime manager named Mike Starkey. Starkey genuinely can't figure out why his boss Tina continually makes such boneheaded decisions — it's like she's *trying* to drive customers away! He also doesn't understand how the place stays open — he's never seen it packed to capacity, which is sad when you consider that "capacity" would be about 70 people. The entire place has about 2,000 feet of floor space, with a single unisex bathroom for staff and customers.

It's a nice-looking place, though. The walls are lined with glass that has been scoured and treated so that everything reflected within is wavy, distorted and unreal. The fixtures are brushed steel (no chrome) and porcelain white, producing an atmosphere that gleams and appears to reflect everywhere, without actually reflecting *anywhere*.



It's a perfect Elysium. It's close to hotels full of trendy transients, but there are few mortals who will brave the Discarded Image's high prices and unwelcoming vibe. It provides an atmosphere that doesn't encourage relaxation, but self-control. No one is going to enter the Image, relax, and stupidly blab something private, but everyone who enters the Image feels like he could turn up his nose at warm blood and sniff, "not my vintage."

Mortals hate it. Kindred love it. Lasky scores again.

The South Side

For the Kindred, Chicago's South Side is a region of young vampires with shallow roots, tight communities of low-income families and crack houses and a lot of unsolved crimes to use to hide neonate mistakes. The human-to-vampire ratio down here is a bit under the average, however, as new Kindred are rare and unwanted in Chicago, and many of the Damned who feed here make their havens somewhere else. The popular notion among modern Kindred is that the South Side is a good place to get drugged blood, but it's just as easy to high off the North Side. The favorite substances are a bit different from North to South, but the lack of control of those substances is about the same.

The Near South Loop

The blocks that mark the border between the Loop and the South Side used to be full of warehouses, commercial rail lines, factory buildings and rusting knots of industrial equipment. Tonight, those warehouses and factory buildings are becoming apartment lofts, and townhouses are growing like weeds at their feet. The abandoned mansions of old industry magnates, left rotting and empty for decades, are being renovated by new industry magnates. Old storefront blocks, sealed behind steel shutters for 10 years, are becoming Starbucks and sushi bars. It's like a dam broke in the Loop and cash, coffee beans and SUVs are pouring south.

This area, despite being heavy on residences and light on nightlife, is an up-and-coming Rack for stealthy but blunt hunters. The yuppie rush to gentrify the region has created a checkerboard pattern of desirable and undesirable blocks; rows of identically bland, brick condos are going up next to empty lots full of rusting oil drums and spent shell casings. In some blocks, only one out of every five townhouses is inhabited. There's a lot of space for screams to go unheard. There's a lot of well-dressed folks walking fashionable dogs blocks away from the nearest neighbor.

The Near South Loop is full of quality havens, for the short-term. At least one vampire has simply moved into an unsold unit and taken possession of it through Dominate. When this neighborhood fills in, it'll be like any of a thousand other recently gentrified, look-alike areas in America, and it'll be hard to feed under all the bright lights and bay windows. Until then, vampires should take advantage.

Englewood

Englewood is the name Chicagoans use to invoke the grimmest images of the South Side. Since the days of the Great Depression, Englewood has suffered from financial woes, crime, abandonment and racial discrimination. Tonight, the neighborhood is a strangely empty space in the midst of a crowded city. Fewer than half the available residences are inhabited here. Fewer still are suitable for habitation. Condemned buildings have stood, rotting in public like corpses on the sidewalk, since the '50s. Streets are littered with abandoned cars. Children peer out from second- and third-story windows filled with chicken wire instead of glass. In place of corner stores, there are drug dealers. In place of gas stations, there are prostitutes.

Gangs rule the streets here, shining with bling and reeking of cash in a neighborhood where more than half the citizens live below the poverty line. The murder rate in Englewood is greater than that of many cities. It is home to just 3,000 or so people.

Kindred looking to nest here have plenty of spaces to choose from, provided security is not important. Windows and doors are in short supply on the abandoned houses here. Bored children poke into forgotten basements for fun and drug-seekers loot whatever they can (copper pipes, fixtures) for money. The neighborhood is not much safer for the undead than it is for the living. The people who live here are tough and often fearless.

Exposed!

The Lancea's Scourers (see p. 61) get sloppy and hit Englewood, one of their favored South Side neighborhoods, one too many times. While its inhabitants are poor and distracted by their circumstances, they're not stupid. Word goes out, and a neighborhood committee is formed. Since Englewood's not a politically connected or popular neighborhood — and since the residents don't want their vigilante-style response splashed across the cover of the *Tribune* before it's time — all this potentially passes off the radar of the Kindred community. The next time the Scourers go into Englewood, they're ambushed by poor and pissed-off locals who make up in numbers what they lack in organization. Maybe there's a Masquerade breach, maybe one of the Scourers turns to ash, but somehow, the members of the citizens' posse realize they're dealing with vampires. The gangs of the South Side start targeting pasty white guys who wander into the wrong neighborhood after sundown. The South Side now becomes the central focus of the court as every effort must be made to contain the breach before word spreads.

South Suburbs

The urban blight doesn't just stop once you leave Chicago proper. Along the lakeshore, the last of Chicago's heavy industry — steel mills and oil refineries, for the most part — exist side by side with crumbling Victorian mansions and ramshackle houses hastily erected in the '50s and '60s to house those who couldn't afford the brick bungalows that are more common in the city's more-prosperous neighborhoods. This light extends from Chicago's city limits all the way down to the Indiana border where it finally peters out in a seedy zone of strip clubs, abandoned homes and undeveloped land. There's nothing *stopping* Kindred from feeding down here. Technically, it's part of somebody's tenurial domain, but it's such a no-man's land that it's considered only half a step better than the barrens.

Inertia Creeps

Chicago's Kindred, for any number of reasons, forget about the south suburbs. They're too ugly, too poor and too sparsely populated to do anything for a self-respecting vampire, and so, they're often forgotten. In the absence of Chicago's vampires, the Kindred of Gary, Indiana, have seen fit to press their influence into Chicago's south suburbs. If Gary's Kindred know anything, it's industry and how to survive in a concrete wilderness.

Now a handful of Carthians have moved into the south suburbs and made themselves at home. On one hand, Prince Maxwell could overlook this move; after all, if anyone in Chicago actually wanted the south suburbs, this would never have happened. On the other hand, the Prince might see it as a matter of principle to deny territory to any faction he has not formally granted Regency. The south suburbs could suddenly become an important bargaining chip between the covenants, even though the suburbs themselves aren't especially coveted.

The characters might get assigned the task of "expelling the trash from the south suburbs." If the characters play their cards right, they might find themselves with a tenurial domain of their very own, such as it is. Of course, then the problems of the obscure vampires who dwell in those sprawling neighborhoods become the characters' problems.

The North Side

Any socially inclined vampire might seek out feeding rights on the North Side. Three of the best Racks in the city are here, as are innumerable smaller strips with vital nightlife. The North Side is big enough and urban enough that small-scale crimes can be easily hidden in the background noise of common suffering. At the same time, the North Side made up of so many smaller neighborhoods — like Bucktown, Wicker Park, Lincoln Park, Logan Square, the DePaul campus, Wrigleyville, Edgewater, Boystown and Lakeview — with so many different social nuclei that, by night, there are plenty of drunken, bar-hopping carousers on the street to go around. The North Side, therefore, can support a slightly larger number of vampires per capita than the rest of the city, provided that the resident Kindred are able to control themselves in the presence of so much prey and so many competing predators. Information travels fast in the arty community newspapers and web logs of these modernizing communities, however. Simple suspicions and rumors could quickly develop into real trouble in this crowded area.

Halsted Street Rack

The Halsted Street Rack is centered on Boystown, the trendy homosexual- themed neighborhood close to the lakefront on Halsted Avenue near Belmont. This stretch of storefront restaurants, clubs, gay bars and small theaters is popular with people of every sexual orientation. Quality independent record shops, fashionable boutiques and the safe-but-edgy vibe of big-city sexuality here draws out suburban teenagers and 20-somethings ripe for seduction and feeding. Though violent crime certainly occurs in this area, the Kindred who hunt here aren't typically rough types. The Halsted Rack is a feeding ground for social predators above all others. Kindred who rely on subtlety, charm and, above all, sexuality are likely to do well here.

Clark Street Rack

In theory, the Clark Street Rack runs like a long and narrow thread (or a rivulet of blood) from Wrigley Field in the north to the edges of the Loop in the south. This puts the Clark Street Rack just one block west of the Halsted Rack up on Belmont Avenue, though, so the two Racks have a fair bit of overlap. Likewise, the Clark Street Rack stretches off Clark Street in various spots along its length. Most Kindred would be hard-pressed to define this Rack's exact boundaries.

Kindred can almost always find sustenance along Clark Street, particularly during baseball season, when sports enthusiasts commonly overindulge and pass out along the streets leading away from the ballpark. Down closer to the Loop, where clubs are more common than bars, Kindred often find it easy to sip from drunk or stoned partygoers. Like the Halsted Rack, the Clark Street Rack is a place for Kindred who use charm and personality to feed, but this stretch is more traditional. Yuppies are common at both ends of Clark Street, though goths, bikers and hipsters cross it all along its length.

The Pretender

Neo, Chicago's oldest goth club, has recently hired a new DJ with a marketing gim-

mick that can't help but appeal to his audience: he claims to be a vampire. In-between sets, he launches into monologues about "the children of the night" and their dark ways. The problem is, most of what he says is true. He's named names, alluded to covenants, implied the status of places popular with the Kindred and stretched the Masquerade as far as it will go.

If the DJ is silenced, his replacement behaves the same way. The source of the problem is the ghost of a man killed by a vampire inside the club in 1999. The ghost wants to expose the Kindred and make them pay for his demise. Not only has he eavesdropped on visiting Kindred for months now, but he's been possessing vessels to use to get his message out. The Kindred need to quiet the ghost before his puppets get much more attention, and the Kindred have to do it without making the situation even more suspicious.

Logan Square and Bucktown

These recently revitalized neighborhoods are the newest North Side Racks, and new feeding grounds are still available for the taking. Logan Square, the larger area that technically includes Bucktown, is a community of three- and four-story apartment buildings, townhouses and bungalows. Traditionally home to a large Hispanic population, business streets here are punctuated with cantinas and tiny, authentic Mexican restaurants. In recent years, though, the neighborhood's blue-collar families have been joined by college students and bohemians looking to take advantage of affordable rents and handsome apartments. Tiny, trendy restaurants have come in pursuit of their petty cash.

Bucktown, by contrast, is a renovated community of bistros with sidewalk patios and rising real estate prices. Many of the local buildings have been gutted and refilled with glass-and-chrome condos with lousy parking. On several blocks, old churches have been converted into lofts, their stained glass replaced with privacy-defying bay windows. Bucktown is in a strange state of transition tonight; it's a coveted neighborhood for well-dressed, young professionals, but it's side yards and parkways still bristle with discarded syringes left over from darker nights.

The feeding in this area is rather average, but more Kindred nest here than hunt here. Logan Square has a surplus of affordable basement apartments that are easy to keep dark, and the 1960s-style quasi-industrial machine shops and dreary, low office suites in the area often feature sunless, out-of-the-way rental options. Bucktown, meanwhile, is nearing the end of an era of small reconstructions. In the last few years, a handful of Kindred with money have had condos custom-designed to make great havens in this neighborhood. It's not too late to get in on that trend.

North Avenue Rack

North Avenue runs perpendicular to Lake Michigan — which is to say it runs east-west — a few blocks north of the Loop. Not all that long ago, North Avenue was a light-industry corridor in the middle of the city. After the area went into a brief decline, it came back as a haven for 20-something yuppies. Now it boasts a range of yuppie superstores (Crate and Barrel, Pottery Barn, Home Depot, etc.) and upscale dance clubs. Traffic slows to a crawl on weekend nights as clubs overflow with 20-somethings wanting to dance, drink and hook up.

What's more, parking along North Avenue is almost nonexistent. The few places that provide parking are several blocks away from the clubs and require patrons to walk through dark streets lined with warehouses. It's a pain in the ass to club-goers but a windfall for Kindred. Those who can't feed through charm can easily do so through more forceful means. Any vampire who can't feed here should just give up the Requiem.

The North Suburbs

The Invictus can't help but love the North Shore (the term for the rich suburbs of Chicago that extend north along the shore of Lake Michigan). Kindred who find power intoxicating are likely to be familiar with this area. Powerful Contacts and Allies may reside here. Though some of this region, such as Evanston, is reachable on the el (and many of the locals claim to live "in the city"), the north suburbs are more suburban than urban. When the multilingual shop signs and Chicago cop cars disappear, you've entered the north suburbs.

Single-family dwellings are common here, and many of them are well-manicured displays of conspicuous consumption. Hobby businesses like hyper-specialized boutiques and expensive gourmet grocers cater to soccer moms and retirees. Further west, into Skokie, churches are replaced with Jewish temples and bilingual signs return, written in English and Hebrew. Streets throughout the area are narrow and hilly; it feels something like suburban yards and strip malls have been squished into the space afforded to a city neighborhood, except the houses are big.

Nighttime feeding is easy for those Kindred with established social ties in the region, but street-stalkers find things more difficult. Drivers outnumber walkers here, and young loners aren't as common as gaggles of over-40 fashionistas and parents with strollers.

Evanston's Loyola University has all the makings of a fine feeding ground for one or two Kindred — frats and dorms are common, drinking and drugs even more so — but the campus has a bad reputation among vampires. More than a few Kindred disappeared in the '90s while attempting to hunt on the Loyola campus and its surroundings. No investigation was ever attempted, however, so the area is avoided tonight due only to its reputation.

The Undercity

Every city has its necessary ducts, sewers and tunnels, but Chicago is blessed with several truly extensive interconnected tunnel systems running underneath,

the result of the city's industrious past and its sensible present. So great is the combined system of air ducts, sewer tunnels, subway routes, freight passageways and the like that the Kindred who have ventured there have taken to calling it the Undercity. Vampires have no special claim over the Undercity, however. Even there, they are outnumbered by runaways and homeless. Some nights, it seems like everyone is outnumbered by ghosts.

The Undercity has three primary components: sewage and infrastructural tunnels, train routes and multilayered streets. Many of these are interconnected through sundry, small official and unofficial access or "home-dug" passages to make them even more useful to vampires and other, living monsters. A few disused tunnels serve as low-rent nests for homeless vampires, mortals and worse.

Up From the Depths

Centuries past, something terrible was bound by Native American Lupines deep below the ground next to the Great Lake. So deeply was this force — this entity, this *thing* — buried that the werewolves believed it might never be freed until the end of the world. They were wrong. Not only has its prison been penetrated by modern industry, but the entity was roused by the rumble of enormous boring machines. Now, the Grand Hall, the center of Undercity society (such as it is) runs scant feet above the prison of something evil that strives to be free.

Everything starts when subterranean vampires begin noticing strange scratching noises coming from beneath the Grand Hall. A few days later, there's an enormous hole in the floor of one tunnel. Then Kindred start disappearing — so many that even up top they can spot the population drop.

The Kindred of the Undercity must decide if they want to fight this freed horror by themselves, ask for help from topside werewolves or abandon the Undercity entirely.

Undercity Society

The Undercity offers several distinct advantages to those vampires who dwell there. The tunnels, bored from solid limestone, will never burn, sunlight will never be an issue and the tunnels are remote enough that nesting vampires can do anything they damn well please there. Kindred of the Undercity colloquially refer to the main tunnel as "the Grand Hall." It is a wet, lonely, strangely noisome place, and, during the summertime, much of the tunnel is underwater, but it's all theirs and many come to dread leaving it.

Through the winter, in particular, the Grand Hall gets decorated in ways both beautiful and grisly, with curtains and hanging rugs, urban cave paintings and trophies of vampire hunts. Mortal inspectors and engineers venture into the deep tunnels only rarely, and the local Kindred have ample informants to tell them when those little invasions are imminent. Years ago, several outclassed municipal workers were caught by Max Maurey and made into ghouls by him and his followers. Tonight, they're the Other Prince's eyes and hands in the mortal world.

Except for the several days of every summer when the tunnel is flooded, the so-called Grand Hall of the Undercity functions as a sort of secondary Elysium, sans Prince, sans Harpies and sans beautiful people. Kindred gather, talk, gossip, squabble and complain. This is the social interaction they're concerned about, the company of their peers. This is where the most disturbing Kindred go to be their disturbing selves without worrying about the squeamish sensibilities and responses of the topsiders.

Chicago's Undercity functions as a *de facto* autonomous zone for a second society of vampires. Prince Maxwell has made the Undercity a tenurial domain, but his largesse is little more than a formality. If something were to happen down here that he didn't like, there's very little he could do about it.

The Undercity has only two laws: discretion and absolute discretion. One protects the Kindred of the Undercity from mortals, the other protects the Kindred from the Prince and his enforcers. The law of discretion states that feeding from, harming, killing or even being seen by the inspectors, engineers and utility workers who occasionally venture into the tunnels is absolutely *verboten*. It's a line drawn under the Masquerade in blood. The Undercity is a vampire playground only to the extent that topsiders believe there's nothing stranger going on down there than the typical urban myths suggest.

The law of *absolute* discretion dictates that what transpires in the Grand Hall stays in the Grand Hall. Those who are welcomed into the Grand Hall are obligated to remain silent on anything they see or experience while they are down there. No one are allowed into the Grand Hall without an invitation, and admission often requires a drink of blood from the wrist of a familiar local. Being caught in the Grand Hall without permission is an invitation for torture or Final Death.

The existence of the Undercity has a crucial impact on the Danse Macabre: the Undercity de-emphasizes the importance of covenant affiliation. When a vampire is in the Grand Hall, he's in a different society, free of the preconceptions that come with the night above. Ideology is just a thin veneer over the monstrous reality of an Undercity Requiem. Down here, a vampire escapes the politicking and treachery of the surface city. Down here, the hunt comes first, and other vampires come second. Down here, enemies scratch out your eyes rather than stabbing you in the back.

Inhuman Underground

Do Kindred gradually sink into the Undercity as they lose themselves to the Beast, or does a Requiem spent underground wear away the Human? Above ground or below, no Kindred can answer that question

for certain. What *is* certain is that the number of bestial, inhuman vampires loose in the darkest, most remote passageways beneath the city would shock most surface Kindred. On one occasion, Max Maurey famously speculated, "the Beast rules as many Kindred down here as the Prince does up there."

Roving packs of feral bloodsuckers are rumored to hunt in the filthy waters of the Undercity's darkest depths. These monsters no longer understand language or morals. Most are on the verge of Wassail. Many are one or two nights away from a long, thoughtless sleep.

Torpor Tombs

Vampires of the Undercity and the surface city share at least one common legend about the dark spaces beneath Chicago. For a century, rumors have persisted that large numbers of torpid Kindred lie waiting in the Undercity. Some stories claim that some remote passages are littered with the withered corpses of handfuls of starved vampires who have succumbed to the Beast in nights past. Other tales describe a kind of elephant's graveyard, where Kindred go to sleep off the thickening Blood under the protection of some ancient magical ward. Rumors that the Matriarch Jaqueline Edens lies in wait beneath Wacker Drive are particularly prolific.

If even a fraction of these stories were true, mortal municipal workers would be tripping over torpid corpses beneath the city. This just leads superstitious Kindred to suppose that something down there is destroying — perhaps eating — the bodies of Kindred who try to pass the centuries underground.

Up From the Depths, Redux

A massive new project is underway beneath the city. Hundreds of municipal workers are venturing into the passages and tunnels below Chicago to lay new pipes or swap out old cables. Whatever the specifics, it's no longer possible for the Undercity to house its Kindred population. They have to immigrate to the surface city.

Prince Maxwell knows Chicago can't support a population surge. Even if the mortal population could feed all the extra mouths, Kindred society would buckle under the new weight of egos and fear. What to do with 20 or more new vampires? Should the Prince's peace be suspended for a few nights of Darwinian struggle? Can volunteers be found to migrate into suburban territories? Does the court need to host a lottery of exile?

And what about Max Maurey? Chicago's a big city, but it's not big enough for two Maxes.

Sewage and Infrastructure

Chicago's sewer system is not especially hospitable, even to undead monsters. The larger sewer tunnels are crowded with large pipes, and any vampire traveling beneath the city in this way had best be prepared to come up smelling like filth. Kindred willing to swim through sewage can get virtually *anywhere* in Chicago or its nearby suburbs, however, and might find safe, free havens in the process.

Chicago and 51 nearby municipalities share a sewer system, and runoff from storms flows freely into them. The sewage treatment facility can treat up to two billion gallons of wastewater a day. During a big storm, the plant can be inundated with around five billion gallons. Excess water used to back up into low-lying streets, basements and, mostly, flow into the Chicago River, filling it with a not-so-diluted mixture of raw sewage and rainwater that reeked for days and killed anything living that might have crept into the river since the last storm. Chicago, being Chicago, decided it needed a grand solution for this problem and so came up with TARP (the Tunnel and Reservoir Project), more commonly known as the deep tunnel project. 109 *miles* of tunnels, including the largest tunnel on the planet, were bored in the rock underneath Chicago and nearby suburbs. The main tunnel is 35 feet in diameter and about 300 feet below ground. This tunnel has a holding capacity of several billion gallons. During storms, excess sewage is channeled into the deep tunnel through vertical drop shafts, to be processed later. In the course of digging out those tunnels, a large number of formerly forgotten underground chambers were opened up, from the foundations of long-gone buildings to turnarounds for old train lines.

Train Routes

Unlike most of Chicago's common sewer lines, the subway tunnels are large, with ample room on the sides of the tunnels to sidestep trains, which run 24 hours a day. While useful, the subway tunnels are limited by the fact that there are only two primary subway lines, the Red Line and the Blue Line, that travel underground for large portions of their length. The Red Line tunnel, however, is a key north-south thoroughfare and the fastest way to pass beneath the Loop.

Then there's the freight tunnel system. Forty feet beneath downtown Chicago, a densely woven system of abandoned freight tunnels runs beneath the entirety of the Loop (and then some). Electric trains carried coal, mail and merchandise to the businesses above and carried cinders away when the coal was burnt. In all, 60 *miles* of tunnels, running under every street in the Loop and many others besides were built between 1899 and 1906. Six feet wide and seven feet high, the tunnels are easily large enough for two or three individuals to walk abreast. This tunnel system connected most buildings in downtown Chicago through basements, sub-basements and elevators. When the Chicago Tunnel Company went out of business in 1959, the tunnel system was abandoned and the trains, tracks and cabling were salvaged; buildings locked their doors to the tunnels,

disabled elevators to prevent them from going to the tunnel level and the tunnels, which were never common knowledge in the first place, were forgotten almost entirely. The city deemed the tunnels dangerous and did what it could to make them inaccessible. Electricians and telecommunications workers are now the only people allowed in the tunnels, and then only with proper paperwork filed weeks in advance.

Multi-layered Streets

Downtown Chicago has, in some places, streets that are two- and three-levels deep. The most famous of these is the recently renovated Lower Wacker Drive, a wide, low-ceilinged expanse of asphalt and steel located beneath some the city's best-known buildings. Wacker has intersections, stoplights, parking spaces, pedestrians and even a few storefronts on its lower levels — everything a city street might have above, but with a sky of concrete.

In some parts of the city, lower-level streets are used solely for commercial deliveries to the large buildings above. Some lower streets are intended for commuter vehicles only, others are open to all traffic. Numerous stairwells allow access to the surface streets, and most of the city's multi-level streets are open on one side to the river, which flows several feet below Chicago's "ground level." These multi-leveled streets don't offer much of an advantage to the average vampire, outside of providing various hard-to-see nooks and corners. A few sensitive governmental and office buildings, however, are more easily accessible from these lower-level entrances and doorways than they are through blackmail or secret deals . . . .

New Merit: Tunnel Rat (• to •••)

Homeless or investigative vampires who have spent all or most of their Requiems in Chicago may have gained some knowledge of the vast and complicated system of connected el tunnels, abandoned freight tunnels, deep tunnels, sewers and commuter train tunnels that riddle the land beneath the city. This Merit indicates how well the character knows this interconnecting suite of tunnels. Characters may add their dots in this Merit to Survival dice pools made within the Undercity, in addition to the effects described below.

It should be noted that any Kindred who starts bringing unwanted visitors into the Undercity makes enemies of his fellow tunnel-dwellers in no time, not the least of whom is Max Maurey.

• The character has ventured into the tunnels once or twice. He's safe so long as he stays on the biggest and busiest passageways. Getting from one place to another strictly through the tunnels may take up to twice as long as it would on the surface. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in the Undercity are reduced by one (e.g., from –3 to –2).

•• The character has a solid, but imperfect, understanding of Chicago's tunnels. He may specialize in one kind of tunnel (el tunnels or freight tunnels, for example), or he may stick to primary and secondary tunnels. Traveling from one place to another through the Undercity is no more time-consuming than surface travel. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in the Undercity are reduced by two (e.g., from –3 to –1).



••• The character knows the Undercity in an up-close and personal way. She has personally explored dozens of tunnels down to the smallest service conduit and probably spends most of her active time down in the Undercity. She can tell her location in the tunnels by one or two subtle landmarks and knows the fastest routes to get anywhere. A character with this level of knowledge need never fear getting lost in the Undercity and cuts travel time by 25% when traveling between any two points in Chicago via the tunnels. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in the Undercity are reduced by three (e.g., from –3 to 0).

Stickney

Go to Stickney with a practiced eye and you can get a pretty good idea of who lives there and who's just passing through. Passing through, people look average — some good, some bad, whatever. Stickney people? Lot of 'em seem kind of worn out, a little wan and waxy, they look like they're suffering from flu-like symptoms.

Whole lot of beautiful smiles there, though.

Why is this? It all comes down to shit. Stickney is the bottom of the drain for Chicago's feces (or, if you prefer, its "waste management plants"). You crap in the Loop, it probably gets aerated, disinfected and ultimately discharged back into the ecosystem in Stickney.

When a town's big business is sewage — especially the sewage of a huge, stuffed-pizza-chomping city like Chicago — you don't just get the occasional illness going around. You get illnesses settling down to raise families. The answer to this problem (which was cheaper than solving it and cheaper than weathering a slew of class-action suits) was to have the city pay for health insurance for every single resident. (Dental care included — hence the sunny smiles.) It should give you a sense of just how sickly Stickney is that socialized medicine is the affordable solution.

Stickney seems to make werewolves uncomfortable and agitated. Wizards get cancer there just like everyone else. Mortal residents who feel run down and sick are more likely to blame their anemia on regional pollution, though, instead of undead predators or a growing population of negative spirits.

It's an Invictus town, the tenurial domain of a Nosferatu known as Hard-Headed Mike Czarneki. Regent Czarneki holds down a middle-level administrative post at Stickney's largest hospital, where his ill-defined duties and fat paycheck combine to give him the freedom he needs to rule the local Kindred with intense scrutiny. Feeding off the sick is encouraged, but killing people is not — it's an invitation to exile from Stickney, unless the offender can show remorse in a suitably material fashion. Exile is a bad deal, since no one wants to be around Stickney vampires. It's assumed (often correctly) that they're plague carriers. That's fine in sicko-ville, but elsewhere they're unwelcome.

Czarneki has the whip hand, since the people there feed easy and can expect lots of roadblocks if they're kicked out. He has few rules other than the non-killing one, but that one's enforced nice and tight — as is his ban on Kindred of the Morbus bloodline. Stickney's got enough problems without those guys around. If a Morbus even sets foot in Czarneki's town, the Morbus should expect locals to try and stake him before sunrise, then get shipped out of town on a slow freight car. No exceptions.

Liar's Town

There is a fine line between doing a thing carefully and doing it obsessively. Like many Ventrue, Dr. Kimberly Imbrie went well past that line in her business dealings. Dr. Imbrie was a go-to gal for gray-market medical services. Need some ether? Valium? Drugs to suppress short-term memory? Maybe a trusted Retainer needs a bone set or a bullet dug out without some snotty ER doctor filing a police report? Go see Dr. Imbrie.

While good at her job, Kimberly's real genius was for creating fake people to whom she issued prescriptions, fake patients with fake operations to explain her demand for sedatives — even fake medical bills to Medicare to keep her bank accounts fat.

Only now the useful Dr. Imbrie has vanished, and all the clues seem to indicate she was abducted by three fellows named Britt Dziegielewski, Benedict Gualdoni and Vincenzo Doussan. The rub? They're not real. They're bogus patients to justify fake operations and fraudulent billing. Only now the Kindred who were *there* when Imbrie made them up and *helped* her with the frauds, are finding real fingerprints, real footprints, real bloodstains left by unreal human beings. What's going on here?

O'Hare Airport

O'Hare International Airport is huge and important. It is arguably the busiest airport in the United States. O'Hare is also a sweet and succulent Rack. On the surface, it seems a lot less useful than some pickup bar where vital bodies are the core focus and no one thinks it weird for someone to pass out or go out back with a guy in a leather jacket, but O'Hare offers subtler advantages.

First off, there's anonymity. Hundreds, if not thousands of lone travelers pass through the airport every day. No one is going to notice them if they miss a flight, except maybe the airline people, and then only in a vague, disinterested, "can we fill this seat?" kind of way.

Second, the victim pool is disarmed. Most Kindred who use physical force to feed already have a host of advantages over a resisting human, but it's still comforting to know that your mark isn't going to pull a .357 or a five-inch gravity knife out of his carry-on luggage.

Third, and perhaps most important, there is disorientation and despair. Lone travelers at night are often tired and unhappy (especially if they're left sleeping in the terminal due to delays). They may want nothing more than to move on, but they're stuck. So if something unpleasant happens to them, they're less likely to react with the clarity and confidence of someone who's in his element. Meeting and chatting with strangers in an airport is common. Feeling sore and tired is common. Having a poor recollection of the hours spent on a layover is common. Kindred can take advantage of that.

With those factors in place, wise Kindred can feed well and discreetly. Most of those wise Kindred at O'Hare are Carthians, or Mekhet or both.

The Carthians are there because the Carthian Movement has always been there. When O'Hare was being built, that future-focused covenant got its hooks in with the workmen, the pilots, the contractors and the cleaning staff. The Carthians have stayed ever since, sneering at the Invictus and saying, "What was that? The old ways are the best? Can't hear you over the roar of these jets, motherfucker!"

The Mekhet are welcome there because lots of goods, people and things that are not people move into and out of the city. Managing O'Hare and keeping it safe for Kindred (which contributes to keeping the city safe for Kindred) requires a sharp eye, and no one sees deeper than the Shadows.

The other reason for extensive Mekhet involvement is that O'Hare by day is thought to be the stomping grounds of some mage gang. They call themselves Banishers and the O'Hare Carthians have developed a détente with them ever since their hostilities boiled over in 1972. After the dust settled, the mages backed out of Meigs, the Kindred ceded Midway (once it was no longer the focal point of intense mortal scrutiny) and they gradually developed ways to share O'Hare.

(Meigs Field got bulldozed in the middle of the night in 2003 on the orders of Mayor Daley, and the Carthians are pretty damn sure they saw some of Norris' men and Invictus enforcers making sure the late-night wrecking crew was well protected. Prince Maxwell said the mayor simply made up his mind without any say-so of the Prince. About half the Carthians even believe him.)

The Battle of Midway, 1972

In 1972, the Carthians were just as invested in Meigs Field as they were in O'Hare, and that's when a mage cabal started muscling in. The mages had marked off Midway Airport as their territory and were in an expansive mood, so they started pushing at Meigs Field and shoving at O'Hare. The Kindred shoved back at Midway, with verbal threats of major violence against the mages.

On the afternoon of December 8, 1972, United Airlines Flight 553 — a flight carrying half of a cabal of Guardian mages — crashed at Midway Airport. The disaster also took the lives of Congressman George Washington Collins and alleged CIA agent Dorothy Hunt, a prominent figure in the Watergate investigation. Had Kindred operatives sabotaged the flight? Had some kind of Arcane mage activity gone awry?

The fallout from the crash was significant. Almost immediately, Midway was crawling with investigators — state, local and federal — including "rescue workers" recognized by at least one witness as CIA agents. The crash set both the Kindred and the mage factions scrambling to cover up their activities in the area and cost everyone influence over Midway for the better part of a decade. Worse, perhaps, was the sneaking suspicion among Kindred and mages alike that, by dueling with each other, they had left themselves vulnerable to manipulation or attack by a *third* party that was primarily interested in killing Collins or Hunt. Understandably spooked, the hotheads in both groups fell from favor, and calmer heads negotiated a truce between Kindred and mages.

There are perhaps 10 Carthians who consider O'Hare their "beat," and half of them are Mekhet. Their leader, the Regent of O'Hare, is a Carthian Mekhet named Julie Walsch. She works the night shift at the Cinnabun stand, she's vivacious and chatty with stranded late-night customers and, every night, she sells some likely traveler a roll frosted with Rohypnol, right before her shift ends.

Another eight to 10 non-Carthian Kindred are "stationed" at O'Hare, usually in some semi-official position for their covenant, usually with the compliance and permission of Walsch. Most of these are Mekhet, which causes some friction with the Carthian Mekhet, but while petty rivalries are frequent, everyone sets aside their differences to deal with non-Kindred issues. That's the theory, anyhow.

With both the cleaning staff and the security staff heavily compromised, the Kindred have a lot of access and a lot of eyes on the ground, but they're still 20 individuals with lots of acres to monitor. It's hard work. That's something else that keeps the pissing contests at manageable levels.

What do they watch for? Just about everything. They watch the air-traffic controllers to make sure there isn't a big, fiery crash. They watch the luggage for bombs, and they watch the passengers for hijackers. (There's some high-minded rhetoric about "we're all Americans even if we're undead," but wanting to keep federal law enforcement calm is also an issue.)

Primarily though, the Kindred are watching for the Weird. And the Weird comes to O'Hare about two or three times a month. Sometimes the Weird is a really gutsy nomad vampire coming in on a red-eye, hoping there isn't a delay that gets him ashed at sunrise. Sometimes the Weird is a group of swarthy, bearded strangers with necklaces made of teeth and auras that glow like the noonday sun. Mages, shapeshifters, ghosts clinging to travelers or items being shipped — those are the *most common* Weirds.

Then you get the woman whose hair spontaneously drifted in the direction of the Awakened. No one else noticed.

There was the eight-year-old kid who had *five auras* instead of one, all registering different emotions.

There was the little cardboard box that made everyone sick when they handled it, until a security guy opened it and found a ball of twine. Everyone who touched the twine died.

Mysteriously growing plants, pet carriers torn open from the inside, lost luggage containing a voodoo-cursed wedding dress, a plane that landed perfectly even though the pilot (who stayed in radio contact throughout) never left the aircraft and couldn't be found inside it — that's the Weird. O'Hare's Kindred never know what to expect. They just know it when they see it, and they know they're better off keeping word of it away from mortal ears. At the same time, this sort of information is a great way to get the attention of local mages.

Politics

Chicago looks about the same to mortals and vampires. What truly separates the city of the living from the city of the Damned, however, are the things that can't be seen. The invisible threads that make up the hidden society of vampires in Chicago are tied to landmarks, buildings and people throughout Cook County and beyond. The social chains that bind a Regent to her territory cannot be touched, but they can be seen and felt in other ways. The silent claims that one covenant makes over a block, to the exclusion of all other covenants, are not always formalized, but the claims can be irrefutable.

Chicago politics require caution and discipline. Every action must be carefully measured, every allegiance must be re-evaluated nightly. Every conversation is about something else, and every vampire wants something from you.

It's the politics of the Damned that sets the Chicago of the Kindred apart from that of the mortals and that of the Lupines and that of the mages. All the immortal vampires who call Chicago home are stitched to the city — in whole or in part — by the relationships they keep. The threads of politics are everywhere.

The Prince's Tranquility

Whereas the turmoil and violence of recent nights has led to mistrust and dismay for all Kindred present and

Whereas the uncertainty and inclination to precaution beggar even the wealthy and lead to the betterment of none and

Whereas the causes of these conflicts arise principally from innate competition, only fed and goaded by political competition,

Therefore I, your Prince, henceforth declare a twofold policy to ensure tranquility and prosperity for the Kindred of my domain. These policies apply to all, without exception, regardless of covenant, clan or creed. Regardless of loyalty or pledge. Regardless of station and regardless of ignorance. Any who transgress shall pay the penalty.

Injunction the First. All Kindred are categorically banned from the creation of childer within the environs of Chicago and those areas within the praxis of Maxwell Clarke. There are to be, without exception, no Embraces.

Those who transgress this prohibition shall be punished by enforced torpor, exile, mutilation or other punishment as judged on a case-by-case basis. Those Embraced willingly or upon request share in the guilt of their sires but are to be held less accountable. Those who travel outside the environs of the city to perform these acts and then return with the fruit of their deeds are to be judged as if they had Embraced inside Chicago itself.

Injunction the Second. All beneath my law are enjoined from slaying Kindred, be it directly or indirectly. While we are eternally subject to the vicissitudes of sun, flame and mortal wrath, within Chicago we shall be safe from one another.

Those who commit this crime shall be punished as above, whether they kill directly or through means of living agents. If your ghoul kills, the ash is on your hands; he does not shield you any more than a dagger protects its wielder from guilt.

By means of these injunctions, peace shall descend at last upon weary but unbowed Chicago. With no strain of competing neonate appetites, my followers can exist in equilibrium. With no fear of harm at others' hands, we can work together to solve our problems with civil equanimity.

Should circumstances merit exceptions to these rules, they shall come only in the form of a Prince's Indulgence, and then only with at least 12 days' forewarning. A Prince's Indulgence is a single night in which these rules are rescinded: while it is in effect, all Kindred may Embrace without legal repercussion, and may similarly slaughter each other with no fear of the Prince's wrath. Do not look for the Indulgence soon: I describe it solely so that all who follow may know that in this place, in the collective, extending our condition is inextricably linked with its destruction.

The Invictus

Though they have not always *held* power in Chicago, the First Estate has always *had* power in Chicago. If you ask any Invictus vampire, she'll tell you that Chicago should have *always* been an Invictus city. It has always been blessed with generous servings of those elements from which the First Estate typically builds its empire: high society, old money and big business.

And yet, strangely, in Chicago of all places, the Invictus has always had to fight for its power. Other Kindred, confused and misled by the other covenants, have inexplicably failed to join the Invictus in the numbers expected. This may be because the power structure in the First Estate has never been anything but ossified, and young Kindred felt they had little hope of advancing in this most static of Kindred organizations.

In carrying out his coup against his predecessor, the so-called Matriarch of the city, Prince Maxwell hoped to establish the Invictus as Chicago's dominant covenant once and for all. By banning the Embrace and the murder of Kindred altogether, Prince Maxwell sought both to make a resounding display of authority and show Chicago's Kindred which covenant really held power. By banning new Embraces, Prince Maxwell sought to stabilize the Kindred population, preventing other covenants from creating more members even as he tempted Kindred to abandon their old covenant in favor of the power and privilege of the First Estate.

Prince Maxwell's expectations, it turns out, were wrong. His ban did stabilize the Kindred population, more or less, but the mass restructuring and swelling of the Invictus he envisioned never materialized. On the contrary, without a constant influx of new blood, the Invictus lost ground as many of its youngest, least powerful, and therefore least-dedicated, members were lured away by the evangelists of the Lancea Sanctum, the mysteries of the Ordo Dracul or the Circle of the Crone and the democratic philosophies and policies of the Carthian Movement.

And then came that regrettable event with Persephone, of course.

Now Prince Maxwell claims praxis over Chicago, and the Invictus has a slight advantage over the other covenants, but Prince Maxwell's reign has grown stale quickly. The great hope of the Invictus, compromised by poor judgment and well-known hypocrisy, have become moderate placeholders, proudly dangling keys but not driving anywhere. Prince Maxwell is actually less popular within the Invictus than he is in the city in general. Some members of the First Estate consider Prince Maxwell nothing but a body holding down the throne until a real Invictus champion can claim praxis. But they would never be so rash as to say that to his face.

Structure

In Chicago, the members of the Invictus are drawn largely from two clans: Daeva and Ventrue. Overall, the covenant appreciates this, as it minimizes inter-clan conflict. Whether this arrangement actually serves the First Estate well, given that it tends to alienate many Kindred from other clans, remains to be seen.

In Chicago, as elsewhere, the Invictus is about nothing if not hierarchy. The higher one is in the pyramid, the more power one wields and the more advantages one has. Those at the top stay there because there is no reason ever to move. Those in the middle serve because they feel that they will eventually be in those positions of control that they salivate over. Those on the bottom — the running dogs, the whipping boys, the caddies, the slaves of the covenant — remain with the Invictus because their sires tell them to and promise them fast advancement through the ranks if they serve well. While those promises may ring hollow, the fact of the matter is that many of the lowest-ranking Invictus believe in the First Estate's feudal system, and feel comfortably stable and anonymous in the lowest, most forgettable ranks.

In truth, it is not so difficult to rise through the ranks of the Invictus in Chicago. The difficulty is in finding empty seats above ground level. Savvy Invictus members create their own seats by finding new ways to be useful to Prince Maxwell and lesser Regents. To do that, of course, the vampire must know what others want.

Invictus Politics

In Chicago, Prince Maxwell is at the pinnacle of power. He leads his covenant just as he leads the city as a whole. He gives orders and his lieutenants see to it that those orders are obeyed. The responsibility for getting things done trickles down the food chain until the lowliest, most tedious and thankless tasks fall to the lowest-ranking Kindred. Within the Invictus, the goal is to see just how much of one's personal agenda can be accomplished while carrying out the orders given down by those above. The only member of the Invictus in Chicago who doesn't have to worry about orders from above is Prince Maxwell.

There's a countermovement against Prince Maxwell brewing in the Invictus, though. The Prince is viewed as overly moderate by many of the middle-tier members of the First Estate. Propelled by frustration at their covenant's near equality with the likes of the Acolytes and the Carthians, the middle-tier members of the First Estate are slowly, quietly placing themselves into position to stage a coup. At the moment, these dissidents are gathering information about the Prince and his resources in order to better counter them when the time comes. The rebellious Invictus members are moving so slowly that it could be a matter of decades before they're ready, but they're gaining an inexorable momentum that promises to bring sweeping change in the Invictus — if the rebellion can successfully remain hidden until it has enough support, that is. Like an aide with a dagger, these power-mongers are creeping up behind Prince Maxwell one step — one year — at a time.

Victim Infrastructure

As a general rule, the Invictus doesn't provide Vitae for its members, but feasts of rounded-up vagrants sometimes take place before large convocations of the Invictus when the Prince wants to present himself as a benevolent ruler. The Invictus members think of such feasts as symbolic of drinking from the city itself. Prince Maxwell, however, never partakes in his own feasts.

Members of the First Estate, especially those with Dominate and Majesty, are in an ideal position to take advantage of the bustling urban landscape around them. Dupes, thralls and blood dolls in the form of plentiful middle managers form the core of the Invictus diet. Lost tourists in the Loop, drunk executives in hotel bars and the occasional hooker round out the menu.

Tribune Tower

On Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago there stands a modern-day Gothic castle, 36 stories high, complete with gargoyles and flying buttresses. This is the Tribune Tower, the seat of the First Estate's power.

Gimme Fever

Rapid-Onset Hemorrhagic Fever (ROHeF to the medicos, pronounced "ROW-heff") is nasty stuff. Causing massive rupturing of thin and blood-rich tissues (primarily lungs and sinus), it's an ugly, painful, mercifully quick way to die. The CDC is keeping things quiet to prevent a panic: even though ROHeF is not as deadly as anthrax and doesn't seem to spread person-to-person like melioidosis, the dramatic death-throes would likely overcome commonsense judgments of ROHeF's real threat.

In fact, ROHeF does not *have* a natural transmission vector. Everyone who's died of the disease got an injection. ROHeF was brewed up in some bio-warfare lab (foreign or domestic?) and fell into the hands of some germ-savvy Kindred who now use it to cover things up when their feeding goes overboard. They don't even need to inject it in the dead body. As long as they can position the body somewhere that vomited blood would naturally seem to drain away, and can contaminate blood samples at some point in the investigation, no one is going to suspect a bite on the neck. It's a high-tech variation on the old "cut his throat and drape the body over a storm sewer" trick, only without the murder investigation.

Now ROHeF has come to Chicago. What happens if some unwitting Kindred becomes a passive carrier, whose feeding creates an outbreak? What if some desperate vampire hunter uses ROHeF to draw the CDC to town? Alternately, what if Belial's Brood get hold of the disease and use it as a lever against the more mainstream covenants? Who made it? Where? What if they want it back? What if they want to create a form that *is* contagious?

The tower is where the Invictus' thralls come to meet with their masters. This is not seen as suspicious, as large metropolitan newspapers are busy at all times of the day and night. It is a common sight to see aldermen, politicians, industry giants and wealthy socialites entering and leaving the tower, and no one blinks an eye, because it's the Tribune and the Tribune has a long history of hosting the movers-and-shakers of Chicago on an ongoing basis. It also puts the Invictus in the perfect position to monitor the majority of local media. (The Tribune Corporation owns the *Chicago Tribune*, The *Red Eye* newspaper, WGN radio, the Hispanic paper *Hoy* and a few television stations.) Conveniently enough, the Tribune also has a number of connections to local cultural institutions like the Field Museum and the Shedd Aquarium.

One of the few freight tunnels still in regular use beneath Chicago is that which links the Tribune Tower with the Freedom Center, the paper's printing facility several blocks to the west. Beneath the Tribune Tower are areas described as "data warehousing rooms." These are supposedly places where the all-important data backups for the *Chicago Tribune* are kept; consequently, they have armed security guards protecting them. But the line about data warehousing rooms is a ruse. The real backups (called "common archives") are kept blocks away at the Freedom Center. The enormous mainframe computers beneath the Tribune Tower are nothing but empty boxes with a few flashing lights. They open with a key, and contain secure, sealed slumbering chambers for elite Invictus Kindred. At least one torpid elder has been down there since 1980 — before Maxwell's return as Prince.

The Lancea Sanctum

In Chicago, the Lancea Sanctum has an average-sized population with superior unity. The Circle of the Crone may have more members, but any Acolyte leader is lucky to get even a third of the Acolytes to actively back *anything* at once. The Lancea Sanctum has a strong leader and a rigid hierarchy, which means that at least half of the Sanctified can be counted on to contribute to any cause, no matter how picayune. The strength of the Lancea Sanctum is that its members may be active on political issues even when they don't personally care. Their position within the covenant is more important than anything as petty as personal politics.

During the Middle Ages, knights found that a lighter, hollow lance was actually stronger than a solid one. The same may be said of the Sanctified in Chicago. The faith of the Lancea Sanctum's congregation grants it remarkable solidarity and power, but faith also puts the faithful in danger of being hijacked and misdirected by a strong demagogue.

Enter Solomon Birch.

Solomon undeniably contributes to the Lancea Sanctum. He is passionate and committed to Longinus' laws. He's got a strong personal connection to the Prince. Solomon is a compelling speaker, a tireless advocate and a



charismatic beacon of devout confidence for disenfranchised and frightened neonates. Plus he's rich.

But Solomon's beliefs aren't in line with the Sanctified mainstream, and an appreciation for his views has become a requirement for advancement in the covenant. Several Acolytes who were in the church when Solomon was initiated now find themselves excluded from the highest levels of discussion because they were not fervent enough about *his* interpretation of the *Testament of Longinus*.

The Lancea Sanctum does not Embrace and hasn't for the last 10 years — ever since Solomon, five years into his tenure as Bishop, finally felt he had enough clout to denounce the Embrace, not just from the pulpit, but in action as well. His Inquisitors seized a Kindred of the congregation who had sired and, at the next Midnight Mass, confined him to a "Solomon Swastika." There he remains to this night, deep in torpor.

(A Solomon Swastika is a device designed to imprison and torment Kindred. It's basically a bent, metal cross with right angles for the arms and legs. Once it's been adjusted for an individual's size, the arms and legs must be broken to fit inside. When the angles are clamped tight, the bones cannot straighten. Thus, even a vampire who contains a great store of Vitae within him cannot correct his limbs and heal, because there is no space for his limbs to straighten.)

Solomon's ban on the Embrace seriously inhibited a decade's growth for the Lancea Sanctum. While the Sanctified grew to some extent by converting unaligned vampires and "poaching" from other covenants, they also suffered attrition from Kindred converting the other way and being rendered torpid by churchly punishments.

The divisions within the Lancea Sanctum fall between Solomon's fundamentalist wing of hardliners and a larger mainstream body led by Sylvia Raines. There are some lunatics and fringe believers who are members of the congregation only by declaration, not action (like a Christian who lies and cheats on his wife but goes to church on Sundays), but the fundamentalist/mainstream schism is the conflict that matters to the Anointed. Everyone else is just sound and fury — Solomon might purge or purify them if he didn't need their numbers as a bulwark against the Invictus and the Circle.

The fundamentalists dominate the highest ranks of the organization, and they *completely* control the Inquisitors. Before Birch, the Inquisitors of Chicago were moderates. Now they're hardliner fundamentalists, at least when speaking in public. Birch purged and replaced the Inquisition in year three of his appointment, and everyone who remains is either in Birch's philosophical camp, loyal to whomever wears the mask of office or devoted solely to the power drawn from the office of Inquisitor. That last group gives Birch some pause, but cutting them off would leave the Inquisition badly understaffed, and Birch needs them to keep the moderates contained. Plus, Birch knows from experience that

Kindred who are devoted to the benefits of office make better allies than enemies.

Sanctified moderates actually do most of the covenant's proselytizing, outside the Temple of the Dark Crusader. But by the same token, most Sanctified Kindred in Chicago attend the Temple, not just because it's central, but because it is, frankly, more in keeping with what attracted them to the Lancea Sanctum in the first place: monumental traditionalism and a sense of belonging.

Secondary Sanctified chapels (meaning, led by moderates like Sylvia Raines) can be found throughout the city. Notable examples include a private chapel in the heart of an exquisite Gold Coast brownstone, a quiet retreat beneath a Spanish-language church in Pilsen and the women-only Cloisters of Lincoln Park, hidden in the old servants' quarters of an old Victorian house. Several of these churches are known only to the Sanctified congregation and not to Chicago's lay vampires. The Gold Coast chapel, in particular, is known only to wealthier Sanctified and, it seems, a pair of mages they pay to protect their holy relics.

An Excerpt From Longinus: An Exegesis by Solomon Birch

"The Damned shall make none of their own, for such is a judgment of soul that is the purview only of God." Can the words of our spiritual leader be made any clearer? Can Longinus' will be more manifest than this simple statement? We, the Damned, are alone. We are cast out from the regard of God, but still we retain a purpose within God's grand design. We hunt and terrify and pursue, but we do not judge the living. From the nadir of the moral cosmos, we cannot presume to drag others to our level.

That is what this statement means. This is the will of the Dark Messiah — that we should not Embrace, ever, under any circumstances. He does not say "shall make none of their own *save when they are willing to sin in pursuit of greater efficiency*" — what sophistry! What a pious mask for degenerate lust!

Longinus did not write "shall make none of their own *except to swell the ranks of the righteous Damned, lest others more perverse overwhelm you*" — how can we presume? How can we know that it is not the Lord's will that we be overcome in the last? Or more, how can we so blithely dismiss the notion that we Sanctified are meant to draw the poison of error out of those Damned and ignorant? Does not Longinus say, "In the darkness you are to be a lamp and a beacon, though in darkness you shall remain, for a lamp light in daylight is lost"? Our role is not to beget, but to educate the misbegotten, and the argument that Embracing for Longinus is a permissible sin — a *permissible sin!* — is an argument for laziness arising from cowardice.

Victim Infrastructure

Many Sanctified ceremonies involve at least one murdered mortal on the altar, but high holy rites such as those held on the Day of St. Daniel (September 22nd) may bleed as many as a dozen mortals. These disposable folk have to come from somewhere. The Sanctified responsible for finding that "somewhere" and "feeding the ceremonies" are known as the Scourers.

The role of Scourer (Covenant Status •+)is a position many Sanctified appreciate but few particularly want. The job description is "find mortals no one will miss, bring them to the church and share the proceeds with the congregation." It's not intuitive behavior for selfish predators, but the Scourers do it, because they're loyal, bucking for advancement or true lovers of the hunt. Scourers are much respected by Birch's followers, though little authority comes with the title. All the same, it's not considered shit work and even some of the city's more important Anointed serve as Scourers a few nights out of the year.

Some Scourers seduce runaways from the bus stations. Some Scourers entice the homeless with promises of work or liquor. Some Scourers work gangland avenues, promising to make problems disappear (for a fee, no less) if "you'll meet me at this old church." The most enterprising of tonight's Scourers actually bills herself as an illegal travel agent, helping fugitives from bad marriages, crushing debt or the law flee the city; some of her clients actually do get out of the city, but she skims off the top when the Bishop needs vessels for Mass.

There are perhaps 10 Scourers serving the Chicago congregation tonight, though only a handful are called on for any given ceremony. At a recent Elysium, Bishop Birch estimated his Scourers and other one-time ceremonial hunters were responsible for as much as 5% or 10% of the city's missing persons and unsolved homicide cases.

The Temple of the Dark Crusader

Completely subterranean, the Temple of the Dark Crusader lies beneath the sub-basement of a defunct factory building on the Near South Side. Above the temple, the city's early 20th century rail lines and factory buildings are being modernized into Internet-ready condos sold by the dozen. Inside the Temple, the city's pre-Fire, 19th-century brickwork has been transformed into a medieval-style nave and catacombs.

There are two ways in or out of the Temple. The most public entry comes through forgotten municipal tunnels and sub-basements near Roosevelt Road. These can be reached through sealed-looking doors beneath the local Red Line el stop and a hidden door in the sunken rail yard near the park, west of the Museum Campus. Those are the doors for congregants, and the locations are taught to any Kindred who can be considered a member of the Sanctified congregation.

The secret door for the celebrants comes out in the bowels of a multi-story hotel parking garage, accessible only by an automobile-sized elevator platform. Only the highest-ranking Sanctified — not just simple Priests — are shown the entrance (though many Sanctified know that it is somewhere down that massive elevator shaft).

Neither entrance is guarded. Rather, Sanctified heavies wait deeper within the access passages, so that curious mortals can be snatched far from the relatively public entrances to the Temple.

Quite a few empty, brick rooms lie between the Temple itself and the outside world. Two of these have been converted into soundproof cells for the storage of mortal vessels. Each is a blank, padded room with a metal floor and a hand-size drain. The doors to these rooms came from Joliet Prison.

The nave itself is a vast brick basement forgotten since the Chicago Fire. The chamber's only architectural features are numerous huge, square pillars and an eroded floor of raw stone (dug out to give the room a higher ceiling). There are no pews or chairs, and the only light comes from torches on the pillars and two large braziers that flank the altar. The altar is the centerpiece of the chamber: a hulking chunk of unadorned rock.

Most of the Temple's decorations are man-portable and are removed from the nave following each mass. This is a security measure designed to protect the Masquerade and the congregation should the nave ever be discovered by mortals. Besides, Birch seldom decorates the nave any more. The focus of the ceremony is meant to be the officiating priest and the ceremonial vessels of blood.

The Carthian Movement

A solidly democratic, union-based city like Chicago respects the common man. At the very least, the city respects the dedication in his heart and his effort for the cause. The city of Chicago was built through teamwork and thrives through teamwork, and the Kindred of the Carthian Movement are happy to take advantage of that long, proud tradition. Since the rise of the labor movement in the 1880s, more Carthian Princes have held praxis than any other covenant.

For Carthians who arrive from less politically balanced cities, Chicago is a utopia of sorts. The nearly even strength of the local Movement makes it a poor target for covenants looking for whipping dogs. Contrary to the stereotypical relationship between the Movement and the First Estate, in Chicago the Carthians are listened to by the Invictus and given at least a chance to politick with the Prince.

It was even better in the old days. Under Jaqueline Edens, the Carthian Prince (or Matriarch, as she preferred to call herself), there were Carthians at every level of the Kindred hierarchy (and the Sanctified were off in the wings, not interfering with politics). The current situation under Prince Maxwell is a far cry from the Matriarch's reign, but the situation is still relatively posh for Carthians who expected something other than a cautious peace at the hands of an Invictus ruler.

This unusual degree of ease has granted the Carthians the luxury of time for infighting. The Chicago Carthians are often lumped into two philosophical camps: those who see unions as an ideal system and instrument of government and those who see organized crime as a more lucrative and empowering option. More Carthians belong to the former camp, but the latter seems more active. In truth, many Carthians work for both factions and regard the union versus Mafia divide as obsolete. Tonight, the bulk of Carthian infighting stems from the plots, rivalries and philosophies of individual vampires unable or unwilling to agree on the covenant's future.

The Candidate

Giovanni Cavallino, a relatively unknown Invictus Ventrue, has played with the rich politicians of the North Shore for some time, and no one has thought much of it. Until now. With a decisive nudge from Cavallino, John Rayn has become favored as the next senator from Illinois. This raises more than a few eyebrows among the Kindred. Not only is Rayn Cavallino's ghoul, but Rayn is also a Republican, and therefore opposed by many mortal citizens in the overwhelmingly Democratic Chicago.

The city's factions are torn. On one hand, Rayn becoming a senator would give the Kindred a degree of power in national politics they rarely get. On the other hand, Rayn's election win could be a threat to the Masquerade with such a prominent tie to the Kindred in the public spotlight. The Invictus, at very high levels, are pressuring Prince Maxwell to let Rayn become a senator. The Carthians, surprisingly, are also for it. The dogmatists of the Lancea Sanctum loathe the idea; they insist Cavallino give up his toy, or they will take the choice out of his hands. Prince Maxwell is weakly leaning toward siding with the Sanctified, but the support of the Invictus *and* the Carthians has him rethinking his position.

The Lancea Sanctum might pay or blackmail the coterie into taking Rayn out of the picture. Killing him could bring down a dangerous level of scrutiny on the Kindred, leaving intimidation and blackmail as the best means to control the candidate. Alternatively, the coterie could be assigned to protect the candidate — possibly secretly, by Prince Maxwell, even as he openly sides with the church.

Carthian Politics

The Carthians, while amply represented and quite influential, are hardly united. The Movement is comprised largely of Kindred dedicated to the notion of egalitarianism, but that idea covers a lot of ground. Thus, the Carthians have a number of divisions in their



ranks, but the Carthians benefit from advantages of diversity as well.

One of the covenant's strengths is the guidance of Steven Barowski, the Carthian Prefect. Barowski has been voted to the position of Prefect every election since 1968. He has been Prefect longer than many Chicago Carthians have been undead. Unlike many Chicago politicians, this is not a matter of habit and corruption. On the contrary, Barowski's dedication to Carthian idea is absolute, and he refuses to play favorites with either faction of the Movement. He insists that the two factions are complementary and that the Movement is stronger for having both wings, and as he supports both wings of the Movement, so do they both support him. Both T.J. Washington, the Carthian gang kingpin, and Angela Stawicki, the organizer behind the Carthians' union activities, consult with the Prefect before making any big moves.

In Chicago, the title of Myrmidon changes hands with more frequency than that of Prefect. While Chicago's Carthians vote on their Prefect once every four years, the Myrmidon comes up for election every two years. The Myrmidon is seen as an important position, but one with more responsibility than power, so the position is often not sought out by candidates. Instead, Myrmidons are frequently encouraged to run (unopposed) by superiors or peers within the Movement.

Short Vampire Syndrome

Many Kindred learn, as a rule of thumb, to never underestimate a short vampire. Why? Go to the Art Institute and look at old time suits of armor. They're tiny. People were smaller in the days before scientific nutrition, supermarkets and famine-resistant crops. People six foot or taller were a miniscule percentage of the population before 1900, and only a small percentage of that small percentage got the Embrace.

That doesn't mean that every short vampire is really old, obviously. But it does mean that some old vampires are rather short. Thus, when the 5'1" vampire named Granville Hoyne shows up in town claiming he was Embraced in England in 1700, Kindred should take notice.

In actual fact, Hoyne was a naturally shrimpy classics scholar before his 1998 Embrace into the Ventrue clan, but his sire has Dominated him so thoroughly that *Hoyne* believes he's an elder who spent centuries in torpor and only emerged in the 1990s. Like a real elder, he'd rather threaten and insinuate than reveal his hand — even though, *unlike* a real elder, his hand is essentially empty.

Who's Hoyne's sire? What's she up to? What's she using her fake elder to achieve? Can his disguise be penetrated? Do the characters gain more if they unmask him or if they use his disguise to their advantage, possibly outmaneuvering a seemingly powerful elder in front of influential peers at court?

The individual holding the title of Myrmidon seems to change every few years, but the Myrmidon's clan has always been the same. A Haunt named Lillian Vanderpool has held the position of Myrmidon since the early '90s, and every Myrmidon before her has been Nosferatu as well. She remains painstakingly neutral in all of her judgments, which is how she keeps her position. She is also not much of a socialite, and so avoids many of the emotional and personal ties that can get tangled in a role such as hers.

Carthian Turf

In general, Carthians are more commonly found in the northwest section of the city. Prince Maxwell has assigned most of the Carthian feeding privileges out in Jefferson Park and Irving Park, where the interminable streets of bungalows hide several communal Carthian havens. In years past, these neighborhoods were overwhelmingly white and Polish, but, in recent years, the old homeowners (most of whom bought in the 1950s) have been dying off, and immigrants from India, Pakistan, Korea and Mexico have been buying into the area and very slowly changing the face of the Carthian Movement in the process.

Carthian influence also stretches into the northwest suburbs that lie between the city and O'Hare Airport. This area is thick with shopping centers, hotels and convention venues, but the airport is the crowning jewel in the Carthian crown.

Victim Infrastructure

Individual Carthians have an easy time feeding on the run. O'Hare and its nearby hotels and bars are a smorgasbord for hungry Kindred. Thanks to influence with various hospitality unions, several Carthians — Mekhet and Nosferatu especially — have notorious connections with some of the airport hotels, and can let themselves into certain key rooms at any time to drink from sleeping guests. After the importance of O'Hare was established in the late '60s, the Carthians systematically made certain that key figures at these busy hotels were theirs. If they're not ghouls or blood addicts, then they're financially dependent on the Kindred.

If the covenant is having a large-scale gathering, the blood typically comes from mortals involved with or against the covenant's gangster faction. Once a year or so, the Carthians connected to organized crime compile a list of mortals who owe money, whose loyalty is suspect or who have failed in recent jobs. Once the high-profile names have been taken off the list (politicians, cops and big-time journalists), a few of the remaining individuals are targeted for pick-up. Since 1995, the targets have been chosen randomly in what is called the blood lottery.

The Circle of the Crone

The Circle of the Crone has relatively large numbers in Chicago, but the covenant's membership is in such a state of disunity that the numerical advantage is wasted. If the Acolytes were truly driven to create a unified front, the Circle of the Crone could be the most powerful covenant in Chicago. Although the group has parlayed its diverse customs and exotic philosophy into a surprisingly large membership, most Acolytes are just this side of unaligned, attending Winnowing and maybe Samhain rites, learning the rudiments of Crúac but often neglecting their responsibilities to their covenant.

Chicago's Acolytes are atypical in the number of schisms that divide their efforts. The covenant agrees on its pagan ways, but not on *which* pagan ways, exactly. The Circle is thus a very loose collection of "sub-covenants" that don't necessarily share enough of the same philosophies to cooperate in politics. For every member who adheres to the Heirophant's core doctrine, there's another two with some alternative take on the religion of the Crone — and the covenant's politics.

The covenant's unity is further damaged by its limited self-awareness. Many Acolytes are secretive about their covenant affiliation. As residents of the wholesome Midwest heartland, some are squeamish, even in undeath, about pagan blood magic. They do not, consequently, wear their covenant affiliation on their sleeves. If two Acolytes run in different social circles, they might never know they're both a part of the same covenant until they run into each other at a major convocation purely by chance.

The core faction of the Circle, accounting for just over half of Chicago's Acolytes, is overseen by the Hierophant, Rowen. She is a high priest of The Three. Most of Chicago's Acolytes worship or at least acknowledge The Three: The Crone (called Lilith by some), the Horned King, and the Great Beast**.** Other deities may be called upon as circumstances dictate, but for most of Chicago's Acolytes, worship of The Three (by whatever names the Acolyte prefers) constitutes the orthodoxy. Peripheral cults within the Circle may not revere The Three at all, but some other symbolic pagan god altogether.

Lilith is the ruling principle, who represents spiritual testing and judgment, the balance of light and darkness, and the power of blood, fertility and sacrifice, life arising from death. The Horned King is the lord of shadows, death and winter, and the master of the wild hunt. The Great Beast is primordial chaos, hunger and madness, the seed of frenzied rage that resides within each Acolyte's unbeating heart.

The Acolytes led by Rowen take their spiritual growth very seriously — possibly too seriously, given the way such worship could hamstring them politically — but their diligence has paid off for them where the study of Crúac is concerned. Thus, the Acolytes have earned a reputation for callous amorality. Rowen has been the Hierophant for decades at this point, but recent nights have seen challengers to her position, mostly from Bella Dravnzie.

Structure

The apex of the Circle's hierarchy is the Hierophant, the primary spiritual guide and teacher of

The Rover

A roving Kindred named Mark Wrathbone is under a death sentence. The bastard's just done too many bad things in ways that threaten to slice through the screen of the Masquerade. He has not one but two nomad coteries trying to take him out in a kind of multi-lateral blood hunt. One coterie is a batch of deluded "good" guys who want him to pay for his crimes. The other coterie is a hard-core Invictus crew of Knights errant who just want him silenced and feel that ashing him is the only way to do it. A solo like Wrathbone has no chance, right?

But he's tricky, he's an ex-cop, he's got a PhD in psychology and he's fled to Chicago, where the Prince's Tranquility protects him. Only now Wrathbone seems to have vanished completely, and while Mark Wrathbone might be an escapist, he's not the subtle type.

The two nomad coteries are clashing over who gets him, and there's pressure on Prince Maxwell to either stand by his principles, declare an Indulgence when they find him or simply rule that Wrathbone is an exception to the Tranquility. Prince Maxwell is leaning toward ordering his pursuers to haul Wrathbone out of town, which only gives Wrathbone more opportunity to escape *again*. But these hunters don't seem to want to haul Wrathbone off — they want him destroyed before he can talk. If it comes down to it, they may just break Prince Maxwell's Tranquility, then skip town in a hurry. Suspecting that, the Prince needs vampires to watch them.

Where is Mark Wrathbone? Who gets him? Is there more to him than just a rogue nomad? Is there political gain to be made negotiating his fate when he's finally captured? Characters who find this fugitive — possibly torpid — have to decide who gets him, if anyone, and why.

Crúac in the area. In Chicago, the Circle also includes the Tender, whose job is to point out where the covenant is failing to embody its philosophies. Frequently, this means acting as the Hierophant's spy and informant. Chicago's Tender is a Mekhet ancilla named Ashly Wainwright. The other covenant officer is the Crucible, who acts as something of an enforcer for the Hierophant. In Chicago, the Crucible is a Gangrel named Lazar Soto, but Rowen is powerful enough that she rarely hesitates to take care of her own enforcement. Any situation that requires the efforts of Rowen *and* Lazar is huge.

These three offices are the only official seats held among Chicago's Acolytes. More accurately, they are the three positions that all Acolytes are expected to respect and acknowledge. Individual coteries often create their own, specialized titles for internal use. Chicago's Circle of the Crone does not, in general, believe in strict hierarchies. That's one of its strengths during times of recruitment but also leads to chaos and disunity.

Victim Ingrastructure

In keeping with the covenant's philosophy of striving and testing, Chicago's Circle of the Crone expects its members to feed themselves. Any predator who does not take joy in procuring her own nourishment needs to be inspired by her peers. Acolyte coteries are encouraged to feed from limited areas, to grow familiar with victims and their environment, to cultivate a personal feeding tradition. On the North Side, it's customary for an Acolyte to feed from as few victims as possible. On the South Side, a variety of blood is prized.

The Uptown Theater

In the 1920s, Chicago saw the construction of dozens of enormous and ornate movie palaces that sought to evoke a sense of exotic, alluring places as well as pure grandeur. With the rise of the multiplex, many of these enormous temples to the cinema went out of business, and many were torn down. The Uptown Theater, in the heart of the North Side's oldest entertainment district is caught in a permanent state of decrepitude that flirts with both restoration and demolition. The theater's interior, once one of the most lavish in a city blessed with grand architecture, is now decayed almost beyond repair. The only living visitors now are the pigeons in the ornate overhangs and the rats that strike out from the theater to invade nearby restaurants.

And then there's the Circle of the Crone. The Acolytes make ample use of the Uptown Theater for both ceremonial and ritual purposes. The doors are closed and locked and all entrances are boarded up, but the rear doors, which open only from inside, are easily opened by those who sleep within.

From the theater's stage, Rowen addresses the Acolytes with her moody but persuasive oratory. At times, she performs Crúac rituals with the aid of other Acolytes. It's not uncommon for Circle members to perform readings from pagan myths and early verse here. On some holidays, elaborate ritual-plays are performed. Unlike Chicago's Sanctified, however, the Acolytes seldom feed during their Uptown rituals. The blood they use in most ceremonies is their own.

The Ordo Dracul

If you exit Columbia College on Wabash Street in the Loop, you can head east and south and, after a pleasant evening walk around the lakefront, reach the Shedd. Or you can turn west and north and get into Union Station, heading outward. Or you can head up Michigan Avenue to find yourself in the shadows of the lions of the Art Institute.

Many Kindred in Chicago know that the various Loop campus buildings of Columbia College are the home of Ordo Dracul chapter meetings. It's common knowledge that the Order has contacts at the Harold Washington Public Library Center nearby, with its gi-

ant winged roof. What few vampires know is the extent of the Dragons' presence at the Art Institute as well. There's an awful lot of history on display at the Art Institute, and a hell of a lot more hidden in its storage rooms. Some Dragons come to the Art Institute for inspiration. Others come to meet and deal with other Chicago occultists and arcane antiquarians.

A mage cabal called the Mercurials have a definite presence at the Art Institute, even though it is typically thought to fall within Maxwell's personal territory. The presence of mages in the Art Institute is an open secret. The popular rumor is that they were invited by the Dragons years ago, and the visitations have since become customary. Prince Maxwell, meanwhile, has simply seemed unwilling to bar others from the pleasures of the place. When a neonate reported seeing a wizard at the Art Institute to the court, Prince Maxwell said, "Fair enough. We know he's there, and that's to our benefit, but I don't think there's any great danger in a wizard bettering himself on the same art that we appreciate when we can. Let the art become our common tongue, if that's possible."

Ordo Dracul Politics

Somewhere between a fifth and a quarter of Chicago's Dragons are Sworn, and it's the Sworn who run the local chapters of the Order. There are three categories of Sworn — the Mysteries, the Axe and the Dying Light — each of which is supposedly supreme in its area of expertise. The Sworn of the Mysteries get long-term planning and agenda-setting authority but cannot rule on any *individual* within the Order. The Sworn of the Dying Light are the researchers and judges to complement the Mysteries' politicians and philosophers. Their job is to mind the nightly business and learn more Coils. The Sworn of the Axe are the defenders, pure and simple.

In Chicago, the Sworn of the Mysteries are in eclipse. With so much supernatural action going on — four viable rival covenants, plus werewolves, mages, ghosts and unknown beings —the Order finds itself in a re-active role more often than not. The Axe has a loud voice and is numerically superior, but they're only in control during an actual crisis. The Dying Light have done a fine job playing "good cop" with the Kindred of the Axe by explaining "those crazy, violent bastards are *in charge* as long as you attack, but as soon as there's a truce we can deal."

The leader of the Sworn of the Dying Light is Richard Mullner, Illuminus of the Fiery Hunger. His rival, the highest-ranked Sworn of the Axe, is Ludmilla Marana, Adept of the Untamed Curse. The "leader" of the Mysteries is Barbara Forsmith, Mistress of Equilibrium, and while she's respected (as every vampire who's Sworn of the Mysteries usually is — one gets admitted through acclamation) she's not very good at getting things *done*. On the other hand, Prince Maxwell likes her.

The wild card in this hand is Norris, an initiate of the Sanguine Curse and the head of the court's secret police. Norris has little impact on Order politics, he's not Sworn, and is unlikely to qualify for an Oath any time soon if he keeps expending his considerable abilities at court rather than on behalf of his covenant. Nevertheless, he has a tremendous amount of influence at his disposal and is careful to show no favoritism between the Sworn.

Currently, Mullner is running most things day-to-day, but his highest priority is always avoiding a disaster that would put Marana in charge. The tricky thing about the Axe is that the qualification for admission is an Oath to defend the Order when it is in need. Obviously that happens most often during open conflict. Thus, any big confrontation with other covenants (or other monsters) would put Marana temporarily in charge and, if her lowly unsworn pawns survive, they could take their Oaths and expand her section of the Order even further.

All she needs to cement her power is a major crisis. She may be crazy enough to provoke one.

Victim Infrastructure

The Ordo Dracul does not expend a lot of energy procuring for its members — they're expected to be self-sufficient. When common courtesy requires the covenant as a whole to provide suitable fare for guests, ceremonies or honorees, there's usually competition between its better-placed members to get the honor of providing the victuals. Typically these victims survive: either they're willing blood dolls brought in by Daeva or others with more natural charms, or they're led in, broken-willed, by Ventrue who can make the victims forget the experience afterwards.

Sometimes fatalities occur, of course, and it is at those times that 3383 (as the Order still calls it) becomes particularly useful. See, in the basement of the house, they've opened a — space. Only this space doesn't seem to actually occupy any space. Currently it's about 21 feet wide, though understandably hard to measure.

If you put a corpse in the space, it comes back hungry for human flesh — it'll eat bones, teeth, hair, doesn't leave a scrap. Also doesn't care if the flesh in question is alive, dead or vampiric. In any event, the Order has created seven "hungry ones" and has destroyed four through experimentation. The three who remain seem mindless but, disturbingly, seem to be getting stronger and stronger. It's also a source of some unease that the space that makes them has grown — if it keeps growing at its current rate, it will extend beyond the basement within four years.

The Human Grail

So a hungry Kindred down around Lower Wacker grabbed some homeless vet with a "Maimed in Iraq" sign and took a drink.

After that, the story gets cloudy. The feeder remembers feeling *great* — not just fed, but curiously lighthearted and well and unfettered by his normal guilt and seething Beastliness. He mentioned it to some buddies, but just



figured the hobo was unusually high on something unusually sweet.

But this feeder isn't the first to report the same phenomenon: feed on bum, feel great. A few who've met this "Maimed in Iraq" guy say they've had physical injuries close up *without the effort of the blood*. Others say that just a sip from him slaked their thirst for days on end, or that they found themselves disinclined towards Wassail or frenzy.

Who is this guy? What's up with his blood? And if he's identified, how long before greedy Kindred suck him dry?

Clans

Unlike some other cities, there is little clan cohesion within Chicago. Politics and religion trump lineage, at least among the Kindred, and what you believe, what you do, is more important than what you *are*. A vampire's clan is hardly irrelevant, though. For the clever and the coy, the clan is another arsenal, another source of information, communication or plain old grift. Clan ties are particularly useful as a pretext for negotiating with rival covenants. Only a sucker believes that "hey, we're all Nosferatu here," bullshit, but it's as good a pretext as any to sit down and talk.

Self-interest, after all, trumps both politics and religion.

Daeva

The Daeva are the least structured of Chicago's clans. That may be an advantage, not a flaw. There is no formal "leader" and there are no official "clan meetings," but if you don't know that Justine Lasky is important — well, then your clanmates can probably get along just fine without you, and it doesn't really matter that you get overlooked when they're planning soirees at the Discarded Image, the Rosehill Cemetery or the Double Door.

Because the Daeva clan is unstructured, Daeva status in Chicago is very fluid — and very subjective. Is Treat Mulligan a pariah because he dared to issue a backhanded compliment to the Harpy Tobias Rieff? Or has Treat's rep improved because he did it cleverly and got away with it? That's up to the individual Daeva to decide. Eventually, a consensus on any given individual arises, but while it's in progress keeping score can be a headache.

Daeva tend to have an ambiguous attitude towards company, just by the Daeva's nature. Given their "super-predator" skill set, they're often quite content to hunt alone, and their difficulties with temptation can make them dangerous company. But by the same token, they're useful companions, and their abilities also make them hard to resist and easy to forgive. Like cool people everywhere, they don't really seem to *need* others around them, which makes it flattering when they accept you by choice.

Those very factors tend to make the Daeva more comfortable with others than with each other, of course. Mortals are the easiest companions, but there are some social desires that fawning lackeys can't fulfill. The Daeva tend to turn their attentions outside the family to get coterie-mates and business associates, usually with the attitude that "anything I'd need a Daeva to do, I'll do myself before trusting another Daeva."

Why do they gather? Sometimes it *is* social — it's refreshing to test wits with equals, and you know you're the better player if you beat someone who had the exact same hand. Daeva are as susceptible to the charms of other Daeva as any other Kindred (though the Daeva are far more likely to know what's being done to them), so a few yearly family parties are *fun*, as long as they don't go on long enough to become tiresome.

More commonly, Daeva meet each other in smaller groups when they need to sell out some person or ideal that has outlasted its usefulness. A Daeva Acolyte, for example, who tired of Crúac and wanted to jump ship for the Ordo Dracul, would most likely broach the subject of changing allegiances with a Dragon clanmate. Sure, Daeva betray one another, but not as often as they betray other clans. It's forgivable to backstab a clanmate, but only if it's carried out with panache and élan. This makes it more work than shanking an outsider — those smelly Nosferatu or scuttling Mekhet don't deserve any better, but treating a Daeva rudely? That's just *gauche*.

The Daeva feel little need to collectivize because, collectively, they have what they want. "Clan business" then, is just a phrase they use as a codeword to mean "personal business between us in the clan."

Über Alles, Part One

A middle-to-lowly unaligned Daeva has come up with an appealing proposition for her clanmates: that the Daeva, being most fit to rule, should rule. That's it, essentially. She's got no elaborate schemes or philosophies or justifications yet. She may never have them. She may never *need* them.

To her (and to the Daeva who follow her) the superiority of their clan is just self-evident. Instead of a rule based on fear (like the Invictus) or secrets (like the Ordo Dracul) or mystic mumbo-jumbo or farcical parliaments of bickering Kindred, the Daeva could rule the undead through *love*. Or, at least, the Majesty-inspired equivalent thereof, which is as good as most Kindred are going to get.

She's probably a kook, but that's never stopped Kindred society from giving its respect — ask the Ventrue. She's dangerous because she's offering an easy solution and she's telling the Daeva what they want to hear.

No one outside the clan knows her name or has any clue to her identity. She theoretically threatens *all* the covenants, and anyone might get pissed enough to move against her. But how to remove her? Destroying her violates the Prince's Tranquility. Will other Daeva put up with being seen as traitors if this rhetoric goes too far?

Mekhet

Mekhet clan cohesion is practically nil. Their Discipline spread skews them towards infiltration, and the skills of a spy are exactly the same as those of a good spy-hunter. Espionage and counter-espionage are flip sides of the same coin, and that coin is the currency of the Mekhet.

Since they're most vulnerable to each other, they tend to avoid their clanmates. The tasteless joke is that Mekhet like to embrace Jews, because they don't have to be taught self-hatred. Norris isn't laughing.

The motives of Chicago Mekhet often see personal relationships — sires and childer or coterie-mates — and covenant loyalties jockeying for priority. The idea that one Mekhet should give another a break because of common ancestry is alien. Each Mekhet should manage his own way and make himself useful to his peers if he wants to be valued.

The only exception is a minor one, and that's for the fans of maximalist art. Maximalist art is the polar opposite of minimalism. Minimalism is all about blankness, objectivity, arguably about "confronting the void at the center of secular society." Maximalism is about ideas, specifically about *wrong* ideas, and it's about being wrong at the top of your lungs.

It is also a uniquely Mekhet art form because, while maximalism can be experienced by anyone, its full ramifications are available only to those with heightened senses. Specifically, it's geared towards *overwhelming* those senses.

The most recent maximalist installation was about the flat Earth, and the installation involved standing on a jumbled pile of coarse rocks in the center of a Day-Glo painted world map with water running over the flat edges. The whole thing was strobe-lit, soundtracked with deafening recordings of voices shouting "FLAT EARTH! FLAT EARTH!" over and over, and perfumed with a cloying reek of overripe gardenias.

To a normal viewer, being there is simply unpleasant. But when a Mekhet walks in with heightened

Unlucky Number

A traveling VII crew is reputed to have entered the city. Deaths are inevitable. A local covenant (or powers within it) wants to assemble a team to quietly "settle" the VII before they can make their strike. Although the timely defeat of VII assassins is arguably more important than the Prince's Peace, this anti-VII squad doesn't want to get caught staking an innocent Kindred "just to be sure." How can a soldier tell a VII vampire from any other vampire, anyway?

Only the "VII squad" is nothing of the sort: they're newly Embraced thugs created by someone local as a private army in disguise. Who are they targeting and why? If the characters are the hit team, can they avoid a slaughter? If they can't (or don't care to), can they cover their tracks?

senses, the effect pretty much blows her out of her mind. It's like an isolation tank, only instead of minimizing input, it so stretches the boundaries of perception that the senses *and the conscious mind* shut down in self-defense. In that moment of overload, some Mekhet connoisseurs find a paradoxical tranquility, like the *satori* of a Zen meditator. Or maybe more like the nod of a heroin junkie — very few who like maximalism are all that familiar with either. Either way, it provides a break from being alert, being alarmed, being hungry — *being Kindred*. Yeah, maximalism hurts at first, but taking a vacation from vampirism has some definite appeal.

Ventrue

It is possible that the tidiness of the Ventrue clan in Chicago has actually eaten itself. Consider: the clan is organized in an absolutely straitened hierarchy, categorically subdivided, independent of all covenant duties and hierarchies — a structure in which *Maxwell* — Maxwell *Clarke*, the Prince of Chicago — is ranked as a *mid-level bureaucrat* whose duties are to "liaise with" the Invictus. (Of course, Prince Maxwell's status in the Invictus is pretty mid-level these days too, what with codifying fringe Lancea Sanctum philosophy into law, ceding O'Hare to the Carthians and the Persephone affair.)

Ventrue in the know call it the Structure.

Über Alles, Part Two

A Ventrue has caught wind of the Daeva supremacist movement and is incensed. How dare the Daeva even *think* of such a thing when it's self-evident that the *Ventrue* are the obvious rulers? Time to teach that lunatic a lesson by beating her at her own game!

While the Daeva supremacy movement is a squishy culture of nods and winks and whispers, with little in the way of actual "plans," the Ventrue counterpart hits the ground running. Quickly locked into a hierarchy and subdivided by covenant, the Ventrue supremacists hit on a scheme to Embrace outspoken and charismatic human leaders into their clan to offset the Daeva Majesty advantage. This violates the Prince's Tranquility of course, so it means road trips to abduct and convert neo-Nazi firebrands, Nation of Islam polemicists, cult leaders and the occasional rock musician. When they're gradually trickled back into Chicago, they'll be the leaders of the uprising!

Can this work? If the characters want to stop it, can they do so? If they *don't* want to stop it, they've certainly got their work cut out helping the rebellion.

The higher one is ranked in the Structure, the less one is expected to deal with picayune details like covenant politics, the current events of the city or even the day-to-day details of staying fed and protected. Oh no, the three highest leaders ("the Triumvirate") have flunkies and toadies and majordomos to deal with all that bullcrap. The duty of the Three — a duty that consumes them, that occupies their every waking thought — is the manipulation of the Structure.

To those at the top, the Chicago Ventrue *are* the center of the universe, with other Chicago Kindred orbiting them like a ring, and the rest of Chicago out-



side that, and the rest of the world, vampires and all, somewhere so distant that their light can barely fall.

(From the outside, the Structure looks like a game in which the ultimate prize is being permitted to keep playing.)

From the top, it's a beguiling riddle, absorbing and byzantine, where power is not only its own reward but also the means to all other rewards (the greatest of which is, of course, more power). The manipulation of pawns, prestige, duties and privileges — most of which are symbolic or *entirely ceremonial* — determines who is "winning" at any given point. It's possible that someone in the Triumvirate might pause to wonder if it's really worth it, but that sort of philosophical musing is usually the sign of a weak player who's about to get kicked downstairs into the middle orbit, there to spend a few decades berating himself for lack of focus before rising painfully again to the Triumvirate — if he doesn't give up and die. Or quit the Structure cold turkey.

For, make no mistake, there are many Ventrue who have opted out. They dismiss the Structure as an elaborate social toy, a trap for Machiavellis so paranoid that they develop a sort of conspiracy constipation. According to this theory, pitting them against the only worthy opponents (that is, other batshit-crazy Ventrue schemers) puts them in check. Indeed, they may actually be closer to *happy* in their damnation than most Kindred. Certainly they're absorbed.

For the top rank, then, the Structure is its own justification. What about those a level down?

They're a mix. Many, like Prince Maxwell, put in their time and hold their place and use the Structure as a complicated utility vending machine — they put in some time as pawns in the big game of Kafka chess, and in return they get vaporous authority that they can apply to get things that *matter* to them accomplished. It's win/win, really: the placeholders give up nothing they value when they get meaninglessly demoted, taking a fall for someone whose Requiem is devoted to the Structure, but the Structurite is disproportionately grateful — usually willing to provide some sort of payola in the form of cash, access or information. That's the stuff that's cheap to *them*, while their position in the Structure they defend with bitter intensity.

The mid-level people who are dedicated to advancement are the ones to look out for. They've accumulated a lot of Structure authority *and* a good share of temporal influence as well. They're eager to use (or even trade) their influence for more Structure power, but since that only comes from above, outsiders rarely have anything they want. But their motives, influenced by the values and strategies of the Structure, are often baffling to outsiders who are vulnerable to the influence the mid-level folks retain.

The bottom level is the same thing, only more extreme. Many at the bottom have more money or better connections than their superiors — often just because the ones at the bottom pay more attention to the world outside the Structure. But because obedience is expected (and disobedience is punished), their power is effectively in the hands of their masters. They can let their superiors squander it in exchange for promises of advancement, which are sometimes even kept. Or the bottom ones can resist (directly or subtly) and risk being demoted or even kicked out.

As with the mid-level, there are both opportunists here and those addicted to the rewards and perks of the Structure. The only real difference is that neither has traded away enough power to get authority.

Secrets and Lies

An old acquaintance of Scratch's, from before his long torpor, is in town looking for the old gangster. The acquaintance says Scratch once told him about an animal that provided a huge rush of power in its Vitae, but wouldn't say which one. Now he wants to know the truth, but Scratch has seemingly vanished. Did Scratch just lie back then, or was he talking about something other than animal Vitae?

This visitor has no real evidence of Scratch's past diablerie, but believes that, with enough talk, a formal investigation could reveal the truth. This investigation into the Nosferatu Priscus turns into a witch-hunt, with Norris and his agents looking into the feeding practices of all Chicago's vampires. Is the hunt a private act? Do Kindred have a right to privacy? What secrets and lies are the characters keeping about their Vitae and where it comes from? How much probing are the city's monsters willing to tolerate in the name of order?

Gangrel

For a large urban center, Chicago boasts a remarkably large population of Gangrel vampires. Situated as the city is in the center of the country, Chicago is something of a hub for itinerant Gangrel (and many of their bloodlines). It's not that Chicago causes the savages to settle down, but the city is so distracting that the Gangrel wander in and may forget to wander back out for a few decades. The city is made more appealing yet by the extensive forest preserves that surround much of the city. In the absence of any overwhelming anti-Gangrel sentiment, the Savages find that Chicago is a relatively sane city. They may not like the Prince or his covenant, but they like the general level of safety Chicago offers. It's a mid-continent oasis for the travel weary, a pleasant departure from the dangers of the road that many Gangrel know all too well.

From the outside, Chicago's Gangrel appear not to have any structure whatsoever. In a standard sense, this is true, as there is no formal or even informal hierarchy. The Gangrel reputation for being only loosely affiliated holds in Chicago, even if it's totally false.



The Gangrel are quite structured, but their organizing principle is entirely unconscious. If you were to ask Chicago's Savages what their organizational principle was, they'd look at you blankly and shrug. Or they might tell you, off the cuff, that there isn't one. They would think they were telling you the truth, but they'd be mistaken.

Functionally, there's a hierarchy of respect among the Gangrel that functions as a kind of substrate underpinning every interaction between them. There's no need for violence or hostility between them because they know exactly who stands where. Upon meeting a Gangrel with more potent Vitae, the unconscious thought, "You could kick my ass, but I hope you won't," passes through the weaker vampire's head. Likewise, upon meeting a Gangrel of weaker blood, the thought "I could kick your ass, but what would be the point?" is there in the background. As sentient predators, the Gangrel considerate it something of a professional courtesy to hunt prey and treat other predators as peers. Consequently, as travelers, hunters and, frequently, soldiers, Chicago's Gangrel share a bond of feral respect for one another. That's not to say that somebody doesn't occasionally get uppity and start trouble, but for the most part, the Gangrel interact with a kind of quiet understanding between them.

This serves them particularly well in Chicago, where there are enough political pitfalls as it is. If they can gather with their own and not have to be walking on pins and needles all the time, or worried about falling into some sneaky Ventrue's carefully laid trap, things just work out better for all involved.

Where hunting is concerned, the Gangrel have it easy. Unless they're nervous about status or particularly concerned with taste, they have more blood at their disposal than they could want. Granted, most of that's from the exploding deer population, but it's easy to come by. Thanks to the forest preserves that surround the city, a Gangrel can summon his meal to him from virtually any place in the city and have it get to him in less time than it takes to order a pizza.

Other options include feeding on the drug dealers and the gay men who cruise the parks and forest preserves at night. In the city proper, Gangrel have to be careful about how they feed, as they're better suited to violent feeding than the subtle, sneaky methods used by the Daeva or Ventrue.

If the Gangrel, as a clan, have "turf," it's the forest preserves. The other Kindred avoid them like the plague, and the Lupines are reasonably easy to avoid unless they get a bug up their ass.

For the most part, the Gangrel, as a clan, don't have any enemies, and they have the rest of their clan as allies, which is a formidable asset. Even the most pugnacious Nosferatu will pause a moment before attacking a Gangrel, because even he is unlikely to be able to survive the wrath of the pack of Kindred hounds that would assuredly follow such an act of folly.

The Forest Preserves

Those Kindred who want the benefits of the city *and* the privacy of a place beyond the city lights have it in Chicago. The early 20th century saw the establishment of an extensive forest preserve around Cook County. In the modern nights, that includes about 68,000 acres of uninhabited, unlit and unwatched forestland. This is an enormous boon to the Gangrel and the more naturalist Kindred of the

Circle of the Crone. Not only does this provide them with lands for feeding, but it makes for safe space in which to sink into the earth.

The Gangrel, of course, make the most ample use of the forest preserves, particularly those Gangrel who feed primarily on animals. In the absence of natural predators, the deer population has exploded in the forest preserves and any Kindred willing to sink to feeding from animals has ample opportunity to do so. Due to the elevated deer population, any attempt to use Animalism to summon deer for feeding in the forest preserve is performed with a bonus of 3 dice to do so.

Kindred aren't the only sentient beasts in the forest preserves at night, however. The Lupines also find themselves drawn there, and more than one coven of witches has made use of the area as well. More commonly, however, the forest preserves are used by drug dealers as quiet places to conduct business or by horny men cruising for a quick hookup.

Nosferatu

Chicago, as a general rule, is relatively hospitable toward the Nosferatu. The city's associations with "the common man" helps the Haunts to be taken seriously and keeps the more vitriolic anti-Nosferatu bigotry to a minimum. The strong union presence (which the Nosferatu have a heavy hand in) gives the Haunts a degree of influence in mortal affairs that their gruesome and unsettling nature often doesn't allow them to have. This explains, to at least some degree, why Chicago's Nosferatu are so often affiliated with the Carthian Movement.

Socially, Chicago is as good as the Nosferatu are going to find. Prince Maxwell goes out of his way (too far out of his way, according to many Invictus vampires) to treat the Nosferatu as he would members of any other clan, and other Kindred generally follow his lead. Meanwhile, the warrens of the Undercity are sometimes stereotyped as a Nosferatu utopia, where the Haunts can throw off all pretense of trying to fit in with other Kindred. Never mind that the Undercity is haven to Kindred of every clan and blood — it's rumored that a sizeable fraction of Chicago's Nosferatu never emerge from the underground. These separatists are known to seclude themselves away from the pettiness and prejudice of topsider Kindred and represent a noteworthy bloc of Chicago's Haunts.

Of all Chicago's vampires, the Nosferatu are the most attuned to the concept of a "clan identity." For some, the bonding power of ideology pales in comparison to the bonding effect of the curse shared by all Nosferatu. Certainly, Chicago's Haunts are just as likely to join covenants and participate in covenant politics as any Kindred but, all other things being equal, when push comes to shove, many a Nosferatu side with another member of their clan long before they side with a member of his covenant against his clan. The covenants are well aware of this clan loyalty. They think of it as "a Nosferatu thing," and they work around it.

Despite the popular opinions to the contrary, Nosferatu solidarity is most cohesive in the suburbs rather than the inner city. Fringe villages clinging to the city's western industrial sprawl, where fields of identical bungalows were planted in the '50s and '60s, are more likely to house all-Haunt coteries than the condo-ridden blocks of the city proper. Out in these orbiting sub-cities, like Cicero, Park Ridge and Bensenville, the Nosferatu can move around in the wider spaces between buildings, where big-box stores give rise to broad parking lots and blue-collar neighborhoods with derelict downtowns mean empty streets and unheard screams. Out here, where the driving is easy and the rents are cheap, clusters of Nosferatu can move about in minivans and gather together in basement communes, going several nights without contact from the headaches, threats and nuisances of a bustling city.

Hunting tends to be a matter of stealth and brute force rather than finesse for the local Nosferatu, who have neither the Discipline spread nor the social aptitudes for other, less traumatic methods of feeding. They do not frequent Chicago's fashionable Racks — not obviously — but tend to feed from the poor, the homeless and the disenfranchised, most of whom live in the South Side, the southwest suburbs or in the other dodgy neighborhoods sprinkled throughout Chicago. Housing projects like the evaporating Cabrini Green and the remains of the Robert Taylor Homes can make for good feeding grounds, but a Haunt who hunts in such places needs to be able to deal with firearms.

Arrival

No realistic, sane person goes around Chicago without protection.
—Saul Bellow

The stereotype of New York is that it's a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there. For Kindred, Chicago's different: nobody's even saying it's nice to visit, and they don't have the option of "living" anywhere. Nevertheless, Kindred do show up in Chicago — nomads passing through, travelers on urgent errands, refugees seeking asylum and even elders looking for a bigger realm to conquer. Sometimes, new vampires are even *made* in Chicago.

All of them, whether a "sucked-and-dumped" fledgling or an arrogant old hand coming out of a long torpor, face some variation of the same dilemma: finding a place.

Passing Through

Nomads are rare among the Kindred, because travel is perilous and difficult. But that very rarity can give them value. What city dweller hasn't daydreamed about escaping the consequences of some rash act of revenge against a noisy or irritating neighbor? Many Kindred have simply evolved to the point that they fantasize about having someone else do it (that is, do the act and then escape) for them.

Chicago's an air hub, a train mecca and the confluence of major interstate highways. As the city at the center of America, Chicago gets a lot of travelers, and some of them are those uncommon, uncanny, undead wanderers.

Stickney

Stickney, the tenurial domain of Regent Mike Czarnecki, has a reputation among some nomadic Kindred. A vampire traveler with Clan or Covenant Status ●●●+ who asks about Chicago likely hears about Hard-Headed Mike. He's known for offering most nomads a very warm welcome, as long as they play by his rules.

Here's what he offers: any nomad passing through Chicago can stay in Mike's hospital for up to a month. He's got a very firm grip on the smaller of the hospital's two morgues: it can hold up to 20 bodies and is overseen by himself at night and one of his ghouls by day. It's as secure a haven as a wanderer can hope for. Furthermore, his guests can help themselves to cold blood that the hospital would otherwise throw out — stuff suctioned in operations and drained from corpses. He'd never assert that this blood's healthy ("Dude, it *is* Stickney . . ."), but he makes a point to collect only from patients who aren't there due to contagion.

In return for his largesse, he asks that any warm-blood feeding be done outside of Stickney. He insists that visitors make themselves known to the Prince or the Prince's governing apparatus. (For nomads without any particular reputation and who don't look like much trouble, this is a rubber stamp. Others get a more intense treatment.) Czarneki's guests are expected to obey mortal laws as long as they're inside Stickney — he doesn't even want them getting traffic tickets.

Every guest is expected to offer Regent Czarneki at least one full night of attention, though sometimes he's too busy (or disinterested). In essence, he wants the option of taking an entire night to question his guests, politely, about their travels, the news from other cities, anything of interest they've heard and so forth. When questioning Kindred, and nomads at that, he expects a certain degree of reluctance and disinformation, but the quality of response certainly influences how receptive other Kindred (especially Mike's folks in Stickney) are to the guest.

Visitors who stay longer than a week owe the Regent a boon, something he explains their first night. Boons are tasks he requests, rarely life-threatening, which most wanderers are happy (or, at least, grudgingly willing) to complete. The most common by far is to convey coded messages to Kindred in other cities. Other times he's had visitors liquidate troublesome mortals, deal with annoying but direct issues in Stickney that no one else wants to handle, even act as go-betweens for the Kindred and factions of other supernatural beings. He doesn't ask his guests to do anything that takes a lot of brains or initiative — you never know what could happen with that. But "go here, talk to this guy and find out what he thinks" is far from atypical. The farther away the chore takes the traveler, the more discretion Mike gives him, pretty much by default.

The reason for Mike's largesse is not, of course, that he's a wonderful and giving human being. Mike is an Invictus player on the national level, a level few play at because travel is so straitened. He has spent 30 years building his contacts within the nomad community, so

Baggage Car

A train arrives in Union Station with a strange cargo, intercepted by the werewolves who watch that site. This large wooden crate, with no useful markings or signage, is packed with earth and clay around the body of a torpid vampire. No one on the train recalls loading the box aboard, and no one knows where it's meant to be delivered.

The Prince needs Kindred to work with the werewolves (whose jurisdiction the body is staying in until they're satisfied that any threat has been dealt with) to identify this vampire. If the Kindred can't solve the riddle of his appearance, what can they and the Uratha agree to do with an anonymous elder Kindred?

Gang War

A vampire illegally Embraces her lover, but as far as the other gangstas in his crew are concerned, he's been killed. Before long, they've decided that it was the work of a rival gang — a gang, unknown to them, with ties to a pack of werewolves. A gang war is brewing. Skirmishes are hitting the streets like spent shells from a Tec-9. The herds, Retainers and allies of vampires are killing the family, friends and contacts of Lupines. Things are about to get out of control.

On both sides, Kindred and Uratha, the leaders want to keep peace in the darkness, but, on the street, personal hatreds are spilling over into the secret world of the supernaturals. The city needs peacemakers and diplomats who aren't afraid to walk in the crossfire. The city needs to find some way to cool the hatred of mortal gangs without breaking the Masquerade.

he has a pretty good (if slow) network of errand runners and intelligence gatherers, and the signal to noise ratio is far higher than anyone is getting talking to distant Kindred by phone or confabbing on the Internet. Mike has ploys in play in San Francisco, in Vancouver, in Cincinnati and St. Louis and, especially, in New Orleans. While Invictus influence is local right now, Mike believes that the telecommunications boom is just going to keep booming, until it shakes the local focus of Kindred politics to pieces.

The Lancea Sanctum

The Lancea Sanctum does not like strangers and makes no bones about it. Though bound by their creed to offer sanctuary and sustenance to Kindred who offer fealty to the church, travelers ask for that handout at their own risk. Under Solomon Birch, anyone who comes to the Temple begging gets some nasty cold blood to eat, but is then assigned a "benefactor" (universally one of Solomon's cronies) who provides a haven — and who is considered the authority over that Kindred's Requiem until such time as the benefactor deems him fit to enter Kindred society at large.

Thus, a better name for the situation might be "indentured servitude." The bosses don't use Vinculums (or, at least, they aren't supposed to), but they are not shy about putting the fist down on anyone who takes advantage of their patronage by disobeying an order they see fit to give. As a consequence, the Lancea is troubled by few visitors, which is just how Solomon likes it. Chicago is trouble enough without uninvited guests throwing off the balance every few years.

Sylvia Raines, on the other hand, is gentle, welcoming and solicitous, as is her right. She is honor-bound to inform Solomon of newcomers and almost always does so — but rarely before she's indebted them to her.

An official Lancea messenger, or "*nuntius*," is a different matter to both factions. Solomon gives the official messenger his due and even courts him, but Solomon's extremist views find little favor with mainstream Lancea travelers. They're far more likely to respect Sylvia, or even travel to study with her, giving Solomon the cold shoulder and enhancing the prestige of his rival. Solomon hates that shit.

The Invictus

The Invictus demands that all nomads of any stripe present themselves to the Prince for recognition. Sometimes it even happens, but the Invictus doesn't put tremendous effort into patrolling for newbies. In Chicago, that rule is mainly in place to give the Prince an excuse to screw with travelers who've irked him in some other fashion that isn't *specifically* against his laws.

Visitors from other clans can usually expect a marginally polite reception when they present themselves. This costs the Prince little and allows him to publicly display his tolerance and largesse. Those who violate his courtesy give him an excuse to mistrust their covenant and strip it of authority or prestige, so either way, he wins.

Official Invictus travelers are something else again. Oh, the public ones are tolerated on a "bread-and-circus" level because they enhance the grandeur of the Invictus court (and thereby legitimize it). Anyone who comes and tries to alter Prince Maxwell's carefully balanced power structure, however, is likely to find himself eagerly aided by Invictus members who appear to dislike the Prince, but who actually seem more interested in turning the traveler against the Invictus' rivals — all in the name of unbalancing Prince *Maxwell's* détente, of course. If the interlopers succeed, they often find that the Prince was well prepared for the outcome. If they fail, well, they're rarely a problem afterwards.

The worst (from the perspective of the Prince and his Inner Circle) are the private, secret, off-the-leash agents that the Invictus (or some *other* monarch claiming to speak for the entire covenant) sends to "rein in Prince Maxwell's excesses." These poor bastards rarely fare well at all. Often, Maxwell sees them coming, courtesy of national power player Mike Czarnecki and, between the Prince and the Regent, these spies and assassins have little chance. Prince Maxwell wants them neutralized because they're coming to fuck him, and Mike wants the same because the Prince supports his Regency and because weakening the Invictus' small pool of official agents allows Mike's large pool of unofficial agents to act with greater freedom.

The Circle of the Crone

The Circle has no official authority to demand recognition, and, under Rowen's guidance, they probably wouldn't use it if they had. They don't care if people travel, but that doesn't mean they don't care about *travelers*. They care deeply. Travelers are useful, important and often meaningful, especially to the ritualists of Chicago.

While Rowen certainly has access to both of these rituals, Bella Dravnzie has been kept out of the loop, which may do much to explain her belief that Rowen is not doing much of anything when, in fact, the elder is simply not doing much that's Bella can see her doing.

The Crossroads and the Circle Path

There are two Crúac rituals, little known, which are unique to Chicago — perhaps because the city has been a crossroads of blood for so long, with millions of animals traveling many miles to meet a painful death. The slaughterhouse of the Americas has its own flavor of power, and these two rites tap into that power of resonating blood. Presumably these rituals were even created in Chicago, but Rowen isn't talking. Acolyte legends imply that different versions of these rituals exist in other cities, however.

Rubbing Elbows

The Adler Planetarium, the Shedd Aquarium and the Field Museum of Natural History all share lakefront lawns and skyline views on the strip of land that's home to Burnham Park. To mortal eyes, it's a landmark crowded with culture and Chicago history. To the supernatural inhabitants of the city, the park is crowded with political and social rivals — and potential threats.

Though most every social vampire knows the Shedd is host to prestigious Elysium functions, not so many Kindred know about the cabal of mages making use of the Adler Planetarium. Likewise, not all wizards and mystics making use of the Planetarium's cabal or the Field Museum's occult resources know what goes on after-hours at the Shedd. At least, they seldom know the scope of it.

Imagine the Masquerade-managing headache for the Invictus when some mage squabble spills over into the Shedd when Prince Maxwell's holding court. Perhaps a cabal of young Turks come looking to strong-arm the Kindred, completely unprepared for the numbers and power of those in attendance that night. Maybe the Kindred get suspicious about those stargazing wizards next door and try to drive them out of the neighborhood. Or maybe the vampires and the mages are driven together by some third supernatural force looking to lay claim to the Field Museum — three's a crowd.

It's possible that the Ordo Dracul (if they somehow learned these highly secret and tightly guarded rites) could explain the geographical variances. Or it's just as possible that the Circle could teach the Order a thing or two about magical landscapes.

Rite of the Bloody Crossroads ••

The Rite of the Bloody Crossroads is a divination that predicts what Kindred are coming to a certain area from outside its boundaries. The region can be defined as an area as small as a haven or as large as Chicago or anything between (making it quite versatile). The rite provides fairly vague and symbolic portents, revealing immaterial factors like the vampire's motives, desires and drives ("He comes with blood in his mouth, in search of black hair and blue eyes . . ."). On the other hand, this rite also provides a fairly concrete feel for the road by which the stranger will enter ("Evil comes across the Skyway — tonight."). The ritual only senses approaching vampires and only works within the Chicago city limits.

The larger the boundary specified, the larger the penalty to the blood sorcerer's activation roll. Divining visitors to a single building imposes no penalty, while divinations centered on a neighborhood might suffer a –3 penalty and divinations focused on a whole city would suffer a –5 penalty.

The information gleaned from the divination is often vague and difficult to understand. Some ritualists receive flashes of imagery and sound that are too intense to recall easily, but others reveal information in a voice that is not their own. Investigation or Occult rolls may be made to puzzle out the meaning of prophetic imagery, at the Storyteller's discretion.

In general, the more successes achieved on the activation roll, the further the reach of the divination in space or time. As a general guidelines, one success equals one mile or one night. If a vampire within the power's range is headed for the specified area, the ritualist receives a glimpse of her; alternately, if a vampire will arrive at the specified area within a number of nights equal to the successes achieved, the ritualist receives some sign.

Rite of the Circle Path ••

The Rite of the Circle Path is more subtle and mysterious. It is cast with a particular goal or object in mind, and, when successful, provides a vision of a traveler (human, Kindred or other) who can aid in the pursuit of that goal or who will come to possess the object in question at some point in the future. Unfortunately, this ritual only reveals the fateful connections between people and events or objects, but not when, how or why the connections exist. Thus, anyone coming to Chicago may, in all ignorance, be the tool the Circle has been awaiting for years, and neither the Acolytes nor the fated subject could encounter each other for years.

The power of this ritual does infuse the blood sorcerer with an intuitive sense of the subject, however. Should the ritualist find herself within a number of yards of the subject equal to 20 plus twice the successes achieved on the activation roll — or within sight of him — she may attempt a Wits + Composure roll with a +2 bonus to sense the subject's connection to her divination. This intuition is entirely mystical; the ritualist does not have to consciously recognize the subject to make the roll.

This ritual works only in the city of Chicago. It can be successfully performed only once per year for any particular object or goal.

The Carthians

Where the Invictus' and the Lancea's ruling cliques dislike outsiders because they're catalysts for instability, the Carthians like them for that exact reason. In Chicago, the Carthians have numbers and a lot of power but find themselves stymied by their prime rivals, the Invictus.

The dream would be to inspire some Carthian nomad to assassinate Norris. Not the Prince, no: the best and brightest of the Carthians figure that if they whack Prince Maxwell they're just going to justify a police state and perpetual crackdown conditions under the rule of Solomon Birch or Norris. The Carthians aren't crazy about Prince Maxwell's policies — they perceive him

as a weak moderate who's going to bumble along and preserve the *status quo* because it rewards him and is just easier to maintain. If they remove him, the Carthians play into the hands of the reactionaries, but if the Carthians destroy one of the reactionaries below him, they take half the steel out of Prince Maxwell's reign. Give a spongy middle-of-the-roader enough rope and he'll hang himself, they figure. But give a psycho like Norris a real rebellion to crush and nothing would stop him.

Wandering, *Yojimbo*-style assassins are pretty rare, so the Carthians' usual expectations for nomads are lower. Much lower. Carthians with plans for nomads are interested in the following — interested enough to offer anonymous backing and encouragement, but not interested enough to take risks that could undermine the covenant altogether:

Insurrection

Some Carthians would love to get wind of some genuinely violent gesture from outsider extremists — some real-gone, beyond-the-pale psycho motherfuckers like Belial's Brood or VII — and trip up Norris' investigation just long enough that *Carthian* enforcers could be the ones to swoop in, save the city, be the heroes and make Prince Maxwell's Invictus look out of touch and impotent. If that means protecting the psychos long enough for them to commit atrocities against civilians, be they Kindred or mortal, that could be acceptable. Innocent bodies will make the Carthians' triumph more dramatic.

Rabble Rousing

Much less malign than a full-bore assault, the Carthians might covertly support a newcomer, loudmouth ideologue willing to say the things they can't: "Prince Maxwell is worthless!" or "You're slaves to a Lancea toady!" or "The machinery of the Masquerade is oiled with the sweat of the neonates!" The lovely thing about having a nomad sound off on these issues is that she'll presumably be gone before the Invictus gets around to taking action — action that would force the Carthians to give her up or fight for her. Ideally, they'd have her bellow some slogans and seed some doubts without them having to take responsibility at all.

Propaganda of the Deed

Alternately, the Carthians can get a small percentage from protecting nomad troublemakers — blood poachers, illegal Embracers and Masquerade-breachers — as long as said criminals exemplify the bad behavior of *other covenants*. An Acolyte diablerist is a walking advertisement for the downside of Crone-style freedom, and it would be a shame if such an inconvenient truth were covered up before it could convince anyone. Many among the Carthians believe it's not enough to make the new guard seem capable. The image of the establishment has to be marred to close the gap of respect between the up-and-comers and the old dead.

Carthian nomads are welcomed at O'Hare, and any traveler with Covenant Status: Carthian Movement • or more can learn that from local Carthians in the know.

The Ordo Dracul

The Ordo Dracul has little interest in Kindred travelers outside the Order's own organization. Individual Dragons might try to recruit a particularly gullible (or useful) wanderer for some plot or scheme, but, as an institution, they regard those outside the Order as uninformed and ignorant. Being a nomad who doesn't even get the *chance* to learn is like compounding a felony.

The exceptions to this are nomads who have interesting knowledge or unique expertise regarding other supernatural creatures. There's some close contact between the Kindred and other supernatural beings in Chicago, and any information that might give the Order an edge is welcome. For the Order, all new information sharpens that edge. The trick lies in offering the nomads something that is locally useful — something more than trivia about the state of affairs in distant cities.

Better than any Kindred wanderer, for the Dragons, is the chance to offer hospitality to a skinchanger or an enchanter. The Dragons don't have such opportunities often, but between vampires at O'Hare, moles inside Norris' intelligence apparatus and plain, ordinary Dragons creeping around town with their eyes open, they sometimes catch wind of a lone traveler of those outré origins. There's a great deal of insight to be gained by establishing a dialogue — or a trade — with those unknown to other Kindred.

Some Dragons prefer to have such receptions attended by the Sworn of the Axe, but the more the Axe is allowed to get involved, the greater the chance that things degenerate into a brawl. (Of course, subduing an unknown agent who might not be missed and getting a chance to covertly dissect an inhuman specimen isn't the worst possible outcome.)

Moving In

The Prince's Tranquility puts Chicago's new Kindred in an interesting position: Tranquility makes them a commodity. Whether he's a crazy Ventrue, scruffy Gangrel or amoral Daeva, he's wanted, because without the Embrace, the covenants lose their easiest means of growth.

Think about it. Their options are to Embrace illegally (and risk the wrath of the Prince backed by the other four covenants), to poach members from another covenant (a difficult task which, in the end, only gets you someone who may be either weak or treacherous) or to recruit newcomers and the unaligned. Few experienced Kindred are unbound without good reason, so the most accessible warm bodies (to use the term loosely) are strangers.

An immigrants who makes good impressions get courted. Someone who proves his worth before settling can spark a sort of bidding war for his allegiance, with various covenants promising protection, position and perquisites. Most Kindred aren't so attractive, but can still expect at least some desultory recruitment pitch from the Lancea, the Circle or the Carthians. (The Invictus feels it can be choosy, and the Order has other priorities.)

The downside to this is no covenant is a good sport when rejected.

Neonates

Neonates who move to Chicago may feel like they have the options of getting on the bus or getting sucked beneath its wheels, with the bus in question being the gaping, gnash-toothed Chicago Kindred political machine. It's always hungry for fresh meat that it can chew up and spit out, packaged like a sausage, as a lowly dogsbody for one of the five covenants. Order library assistant? Carthian errand boy? Lancea penitent, Circle jerk, Invictus piss-boy? The bottom-rung options from *every* covenant look pretty unattractive.

One choice is to not choose. While the covenants would *like* to suck in every new Kindred they can, it's not like they have nothing better to do than harass the unaligned. Cicero beckons, though the rumors that surround it vary wildly from the misleading ("it's like Shangri-La for the unbound!") to the distorted ("one of the Unholy's childer dwells there and all cower before his prowess!") to the baldly bizarre ("the undead there are unwitting pawns in a spirit war waged between the ghosts of Dion O'Banion and Al Capone!"). Travelers looking for a home have to deal with no open assaults, just bitchiness and snide comments from the chaotic Kindred there — unless Rafael Ladue gets his way and "organizes" the township. Or unless the newcomers fall on one side or the other of Ladue's authority schemes.

Slipping into Chicago proper unnoticed is possible, but accomplishing anything there other than stark and bare survival really is not. With the covenants dueling for anything of value, any good feed zone is parceled off and any area of mortal influence or profit is, if not spoken for, at least guarded. The mayor's office, for example, is remarkably clean of "control" by any Kindred faction or by any Lupine pack or wizard's cabal because, much as *all* of them would like to get a finger in that sweet pie, they know that using Dominate or blood addiction or other rough means would paint a big target on the user. Everybody *wants* the target, but more than wanting it for themselves, they want for enemies and unknown elements to *not have it*.

In Chicago, the Devil you know beats the Devil you don't: no one knows for sure how the Chicago Fire was started.

It's actually *easier* to infiltrate something like the Chicago River or Stickney township, something that's solidly staked out by one group and for which there is no competition. Regent Czarneki in Stickney sees much, but his network isn't infinite and he has most of his attention focused on distant events. A mouse-quiet newcomer, or a set of them, might be able to escape his attention. As for the River Snakes, there are a *lot* of tunnels and rain sewer branches coming off that waterway. Interlopers who cover their tracks, who don't poach on Snake feeding and who don't run afoul of that weird spirit thing the Snakes have got working for them could stay unnoticed (or at least, ignored) for a decade.

Alternately, a neonate Kindred might do better trying to muscle in on young mages or Union Station Lupines. Shapechangers and occultists aren't pushovers, but neither are they as well acquainted with the limitations (physical, mystical and social) of fledgling Kindred as are, say, ancillae and elder Kindred. A ballsy neonate (or group of them) might be able to claim some turf by backing off some ignorant bottom feeders from another group or blazing trails of diplomacy where the established undead believe such efforts would fail. What are the mages or Lupines going to do? Call the Prince? Risk their society's détente with Kindred because some punks got pushy?

As long as the answers to those questions are "no," bravado can work. (The answers aren't always "no.")

Asleep on the El

The el is a popular feeding place for many street-level vampires. Many people carelessly fall asleep on the train after a night of drinking and dancing, leaving themselves susceptible to the memory-glossing power of the Kiss. Couples making out on the stiff plastic seats of the trains are a common late-night sight. For many vampires, this is the perfect situation: no stalking, no hiding and no fear of witnesses.

The trouble is that, for years, virtually every train running between midnight and four in the morning is unofficially claimed by some bloodsucker. In some neighborhoods, a train is considered to be the local Regent domain while the el is passing through his territory, but in other 'hoods the el is a domain in its own right. Getting caught feeding on another vampire's train is the start to one bad night, as a simple attempt to prepare for some other challenge of the Danse Macabre leads to a petty turf-battle with some would-be vampire lord. This could lead to Kindred getting stranded in an unfamiliar neighborhood near dawn or undergoing a savage gang trial for poaching on the ground claimed by a monster whose only authority comes from his own sense of entitlement.

After examining the options of crossing werewolves, sleeping underwater or possibly becoming a walking plague ward, many young refugees may decide that a covenant position *isn't* such a bad thing. The question is, which one to join? The follow-up question is, how to mitigate the drawbacks and maximize the advantages of membership?

The Invictus always needs more boot polishers, squires and audiences to provide an awed hush during their spectacles, but canny neonates are going to parlay their positions as new recruits into something better. Liaison positions with other covenants are roles in which new faces can make a difference, because the diplomats on all sides have usually rusted into stalemated positions. Someone new can shake things up. Of course, with the Invictus' conservative bent, that isn't always considered a positive development.

For those who choose the Circle of the Crone, the issue is philosophical. Is the newcomer going to follow Rowen's lead, leaving others alone and asking nothing but the same courtesy? Or will he sign up with Bella Dravnzie to try and wrest power away from the Lancea? Bella's crew is hungry to recruit, but joining up earns one enmity from outside the covenant and some disdain within it. Not the choice to make if you're doing it all for the Crúac.

A similar division splits the Lancea Sanctum. There's no ritual that shows whether the new recruit is a fire-breathing reactionary like Solomon or a pacifying moderate like Sylvia. Sooner or later, however, the new congregant is going to have to show her hand or else be ignored as one more Sunday-only Sanctified unworthy of consideration in covenant matters.

With the Ordo Dracul, it all depends on whom the neonate can get as a teacher, and that often depends on what the neonate has to offer in exchange. A Sworn teacher is essential for any kind of political protection inside the group, but there are no neutral parties among the Sworn. Political transgression against one's mentor is rarely tolerated in the Order, so the wise pupil is willing to go to the mat for his instructor's philosophies. The foolish pupil either winds up fighting for a cause he despises, or he defies his teacher and gets shut out from the education that is a primary measure of merit in the Ordo.

Finally, the new arrival could sign up with the loyal opposition — the Carthians. They've got a heavy grip on local sources of power like the unions, the police departments, citizens' action groups. The Carthians don't need any more of that stuff, which is great for neonates from Somewhere Else who don't have any of it to offer. What the Carthians want and don't have is access to the eerie fruits of eldritch study. Sure, they have members with a smattering of Crúac, they know a few of the simpler Theban rites, they have rogue ex-Dragons who can teach them a low Coil or two. But the Carthians' rivals aren't eager to share their hard-won knowledge with a bunch of pushy democrats, and the hammer would fall hard on anyone who was too open about teaching the secrets of a covenant they've forsaken. Thus, a neonate with unique knowledge *and* the courage to share it in face of consequences — that's a traveler who can find a *warm* home with the Movement.

Ancillae

Everything that's true for neonates is, by and large, true for ancillae. But the differing details can be critical.

For example, the covenants that would make concessions to young Kindred with desirable qualities are likely to make greater concessions for more experienced Kindred with that same qualities. The flip side of that is that rival covenants are more likely to take steps against the young hotshot on the Other Team than against some punk rookie. This is particularly true for ancillae who have jumped from one covenant to another, and triply true for those who bought their way into a new group with the secrets of their old group.

The Ordo Dracul (for example) may not sweat it over some putz who's showing off the lowest Coil to his Crone coterie-mates, but the Dragons will make him suffer for his temerity however they can without violating the Prince's Tranquility. Somebody who's teaching high-level Coils, though, has *got* to pay. Maybe they'll pressure the Prince for an Indulgence specifically so they can take him out. Maybe they'll take him out of town to do the deed. Or maybe they'll get a deniable cutout to do the deed.

What this illustrates is the importance of reputation at the ancilla level (and higher). While a neonate without status has to prostitute herself pretty hard to cut a good deal with a covenant, an ancilla can trade on past accomplishments — to a certain extent. But that benefit is counterbalanced by the sad fact that others are going to try and exploit that rep for their own gain. In other words, hosing down a neonate is unimpressive. Successfully scoring off someone with a rep makes your rep stronger.

Elders

Elders rarely move to Chicago, because elders rarely move, because Kindred who move rarely survive to become elders. Thus, when one shows up, people notice. It's not just the Harpies, not just the courtiers, not just the hooked-up Invictus Ventrue political hacks. Any Kindred who talks to any other Kindred is likely to hear rumors, no matter how half-baked, or illogical. No matter how faded the truth may be from cycling through Chinese Whispers, every Kindred with even the faintest fear of his own kind will hear: *something big is coming.*

The students of Auspex dream dreams. The Acolyte diviners nod over crystal balls, while the Sworn of the Dying Light frown over charts showing a shift of mystic currents. Those who listen to the animals hear them whine, as before a storm or an earthquake. Secret

members of VII prick up their ears, and if they can't quite be certain, they still suspect: *something ancient walks this way*.

Even beyond the Kindred, the Lupines sniff the air and the wizards see signs of grim portent. The spirits move uneasy on their hidden paths, and even the dead may fear. Mortals sense the least of all, but those who do, feel it, perhaps, most deeply. They don't know what they know, or how, but they can't escape the feeling: *a shadow has fallen on my home, and that which cast it approaches*.

An elder can sneak into Chicago and conceal her person, but she can only mitigate her impact, not hide it.

The weak flee. The foolish worship. The cunning and ambitious offer service, while the powerful brace themselves, and watch.

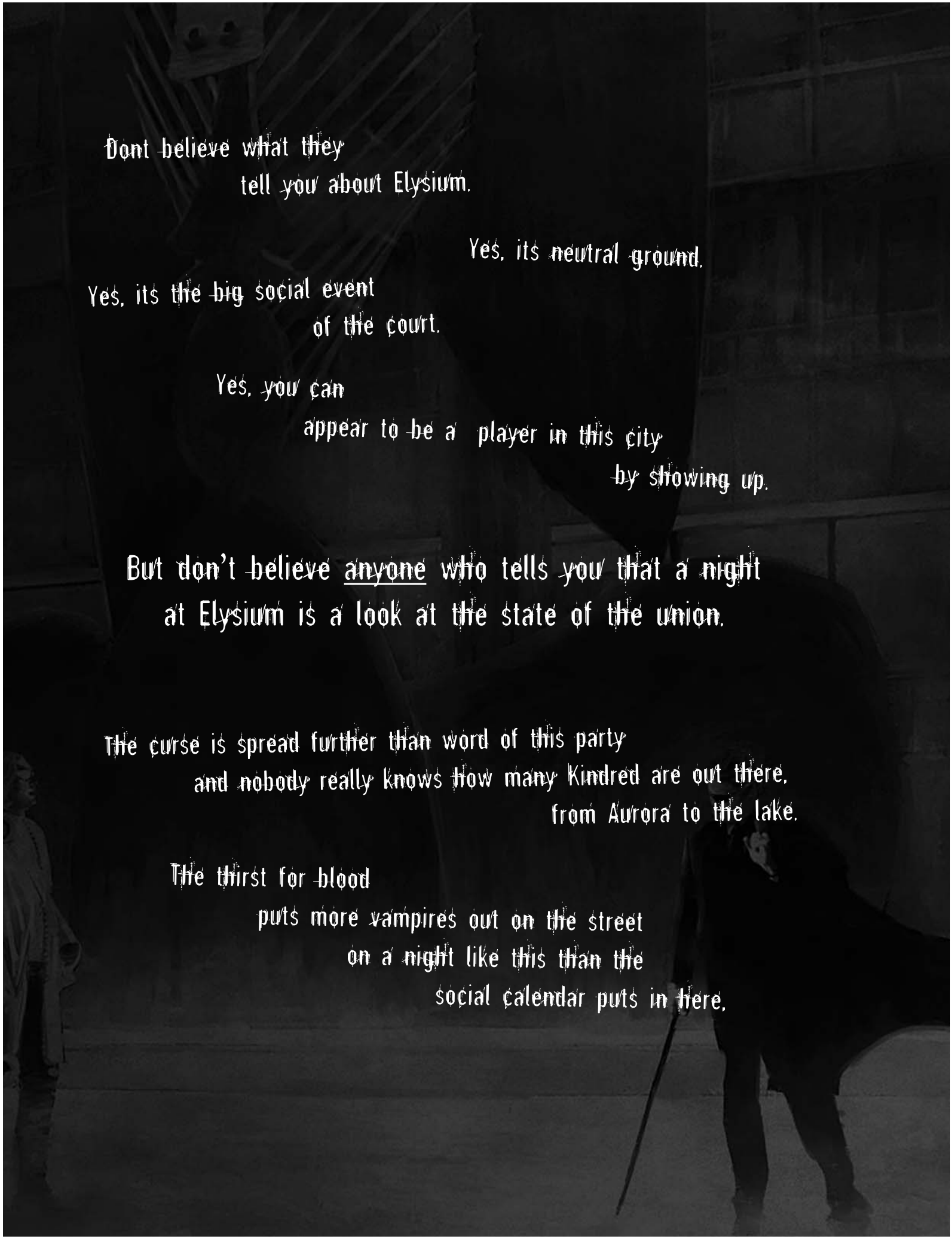
The mere arrival of an elder unbalances covenant politics. If the elder has stated loyalty to one faction or another, that faction's rivals immediately circle their wagons, possibly overcoming conflicts that were previously severe. An unaligned elder can spark a fierce bidding war as the five gangs battle for her favor — and if she stays unaligned, she'd better brace herself for an onslaught from *all* of them, because, like the Republicans and the Democrats, the only thing the covenants agree on is that they don't share power gladly.

In each of Chicago's five covenants, there's someone who suspects there's space for a sixth, and an unaligned elder is one of the few foci around which such a thing could cohere. There are Sanctified who were just looking for some answers and who are uneasy with the total faith that Solomon demands. There are Acolytes who think that Rowen is doing nothing and Bella is trying to turn them into the Invictus. There are Carthians who secretly hate votes and debate — they signed on for revolution, and they're fed up with waiting. As for the Ordo Dracul and the Invictus, they both have plenty of irritated neonates who are ready to be Lords of the Night already and who feel like they're going to explode if they have to say "I abide thy will, my master" one more fucking time.

Every elder needs to hit the ground running with her power structure, because the established authorities all fear competition within their covenants. More than that, they fear competition from outside their covenants. But most of all, they fear competition from outside *all* the covenants.






Dont believe what they
tell you about Elysium.
Yes, its neutral ground.
Yes, its the big social event
of the court.
Yes, you can
appear to be a player in this city
by showing up.
But don't believe anyone who tells you that a night
at Elysium is a look at the state of the union.
The curse is spread further than word of this party
and nobody really knows how many Kindred are out there,
from Aurora to the lake.
The thirst for blood
puts more vampires out on the street
on a night like this than the
social calendar puts in here.

Chicago's Damned

Chicago is unique. It is the only completely corrupt city in America.

—Charles Merriam, losing mayoral candidate, 1911

Chicago is not the most corrupt American city. It's the most theatrically corrupt.

—Studs Terkel, 1978

This chapter examines influential and noteworthy vampires from every level of Kindred society and every faction of Kindred politics, but these are by no means all of the vampires in Chicago. Although the edicts of Prince Maxwell should keep the city's Kindred count relatively stable, no thorough census has ever been completed. With Chicago's core metropolitan area home to three million mortals and a ratio of one Kindred for every 50,000 kine, the city could feasibly be home to 60 vampires. In practice, the core metropolitan area — where nightlife is ubiquitous and crime provides a vampire good cover against routine investigations — seems to attract vampires from throughout the greater Chicagoland area. That larger population of more than nine million mortals could support as many 180 vampires from Lake Michigan to the edge of the western suburbs. With a population that large, the vampires described herein aren't even a majority, so defining trends in Kindred society from these vampires alone may be folly.

To put it another way, even if everything in this chapter is accurate, it may not speak to the truth of the Danse Macabre in Chicago. Your chronicles will do that.

Strangely, the most important Kindred in your chronicle are missing from this chapter — your characters. Surrounding all of these characters, however, is plenty of room for your own. Little is know about the coterie of Solomon Birch or the agents of Norris, except that they exist. These could be excellent places to start a new chronicle and excellent roles for new characters to fill (even if they need a generous dose of experience points from the Storyteller right at the outset). Ultimately, to learn what's really going on with these characters, they must appear in your own stories. Own them. Make them yours.

The Prince's Inner Circle

Uneasy lies the head that bears the crown, and never more uneasily than after executing a tricky usurpation. Everyone agreed that the Matriarch had to go, but only Maxwell and his colleagues had the balls to step up. Now, of course, everyone retroactively "always supported him," but Prince Maxwell hasn't forgotten who was by his side when he was just an exile looking to reclaim his praxis. Those companions — Garret McLean, the ghoul Robert Washington, Elise Kirkhaur and, to a lesser extent, Solomon Birch — are the intimates of the Prince and the core of his power structure.

Leader: Prince Maxwell

The Prince is a moderate whose policies are tolerated by all but welcomed by few. By banning both the Embrace and the murder of fellow Kindred, he has imposed a certain measure of order after the wild days of the Matriarch's fall. Forbidding childer makes Kindred work harder for their allies, thus leveraging his own position as a moderator. By outlawing violence against Kindred, he has cooled down certain conflicts and brought them into more civil arenas — again, arenas that play to his strength and the strength of the Invictus. This means, of course, that the more

blatant and aggressive a coterie or individual is, the more angry it or she is at the Prince and the less place it's likely to have in his new order. (Solomon Birch, known for his aggression, anger and blatancy, is a noteworthy exception.)

Maxwell's Inner Circle is *not* the Primogen: In fact, some of his most secret rivals sit on that body, scheming against him while playing at being friends. The Inner Circle consists of those ghouls and Kindred that Prince Maxwell trusts implicitly, and they are few in number.

Unfortunately for the Prince, he himself broke the ban on Embrace by creating Persephone, and she cost him a great deal of credibility. While he retains praxis, his rivals have already begun to question whether he is a hypocrite, or whether he's fallen prey to the eccentricities of the Ventrue clan.

Prince Maxwell Clarke

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1800
Apparent Age: Late 30s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Liberal Arts) 2, Investigation 2, Politics (Chicago) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Weaponry (Sword, Axe) 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Kindred) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4
Merits: City Status (Chicago) 5, Clan Status: Ventrue 3, Covenant Status: Invictus 4, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Location 3, Haven: Size 4, Herd 5, Language (French), Resources 4, Retainers 5
Willpower: 6



Humanity: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 9
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 6
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Dominate 4, Resilience 4
Vitae/ per Turn: 15/3

Maxwell's Devotion: Infallible Aim (Auspex ·, Celerity ·)

With this Devotion, Maxwell can combine Auspex's capability to perceive with Celerity's ability to react. Infallible Aim essentially creates a pause in which Maxwell can aim while using a ranged weapon — a pause that seems generous to him but is imperceptible to those around him. While this Devotion can't be used for more than one shot (no matter how fast *he's* moving, the gun barrel still quivers and jerks after firing), this Devotion does make him incredibly accurate.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

When used, Maxwell can add his Celerity dots to his attack pool for any ranged weapon, up to a maximum +3 dice pool bonus. Essentially, he gets a free chance to aim each turn. As with normal aiming, however (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 162), Maxwell loses his mundane Defense for the turn. Likewise, the dice pool bonus he gains from aiming subtracts from the bonus Celerity grants to his Defense in the turn. Therefore, if Maxwell were to gain a +2 dice pool bonus to his attack, he would lose his mundane Defense, and his Celerity-derived Defense bonus would be just 1: Celerity 3 minus the +2 dice pool bonus.

This Devotion costs 10 experience points to learn.

"You gonna be my scent-hound now, nigrah." Those were the words that welcomed Maxwell Clarke into his Requiem. His sire, Peter Murray, was a grand Southern gentleman who, feeling the need for a tracker, Embraced a woodsman familiar with the wilds of western America. Murray picked Maxwell specifically because Murray figured a black man would be easier to control and predict.

Maxwell, however, wasn't the type of Negro to whom Peter Murray was accustomed. Born free in Quebec, Maxwell Clarke had never known the yoke of slavery and was ill inclined to accept it from anyone. Play-

ing the dutifully whipped servant, he took Peter out into the woods in pursuit of some lost property, called some wolves and left them to figure out what to do with carrion that was still moving. Peter tried to scare them off by firing a pistol into the air, only to find that its plugged barrel made it explode in his hand. The sight of shredded flesh and dripping blood decided the wolves, while Maxwell sat back and watched with a gentle smile.

Clarke drifted across the west for a while, but he was no longer content to be the solo wanderer he'd been when alive. He wanted to find others of his type, to learn what he'd become and how to cope with it. But more, he had a hunger that no number of elk or beaver could satisfy.

He came, in time, to San Francisco, where he tarried for only a few decades. That was his first attempt to re-invent himself as a person of culture and learning, and it was a laughable one. By the time he realized what he was doing wrong (which was, essentially, everything), his reputation as a poser, buffoon and cockalorum was set. Undeterred, he did what few Kindred in San Francisco would contemplate: he left.

In Kansas City, he became Maxwell Phillips, and he made a much better job of presenting himself as discerning and educated. (He went back to his French accent, which helped.) By the time he felt ready to move to Chicago, he had accumulated the equivalent of a college degree.

He had also developed his fatal fascination with women of promise.

While Maxwell is not fastidious (though, as Prince he can certainly feed as he likes), he takes far more satisfaction when feeding from women who possess the qualities that he still (still, after 200 years) fears he lacks. Women who are poised, graceful, dignified, intelligent, educated, articulate — and young. After 30 or so, they begin to fade and spoil in his eyes, but a pretty Rhodes Scholar in her late 20s — ah, that's a vessel that feeds both his man *and* his Beast.

In Chicago, he got a position at the Palmer House Hotel, working as a night porter and, eventually, working his way up to the level of chief concierge. By now, the man who had destroyed his sire in defense of his own freedom was happy to play at subservience — because play was all it was. Acting as the faithful "good colored boy" to the wealthy guests was Maxwell's grand joke upon them. He got them theater tickets and sent them to the levee, and while they were dining, he fed on their daughters.

Maxwell's Haven

While he retains a suite at the Palmer House and has access to a couple other bolt-holes scattered about town (• and •• havens, not reflected in his statistics above), Maxwell's personal haven is not really that impressive. It's decorated with tasteful restraint, it's spacious and comfortable and it's highly guarded — first, by well-remunerated police, second, by a variety of occult traps set by the Lancea and the Circle, third, by armed guards and high-tech gadgetry (some of which, designed in part by Solomon, take advantage of Kindred physiology quirks such as low body temperature and breathlessness) and fourth, by Maxwell's extensive menagerie of exotic pets. No one's sure exactly what he's got where, except maybe the fellow who gave Maxwell his license. Everyone sees the aquariums of poisonous snakes, and everyone meets the puma, but there are rumors of rarer creatures that crawl, fly or cling to the walls of his abode.

And don't forget the "grims" (see p. 66).

But despite these precautions, Prince Maxwell's home is far from perfectly secure, for two very significant reasons. First, everyone knows where it is, which is a security problem all by itself. Second, every covenant except the Carthians and the Ordo Dracul had a part in building the defenses, so rumors of its defenses have gotten around.

What leaves his subjects puzzled is that surely Prince Maxwell *knows* this.

Servility was fun as long as it was an act, which was why Maxwell felt the need to climb the Invictus ladder as remorselessly and rapidly as he eventually did. Kindred today know Prince Maxwell as the uniter, the moderate, the coalition-builder. That's because the Kindred who got to know Maxwell the murderous mastermind aren't around to talk about it. (Charles H. Percy learned the hard way when he refused to drop out of a race against Maxwell's favorite, Paul H. Douglas. Percy won. But he paid a terrible price.) Their childer and colleagues tell stories, but without much credibility — just enough to keep the clans and covenants honest.

Maxwell first took praxis in 1965, by shrewdly using his civil rights movement connections to forge an alliance with the Carthians against the Circle (considered the real threat to the throne back then). Unfortunately, he miscalculated the importance of a certain Cicero pimp called Old John. Old John had sworn to stay out of Maxwell's way, but the pimp had always been a liar. Old John took advantage of Maxwell's cordial social customs and desire to appear accessible — which he was, back then — to put assassins within striking distance. Old John's minions almost brought the Prince to ashes, and Maxwell wound up in torpor until 1974. Upon emerging, Solomon Birch sheltered him, protected him and helped him get his final vengeance on Old John — a revenge that apparently contradicted Birch's personal stance against Kindred killing other Kindred. If Birch is uneasy or disappointed, it doesn't show — perhaps the two of them know who *really* destroyed Old John, who may have been Chicago's most feared vampire at the time. Certainly there were plenty who had the desire, if not the will. Old John and his whorehouse lit up the night with fright yellow flames, and while the culprit who struck the match is unknown, the Kindred who got it done is: Maxwell.

In any event, his role in saving Chicago from Old John restored his credibility, and when the reign of the Matriarch stumbled in 1986, Maxwell was there to unite the opposition, buffalo the shrinking elite and offer his enemies the mercy of a quick trip out of town. Then he claimed the throne as the vampire whom few really wanted, but everyone was willing to accept. He'd spent a decade following his vengeance on Old John studying the aims and enemies of the city's influential Kindred in preparation for a moment of weakness in the Matriarch — Maxwell's subtle advantage over her was his willingness to recognize unpopular and lesser-known vampires as influential.

The Matriarch was displaced with a minimum of violence, but everything she had has been broken up among the elders who once supported her, from real estate to ghouls. Edens herself disappeared, but Maxwell presumes she is sleeping somewhere in Chicago, dreaming of a bloody throne and her own second chance at praxis.

Now, Prince Maxwell is concentrating on making his reign look smooth and invulnerable. He knows it can never *be* those things, but in 200 years, he's learned how often reality takes its cues from pretense. He seeks a calm and sustainable court, which often translates to a bread-and-circuses approach to his followers. After all, "calm prosperity" isn't sexy compared to the orgy of bloodshed some would-be Circle Princes espouse or the "total political liberation" promised by the Carthians.

Rubbing awkwardly against Prince Maxwell's need to keep his Kindred entertained is his genuine love of the city of Chicago. For the lowest common denominator of Kindred joy is the lust for horror of the Beast. Feeding those low urges could keep him in power for a long time, but what shadow would that cast on his city? Maxwell listens to Chicago and, better than any other vampire, understands how little influence his ilk truly have in the long run. With great effort they can, over years, make things a little bit better, if they dare. But they can so easily pull the city toward despair and injustice, even by careless selfishness. He knows he must protect Chicago from his court, but to do so, he needs to control them, and to control them, he must keep them happy.

To keep them happy, he must endanger Chicago.

Goal: Stability

Maxwell believes that it's best for the city if Chicago does not know about the Kindred, and it's best for the Kindred if the city doesn't know about them. The widespread perception is that Maxwell fears change, but that's a half-truth at best. He wants the city to continue to grow and improve. He just doesn't want that growth perverted by the Damned. Hence, he tries to keep everyone fed, calm and, if not happy, at least contented enough to make no trouble.

What They've Got

Small in number, the Prince's clique is heavy with the ability to work their will on the masses below — they're a textbook example of a "ruling elite." Almost any ability they do not personally possess they can access by applying influence. It's less perfect than using the means they control directly, but any ability, perk or lever they need they can probably obtain, with enough time and effort.

Legal Authority

Quite simply, the Sheriffs and Hounds answer to Maxwell. He can, by simple decree, rescind his ban on lethal punishments and then place the final price on anyone he deems criminal.

He does not do so because the threat is, at present, more dreadful than the act. A Prince who frequently executes is a tyrant, and being killed by a tyrant, while unfortunate, is no particular shame. But being the *first* to be put to death by the notoriously reluctant Prince Maxwell? That's the sort of thing that brings dishonor not only to the dead vampire but to her sire, her childer, her sect and her coterie. Furthermore, no covenant is eager to be remembered as the one that got the heads rolling again.

Aside from the final price, Maxwell has the right to arbitrate any complaint that is brought before him as he sees fit *and* the right to demand that Kindred in conflict submit to his judgment. He has made a point of not abusing this authority capriciously (or of not appearing to do so — to Kindred that's pretty much the same thing), so few are willing to seriously resist any ruling he hands down. Retaining a substantial palette of punishments (Vinculums, fines, beatings, maimings, the torment of valued mortals), Maxwell is not one to cross.

Beyond the punitive aspect of law, there is the question of Princely reward. Maxwell is the font of titles, Regencies, feeding licenses and similar perks. He's as stingy with his favors as he is with his penalties, making the favors all the more valuable. Furthermore, he has every right to take away what he has given.

Brute Force

Garret McLean, the Prince's Herald and personal bodyguard, is one of the more vicious Kindred in Chicago when it comes to a straight-up brawl. The Prince himself is no slouch, of course, and he can usually call on Solomon Birch when enemies turn violent. Beyond them, and the aforementioned Hounds and Sheriffs, Maxwell's policy against capital punishment has provided him with a horrific secret weapon.

Instead of destroying vampires who are insane, or who have lost all touches of their humanity or who are psychopathic brutes, Maxwell keeps a prison in which they are starved into frenzy and then fed his own blood

to create a Vinculum. Once their adoration to him is complete (and reinforced by the use of Dominate) he keeps them fed on the leanest human or animal rations possible, waiting in chains to be set upon the Prince's foes in a frenzy of bloodshed. These so-called grims are not cunning — they have only the ferocious animal lusts of the Beast — but they are bloodthirsty to the point of fearlessness. They are ugly foes to face.

When the time comes, a grim is unleashed in a controllable area, such as a cell or closed-off building owned by Maxwell himself. The Prince's rule of thumb is that a grim is never used with the expectation that it could survive. After it has served its purpose, be it intimidation, terror or slaughter, a grim is often put down out of necessity — recapture is seldom feasible.

Popular rumors claim the Prince has seven grims, sometimes mistakenly called "ghouls" or "grues." More than a few Kindred believe these monsters are lies used to scare the common folk, as similar rumors surrounded the Matriarch in her time. On the other hand, it's possible that Maxwell took possession of the Matriarch's monsters or listened to the advice of Norris, who may have been behind the creation of such beasts in the nights of the Matriarch as well.

Revenant Memories

Axel Briggs was sired by Stephanie Walker, and was entrusted with keeping her torpor journal safe. Unfortunately, Axel was a bad boy and committed diablerie. No one's seen him since except the Prince's Inner Circle, who know him as "grim number four." Maxwell has kept Axel chained up, starved and brain-warped for several years now.

Some valuable information was stored in Stephanie Walker's journal. When she wakes up, she'll want to find it. For that, she'll need someone to get Axel Briggs back and figure out how to "fix" him.

What They Need

Maxwell's direct aides are well protected and influential, but there are some very real flaws to their organization —necessary flaws that can't be eliminated without attracting other troubles. Nevertheless, the aides are aware of their problems, and anyone with a good way to mitigate them can earn Princely gratitude.

A Higher Mission

The Inner Circle is a cult of personality. The Prince is their *raison d'être*, for good or for ill. His rewards and personal charisma are enough for McLean and the others in the circle, but they're hardly sufficient to up banners among the *hoi polloi*. Other than the *status quo*, the Prince's gang has little to offer the masses.

Given the memories of recent upheaval, and draconian repression before that, the *status quo* looks pretty good to many of the city's Kindred. But still, the promise of the Order's transcendence, or Carthian equality or the Crone's revels — those are often more attractive promises than "things will stay just as they are."

Prince Maxwell loves Chicago as a city, and understands that the Kindred are a tiny element of it. He is content to protect and defend his beloved, and the best way to do that (from his perspective) is to keep the Kindred glutted, lazy and relatively inactive. Again, not a rallying cry that inspires martyrs. In time, laziness may turn to boredom, and boredom to restlessness. Can a city full of blood-drinking monsters ever be sated?

Project: Eliminating the Meddlers

Many Kindred take it for granted that Prince Maxwell favors the Invictus, but it's just not true. The Prince regards the traditional Invictus domains of power as a pie of finite size, and he is not eager to subdivide any of his slices. The more Invictus vampires there are scheming for influence, both within and outside the Kindred political structures, the more pressure there is on his own authority.

Maxwell's Inner Circle is *not* trying to recruit to the Invictus. They're actually happy to see conversions to the Ordo Dracul and the Circle of the Crone — as long as those covenants restrain their political ambitions. Religion is the opiate of the masses, and the ruling elite likes its underlings narcotized by "vision quests" and "paranormal research" — otherwise, they'd be stealing the business of rulership.

At the same time, Prince Maxwell doesn't want the Invictus weakened, since it is the avenue for his authority. What he really wants is to de-claw the Carthians and the unbound, not by killing them, but by moving their members into covenants whose goals are more ephemeral and less political. Every ex-Carthian pagan who's meditating on his inner Beast is one who isn't upsetting the Chicago political machine. Even better, can Carthians be made to join the Invictus?

This only goes so far, of course. Prince Maxwell has no interest in strengthening the Lancea Sanctum, even though the Sanctified are nominally his allies, because they *are* organized and they *do* have political axes to grind. If the Ordo Dracul and the Circle develop political real leaders (he's watching Norris, Bella Dravnzie and Ludmilla Marana *very* carefully), he'll cease to covertly support them. But, for now, he very much wants them to have bread and circuses, while the Carthians and the unbound get ashes and humiliation.

A Man on the Inside

Maxwell's aides, working through several cutouts, are looking for Carthians and un-

bound who are dissatisfied with their covenant or lack thereof. The aides offer covert assistance to any who convert to the Circle of the Crone or the Ordo Dracul, while retaining a separate (and theoretically non-conflicting) loyalty to the Prince. These agents are essentially treated like MLM reps: the more of their old cronies they convert to a new allegiance, the more perks and advantages they earn.

Carthian characters may get approached to switch or may be asked to investigate the defections. Characters who become agents may be asked to spread implausibly complex conspiracy theories about Invictus meddling to cover up the genuine meddling. Characters who were already in the Order or the Circle may be asked to look for Carthian infiltrators, only to find a deeper layer of infiltration, possibly by creatures other than vampires . . . .

Project: The Paper Tiger

The problem with success is that people expect you to continue to succeed, and the problem with stability is that when it becomes familiar, it breeds contempt. The Inner Circle is well aware that the Lancea Sanctum would produce misery if the Sanctified took over and tried to forcibly convert all the Kindred and that a Crone-worshipping city would be a disaster of license, not a paradise of freedom. But, by the time anyone else realized that, it would be far too late. As outsiders, those covenants are free to promise utopia, while top dog Maxwell would have to produce it to compete.

The Inner Circle, therefore, seeks to create a less hearty opponent — an artificial threat, against which Prince Maxwell's comparative inaction can be seen as a stout defense. An external threat would be ideal, but, currently, the mages of Chicago seem unlikely in the role of "gullible patsy," while framing werewolves as aggressors might lead to an uncontrolled escalation of violence at the street level. However, if Maxwell's agents could form an alliance with creatures from those groups (or who could reliably pose as them) and fake some turmoil to overcome, such action could go far toward cementing Maxwell's praxis and his Peace.

Norris' Intelligence Network

Norris was Prince Maxwell's inside man against the Matriarch, and Norris served Maxwell ably as a spy. At the time, Norris was the Matriarch's chief information-gatherer. Now, Norris is Maxwell's chief intelligence officer. The irony is not lost on the Prince.

The so-called Lords of Secrecy (who overlap somewhat with the Sheriffs and Hounds but are not always the same Kindred) report to Norris first and to the Prince only when asked. Their ridiculous name began as sarcasm, became a running joke and eventually solidified into common parlance among those who fear Norris' agents but want to pretend otherwise. Even when the name is mocked or the very existence of the network is downplayed, it's done with caution and uncertainty. The name "Lords of Secrecy" is an awkward joke made in the face of almost unbearable fear.

So far, the Lords are content with Prince Maxwell because he has provided some measure of stability. Nonetheless, it's an uneasy alliance. The Lords would prefer someone like Solomon, someone who would crack down on the unbound and the nomads and the others outside the established social order. But until Maxwell's stability starts to rattle, they're willing to tolerate the Prince's velvet glove.

Leader: Norris

Norris is obsessed with secrets and the control they give him over others. Distrustful of bribes and disdainful of "moral conviction," Norris believes the only true loyalty is that of the creature you can destroy. He is a blackmailer, a threatener, a schemer and conniver, and he's indisputably good at his job.

Born into a family of East Coast intellectuals, Norris Kleinspiegel was successful in the District Attorney's office in Chicago and got elected judge after a group of disgruntled ex-cons banded together to abduct and torture the man who'd sent them away. (His rescue stole a day's headlines from World War II.) After 10 years on the bench, he sent away a Mekhet's favored ghoul and, for his temerity, was punished with the Embrace. That's how Norris tells it.

Joining the Ordo Dracul and serving as Sheriff for a time, Norris concentrated on uncovering secrets, both within himself and within his new community. More successful at unraveling others', he was a fixture of the court for decades, though never with much authority until the Matriarch Edens, the former Prince, appointed him Regent of the Masquerade — a broad mandate that let him spy on virtually anyone with little or no explanation. Under Prince Maxwell, Norris has been redubbed Regent of the Prince's Law, which gives him the same rights but a great deal more responsibility.

Dead Man Stalking

There are a lot of humans and monsters who have reason to wish Norris ill, but Riley Frakes stewed in the big house for 50 years before dying of natural causes with Norris' face on his mind. Riley believed that Norris framed him for murder in order to score with Riley's daughter Lenora. (In fact, Lenora framed Riley so that she could bang their farmhand Harry and spend the family savings.) Now that Riley's finally dead (10 years after Harry and 17 years after Lenora) his ghost has returned to torment that "damned crooked judge."

Characters experienced with ghosts can get on Norris' good side if they take care of Riley's ghost. Characters who hate Norris might help Riley or protect him, to make the spymaster's Requiem even more wretched — or to drive Norris away and take his seat. Characters who don't care one way or the other might learn some valuable information about Norris' past from the Frakes ghost and then share it with those who do care.

Norris Kleinspiegel

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Ordo Dracul
Embrace: 1950
Apparent Age: 40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 3, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 5, Occult 2, Politics (Chicago, Kindred) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 4, Larceny (Safecracking) 3, Stealth (Eavesdrop, Shadow) 4, Survival 1, Weaponry (Ambush) 3
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Intimidation (Insinuate) 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise (Rumor Mill) 3, Subterfuge (Spot Lie) 4
Merits: Allies (see sidebar), City Status (Head of Intelligence) 3, Contacts (CPD, DA's Office, Black Market, Law Firms, PIs), Covenant Status: Ordo Dracul 2, Covenant Status: Invictus 1, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Size 1, Resources 3, Retainer (see sidebar) 5
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 3 (Suspicion, mild: 5; Paranoia, severe: 3)
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Envy
Health: 7
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/Turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 1, Coils of the Dragon 4, Dominate 4, Obfuscate 1, Resilience 3
Coils of the Dragon: Blood Sleeps Slowly, Blood of Beasts, Conquer the Red Fear, Surmounting the Daysleep



Norris' Allies and Retainer

It is well-known that Norris has allies from Wisconsin to Indiana, in surprising corners of Kindred, Lupine and mage society alike. It's also well-known that Norris' illicit relationships with these assets are always changing, and usually kept secret from everyone but Prince Maxwell. Storytellers are encouraged to select characters from every corner of this book to flesh out Norris' Allies Merit. The degree of help such Allies are willing to provide depends on what Norris is willing to do for them in return, keeping in mind that he is a remorseless monster who places his own success above all other concerns.

Norris also has a valuable, skilled and secret Retainer. Whispers in Elysium suggest this aide may be a ghoul that Norris has kept hidden from the eyes of his enemies (or just the criticism of Solomon Birch), but some say Norris' servant is actually his childe, created in violation of the Prince's edict following the appearance of Persephone Moore. It's possible, however, that Norris' Retainer could be an enemy of Prince Maxwell or even a Lupine. Maybe it's a mage Norris keeps under his thumb to perform divinations for him. Certainly, these possibilities have all occurred to the Prince.

Any Kindred whom Norris knows is vulnerable to his agents and threats. The only time that any Kindred is likely to take Norris by surprise is during the few nights after their introduction, when Norris' agents are just beginning their work. So the Prince needs a handful of vampires new to the city to spy on Norris, to inspect the inspector and find out what he's hiding. Sounds like a job for new characters.

"Tell me everything. I know it all, of course, but I want to see what you leave out."

In life, he judged crimes against the public. After, he gathers information but judges no one. Before his Embrace, the worst thing that had happened to him was a physical imprisonment, coupled with physical torture. As one of the Kindred, his suffering and durance are all psychological.

It all comes back to his Embrace, really. That was the moment it all got disjointed. Before that, he was an

atheist, materialist intellectual with a chokehold grasp of legal subtleties and a reputation for riding the jury like Roy fuckin' Rogers, from either side of the bench. Then, in the course of one night, it was all turned upside down. Vampires, curses, life after death — if all *that*, which he knew was untrue and in fact could *never* be true, *was* true — what then? What other preposterous beliefs might actually be the truth? Werewolves? Theosophy? *God*?

The Ordo Dracul was a good fit for a smart guy who was a rationalist at heart, but although he's reached the rank of Initiate of the Sanguine Curse, his core competence isn't exploring mystic philosophy. What he does best is peel open souls and suck out the rotten bits.

Norris is quite as obsessed and paranoid as any Ventrue, and, perhaps at some level, he realizes that his pursuit of greater power, greater knowledge and greater influence is futile. No matter how much he learns, his knowledge will never outweigh his ignorance, and learning the darkest about the Kindred isn't going to relieve his fear in any event. But that part of him is very quiet and abstract, while the desperate and furtive part is loud and immediate, always clamoring for another chain around another pawn, and the desperate part only rests when sated with bad news. Even then, that part only rests until that food can grow that part further.

Norris is tall and slender, with rodent-like features. His pasty skin has an olive sheen that makes it appear waxy, and all the fingernails on his right hand are gone — pulled out when he was alive. His voice, while deep, still has a grating nasal quality. He has a tendency to act smarmy and ingratiating, even to someone he's destroying face-to-face.

Norris never does anything directly, except display power. He never exposes himself if he thinks there's any real risk to his person, but he happily risks the lower levels of his operation in chancy endeavors — after all, they're often unwilling and always replaceable. He's a bad enemy, a harsh master and a false friend.

Even as a District Attorney during World War II he was sharp, instinctively able to see through lies or perceive hidden self-interest. What he couldn't sniff out with intuition, he could isolate through induction and deduction in the forests of law and document. Now he has expanded his repertoire to occult means, illegal and downright bizarre.

No one gets elected judge in Illinois without juice, no matter how heroically he defies ex-con kidnappers. After Norris' Embrace, the training wheels came off.

Goal: Control

The Requiem is a precarious existence. Lazy vampires not only die, they threaten all their ilk with the loss of the Masquerade. Therefore, it behooves the Lords of Secrecy to be their Kindred's keepers. It's not enough to *advise* fools not to screw up. The only way to keep a fool from being foolish is to make it so he *can't* screw up. If that means Final Death, well, some fools never learn. The Lords of Secrecy don't "sanction" often, but they don't have Prince Maxwell's legal concerns or Solomon's moral quandaries. The Lords just make it look like a fool being foolish.

What They've Got

The tip of the iceberg is small; there are only two Kindred who openly serve Norris. Beneath them is a wider pool of Kindred who can be pushed into unwilling (and potentially treacherous) service through the levers of blackmail and intimidation. The Lords of Secrecy are careful not to blackmail too hard, lest their victims realize that evidence isn't the problem, *Norris* is the problem. Ideally, the Lords blackmail people into performing minor jobs that, in turn, provide further blackmail material. The widest but loosest elements of the web are the stringers — part-time spies who tell stuff to Norris' agents in hopes of gaining favor but who have little personal stake. This level of chatter is held in the lowest esteem, because 90% of it is worthless, 5% is grossly distorted and 4% of it doesn't get processed until it's too late. But that last 1% is gold — stuff that the Lords of Secrecy could never get through their normal channels.

Ancient History

One deeply-buried agent of the Lords of Secrecy is called Creeper, for his predilection for stealth. Actually, it's because he was once Günter Kreujpek, a Hungarian of German decent who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. Seeing as how Norris was the first generation of his family to abandon Judaism, this could create a significant schism between Norris and his loyal agent. When the characters come into evidence of Creeper's Nazi ties, what do they do with it? Is it part of a plot pitting Norris against his own agents, or is someone testing the characters themselves?

Insight

The Lords of Secrecy have members who are skilled at Obfuscate, Auspex or both, but they don't make the mistake of assuming those Disciplines are the trump card in an information war. Computer hacking, audio surveillance and GPS tracking are tools in their arsenal as well, not to mention a lot of good old-fashioned tailing and Dumpster diving. More profound than steaming open letters and tapping phone lines, however, are the spiritual and psychological methods Norris' agents use on those who rouse their interest. In the '70s, Norris had files. Now he has psychological profiles.

These are courtesy of his childe, Helen Gambeau, a brilliant police psychologist who was Embraced ex-

pressly so that Norris could use her to gain insight into the thoughts, feelings and motivations of his Kindred targets. Helen is his secret weapon. She's shielded, coddled and protected as much as possible, but since the late 1990s, she's been chafing under his constraints. The stories of the people she's analyzing are so much more interesting than her own Requiem, but Norris, being Norris, has no intention of letting her out of his control. If he needs to, he'll tell Helen one of his secrets: he's got her mortal daughter under the gun.

Connections

Norris' agents — if not Norris himself — know how to get in touch with all manner of creatures and people in the city. While knowledge of a Lupine meeting place in the North Loop is not uncommon, most Kindred know it exists, but not how to make contact with the werewolves who watch the site. Norris knows how to make contact and has the reputation needed to pull in a few favors. The werewolf pack is called the Whispers, and they've worked with Prince Maxwell before — through Norris. Supposedly, they're the translators the Prince uses to deal with the spirits of Chicago.

What They Need

The Lords aren't an enforcement arm of the court, so their operatives have few combat skills, other than the ability to avoid a fight. They have poor enticements for the upright but, by the same token, have found no moral paragons whose services they require. Cash reserves are low, but they can get material goods by stealing and many immaterial services through blackmail. No, there's only one real area in which Norris' operation is wanting.

Heroism and Initiative

The drawback to the Lords' obsessive distrust of any but the basest motives is that they often fail to recruit anyone with loftier motives. No asset is going to take a risk, make a sacrifice or stay loyal if a greater threat eclipses Norris. In the same spirit, except for Norris and his very closest aides, agents are unlikely to put in extreme efforts or go the extra mile simply because Norris' entire structure punishes those who do the unexpected. Even if an agent is unexpectedly *resourceful* or produces unexpectedly *good* results, he's likely to be regarded with unease and suspicion. In the Lords of Secrecy's devotion to control, they have come to favor predictability over excellence.

Project: The Master File

The Lords are currently in a building and regrouping phase: a lot of scores got settled during the handover of power from Edens to Maxwell. The increased demands on the Lords' time have knocked them into a re-active, not pro-active, stance. However, they are working on one big project: the Master File is an attempt to secretly register *every* vampire in Chicago. A file will be considered complete when it lists the name, date of birth, date of Embrace, sire, clan, covenant and all known havens for every Kindred. The sticking part is that Norris wants a visual reference as well but, Kindred being what they are, photos aren't available.

Therefore, Norris wants skilled artists who work quickly and accurately, and whom he can blackmail or coerce without fear. So far, no one's fit all the categories. He's considering Embracing some talented art student, but isn't quite ready to risk the Prince's displeasure. Yet.

Justine and the Keepers of Culture

If the Prince is the head of the city, the clique of Harpies, gossips and political commentators is the city's heart — pumping the priceless blood of information through the Kindred community or, more sentimentally, storing the cherished memories of celebrated triumphs and epic failures.

With fealty to neither clan or covenant, the Keepers' job in practice is this: they are the core around which the accepted version of events coalesces. They are the ones who understand what the Kindred believe. (This is sometimes different from the official version openly bruited by the Invictus or other officers of the court. The Keeper version is more often told in private.) While the Keepers generally provide a true reflection of popular belief, there are times when there's a percentage in coloring views or favoring particular interpretations. When it's time, they spin stories with splendid deftness.

Leader:
Mistress Justine Lasky

The lovely Justine Lasky is Mistress of two Elysiums. One is the Discarded Image, a tiny bar near the Water Tower that alienates all but the most clueless mortals by mixing obscenely high prices, watered-down drinks, rude service and the intangible air of menace that develops around a place frequented by vampires. The bar is open from noon to 2 A.M. and unlocked until sunup. All Kindred are welcome, and the bar's value as neutral territory is such that many casual patrons pitch in to help quell any violence. (Justine has her people for that, but she's shown much gratitude to outsiders who help.)

The other Elysium is at the Shedd Aquarium, which is most important on the first Sunday of every month, when it's rented and decorated by the Kindred court for their general open meeting. These Elysiums are relatively free of mortals (save for the occasional trusted ghoul), so the Kindred can theoretically relax and let

their hair down. In practice, they're tenser than ever because they're surrounded by rival predators, *and* they're trying to make an impression. Modes of dress vary wildly, almost surreally, from filthy parkas to corsets no living woman could wear to antique costumes to the sharpest edge of modern fashion.

As expediter of these meetings, and a Primogen to boot, Justine is a central switching point for most information that isn't secret and a great deal that supposedly is. Simply by deciding whom to tell a certain piece of data, and *how*, Justine and her fellow Keepers shape the opinions and actions of their peers. The Keepers can do that without even lying.

Mistress Justine Lasky

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1905
Apparent Age: Late 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics (Social) 5
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Stealth (Sneak) 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Intimidation (Demean) 3, Persuasion (Seduce, Peer Pressure) 4, Socialize (Fraternize) 5, Subterfuge (Lie) 4
Merits: Allies (Harpies) 4, Allies (Alderman) 3, Barfly, City Status (Master of Elysium, Primogen) 4, Contacts (ATF, Tribune Style Section, City Hall), Covenant Status: Invictus 3, Haven: Security 2, Haven: Size 3, Haven: Location 4, Herd 2, Inspiring, Resources 3
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 5



Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/Turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Celerity 3, Majesty 4, Vigor 1

"How fascinating, darling. Truly. Why don't you tell me all about it tomorrow night?"

She was a pretty Polish girl who turned tricks at the Custom House Levee until the whorehouse she worked in got busted up around 1905. During the raid, she "ingratiated herself" with one of the cops, who pulled strings and got her brothel work at the Hotel Wisconsin.

It should have been a tawdry, joyless business transaction — sex for protection, the same gig that thousands of whores and cops have worked out for centuries. But somehow it went wrong — or maybe right. Somehow, they found out they actually had *fun* together. Somehow, they fell in love.

It was something out of a dime novel: hooker with a heart of gold redeems a crooked cop. Or maybe it was that that the man forgot how good he could be until love reminded him. It was something.

It made her want to be a better woman, get out of the Wisconsin, get work in a shop. It made him want to be a better man, make a difference, do something about the hundreds of girls like Justine who got sucked in and had no chance of anything better.

She gave him the backbone to really start an effective investigation. What he uncovered was an evil deeper than pimps slipping the mickey to unsuspecting rube customers. What he found was a vampire who was willing to threaten Justine to back him off and, when that didn't work, Embrace her . . . .

. . . and make sure he was the first living thing she saw in the throes of her newborn thirst.

She fled the city after that, but, after 30 years, returned. No one knows her past. As far as they're concerned, she was Embraced in Milwaukee and moved to Chicago when she was ready for the big leagues. She's never told anyone about murdering the man who saved her, and she's never told anyone about consuming the soul of the vampire who Damned her.

Lasky possesses a stately beauty that is classical, austere, almost forbidding. All but the most rigidly confident feel a little shaken in her presence. She is not alluring or inviting, unless she wants to be — she can present a fraudulent accessibility that seems more welcoming than genuine openness, when it suits her purpose. But the real her has the beauty of a sculpted iceberg. There is pleasure in looking, but it does not invite approach.

She's become everything she ever wanted to be, wrapped up in everything she ever despised, and she's okay with that. She'd like to believe in something big-

ger and better than sculpting the moods and opinions of the Kindred, but she's far too wise to be tricked by anything that isn't genuine. Hell, she may be too cynical to even take a genuine chance to make something meaningful and real.

Goal: Influence

Influence is the goal of the Keepers. They don't want authority — that would make them responsible if things go wrong. They don't want control because, frankly, they can't be bothered, especially when they can get the *good* part of control (people doing what you want) without the bad part (the resentment and fear). The Keepers rarely tell anyone to do anything: they just cultivate attitudes of which they approve, and let actions develop organically. The most approved-of attitude, of course, is susceptibility to Keeper influence.

What They've Got

The Keepers accumulate money and valuable information almost as a matter of course, but they lack the focused analysis of Norris' spies. If the Keepers turn their minds to it, they can find out what they need, assuming their interest is fairly narrow — unlike Norris, they have no interest in tracking every Kindred in Chicago (though they're probably vaguely aware of a few hiding licks he's missed). Similarly, they can call on favors of nearly any variety — as long as they don't do so too often. This is because of their greatest strength: ecumenism.

Ecumenism

The Keepers don't care if you're in the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle of the Crone. What the Keepers care about is what you can do for them, and what they need to offer in return. They're hardly apolitical, but their lack of dogma and doctrine means they can forge temporary alliances (as if there were any other kind, with them) to any group that has the mystic, monetary, social, political or informational wherewithal they require.

What They Need

The Keepers are an organization of broad interests, rather than deep. Their versatility serves them well, but it comes with a seemingly inescapable weakness.

Focus

Simply put, the Keepers have no unmet goals. Sure, there are things that the members would *like* to accomplish individually, but the group as a whole has aimed at influence for its own sake, won it and now primarily applies it to the acquisition of greater influence. As long as they refuse to rock the boat by alienating any other faction, they can continue to sit in the middle, safely aiding most, hindering few and accomplishing little. If they were to undergo a sudden reorientation — choosing some prize worthy of alarming, dismaying, harming or alienating another power group — they could almost certainly achieve it quickly, though at the expense of much built-up social capital.

Project: Immortality

Justine seeks to have her fetching likeness immortalized in some large-scale piece of public art. Currently, she's funding a group that proposes a memorial for American soldiers killed in the Middle East. The group wants a classical statue depicting Liberty grieving for those who died on her behalf. Liberty would, of course, be modeled after Justine. With new lakefront development proposals being debated, she thinks her group has a good chance of putting up this statue.

She has multiple motives for this, of course. Vanity is one, but it's not an unalloyed vice. Justine believes that the statue will subtly underlie her importance in future decades. After all, what happens when you see a statue every day for 20 years, then become a vampire and *meet her*? Even those who are already Damned would surely feel some impact: the statue would be her physical stamp on the city.

The argument against it is, of course, a Masquerade concern. If people met the Mona Lisa unchanged, they'd surely start to question their assumptions. At least, that's the argument Norris levels against the statue to the Prince (so far, Norris is the only Primogen to voice an opinion — he may be the only one aware of the plan). Justine's counter-argument is quite simple: people are more likely to buy an explanation as simple as "I must resemble an old-time model" over "I must be an unnaturally preserved undead being who once posed for a statue."

Vanitas

Mistress Justine owns an antique plate of silver, oval in shape, set into a gilt frame with *Vanitas* written on a plaque at the bottom. Kindred can see their reflections in this mirror, without effort. Justine considers it a useful curiosity, but her efforts to learn of its past have failed. In fact, the item was once part of a werewolf artifact designed to show things as they truly are. If it could be re-forged by knowledgeable Lupines, it would possess the power to penetrate disguises.

Justine is always seeking researchers to find out about *Vanitas*. Intellectuals can earn her trust in this matter, which interests her without being of critical concern. Lupines are looking for "a piece of silver that shows things differently than they appear to the eye." They might query any Kindred they can find, just in the interests of covering their bases. The mirror gives them a chance to make good with the Forsaken, if they can get the mirror from Justine, or present it without her taking all the credit.

Solomon and the Lancea Sanctum Fundamentalists

The Lancea Sanctum wields an influence disproportionate to its numbers — especially if you listen to followers of the Crone. This is because the Sanctified are well organized, disciplined and follow a coherent and clearly stated set of precepts and principles. Plus, they have a leader who is tough, charismatic and can kick your ass.

Solomon is the arch-fundie and makes no bones about it. The Nosferatu Chet Berman is his assistant in charge of delegated smackdowns. Chet's official title is "Bearer of the Claws." The Ventrue Emily Morris ("Bearer of the Visage") is his pet diplomat. Although they're authorities within the church, Birch keeps them on a pretty short leash.



Leader: Solomon Birch

Solomon, like his cronies, is absolutely convinced that he is right, that God wants him to do what he's doing and that anything that sways him from his path is devious and wrong. The only thing that's kept this inflexibility from destroying him is that it's tempered with actual cowardice. He hides it well — overcompensates, even — but Solomon is, deep down, a frightened creature, and his fear can lead him to slink away from situations when the strict letter of his faith would demand confrontation.

Fortunately for him and his followers, he's also a genius when it comes to rationalization. He can always slant, interpret or outright mangle some piece of scripture to justify nearly any vile, low, shitty deed he does. He even convinces *himself*. Ironically, this ability to be morally flexible when the heat is really on, while being a moral absolutist at other times, has made him a supremely capable and long-lived player in the Chicago court.

Solomon Birch

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Lancea Sanctum
Embrace: 1896
Apparent Age: Early 40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Theban Sorcery) 2, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Occult 1, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Kindred Physiology) 3, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Weaponry (Staking) 3
Social Skills: Expression 4, Intimidation (The Faithful) 2, Persuasion (The Faithful) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: City Status (Chicago) 4, Covenant Status: Lancea Sanctum 5, Disarm, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Location 2, Haven: Size 4, Herd 3, Quick Draw, Resources 4, Retainers 4
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/Turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Vigor 3, Theban Sorcery 2
Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Vitae Reliquary (1), Curse of Babel (1), Liar's Plague (1)

Born in the middle of seven children, Solomon was one of the four who lived into adulthood, watching brothers and sisters both older and younger succumb to illness or accident.

A quiet child, son of a harness-maker and a seamstress, Solomon grew up helping both his parents in trade, and his nimble fingers recommended him to a crafter of artificial limbs. Legs and feet and hook-hands were always needed in a city so crowded and callously industrious — especially in the wake of the Great Fire and the buzz of reconstruction.

Eventually opening his own shop, Solomon's life as an unexceptional tradesman was interrupted by his Embrace by a mad Daeva who wanted an expert to help her dispose of her corpses more ingeniously. Solomon spent less than a decade under her tutelage before the Carthians killed her, and then his long period as an outcast began.

Uncomfortable with any of the covenants, wary and defensive, Solomon grew more cold and cruel with the passing years. When the century turned, he was well-known as a bully and a loudmouth. By chance, Solomon did a favor for Maxwell, and came to distrust the strange Ventrue ancilla less than Solomon did others of his kind, but his true revelation came in the 1940s when, weakened by a fight with agents of the Treasury Department, he was rescued by members of the Lancea Sanctum. Expecting abuse, he instead was treated with respect and given the kind of support and advice his sire had never offered.

Solomon suspected a trick for years, but when he converted, he did so with a vengeance. The role of a testing pestilence upon humanity made more sense of his Requiem than anything else ever had, and his zeal led to rapid advancement. In a mere 50 years, he has risen to the rank of Bishop, all while espousing interpretations of the *Testament* that are far stricter than most of his congregation. Doctrinal strictness has become the litmus test of the Sanctified, thanks mostly to Solomon's skill at playing "holier than thou" with those who defy him.

Perhaps the fullest expression of his desire to strengthen humanity (albeit through a cruel winnowing process) is his relationship with the Brigman family. A longtime proponent of eugenics, Solomon felt the Brigmans were genetically superior to other regional strains, and he has exercised his power through several generations to purify them. In the process, they have become completely dominated by the vampire who dwells in their basement: he chooses who they marry, when they bear children and which of them receive the "blessing" of ghoul status to serve him indefinitely. Though he rules them as a master rules his kennel, Solomon does truly believe that the Brigmans can, in time, become a superior strain that will lead humankind to a brighter future — one in which more humans are able to resist the lures and threats and snares of creatures like him.

He is breeding men worthy of God, and any who tamper with his project do so at great peril.

Solomon is also a great lover of gadgetry. He makes a tremendous effort to stay current with technology, an effort that his 19th century mindset often hinders. But more than one Kindred who expects the Bishop to be protected solely by occult sigils has been unpleasantly surprised by the fruits of Solomon's fascination with 20th and 21st century instruments.

Above the eugenicist and above the technophile, is Solomon the priest. He is truly faithful, but with a weakness that, paradoxically, makes him stronger in the long run. Solomon, whose faith stumbles and rises again, can confound opponents who would easily predict (and break) a man of unalloyed conviction. Those who see him as a fanatic are unprepared for his last-minute betrayals. Those who think him a pure hypocrite are taken aback by his refusal to compromise, even for tremendous gain, even in his own best interest. Solomon will not break to temptation, but only to fear — and only to a very great fear, at that.

Goal: A Sanctified City

Unlike many mortal fundamentalists, Solomon has little hope of yoking formal law to the service of religion. While some think that the mixture can sanctify politics, Solomon's experience is that the mixture is more likely to sully the faith. Politics is the art of compromise, and there's no room for that in the Sanctified scripture.

That's not to say the fundamentalists won't take a political concession if it matches his convictions — that's a no-brainer, and they pushed loud and long for the ban on Embrace and Final Death. Now that they've made those gains, however, they aren't pushing for any direct legal embrace of Lancea Sanctum dogma. As long as the law is at least tolerant, their goals are met.

They believe that if they get a level playing field, they can demolish any other Kindred religion, because they are right and those others are wrong. They feel that they are just now getting that even footing, and they're ready to convert hearts and minds by any acceptable means. Unlike other Sanctified, the fundamentalists won't destroy those who refuse — their own fundamentalist interpretation holds the destruction of another Kindred to be as abhorrent as diablerie. But they're more than willing to make obdurate heretics suffer until they *wish* they were truly dead or until they destroy themselves. Unlike Christians, these fundamentalists don't consider suicide a sin for anyone but the sinner — a vampire must protect herself against her own urges and attacks.

What They've Got

There's a clear chain of command: Solomon down to the Bearers, down to everyone else. The lines of communication are similarly clear, with the faithful meeting weekly to hear Solomon fulminate (and often set an agenda) from the pulpit. But order and organization are not their greatest strength.

Moral Certainty

The fundamentalists have no room for other opinions. They have the certainty that moves mountains — in their case, often mountains of bodies. Interestingly, Solomon the part-time hypocrite has an incredible nose for hypocrisy in others, so his followers are the die-hards. Most of them hit some sort of abysmal low, either as mortals or as Kindred, and only belief in Longinus raised them out of it. They truly fear nothing more than a return to meaninglessness, so they will do anything to defend and propagate the religion that gives them meaning.

The Bearers and several of their followers literally cannot be deterred from any course that they feel is compelled by their faith. Someone who's up on the scriptures

may talk them around, and they may temporarily retreat from unbeatable odds, but when the night is done, Longinus has their first, strongest and deepest loyalty.

The Stolen Visage

The ceremonial Mask of the Man, which Solomon wears during certain services, is solid gold and exquisitely worked, but its value is greater than that of a mere *objet d'art*. It is a symbol of religious respect and the moderating power of humanity (just as the Claws of the Beast represent vampiric frenzy). Anyone who rightly carries the Mask gets a +2 bonus to all Social rolls against members of the Lancea Sanctum. The only people who can rightly carry the Mask of the Man in Chicago are Solomon Birch and Emily Morris. And it's just been stolen.

Trusted Sanctified characters might be mobilized to find it before anyone else learns of the sacrilege. Maybe Emily wants it found before Solomon knows it's missing. Was it stolen by Kindred, mortals, mages or something else? Do the thieves know what they have? What do they plan on doing with it? How far will the characters go to get it back?

When they've recovered it, do they return it or use it to get what they want?

What They Need

The extremist evaluation is that Solomon's hardliners need for all vampires to convert and follow Longinus. Analyzing what they need to function more effectively as a Kindred faction, a few lacunae pop out: Birch's hardliners aren't an easy faction to belong to, and they don't offer a lot of immediate material advantages. But their biggest failing is a result of their political rigor.

Diplomacy

The biggest hurdle for Birch's fundamentalists is that they are obsessed with their doctrines and are negligent toward most other issues. If the issue is germane to their beliefs, they can't compromise. If it isn't germane, they don't really care. Solomon's a leader because he's an exception to this trend, but one wheeler-dealer isn't enough. If they could get some slick hypocrites — people who are willing to sacrifice a little in order to gain a lot — they might capitalize on the gains Solomon's support of Prince Maxwell has made them. But since they abhor anyone whose dedication to the cause is less than fanatical, said diplomat would need to be extremely aggressive, tough and capable. If anyone fitting that bill did muscle in, the fundamentalists would hate him even as he made them strong, but since Solomon already fits that description, he's unwilling to share his role, even if he accepted that sharing it would strengthen his cause.

Project: C versus C

If there's anyone the fundamentalists hate more than the Carthians, it's the Circle of the Crone. For Birch's holy monsters, agnostic political maundering is slightly preferable to onanistic New Age heresy. A plan that sets the two covenants against each other, however, is preferable to a plan that harms only one.

The "C versus C" plan has so far only been discussed and debated among Solomon, the Bearers and a few other ideologues, but its outline is as follows: Carthians are provoked into speaking out against the Circle. Pagans are similarly encouraged to holler back. When the two covenants are at sufficient loggerheads, a disguised Sanctified strike team infiltrates the Circle's ritual grounds on the night before the Equinox — a time when the Acolytes should be off preparing for holiday rites. The strike team desecrates the ground and makes it look like a Carthian assassination attempt on the Acolyte groundskeeper (who escapes only because the team appears to botch the job).

Or so it would *seem*. In actuality, the fundamentalists are unwilling to kill *any* Kindred, even loathsome Crones, because of the Sanctified core belief that all Kindred will (and must) convert in time.

The hurdles in front of this project are manifold, starting with the fundamentalists' limited ability to influence the Crones *or* the Carthians, and ending with the low failure tolerance of a violent operation in which *no one* can die. But the fundamentalists are patient, they're careful and they're bold. One night, Birch will find the avenues of influence he needs, the delegates to the covenants he wants and the perfect opportunity to strike. After all, God is on his side.

Miriam

Chicago's Gangrel Primogen and a rising star in her own right, Miriam breaks the Gangrel mold and could become a power player in Chicago if she makes a few wise moves. As far as Prince Maxwell is concerned, Miriam is his key to Gangrel cooperation. She may be a cultist of sorts, but she has the ability to mobilize the Savages when she needs to, a talent he has tested on occasion. In return, she advises him on how to keep the Gangrel appeased and complacent. Many of these things, conveniently, are things about which she herself has strong feelings.

Miriam has grown to like the taste of power, but she's uncertain where to go from here. She's neither driven nor interested enough in the ways of the Crone to try being Hierophant, she's not old enough to be Gangrel Priscus and Gangrel Princes are rare oddities. And yet she's quickly becoming dissatisfied with the limited power granted by her place on the Primogen Council.

When she's not hunting or networking with other Gangrel or advising Prince Maxwell, Miriam is plotting her next move.

Miriam

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1944
Apparent Age: 26
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Occult 1, Politics 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Stealth 2, Survival 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (Gangrel) 4, Mentor (Rowen) 3, Resources 2, City Status (Chicago) 3, Clan Status: Gangrel 5
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Greed
Health: 9
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Protean 4, Resilience 4

In her breathing days, Miriam (who then had the surname of Mueller) was a nurse and a rather fierce one at that. A WAC in World War II, she had seen more of the world than many women twice her age by the time her sire, Smith, bled her dry and brought her over into the Requiem. Miriam was Embraced because she was vigorous, bold and beautiful. Those qualities have served her well in the years since her death.



Miriam spent the first two decades of her Requiem roaming the country with her sire. Smith was much more at home in the wilderness than she, and much less politically astute. He imagined the two of them becoming powerful together but, as with so many of the dreams of the Kindred, that plan went nowhere. Smith met his end at the claws of a pack of werewolves outside of Chicago in an encounter Miriam herself barely survived.

Miriam only intended to stay in Chicago for a while as she recovered from the shock of losing Smith, but the city charmed her and convinced her to stay. For a brief while Miriam found a mentor in Bella Dravnzie, and during that time, Miriam joined the Circle of the Crone because of the way its philosophies resonated with her wild side. Miriam's association with the Circle outlasted her friendship with Bella, whom she grew to despise as shallow and manipulative, but just barely.

Miriam was one of those rare Kindred who found herself more inclined to associate with others based on blood rather than ideology. Philosophies change, but blood is constant. She felt a bond of kinship with most Gangrel that she simply didn't feel with any other Kindred, regardless of ideology. That's not to say that she's never met a Gangrel she didn't like — she's met a number of them — but she finds that she communicates better with other Savages than she does with Kindred from most other clans. Miriam spent much of the '70s and '80s in the forested areas just outside of Chicago, and her only contact with other Kindred took place with other Gangrel or when the members of the Circle met for the Crone's holy days.

Around the same time, Miriam became fascinated with Rowen after watching her preside over the spiritual exercises of the Acolytes. The elder's understanding of blood magic, her blasé approach to politics and the fact that she was a fellow Gangrel, intrigued Miriam, who saw Rowen as a powerful potential ally. Miriam performed some small favors for the Hierophant and parlayed a few favors into something akin to an alliance with the elder. Rowen's facility with Crúac made her one of Prince Maxwell's more important allies once he claimed praxis in Chicago, and when Maxwell asked Rowen to be his Gangrel Primogen, essentially his envoy to that clan, she declined without giving her reasons — and suggested Miriam instead.

Though he found her a bit young, the Prince offered Miriam the position on his Primogen Council and she accepted. Furthermore, she was a perfect fit. She was well traveled and therefore respected by her clan, and she was known to have a fondness for members of her own clan, but she was also free of a lot of the baggage that many elders accumulate as they rise through the ranks. She had not needed to compromise herself

to get where she was. As Miriam has risen through the ranks, she has come to realize the importance of connections, and she has a number of quiet alliances established with key Gangrel in Chicago and its environs. She arranged this network primarily for her own benefit, but Prince Maxwell benefits from the arrangement as well.

Miriam is not the oldest or most personally powerful Gangrel in Chicago. She is, however, the most politically savvy and the best at working with others within her clan. She even survived a two-hour conversation with the Unholy about "the Gangrel way," a feat that still comes up in stories told by Gangrel when they gather.



Rowen

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1754
Apparent Age: 35
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 6, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 5
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Survival 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken 4, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Allies (Occult) 4, Allies (Cassandra's Vision) 3, City Status 3, Contacts 3, Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone (Hierophant) 5, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Size 2, Haven: Location 1, Holistic Knowledge, Iron Stamina 3, Meditative Mind, Resources 3
Willpower: 10
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Sloth
Health: 11
Initiative: 8
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 6 (Vitae/turn: 15/3)
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Crúac 5, Protean 5, Resilience 4
Crúac Rituals: Rowen knows all of the Crúac rituals listed in **Vampire: The Requiem**, all those presented in this book and a number of others besides, many of her own devising.

Large, misshapen and glaringly inhuman, Rowen is easily one of the city's most disturbing elders. In her role as Hierophant for the Circle of the Crone, Rowen has performed some remarkably bloody rituals. Between that and the fact that she's a Gangrel elder (and all that entails), Rowen may be the vampire most feared by Chicago's Kindred. When she chooses to be, Rowen is also among Prince Maxwell's most important advisors on issues pertaining to magic and the occult.

The occult, particularly its place in vampire spirituality, is Rowen's primary fascination and the focal point of her Requiem. She has sought out complex and exotic Disciplines to improve her own understanding of magic. Her knowledge of Crúac rituals is thought to be second to none in Chicago, and several of the rituals she knows are of her own devising. To maximize her own usefulness, she has explored other types of magic as well. She has made several subtle overtures to members of the Lancea Sanctum and the Ordo Dracul, seeking to learn their forms of blood-sorcery. In response, both covenants threatened to summarily execute (or place into permanent torpor) any Kindred who taught her even the fundamentals of Theban Sorcery or the Coils of the Dragon. Such is her understanding and quick mastery of blood magic that these covenants fear she might learn their own sorcery better than they, and in half the time.

Despite their rejection, which she intends to appeal again soon, Rowen's influence in the occult sphere does not end at her own formidable talents with blood-sorcery. She long ago realized that even her impressive power, not to mention her value to the Prince, extended only so far unaided. She rectified that limitation by seeking out would-be mages and making blood addicts of them. The process of stalking them, besting them in combat and forcing them to drink her blood was neither quick nor easy, but she arranged all of the circumstances in her favor and wound up with three uncommonly powerful followers.

Her three "viziers" (as she calls them) are capable of far more magic than Rowen herself, but they're happy to do what they can in her service, thanks to the blood. Her extensive discussions with them have given her a basic understanding of the magic they use, though she is utterly incapable of practicing magic in the way they do. In addition to performing magic for Rowen, her viziers also keep her informed of events taking place among the mages. The viziers don't know everything that's going on with their fellow mages, obviously, but they certainly tell Rowen enough to keep her adequately apprised, and she, in turn, tells Prince Maxwell as much as she thinks he needs to know.

Despite all her occult might, Rowen has a challenger for control of Chicago's Acolytes: Bella Dravnzie. Rowen has trouble taking her seriously, though; the Daeva's spiritual insight, as expressed through her understanding of Crúac, is clearly not in Rowen's league. That said, Rowen's social skills are clearly not in Bella's league. Rowen's fixation on the spiritual world is at odds with her ability to function politically, a fact she is only now coming to terms with.

The Distant Teacher

Rowen is a master of Crúac, and she is eager to learn additional forms of blood-sorcery. In fact, she wants to learn something of both Theban sorcery and the Coils of the Dragon before she enters her first long torpor. The Lancea Sanctum and Ordo Dracul have expressly forbidden anyone to teach Rowen so much as the most basic fact of either form of sorcery.

Being a clever type, Rowen took her search beyond Chicago and its environs, and she found a teacher for one (or perhaps both) of the forms of sorcery that she does not know. The trouble is, this great teacher resides in Boston. He's willing to come to Chicago to teach Rowen what she wants to learn, but only if he has an escort.

She approaches the characters with an offer: bring this wise teacher safely to Chicago, and Rowen will make it worth their while. The characters will, of course, have to deal with the dangers of travel to another city, with the wrath of the covenants whose secrets they're compromising and with who knows what challenges in Boston, but Rowen is an extraordinarily powerful patron, and she could, in fact, make the effort worth the characters' while.

History of the Hierophant

Old, brooding and physically imposing, the Gangrel named Rowen would strike a terrifying figure even if she were not the Circle of the Crone's Hierophant and the foremost blood witch in the Chicago area. Standing over six feet tall and unusually muscular, Rowen is, to understate things, an imposing figure. Her long, dark hair and coarse features render her both bestial and beautiful at the same time, a Neanderthal Helen of Troy.

Rowen was the daughter of a Native American woman and a Baptist minister. Rowen never took to her father's religion, which always struck her as violent, judgmental and cruel. Rowen herself was none of these things. On the contrary, she was overly forgiving to the point of naïveté — of everyone except her father, that is. By the time she left home, Rowen despised her father as well as Christianity and all of its tenets and began creating, piece by piece, a nature-based spirituality of her own. In her rebellion, she fell in with a wayward crowd. Unmarried, she had a child by the age of 18 and was effectively banned from her parents' house and most of polite society for her transgression. In the time made empty by her *de facto* banishment, Rowen extrapolated on her home-brewed spirituality and spent as much time as possible outside. This habit eventually led her and her baby into the wrong forest, on the wrong night. She stumbled across the Samhain revels of a group of Acolytes. They took her child from her, and, in exchange, they gave her the Embrace.

A Gangrel sire brought Rowen into the Requiem, a fact she's thankful for, but only for the clan's hardiness and practical talents. Though she respects her clanmates, she has no particular affinity for them on a social level. The sole exception to this rule is Miriam, whom Rowen finds both intelligent and focused. Rowen respects Miriam, whom she sees as a powerful Kindred and a potential ally, although a bit of a slouch when it comes to supporting her covenant. Rowen's primary social ties are to the members of the Circle of the Crone, which she leads and serves with a nigh-obsessive zeal.

All these facets have combined to make Rowen is a powerful figure in Chicago's political landscape, though not nearly the operator she could be if she paid more attention to politics. In addition to being the Hierophant of the Circle of the Crone, Rowen is a Gangrel elder, with all the martial prowess entailed thereby.

Rowen is a hard woman, only minimally burdened with the pangs of conscience. Her mastery of Crúac has come at the cost of the naïveté and innocence she was known for in her breathing days and most of the Humanity with which she began her Requiem. From Rowen's perspective, however, the spiritual enlightenment she has gained has been worth it.

Tobias Rieff

A senior Harpy at Maxwell's court, the Daeva named Tobias Rieff never intended to rise to a position of power. He only meant to know everyone else's business. He has done a remarkable job. If any Kindred in Chicago knows the agonies, the excesses and the ambitions of his fellow Kindred, it's Rieff. He's not a passive Harpy, waiting for information to come to him. Instead,

he sniffs out gossip and scandal like a dog after prey. When gossip does find its way unbidden to his ear, he checks it for factuality before giving it his seal of approval and making it "official" gossip. While Rieff often does this through social means, including ample uses of the Majesty Discipline, he's not averse to occasionally taking a more active interest in his fellow Kindred.

On one hand, this is a major boon for the Kindred of Chicago because they know this Harpy is attentively doing his job, and those he recognizes as trend-setters really are the trend-setters. Still, Rieff's enthusiasm for knowing the Kindred of the city *very* well can be incredibly disturbing. Rieff's knowledge of Chicago's Kindred is nearly equal to Norris', though more socially focused.

Whatever else may be said about Rieff, the city's vampires agree on one thing: Rieff is scrupulously honest. He does not create scandal where there is none or inflate the status of those who don't deserve it. To do so, in his mind, would be to undermine everything his position is about. To this end, he takes great joy in investigating gossip before he passes it along. Consequently, any time a Kindred gets good gossip from Rieff, they have the added comfort of knowing that it's true and, therefore, worth spreading. It's one more aspect of Rieff's job performance that makes him popular in the role of Harpy.

While Rieff knows far too much about far too many Kindred, his knowledge is notably incomplete. There is one topic he finds himself loath to cover: he hates (or fears) the Nosferatu, and he can't seem to harness the same degree of enthusiasm about investigating them as he does others. Like them, their secrets tend to be ugly and unglamorous. His work, consequently, tends to be shoddy where the Haunts are concerned. Unbeknownst to him or Prince Maxwell, many Nosferatu are fully aware of this, and they find it satisfying to make subtle use of the Nightmare Discipline on and around Rieff, just to reinforce his phobia. They've seen what a pain in the ass Rieff can be to other Kindred, and they're happy not to have to put up with him.

In addition to his position as Harpy, Rieff serves Prince Maxwell as something of a jester, fearlessly (but humorously) pointing out when the Prince is being rash or transparent. Rieff doesn't do this in public, but his blunt tongue has nearly gotten him imprisoned on several occasions. Though it galls the Prince to admit it, he believes that Rieff's blunt (if witty) candor is probably one of the Harpy's greatest assets at Elysium.

Blackmailed

Someone in the characters' coterie winds up attracting Tobias Rieff's unwanted attention. Rieff finds that individual — and her peccadilloes — fascinating, and makes the vampire (or coterie) his favorite hobby for a while. The group may or may not even know the attention they've attracted until Rieff comes to them and mentions that little breach of the Masquerade (or some other sin) they thought they'd gotten away with. Rieff informs the character that she has 24 hours to meet his demands before the character finds herself the favorite topic of gossips and rumor mongers — and possibly on the Prince's short list of Kindred needing punishment. Rieff might ask for anything — money, influence, blood, sexual favors or anything else the character has access to.

The characters have the option of buying their way out of their predicament, in which case Rieff might sense easy prey and keep coming back for more, or they can opt to let Rieff expose whatever information it is that he has and just take the heat. Neither option is easy, but one might get Rieff off their backs for good.

Tobias Rieff

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Lancea Sanctum
Embrace: 1902
Apparent Age: 25
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 4, Investigation 5, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Allies 2, Contacts 5, Eidetic Memory, Haven 4, Herd 4, City Status (Chicago) 3
Willpower: 6



Humanity: 6
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Celerity 4, Majesty 4, Vigor 2

In his breathing days, Rieff was an attractive, if obnoxious, lothario and stalker. This was a side effect, for the most part, of a wealthy and somewhat dissolute childhood; not only did he have the spare time to focus on whatever woman caught his fancy, but he also had the money to spend on her and his rich father's political clout to shield him from the worst of his well-earned consequences.

Rieff was little more than a serial seducer. He would fall in love (or lust) with women he encountered in his daily routine, and he would woo (or stalk) them until they succumbed to his relentless charm (or intimidation). Once he had had them physically, he would become bored with them and move on to the next.

One of the women Rieff became obsessed with, the last one in fact, was more than she seemed. She also showed remarkable immunity to his formidable charm. He became more enthralled with her than with any woman he had ever seen. She was an incredibly difficult woman to stalk, however, because she kept odd, late hours. Rieff persevered, however, and eventually he discovered what she was. Around the same time, she became aware of the fact that he'd been following her. Impressed by both his passion and his daring, she Embraced him, and cursed others with his presence for many more years than his natural span would ever have allowed.

His sire, Juliana Powell, was the Daeva Priscus at the time and taught her childe well about the subtleties of existence among the Kindred. He learned some of her lessons better than others.

Rieff has an almost predatory fascination with others' existences. He revels in both the gathering and sharing of gossip, particularly if he can use it to boost his own standing. He is an unapologetic voyeur and busybody. Understanding how others conduct their Requiems is his fascination and his passion, and he's more than happy to pull others' secrets out of them with Majesty, if that's what it takes, but he's equally content to snoop around until he has his answers. Rieff doesn't do this to gain power over others, although he's willing to use it that way if it gets him something he wants more. This perverse little obsession with others is the misbegotten product of curiosity combined with an enduring sense of entitlement; he wants to know what others are doing with their Requiems, and he's quite certain that he deserves to know. And so he pries. He investigates. He asks questions, and he has others ask questions, and he listens to the gossip and, on occasion, he'll break into another's haven just to make sure he has evidence to support his suppositions. He follows people and takes notes of where they go and who they go there with. And, once he has his answers, he moves on to the next burning question.

One of his early targets was the Ventrue named Maxwell. Rieff gathered a great deal of dirt on Maxwell and almost forgot about it until Maxwell became Prince. Some of that dirt Rieff collected kept quite well over the years. It would have served Rieff in good stead — and imperiled some of Maxwell's key alliances — were it to get out. Prince Maxwell knew blackmail when he saw it. He asked Rieff what he wanted in exchange for silence. Rieff wanted nothing less than permission to spy on everyone and anyone in the city.

And so Maxwell made him the Harpy.

Rarely have character and social role been so intimately connected. Since becoming Chicago's primary Harpy, Rieff has pushed himself as never before to know the scuttlebutt on everyone. Rieff is not a spy, exactly; he's not seeking out the deeply hidden, dangerous facts on others, just the general information, the embarrassing truths, the eyebrow-raising connections and shocking peccadilloes that others would rather have go unnoticed. From time to time, Rieff's rampant curiosity gets him in trouble, but the Prince has, thus far, smoothed everything over. In exchange, Rieff keeps Maxwell particularly well informed about what's happening among the Kindred of Chicago. The Prince asks Rieff whom a Kindred met with, Rieff tells the Prince. The Prince asks for embarrassing facts about a Kindred, Rieff gives it to the Prince. What Rieff doesn't know, he's happy to find out. With Rieff's rampant voyeurism, along with Norris' constant intelligence gathering, there's *very* little Maxwell can't find out.

Garret McLean, Seneschal

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1884
Apparent Age: 29
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 , Dexterity 5 , Stamina 5
Social Attributes: Presence 3 , Manipulation 2 , Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 4, Occult 2, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Drive 3, Firearms 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies 5, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Disarm, Fighting Style (Kung Fu) 4, Mentor (Maxwell) 5, Covenant Status: Invictus 4, Haven 4, Herd 4, Resources 4, Retainer 1
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 5



Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Health: 10
Initiative: 9
Defense: 5
Speed: 14
Blood Potency: 5 (Vitae/turn: 14/2)
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 3, Protean 3, Resilience 5, Vigor 3

The dangerous right hand of the Prince, Garret McLean is among the most personally and politically powerful Kindred in Chicago, but he carefully avoids doing anything to reveal just how much power he has over Chicago's Kindred.

Garret was Embraced about 20 years after the Civil War. His sire was a Gangrel named Carmelita Escobar. She'd been looking for a long, long time for someone with the proper mix of good looks and martial skills to make into her partner and childe. Thanks to his service in the Union Army, and further work as a fighter on the frontier, Garret had the latter. The handsomeness just kind of happened on its own.

Carmelita put a full Vinculum on Garret within the first week and then spent a year and a half grooming him as her mouthpiece. She figured the United States was where the action was going to be, and, as a brown woman from Mexico, she needed a white man figurehead to be taken seriously. Given the amount of trouble she planned to stir up, her face-man had to be able to take care of himself.

Garret got towed along on his sire's mad crusade against American Carthians, a rambling hell-tour of the southwest half of America that sometimes ended with Carmelita diablerizing someone right before they split town. Eventually, the Invictus caught up to her, but Garret escaped destruction by selling out all her mortal contacts and resource channels to the Invictus Knight who did her in.

That Knight was Maxwell Clarke, then a Sheriff in Kansas City. Garret didn't bear him any ill will. In fact, when Garret felt the bondage within his soul snap, he was grateful.

The two of them were collegial equals in Kansas City for a while, but the town was too tight for both of them — Garret because he was still stigmatized as "that dago bitch's slavey-man" 20 years after his liberation, and Maxwell because he was black. They came to Chicago together, had a falling out, drifted apart, but made up when it came time to take the city back in the late 1980s. Garret knows which way the wind is blowing, and he's as loyal to Maxwell as the Prince can expect from someone who retains free will. It's not impossible that Garret could betray his old comrade, but there's no individual that Garret has known longer or worked with more profitably. If McLean is going to turn on the Prince, it's going to be solely of McLean's own volition and not as anyone else's pawn. But for the foreseeable future, Garret is happy to be near the top of the heap as Maxwell's Seneschal and unofficial bodyguard. He's enjoying the perks without the threats, and it could be some time before he gets envious of the power and responsibility.

McLean started out as a simple thug, muscle for the Prince to flex from time to time. He was, initially, little more than an uncivilized — but powerful — agent of Maxwell's wrath. That was a while ago. McLean has been with the Prince for decades now, working his way up from Hound, to Sheriff, to Herald and now Seneschal, and excelling at each of these duties in turn. While McLean has been taking care of the Prince's business, he has also been learning a great deal about civility, about subtlety and about less personal but more powerful power granted by money and allies. McLean handles the Prince's business, much of his mortal influence, his stock portfolio, his bank accounts and just about everything but "matters of state," that is, Maxwell's interactions with key Kindred, particularly the Primogen.

There are nights when Maxwell never shows his face in Elysium, leaving McLean to run the whole show. Norris and Rieff both tell McLean everything they would tell the Prince, so McLean has heard everything the Prince has heard. Moreover, McLean tends to pay closer attention. In many ways, McLean is essentially a co-Prince, though neither he nor Maxwell want anyone to get this impression. As far as Chicago's Kindred are concerned, Maxwell is the clear Prince and holder of praxis, and McLean is just his majordomo. Norris and Tobias Rieff may both have an inkling that the situation is more complex than that, but they're hardly going to share their suspicions while the power structure remains as it is.

In truth, McLean is not so far beneath Maxwell, either in savvy or in raw power and McLean is certainly not the lapdog some would claim him to be. Between his martial ferocity and his decades of experience in Kindred politics, McLean could easily claim praxis in

some other city. He may not be as old as some other Princes, but he's seen how cities operate, and he understands politics at a visceral level. Prince Maxwell occasionally tells himself that he should repay McLean's loyalty by helping McLean claim praxis in a city somewhere, or maybe even abdicate praxis of Chicago to McLean at some point, but the Prince is kidding himself. Maxwell would get by more easily without his hands than without McLean, and the Prince is far too content with the power that comes from overseeing Chicago's Kindred to ever give up praxis willingly.

For his part, McLean is frustrated by the absence of advancement opportunities, but his loyalty to Maxwell, augmented as it is by the Vinculum, keeps him from taking his leave. McLean was a tool of Maxwell's even before the Prince's last torpor, and McLean's dedication to Maxwell is unshakeable, not just because of the Vinculum, but because Maxwell treats McLean exceptionally well. The Seneschal has prime feeding grounds, a secure and spacious haven and access to both his own and the Prince's mortal influences. Almost any other situation would involve a worsening of circumstances for McLean.

But for all that, Garret still feels very much a bird in a gilded cage. He recognizes that he has no realistic chance of advancing any further in Chicago, and while he has the Prince's power to control as he sees fit, it is not rightfully (or at least not technically) his. No Elysium passes that McLean does not accompany Prince Maxwell and fulfill the standard duties of the Seneschal and more. He still occasionally steps into the role of Sheriff if the Prince asks him to, and Garret finds that he gets more satisfaction from the more brutal, physical aspects of that job than from his more refined duties as Seneschal.

McLean is well aware that he has one key flaw that would likely make him a less successful Prince than Maxwell: Garret has a violent temper and a merciless nature. Under Maxwell's control, McLean comes across as regal in his bearing, but that bearing is but a mask. McLean's real nature is more akin to that of a hungry wolf than a courtier, but years of serving (and imitating) Prince Maxwell have seemingly civilized Garret. This is an illusion. McLean simply sees to it that any sanguinary indiscretions on his part take place rarely and as far from the Loop as he can manage.

In his years as Sheriff, Herald and Seneschal, McLean has identified a number of Kindred whom he believes the city could do without, some of them fairly high ranking. (Solomon Birch's name, for example, heads the list.) Add to their number the Kindred whom Prince Maxwell would like to see destroyed, and that makes for quite a pool of targets. If and when Maxwell's Tranquility ends, McLean will be one of the busiest Kindred in the city. Afterward, he will be one of the most feared.

And if Garret ever *does* claim praxis in Chicago, the city will become a radically different place indeed for its Kindred citizens.

The Ghoul's Conspiracy

The characters are approached by a ghoul on behalf of her master, who wishes to remain incognito. The ghoul is more likely to approach unaligned and Carthian Kindred, but those affiliated with the Circle of the Crone could be solicited as well. The ghoul has a modest proposal for the characters: teach the arrogant elders of Chicago a lesson in humility. The characters are given documents listing the havens of a few Invictus and Lancea Sanctum elders, along with a catalogue of each of their "sins against the common vampire." For every elder the characters' coterie stakes, they'll be handsomely rewarded with cash and mortal influence (the influence of their target, to be specific).

The problem is, the ghoul's mind has been so manipulated, the characters can't figure out who sent her. On one hand, if the characters assume their benefactor is a powerful Carthian (or unaligned), they have a lot to gain. If it's a trap, then the characters could be implicating their whole covenant in the worst way.

Walt Barowski, Carthian Prefect

"Herding cats" is a metaphor commonly used to describe the experience of leading the Kindred of Chicago's Carthian Movement, and the Carthian Prefect in Chicago wouldn't dream of characterizing the experience in any other terms.

Barowski has been a familiar figure in Carthian politics for decades now. His initial ideological excesses — establishing a guerilla coterie dedicated to destroying the cruelest and most arrogant Kindred elders in the city, for example — have given way to more politically savvy methodologies. He has mitigated his tactics, but not his ideals; Barowski is among the most ardent Carthians in the city, and one of the most respected. During the Matriarch's praxis, Barowski served as the Myrmidon for the Carthian Movement. He worked closely with the Matriarch to ensure smooth functioning of the covenant and further Carthian ideals. Barowski was relatively certain that he would become the next Prince of Chicago when she finally went into torpor, though he wasn't entirely happy with that prospect. When she was beaten badly enough to crawl off to torpor (at the hands of Maxwell, of all people), it was a painful wakeup call.

In retrospect, Barowski believes he was naïve to have assumed that things would continue on as they

had been, but Maxwell had never seemed aggressive enough to take down the Matriarch. The shock and the anger have nudged Barowski's politics back toward the revolutionary side of the spectrum. Rumors have circulated almost non-stop since the Matriarch's disappearance that Barowski now has it in for Prince Maxwell and, by extension, the Invictus as a whole. Those in the know, Norris and company in particular, are watching Barowski closely and waiting for him to screw up so they can take legitimate action against him. So far, he appears to be behaving like a model Kindred (to the dismay of some younger Carthians), but whether that's because he's *been* a model Kindred or just because he's good at covering his tracks remains to be seen.

Regardless, it behooves a Carthian Prefect to keep a low profile, especially when the Prince is not a Carthian himself. This hard-won lesson informs Barowski's actions in the modern nights. He is a master of working both with and through others. He often doesn't even think of himself as an individual but as the brain in a larger organism. His Carthian brethren are his body, his feet and his fists. Barowski considers his ego secondary to his goals, and if he can make things happen without grandstanding (and thereby putting a big target on his head), then so much the better.

Barowski is an extraordinarily subtle agitator. He isn't the guy in the foreground, he's the guy in the background, smiling a lot and talking with the power broker. Barowski is an influence monster. He has contacts *everywhere* in the mortal realm. Librarians and contractors, club kids and cops, aldermen and hit men, Walt Barowski knows a little bit of everybody, and everybody likes Walt. They'd give Walt the shirts off their backs. His position in the city is much less prestigious than Maxwell's, but Walt puts in far more time and effort. His dedication to the Carthian cause is absolute. It's the only thing that allows him to maintain credibility at his advanced age.

Prince Maxwell is well aware that Barowski is only too eager to see a new Prince reign in Chicago, and the Prince is quite certain that Barowski has probably pondered how to take praxis himself. That's the main reason that Barowski isn't on the Primogen Council. The further Barowski is from the reins of power in Chicago, the happier Maxwell is. On several occasions, the Prince has given serious consideration to trumping up charges against Barowski in order to lock him up, or turn him into one of his loyal grims. Barowski, however, has too high a profile in the city and there's a great likelihood that Barowski's disappearance would cause Prince Maxwell more trouble than it's worth.

Walt Barowski

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1899
Apparent Age: 32
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4



Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4 , Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Politics 4, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Unions) 4, Allies (City Hall) 4, Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Media) 3, Covenant Status: Carthians 5, City Status (Chicago) 3, Contacts 5, Haven 3, Herd 2, Inspiring, Language (Polish) 3, Resources 3
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Health: 9
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 4
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Majesty 5, Vigor 4
Vitae/ per Turn: 13/2

The scion of a Polish noble family, the young Walter Barowski came to the United States when his parents were exiled for trumped-up political reasons. Barowski was in medical school at the time of his family's banishment, and the spoiled young man had to come to terms with his family's financial ruin all too quickly.

Chicago's Polish community is the largest outside Poland. Chicago itself contains more speakers of Polish than

any other city besides Warsaw. Barowski's family, consequently, chose Chicago as the site of their banishment.

Barowski found himself working with anyone who would pay an immigrant with a strong back. He worked with carpenters, Teamsters and meatpackers, and when the city's grand fathers of industry tried cheating their employees, the noble-born Barowski took exception and helped organize his co-workers into effective unions.

For his zeal and dedication Barowki got — killed. Chicago's fathers of industry didn't like the uppity Polack giving his co-workers ideas above their station, so the wealthy men had him killed. Were it not for the quick intervention of a young woman (or a woman who *looked* young, at any rate), Barowski would have died on the street. Her blood brought him across into the Requiem. In the years to come, that woman would become the Carthian elder called the Matriarch, once she claimed praxis of Chicago.

Barowki had a hard time pulling himself away from the affairs of mortals. Even after his Embrace, he would appear to the union workers and inspire them to greatness. In his Kindred affairs, Barowski has taken a similar approach. He dislikes both the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum for holding on to tired, outmoded systems. He particularly resents American Kindred who betray their own political heritage of democracy to follow such repressive systems.

Despite his concern with the past, Barowski is also keenly aware of the present and the future. He forces himself to learn every popular new technology as it comes out as a means of mastering any technique that might give him an advantage over the Kindred of the more archaic covenants.

For years, Barowski thought he was in a safely Carthian city. The assassination of the Matriarch and the rise to power of Maxwell has put a bitterness in Barowski's heart that he can barely contain. At this point, he's looking for any and all allies who can help him tip the balance of power back over to the Carthian Movement, and he's not being all that choosy about who joins him or what their methods are, so long as they don't endanger the standing of the covenant or trample its ideologies.

Max Maxey

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Unaligned
Embrace: 1734
Apparent Age: 70s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Jaqueline Edens: The Matriarch

The last elder to claim praxis in Chicago was a Carthian popular within her covenant but loathed by both the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum. While others fell into sloppy habits and referred to her as the Prince, Jaqueline Edens preferred to be called the Matriarch. She felt it had a more familial, egalitarian ring to it, and many Carthians agreed.

Embraced from an old and respected Chicago family of bankers and politicians (the Edens Expressway is named after her son, William G. Edens), it was a surprise that Edens joined the Carthians instead of the Invictus, particularly given that her sire, a Daeva, was an aggressive Invictus partisan. Expectations aside, Edens embodied the values of the Carthian Movement to the fullest. Too much so, in fact, for the Invictus of those nights.

To the Carthians, the Matriarch was a liberator who allowed the Kindred the widest possible latitude to take their Requiems in whatever directions they so chose. The expectation was that they would, eventually, mature enough to handle the freedom she granted. Sometimes that expectation was fulfilled, sometimes it wasn't. It was the kind of idealism the Carthian Movement revels in.

It also made Chicago a hard city, a rough city, especially for neonates. Under the Matriarch's praxis, Kindred-versus-Kindred violence was unavoidable in certain neighborhoods. On the other hand, the Kindred had freedoms (to Embrace, within limits) and a privacy that they simply don't have under Prince Maxwell and the prying eyes of Norris and Rieff.

Edens took over Chicago following Maxwell's first praxis, in 1969. Her period of rule (1969–1986) is the shortest of any Chicago Prince, except for Maxwell, whose first era on the throne lasted just four years. A conspiracy of the Sanctified and the First Estate brought the Matriarch down and installed the current Prince, and many Carthians are still bitter. Some of them are holding out for the Matriarch's return from torpor, if for no other reason than they like the symmetry of turning the same tables on Maxwell one more time.

They may have to wait a while. The Prince's Tranquility, though imposed from the top down, has brought a level of safety and civility to Chicago's Kindred that they've never experienced before. Certain members of the Carthian Movement who were loyal to the Matriarch seem to take the greatest exception to the freedoms they've lost under the current Prince and, sooner or later, they'll take back the city. In the meantime, Prince Maxwell's peace is certainly tolerable enough to keep less fanatical Carthians from getting properly motivated.



Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 6

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 5, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl (Bite) 4, Larceny 4, Stealth 6, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 4, Empathy 6, Expression (Memoirs) 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 6

Merits: Allies (Public Works) 3, City Status (Legend) 2, Clan Status: Ventrue (Priscus) 4, Contacts (Homeless), Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven: Security 5, Haven: Size 2, Herd (Kindred) 3, Languages (French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Polish) 5

Willpower: 11

Humanity: 3 (Fixation, mild: 5; Obsessive Compulsion, severe: 3)

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Health: 10

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 7 (Vitae/turn: 20/5)

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 1, Dominate 5, Majesty 5, Nightmare 5, Obfuscate 4, Protean 1, Resilience 4, Vigor 4

Devotions: Quicken Sight, Threefold Assault, Veridical Tongue

In the depths of the Undercity beneath the South Side, there resides an old, repulsive and powerful Kindred some call the King of the Undercity. Max Maurey would argue against that title, but the fact remains he is one of the oldest (maybe *the* oldest) Kindred in Chicago. Maurey was the Ventrue Priscus under the Matriarch and some of her predecessors. Maurey's politics and infrequent visits to the surface have seen him forgotten by Prince Maxwell ("that other Max"), who acknowledges another Ventrue Priscus for all intents and purposes.

Maurey is one of the eldest waking Kindred in Chicago and he knows the city like he knows his own flesh. He keeps a concise journal of his experiences and the historical events of the night, both Kindred and mortal, as he dreads the notion of entering torpor. Maurey is a powerful cultural force in the Undercity, though conspicuously *not* in any covenant. He has worked with the Carthians from time to time, and with the Circle of the Crone on occasion as well, but he doesn't subscribe to the ideology of any faction enough to actually join (though not for lack of invitations).

In the '60s and '70s, Maurey knew several of the Lupine packs that protected Union Station and the surrounding underground. He might still have common allies or friends with some of them, but it's been some time since he ventured out into the cavernous rail yards where the wolves wait and the dark is thick with ghosts.

Prior to the Mage War in '87, Maurey had regular contact with a cabal from the Mysterium. He assumes they were wiped out or driven off, however, as one night they just stopped coming down to see him. He still has an artifact they left in his care.

Scratch, the Nosferatu Priscus, doesn't like Maurey. In fact, Scratch is terrified of him. Maurey may be the only Chicago Kindred who knows, firsthand, what Scratch was doing in the '20s — Maurey's own childe is the vampire who put Scratch in the river for half a century. Maurey doesn't like Scratch either; Maurey finds Scratch repulsive due to his moral failings, not his behavior. The two have met at least once since the old nights, but Scratch couldn't get a straight read on old Max: does he know Scratch's secret or not? Once, in the 1920s, the two saw each other regularly. Tonight, Maurey wants nothing to do with Scratch.

Theft of Memory

Scratch wants Maurey's journal. Not only does Scratch like the idea of crippling a powerful elder, but he is concerned that there may be information in the journal about him and the behavior that made Maurey disown him. Scratch has no intent of stealing the journal himself; as Chicago's Nosferatu Priscus, he has too much to lose. He would love to get other Kindred to go into the tunnels where Maurey makes his lair and get it for him, however.

This is likely harder than it sounds. Finding Maurey's own tunnels is the first challenge. Many Kindred in Chicago know where to find Maurey's tunnels, but knowing where to start is no guarantee that Maurey is where folks say and no protection against whatever lurks on the road to him. Then there's the matter of Maurey's ghouled guards and rats, decoy tunnels, the highly complex vault door that protects his haven and, of course, Maurey himself.

The "journal" is enormous. Each volume is a huge affair made of leather-sheathed metal plates, weighing around 40 pounds. And there are almost 100 volumes, accumulated over the centuries.

Maurey is considered the quiet champion of the Undercity's Kindred. Anything that would bring trouble to the underground or damage their standing in the city, Maurey weighs in on. More than once, he's sent word to the court at Elysium via a filthy undead messenger long thought destroyed by surface society. Courtly Kindred often rumor that Prince Maxwell even went into the tunnels once to parley with Maurey, shortly after the Prince returned to power, but who knows if it's true.

Few topsiders even know of Maurey's existence beyond occasional rumors, as he goes for years without ever leaving his corner of the Undercity. Kindred of the underground don't go out of their way to mention his existence to those who don't already know him: he's like their secret grandfather. Except for the most bestial vampires of the subterranean world, only Max Maurey truly resembles the romantic stereotype of the phantom that languishes among stolen finery and phonographs in the cracked concrete and vaulted chambers of the underground. Only Max Maurey really has *no* intention of ever returning to the surface.

Only Kindred Vitae gives Maurey nourishment, and he drinks only Vitae willingly offered up by other underground vampires — and they offer it frequently. Certainly, any vampire with a favor to ask would start off the meeting by offering a significant quantity of his Vitae, and those stopping by to ask his advice usually provide a bit of blood for his time. One of his childer stops by once or twice a year, it is said, to touch base with their powerful sire and give a little of themselves, and then there are those visitors who didn't *intend* to give Maurey any of their Vitae, but find themselves moved to do so by his incredible presence. For a vampire with a very exclusive feeding requirement, Maurey is remarkably well fed.

Should he ever enter torpor, Maurey has kept a detailed journal of his Requiem in which he places every note, story and anecdote of any importance to him: events, dates, hand-drawn illustrations, notes on the city's political squabbles and so on. Word of the night's business comes to him from traveling vampires, visiting mages and Lupines looking for his insight. Those who've seen the many volumes of his memoirs say he *must* be going to the surface, at least sometimes, to know what he knows.

Maurey keeps his journals in his haven, behind a metal bank vault door that he installed back in the '20s when he was more active in surface events. Maurey has never been in torpor and the thought terrifies him, but he concedes that circumstances must force his hand some night. When torpor comes, he'll seal himself away with the phonograph playing and pray his nightmares are short.

Maurey is an old-fashioned, regal sort of lord. He is a relic, like everything else in his haven, warped and rotten by the damp, but still charming and fascinating in antiquity. Maurey comes across as patient and dignified but, less obviously, Maurey is also a creature of immense cunning. His considerable age has twisted his features in a way that leads many to believe he is a Nosferatu, but he is simply a wise and tired old man in a body worn out from fighting off the insatiable Beast.

Maurey's Devotion: Threefold Assault

(Majesty •, Dominate •, Nightmare •)

Maurey has always been intrigued by the Disciplines that influence the mind, and has studied them as intensely as he's been able. Threefold Assault is the first fruit of his studies, being a fused and paradoxical jolt of melded love, terror and devotion.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidate + Majesty, Dominate or Nightmare (selected by the character when the Devotion is learned) versus the lowest of the subject's Composure, Resolve or Stamina + Blood Potency

Action: Instant and contested; resistance is reflexive

To make a Threefold Assault, Max must meet the gaze of his target and shout something — given the confusing tangle of emotions carried in the voice, it doesn't really matter what he says, or if it's comprehensible. If Max succeeds, the effects of the Devotion are imposed on the target for one turn. The effect imposed depends on which trait the target rolled to resist (Composure, Resolve or Stamina).

If Stamina is lowest, the target is overcome with trembling terror and suffers a –1 penalty to all Physical Attributes.

If Resolve is the lowest, the target is baffled and confused. The victim can either move or take an action on her turn, but not both.

If Composure is lowest, the target is torn between hatred for Max and loathing for herself. This tension prevents her from spending Willpower points to oppose, attack or resist Max.

If two or three traits are equally low, the target chooses which to defend with. Only one Threefold Attack can affect a target at a time.

This Devotion costs 10 experience points to learn.

Old Max

In 1734, a young professor of philology, en route to visit his family in Bavaria, disappeared and was never heard from again.

The scholar, Maximilian Maurey, did not disappear from the flow of history — he just jumped streams, from

the history of the living to the history of the Kindred. His sire, an old Kindred named Hugo Kleist, was a hideous, rotted thing that looked more like a corpse that had been allowed to rot for a few weeks and then mummified. Kleist, however, was relatively humanitarian. The frenzy of the German witch trials had forced Kleist to move his haven no fewer than three times in the space of a century. He was on the verge of entering torpor, and he needed an assistant to help him find a new place of safety before his torpor overtook him. Of all those in the diligence he'd stopped, he felt that Maurey alone was worthy of the Embrace.

Kleist made certain that he had a Vinculum with Maurey, and the two traveled together for weeks through the dark fairy-tale woods of what is now Germany, Poland and Romania. Kleist had long been able to feed only from other vampires, and his one vessel was now Maurey. After six months on the road, Kleist's appetite became more than he could bear and more than Maurey could sustain; Maurey had to feed several times on certain evenings just so his sire could drink his fill. The two finally found a crypt that was amenable to the ancient Kleist. The elder spent several evenings summarizing everything his childe needed to know about the world and the dark forces at work within it until, at last, Kleist fed one last time from Maurey and succumbed to the nightmares of torpor.

Maurey the scholar was hardly ready for the Requiem into which he had been introduced, but he survived by traveling from village to village, preying on the sleeping. Without the burden of feeding his sire as well, Maurey actually found the burden of the Requiem to be much lighter.

Around the turn of the 19th century, Maurey left Germany for Paris, a city in which he thrived. He became a courtier to Paris' Prince, but grew disenchanted with the politics. In 1850, Maurey did the unthinkable (by most Kindred terms, anyway) and moved to London, giving up immense status and a spectacular haven to do so. London suited Maurey. It was a fine time to be a vampire, but it, too, paled after a few decades. And so, he gave up his place in the city and shipped himself across the ocean, to New York and then Chicago, where he settled.

From 1904 until Maxwell claimed praxis, Maurey was an influential voice in city and Ventrue circles. For a time, he was on the Primogen as a voice for peace — Maurey has long had Carthian leanings, although he was never an actual member of the Carthians. Still, when the Matriarch was dethroned, Maurey was both alarmed and angered. While it was a rare thing for him to come out of the Undercity even before Prince Maxwell claimed praxis, it has been all but unheard of since. Maurey finds Maxwell's peace, achieved by ambushing and destroying his predecessors, to be hypocrisy and cowardice.

Prince Maxwell came to the old Ventrue, but Maurey refused to advise the Prince. Instead, Maurey established his own court beneath the city, where those who were sick of the political games could escape them. To Maurey's surprise, Maxwell named Maurey the Regent of the Undercity and gave him the right to intervene on behalf of the Kindred below. In the years since, Maurey's been second-guessing himself. The Prince has never sent envoys to intrude on Maurey's territory and has truly upheld the boundary between the two cities — the politics and treacheries of court do not drip down into Maurey's domain. Could Maurey have been wrong about Prince Maxwell?

If Maurey *wanted* to be Prince, Maxwell would have cause for concern. As it is, Maurey is more concerned with avoiding torpor (even as he makes his preparations for it) than seeking power. That said, Maurey has the experience, the strength of the blood and the legendary reputation to make him a serious candidate for praxis, if someone could convince him that it was the right thing to do.

Middle Management

In most places in the country, voting is looked upon as a right and a duty, but in Chicago it's a sport. In Chicago not only your vote counts, but all kinds of other votes — kids, dead folks, and so on.

—Dick Gregory, *Dick Gregory's Political Primer*, 1972

The Pagan Malcontents

Although the Circle of the Crone is as numerous as any other covenant in Chicago, the Acolytes lack the political pull of the smaller Lancea Sanctum, or the claim to religious neutrality that the Carthians and Invictus possess. (The Ordo Dracul is just kind of "out there.") Every covenant has its factions, but in agnostic groups like Invictus and the Carthian movement, those divisions are purely strategic. In the Lancea Sanctum, theological divisions are the organizing principle. Only the Circle has separate religious *and* political fault-lines.

In practice, this means that some in the Circle devote themselves to Eris, and some find the Crone in Kali and some find her in Ishtar. Separate from those

disagreements, there are conflicts over how involved the Circle *qua* Circle should be in Kindred policy-making. Currently the only Acolyte to sit on the Primogen (Rowen) takes a very *laissez-faire* stance.

The Malcontents want to change that. They believe the Circle can, and *should* be the dominant faction at Court. (Why? Because they're right and everyone else is misled.) But Rowen only sticks her oar in when she's needed to break a tie or to defend Circle interests against *egregious* abuses. She's not making any *gains* and is content to let things slide — and let Solomon and his fire-breathers bellow in the Prince's ear without any dissenting opinion.

Unlike many Circle coteries, the Malcontents are all over the map *spiritually*. But they agree that their covenant needs more clout, and they're willing to whitewash a *lot* of doctrinal disagreement until the threat of Sanctified ideological dominion is settled.

Leader: Bella Dravnzie

Bella looks 17 and thinks 74. She's been dead three times longer than she was alive, and she's spent most of that time studying the art of helping people misjudge, underestimate and (best and rarest of all) *trust* her. A Crone at heart, she truly believes that suffering and difficulty are the seeds from which new spiritual strength grows — and what's more difficult than a betrayal from a friend?

Philosophically, treachery to trusting students is her duty.

Fortunately for her coterie, half of them are old enough to know better, another third are just too busy to get personally involved and the remainder — well, there's a tacit agreement among the *leaders* of the group that some followers are pretty much fungible.

Bella Dravnzie

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1948
Apparent Age: 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (History) 2, Investigation 2, Occult (The Crone) 3, Politics (Kindred) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth (Get Away) 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Sense Weakness) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Seduce) 4, Socialize (Carousing) 4, Streetwise (Clubs) 3, Subterfuge (Lie) 4
Merits: Allies (New Age Religion) 2, Barfly, City Status 1, Contacts (Clubs, Contractors, Event Planners, Nomads), Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone 3, Covenant Status: Invictus 1, Haven: Security 1, Haven: Size 1, Meditative Mind, Resources 1
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 4 (Narcissism, mild: 5)
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Pride
Health: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Crúac 2, Dominate 3, Majesty 1, Resilience 2
Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina (1), Hydra's Vitae (2)



Bella Talks

"Loki, our people are being crushed and if you do not help them, the guilt lies— hold on, I have to take this call.

"Peter? Ohmigod Peter, how come you haven't called me? We, like, totally have to go see this really cool band, they're playing Friday? At Excalibur? They're called Garage Against the Machine, you'll get me tickets? Hold on minute, 'kay Petey?

"Loki, we are not done with our conversation. I just need to get this sap on the hook."

Embraced at the tender age of 17, Bella missed out on a lot of growing up. She went right from the bickering and politics of a private boarding school to the bickering and politics of the Invictus. Seventy years of Requiem still haven't done much to help her develop a sense of proportion.

She was a junior member of the Invictus for years, until she really spent some time in the presence of Acolytes to the Crone. They seemed to possess a quality — be it tranquility or resignation — that allowed them to rise above the petty squabbles of so many other covenants. She knew then that she wanted what they had, and she joined.

The irony is that one of the elders who so impressed her is Rowen, currently Chicago's most experienced Crone worshipper. Bella herself was sickened by politics but, like a car crash, she's never been able too look away. That was fine in neighborhoods where the Circle was dominant, but she cannot stand to see the Invictus and the Carthians — to her mind, groups of inferior putzes who don't understand what *really matters* — elbowing people away from the Circle, which provides real guidance. Even worse, though, are the concessions to Solomon and his kook brigade. No *Embrace*? No competition to the *death*? Hell, why doesn't he just try and teach wolves to live on whole-grain muffins while he's at it?

Bella can't stay out of it any more. She has to fight for her beliefs, she has to fight the madness of the Lancea Sanctum and if that means she has to fight her respected elder for control of the Circle first — so be it.

When she prays (and she prays every night), Bella hopes it will not come to that.

Bella's a little on the short side of average height, skinny and lithe with small breasts, dishwater-blonde hair and deep-set brown eyes. She's plain as a stick figure when she does not exercise her Disciplines, and she's a glamorous apparition of unattainable beauty when she does. Bella uses both looks to great effect and is always careful to dress appropriately.

She's been the Maiden and she's become the Crone without ever going through the Mother stage. She believes in opportunity and she believes in finality, but nurturing only has one meaning for her — nurturing can only be a prelude to betrayal. She respects those stronger than herself, as long as they earned their strength through righteous trial. But she understands that to the weak, it is her duty to *be* a righteous trial.

Bella enjoys clubbing and partying and hitting the scene, but it's a distant enjoyment. That's fine. Otherwise, she might be distracted from her business. Not only is she plugged in, of her entire Chicago covenant she's the one who cares the most. Her displays of empathy, sympathy and kindness often seem more impulsive and maternal than the real thing because they're so studiedly deliberate.

Goal: Awaken the Circle

The Malcontents know that their philosophy is the One True Way and they're tired of the Sanctified and their One False Way suggesting legal policy to the Prince. The Circle should be giving the Prince advice. The Circle *must start* giving the Prince advice, and the Prince must listen. That means the Circle needs clout and, unfortunately, its rivals aren't big on sharing.

What They've Got

The Malcontents are a broad cross-section of Circle philosophy, which gives them a lot of variety in terms of clan membership, status, wealth and social connectedness. There are blue-blooded art snobs rubbing shoulders with car-jacking street hoods. It's a big tent.

At the current moment, the Malcontents are also the most motivated Circle coterie. Because they value influence so highly, they feel the most threatened by the Lance Sanctum's disproportionate pull. (The Invictus has more pull, of course, but that's less irritating because the Invictus is, from the Malcontents' perspective, merely based on ignorance and not on the active *pursuit* of falsehood.)

The Persephone Thing

Another odd advantage the Malcontents possess is a connection to Persephone Moore. When Persephone was the rankest of neonates, Maxwell asked Bella to take his childe under her wing, teach her how to hunt with style and discretion and even asked Bella to instruct Persephone in the Discipline of Majesty. Bella, no fool, was happy to comply with the Prince's request.

Happy for the most part. She *likes* Persephone. Sure, Bella considers Moore ridiculously willful and arrogant, but Bella hides it expertly and goes along, blithely confident that Fate will take care of humbling Persephone if no Kindred does. But sometimes, when things are quiet and still, Bella wonders *why* Maxwell chose her, Bella Dravnzie, a mid-level and politically belligerent Acolyte. There are certainly plenty of Invictus types who could play the mentor role as well. Why indebt himself to Bella? Why indebt *Persephone*? Is it some kind of backhanded insult — "I'm sticking you with this chore because I know you're too weak and stupid to exploit the opening"? Or is it a compliment, a show of trust? Or did he just figure they'd get along and that pleasant camaraderie might provide his offspring an extra layer of protection?

It's a stumper, and often Bella wonders if Maxwell isn't hoping that Persephone will somehow alter *Bella* and "bring her around" to Maxwell's coalition. It's a ridiculous thought — but one that makes the idea of selling out her trusting charge to the highest bidder all the more palatable.

What They Need

They don't have a lot of elders — Bella's the oldest of the lot, and she was turned only 57 years ago. Furthermore, the Malcontents are the most avidly political of the Circle, pretty much by definition. It should therefore surprise no one that their study of Kindred metaphysics has taken a backseat to more directly applicable tools of control and manipulation. To be blunt, they may know a lot of aldermen and precinct dispatchers, but they don't know a lot of Crúac.

New Recruits

Bella's habit of backstabbing her protégés for profit means that she operates best when she's got a steady supply of ignorant new Kindred to sell. One impediment, of course, is that stubborn residue of cast-asides, but it's less of a problem than it might seem. Some take her message to heart, understand that she really *did* fuck them over for their own good, and are happy to set up the next chump. Others, while bitter, are too embarrassed over their own humiliation to admit what happened to them. Still others see their betrayal as a sort of hazing, and are willing to put their grudges in abeyance as long as they get to torment the next class of pledges.

Nevertheless, there are Kindred out there who can credibly warn neonates about the Malcontents, and those Kindred's numbers are growing to the point that Bella can't easily sweep them all under the rug. Therefore, she's looking for new sources of followers — not only to provide a pool of potential pawns, but to give the Malcontents the muscle they need to edge out the Lancea Sanctum.

Where to get these newcomers?

One option is conversions from other covenants, but that's a hard sell — and even if she gets someone to join the Circle, it's quite possible that said convert will mostly be interested in apolitical spiritual questing — arguably, that *is* what the Circle has to offer.

Another possibility is a Prince's Indulgence (see p. 57). If the ban on Embrace was lifted, she and her followers could theoretically double the numbers of their clique. Of course, the Prince has been steadfast in his refusal to declare an Indulgence, no matter who asks. Nevertheless, the precedent is there, and Bella encourages her followers to be ready at a moment's notice to take advantage of any liberty forthcoming.

But maybe the best potential source is to bring in Acolytes from elsewhere.

Project: The Migration

The "source city" — from which the Malcontents plan on importing their new allies — is far from the best place in America to live, but it's even worse to be undead there. Starting in the late '90s, a group of witch hunters got started and developed a kind of critical mass before the local ruler — then a member of the Circle — could squash them. (In her defense, her praxis was heavily besieged at the time.) The group of hunters has grown into an actual subculture, and with some suspiciously well-timed "lucky breaks" they actually managed to assassinate the Prince herself. Now it sounds like a distinctly Jacobin-flavored cell of Carthians have taken over, and the new Prince is busily kicking the local Acolytes while they're down.

Hunters to the left, Jacobins to the right, it's a terrible city for the Acolytes residing there. Their religious practices attract political attacks and hunters alike. They have no real leader to speak of, and the only reason word of their plight has spread is because two of them have taken up the nomad's Requiem and passed through Chicago last summer. It was through those nomads that Bella offered the dozen Malcontents of that troubled city a chance to join her Malcontents. It's just a matter of convincing them to cross the miles between cities.

Although a road trip with a dozen Kindred is no picnic, it shouldn't be impossible, but there are all sorts of problems with these refugees: three of them are in torpor. Another four are scared fledglings with more hunger than sense. The best fighter is a Gangrel who was, to be blunt, stupid even when alive. Two others are seriously injured and won't be able to walk for days, but between them they've got the Gangrel and three of the newbies under some stage of Vinculum. Of the two who remain, one's a Ventrue with a reputation for being pushy and paranoid. But hey, at least one of the gang is uncomplicated!

The emigrants aren't willing to move without an escort, and they think their current haven is under surveillance by hunters *and* the Carthians. Their Chicago allies have to get in, get them out of their urban hermitage and on the road and then protect them as they run the gauntlet of the American countryside. And *then* they have to be introduced to Maxwell so they can be formally placed under the Prince's Tranquility. Oh, and then the strangers have to be integrated into a Chicago society that feels quite full enough, thank you.

It's a big job, and daring, so Bella would be greatly indebted to any Kindred, werewolf or mage who could carry it off, just as her rivals would be indebted to anyone who foiled it.

The biggest catch? Bella hasn't told anyone where this "source city" is.

The River Snakes

The Chicago river is full of dirty and unsavory things, not least of which are a gang of blood-sipping freaks known as the River Snakes. There are about 15 to 20 of them at any given time and, with no formal membership, Kindred drift in and out with some regularity.

Kindred have been lairing in the river since at least the 1860s, when it was a dumping ground for vast stockyards that killed 21,000 cows and 75,000 pigs per day. Kindred of low ambition could feed easily on dumped blood, though such feeding often involved straining out other matter. (The river was also the city's sewer and junkyard.) Burrowing in the muck on the bottom provided extra shelter from the sun, though many found that the water itself was opaque and polluted enough for full protection.

Over the course of a 100-plus years, some ingenious shelters have been constructed to branch off storm sewer outlets, and there are some rooms in riverfront basements that open to the water and don't show up on blue-

prints. "Going snake" still indicates hitting the skids — settling for the lowliest of havens and the meanest of diets — but a few who have chosen a River Snake Requiem do so because they have adapted. They have the good havens up closer to Navy Pier, they prey on the tourists and fun-lovers there, they dress nicely and take warm showers with scented shampoo after rising from their watery graves.

Leader: Alexi Serbetsnya

A wild-eyed first-generation American beauty from Chicago's Ukrainian neighborhood, Alexi leads the Snakes by virtue of age, a weird charisma and being crazy enough that no one wants to cross her. Technically Invictus, Alexi believes that the water is the natural domain of the Kindred, and is not shy about pushing that theory. In fact, part of the reason she has so much pull with the Snakes is that she truly believes their way is the best, safest and most reasonable. When you're used to being regarded as a loser who can't do better, it's attractive to listen to someone who gives you some pride.

Alexi Serbetsnya

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1956
Apparent Age: 30s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 3, Occult 1, Politics 2.



Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry (Multiple Opponents) 3
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Near the River) 3, Subterfuge (Bald Lie) 3
Merits: Direction Sense 1, Allies 4, Covenant Status: Invictus 3, Resources 3, Contacts 3, Haven 4, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Pride
Health: 7
Initiative: 6 (9 with Celerity)
Defense: 3 (6 with Celerity)
Speed: 11 (44 with Celerity)
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 3

Alexi wanted more.

Really, at any turn of her personal history, you can simply fall back on that recurring theme: Alexi wanted more. When she was growing up poor on the South Side? Alexi wanted more. Got tutored by a pickpocket in her youth? She wanted more. Worked as the sex appeal tool for grifters and con-men in her teens? Wanted more.

Became a cat burglar, a bank robber, the mastermind of a plan to hijack a train car full of treasury notes?

More, more and — if she hadn't gotten caught on that last one — more again, probably.

She sobbed for the jury and made startling (and untrue) revelations about her boyfriend Edward, how he forced her into it, the shame, the degrading things he made her do, oh, any woman would do *anything* to keep such a beast of a man from harming her again . . . .

The jury bought it and she only served five years, while Edward got sent away for 15 but, as luck would have it, escaped after killing a guard and headed back to Chicago with a fairly elaborate revenge on his mind. (Edward Faulkes was something of a dummy when it came to women, but he was a genius with a lock and, additionally, pretty damn handy with an edged weapon. He taught Alexi everything she could learn, which was about half of what he knew.)

With Edward impending, Alexi needed protection, and fast, but chumps of Edward's caliber were scarce on the ground. Then she met Valencia. Valencia offered Alexi protection. Valencia offered her prestige, grace, inhuman longevity and, at first, Alexi was glad to take it. Then she learned what Valencia really was.

(Alexi wanted more.)

When Valencia wouldn't Embrace her, Alexi kidnapped her and forced the issue. Alexi's weakened sire escaped during Alexi's fledgling hunger and disorientation, leaving the neonate Alexi to make an ugly little rampage before her sire could recapture her, with the aid of an unexpected ally.

Edward Faulkes. Embraced at Valencia's command by a member of the Ventrue clan.

Edward, Valencia and that Ventrue ally had a *lot* of fun at Alexi's expense for a long, *long* time. That's why Alexi suffers from paranoia, delusions of grandeur and the odd fugue state in modern nights. But eventually Valencia and her Lordly friend had a falling-out, Edward got caught in the middle and, in the hubbub (this was during the infamous Democratic National Convention of 1968) Alexi escaped.

Alexi had gained her freedom, but Alexi wanted more.

By 1971, Edward had fled to Cincinnati. By 1978, the Ventrue sicko was in torpor and by 1984, Valencia had disappeared. All these events coincided with Alexi's growing influence with the River Snakes. By the turn of the millennium, she had become their leader.

She still wants more.

Goal: Proselytize

The River Snakes want more Kindred to go Snake. Other than recruiting, they have no real agenda. They throw any limited pull they have this way or that, but most Kindred just aren't buying.

What They've Got

Prince Maxwell has formally recognized Alexi as the Regent of the Chicago River — not any of the dry land around it, but the water and the bridges. She's hassled a few Kindred in the past by not letting them use "her" bridges, but by and large she doesn't fool with such petty, finicky stuff. Instead, the Snakes concentrate on mastering their one real advantage.

The River

There are currently about three decent havens branching off the Chicago River underwater — places where Kindred can enter and sleep submerged, store their possessions dry and leave on dry land after bathing. All are, of course, occupied. There are many more makeshift boltholes with river access, ranging from holes dug under piers to abandoned conduit tunnels that have been broken into via storm sewer pipes. The Snakes know all these spots, they know how and where to put a dead body so that cops will *never* find it, they know the cheap ways to filter water in a semi-enclosed space and they know all the ins and outs of going from being undead under the water to passing for a normal citizen up on the streets.

Beyond that, there are rumors that some spirit — something hungry and cruel — haunts the river. Maybe it's the collective ghosts of the over 800 people who drowned when the *Eastland* sank near the Clark Street Bridge in 1915. Maybe the spirit is an accrued spiritual residue from those millions of pigs and cows. Or maybe it's something that has nothing to do with the river at all, but merely finds Alexi and the Snakes amusing, or useful.

Maybe there's nothing to the rumor.

Haven and Herd: Snake Style

As a historical concession, a River Snake has always had feeding rights over pigs slaughtered in Chicago, and while hundreds of gallons of pig blood are no longer dumped in the river, the Snakes still have their thumbs in that pie. They can get as much nasty, dead pig blood as they want, and anyone who gets on their good side may share in their paltry harvest. Not so many pigs are slaughtered in Chicago anymore, but the River Snakes have dibs on those that are.

Similarly, anyone who befriends the Snakes enough to get their tutelage may be shown the best way to find an underwater haven or may just be awarded one. The very best havens that are handed out as gifts in this fashion have one or more dots of Haven Security and one dot of Haven Location. Security, in the case of these gross nests, typically describes nothing more than the sheer difficulty of finding and reaching a hole in the concrete under 10 feet of black water and river sludge. The final spread of awarded dots is, naturally, up to the Storyteller.

What They Need

With a few noteworthy exceptions, individual Snakes need more money, more reliable sources for human blood, haven improvements and a tighter connection to Kindred outside. But what the group itself needs to grow and thrive is something that no individual has yet provided.

An Ambassador

While Alexi is respected, she is not *liked*. All but the desperate tend to avoid her, which bodes ill for her desire to be emulated. If the River Snakes could find a spokesperson who wasn't so shrill and strident, they would find it much easier to sell their contemporaries on the benefits of their unusual setup.

Essentially, Alexi is their Malcolm X, the revolutionary leader who demands respect. Now they need a Michael Jordan — someone whom people actually want to *be*.

Project: The Impregnable

Alexi has a vision of a fortress, utterly submerged, concealed from human prying and nigh-impossible for the breathers to penetrate. She wants a ballroom, a maze of private quarters, exits into the river and up through the sewers, she wants serious purification for this completely submerged micro-empire and she wants it built without mortals being any the wiser.

No one ever said Alexi lacked ambition, though many have said she lacks even a shred of common sense.

Nevertheless, she's actually got it all planned out. The first step is a devastating riverbank collapse by the Wacker Drive Bridge. She's got her hooks into the city's surveyors and waterway engineers by virtue of backing Prince Maxwell on his bid for praxis and on his Embrace ban. (Admittedly, she and the Snakes ignore the ban when they think their difficult circumstances warrant it. The ban is mainly a hassle for the childer who can't show themselves on the surface without being recognized as strangers.) After she provokes the accident, her engineers are to enter a bid to drain and shore up the riverbanks and any nearby building foundations that need it. Under the cover of that excavation, Alexi and the Snakes will nocturnally borrow the draining, dredging, pumping and earthmoving equipment (and some personnel) required to construct their 200,000-cubic-foot marine utopia.

Storm! Pirates! Shipwreck!

The rumors about a wretchedly evil water spirit? Not just rumors. Alexi wants to find some way (maybe by negotiating with Lupines or wizards) to convince the river's gruesome spirits to summon a vicious storm just as the cargo ship, *Wilhelmina,* gets within sight of Chicago. During the storm, Alexi's followers plan to swarm aboard the ship, kill the crew and sink her with all possible haste, so that the River Snakes can loot the cargo of imported jewelry and other goods within her hold. The blood of the crew members is only an added bonus.

The River Snakes aren't often given much credibility, but their words are often repeated for entertainment value. Characters catching wind of this convoluted plan might want in on the action in exchange for a cut, or might take word of it to the Prince's people, making enemies of the Snakes in exchange for allies at court. On the other hand, a fraudulent mage or werewolf might string the Snakes along for a time as part of some larger plot involving the river's spirits.

Ladue's Gang

Rafael Ladue is one of the unbound living in Cicero, an outlying suburb of Chicago. Unlike most unbound, Rafael *wants* to belong — specifically, he wants to belong to the Invictus. He just wants to join on his own terms.

Beside him are a rabble of Kindred who haven't signed up with a covenant and who don't really trust Ladue, either — but he's the Devil they know, and they're at least confident that he won't be able to hose them over as efficiently as an Invictus elder, should Ladue choose to do so. They genuinely wouldn't mind a little more organization (or, at least, communication) in their neck of the woods, and if Rafael can get it for them without them having to become vassals to some fossilized old bastard — yeah, well, okay.

Leader: Rafael Ladue

Rafael was Embraced by the notorious Kindred pimp Old John. Old John was worried about laundering his bordello profits and concluded that he needed one of these "computer nerds" to hide his cash. Half a year of stalking the campus at the University of Chicago led him to a likely suspect — straight A's but a few discipline problems — and he made his move in October of 1983.

Rafael has been bitter ever since. Then again, he was bitter when alive, too. He feels he deserves better, and that sense of entitlement is what drives him to join the Invictus. He has absolutely no justification for this sense that *he* should be in charge and have things go his way, and needs none. To him, his own wisdom is self-evident.

He's worked hard at staying on the technological edge, so he's a local go-to for cloned phones, fake ID and forged library cards. He keeps his prices ridiculous and his attitude unpleasant though, so no one knows how limited his abilities truly are.

Rafael Ladue

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Unbound
Embrace: 1983
Apparent Age: 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Business) 2, Computer



(Programming) 3, Crafts (Electronics) 3, Investigation (Research) 1, Occult 1, Politics 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 2, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Internet Scree) 1, Intimidate (Spaz) 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Cicero) 2, Subterfuge (Act Big) 2

Merits: Allies (Cicero, Nosferatu) 2, Contacts (Unions, Contractors), City Status (Childe of Old John) 2, Covenant Status: Carthians 2, Haven: Size 2, Resources 1

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)

Disciplines: Majesty 3

Cranky and self-righteous 1980s-era computer nerd finds himself, without warning, drafted to be the money-launderer for a terrifying undead pimp. Nerd does his best, he's seesawed between extremes of adoration and loathing for his sire, and then one day the brothel burns down and he's all on his own.

Rafael has adapted. He got as much money as he could out of Old John's financial networks (though a lot had already been liquidated), bought a house in Cicero and moodily started cruising clubs to feed. As the Internet evolved, he was on the forefront of the web dating scene, creating dozens of false identities with which to lure women into biteable positions. Thanks to the Kiss, some of them are still trying to track him down for second dates.

Without Majesty, he's a whiny, surly, sullen, pushy nebbish. With Majesty, he's a commanding, compelling leader with cogent arguments and obvious intelligence. He has brown hair and eyes, he's about 5'10" and he dresses in clothes he'd call "modish" — Nehru jackets, tab-collar shirts, Beatle boots.

He's picked up some tricks from Filthfoot (though he'd never admit it) and read a hell of a lot of Internet "How To" manuals on crime. Typically, he's more likely to trust them than the Kindred around him. He'd like to think that he can engage the truly intelligent with the sheer force of his ideas, which means that anyone who doesn't go along with him must be (in Rafael's mind) a dope.

The World According to Rafael

"Jesus! Am I the only person *thinking* here?"

Never forget that every single other person you meet is a dumbshit. Some of them need to be manipulated with false shows of respect, and some are genuinely admirable because they possess other positive qualities, but no matter how much you instinctively suck up to people who remind you of the popular kids from high school, remember that they are, in the final analysis, dumbshits.

Goal: All Gain, No Pain

The gang wants it both ways. They want the benefits of Invictus rule — stability, mortal leverage, and community. They don't care for the costs — obligation, formality, constant hard work. Rafael is confident that if he's awarded the Regency he covets, he can insulate Cicero from Chicago and have it be his scene, without interference from Maxwell or Solomon or the other big-boss types. He truly believes that he can build a *casual* Invictus community, and that the Chicago court will leave it alone rather than disrupt its smooth and efficient functioning.

What They've Got

Fake IDs, some respectful distance because people are still jittery about Old John (who has been presumed destroyed for years, but still . . .), and the gnat-like benefits of being too small to be worth crushing (or even noticing). The harder Rafael pushes to be Invictus Regent, the more targetable he becomes — from both sides.

What They Need

Just about everything. One of the major reasons Rafael has any pull at all is that he owns his own house and lets the unbound crash there and hang out. None of the unbound in Cicero have any real profound knowledge of blood-sorcery, so it consequently scares the crap out of them. Ambrose Masterson is pretty tough and has an even scarier sire than Ladue, but he's an anemic ally — he might defend Rafael or the others in a pinch, or he might just roll his eyes and bail. Their greatest need is a rallying point. So far, the group is organized around Rafael's ambitions and his vague nagging about making things better. That's been enough without serious resistance, but he doesn't have anywhere near the charisma needed to really unite Cicero.

Project: The Lesser Evil

Rafael has maybe three other Kindred he trusts enough to back this play: he wants to manipulate Prince Maxwell into appointing someone *horrible* to rein in Cicero, then provoke resistance and sabotage among the Cicero Kindred so that he, Rafael, can sweep in as the popular compromise. By far the bulk of Cicero's undead would prefer to remain unbound, but Rafael hopes that once the Invictus puts its boot down, the Invictus members will be unwilling to retreat from a bunch of scruffy punks. He knows the physical might of the court is far

greater than anything Cicero's disorganized resistance might pull together — but he also knows that Prince Maxwell has banned the killing of Kindred, while an unbound insurgency would have no such compunctions. Ladue is willing to gamble the more freedom-minded of his neighbors, figuring that Maxwell's ban will sap the will of the Chicagoans to fight as effectively as they otherwise would.

Rafael has not for a moment considered the possibility that Maxwell might appoint someone that the Cicero residents would like *more* than Rafael, or even that they might tolerate an official Regent other than him.

Scratch's Machine

About eight Kindred (from a variety of clans and even covenants) make up Scratch's criminal crew. While they don't all like each other, they do all like making money and getting blood without hassles, and those are the very tasks to which Scratch turns his considerable talents.

The Kindred of the Machine are actually its most replaceable elements, however. More important is the network of mobsters, gangbangers, con-men, freelance heavies and others in the criminal fraternity who ally themselves with the Machine. They are, if anything, more disparate than the Kindred, and more ignorant of the forces with whom they deal. But they want an edge, and Scratch can offer it, and many of the hoods will pay any price for it.

Leader: Scratch

The Nosferatu Scratch is the oldest of his clan in Chicago, but he is an anomalous elder. Because he spent a lengthy span in torpor (from 1927 to 1975), he seems to be much "younger" in attitude than many with the same degree of Kindred prowess. He is not interested in the schemes of the Carthians or the prestige of the court or the beliefs of any of the Kindred cults. He wants to get by in comfort and keep a low profile. He is the staunchest of conservatives — the type who wants everything to stay just like now, only be better for *him*.

Scratch



Clan: Nosferatu
Covenant: Ordo Dracul
Embrace: 1921
Apparent Age: Mid-40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny (Unlawful Entry) 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation (Perverse Humor) 3, Persuasion (Perverse Humor) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Disguise) 3
Merits: Contacts 5, Resources 4, Haven 3, Clan Status: Nosferatu 3
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 4 (Suspicion, mild: 4)
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 4
Disciplines: Obfuscate 5, Nightmare 3, Vigor 1, Coil of Banes 1, Coil of Beast 2
Vitae/ per Turn: 13/2

Scratch is a funny kind of coward. An incomplete coward. When taken by surprise he can handle himself adroitly without panicking or losing his panache. Or when he's carefully planned and prepared to get into a situation — then he's cool as a Minnesota New Year. But when he's got something to dread — something hanging over him — some looming threat or problem that he can't do anything to abort or defer — then he starts behaving erratically.

Credit it to growing up during the Great War. Credit it to seeing his dad carried off by the cops after a whole year spent on the lam, hauling his family from tenement to tenement. Credit it to going into a life of crime himself, because the kid of a two-time loser whose uncles all break fingers and run numbers doesn't have a lot of options.

So eventually, the cops hounded him into becoming a stoolie. And his crimey pals hounded him into making his bones. And when the pressure from both sides got too intense, he did something stupid. He looked for protection from the most dangerous creatures on the face of the Earth.

Never get old? Be stronger and quicker than humans? Join a society dedicated to preventing people from even *knowing* you exist? Hell, it sounded like he'd be a fool *not* to jump on board. After all, he was already mostly nocturnal, and it wasn't like he'd never seen blood spilled . . . .

It took him about a week to understand what the Requiem *really* meant, particularly one as a Nosferatu. Everyone else had a good laugh.

Scratch laughed last, though. He got the last laugh on his sire after three years, when she couldn't get out of the way of one of those newfangled street cars — too used to horses avoiding her by instinct. She was too tough to get killed by the impact, but when she crawled in expecting him to help, all Scratch did was help her die.

Then he diablerized her.

Then, because he'd gotten a taste for diablerie, he did it four more times in the next three years before he tried it on the wrong vampire: the lover of an elder. That elder, whom Scratch believed to be the childe of Max Maurey, beat Scratch into torpor and threw him in the river with rocks in his pockets.

That was 1927.

Scratch woke up in 1975. After a few indiscretions, he got help from the River Snakes, then spent a couple years catching up to the future before successfully reintegrating himself into Kindred society.

It wasn't too hard. He was an "elder,: he was a master of disguise and when he was a neonate, he kept his gruesome visage concealed out of shame. Surprisingly few Kindred remembered his old identity, many having moved on, gone torpid or come out of torpor with memories as scrambled as his own. As "Scratch," he could effectively start anew.

The only mark against him (quite literally) is the stain of diablerie on his soul. So far, he hasn't found a way to disguise *that*.

Until he does, he continues to be the Kindred equivalent of the racketeer he was in life. He still has some ties to the Snakes (though as far as he's concerned, he's paid them back for the aid they gave him, plus Alexi is nuts) but his interest in becoming a court big shot is exactly zero. His desire to rise in the Ordo Dracul is only slightly higher — he knows that if he joins the Sworn of the Dying Light, there are some circumstances in which diablerie would be *encouraged*. It's not like he wants to do it again, but once he was in the Sworn he could make a credible case that the streaks he has *now* were gotten semi-honorably serving the Order. As a lowly Scholar of the Fiery Terror, he's got a long way to go to get Sworn, but he would love an explanation for those black streaks in his aura. It's not that he's hoping to get to diablerize some traitor.

Okay, it's *exactly* that he's hoping to be ordered to do it again. He's stayed clean since his new awakening, but not a night goes by that he doesn't remember the rush, the power, the love that is the Amaranth.

Goal: Payday!

Where most power groups think in decades and scheme over long-term goals, the Machine is short in focus. They're always looking for the next heist, scam or ploy with which to enrich themselves. Unlike a true criminal mob, they aren't invested in long-term criminal enterprises like a gambling organization, a protection scheme, prostitution or drug smuggling. Scratch won't commit like that, because obligation leaves him vulnerable. Besides, that kind of activity has been divvied up among mortal gangs and mobs, and it's not healthy to upset the apple cart. Kindred may be involved in such long-term crimes, but not Scratch and his pals. They like stuff where they score, and then get away clean.

Unwelcome to the Machine

Johnny Piano, one of Scratch's coteriemates, killed a girl. Normally, this would be no big deal, except the girl (he thinks he name was Lora) happened to be the sister of a local gang hothead. Even *that* would be no big deal except that the gangster saw him do it, and Piano didn't realize. (Rookie mistake, but even the pros slip up.) Now that they're asking around, the gang keeps hearing stories about vampires and they've seen enough of Chicago to believe it.

What's the Machine to do? Sell out Piano to the vengeance-thirsty gangsters? Will that be enough to appease them? Frame some mortal as a blood pervert and throw *him* to the gang? Cultivate the gang into a crew of intrepid witch hunters and covertly direct them against the Machine's Kindred enemies?

What They've Got

Their focus on money has provided them a pretty good financial base, and the variety of their membership gives them access to a variety of Disciplines. Perhaps more important, they have access to different levels of society. If they need to look like billionaires, they can borrow a penthouse from one of their rich mob cronies. If they need a safe place full of cutting torches and hydraulic jacks, they can borrow a chop shop for the night. If they need a deserted crawlspace where the police never go — that's available too. All these benefits flow from one pool: the guys.

The Guys

The greatest strength of the Machine is its human components. This coterie's contacts and allies among mortal criminals are second to none in Chicago. They can access just about any illegal skill they require, but the same is true for other covenants with criminal ties. What is deeper about the Machine's people is their initiative. They keep an eye out for the kind of jobs they know Scratch likes. They confide in the Machine, rely on it and willfully participate in its schemes. The guys, in a word, show initiative, where the followers of other coteries may be loyal soldiers, but they're never going to make a brilliant proposal.

What They Need

While they span several covenants, that very ecumenism makes them suspect: while Scratch is nominally a member of the Ordo Dracul, and he's never done anything overt to alarm the Order, he's regarded as a weak link at best. Similarly, the Carthian and Invictus members of his Machine have low esteem in their covenants. While Scratch is a Priscus, he constantly shirks both the duties and the rewards of that position. No one else in his crew has any such formal clan recognition.

Laundry

The Machine members have no problem getting money. They have no problem spending it, either — as long as they're buying guns, drugs or stolen goods. They have difficulty when they want to get stocks, bonds or real-estate equity — in other words, stuff you can't get just by plopping down a stack of cocaine-smirched 50s.

Scratch and his Kindred have been jumpy about finances ever since their comrade Baby Steve got subpoenaed by the IRS after trying to buy into a tenement. Baby Steve's gone underground, but there's a warrant out for his arrest, and several of the Machine's mortal cogs have been questioned.

The problem is, Scratch and his pals aren't accustomed to thinking of money abstractly. When they were alive, devaluing the gold standard was a big deal. They don't have the mindset for seeing money as a stream of placeholders in a vast, computerized financial network, but that kind of money — traceable, paper-trailed money blessed and accepted by banks and credit firms — is what they need to take their unstable payoffs and transform them into long-term benefits.

Furthermore, the Machine members don't even recognize their problems. They've got stacks of money — bales and boxes of it! It seems crazy to them that they can't just go to a bank and deposit it without explaining where it came from. But that's exactly the case, and without a bank behind them, they're sorely put to spend their criminal gains on anything legit.

Project: The Book of Gangsters

The trouble is that these modern gangs aren't what Scratch is used to. He figures he can reason with anyone with a criminal mind like his, but he's on the losing side of a culture clash. First, he'll need someone to do some research for him. Scratch wants someone to write him the book on Chicago's drug lords and new gangstas: the colors, the lingo, the hierarchy, the turf, everything.

The Crown of Thorns

Scratch wants to steal the crown of thorns. He's got a hint, now, that some artifact is being held by a group of weirdos — sorcerers, he's guessing — in the bowels of the Field Museum, just a stone's throw from the Shedd Aquarium. They're calling it the "crown of thorns," and whatever it is, he wants it. He's still in the investigative phase, but he knows that if it's a real Judeo-Christian relic, he can ransom it back to the Sanctified for just about *anything*. If it's a heresy, the Sanctified might still want to get it out of circulation. He's not committed to the job yet, but it's sure worth investigating.

His crew is pretty good at sneaking around, but he doesn't want to take chances against wizards (or Devil worshippers or Freemasons or whatever the hell these guys are), so he needs some scrubs to send off the bench. If his pawns get wiped out, at least he gets a sense of the museum guardians' competence. If the pawns make it out with valuable intelligence, so much the better. At the very least, they can provide a distraction while his people do their thing — and a patsy if they fail.

Is it *the* crown of thorns? Is it something entirely different that they're just calling "crown of thorns" 'cause it sounds good? Even if it's not the true crown, is it worthy of pilferage? Who the hell are these guys anyway? Scratch wants answers, and he needs help to get them.

The Discontented Sanctified Mainstream

Solomon Birch is the Bishop of Chicago, and it makes Sylvia Raines and her faction of the Lancea Sanctum absolutely crazy. They're angry, not because they're at the opposite ideological pole, but because they're in the middle. They're moderate Lancers — which means, in practical terms, that they have two major disagree-

ments with Solomon's fundamentalists. First, while the members of Sylvia's oppose Amaranth, they think it's just fine for Kindred to kill one another. Second, they oppose the Embrace — in theory. But they're among the branch of the Lancea Sanctum that believes that some Embraces are more odious than others, and those performed to swell the ranks of the Lancea Sanctum are, at worst, "fortunate falls."

Leader: Sylvia Raines

Sylvia may be Chicago's foremost scholar of Theban Sorcery — light years beyond Solomon Birch and a good level ahead of the most advanced fundamentalist. While her renown protects her and gives her the credibility to openly criticize the Bishop, her renown also (ironically) limits her. As the *only* Kindred in Chicago known to have access to the highest rank of ritual, any use of those rites is likely to turn curious eyes in her direction. She uses her power to fuck with the fundies, but she can't use it at its highest levels without crossing the line and painting a target on her chest.

Lacking Solomon's forceful personality, Sylvia is a scholar and a mentor, but she is no inspiring leader. Nevertheless, she is as deeply committed to the principles of the *Testament of Longinus* as her rival. She just believes in a more nuanced faith.

Sylvia Raines

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Lancea Sanctum
Embrace: 1911
Apparent Age: Mid-50s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (History, Theology) 4, Crafts 2, Investigation (Research) 3, Medicine (Diet) 1, Occult (Demonology) 4, Politics (Sanctified) 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Larceny (Lockpicking) 1, Stealth (Hide) 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression (Choir) 2, Intimidation (Matronly Authority) 2, Persuasion (Confession) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Drug Culture) 2, Subterfuge (Hide Emotions) 3
Merits: Allies (West Side Churches) 3, Clan Status: Mekhet (Powerful Occultist) 3, Contacts (Library, Historical Society, Church Volunteers, Homeless Shelters), Covenant Status: Lancea Sanctum (Priest, Scholar) 2, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven: Security 1, Haven: Size 2, Haven: Location 2, Herd (Soup Kitchen) 4, Inspiring, Languages (Latin, Spanish) 2, Resources 3
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Greed
Health: 8



Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 3, Nightmare 1, Obfuscate 4, Theban Sorcery 5
Theban Sorcery Rituals: Vitae Reliquary (1), Curse of Babel (2), Liar's Plague (2), Sanguine Exaltation (2), Trap of Slumber (2), Blandishment of Sin (3), Malediction of Despair (3), Stigmata (4), Transubstantiation (5), Wrathful Judgment (5)

Other Rituals

If your chronicle is using the **Lancea Sanctum** supplement, Sylvia should know several of the rituals from that book as well. In general, she learns rituals that involve interaction with mortals before she learns those that affect her fellow Kindred. She also knows of one or two rituals that she has not yet learned herself. If moved by the faithful acts of another Kindred, she might share those secrets.

"You can have clarity or you can have truth. Choose carefully."

Sylvia became a nun in 1936. She was 18 years old. It took only five years of harsh discipline and hypocrisy to sour her faith, but leaving the convent was unthinkable — she'd be disgraced, cast out of her family, alone in a world that did not look kindly on unprotected women.

So she stayed nestled in the bosom of the church — but as a viper. Sylvia turned to Satanism and the study of the forbidden black arts, a study that culminated with her exposure to vampires and her Embrace into the Mekhet clan.

Oddly, it was her transformation into a creature of darkness that brought Sylvia back to the light. To her, the Embrace was proof that God had been watching her all along, had been testing her and that she had ultimately failed. The gall of that failure has driven her to make it right with the Lord, by pursuing the Sanctified philosophy of being a holy tester of humanity.

Three times a week, Sylvia works the night shift at a homeless shelter on the West Side, near Cassandra's Visions bookstore, encouraging recovering drug addicts to stay clean. But she also makes sure they have plenty of temptation to resist, as is proper. She genuinely rejoices for those who make it off the street, while those who fail — well, they deserve to be fed upon. But sometimes, against her strictest judgment, she feeds unto death those who have made a fragile but promising new start. She knows it would be better to let them fall back into sin if that's their choice, but sometimes she can't resist sending them home to God before they get the chance to betray Him and themselves.

It is her form of hope.

Sylvia was in her late 50s when she was Embraced. She's a wee slip of a thing with gray hair in a bun, thick glasses, usually wearing a long skirt and a twinset. Even her eyes seem to twinkle with kindness, most of the time.

Sylvia really, really wants to help. It's just that she truly believes the best way she can help human beings is by harming them, by teaching them to deal with adversity. As for Kindred, the greatest kindness she can do is to show them that, no, there really *aren't* easy answers. That's why they call it being "Damned."

Sylvia has the strength of her convictions, which lend her passion when she's arguing honestly and strength when she's arguing dishonestly. If everything depends on ideology, well, one needs to verify ideology through action, right? She's all about the cause, but she *is* Kindred, which means she's thinking in the long-term, and in the long-term, there's no percentage in leaving your heart on your sleeve for crows to peck at.

She's got a knack for Theban Sorcery, enhanced by diligent study in the history of the occult. She's not shy about using the miracles of Thebes but, when it could redound to discredit her, she is shy about *being seen* doing it. As for teaching it, well — it all depends on ideology, doesn't it?

Sylvia's Secret Rituals

Sylvia is well-known as a student of Theban Sorcery, and in her decades of research she's uncovered two rites that she has shared with absolutely no one, as yet.

Sanguine Exaltation
(•• Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This ritual focuses the occult power of the blood and stores it, much like Vitae Reliquary. Unlike that simpler spell, it does not merely make the blood available as *blood*. It makes it available as a raw force of will.

When the ritual is performed, it infuses energy into the offering object. When that object is used (often kissed, broken or swallowed), it adds two dice to one Theban Sorcery roll. The object (typically a pendant or ring — it can be anything with a pearl on it) is consumed through use. The object can be used by any Sanctified ritualist, not just the sorcerer who empowered it.

Offering: A pearl and a blood sacrifice of two Vitae

Trap of Slumber
(•• Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This rite is a useful defense against meddling mortals in the best of times, and potentially deadly to them at the worst. What it does is extend the preternatural slumber of the subject vampire to the next mortal or ghoul to get within three yards of the sleeping subject Kindred. The first mortal to approach the subject while the ritual is active must make a Resolve + Stamina roll, with the Composure and current Blood Potency of the subject (accounting for diminishment over time) as a penalty to the roll. If the mortal fails, he falls asleep and cannot be awakened until the Kindred wakes or is destroyed. Thus, if Trap of Slumber is cast on a torpid Kindred, a mortal victim could sleep through starvation and into death.

A single activation of Trap of Slumber affects only a single mortal or ghoul victim, but persists until the ritual has been successfully triggered (that is, until one victim has fallen into slumber) or until the subject awakes. A single vampire can be the subject of one Trap of Slumber equal to her Composure. Multiple "layers" of this ritual do not require a single victim to resist each Trap of Slumber. Rather, each instance of the ritual allows a subsequent victim to be affected.

Offering: A crumb of discharged eye matter — what ritualists call "sleep sand" — from a living mortal

Goal: Haul the Lancea Sanctum Back to the Middle

Neither the fundamentalist faction nor Sylvia's set nor any third group is the majority faction of the Lancea Sanctum in Chicago. Going strictly by ideology, of the Sanctified, about 25% are fundamentalist, 40% are moderates, 5% are an amalgamation of lunatic fringes and another 20% are opportunists — members who study the rituals, swing their support to other Lancers when it doesn't cost them too dearly, go through the motions, but have no real passionate commitment. Sylvia knows that her beliefs are actually the plurality, and she wants a leader and policies that reflect that. (Ideally, she'd like to *be* that leader, but she'd settle for anyone who isn't rock-headed like Solomon.)

What They've Got

In addition to Sylvia's ritual knowledge, the moderates are well funded. That's about it, though.

Unreal Coke

Regardless which side of the war on drugs a given individual finds herself, the so-called Lot parties are guaranteed to rouse some interest. Based around an elusive woman called Lot, the parties are, quite simply, an opportunity for Chicago blow-fiends to get incredibly pure stuff, way below market price. Strangely, no cartel has been linked to the parties or their product. No one can find or even contact Lot, except her representatives. No one on either side of the law can figure out how she's getting her stuff into the country.

Lot's supplier is Sylvia, who can use a ritual called Transubstantiation to turn a cup of saline into 10 keys of pure cocaine. The mystical transformation only lasts until the next sunrise, but given the Lot party clientele, it's done its work by then.

Mortal drug lords throughout Chicago aren't going to put up with this mysterious supplier for long, though. When Prince Maxwell appoints a Kindred as "Regent of Narcotics" in the city, things get even more precarious. This might spell trouble for Sylvia Raines, except it's almost what she's after. She wants Chicago's drug kingpins to destroy each other. She wants mortal gluttons and those who get rich off their sins to hurt and suffer. She wants them to learn the errors of their ways or perish in the lesson.

Solomon's Enemies

The drawbacks of crossing Solomon Birch are obvious, but the one advantage is that it raises your stock with everyone else who hates or fears him — and that's no small crowd. Members of the Circle, the Order and the Invictus who don't give a fig about Longinus would, if pressed for it, side with the mainstream against the fundamentalists. In the abstract, they'd probably prefer Sylvia's view of church law, but that's really just icing on the cake. The main treat is getting Solomon off their fucking backs.

What They Need

Sadly, many of the Lancers who agree with Sylvia theologically would still pick Solomon if forced to choose. The mainstream just doesn't have an identity behind which allies can rally, and Solomon holds the mask, he's official.

Legitimacy

While she has tremendous academic respect, Sylvia has no formal position in the Lancea Sanctum. Not surprisingly, most of Solomon's official appointments come from the ranks of his hard core. Without voices inside the structure, all the mainstream can really do is criticize after the fact. There are mainstream Priests — in fact, there aren't enough qualified fundamentalists to fill all the Priest positions in Chicago — but the Inquisitors are universally fundie. Since such appointments have no fixed span, the mainstream has two options. One, they can wait for an Inquisitor to die off, and then lobby furiously for a more moderate replacement. Or they can try to sway appointed Inquisitors away from Solomon's inflexible views. Neither approach is easy, but the mainstream is pursuing both options.

Project: Serpents Among the Spears

Sylvia didn't like Solomon when she was Embraced, and she didn't like him when he converted to the Lancea Sanctum, but she really started to *hate* him when he got was appointed Inquisitor while she remained (and still remains) at the level of Priest. That was in 1971, and that was when she started to really worry about the fundamentalism.

It took her 11 years to groom a candidate for insertion into the fundamentalist wing, and another 13 after that to do it again. But her two moles within Solomon's circle — not close to him, certainly, but trusted somewhat for the years or decades they've supported the party line — are in a stable, if perilous, position as double agents. Right now, Sylvia's getting decent intelligence from them but little that she couldn't get on her own. What she wants is to get one or the other promoted to Inquisitor, after which his loyalties could either change without repercussion — or be far more useful concealed.

Fires Inside

Horace Sandel was a Ventrue, a member of the Circle of the Crone, a *cauchemar*, a skilled pool player who lost all his winnings and far more at the poker table, a gifted burglar and a Freemason. He also had the unenviable fate of being burned to death by his own blood in front of three Kindred witnesses. Rumors and suspicions immediately turned to legends of a powerful ritual of Theban Sorcery. At present, that's the most likely conclusion reached by the Invictus investigator and a consultant from the Lancea Sanctum.

The only Kindred in Chicago who could command such a fearsome ritual is Sylvia Raines, who insists she's innocent. Is there a hidden Theban sage in the city? If so, why risk discovery by killing Horace in such a flashy and unique fashion? If Sylvia did it, why? And why didn't *she* find a subtler means? Both the investigators are Mekhet. Is there some clan conspiracy to frame Sylvia or conceal the truth? Will the Sanctified rally behind their mystic

matron? Will Solomon hang her out to dry? If he does, could that provoke the internal uprising against him?

Trey "Loki" Fischer

An up-and-coming Hound in Maxwell's court, Loki looks too young to be taken seriously. A product of Chicago's booming gothic-industrial scene, Loki continues to dress the part of the disenfranchised youth, even in Elysium. After all, if being dead isn't a good enough reason to wear black all the time, then what is?

While many of the rank-and-file Kindred of Chicago tend to overlook Loki, despite his status, he has the ear of the city's most powerful Kindred: Maxwell, McLean and Norris. Loki takes care not to abuse this privilege, and thus far he has performed well for the Prince and remains in the Prince's good graces.

Loki most often reports directly to Norris, and Loki is typically tasked with spying or gathering information on the city's Kindred. Loki's skills make him a capable investigator in this capacity, but his maturity and surprisingly good judgment make him a reliable one.

Although Loki is on the young side, both in blood and demeanor, he is deferred to as an ancilla. His responsibility, determination and his reputation as a shrewd and resourceful problem-solver have established him as a tenacious foe, a cunning ally and a rising star in Prince Maxwell's court.

Send in the Hounds

Despite being both from a different clan and a different covenant, Loki has become one of Maxwell's favorites at court. As one of the Prince's Hounds, he's expected to be an agent of the Prince's displeasure. And sometimes he needs assistance.

In this case, the Prince is planning the first Prince's Indulgence, one night when all Kindred laws are suspended. He has designated a handful of targets for Loki to get rid of, and he has authorized the Hound to recruit a coterie of Kindred to help him with this mission, but the recruited Kindred must be discreet.

Loki approaches the characters with a very low-key proposition. He's smart enough not so say, "So, you want to help me bump off some Kindred who got on the Prince's bad side?" Loki will be very subtle. If the characters are too dense to understand what he's saying, he'll ask someone else. If the characters catch on, he'll dish out information on a need-to-know basis until the actual night of the Indulgence, at which time the characters may be shocked to discover who it is they're expected to destroy . . . .

Trey "Loki" Fischer

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1995
Apparent Age: 18
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny (B&E) 1, Stealth (Sneak) 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Rumor Mill) 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Barfly, Haven: Security 1, Haven: Size 1, Haven: Location 1, Herd 1, City Status (Hound) 1, Contacts (Ravers, DJs, Auto Mechanics), Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone 1
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Health: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Obfuscate 3,

Loki was never in *big* trouble as an adolescent, but he was always in *enough* trouble to make him a pain in the ass. When his mother fled her disintegrating marriage, she took her daughters and left Loki behind. Since



his father was largely absent, preferring to work away his every conscious hour, Loki's girlfriend, Suzanne, became the center of his world. The two were extremely close until a few months later, when Suzanne disappeared as well.

With no parental or social support, Loki imploded. He blew off his last months of school, preferring to wallow in self-pity instead of graduating from high school. If he was awake, he was slipping into industrial dance clubs or looking for trouble on the dark streets of Chicago.

While wandering the streets one spring night, shortly before his 18th birthday, Loki glimpsed his girlfriend again, looking pale and wild in the lights of the street. She was hanging with a rough crowd. When he confronted her, the others got involved and everything turned ugly. He was used to charming, tricking or lying his way out of ugly situations, but this time was different. Suzanne and her gang turned on him, and neither his wits nor his tenacity helped him avoid being fed on and Embraced. The gang members assumed Loki would fry in the sunrise. He didn't. Furthermore, he figured out what had been done to him in fairly short order and adapted accordingly. But he was furious about the circumstances of his death and Embrace.

Loki quickly realized that his sire and gang were unwanted mongrels among the Kindred, and that they feared the Prince more than anyone else in the city. It didn't take long for him to figure out that what they had done to him was against some Kindred law. So he sought out the enemy of his enemy —and his appeal caught Prince Maxwell's interest. Maxwell was enraged that anyone, no less an unaligned pack, had broken his Tranquility. And, conveniently, here was an angry young Kindred with a serious *grudge* against said pack, to do the bulk of the dirty work. He gave Loki some backup, in the form of a couple of the city's Hounds, and instructions to bring the curs in that justice may be done. Then he sat back to see what Loki would do.

Loki performed extraordinarily well, demonstrating a talent for undercover investigation, subterfuge and the setting of traps. He also evinced an unexpected ferocity when cornered. Ultimately, Loki managed to stake his sire and turn him over to Prince Maxwell for judgment as instructed.

The Prince was impressed with the young Kindred's performance. Maxwell took Loki under his wing and made him one of his Hounds, both as a means of socializing the young vampire and as a means of harnessing his obvious potential.

After realizing that being unaligned had too many political consequences (not the least of which is forgoing Maxwell's patronage), Loki joined the Circle of the Crone after being aggressively wooed by Bella Dravnzie. Although he likes the primal nature of the Acolytes, he has too little time and too much political ambition to pursue spiritual matters with any great diligence.

Loki was 18, physically and emotionally, when he was Embraced, and he will remain 18 for the duration of his Requiem. Consequently, he will always have the motivations, the interests and the judgment of an 18-year old. While this has many advantages, it could prove to be the one obstacle to Loki's advancement as he works his way up the Kindred power scale.

Michael Dubiard

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Lancea Sanctum
Embrace: 1974
Apparent Age: 27
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Christian Philosophy) 3, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult (Jewish Mysticism) 2, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 1, Intimidation (Fire and Brimstone) 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Covenant Status: Lancea Sanctum (Priest, Ritualist, Solomon Crony) 3**,** Haven: Security 1, Haven: Size 3, Herd 2, Resources 1
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Dominate 2, Theban Sorcery 3



Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Vitae Reliquary (1), Curse of Babel (2), Liar's Plague (2), Blandishment of Sin (3)

A poster child for both the Lancea Sanctum's obsessiveness and its self-loathing, Dubiard has nonetheless managed to work his way up Chicago's political ladder, with only minimal assistance from Solomon Birch, his mentor and primary benefactor.

A dogmatist to the core, Dubiard is not popular outside his own covenant. His knowledge and status mark him as a solid member of the ancillae, but only other Sanctified will have anything to do with him. His constant monologue on the cursed, fallen status of the Kindred, frequently punctuated by quotations from the *Testament of Longinus* prevent him from being a particularly lively or engaging companion, and most of Chicago's Kindred, including many members of his own covenant, leave Dubiard to his self-hatred.

To his credit, he has used his surfeit of solitude to improve his knowledge and his usefulness to his covenant. While he's not exactly a quick study, he has focused an amazing amount of effort and concentration into learning Theban Sorcery. His effort has clearly paid off. Dubiard is among the Lancea Sanctum's most knowledgeable ritualists in Chicago. When Solomon Birch needs to a partner who understands the Liar's Plague during an interrogation, he calls on Dubiard. When Solomon needs to know about Sanctified mysticism, but doesn't want to deal with Sylvia Raines, he calls Dubiard.

Force-fed a diet of hardcore fundamentalism from an early age, Dubiard has always been burdened with a thousand Thou Shalt Nots. In an age of long hair, free love and relaxed morals, Dubiard was an exemplar of conservative prudery. When he was alive, he loathed his own flesh for its passions. Seeing an attractive girl on the street was enough to send him into a fit of self-mortification, and it was a rare week that went by without Dubiard flagellating himself for one thing or another. So uptight was Dubiard in his breathing days that he was still a virgin at the time of his Embrace. He was 27.

It was his religiosity that brought him to the attention of his sire, a pious Ventrue named Andrew Carfax. Carfax stalked Dubiard for weeks waiting for the right night to Embrace the conflicted young man, and Carfax waited until Dubiard had just come out of a prayer binge before bringing him into the Requiem. Carfax's intent, as he later told his childe, was to Embrace him when his load of guilt was lightest so he could enter the Requiem unburdened.

It didn't help. If Dubiard felt he was a corrupt, fallen creature *before* his Embrace, his self-loathing afterwards was nearly palpable. Finding the Lancea Sanctum, however, eased his distress considerably. Had it not, he certainly would have sought out his own Final Death by now.

Solomon Birch himself recruited the distressed Dubiard into the Lancea Sanctum personally, and he acts as Dubiard's personal confessor. In exchange, Dubiard is a zealous supporter of the Lancea Sanctum and does anything he can to spread the faith to other Kindred. Dubiard also functions as Birch's liaison to the Lancea Sanctum's younger members. If Birch is too busy to deal with younger or lower-ranking Kindred, that responsibility then falls to Dubiard. While this isn't necessarily a great benefit for younger Kindred, it does give Dubiard an opportunity to cultivate his self-loathing into younger, more impressionable Kindred. Those who show some willingness to accept Dubiard's take on the Requiem (e.g., those who also feed as rarely as possible and feel that they truly are Damned) often find him to be a very helpful, if overbearing, mentor. Those who don't accept his particular interpretation of the Requiem are likely to find themselves written off and ignored, and if Dubiard ever has an opportunity to punish such Kindred in small, petty ways, he does so with great enthusiasm.

While Dubiard has embraced the Sanctified many Thou Shalt Nots, he has not been as open to its exaltation of the predator. To his way of thinking, vampires are devils, and feeding is obviously evil because it brings pleasure. Dubiard has almost entered torpor on several occasions from lack of feeding, and he commonly goes several nights every week without feeding.

Dubiard's intense religiosity has undergone a subtle shift since his Embrace. No longer does he mortify his flesh when he feels unclean. (What good does it do when he can just heal his self-inflicted stripes anyway?) Instead, he channels his zeal into the study of Theban Sorcery. His understanding of the Lancea Sanctum's blood magic surpasses that of most of Chicago's Sanctified and his devotion has made him one of Birch's favorite Kindred.

Duce Carter

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1975
Apparent Age: 28
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Haven 2, Herd 2, Resources 2
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Health: 8



Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 2

Once a two-bit hood on Chicago's South Side, Carter now finds himself in the position of being one of Walt Barowski's lieutenants (though neither would use such hierarchical language to describe the arrangement) and a driving force in the Movement. Carter is, in essence, the Carthian Movement's liaison to Chicago's street gangs. He organizes, deploys and rewards gang members for Barowski, and in return Carter enjoys free rein to take care of his own business as he sees fit and has Barowski backing him up if he runs into trouble from other covenants, which he does on a fairly regular basis.

Carter is at odds with much of his own sect, because he regards them as either too fractious (at best) or needlessly brutal (at worst). His loyalties are firmly with the Carthian Movement, but he regularly feels that many members of his sect just don't "get it" on a philosophical level. As far as he's concerned, much of the covenant's effort is wasted because of their lack of direction.

Carter is often at odds with much of his own sect, especially its pointlessly rebellious younger members, whom he regards as either needlessly brutal or otherwise too rowdy to work together for a common goal. As an intellectual archetype, he realizes that much of his sect's efforts are wasted because of the lack of direction, so he strikes a deal with Persephone because she has proximity to the authority figure and because she's got power of her own. The deal here is that *he* can't actively raise a hand against the Prince because he's a known agitator and the Prince forces him to drink his blood every month to maintain a Vinculum.

Carter has succeeded at just about everything he's done in his Requiem thus far, and gained a bit of a reputation in doing so. He has unquestionable street cred with Chicago's black and white organized crime rings. This has made Carter a very wealthy vampire. Still, he knows the deck is stacked against other Kindred and that just doesn't sit right with him. He doesn't have the money to bankroll all the downtrodden Kindred everywhere, but he can help them change the system, and that's what hopes to do, starting in Chicago.

Old Business

Carter has been carrying out his just-barely-illegal South Side operations for decades now with only minor trouble from his past, but a new young gang leader in the southwest suburbs, possibly stirred up by a Kindred rival of Carter's has begun questioning why Duce Carter, known stool pigeon, is still alive and being allowed to operate in Chicago.

For his part, Carter wants to minimize his own gangs' exposure to the past, which means he needs to get the characters to do his dirty work for him. Carter asks the characters to neutralize the young rabble-rouser who's making his Requiem so difficult. Killing him is an option, obviously, but other methods that don't make Carter look bad, would be preferable. Clever uses of Disciplines, mortal influence or other Merits might be just what the Duce ordered. If the characters are white, however, the first and hardest step might just be not standing out.

In his breathing days, Duce was a small-time drug dealer and lightweight gangsta. Even back then (then being the late '70s), Carter was a thinking man's gangster. He knew how to get the results he needed from those around him, whether they were above or below him on the food chain.

Duce turned state's witness to bargain down a sentence on a drug-distribution arrest, while seeing to it that the corrupt kingpins who needed to pay did so. This history as a rat haunts him — he knows he did the right thing by helping put a bigger, more corrupt dealer in jail, but it still took a toll on his honor and dignity. Members from the old neighborhood occasionally show up to fuck with him, but Carter is both smooth and good with his Disciplines and handles them easily. Still, even seeing his old homies around doing the same shit they were doing 30 years ago depresses and aggravates him.

It wasn't long after his release from a very short stint in prison that Carter suffered the Embrace. He never knew his sire, and he was never certain if he was Embraced as punishment or if he was Embraced through sheer coincidence or for some other reason.

Barowski saw immediately that Carter understood the Carthian philosophy better than most of the sect's members, took him under his wing and helped him deal with his Embrace. The Prefect quickly groomed Carter for a role in Chicago's Carthian operations. Carter took

to it readily, overseeing Carthian operations on the South Side and managing the more legally questionable aspects of the Carthian agenda in Chicago.

Being linked to Barowski wasn't all a boon for Carter. Prince Maxwell, acting on the principle that the allies of an agitator are also probably agitators, has made Carter feed from him once a month for years, and the Vinculum is now quite solid. If Maxwell ever needs a weapon to wield against the Carthians, it'll be Carter.

Edgar Treadwell

Embraced in the early '80s, Edgar Treadwell has used most of the intervening years since them to make himself into one of the most loathed Kindred in the city. That was not his intent, but it has most assuredly been his result.

Treadwell is a highly partisan member of the First Estate, and he epitomizes its worst elements. He is an unmitigated sycophant to those who outrank him and a malicious bastard to those he feels safe treating poorly (a group that includes, but is not limited to, all ghouls, unaligned Kindred, younger Carthians and anyone currently out of favor with Prince Maxwell). If Treadwell obtains a piece of information that he thinks might boost his status at Elysium, he happily sells the information to the highest bidder. Treadwell is one of Tobias Rieff's key informants, and the two spur each other on to increasingly worse invasions of other Kindred's privacy. For his efforts, Rieff sees to it that Treadwell — and anyone who serves Treadwell diligently — enjoys good standing in Prince Maxwell's court; for his part, though, Rieff is suspicious enough of Treadwell that the moment Rieff gets bad intelligence from him he will drop him like a hot rock, and Treadwell is fully aware of this.

Treadwell's good standing in the city is ironic, given that he has actually penned contingency plans for the destruction of every Chicago Kindred more powerful than he, including the Prince. Treadwell is cowardly enough, however, that those plans will almost certainly go unused. Nonetheless, he keeps them in his haven, and were they ever to be discovered, Rieff would be hard-pressed to keep Treadwell's reputation from degenerating completely.

Elder members of the Invictus like Treadwell because he *is* a willing dupe; he knows his place and stays there, biding his time and awaiting the rewards he know must come his way eventually. There are few depths Treadwell will not sink to in his campaign for power. He's in the Invictus for the long haul, and he's certain that he will, in time, be Prince. To that end, he has made a reputation for himself of being a willing performer of the covenant's dirty work. Small-time enforcement, threats, intimidation and the like are Treadwell's stock-in-trade. If mortals get out of line, it's often Treadwell who's sent in to see that they don't forget their place for long. The secret to Treadwell's success is simple: he enjoys his work. Few things compare to the joy of pushing others around and putting them through Hell if they resist.

If a mortal persists in causing trouble, Treadwell has no qualms about committing murder. He's also fairly adept at covering his tracks when he does so.

Ironically, though Treadwell may kill mortals in the line of duty, he rarely does so in the act of feeding. He has a huge herd of young women from whom he feeds, but given his appetites, he almost has to. Treadwell is among the most prolific feeders in the city, feeding far more than he needs to for simple subsistence. Treadwell has a habit of glutting himself on blood until he can't hold any more, even if he's only down a single Vitae. Due to all the blood in his system, Treadwell often has a rosy pink complexion that makes him particularly adept at passing for mortal.

Prelude to Betrayal

Edgar Treadwell has a long history of treating neonate Kindred very poorly. Not only does he expect them to kowtow to him, but he can, with little difficulty, see that they do. The characters will likely know this all too well if they've dealt with Treadwell before, and they'll know it especially well if they've gotten onto his bad side.

In this scenario, however, Treadwell begins treating the characters quite well. Furthermore, their standing in court begins improving in small but noticeable ways. Right about the time the characters begin getting used to this treatment, Treadwell comes to them with an offer: Treadwell and his mentor Tobias Rieff have seen that the characters have been enjoying their new positions in the world. He would love to prolong the duration of the new positions, and he can, but he's going to need to ask a favor of the characters.

The nature of the favor may depend on the characters' strengths and interests, but it could range anywhere from creating a distraction for the Sheriff to sending a target to Final Death. Obviously, neither Treadwell nor Rieff is stupid, and they won't put themselves in a position to be blackmailed, but Treadwell fancies himself a master of implicit communication, and the characters are likely to know what he's wanting without him ever saying anything unsavory.

Edgar Treadwell

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1982
Apparent Age: 25
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3



Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 4, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Contacts 2, Haven 2, Herd 3
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1
Disciplines: Celerity 2, Vigor 3
Vitae/ per Turn: 10/1

Metaphorically, at least, Treadwell was a vampire long before his Embrace. He was a con-man, a club manager and frequent cocaine dealer in Chicago's discos and dance clubs. Those who knew him rarely dealt with him more than once because he typically sold bad drugs at inflated prices. But Treadwell was accomplished at presenting an illusion of wealth and power, and there were always more suckers waiting to be ushered into the glamorous life of addiction, so Treadwell never hurt for cash or groupies.

Initially a ghoul, Treadwell soon realized that he *really* wanted to be Kindred. The common rumor that goes out about Treadwell is that he paid to be Embraced, but those who know the truth have mostly faded from view. The rumor is common enough at this point that nobody cares if it's true or not because they *want* to believe that Treadwell was such a vile creature that he would not just *choose* to give up his humanity, but pay to do so.

Oddly enough, Treadwell's habits and lifestyle didn't change a bit once he was Embraced. If anything, it gave him the power to do what he was already doing *better*. He expanded his operations to include whatever club drugs are popular. With the proceeds from his drug sales, he has accumulated three of Chicago's major dance clubs: Excalibur, Circus and Cro-Bar. He readily offers these up for use by any higher-ranking Invictus members, although he usually tries to squeeze a favor out of it when he does.

Treadwell has never legally died, although he's been giving it consideration, just to get rid of his legal record. His youthful looks can only be attributed to Botox for so long.

Lillian Vanderpool

A key but quiet figure in Carthian politics is the Myrmidon. The Myrmidon is a judge, a final arbiter in disputes and, in theory, a completely dispassionate individual. Chicago's Myrmidon is a woman named Lillian Vanderpool, and she is so low-key as to be hard to find. She prefers the company of mortals to Kindred, attends Elysium only rarely, and usually at the behest of Walt Barowski, the only Kindred in Chicago who knows her whereabouts with any regularity.

Though hard to track down, Vanderpool is not out of the loop or isolated by any means. On the contrary, she keeps close tabs on what's going on around her and what's happening among the Kindred of Chicago, especially those belonging to the Carthian Movement. Given her mastery of the Auspex Discipline, this is a relatively simple matter for her. She also makes ample use of the Auspex Discipline when arbitrating cases among the Kindred. Vanderpool is given much more respect than Myrmidons typically receive, largely because she is considered a bit of a seer for the covenant as well as its judge. In this sense, she has almost expanded the role of the Myrmidon in Chicago. Younger Kindred who have spent their entire Requiems in Chicago would be surprised to discover that Myrmidons don't double as seers in other cities.

Vanderpool's somewhat cold, patrician demeanor initially brought invitations from the Invictus, but the arrogance and feudalism at its core offended her staunchly democratic sensibilities. She told the would-be recruiter what she thought of the First Estate and soon joined the Carthians.

From her comportment, one might assume Vanderpool to be as cold as any Invictus elder. This is not the case. Instead, she wraps herself in a mantle of hostility when she is in the company of Kindred, the better to protect her unusually humane core.

Vanderpool is among the least radical members of her covenant. She does not push for equality among Kindred so much as she embodies it. In Vanderpool's case, it means she treats all Kindred with the same cool sense of detachment. For the most part, she would rather spend time with mortals than with Kindred, and she hates the hunger she feels around mortals. She learned a lesson from her inadvertent diablerie of her sire, and she now feeds very carefully to avoid causing harm to mortals.

While not a warm or kind woman in the presence of other Kindred, Vanderpool is one of the shrewdest minds at work among Chicago's Kindred. She knows a great deal about every Kindred in Chicago, although she never lets anything slip. She keeps her own counsel at all times, giving the impression to many that she actually dislikes all Kindred. For the most part, this is true. She feels she was wronged by being Embraced, she feels that she is now a repulsive creature and she dislikes what she has to do to survive. She resents her sire for what he did to her, and this resentment gets directed back to Kindred in general. While Vanderpool has suffered through her Requiem thus far, she has promised herself that it won't last forever.

The only warm spot in Vanderpool's Requiem is her son, Frank. She has watched over him from the night of her death, and she has diligently honed her abilities with Auspex in order to be able to do so. Every time she sees him going through something she feels she could have helped him with had she been alive, she weeps tears of blood over her condition. She occasionally uses her connections and knowledge to arrange for small windfalls to help her son and his partner, and she has fed on at least one would-be burglar who was trying to break into their home. Once she has watched her son's life unfurl completely, and end, she intends to watch a sunrise the morning after his funeral, though she hasn't expressed her intentions to anyone. This, as much as her distaste for the Kindred condition, keeps her from pursuing any more political goals.

In the meantime, she fulfills the role of Carthian Myrmidon with cold and flawless diligence.

Witness for the Revolution

As a high-ranking Carthian, Lillian Vanderpool has a strike against her in Maxwell's eyes as it is. What's worse, she's known to be very good at knowing other people's business. In this scenario, she sees something that could bring her Requiem to a close: Prince Maxwell, in a fit of rage, destroys Walt Barowski, the Carthian Prefect. Furthermore, the Prince frames Duce Carter, another leading Carthian, for the crime. Vanderpool knows what the Prince did because she was in Telepathic contact with Barowski when it happened, but the moment Maxwell finds out that she knows, her Requiem is as good as over. Vanderpool asks the characters to help her flee Chicago to a Carthian-controlled city. She'll do this only if the characters are at least somewhat sympathetic to the Carthian cause.

If, on the other hand, the characters are supporters of the Invictus or Lancea Sanctum, the Prince may ask them to investigate the sudden disappearance of the Carthian Myrmidon. If he finds out that Vanderpool has fled the city, he may send the characters to bring her back or, at the very least, defame her so that her story doesn't prompt Carthians from other cities to come snooping around and seeking revenge.

Lillian Vanderpool

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1980
Apparent Age: 56
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Politics 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven 2, Status 3
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 8
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Auspex 5, Majesty 2
Vitae/ per Turn: 11/1

Though she looks older than most of the Kindred in Chicago, Lillian Vanderpool only entered her Requiem in 1980. In her mid-50s when she was Embraced, Vanderpool was a high school principal with 30 years of teaching high school under her belt at the time of her Embrace. Ironi-



cally, one of her former students brought her into the Requiem, hoping to make her into some kind of advisor or mother figure. It was a poorly thought-out reason for granting the Embrace, and a rash move on his part. Vanderpool is one of those individuals who made a much better mortal than a vampire. Though she was a warm woman with many friends and a busy schedule, the Embrace appears to have turned everything warm about her into ice. From her perspective, her work as a teacher and a parent was in full swing when her sire plucked her from it. Her oldest daughter was just having her first child, and her youngest (and favorite) son had just begun attending the very prestigious Northwestern University. These were all things she had to be around for. Being pulled into the Requiem plucked her away from her role as a living, breathing human, and her rage and resentment seemed to have no end. After her Embrace, Vanderpool listened to her sire as he prattled on about the Requiem. She paid particularly close attention when he told her about staking. As soon as she had the opportunity, she made him pay for his rash move. Within a week, she had diablerized him. This was enormously uncharacteristic of her; she was in no way a violent woman, but her seething rage, backed by the Beast, won out, and she made her sire pay in the most absolute way she could imagine. She'd intended to kill him, but the diablerie was unexpected.

Vanderpool's cold anger became a constant background for everything that came after her Embrace. Combined with her keen mind and short temper, this makes Vanderpool a force to be reckoned with. Vanderpool respects mortals and enjoys their company. She dislikes Kindred in general and has a particular dislike for those who think that their curse somehow makes them *better* than mortals, like the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum.

While she respects mortals and hates feeding, Vanderpool bears a vague ill will for all Kindred and an active hatred for most.

Having been a member of the teacher's union in Chicago for many years, the Carthian Movement seemed as natural as any of the choices granted her by the Requiem. She has made a slow but steady creep up the rungs of recognition since her Embrace, and she is now considered one of the foremost Carthians in the city. Her candid and dispassionate analyses of Kindred and Kindred politics long ago earned her the position of Myrmidon among the Carthians (a position she accepted when Walt Barowski became the local Prefect).

Vanderpool has a certain cold, grandmotherly appearance. She has a long, thin face and an austere bearing. She keeps her white hair short, although it has a tendency to go awry when she lets it. Though Vanderpool dresses like the old woman she appears to be, she favors clothes on the expensive end of that spectrum and often wears expensive silk blouses with colorful scarves and the same gold jewelry she's been wearing since her breathing days.

Bottom Feeders

Could anything be more indicative of a slight but general insanity than the aspect of the crowd on the streets of Chicago?

—Charles Horton Cooley "Human Nature and the Social Order," 1902

Persephone Moore

Persephone is the childe of the Prince — the Prince who forbade childer.

Before she was Persephone, she was Linda Moore, a real-estate lawyer who moved to the big city from Indiana and was living out a hip, remixed version of the Mary Tyler Moore story when she met this fascinating consultant named Maxwell Drake (whom she now knows as Maxwell Polermo, and Maxwell Smithe, and Maxwell Fabian and "sire"). Things were going great until he killed her.

Now Linda finds herself divided between keeping up the façade of her mortal life, and coming to terms with a new existence as a predator from the darkness. She has coped by re-inventing herself as "Persephone" — a glamorous sybarite Id with the wardrobe of a goth-themed prostitute — but when she needs to, she can still be Superego Linda, strait-laced and prim and all business. When she's alone in her apartment, she usually still thinks of herself as Linda, with Persephone as a role she plays to keep herself insulated from other Kindred, and from the acts she herself must perform. But when the Beast calls, more and more she finds it's Persephone's voice that answers.

Goal: Find Equilibrium, or Commit

Typically, Persephone is of two minds about her long-term goals. When things are going well, she hopes to find a balance between her personae — Linda for managing the every day tasks that she confronted as a human, such as laundry and shelter and interacting with her living friends and Persephone for hunting and politicking and dealing with the Kindred. But more and more, she finds herself

pressured to give up on the human side of her existence, abandon the memory of life for the reality of the Requiem, and sever her ties to the mortal world. Linda is smart, willful and strongly motivated. If anyone can find a middle path between woman and monster, it's her. At least, that's what she tells herself. But she finds herself spending more time as Persephone, and her old friends and behaviors feel like the lie, with her vampire act the reality.

Did Linda really create Persephone? Or was Persephone there all along, just waiting to be needed and released? That's a question that haunts her when she lies down for daylight, regardless of who she's pretending to be.

What She's Got

Brains, looks and an excellent education in Disciplines. Moreover, as the Prince's get she's protected by his reputation, and it casts a very long shadow indeed. On top of that, she was a lawyer — a good one, if not one who had the chance to be great. She's rusty with anything outside of real-estate (say, evidentiary procedure or contract negotiation) but she'd at least know where to start. She's also made some Carthian friends, primarily by playing the willful role of "rebellious childe of the Prince."

What She Needs

Protection that stems from herself, not from her sire. Being Maxwell's offspring has made her more enemies than friends, and for every 10 Kindred who fear the Prince's revenge, there's one who can't help but see her as a weak spot in his armor. So far, she's been shielded from the Prince's rivals, but he cannot protect her forever nor does he even want to do so. Solomon Birch, in particular, would like to see this evidence of the Prince's poor judgment swept under the rug, willing or no.

Project: Paper Chase

Persephone recognizes the value of a vampire's haven. Her attitude (modern) and training (property law) give her a specialized ability to see the vulnerabilities as well.

She started out casually, finding the locations of various Kindred havens and researching any liens, mortgages and outstanding claims on them. What she found surprised her. A few were rock solid, administrated by mortals (in some cases, a couple of generations of mortals). Others, however, were tissues of fabrications that only stood because they were unexamined. Guessing that many Kindred are relying on mind tricks to conceal years of unpaid back taxes, Persephone is quietly building the case files she'd need to get several havens condemned, reclaimed or auctioned off. Granted, the vulnerable havens aren't held by prominent Kindred, but a lever is a lever . . . .

She'd like to step up this project, but she lacks the stealth and the survivability to access really confidential info. So she needs an agent (or better, agents). Ideally, the agent would be someone with a vulnerable haven, which she could use her expertise to "fix" in return for the dirt on others . . . .

Peter Gitzlaff

If Persephone decides to slam the door on someone's haven, the inspector who gets sent to investigate and oversee the case — Pete Gitzlaff — gets more than he bargained for. The Kindred tenant, disturbed during the daytime, freaks and kills two of Pete's assistants. More through luck than anything else, Pete survives and traps the vampire in daylight until he's ash. But Pete's now through the Masquerade — with no one the wiser.

Poking around, Pete uncovers more Kindred (including Persephone, if that works for your chronicle), but he doesn't want to destroy them — he's far too chickenshit. No, he wants to *join*. See, by the time Pete catches the scent, he's been diagnosed with an incurable disease. He thinks a fortunate Fate led him to vampires just in time to dodge the grim reaper. Pete wants the Embrace, Prince's ban or no. If refused? He's put the paper in the Machine to wreck half a dozen havens. But give him what he wants, and he'll stop the process before it properly starts . . . .

Persephone Moore

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 2003
Apparent Age: 29
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 4, Computer 1, Investigation (Legal Matters) 3, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 2, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (The Pickup) 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies 4, Mentor (Bella) 4, Resources 3, Striking Looks 1
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Pride
Health: 7
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 9



Blood Potency: 1
Disciplines: Dominate 3, Resilience 1
Vitae/ per Turn: 10/1

Persephone isn't crazy. She has a decent sense of her own identity, she knows the difference between pretending to be a gaudy club-tramp and truly being an urban lawyer with smarts and self-respect. She doesn't suffer lost time, she doesn't have multiple personalities, she doesn't change between *being* two different persons named Linda and Persephone. Furthermore, she won't start.

If Persephone goes crazy, it'll be some kind of borderline personality or dissociation disorder in which she feels herself to have no true identity whatsoever — no beliefs, no feelings, no real drive. Her every action will seem hollow, as if she's on the outside watching herself act. Once she becomes empty of any volition, she will truly become a monster, a slave to the appetites of the Beast.

But that's a long way off, yet. For now, she's hanging on just fine, trying to figure out exactly what her position is in the court. On one hand, she's under Prince Maxwell's wing, and that counts for a hell of a lot. On the other hand, she's the visible consequence of him breaking his own law. The best way she can help him, as often as not, is to stay quiet and hope people forget she exists.

Already, she's sliding crazily between "outcast" and "power-player," but, on an entirely different axis, there's her own politics. She's nominally Invictus, but her true sympathies lie a lot closer to the Carthian end of the street — if not actually among the unbound. Equality and democracy sound much better in her ears than fealty and obedience. On the other hand, she's a *Chicagoan*, which means she's had plenty of chances to see just how the sausage of democracy can get ground up. She's used to being elite; she went to law school. So she's not quite ready to kiss off the Invictus and go Carthian, much as they'd love it if she did. (What, are you kidding? Prince's illegal get scorns his old-boy network and comes out on behalf of freedom and brotherhood? It'd be huge!)

Mainly, Persephone wants to get the personal settled before plunging any deeper into the political. She's been Kindred for a short time, and she killed her first human only three months after her Embrace. She didn't mean to, but he was just some jerk from a club and, in the passion of the moment, she got carried away.

Since then, she's been far more careful. She no longer feeds from men who repel her, because she *knows* that can tempt her to treat them as if their lives are disposable. Instead she looks for nice men, sweet guys, kind and shy and not overbearing. She tries hard to like them before she bites their necks open. That way it's a lot easier to back off, take it down a notch — let them live.

Filthfoot

Believe it or not, the McCarthy trials were only partially the result of paranoia and demagoguery. There really *were* some communists in America trying to undermine capitalism. Mike Smith was one, and in 1954 he got the Embrace by a Chicagoland Nosferatu who felt Mike would make an admirable weapon against his well-invested Ventrue rivals. Smith's sire fell afoul of that "we always win" business, and Mike was left to fend for himself as best he could with two powerful Ventrue regarding him as the shit that fell from the ass they kicked.

He faded into the background the best way he could, considering the twisted and distorted visage the Embrace gave him: he took to the streets, posing as a homeless man. Only it wasn't really a pose. Dubbed "Filthfoot" for his habit of going shoeless, he begged quarters, preyed on his fellow itinerants, and (in the early 1970s), got religion.

Filthfoot has fused the faith of the Lancea Sanctum with the tenets of Marxism, producing a hybrid of unusual strength. At least, it exerts unusual strength over Filthfoot.

Goal: Revolution!

Like the Sanctified, he believes it is the Kindred fate to torment humanity. However, he applies this through the lens of a fractured Marxist dialectic. He preys on wealthy "parasites" (those who inherit wealth without work particularly rouse his ire) and often robs them as well. This, though, is only a small part of his overall plan.

Simply put, he wants to weaken the "oppressor class" and make it easier for the proletariat to overthrow them. Once upon a time, he believed that this would lead to the Workers' Paradise and the withering away of the state, yadda yadda. Now, he's more focused on hurting the rich than exulting the poor. But, as far as he's concerned, exulting the poor is probably the most grievous hurt he could inflict on the bourgeois land- and factory-owners.

He hopes that his robberies (and other crimes — he murders the occasional trust fund kid, though he makes sure to *never* feed when he kills) will inspire the underclass to rise up, by showing them that the rich are vulnerable. When he comes across a human criminal who rises from humble beginnings to rip off the wealthy (ideally through direct and violent methods) he tries to support and protect that crook to the extent that he's able.

What He's Got

Filthfoot has some Sanctified friends, but because he quietly disagrees with some of their tenets (diablerie sounds a lot like radical wealth redistribution to him, albeit with a different sort of currency) he has chosen not to get initiated. He shows up at the Temple sometimes, but no one's pressing him hard because (1) he's on the right track, more or less, (2) they've got decades to bring him along slowly and (3) he's a scary SOB when he wants to be.

He has a number of ratty bolt-holes around the Cicero area. Some of the crazier carjackers and home invaders consider him an *amigo*, though he prefers freelancers: guys inside gangs and cartels are, if anything, hypertrophic capitalists rather than prole heroes. He's also been known to spook cops and punk kids away from homeless guys, so the community of the skids (such as it is) respects him.

What He Needs

Money, always — somehow, the guy who wants to overthrow capitalism is very bad at managing his capital. He's got people (both mortal and Kindred) who help him when it's to their benefit, but no real followers because his "eat the rich" philosophy is a tough sell even when you're not physically hideous and socially maladroit.

Project: Ghetto Avenger

Filthfoot's secret ambition is to cultivate a sort of socialist radical out of the Horner Homes or the Cabrini Green region — sort of a "Robin Hood from the 'hood" concept. Filthfoot envisions this figure performing a series of high-profile robberies of wealthy parasites, then using the proceeds to help clean crack cocaine (the CIA's tool to keep the should-be revolutionaries sedated) out of the ghettos so that they can really start sticking it to the Man. Unfortunately for Filthfoot, "enlightened socialist" and "crazy drama-queen criminal" just don't seem like concepts eager to crossbreed. But if he finds That Guy, Filthfoot will do all he can to protect, publicize, evangelize and assist him.

Mike "Filthfoot" Smith



Clan: Nosferatu
Covenant: Unbound
Embrace: 1950s
Apparent Age: Late 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (History) 2, Computer 1, Crafts (Sewing) 2, Investigation (Research) 1, Occult 1, Politics (Socialism) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Stealth 4, Survival (Winter) 3, Weaponry (Improvised) 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression (Writing) 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Debate) 3, Streetwise (Liberals) 3, Subterfuge (Subversive) 3
Merits: Allies (Cicero, Nosferatu) 3, Allies (Illinois Socialist Party) 2, Clan Status: Nosferatu 2, Contacts (Cicero Restaurants, Homeless), Fleet of Foot 2, Language (Spanish) 1, Strong Back
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Sloth
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 13
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Nightmare 2, Obfuscate 2, Resilience 2, Vigor 1

A communist agitator turned Nosferatu pawn turned Lancea Sanctum wannabe, Mike Smith has spent his adult life and his afterlife on the bottom punching upwards. While he sees the Invictus as an oppressive burden on the bulk of Kindred, he actually considers Invictus members a less pressing problem than the bourgeois — an oppressive burden on the bulk of humankind. Filthfoot, for all his poverty and wild-eyed ranting, has not made the common Kindred mistake of thinking that the society of the undead is the star of the drama on planet Earth. He knows the mortals, in all their sludgy and slumbering bulk, are the bright center around which the shadowy Kindred orbit. He hopes that by enlightening the masses and fueling the inevitable uprising against the landowning plutocrats, he can eliminate the unjust social structures that are so adroitly parasitized by the Invictus in particular and the Kindred in general.

Plus, those wealthy fuckers are *evil*. They deserve to have someone knock them down and take their stuff.

Barefoot in all but the coldest weather, dressed in layers of unlaundered and grease-stained clothes, Filthfoot's crowning touch is his warped and distorted visage. Although his features are generally in the right positions, they're lopsided, disproportionate and just generally skewed. Most people with the misfortune to meet his gaze chalk it up to some sort of chemical discharge while he was in the womb — if they don't have the greater misfortune to know the truth.

While he's got a profound and abiding faith, he doesn't go out of his way to proselytize — or to make enemies. His beliefs guide his Requiem in all things, and the purity of his goals drives him, but the situation is tough enough without riling people up. Stick it to the mortals because they're more vulnerable *and* more important. Kindred are to be respected, taught the truth if they're receptive, and ignored or avoided otherwise.

Jenny

People in Oak Park are scared. A second body was found, drained of blood. The second waitress taken in a year, and three others disappeared last year and *weren't* found. They were all named Jenny.

The Chicago court is in an uproar, asking who could be so careless, so stupid, so *crazy*. The Prince needs to restore order by finding and punishing someone — ideally, the right person.

The unbound in Cicero are freaking out too, particularly Rafael. He's dead certain that this is going to be the pretext the Invictus needs to put his town under its iron thumb — if it's not a set-up that *Invictus members* did to give themselves permission. In any event, he's desperate for someone to find the killer.

Plus, there are all those waitresses named Jenny, many of whom are borrowing other nametags. Nosy Kindred can quickly find that the Jennies were probably taken during the *day*, which either means a vampire acting through a cutout — or a human who's draining blood for some reason of his own — or something else that needs blood, is competing with vampires and is threatening to blow the Masquerade out of sheer ignorance.

If it's a human, can they find him? Does killing him even help? Does handing him in strengthen the Masquerade, or will it provoke copycat slayings? If it's not a human — what is it?

The Family

They don't call themselves "the Lowlies" but, to everyone outside their clique, that's their sobriquet. Among themselves, they're "the Family," a largish coterie of vampires, unremarkable except that they don't drain people and have some non-traditional beliefs.

Specifically, the Family believes that drinking human blood is abhorrent — or, at least, it should be. Unwilling to live off the misery of others, Family members do everything in their power to avoid the urges that make them what they are. It is, to be sure, an uphill battle.

Leader: Vail O'Connor, or "Mama"

Mama Vail did a lot of mind-expanding in the '60s, when she was alive. Some vivid acid experiences convinced her that a universal life-vibration flows through the world, and that any harmful or aggressive act impedes that flow.

Twenty years of the Requiem have more than tempered Mama Vail's initial cheer, but a core of belief remains. She is focused on limiting the harms she and her followers do, and the sincerity of her efforts has led some Kindred to follow her banner.

Mama Vail O'Connor

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Unbound
Embrace: 1971
Apparent Age: 40s, with added mileage
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Philosophy) 1, Crafts (Weaving) 2, Medicine (Drugs) 1, Occult 2, Politics (Hippy) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Expression (Rant) 3, Persuasion (Indoctrinate) 3, Streetwise (Drugs) 3, Subterfuge (Lie) 3
Merits: Contacts (Drug Dealers), Haven: Size (Shared) 4, Haven: Location (Shared) 4, Herd (Animals) 3, Iron Stamina 1, Language (Spanish), Resources 2

"Yes, it's Kindred nature to feed on humans, but so? It's human nature to die, and we've all thwarted that problem."

Vail's got a boo-hoo childhood so typical it's almost boring — mom drank, absent dad, ran off when she was 14 to get on the bus with the Strawberry Alarm Clock. She wound up in Haight-Ashbury, dropping acid and panhandling, drifted to a commune, was at both Woodstock *and* Altamont and got the Embrace from a crank Ventrue who *needed* someone close to be more miserable than he was so he could feel like somebody. He figured that a life-affirming hippie with a trembling belief in Love and Trust, crammed into Kindred mold, would qualify.

He underestimated Vail. She's more tough than bright and more determined than logical, but logic isn't always a good friend when dealing with matters vampiric. She has a junkie's knack for rationalization, and she's applied it to justifying choices that have left her leading the Family.

Mama Vail isn't willing to throw over her thralls, of course. She's got a two-drink Vinculum to four of her fol-



lowers and a one-drink bond to the other eight. Seven of them have completed bonds to her, three others have taken two drinks and the rest have at least one. She's dizzied and bewildered by her passion for all of her "relatives" and she'd do anything (just about) for any of them — but some deep part of her realizes that all that puzzling fog of love will lift when she takes the third drink of any one follower. Now she just has to choose one of her children for the role of "favored son." Obviously, the chosen one must be someone with an equivalent full Vinculum to her — and, ideally, someone weak-willed enough that she can talk him into a voluntary torpor.

Being enslaved to someone who's motionless is, after all, the best outcome for Vail, and what's good for her is good for the Family. Right?

Mama didn't have a lot of years on her when she was changed, but they were hard years. Her hair is an un-grayed blonde, and her skin has taken on the alabaster corpse-sheen of the undead, but lines and blotches from her uncertain life remain. She's scrawny and tall and looks like she'd collapse into dust if you pushed her over.

She believe in love, life and decency, and if the price of preserving the integrity of the life-vibration is that she has to rob her followers of their freedom or convince them to sacrifice it to her ego, well, "freedom's just another word for 'nothing left to lose'" — right? She feels for *everyone*, deeply. Mortals deserve to be left alone. Kindred are in a terrible fix, just by their nature. The best solution to their fix is Love, and the tightest love they can form is a Vinculum — which, managed well, can keep them from hassling the mortals.

Whoa, cosmic.

Being immune to logic can make one eerily confident, and being confident can make one persuasive. Mama Vail starts to make a curious amount of sense to those foolish enough to go off with her alone. While her "talk without listening" approach helps her steamroll the weak, it does leave her pretty clueless about what others are feeling, or thinking. If nothing else, she gets people in the door, where she can start whittling away their common sense. The crazy, lowly hippie chick with the drug connection throws some pretty awesome parties.

Goal: Freedom from the Blood

The Family recognizes that their hunger is a fact of the Requiem. As far as they're concerned, it's the primary fact. But they seek to offset, mitigate, avoid, delay or otherwise thwart the need for human blood as long and as inventively as possible. They have a number of strategies.

Gorging on Animal Blood. Vail's come a long way from her vegetarian days, but her theory is that if you're so full you can't consume more, it blunts the desire to hunt humans. However, many Kindred have been known to resort to bulimia in order to get the good stuff, so this is an imperfect strategy.

Alternative Ecstasies. Although nothing compares to the bliss of feeding — it is, after all, the completion of a vampire's destiny or purpose — there are still plenty of good times to be had with other substances. Vail encourages all her followers to get high, get drunk and get laid early and often. The problem with *this* approach is that depressants lower one's inhibitions *vis à vis* neck biting, stimulants tend to make Kindred hungry and jumpy and sex puts you in close proximity to major blood vessels.

Aversion Therapy. Vail knows Dominate and has had some very minor successes trying to condition her followers to resist the lure of the blood. It's not a technique that works well on Kindred, but it's better than nothing.

The Alternative. So far, what seems to work best is feeding from other vampires. Sure, it's an endeavor absolutely *permeated* with perilous Vinculums, but it *seems to work*. Mostly what happens is that the Family tanks up on animal blood, then they bite one another for the ecstasy of it. Sooner or later, someone forms a critical bond, forsaking all others — but, so far, Mama Vail has been careful to be at the center of those third-drink Vinculums.

Voluntary Torpor. They know enough about Kindred history and (for lack of a better word) physiology to know that old vampires can't handle animal blood. But they also know that sleeping it off can mitigate the effects of raw age. Thus, they plan to carefully enter torpor on schedules to remain open to animal feeding.

What They've Got

Profound, freaky interpersonal loyalty, thanks to the tangled snarl of blood bonds. Centralized leadership, because those bonds tend to straighten out with Vail at the center. Family members have allied with the River Snakes to get a steady supply of "cold" animal blood, and members have infiltrated a number of animal shelters and farms to get it fresh. Vail's got contacts in the minor pharmaceutical culture (that is, drugs without the centralized, competitive and violent infrastructures of heroin and cocaine — the Family deals mostly in stuff like X, acid and prescription stuff gotten from Dominated doctors) keep the Family funded and provide them with some ears on the street.

What They Need

The Coils of the Dragon would go a long way toward providing them the Requiem they desire. Unfortunately for the Family, the Ordo Dracul isn't going to admit anyone from a group whose reputation is "Vinculized, dingbat Lowlies."

Project: The Mountain Comes to Mohammed

If the Order won't admit Kindred from the Family, then the Family needs must admit someone from the Order. Sadly for the Lowlies, no Dragon is beating down the door demanding access. Therefore, the Family's hope is to kidnap someone who can teach them the Coils of the Blood (and they wouldn't turn down the first Coil of the Beast). The problem is, the Order is large and the Family is small. In addition to being small, they're inflexibly led by a woman who's disorganized, drug-addicted and not exactly a hostage-extraction expert. They haven't even figured out a local Order member to target, or even how to figure out *which* Dragon knows what they want.

Nothing Sweeter Than This

Kindred love blood dolls, and why not? Mortals all hot and bothered by the shuddersome thrills of the Kiss are an easy feed, a welcome break amidst the otherwise hectic elements of the Requiem.

Only now the blood dolls of Chicago have found something else. It's a drug that, if it doesn't hit the *exact* same sensual spot in the brain, is, by hell, close enough. The mortals shoot it up, they feel the rush, they don't get the lethargy and immune system depression and they can do it every week without *dying*. Sure, it's an AIDS and hepatitis risk, but so are vampires — and vampires you can't soak in bleach first.

Where's this shit originate? Does it have side effects? Is it eventually going to sicken and kill the blood doll population? Or will it just make vampire thrills obsolete? Kindred want answers, and all they have are suspicions, but their suspicions are very deep.

After all, the drug is called "Kiss."

Ambrose Masterson

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Unaligned
Embrace: 1954
Apparent Age: Late 40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive (Small Aircraft) 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Poker Face, Detect BS) 2
Merits: Clan Status: Gangrel 2, Contacts (Park Service, The Unbound, Construction) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Herd 1, Language (German), Resources 1
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7
Initiative: 9
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Protean 4, Resilience 1
Vitae/ per Turn: 11/1

Ambrose Masterson grew up in Chicago, played stickball, did well enough in school, had a great summer job working at Wrigley Field and, when his country called, he signed up to fight in World War II. He was pretty good, too. He made flight school, became a fighter pilot and shot down two Jerries before he took a stream of shells to his fuel tank and fell, burning, to earth.

He doesn't remember the crash, which is probably a mercy. All he knew was darkness and oblivion until he awoke in the hospital. Gradually, his thoughts returned. But the darkness never lifted.

He was decorated and returned home, where he found heroism a small consolation for blindness. He missed sight, he missed flying and he missed being useful.

He spent about a year drifting in and out of veterans' hospitals, depressed and stymied, when an old war buddy caught up with him — a war buddy who'd been paralyzed from the waist down, but who came to Ambrose walking upright.

There was a way, his friend told him.

Sure, blindness and paralysis and so many other war wounds were beyond medical *science* — but there was another way. His friend called it "the stuff," a rare and elusive drug that, when properly taken, could heal any ill, any injury. All you needed was enough of it.

Ambrose wanted to believe, but it sounded too good to be true. Then his buddy told him about the price. Told him who had the stuff, and what it did to humans, and how the cost was high but worth it.

Ambrose didn't want to believe in vampires, and he didn't want to become an addict, a slave. But he didn't want to stay blind, either.

Eventually, he broke down. Called his friend. Got supplied: the Kindred were eager for pilots, the possibilities of traveling by a private plane entranced the more daring of their ilk. Who could be better trusted as a pilot than one with utter devotion, a ghoul who owed his master the very eyes he needed to fly again?

Ambrose was a loyal ghoul for six years, and then he saw his master ripped to shreds, quite casually, by another vampire called the Unholy.

Like Ambrose's domitor, the Unholy was interested in airplanes, and she made it *very* clear to Ambrose what would happen if he didn't give her the ride she needed. (That was 1954 and a collusion of factors in St. Louis had made the town too hot even for her.) Once they were aloft, Ambrose told her that unless she gave him the Embrace, he'd crash the goddamn plane.

Not a terribly wise plan, but Ambrose had unrealistic ideas about vampirism, and he was distressed from losing his domitor, so he issued an ultimatum to the Unholy.

He realizes, now, that she could have twisted his head right off, spiraled the plane lower and then turned into a bird (or, hell, a mist for all he knows) and flown to the ground. But, instead, she gave him what he asked for, and gave it to him good and hard.

Like his infamous sire, Ambrose is deformed. In his case, his mouth is no longer human in configuration. Instead, it's a giant-sized model of a carnivorous bat's fanged maw, right down to the splotchy pink and gray flesh of his gums. He's learned that what he bargained for so brazenly was not freedom, but a different slavery. Just when he thought it wouldn't get any worse, he found out about HIV — by catching it.

Ambrose can't get sick, of course, but anyone he feeds from is at risk, so he has to be very careful. He's got a small herd, but he can't afford to feed from them too often — any opportunistic infection is more dangerous to someone with a depleted blood supply. Mostly, he feeds on animals and makes his peace with hunger.

He has no fixed haven, but he shacks up in crypts, abandoned culverts or, when push comes to shove, in the faithful Haven of Soil. He doesn't have much money, but a couple of lawyers know that, for a 1,000 bucks cash, this Masterson guy can make sure a witness is rattled and sleepless — if he shows up to testify at all after a bat flies into his room, turns into a fang-faced guy and yells at him. After that treatment, making a court date doesn't seem that important. Masterson's been known to offer the same service to people in messy divorces or complicated adoption battles — it doesn't work every time, but even those who persevere negotiate less stridently under the threat of Ambrose coming back to slap them around some more.



The Face Factory

The old Prosser Steelcraft factory on the West Side looks like a perfect haven for the security-conscious Kindred. It's big, it's empty and it's got a couple miles of pitch black cooling tunnels underneath it. The cherry on the sundae is that the title to the land is actually in dispute, but because the land is worthless and in a crap neighborhood, no one's likely to even press the claim until an old lien expires in 52 years.

A vampire who moves in can enjoy Prosser Steelcraft for all of three months before she realizes that someone else is using the building. It's not at night, probably. But during the day, someone is coming into the factory, fixing and re-activating the equipment and using it. A night or two of exploration finds a locked storeroom full of bright chrome masks. Some of the masks may be very familiar, right off the front page. They're death-masks of the city's victims. Some masks are anomalous — investigation reveals that they're the faces of people who are merely reported as "missing" or who have gone missing without report.

<sWith enough observation, a pattern emerges. Mortals killed in Chicago are being faced, in reverse chronological order, with eerie precision. How do characters react when their own faces turn up? Or the face of a mortal ally they talked to last week, but who — according to the masks — died nine months ago? How do they feel when the mortal they *saw* go under those el wheels doesn't show up as dead? And, most importantly, who the hell is doing this? How? Why?

Dumptruck Ned

Not exactly a rising star, but a reliable ally when you need one, Dumptruck Ned (or just Dump, Truck or Ned for short) has only been Kindred for a handful of years, but he's already proved his worth to Chicago's Kindred, particularly those in the Carthian Movement.

Just as he was in his breathing days, Dump is a waste hauler. If you need to get rid of something, *a*nything, you can call him and have it quietly hauled away, no questions asked.

Ned is a cleaner, but he doesn't handle situations, just the aftermath of situations. In his time among the Kindred, Dumptruck Ned has disposed of cars, ashes, drugs, bodies, junk, ashes, weapons, bodies, identities, ashes and bodies. His big, blue garbage truck is one that the city "lost" a couple of years back. The truck still looks (and smells) authentic enough that it doesn't get much attention from anyone who sees it going down alleys at night. In addition to some friends at the local landfills, Ned has a couple of ghouls on the night shift at a rendering plant south of the city, and they deal with human remains the same way they do with those of dogs, horses, cattle and leftovers from butcher shops: they throw them all in the same big walloping vats, and the bones all wind up in the same bone meal fertilizer.

Ned performs this service for allies and friends of the Carthian movement for "favors to be named later," with the size of the favor corresponding to the risk involved in the disposal. Everybody else pays cash. The riskier the cargo, the more it costs to get rid of. Hauling away the body of a notorious South Side gangsta runs about $500. Disposing of the corpse of a popular North Shore socialite runs the client around $10,000. Ned does not lack for money.

Ned was a hardcore union man before his Embrace, and he continues to be now. The labor faction of Chicago's Carthians all look to Ned as a kind of exemplar. The Invictus, on the other hand, see him as a dangerous Masquerade breach just waiting to happen. The Invictus also doesn't like the fact that he refuses to snitch on anybody he does a job for.

Ned is fully aware that his calling among the Kindred puts him in possession of some very sensitive information. To minimize the possibility of being compromised by an unwanted Vinculum, Ned deliberately established a Vinculum with the most apolitical vampire he knew: Lillian Vanderpool, the Carthian Myrmidon. She has yet to ask him to dispose of anything for her, and she has never contacted him outside of their quarterly Vinculum maintenance sessions, but there is nothing Ned wouldn't do for Vanderpool. While he doesn't know it, she feels much the same way about him.

Almost every Carthian and a handful of other Kindred owe Ned favors of one sort or another. He may not be as pretty, flashy or powerful as some other Kindred in town, but Ned is, almost inadvertently, cultivating a fair amount of political influence. If he ever steps away from his garbage truck long enough to get political, he could wind up on the road to being Prefect without much effort at all.

Dumptruck Ned

Clan: Nosferatu
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1989
Apparent Age: 28
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts 1, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 4, Firearms 1, Larceny 4, Stealth 4, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Allies 3, Haven 4, Resources 3
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Envy
Health: 9
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 1
Disciplines: Obfuscate 3, Vigor 1
Vitae/ per Turn: 10/1

Born poor, Ned never quite got around to changing his financial circumstances before he died. Ned hated school, hated learning, hated books and hated his teachers. As soon as he was able to drop out of school, he did so.

And immediately noticed that those dreams of wealth that he'd been entertaining for so many years were farther away than ever without a college education.

So he started a waste hauling business. Not once did Ned refuse to haul something away for money. The mob loved Ned. The Kindred loved Ned, too, so much, in fact, that they made him a ghoul, and when he'd been a ghoul for long enough to "pay his dues," someone, a Carthian, finally got around to bringing him into the Requiem.



Ned wasn't a particularly handsome man to begin with, skinny as a scarecrow and oddly proportioned to boot, but since his Embrace, he's only undergone one change: he continues to look much the same as he ever did except for the disturbingly intense expression that stays on his face at all times, like you're a bird and he's a cat. When others comment on it, he apologizes and tries to re-arrange his facial expression, but to no avail.

Ned gets most of his clothes from the houses he empties out and the bodies he gets rid of. It strikes him as the height of impracticality to throw away perfectly good clothing, especially when he spent most of his life hovering around the poverty threshold. That doesn't mean that he dresses sloppily, however. Ned has accrued enough clothes from emptying out houses and going through garbage bins that he can actually put together some decent outfits that wouldn't look out of place in any neighborhood in North America. The worst that can be said about his clothes is that they sometimes seem a little out of fashion.



Brad Kerwin

Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1993
Apparent Age: Early 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Politics (Sexual) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Acting) 1, Persuasion (Seduce) 4, Socialize (Carouse) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (Club Scene) 3, Barfly, Contacts (Porn Industry, Motels, Drug Scene, Clubs), Herd 5, Resources 3, Striking Looks 4
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 4 (Megalomania, severe: 4)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Lust
Health: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 12
Blood Potency: 1
Disciplines: Majesty 3, Vigor 1
Vitae/ per Turn: 10/1

Halsted Street is the main strip of Chicago's biggest gay neighborhood. Brad Kerwin likes to think of himself as its Kindred mayor.

Since his Embrace, Kerwin has parlayed his good looks and powerful presence into a small but comfortable niche empire. He now owns Sidetrack, the biggest and most profitable gay bar in the state, and possibly the country. It is his base of operations, and it keeps him well heeled and well fed. On the side, he also runs a booming pornography production company, Cockpit Video, that also brings money pouring into his coffers. Kerwin doesn't have to make do with the same tired, jaded stable of actors willing to do porn as the other companies. He can get *anyone* he wants to be in his movies whether it's a runaway fresh off the bus from Iowa or the favored scion of a powerful senator. When Kerwin sees a young man he wants in one of his movies, the Kindred offers whatever it takes to get his prey on camera — and when Kerwin turns the charm on, he often doesn't have to offer much.

Kerwin was vain when he was alive; now he's nigh-insufferable. With the assistance of the Majesty Discipline, Kerwin surrounds himself with attractive, enthralled young men whom he uses as he will before tossing them aside for the next conquest. Kerwin prides himself on never using force to feed; those he feeds from always offer themselves to him and sometimes vie for the honor of being the first to be fed on by Kerwin in a given evening.

Kerwin often finds himself working with Duce Carter. The party drugs Carter brings into the city are popular with many young, nihilistic gay men, and Kerwin has the connections to get the drugs to their target market. Kerwin doesn't allow any dealing in Sidetrack or even in a one-block radius around it, but beyond there, he has no qualms about selling anything to anybody.

In recent years, the Invictus has taken note of the amount of cash that flows into Boystown, and the covenant like to get in on the action, but after writing off the gay community for so many years, the Invictus has no infrastructure in place to do so, and Kerwin has used his

myriad contacts to sabotage the covenant's efforts and block its inroads time and time again.

A very low-key conflict is beginning to heat up as a couple of First Estate Kindred keep trying to cultivate influence in Boystown and Kerwin keeps repelling them. If the Invictus Kindred keep it up, Kerwin is prepared to approach Walt Barowski and other key Carthians for help. Given Barowski's dislike for the Invictus and the current Prince, it wouldn't take much to get Barowski to draw a line in the sand where Boystown is concerned.

Before his Embrace, Kerwin was an assistant bartender at Sidetrack and an up-and-coming porn star. His Daeva sire Embraced Kerwin to preserve his beauty; what he really did was make a monster. The power of the blood has made Kerwin immune to everything he feared and enhanced his already considerable charm. And it's not as though he was unaccustomed to using people and throwing them away when he was done with them, so feeding is just a new approach to an old hobby.

Words like "attractive" and "handsome" don't fit Kerwin so much as words like "hot" or "stunning." Kerwin could easily have been a model in his breathing days if he'd made even a weak stab at it. At it was, his gorgeous face and cut body landed him in the porn industry. Kerwin dresses to show off his body: tight shirts of sheer fabric, form-fitting jeans and trendy shoes. Kerwin jumps at every opportunity to don club- or fetish-wear, and if he can doff his shirt altogether, then so much the better as far as he's concerned.

Richard Tabor

Tabor initially had the makings of a rising star among the Kindred, particularly in the Circle of the Crone, but he developed another problem when he was Embraced: he can't seem to work with anyone without betraying them in one way or another. Maurey, Rowen and other established Kindred have attempted to work with Tabor, but to no avail. He's betrayed them every time, either through a slip of the tongue or through deals he's tried to cut with their enemies. It's blatant self-sabotage, but he can't seem to prevent himself from doing it. None of these little betrayals have been big enough to warrant his destruction, but none of the Kindred want anything to do with him. The one Kindred in Chicago who talks with him on a regular basis is his sire Max Maurey, who gets information from him and drinks his Vitae on a weekly basis. On rare occasions when Rowen can't find an Acolyte she trusts more, she may engage Tabor as an enforcer for the Circle of the Crone as a way of reminding people that it is *not* okay to teach Crúac to those outside the covenant. To his credit, he has always handled these missions in a very professional and determined manner, mostly because of his somewhat dogmatic dedication to the Circle of the Crone. Rowen is certain that there must be some way to use Tabor more often, because he's a very diligent and effective enforcer, but she herself has been burned by his betrayals several times and can't bring herself to trust him.

Tabor is now, for the most part, social wreckage on the floor of the Kindred social arena. With the exception of Maurey and Rowen, neither elders nor ancillae will even talk with Tabor and most neonates find him too creepy for words. Still, he is a relatively powerful vampire for his age, and it's possible that he might be able to become the patron of a young coterie, provided its members' sires don't warn them away from him.

Richard Tabor

Clan: Nosferatu
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1943
Apparent Age: 24
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 , Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 1, Occult 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 5, Survival 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts 2, Directional Sense, Haven 3
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Lust
Health: 9
Initiative: 10
Defense: 5
Speed: 8
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)



Disciplines: Crúac 2, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 1
Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina (1), Rigor Mortis (1), Hydra's Vitae (2)

A creepy motherfucker even before his Embrace, Richard Tabor has only become more disturbing since beginning his Requiem. Unlike most of those on the ground floor of Kindred society, Tabor is not a neonate and hasn't been for years. When the draft was called in World War II, Tabor cut off the toes of one foot to avoid military service and called it a farm accident. When most of his high school friends shipped overseas, he made sure their wives didn't get lonely at night and wound up with no fewer than three bastard children through his efforts. His behavior caught the eye of Max Maurey, then the Nosferatu Priscus, who Embraced him. Whether Maurey's Embrace was meant as a reward for Tabor's cleverness or as punishment for his perfidy was not clear, but the 24-year-old lothario found himself suddenly much less in demand for his stud services once the intensity of his presence became overwhelming.

Tabor initially took to the Kindred existence relatively well, joining up with the Acolytes and developing a fair understanding of blood-sorcery. As a voyeur, he found that Obfuscate gave him the perfect tool for watching attractive people when they didn't think they were being watched. His favorite means of feeding was to watch a couple making love and then feed from them unseen while they were distracted, heightening the intensity of their passion.

Clean-cut and boyish in an Eisenhower-era way, Tabor is *almost* attractive, but all of his features seem just a bit off. His mouth doesn't seem like it goes on his face, his well-shaped eyes aren't quite symmetrical and his nose has definitely been broken (a souvenir of a past conquest's boyfriend). And the air of intensity that he projects makes most people he's speaking with feel like bugs under a microscope. He also gets the vast majority of his clothes from thrift stores, and the weird mismatched outfits he wears often make him look a bit like he's a bum.

Jedediah Holyoak

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1766
Apparent Age: Early 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 2, Investigation (Research) 3, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Occult 5, Politics (Kindred) 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry (Axe) 3



Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Disguise, Lie) 4
Merits: Common Sense, Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone 1, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Size 3, Herd 2, Resources 2
Willpower: 9
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Health: 10
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 14
Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae/turn: 12/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 2, Crúac 5
Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina (1), Rigor Mortis (1), Cheval (2), Hydra's Vitae (2), Deflection of Wooden Doom (3), Touch of the Morrigan (3), Willful Vitae (4), Feeding the Crone (5)

There was a time, long ago, when Jedediah Holyoak was a powerful elder vampire in the Cleveland area, easily the superior of Chicago's current Prince and possibly on par with the Unholy. For a very brief period, Holyoak imagined himself the vampire baron of America and dreamed of making the North American continent a haven for the Crone's children. And he was powerful enough that he might even have succeeded if his blood hadn't overwhelmed him. Holyoak's thirst was such that he needed to feed from his own kind, and after a few terrifying encounters in Cleveland stemming from that forbidden hunger, Holyoak moved to Chicago a few years before the Great Fire.

A fight with a local mage shortly after the Great Fire left Holyoak cursed and unable to use his (formerly quite potent) Disciplines. The idea of feeding from other Kindred didn't bother him (quite the contrary, actually), but it was not a tenable situation if he could count on the Disciplines he'd grown to rely on. He immediately opted to enter torpor.

Holyoak awoke two years ago, his memory remarkably sharp given that he'd slept away an entire century, but his blood was quite weak. Though he hasn't seen any hint of the old curse affecting him, he seems to have been stripped of much of the power his blood once held. Those Disciplines he has relearned, he seems to be able to use normally without any problem. His understanding of the principles of Crúac returned to him within a few nights (leading him to believe that he has slept off the mage's curse), but Holyoak's other Disciplines need to be learned all over again if he is ever to have access to them.

While Holyoak is a shrewd operator, he's not certain how to proceed with his Requiem. He hadn't been in Chicago long enough to meet many other Kindred before going into torpor. While this means he has no allies, it also means he has no enemies (like those he would have if he had stayed in Cleveland). Kindred have the luxury of long-term thinking, and Holyoak still entertains great plans for the city (especially for that pretender, Maxwell) once Holyoak's power returns properly, but until that night (decades hence at the earliest), he's stuck biding his time and masquerading as a clueless neonate. Holyoak has made a conscious effort to learn and mimic the styles of younger Kindred and spends time in the presence of mortals when he can to help pick up current trends and lingo.

Buzzing around in the back of his mind is the suggestion that he might be able to expedite the return of his power through diablerie, but he's hesitant to take any risks while he remains so weak. His preferred approach is to join a coterie with a few ambitious neonates whom he can groom into a team worthy of ruling the city. In the meantime, Holyoak is making the most of the fact that he's an unknown. As far anyone is concerned, Jed's been Kindred for only a few years, and he has absolutely no connection to *the* Jedediah Holyoak, the notorious conspirator who was banished from Cleveland decades ago for conspiring against the Prince.

Holyoak realizes now that America will not have him as its great baron, nor will the country be the Acolytes' homeland. But Chicago itself is a jewel of great promise with a large (if disorganized) population of Acolytes that he might eventually be able to wield like a weapon.

The political situation in the Circle of the Crone complicates matters a bit. Holyoak doesn't like the schism he sees between the political and the spiritual factions of Acolytes. He likes Rowen and finds her an inspired teacher but a wretched politician. On the other hand, he despises Bella Dravnzie on all accounts.

Holyoak attends every service Rowen presides over. He is impressed with her understanding of the Crone and of Crúac (which she appears to understand better than he), and he supports her completely, but her blindness to politics worries him, and he's been pondering how to nudge her in the right direction. Any night now he may offer her his services as an advisor, and if he has to, he may even give her in indication of who he is and what he can do. With Holyoak as her political advisor, Rowen and the Acolytes in general would likely see their fortunes improving rapidly. Bella, on the other hand, would likely lose much of the political clout she's worked for. If Bella ever learns who Holyoak is and what his aims are, she would doubtless organize against him, rather than be overshadowed by an ancient, lying man. Holyoak realizes this, of course, and he's proceeding accordingly — which is to say, with the abundance of secrecy and guile his clan is known for.

Another goal drives Holyoak through the Requiem as well: a fanatical hatred of mages. Having seen the danger they pose, both at the time of his sire's death and in his own "maiming," Holyoak considers them among the most dangerous foes the Kindred have, and he works to undermine the attempts of mages to influence vampire society.

Damnation Magic

Holyoak was the son of one of the first farmers to come west from the British colonies. He and his family lived in a risky world where his parents had to create a homestead out of unspoiled forest land with a minimum of tools. Furthermore, they had to pull off this feat in the presence of hostile Native Americans.

It was the Indians who prayed to their strange night god to destroy the Holyoak family, and that "god" who Embraced Jedediah after killing his father.

For years, Holyoak operated under a Vinculum to his sire. Holyoak served his Native American sire until that Kindred was gravely wounded by an itinerant shaman — at which point Holyoak diablerized his erstwhile mentor. Holyoak had no interest in staying among the Indians after his sire's destruction. Holyoak went east, to the nascent city of Cleveland, Ohio, to feed off the denser population of European immigrants. There he found that it was not just the Indians who had their night-dwelling monsters. As one of the first Kindred in the city, Holyoak often found himself with a great deal of influence in the running of the city.

At times in his past, Holyoak was a Mekhet Priscus, a Hierophant for the Circle of the Crone and a member of the Primogen Council in Cleveland. For a short while, he sought praxis, but he thought better of it when the sitting Prince made it clear that he would punish anyone who tried such a thing — as demonstrated by a conspiracy to destroy another rival for the seat.

Diplomacy between Holyoak and Cleveland's Invictus Prince was permanently strained thereafter. While Holyoak was more personally powerful, the Prince had the city's other elders well in hand, and Holyoak realized he would need to leave Cleveland or forfeit his Requiem. And so he tried going west again, this time farther than his parents had ever gotten: to the city of Chicago.

Holyoak was just in the process of establishing himself in Chicago's pecking order when the Great Fire (and all the associated madness and chaos of that night) en-

sued. Not only did he survive the fire, he encountered a mage using powerful magic at the peak of the chaos, something Holyoak had been looking for since the death of his sire. Holyoak had long wanted to bond a mage to his blood and gain the benefits of his own pet wizard.

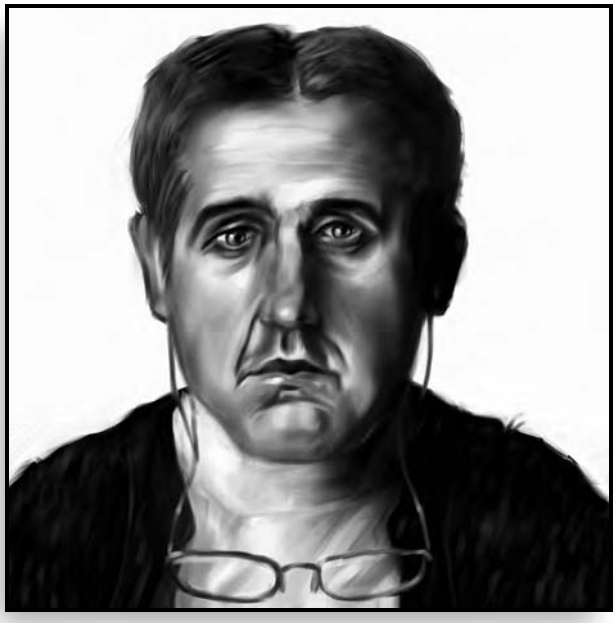
If Holyoak thought the mage would be an easy target, he thought wrongly. The spellcaster was not interested in serving him or any other vampire. The mage attacked Holyoak with potent magic, burning him (as Holyoak phrases it) "to his soul." Holyoak's speed ultimately settled the conflict and the mage died, but Holyoak's Vitae ceased to fuel most of his Disciplines properly. The power of his Vitae had been muted by magic. Blood-sorcery was the only power he could stir from his veins; his other Disciplines stopped working altogether.

Holyoak immediately withdrew from the night-to-night struggles of the Kindred and went into voluntary torpor, hoping that his blood would purge the mage's curse over time. Holyoak is now active again, and while his blood is weak, he no longer feels the full chill of the mage's curse at work in his blood. Now Holyoak waits to see if the power of his Vitae comes back of its own accord, or if he needs to take action of some sort to rectify his situation.

Holyoak is handsome, albeit in a gaunt sort of way. His hair is dark brown, and his eyes are a dull green. He pays less attention to his appearance than many vampires and forgets to hide his pallor. In his quest to pass as a neonate, Holyoak has made a careful study of 21st-century dress and manners, and he passes better in that regard than some Kindred who only entered the Requiem a decade or two ago.

Greg Norton

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1979
Apparent Age: 30
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (PR) 3, Computer 4, Investigation 3, Politics (PR) 1
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Mingle) 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (News, Magazines, Law Offices), Haven: Security 4, Haven: Size 3, Inspiring, Mentor 3, Resources 1
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Temperance



Vice: Envy
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)
Disciplines: Dominate 1, Resilience 4, Vigor 1

Chicago's Kindred all talk a great deal about Maxwell's most infamous childe, Persephone Moore, but nobody discusses (or even remembers) Greg Norton, Maxwell's penultimate childe. Norton is easily forgotten as he was quietly Embraced shortly before Maxwell claimed praxis, on a night when other, more spectacular things were going on to distract from the few muttered comments about Maxwell's new childe. Not only is Norton free of the scandal that clings to Moore, but he is unremarkable looking and carefully maintains an ultra-low profile. Of the few Kindred who ever even knew of Norton's existence, all but Garret McLean and Tobias Rieff have forgotten him. Only those two know Norton, and know of his connection to the Prince. The Prince has thus far successfully kept Norton's existence a secret from Norris, "just in case." If Norris ever *does* discover Norton's existence, Norris may resent the Prince's secrecy

Norton is the Prince's media monitor, his archivist and his occasional spy. From Norton's haven in the basement of the *Chicago Tribune*, he monitors the local media, watching for strange or unexpected stories popping up in the news; if anything catches his eye, or if he notices patterns coming together, he informs the Prince and often finds himself assigned to investigate. The amount of weird phenomena that unfold in and around Chicago is vast, and it's up to Norton to determine what's salient and what's not, but he errs on the side of excess. Better, he has decided, to raise the occasional false alarm than to overlook something that might be important.

Norton's other desk job is to transcribe all of Prince Maxwell's journals, notes and memoirs onto computer and place them in a safe as a safeguard in case Maxwell succumbs to torpor again. It is also within Norton's duties to see to it that Maxwell's body is properly hidden should he ever enter torpor involuntarily.

Norton's last duty, and the one he engages in least frequently, is to act as Maxwell's eyes and ears on the street. Nobody knows Greg Norton. More importantly, nobody recognizes him, and nobody connects him to Maxwell. The Prince himself occasionally goes out in disguise, but there are times when he can't attend to such things himself. Norton does not work for Maxwell in his role as Prince, but in Maxwell's role as elder. Norton's investigations generally don't pertain to city business but to Maxwell's personal interests.

Norton is one of the most isolated Kindred in Chicago; he doesn't have a coterie, he doesn't have a system of allies and he doesn't have his own contacts or influence in the mortal world. He *could* get all of these things just as easily as any other Kindred, but Maxwell has forbidden Norton to do so lest his secrecy be compromised. In exchange for this cloistered Requiem, the Prince provides Norton with ample Vitae and every benefit of wealth and luxury. The implicit promise in the situation is that Norton will someday jump several rungs up the Invictus ladder.

Maxwell's Shadow

Norton grew up on Chicago's North Shore, an unmotivated scion of a wealthy family whose large backyard overlooked Lake Michigan. In school, Norton was notoriously boring, and, consequently, he was chronically bored. He never particularly stood out in any group because he never made an effort to do so, and he rarely even joined any kind of group at all. Instead, Norton sat home and resented others who had established more interesting social circles or otherwise made more interesting decisions than he had.

The same pattern plagued him his whole life. Instead of making a change, he preferred to complain about his lousy predicament and then sit home alone.

By the time he was 30, Norton was still single and nursing a significant bitterness against the rest of the world, but he *still* refused to make any decisive effort to change his own life.

Finally, it was changed for him.

Shortly before claiming praxis, Prince Maxwell had been looking for a notably unremarkable individual to serve him as a media analyst and occasional investigator. This servant was to be very low-key. Nobody flashy would do.

And no one could ever mistake Greg Norton for being flashy. When the Prince saw him, the Prince saw the ideal subtle operative. He immediately checked the young man out and arranged for Norton's Embrace.

The Embrace itself wasn't particularly shocking to Norton, but Maxwell's intensive training regimen afterward was a bit of a shock. It didn't take that long for Norton to catch on to what Maxwell wanted of him — and part of what he wanted was Norton's conspicuous absence from the public eye. Maxwell himself arranged Norton's haven, his office and his feeding. There is very little Norton needs to do but watch news, read newspapers and assemble concise accounts of what he reads. If something particularly noteworthy shows up in the news, Norton has the support he needs to investigate it. Norton's job isn't to "handle" the strange things he discovers, just to investigate them in case Maxwell needs to handle it. While Norris is Maxwell's window onto Chicago's Kindred, Norton is Maxwell's window onto the strange world of mortals.

Very much the bird in the gilded cage, Norton resides in a remarkably comfortable apartment located in the basement of the Chicago Tribune Tower. There he monitors the media in a posh environment that even many among the wealthy would envy. And it takes very little effort on Norton's part, just the way he likes it.

On those occasions when he has to actually go out of his quarters, Norton is ignored almost universally, but now he's *trying* to be subtle, he finds that response from mortals strangely empowering.

Greg Norton is among the more forgettable vampires in the city of Chicago. Maxwell deliberately chose him for those features. The young Ventrue has average features, light brown hair and hazel eyes. He wears neat, business casual clothing bought from casual venues like the Gap and Banana Republic.

Ilsa Gotovsky

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Unbound
Embrace: 1994
Apparent Age: 25
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Stealth 1, Survival 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies 2, Contacts 1, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Haven 1
Willpower: 9
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Pride
Health: 8
Initiative: 8



Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)
Disciplines: Majesty 1, Protean 3, Resilience 2

Given the difficulty of travel and the ban on Embracing, it's rare to see a new face in Kindred circles. The newest face to grace Elysium (and one of the most beautiful) is that of Ilsa Cotovsky, a Gangrel nomad barely beyond her first decade in the Requiem.

While Cotovsky belongs to no covenant, she has steadfastly refused to fall in with the rabble that make up Chicago's unbound Kindred. On the contrary, she comports herself in a very civilized fashion, more so in fact than some members of the covenants. By looking at her and making a guess by the way she interacts with other Kindred in Elysium, one might mistake her for an Invictus operator or a Carthian diplomat. Not only does she make an appearance at every Elysium, she talks and flirts and makes deals and often impresses those attending with tales of her travels, something Chicago's Kindred, bound as they are to the city, seem to appreciate.

Cotovsky knows how to captivate, and the covenants all want her to join them. She is the kind of respectable Kindred whose membership grants prestige to a covenant. Representatives from all five of Chicago's covenants have tried to recruit her since she arrived in the city, but to no avail. She thanks them and reiterates that she prefers to avoid subscribing to others' ideologies as much as possible. Beyond a few minor social rejections, Cotovsky's unbound status thus far seems not to cause her the least bit of discomfort — and therein lies the problem. Being unbound is *supposed* to have drawbacks, supposed to be limiting; the unbound existence is *supposed* to be synonymous with "brutish" and "outcast." If it is not, young Kindred may be less willing to suffer the burdens placed on them by the Kindred organizations they serve. Individual Kindred appreciate Ilsa and her civility, but the covenants resent her as a flouter of tradition.

A political storm is brewing around Cotovsky at this point. As she establishes herself as a successful and well-liked Kindred even while refusing to join a covenant, certain young members of other covenants are finding her to be a role model for freedom, an exemplar of what an unbound *could* be if they all didn't seem to sink to the lowest possible level. Cotovsky sidesteps the responsibility and obligations of belonging to a covenant, and yet she appears to pay no price for her stubborn independence. Furthermore, a couple of the unbound have cleaned up their acts and are now doing what they can (with varying degrees of success) to emulate her and her success among the Kindred of Chicago. Some members of the Invictus fear she could unify the unbound and make them dangerous (although Maxwell is sufficiently taken with her than he will use his standing to protect her from such accusations). Some younger members of the Carthian Movement think they might make their collective point better by siding with her than with the vaguely disreputable ancillae of their own covenant. The more fervent supporters of the Lancea Sanctum despise Cotovsky and want her banished from Chicago permanently (although if she showed any interest in joining them, they would change their tune instantly).

There are now plots afoot to smear Cotovsky's reputation or frame her for some loathsome crime that will effectively defame and disarm her. Obviously, if she can be shown to be just one more untrustworthy unbound wretch, the hold she has on the city's neonates will be broken. Still, if the ancillae are right, and if the city's independent Kindred *do* rally around Cotovsky, she and the unbound might have a much larger part to play in the landscape of Chicago's Kindred politics.

Woodland Sunset

Cotovsky grew up in the Fernando Valley outside of Los Angeles and studied biology at UCLA. She was a bright, inquisitive young woman, and she and her parents alike assumed she'd be something eventually. As fate had it, she did become something, just not what anyone expected. Shortly after finishing up a master's degree in phytobiology, Cotovsky was an intern working for the national forests. She was walking back to her cabin one night when she met a grubby but somewhat attractive guy whom she thought would make an interesting summer fling. They talked late into the evening, and then he gave Cotovsky the Embrace.

She hated the Requiem at first. Several nights in a row her sire, Derek, had to talk her out of watching the sun rise. Each night he showed her a different aspect of her Kindred nature, and by the end of the summer, she'd grown to accept her death, but she hated her sire. She didn't want the same kind of isolated, lonely existence that he'd told her about. She'd been extremely social all her life, and she wasn't interested in giving that up just because he'd made that decision for himself.

She left him and undertook a nigh-suicidal campaign to educate herself about the nature and limits of the Requiem. As a scientist, she was interested in how far she could push the Vitae. In her trek away from her sire, she pushed the power of her blood about as far as it could go, having several violent run-ins with criminals, wild animals and, on a couple of occasions, the sun.

Cotovsky survived all of these, and not long after she left Derek in the California forests, she showed up in San Francisco, where she made a splash in Elysium, both with her good looks and her accounts of the dangers that lurk between cities. When the Prince tried to get her to be a pawn in one of his schemes, she decided to go back out to accumulate some more tales. After San Francisco, it was Portland, then Seattle, then Boulder, and now Cotovsky is in Chicago, and she's tempted to stay. She's amused by the way the covenants are all trying to recruit her; it's like the way boys are in high school when they'll say or do anything to get you back to their rooms.

Cotovsky has no interest in the vampire covenants at all, and she will not join one, but she likes Chicago, both for the ways it reminds her of LA and the ways it doesn't. If she's going to settle down in a city, she wants to be sure that she likes it, because she's seen how sessile vampires can become once they've settled in a place and established themselves.

For her part, Cotovsky hopes that the covenants will get over their political feeding frenzy and just let her function in Elysium as a free agent; otherwise she may need to move on.

Cotovsky is a very attractive young woman with curly dark hair and brown eyes. She favors clothes that are practical and sturdy, and on most nights she exhibits what might be called a tomboy's taste in clothing. On nights when she ventures into Elysium, however, she tends to dress to impress, and often wears a flattering black blouse with an expensive string of pearls.

Alex Gutierrez



Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Ordo Dracul
Embrace: 1999
Apparent Age: 25
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (City Hall) 4, Contacts (DA's Office, Police), Covenant Status: Ordo Dracul 1, Haven: Security 3, Haven: Size 3, Herd 2, Language (Spanish), Resources 4
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Coils of the Dragon 1, Majesty 2, Vigor 1

Coils of the Dragon: Blood Seeps Slowly

Something of a *wunderkind*, in the Ordo Dracul, Alex Gutierrez is one of Chicago's most successful neonates. As perhaps the only Kindred in Chicago capable of legally practicing law, Gutierrez has a monopoly of sorts on legal issues. There may be ghouls who can practice law just as well, but many Kindred would rather deal with another Kindred on these matters (although, on the other hand, more paranoid Kindred wouldn't be caught dead using an attorney on whom they couldn't enforce a Vinculum).

Thanks to legal wrangling on his own behalf (and generous use of the Americans with Disabilities Act), Gutierrez is formally listed as suffering from xeroderma pigmentosum, a severe allergy to sunlight, and can request that any meetings he needs to have with judges, members of City Hall or the like be held after daylight hours.

Due to his position, Gutierrez has amazing access to sensitive information on a number of Chicago's Kindred. Although he has never violated his clients' confidentiality, he's never been asked to. Gutierrez's silence could very possibly be bought, if a Kindred knew enough

to ask him and knew enough to offer him a substantial amount of money. The fact is that Gutierrez has a pronounced fondness for the luxuries money can buy, and his monthly outlay occasionally exceeds his already large income. If Gutierrez were approached with a substantial sum of money, it's entirely possible that he could be a storehouse of sensitive information on other Kindred. Due to his desire to rise within his covenant, Gutierrez would *never* compromise a fellow member of the Ordo Dracul, but his clients from other covenants aren't likely to receive the same degree of consideration.

Gutierrez's legal background also gives him a potent weapon with which to go after other Kindred. Eviction notices, re-zoning, license revocations and condemnation of buildings are all within the Gutierrez's purview, particularly given some of the alliances he's cultivated in City Hall and among the city's aldermen. Tellingly, Gutierrez has actually assembled a suite of legal techniques specifically for harassing Kindred. Any vampire rash enough to get on Gutierrez's bad side could easily find herself audited, her ID scrutinized or revoked and her haven condemned. While he himself is not personally dangerous to many Kindred, he's amply capable of making another Kindred's Requiem Hell.

The Dragon and the Crone

Alex Gutierrez grew up in a poor Hispanic neighborhood on the far north side of the city. He was the first member of his family to graduate from college, so when he also graduated from law school he became a minor celebrity in his large family, and it looked like he was on his way to great things. He never got a chance to practice law. The day after he received news that he had passed the Illinois bar, he met a woman more beautiful than any he'd ever seen. Or she seemed that way. As it was, she was using the Majesty Discipline, and he was led to his death and into his Requiem.

His sire, Bella Dravnzie, assumed that she would be able to recruit him into the Circle of the Crone, but Gutierrez had long since given up on organized religion (or even disorganized religion), and wanted nothing to do with the Circle, and so Dravnzie wanted nothing to do with him.

Her loss turned out to be the Ordo Dracul's gain. For a brief time, Gutierrez was one of the unbound as he shopped around to learn what he could of the other covenants. Gutierrez's finesse with books and research made him a natural for the Ordo Dracul. While he expected to put his legal career behind him, the Dragons would not hear of it. On the contrary, they made sure that he had his own law library in his haven and a staff of ghouls to represent him during daylight hours. They have insisted on his maintaining his legal knowledge even as he also pursues his study of the Coils of the Dragon, and while it's been difficult for him, he sees the wisdom of their ways: once he transcends his temporary Damnation, he will once again need to practice law.

As things stand now, Gutierrez is one of the most harried Kindred in the city. He is conducting a booming legal business with Chicago's Kindred and ghouls as his primary clientele. His fortunes have increased remarkably since his Embrace, but one thing is still bothering Gutierrez: if he acknowledges his death, his license to practice law becomes unusable. On the other hand, his family has been trying to get him to spend time with them (mostly during the daylight hours), and while it's hardly a stretch to say that he's busy working, his family is growing suspicious. They've already asked him if he's having a problem with drugs, and they're not above snooping to find out what's keeping him from participating in the family the way he used to. Thus far, he's done an effective job of holding them off, but he knows he's going to have to do something, because other members of the Ordo Dracul are beginning to notice Gutierrez's family, and he can't stand the idea that he could be responsible for the harm of any member of his family.

Gutierrez is a Hispanic man with a neatly trimmed Vandyke. While he often tries to pass himself off as gracious and friendly, his smile never extends to his eyes, which always seem a little cold. Gutierrez most commonly dresses toward the formal end of the spectrum, sporting wool slacks, white shirts and ties on most nights.

Lucy Armstrong

Clan: Mekhet
Covenant: Invictus
Embrace: 1994
Apparent Age: 23
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3 , Manipulation 3 , Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 1, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Drive 1, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 5
Merits: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Herd 3, Resources 3
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Pride
Health: 7
Initiative:
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae/turn: 10/1)
Disciplines: Auspex 3, Obfuscate 1

Behind the beautiful mask presented by Lucy Armstrong is the soul of an adder. When she was among the living, she was a manipulator and a nascent politician from a patrician North Shore family. Now that she's been sucked into the world of Kindred politics, she has dedicated herself to the covenant that she feels will take her farthest and, ultimately, grant her the greatest power: the Invictus.



Armstrong is pleasant and, seemingly, forthright, but primarily as a means to see what she can get from those around her. Kindred meeting her may get the impression that she's too good, too virtuous, too sweet to be true — and they're perfectly correct. She was duplicitous even before her Embrace, but the Mekhet Vitae has only enhanced her ability (and willingness) to manipulate, lie and connive.

To the degree that she has such a thing, her patron and mentor is Norris, the Prince's spy. In exchange for his protection, Armstrong does what she can to further his aims and make him look good. Armstrong pulls a hackneyed but effective dumb blonde routine to get the information and complicity she wants, and she has suckered many a Kindred into compromising positions in the name of expediting her advancement through the ranks. While she plays dumb well, she is anything but. She always expected to attain a high position of some sort while she was alive. Now that her breathing days are behind her, she still expects to attain high position, just through different means and for a much longer period. All that's changed is who gets to foot the bill for her elevation. As it stands now, she's happy to saddle any non-Invictus vampire with that bill. By and large, she avoids backstabbing other members of the First Estate; with eternity stretching out ahead of her, she doesn't want to make enemies within the covenant too quickly.

If Armstrong has one major obstacle standing between her and quick promotion, it's her family. She was a ghoul for several months before her Embrace, and her mother began getting suspicious about the late hours Armstrong was keeping. After her death, her mother began investigating the places Lucy frequented and the people she was seen with. While the façade would have been more than enough to satisfy a casual viewer, Armstrong's mother was a pampered housewife whose ample free time was spent dabbling in the occult. Her superstitious scrutiny was almost enough to pierce the Masquerade. Only the fact that two disappearances from the same family would have brought unnecessary trouble kept the Prince from dispatching Kindred to kill her.

Armstrong's mother has made it her fundamental goal to discover the truth about her daughter's death, and she has money and a modicum of political clout to throw into her investigation.

Lucy Armstrong strongly (and correctly) suspects that her mother's persistent investigations are retarding her advancement. She's intent on rectifying that, but she's not yet willing to go against Maxwell's orders and kill her mother. As her frustration — and her mother's obsession — grows, however, she may reconsider her decision.

Embarrassing Relatives

The players are confronted on a lonely street one night by a mage wielding enough power to hold his own against the coterie. He claims not to want conflict, and that he simply needs to find out one thing. He shows them a picture of Lucy Armstrong (from her living days) and asks if they've seen her. Given the high profile Armstrong keeps at Elysium, it would be hard not to. If they lie, the mage will sense it. Telling the truth, on the other hand, is a breach of the Masquerade (though only technically, as mages are hardly unaware of the Kindred).

The mage is working for Lucy Armstrong's mother, Christine. Through her dabbling and playing out hunches, she has stumbled on a mage who's happy to take the money she wants to pay him. In return, all he has to do is find out what happened to Lucy. However this encounter turns out, it's likely that Christine Armstrong is going to learn that her daughter is a vampire, and the characters will be the ones who provided her with that knowledge.

Family History

Lucy's father was a wealthy North Shore attorney and nascent politician, and her mother was a socialite and New Age devotee. It made for an odd, but high-pressure, adolescence. Lucy felt that she was being groomed to be a partner in her father's company even at the age of 16. Not coincidentally, that was her age at the time of her first eating disorder as well.

For the most part, Armstrong had her father wrapped around her little finger. She had the "Daddy's little girl" act down perfectly. She knew how much she could get away with and how much was going too far, and she knew how to work around her mother when she had to.

Armstrong wasn't just a manipulator, however. She never backed away from taking the bull by the horns and doing what it took to put herself on top — something that surprised many of her teachers and peers.

Everything about her adolescence was aimed at making sure Armstrong was a power-player the moment she graduated high school. She turned down several top universities to accept a scholarship at the most prestigious of all: Harvard.

From undergrad, she embarked on a graduate program at the University of Chicago Law School, and it was there, on the grounds of the most Gothic campus in America, that she was ushered into her Requiem. Her sire had not intended to kill her. He had simply wanted to feed from a pretty vessel that night, but he was hungrier than he realized and drank her dry.

Still, after taking responsibility for her Embrace, he did what he could to set her up well. His political fortunes went south shortly thereafter, and he disappeared from Chicago. She, on the other hand, has become a favorite lapdog of Invictus partisans.

Armstrong is a very pretty, petite woman with long, blonde hair and big blue eyes. She was Embraced at the age of 23 and still retains the clear, if pale, translucent skin of adolescence. She hides her pallor with a great Florida tan that she has airbrushed on once a week. Armstrong's fashion sense combines sorority girl sensibilities with business casual. She is partial to fuzzy pink sweaters.

Vin Mariani

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Belial's Brood (formerly Lancea Sanctum)
Embrace: 1992
Apparent Age: 26
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4 , Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven: Security 4, Haven: Size 1
Willpower: 7
Humanity: 2 (Delusional Obsession: 2, Irrationality: 4)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Pride
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Dominate 2, Theban Sorcery 1
Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge (1), Vitae Reliquary (1)

A casual observer would suspect that Vin Mariani was a serious Kindred, burdened unduly by the Requiem and, on the whole, very much a conformist. One would also likely assume him to be a typical smarmy game-playing Invictus power-broker. His wheeler-dealer attitude combined with shortening his name from Vincenzo to the trendier "Vin" all add up in such a way that other Kindred think they can pigeonhole him within a minute of meeting him. That's what Mariani *wants* other Kindred to do, because if they knew that he was actually looking for immense power through brokering mortal souls to the demon Falisterion, even the dogmatists of the Lancea Sanctum would be screaming for his destruction.

But they don't know. And he doesn't make an issue of it. He doesn't feel the need to wear his spiritual beliefs on his sleeve, in part because that's a pretty damned good way to find Final Death. Instead, he plays the part of the high Humanity vampire, never wanting to kill anyone or even wanting to feed excessively from one mortal. He masquerades as one of those un-predatory predators that the Lancea Sanctum *revile*. All the while, he drops seemingly harmless throwaway comments about demons, devils and Hell, just to see who ignores them, whose eyes narrow and whose ears prick up, interested. If he gets hostile or suspicious responses, he drops the topic entirely and plays up his seemingly high Humanity again. If they seem curious, he steers the conversation in the direction of diabolism.

Mariani had only just begun sneering at God and berating himself for his own gullible nature when he was Embraced for his faith. It was the universe at its most ironic, as far as Mariani was concerned. Still, while he didn't find much of value in the Sanctified theology, he did appreciate having guides to help him in his examination of religion's dark underbelly. It made him curious about the world. If there were really such things as vampires, why not demons too?

And, as if the universe heard his thoughts, Mariani soon had his chance to fall in with demons. And he did, enthusiastically.



Mariani is by no means the only member of Belial's Brood in Chicago. On the contrary, he is only the most active of the demon's servants. If the Brood does something major in Chicago — deconsecrates a church for ritual use, for example, or makes a child sacrifice, it's likely Mariani who's doing the work. Those he reports to prefer to stay as deep in the shadows as possible.

For expediency's sake, Mariani expends some small amount of effort to stay connected to the Lancea Sanctum (lest he be mistaken for one of the unbound), but no more than absolutely necessary.

As members of Belial's Brood go, Mariani is unusually subtle and patient. The crazy, in-your-face Masquerade breaches of some others have never made sense to him. If they really want to perform Belial's will on Earth, the least they can do is plan it out so as to avoid complete and utter failure. Mariani is quite sure that he could do more if he could find just a few more converts to the Brood, but he doesn't want to bring in idiots who will fuck up his plans, so he's being very exclusive in his recruiting.

Dance With the Devil

Mariani grew up in Boston's historical, and largely Italian, North End. His parents owned a restaurant that he worked at through his adolescence in order to pay for his college. Mariani had what some might call a mystical disposition, with a tendency to dwell on subjects that others found sacred or mysterious, not the least of which were spirituality and death.

Once done with his undergraduate degree, Mariani entered the seminary and became a priest. Working for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the arm of the Catholic Church originally known as the Inquisition), Mariani saw the Church dabble in a wide range of affairs that Mariani found questionable, not the least of which was the blatant manipulation of Catholic politicians by the Vatican, and the establishment of a school for exorcists.

Even as he was questioning the Church and its political strategies, Mariani was being watched by Sanctified Kindred.

The night Mariani was Embraced was the night he lost his faith in God (or at least God as he had previously imagined Him) — ironic since he was chosen for the Embrace *because* of his faith.

Even as his sire schooled him in the alternative theology of the Lancea Sanctum, Mariani found it insufficiently heretical. Its cosmology and perspective were all suspect in his mind because of its similarity to the faith he'd just renounced.

He continued his half-hearted affiliation with the Sanctified mostly out of convenience, a comfortable situation to relax in until he found something that fit him better. It didn't take long.

He met his first real Belial vampire seemingly by accident — seemingly, of course, because it wasn't accidental at all. The topic of demons came up, and Mariani was just a bit too eager to learn more. So he was told to go to a certain used bookshop and ask for a copy of *Liber B.L.I.L.*, the "fundamental" text on Kindred demonolatry, from the locked case behind the register.

While reading it, the scales suddenly fell from his eyes. He understood that his Damnation was a warrant for his own freedom. Mariani had seen a lot of strange things, both before and after his Embrace, and *Liber B.L.I.L.* provided him with a context to link those odd phenomena together. The book also told of the kind of power a vampire could accrue through the worship of Belial, and trumped anything the Lancea Sanctum offered. The power of the Kindred wasn't meant to stay hidden from humankind — not forever!

Since becoming a part of Belial's Brood, Mariani has heard tales of Kindred gaining all manner of demonic investments from Belial, the better with which to carry out the Dark Work. *Liber B.L.I.L.* doesn't stipulate what's necessary to gain those investments, but Mariani is already looking for other books and doing what he can, in his small way, to spread Belial's influence.

Mariani is an attractive man of Italian descent. He dresses formally and well. It is his strongly held belief that one does not need to dress like a barbarian or a Hollywood villain to worship demons, and Mariani takes a great deal of satisfaction in wearing high-quality suits most of the time.

Ogilvie

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Circle of the Crone
Embrace: 1884
Apparent Age: 62
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Science 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 5
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Language (Latin) 2, Language (Greek) 3, Contacts 3, Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone 3
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Health: 8 or 10 with Resilience
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Blood Potency: 4
Disciplines: Crúac 4, Protean 3, Resilience 2, Vigor 2
Vitae/ per Turn: 13/2



Ogilvie is a bit of a mystery, even among the secretive Acolytes and even among the taciturn Gangrel. Chicago's Kindred are pretty sure that "Ogilvie" is his last name, not his first, but he's never said one way or the other.

A sour-faced Crúac scholar who can often be found near one library or another, Ogilvie is excessively demanding about recompense when it comes to teaching his rituals — excessively demanding by *Kindred* standards, so trying to learn from this guy is probably *really* not worth it. Though, unfortunately, he's one of the few who definitely knows both the Rite of the Crossroads and the Rite of the Circle Path. The last three Kindred who tried to get him to teach them got sent on quests so dangerous (and were so poorly prepared for them by their "mentor") that two died and one went crazy.

There's a reason he has no real "allies."

There's one thing that pries Ogilvie out of his bookish reverie, and that's fresh blood. For some reason, Ogilvie seems to fucking *hate* neonates. It's not an unreasoning hate, meaning he won't risk *too* much to torment them. On the other hand, "neonate" could well be defined as "those who can be tormented without much risk."

Ogilvie sneers at the city's other Kindred, with the exceptions of Rowen, Norris, Solomon and Maxwell — the Prince especially can send Ogilvie scuttling in fear with just a look. There's some old business there that only the two of them know (and perhaps a certain Cicero pimp, if Old John survived . . .). That's protected Persephone, and she doesn't even know it.

But any other neonates who enter his sphere can expect to be bullied, threatened, pointlessly harassed and extorted without pity.

Ogilvie?

Though inventive Storytellers will surely find myriad uses for him, Ogilvie is present for one main reason: to play the part of a real asshole vampire who is *not* a part of any other plot in the book. This means he can mistreat newbie characters in one session, fade away for a few, make a jerk of himself again a few more times as a side note in other plots and then, when the characters are really stymied with a main plot, the Storyteller can reveal a vulnerability and give them a chance to get some sweet payback on the nasty old bastard. All without derailing any other plot in the book.

Storytellers can and should take this kind of control over all the characters in this book, but whereas most of the other characters have the advantage of coming into your stories with implied relationships and schemes of their own, Ogilvie is a blank slate. Players can't know what to expect from him. That's his purpose.

Zhoniqua Jefferson

Clan: Gangrel
Covenant: Carthian Movement
Embrace: 1983
Apparent Age: 28
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Medicine 1, Investigation 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Common Sense, Danger Sense, Resources 2
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8
Initiative: 8
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae/turn: 11/1)
Disciplines: Protean 4, Resilience 2, Vigor 4

Stubborn, determined and unflinching, Zhoniqua Jefferson is one of the more controversial Kindred in Chicago — a remarkable feat for a Kindred so recently Embraced. She's almost too controversial for the Carthians, which speaks volumes, but they like what she's done in the South Side enough that they won't be dropping her from their roster any time soon.

Making a name for herself wasn't Jefferson's goal when she started going after pimps — revenge was. When she'd bled her old pimp dry, she went after other pimps. She had her own list of targets: any pimp who wouldn't let his girls use condoms, who got his girls



hooked on drugs to control them or who hit his girls went to the top of her list. She never worried about killing them. For what they did, she felt they deserved it. She started organizing hookers throughout the South Side, creating a network of sex workers that hookers and dancers could turn to when confronted with malicious pimps, abusive Johns or other predators — including other Kindred.

This hasn't sat well with either the Lancea Sanctum or the Invictus, both of whom see prostitutes as fast food. The Carthian Movement has long had the advantage in the South Side, but it was always an implicit arrangement. One of the many side effects of Jefferson's crusade was to harden the previously accepted boundaries, as both the Carthians and the Invictus fortified their respective fronts. Once boundaries are explicitly acknowledged, however, they can be changed, and Prince Maxwell is under pressure from many of the Sanctified as well as many of his own covenant to punish the Carthians' effrontery by messing with the feeding grounds of individual Carthians.

Regardless of covenant affiliation, Jefferson is none too thrilled with other Kindred coming down into her South Side neighborhoods to feed. This holds especially true if they look like members of the First Estate, Ordo Dracul or the Sanctified. Unbound she doesn't mind that much as they seem to understand her, and she considers several members of the Carthian Movement to be reliable allies.

Jefferson's most dependable ally, and her primary connection to Kindred "society" is Duce Carter, whom she respects and occasionally works with. His work and hers occasionally overlap; both are trying to organize their respective constituents, they just have different concepts of how to make the best use of those groups. For her part, Jefferson would like to see Carter become the next Carthian Prefect, but she fears that would just put him in line for assassination by "those mean-ass Invictus mother fuckers." Jefferson has never been to Elysium and has no intention of ever going. If she did go, she would be surprised (and really pissed off) to discover that her own sire is none other than Garret McLean, one of the ranking members of the Invictus in the city.

Jefferson isn't especially fond of the Carthian doctrine, but she *hates* Kindred who strike her as arrogant or racist, which includes pretty much all of the Invictus, the Ordo Dracul and the Lancea Sanctum, and she figures she can do more against them as a Carthian than as one of the unbound. She also likes the "common guy" feel of the Carthians.

Since her Embrace, Jefferson finds that she likes to get out of the city from time to time. On those occasions, she occasionally meets up with other Gangrel in the forest preserves. It's a weird thing for her, particularly since she didn't leave the South Side at all, *ever*, before her Embrace. Now, despite the horror stories the other Gangrel tell of werewolves and other weird shit, she finds herself wondering what it might be like to leave the city entirely.

Requiem for the Street

It was a hard life, turning tricks to put food on the table and junk in her veins, but Zhoniqua Jefferson had become relatively adept at it by the time of her Embrace at the age of 28. Her sire, a particularly old and powerful Gangrel (and one whose face she would be amazed to see at Elysium, were she ever to go), Embraced her to see if one curse might counteract another. The results speak for themselves.

No longer needing to buy food or seek traditional shelter, and replacing her addiction to heroin with an addiction to blood, Jefferson's existence actually changed for the better after her Embrace. She certainly became more capable of defending herself and determining her own fate.

Now instead of giving money she's earned to pimps who do nothing, she feeds on the pimps and takes their girls as her own. Furthermore, she guards the women who work for her with a remarkable ferocity; treating one of Jefferson's girls bad is a fast train to bleed-out. She takes a much smaller percentage of her girl's take than any of the South Side's male pimps, and she insists that her girls use protection and stay off drugs. Since Jefferson has started moving in on prostitution operations in the South Side, there have been reports of a big, black dog that seems to patrol the areas around the hooker motels; that's Jefferson in her wolf form, and she's done a remarkable job of changing the way prostitution is conducted on the South Side. In her one-Kindred crusade, Jefferson is developing both a following among prostitutes and an increasing number of pimps who want nothing more than to see her dead. Little do they know they already have.

At this point, Jefferson has taken on as many working girls as she has time to protect. She would like to

find another Kindred, and preferably a woman, to help her continue her pimp-retirement campaign, but thus far she hasn't found anyone she trusts enough to turn part of her business over to.

Although she's not been Kindred for long, Jefferson has spent her nights in near-constant conflict. She's been shot so many times that there would be nothing left of her if she hadn't healed the damage. While she's not crazy about the violence that seems to follow her everywhere, it's benefited her in that she's been forced to learn quickly how to bend the power of her Vitae to her will. Though she never did well in school, she's taken to the Requiem remarkably well.

Jefferson's biggest disadvantage in her Requiem is that she is definitely not a team player. Given that she's a member of the Carthians, that's a bigger issue than it would be if she were associated with another, less organized, covenant. So far she's been helpful enough to the overall Carthian goal that her stubbornness has been overlooked.

Jefferson has pretty features, but, on the whole, she is not an attractive woman. She would be much more attractive were she to wear any other expression but one of resolute fatigue. She is a fighter and has had to be a fighter for years. When she was turning tricks, Jefferson would occasionally smile to attract potential clients, but she doesn't need to do that any more. Jefferson's sartorial habits have also changed now that she's no longer a hooker. The clothes she wears now she picks for durability instead of sex appeal, and she hasn't worn high heels since the night of her Embrace, trading them in for heavy workman's boots instead.

Bitch Kills Pig, News at 11:00

The Invictus doesn't like Zhoniqua Jefferson. Not only has she made it clear through every channel she has access to that *she* doesn't like *the Invictus*, but she's messing with the covenant's power structure. Prince Maxwell in particular hates her because she's far too young to be causing him this much trouble. Much of the South Side is Carthian territory, but the fact remains that she's interfering with some of the Invictus' revenue streams by restructuring the South Side's prostitution industry. Though the First Estate has tried to move police against her, she's become a strange folk hero, and many of the police on the South Side respect what Jefferson has done for the hookers working down there. Furthermore, Invictus influence in the South Side isn't what it is in the Loop and on the North Side.

The last Invictus cat's-paw to go after Jefferson was a cop who got torn apart by a huge black dog of some sort in an alley as his partner watched helplessly. While Jefferson isn't known for keeping animals, cops get a lot of exercise jumping to conclusions when one of their own has died. Because the dead cop was on a crusade against her when he died, they want to blame Jefferson for the dead officer even though they don't have any evidence to do so and many of them respect what she's done for the hookers.

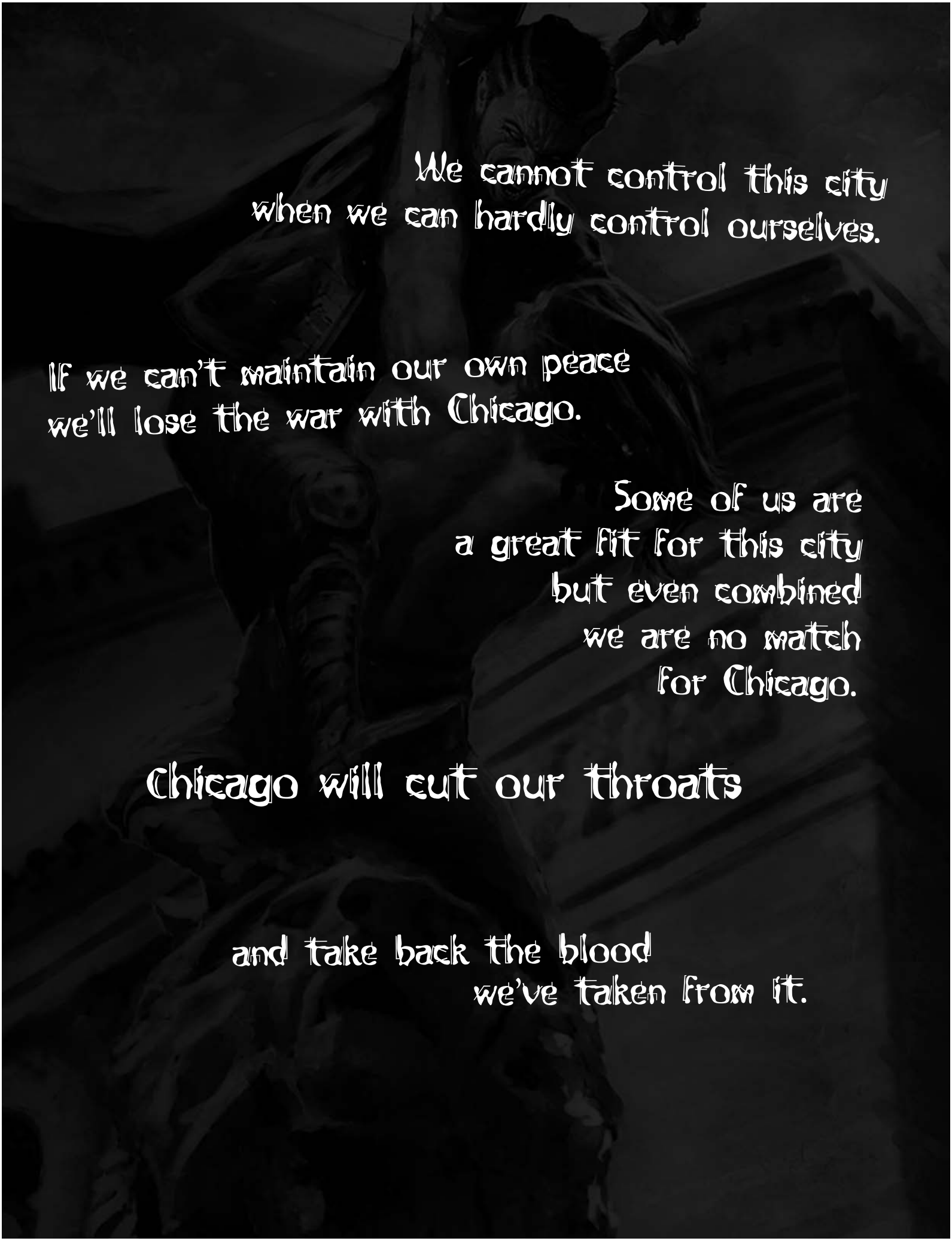
As it stands now, the Invictus is pushing cops to come down hard on Jefferson and anyone associated with her. The Carthians, particularly Duce Carter, are doing what they can to repel the First Estate, but they're not used to the Invictus pushing this hard into their area, and they can't talk sense into Jefferson.

And the Invictus isn't doing half of what it could because the Seneschal is quietly countermanding the Prince's will and mitigating the Invictus' efforts against Jefferson. The Seneschal can't keep doing that forever, though, or the Prince will catch him. Garret McLean has yet to tell Maxwell that he's Jefferson's sire, and he won't if given the opportunity to avoid doing so. But she's making it hard on him.

If Maxwell and Jefferson have their way, it could lead to all-out war between the Invictus and the Carthian Movement, but neither one is likely to blink. The characters, whether Invictus, Carthian, unbound or other, have their work cut out for them.






We cannot control this city
when we can hardly control ourselves.
If we can't maintain our own peace
we'll lose the war with Chicago.
Some of us are
a great fit for this city
but even combined
we are no match
for Chicago.
Chicago will cut our throats
and take back the blood
we've taken from it.

Hell Calling

Hell has been described as a pocket edition of Chicago

—Ashley Montagu, "The American Way Of Life," 1967

Introduction

The following chapter describes a story set in Chicago that Storytellers can use to bring all the myriad Vampire elements of this book — history, geography, characters — together in one tale. If there's any likelihood of your going through this scenario as a player, don't read this chapter or you'll ruin all the creepy surprises and intrigue. The fun you undermine will be your own. Consider yourself warned.

The story begins with a series of events that follow logically from the events outlined in the **Vampire** sections of this book. What starts out as a major offensive by the unhinged vampires of Belial's Brood catalyzes something much larger that destabilizes Chicago's Kindred population. This initial account describes what happens if the characters don't participate. The balance of the chapter is a series of vignettes in which the characters play key roles in altering the trajectory of the narrative. Taken as a whole, these vignettes compose the whole story told in this chapter. This differs from some stories, which rely on key locations or events to unfold, but what matters in a Storytelling game is what the characters do to take control and drive the story. It's their story.

The vignettes we present to you later in the chapter, therefore, are those key points where the characters can intervene and shape events. The point of this chapter is not to put the characters on rails and push them through the haunted house. On the contrary, this chapter — and all Chicago — is a haunted house through which the characters propel themselves, taking whatever course of action they see fit. Extending the metaphor, then, it's the Storyteller's goal to mediate between the chapter and the players, fleshing things out where needed, giving the characters the freedom they need to choose their own fate and revealing bits of the haunted house to the characters at appropriate moments, so they have at least a vague understanding of which Hall of Dread or Chamber of Horrors they're getting themselves into.

This chapter presents the crucial moments of the story bit-by-bit, focusing on the hinging scenes where the characters have the greatest opportunity to intervene, take action and alter the default narrative.

Storytellers can use this story with characters of any level of experience. Less-powerful characters can interfere with the antagonists' plans simply by learning about them and surviving long enough to inform the Prince or other Kindred authority. More experienced characters have the option of preventing the Brood's mayhem by placing themselves in the fray more directly.

The Dark To

The following is an account of how events will unfold if the characters aren't around to intervene and take action against Belial's Brood. It's a fairly ugly progression of events that leads to a Kindred tragedy. Even if the characters *do* intervene, they may still fail and the tragedy may come to pass anyway,

or they may mitigate the full damage caused by Belial's Brood, but the chances are that, at the very least, the characters' efforts keep events from going quite so far awry as they do in this version.

The Devil's Own

Over the course of a year, about 10 new Kindred arrive in Chicago. Most are Mekhet and Daeva, but a handful are from other clans as well. While this is more new Kindred than Chicago has seen in a long time, it's not entirely beyond the pale. Travel is dangerous for Kindred, but there are always those who think their Requiems will be better elsewhere. Some Chicago Kindred attribute this influx to Prince Maxwell's Tranquility.

Some of these new Kindred are already affiliated with covenants; other Kindred are unbound. With the exception of the Lancea Sanctum, most of the covenants in Chicago are pleased to get new members. (For their part, the Sanctified are concerned about possible heresies that their new members might bring with them.)

A few subtle warnings manifest over the subsequent months, but most Kindred, too involved with their own intrigues and affairs, fail to note the pattern forming: all of the new Kindred remain a little standoffish from their covenants and form two coteries of their own. They interact with their own covenants as little as they can get away with, but that, in itself, is too common to be considered odd. Violent crime, particularly that with a Satanic twist, takes a dramatic upturn, but that, in itself, is hardly noteworthy for Chicago, which already has one of the country's highest murder rates.

Though the city's new Kindred hide it well, most of them are members of Belial's Brood. Though these infernalists are often gung-ho psychopaths, these cells were chosen for their subtlety and their ability to pass for normal Kindred. Those Kindred on the lookout for cackling maniacs see nothing alarming.

The goal of these infernalists is to cause a major breach of the Masquerade — something better than just one night's hellish revelry. It is their belief that they are the agents of Hell on Earth and that it is their right to horrify, torment and test mortals to weed out the weak, challenge the noble and lay low the arrogant. And if these infernalists get to blow shit up in the process, all the better.

These Brood members are under the impression that their masters will reward them with demonic investments — the twisted powers of Hell granted by their demonic masters — if these Brood members achieve their goal in Chicago. This may be a ruse used by crafty elder infernalists to motivate stupid young Kindred into nigh-suicidal maneuvers, or it could be the truth and Belial's demonic agents are willing and able to give noteworthy Kindred gifts of infernal power in exchange for their services. Again, this is as true as the Storyteller needs it to be.

The infernalists have chosen Chicago because they consider the cautious co-existence of Kindred and mortals to be a betrayal of the vampiric *raison d'être*. Being a major city, and the so-called American heartland, Chicago is a perfect target for Belial's Brood. They detest Prince Maxwell's Tranquility and hope to bring such weakness and cowardice to an end. By taking the torch to Chicago, Belial's Brood can demonstrate the horrible might of Hell not only over humankind — but over mages and werewolves as well. And if that brings about the Brood members' own end, then so be it. They, at least, were true to their purpose on Earth.

The Brood's first order of business is to find out who's who in Chicago's power structure (and which heretic is responsible for the Tranquility). The positions the Brood is concerned about are the Prince and the Prince's main advisors. In this case, the Brood members figure out, among other things, that Norris is Maxwell's spymaster, and they target him for destruction.

Second on their list is figuring out what Chicago's Kindred politics are like: who's on top, who shouldn't be, who's on the bottom and hating it and who the malcontents are in between. The Brood trains its members in the arts of sowing discord. By dividing, they hope to conquer. Any petty hatred, resentment, bigotry or envy that they can inflame without exposing themselves, they do. In Chicago, this means setting the Carthians and the Invictus against each other, amplifying the conflict between Rowen and Bella Dravnzie in the Circle of the Crone, fanning the conflict between Solomon Birch and Prince Maxwell and similar acts of *realpolitik*.

This story makes use of one of the bigger schisms in the city: the antagonism and bad blood that lingers between the Carthians and the Invictus.

The Brood members spread rumors about a powerful Carthian operative who's coming to the city to give Walt Barowski some important information and, possibly, a means of "dealing with" Prince Maxwell. Over the course of a few weeks, most of Chicago's Kindred have heard this rumor, including Norris and Maxwell. Having heard it through the grapevine, the Carthians themselves happily spread this rumor. Not only do the neonates believe it, but they *want* it to be true. Elder members of the covenant know it's not true. Members of Belial's Brood have discreetly communicated just enough to certain Carthian ancillae that they understand a trap is being set for Norris.

The members of the Brood don't set down this bait ham-handedly, but subtly, so that Norris thinks he's discovered something valuable. Norris takes the Brood's bait without much hesitation. He's a little arrogant, so it's not that difficult to arrange. He's come to feel that he knows who the dangerous Kindred are in the city are and how each is likely to challenge him. In truth, he's gotten so comfortable with the relative stability of the Prince's Tranquility that Norris may have forgotten what the Requiem is like in less-orderly cities. It's clear that he wants something that will effectively tar the Carthians, and that's what the Brood's disinformation provides him. He arrives, expecting to see a Carthian *agent provocateur*. What he finds instead is two coteries of Belial's Brood waiting for him. While Norris is good, he's a spy and not a fighter. He plays



it out as long as possible, but to no avail. One of their members diablerizes him within the hour. The Carthian Myrmidon, using the Discipline power of Twilight Projection, sees everything and informs Walt Barowski, who couldn't be happier, despite the waves he knows this is going to create.

For his part, Prince Maxwell is at least somewhat dependent on Norris to provide him with intelligence about Chicago's Kindred, including their sundry conspiracies and schemes. The Prince is used to Norris disappearing for a night or two, but after a week, it's clear that something is wrong. Until Norris' hoped-for return, Loki is promoted from the position of Hound and made interim spymaster.

The Carthians, for their part, have realized what's going on. Lillian Vanderpool not only knows who all the members of Belial's Brood are, she also knows the whereabouts of their havens and has an inkling of their plans for Chicago. She tells Walt Barowski what she knows and offers to inform the Prince. Barowski asks her not to. For his part, he'd rather give Belial's Brood free rein for a while longer and see if they rid the Carthians of any more of the Movement's oppressors.

In Norris' absence, Barowski instructs the Carthians to be a little more aggressive in their influence wars against the Invictus to take advantage of the spymaster's absence and the Prince's uncertainty. Barowski himself is more solicitous toward both Rowen and Bella Dravnzie as he tries to cement an alliance between his covenant and theirs as a contingency for when the shit hits the fan.

Between the influence war being waged by the Carthians and information provided by Loki, Prince Maxwell comes to the conclusion that the Carthians, in preparation for a coup attempt, are behind Norris' disappearance. The Prince has all of his informants watching members of the Carthian Movement and waiting for them to slip up so he can lower the boom. Carthians the city over start to feel like somebody's watching them, and a creeping sense of paranoia falls across the city's Carthians.

Meanwhile, "those suspicious new Kindred" (that is, the members of Belial's Brood) are forgotten entirely. While the Carthians have been smeared by a whisper campaign, the infernalists have the run of the city. They take advantage of this by planning a Hell-raising — an orgy of violence dedicated to breaching the Masquerade for their lord Belial — at the University of Chicago.

The members of Belial's Brood aren't subtle. They don't take any particular clever steps to hide their operations, but neither do they have to. The Prince and his covenant are more than happy to jump to conclusions and leave the Brood to its own plotting.

At the University of Chicago, the Hell-raising begins. Several students at the Theological Seminary are dragged from their dorms and murdered, their blood drunk in front of other students, all while the members of Belial's Brood proclaim the coming of Belial, the superiority of Kindred and the fragility and pointlessness of mortal life. Readings from Satanic texts accompany the screams of the dying students. Several members of the university police arrive, but the Brood vampires murder them just as easily. The infernalists continue their orgy of violence. They are waiting for the media to arrive.

The Hell-raising is interrupted by the appearance of a cabal of mortals, possibly mages, wielding extraordinary powers. These powerful mortals put up enough resistance to force the vampires off the campus, but the mortals don't give chase.

The members of Belial's Brood continue their rampage only a few more minutes, however, as many members of the Carthian Movement, alerted by their Myrmidon, attack in a bid to clear their name. Among the Carthians is Zhoniqua Jefferson, one of the Invictus' favorite targets. She destroys several of the infernalists herself before the remainder scatter, but she's seen doing it by a small crowd of spectators, many of whom capture the event on video cameras (as much as possible given Kindred's strange effect on cameras).

For her audacity, Prince Maxwell has Garret McLean bring Jefferson in. The Prince makes her into one of his blood-starved thralls as her personal punishment for breaching the Masquerade and as punishment for the Carthian Movement (whom he suspects of collaborating with Belial's Brood) in general.

That's a step too far for the Carthians, especially Walt Barowski. They establish a loose alliance with the Circle of the Crone and launch a series of offensives against the Prince, the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum. The city's fragile détente broken, and a war between covenants breaks out, staining Chicago's nights a rich and sticky crimson. For the Carthians, the war is a revolution against the injustices of the Invictus oppressor. For the Invictus, the war is a crusade against chaos. Neither side will back down, and the biggest loser stands to be the mortals of Chicago.

The Brood

Most Kindred have adopted a model of vampirism that gives their type a human origin. Longinus was once a mortal soldier, likewise Dracula was a warrior of his own people. Both were cursed to suffer the pangs of blood-hunger and the madness of the Beast, but both were, at heart, mortals somehow changed.

The Kindred of Belial's Brood, or at least of this large coterie, are quite certain that the first vampires were not mortal at all, but demons who slipped free of their imprisonment in Hell or some Stygian underworld and came — like locusts, beetles and serpents once did — as a plague on the mortal realm. It is the Brood's belief that Kindred were given the dark hungers of the Beast precisely because the Kindred are *meant* to give into them. Members of Belial's Brood insist that one does not find the meaning of one's existence by *denying* one's most basic urges, but by giving in to them. If a human denied the pangs of hunger, he would die. If humans denied the lust of their loins, the species would die out. Likewise, if the Kindred ceased to bedevil humankind, then humankind would grow frail and more pathetic than it already is. The Devil may be evil, but he knows his job and performs it well.

Consequently, it is the Brood's unholy duty to terrify and bedevil humankind as much as possible. Carnage and mayhem in the name of the Brood's demonic lord is the Brood members' *raison d'être*, their one goal for the Requiem — when they reach a critical mass in an area, things happen. Very bad things. Small towns are wiped out in the space of a night. Blighted neighborhoods are transformed into temples of carnage and set ablaze, all to the delight of Belial's Brood.

As a general (but by no means absolute) rule, these infernal Kindred target mortals for the Brood's bloody revels. Brood members may try to recruit disenfranchised Kindred into the Brood's ranks, but by the Brood's reasoning, it makes more sense to pull other vampires to the side of Belial, not alienate or destroy them. As Brood members see it, all Kindred are ultimately working for the same master, whether they acknowledge it or not. Some Kindred secretly agree. Some grow to hate or resent mortals and *like* the idea of shaking them up a bit. While these Kindred may not *join* Belial's Brood, such Kindred may aid the Brood in small ways that ultimately furthers the Brood's agenda.

Fortunately for the Kindred, more rational minds typically prevail. Belial's Brood isn't satisfied with mere *breaches* of the Masquerade, Brood members want to bring down the whole charade altogether and let the mewling mortal masses know their true place in the food chain.

If Belial's Brood had its way, of course, it would mean the end of Kindred society, if not of the Kindred themselves. Even the grandest Prince would be forced to live in tunnels and sewers to avoid being hunted down by mortals with flame-throwers and phosphorous rounds.

And so Kindred of all *legitimate* covenants do what they can to stamp out the Brood wherever Brood members appear.

Chicago's Kindred have historically hunted down members of Belial's Brood with swift zeal. Elders, in particular, may remember the last time something called Belial's Brood came to congregate in Chicago, back in 1871, and the blaze that followed in their wake. Belial's Brood members, strangely, is not always responsible for the hellish chaos that follows in their wake, but the chaos follows all the same.

And now that same dark siren song seems to be calling the Brood back to Chicago again . . . .

Burn, Belial

This particular cult of Belial's Brood may be motivated into hyperactivity by the flaming face that has come to them in the night. Several of these Brood vampires have heard the voice of the Fire — the spirit of the Great Chicago Fire — and a few have even seen it in action. The acts of the Brood have inadvertently created vital resonance and fed the Fire. When this story opens, the cult and the spirit are just solidifying their relationship. The Brood will feed the Fire, which they consider to be a demon in service of Belial, and in exchange the Fire will pass the burning corpses of their Beasts on to Belial in Hell. The consummation of their relationship is the Hell-raising, the New Chicago Fire brought about by these immortal madmen and their lying god.

Spirit-savvy characters, such as werewolves and mages, may assume that the vampires of this Belial's Brood cult are being manipulated by Numina, but that is not the true root of the Brood's motivation. Rather, the Brood is acting out of faith — they believe the Fire is a servant of Belial, even if it doesn't know that itself. The Fire is their co-conspirator, not their puppet-master.

Creating the Brood

The Storyteller should define the traits of these hellish vampires based on the power levels of the players' characters. There are two Belial's Broods coteries, comprising a total of 10 Kindred, in this story. One example of a Belial's Brood member is given in this book (see "Vin Mariani," p. 147); the other nine can be as lethal (or as weak) as the Storyteller needs them to be. The Belial's Brood Fanatic Antagonist on p. 228 of **Vampire: The Requiem** is a good place to start when devising other Brood members.

One of the Brood coteries should be roughly on par with the characters' power levels; the other should be a little more powerful. One way to scale the traits of the Belial's Brood vampires is to measure the total experience points the players' characters have received and then grant the same amount to the Brood vampires of the lesser coterie. To determine the power level of the other coterie, then, you can spend a sum of experience points based on the chart on p. 92 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.

Another way of scaling the Brood coteries is to determine how many dots of Disciplines the players' characters have altogether (the sum of the Discipline dots of all members of the coterie) and then make sure that the first Brood coterie has the same number of Discipline dots and the second coterie has five to eight *more* dots of Disciplines spread across its total collection of members.

Try adjusting the number of Belial's Brood vampires "in play" during this story, especially if you can imagine the cult's membership waxing or waning in response to the actions of the characters. Perhaps the weaker Brood coterie simply has fewer members than the characters' coterie, while the stronger Brood coterie has more. Maybe the Brood manages to recruit more vampires from the Kindred of Chicago, or maybe the Brood Embraces local mortals to create more, weaker vampires to replace those destroyed or even converted by the characters throughout the story.

Consider the possibility of making one or more of the Brood vampires part of a potent bloodline. These bizarre and frightening outsiders might be a good way to import an exotic or mysterious bloodline from **Bloodlines: The Hidden** or **Bloodlines: The Legendary**, without finding a niche for the lineage in Chicago's history. Plus, a unique bloodline Discipline gives the Brood an edge over the local Kindred while the additional bloodline weakness gives characters another pressure point to research during the second act of the story and strategize around in the third act.

Changing Fate

The above account is what comes to pass if the characters *don't* intercede. The characters, however, should have the freedom to be as dynamic as they like. It is assumed that they're in a position to change things. They hear things, they see things, they say things and, most importantly, they *do* things that keep the above scenario from coming to pass.

At every stage of this tale are junctures where the downward spiral of events can be interrupted. Following is a collection of those points, fleshed out to show where the characters have the most opportunities to change history.

Likewise, each phase listed below is a little more dangerous than the one before it, and, hence, is more appropriate for more powerful characters. Starting characters can play through Phase 1, more experienced characters can play through Phase 2 and powerful characters can participate all the way through to Phase 3, though you may want to skip or speed through earlier phases, especially if the players have short attention spans. Alternately, you can spread these phases out over the course of your chronicle, so that the threat of Belial's Brood simmers beneath the city for years from Phase 1 to Phase 3.

The following vignettes are just a sampling of those that can be taken from the previous narrative. You should try to invent other pivotal scenes as well, to create more opportunities for drama and more intersections between this tale and the Requiems of the central characters. There's enough conflict in here to fuel a long story if the Storyteller makes the most of the material.

Phase One: Opening Gambit

As with most situations, the earlier the characters can address the problem, the less violent things are likely to become and the less impact these events have on the Kindred (and mortals) of Chicago. It's the Storyteller's place to decide what the characters hear and when they hear it, as well as to create a sense of foreboding around the events that are unfolding. Weaker characters should get involved with the action earlier, before it has a chance to get too violent. More powerful characters can get involved later, when the challenge level is more appropriate to their experience and power levels.

While some of the scenarios below are combat oriented, many are not. Coteries will do best if they have a range of strengths. A coterie composed of five combat monsters will likely have trouble getting through this story, as will a clique of dainty socialites. There is strength in variety, and Chicago is evidence of that.

Rumors: Part One

The events in this story really kick off with a flurry of whispers. Belial's Brood wants to sow dissent between the Invictus and the Carthians. To that end, Brood members begin a whispering campaign about a powerful Carthian elder coming to advise Barowski and, possibly, help him bring an end to Prince Maxwell's praxis. Most Kindred know that there's bad blood between Barowski and Maxwell, so it's not a difficult proposition to believe.

The infernalists spread this rumor because it exacerbates the subtle hostilities between the Carthians and the First Estate, but members of the Carthian Movement, especially the young, repeat the rumor because they want it to be true. They're tired of the Kindred aristocracy and want to go back to a Carthian model. And so they brag about the big, tough Carthian who's coming to help Barowski. They don't know that they're feeding into the infernalists' plans: the Carthians just know they *want* the *status quo* to change, and, on some level, they probably hope that by spreading this rumor that they might make it come to pass. For his part, Barowski knows this rumor isn't true, but he also likes the idea, and he's not interested in squelching a rumor that might still be useful.

What the characters can do: Discern the facts of the matter and spread the truth. In this case, the truth isn't as interesting as the falsehood, so the truth is unlikely to travel as far, but, by finding out the truth of the matter from Barowski, the characters can hope to minimize the spread of the infernalists' propaganda (and detract from the friction it's likely to cause with the Invictus). Furthermore, if the characters can trace back where the rumors came from, they might start getting a clearer picture of the suspicious parties' true identities.

Rumors: Part Two

Characters may wind up hearing rumors about Belial's Brood. These rumors could be anything as vague as "some of the new Kindred in the city are only faking their allegiance to their covenants," to "members of Belial's Brood are coming to Chicago — or are already here!" These rumors might come from a character's Allies, Contacts or Mentors. These rumors might be spoken by Storyteller characters in stories leading up to this one. These rumors may be picked up with Socialize rolls made at Elysium. These rumors may come straight from the mouth of a Brood member.

Alternately, the characters might actually stumble across members of Belial's Brood doing something suspicious — performing a Satanic mass, desecrating a church, conducting a human sacrifice or other, more subtle acts of blasphemy. You might make a lone follower of Belial the antagonist of an early story, and let the outcome of that tale dictate what the characters know about the infernalists, and what the infernalists know about the characters. It also gives the characters a chance to weaken the enemy before the last Phase of the story.

What the characters can do: Assuming the characters can get away after they learn that Chicago is being infiltrated by infernalists, the characters can tell Norris (if he's still around), McLean or even the Prince himself what's happening. In and of itself, this may or may not help prevent the Hell-raising planned by the Brood, but telling someone in Kindred authority helps lessen the friction developing between the Invictus and the Carthians, staving off what would be, in the long-term, a much darker period for Chicago's Kindred.

On the other hand, if the characters have names, dates, places and proof, they can see to it that certain infernalists are brought in for interrogation (and likely imprisonment). If the characters are able to do this, it will cut the Brood's numbers down to size before the Hell-raising and make later events easier on the characters. If the characters are lucky, this could cut down the total number of Brood members in Chicago from two coteries (one weak and one strong) to one (leaving the Storyteller to work with whichever one fits the characters' experience levels best).

The Flow of Information

How are the Belial's Brood coteries learning so much about Chicago's politics? Have they got a mole in the Prince's Inner Circle or in the larger court? If the Brood has access to Disciplines like Dominate and Majesty, they may have an unwitting informant leaking vital information from Prince Maxwell's haven or a Carthian meeting site. Maybe Brood members didn't destroy Norris at all — what if they're keeping him awake and undead as a source of information? What if Norris has aligned himself with Belial's Brood and even his disappearance is just one more part of the disinformation campaign designed to tear Chicago apart?

Deep Cover One

Characters have another means of discovering the activities of Belial's Brood, although this method could take the game off on another tangent altogether as the characters go under deep cover to root out the Brood: if a character seems suitably rebellious, hostile or disenfranchised, she might be contacted by members of Belial's Brood interested in recruiting her (and possibly her coterie). Contact is arranged by phone, and the character is offered incredible mystical rewards (in the form of demonic investments), power over her peers and "a place at the Devil's table." If the character declines immediately, that's the end of the call and the start of an ugly relationship with the Brood, who won't let loose ends dangle.

If, on the other hand, the characters string the Brood along a little, acting interested and saying all the right things, they might wind up with some good intelligence on the Brood. The more the characters play along, the more infor-

mation they're able to get. What the infernalists are planning, however, is neither small nor isolated — playing along *too well* can get the coterie ashed with the rest of the Brood when that inevitable night comes. Even worse, the characters might be truly sucked into the ways of Belial's Brood and lose themselves to the Beast and the Devil.

What the characters can do: Characters can get just as involved as they want at this point. They can learn enough to let the Prince know where the false rumors are coming from, or they can nose into the Brood's business a little deeper. If the characters can convince the members of Belial's Brood that the characters are kindred spirits (with a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, perhaps, or just good roleplaying), they can get close to the Brood leader and find out what the Brood has planned. Just how far undercover the characters go is up to them and how much heat they can take. If they start hanging out and plotting with infernalists as a means of gathering information on the enemy, the characters are going to suffer some major effects of guilt by association later on, even if they claim they were, ultimately, with the Brood for good reasons.

A key point to note is that the Brood won't be inclined to let the characters wander off when they want out. They may get dragged far deeper into demonolatry than they initially signed up for. Getting out is a bit more challenging once the characters are that far in. If they start acting suspicious, everything they've done thus far could be for naught when the Brood members decide the characters are untrustworthy and turn on them.

Alternatively, if the characters do start acting strangely, the Brood may order them commit some terrible act (capturing or destroying Solomon Birch or Persephone Moore, for example) to prove their dedication to the infernal cause. To gain the trust of the infernalists, the characters may need to sign their name in blood in *The Book of the Lost*. It's up to you to decide if this is just for show, or if signing one's name in an occult tome somehow obligates one to infernal service. To prove their commitment, the characters may be required to form Vinculums with others of the Brood. Whatever the awful methods, the Brood makes sure that the characters cannot just change their minds and go back to their old Requiems.

Rumors Redux

If and when Norris goes missing, rumors spread with particular alacrity, but only once Chicago's Kindred get the hint that something is amiss. Prince Maxwell does *not* announce that Norris has gone missing, as that would be a blatant invitation to every scheming Kindred in the city to misbehave. But word of such a major disappearance can't help but get out. Maybe Tobias Rieff, the Harpy, tells a lesser Harpy who can't keep her mouth shut. Maybe a character has Heightened Senses active at a fortuitous moment and hears more than he should about Norris' absence from Elysium. Maybe the members of Belial's Brood make an announcement about Norris' destruction as part of their terror campaign.

Characters may also be led astray by being given false or contradictory rumors. This can happen if they listen to Kindred who are talking about things they don't know about ("Oh, Belial's Brood? Yeah, the last member of that band of psychos was put to Final Death over 10 years ago."), or if the characters listen to Kindred allied with the Brood (Vin Mariani, for example) who want to mislead the characters' coterie.

The gist of the rumors is that the characters get hooked into the story. Play up any clan or covenant affiliations that might nudge the characters into following up on the rumors and getting involved in the story. The Ordo Dracul may be interested in performing experiments on the blood of Kindred from Belial's Brood to see if there *is* any difference in their Vitae, for example, or the Carthians may resent being connected in any way with infernalists and ask the characters to track down Brood members. Maybe the Lancea Sanctum begins a sort of inquisition in its own ranks when the Sanctified hear rumors of new Belial's Brood vampires in Chicago. To keep the characters involved, make sure that the covenant with the most interest in investigating the Brood is one to which the characters have some loyalty (or owe some favors).

Deputized

With Norris' disappearance, Loki gets a *big* promotion. The problem is, he's out of his league at that point. To rectify the problem, Loki uses his power to deputize other Kindred. The players' characters, for example, can be among these deputies, assuming the characters have done *something* to catch his attention — even coming to Maxwell with reports of Belial's Brood could be enough if the characters haven't done anything else of note. Since Loki also happens to be a member of the Circle of the Crone, this grants Acolytes an easy way into the action as Loki tries to get deputies from the ranks of his own covenant.

What characters can do: Make the most of it, baby. This is a key first step. Smart players will use this as a launch pad to their characters' advancement. All they need to do is go above and beyond the call of duty to uncover every last infernalist. Being deputies puts the characters in a position to get noticed by everyone right on up to Prince Maxwell himself, assuming the characters prove themselves competent. If they prove themselves *in*competent, they'll still come to the attention of Tobias Rieff, who gleefully undermines their every subsequent attempt to move up the ladder in Chicago.

Early Confrontations

From the rumors that get the characters hooked, they may find themselves investigating the situation in a bit more depth. Why they do this is up to the Storyteller. Did Loki ask them for help? Is the coterie naturally inquisitive, or are they hoping to advance socially through loyal service to the Prince? For better or for worse, they're pulled into the story.

Being too curious about the Brood is a dangerous thing. Curiosity can easily invite threats or violence, but, at this early point in their plans, the infernalists will likely want to keep as low a profile as possible, and so they may be more likely to flee in an attempt to keep a low profile than attack, especially if they've recently taken out Norris, and the Sheriff and Hounds are already out for their blood.

The first confrontation with the Brood should not double as the big battle. That, as any movie critic can tell you, would be anticlimactic. The first encounter with the infernalists should just be an appetizer, scary enough to make the characters nervous, but rewarding enough that they forge ahead anyway.

The question then becomes how to approach less-than-full-blown conflicts between the characters and Belial's Brood.

The characters' first encounter with the Brood may be softened in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. The infernalists may opt to let the characters survive an early encounter if the Brood members think the characters are ripe for recruitment. Brood members may hope to sway the coterie to their side, especially if the characters seem to show an affinity for violence, rebellion or the occult. Wayward members of the Circle of the Crone or the Lancea Sanctum, in particular, might appear to be likely candidates for recruitment. In that case, Brood members may hope to impress the characters with their resolve, if not their power or sheer numbers. The infernalists are only likely to do this if the characters seem like they might be turned. Sanctified Zealots or Knights of the Invictus are clearly not recruitment material, and that won't be lost on the Brood.

A twist on this option is to let the characters live in order that they can be messenger boys for the infernalists. Once the characters have been soundly beaten (possibly beaten into torpor), the lead villain can toss them Norris' fangs, his clothes or anything else belonging to the spymaster and say a few pithy, dramatic words of parting, something like, "That's what happens to Kindred who deny their role on this wretched dungheap," or "We await your next great spy, oh Prince."

Alternatively, the characters, on the verge of defeat, could survive their initial encounter with Belial's Brood thanks to the timely arrival of the cavalry (in the form of Garret McLean, Max Maurey or similarly powerful Kindred). This kind of *deus ex machina* has certainly been done in thousands of movies and chronicles but, unless it is suitably set up or implied ahead of time, it can seem forced and heavy-handed. If the characters (or the players) think powerful vampires are going to come to the rescue in the future, the players may take unnecessary and unwelcome risks. Worse, they may feel their actions have no real consequences. You can't have an exciting story without risk and consequence, but you can't have it without the characters either — you can probably get away with this sort of thing once, but just once.

Another alternative not only sees the players survive, but discovering a whole section of the city with which they may have been unfamiliar. It might also give them a means by which to encounter the Lord named Max Maurey.

The Pit and the Labyrinth

If you're running this story as a part of a longer chronicle and want to slow down the pace a bit, the following is a means of giving the characters an initial confrontation with the vampires of Belial's Brood without meeting Final Death.

The characters meet with Belial's Brood and have their first go-round. If the infernalists are suitably tough, the five (or 10) of them should be more than enough to best the characters. Instead of destroying or diablerizing the characters, however, the infernalists simply toss the characters into an oubliette in the basement of an old building downtown and wait for them to go into torpor from hunger (not unlike what the Prince does with his enemies, in fact). Then, down the line, the characters can be diablerized, ransomed, sacrificed or otherwise utilized. As a preparation for future sacrifice, the Brood has lined the bottom of the pit with newspapers (a good source of exposition and a good use of time), dry wood and kerosene. One night they may just drop in a match.

The oubliette is basically the sub-basement of an old building. It's a dank, featureless room about 30 feet deep below the trapdoor through which the characters are dropped. There are no fingerholds for climbing, and nothing to hold on to on the ceiling. The Kindred of Belial's Brood have done an excellent job of sealing off every route of escape, but they did miss one potential exit: an old entrance to the freight tunnels beneath Chicago that's been closed with brick under a thin layer of cement. This entrance was bricked over shortly after World War II and forgotten. The infernalists, being new to Chicago, have no reason to assume that this sub-basement ever went anywhere. Characters can discern the difference in the texture and color of the cement over the entrance with a Wits + Composure or Wits + Crafts roll with a –2 modifier. Characters with Heightened Senses active suffer no modifier to see the difference in cement color and a +2 modifier if they're feeling the wall instead of looking at it. Characters with the Tunnel Rat Merit (see p. 54) add their dots as a bonus to the dice pool either way.

Once the characters *find* the old doorway, they'll need to pound through the brick and cement in their way. A great deal of it is cracked and crumbling, so the job is difficult but doable. This can be done in several ways, as described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (on p. 136). The bricked-up portal has the following traits, scaled to about the size of a door — something large enough for the characters to escape through:

Bricked-Up Tunnel Entrance: Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 9

The passageway leads into the old freight tunnels that run beneath the city. Trains used to carry coal, merchandise and cinders to buildings around Chicago down here. In the modern nights, the tunnels are primarily the stomping grounds of the homeless and unwanted mortals and vampires.

The tunnels all look alike: vaulted passageways six feet wide and seven feet tall. They're easy to get lost in. Once the characters proceed through the tunnels at full Speed for 10 turns, they're lost. If they've been taking steps to ensure that they *don't* get lost, their Speed drops by half. Getting back to the surface requires a guide who knows the tunnels (perhaps using Manipulation + Persuasion or Majesty to get the help of homeless kine) or an extended Intelligence + Survival roll, with 20 successes needed to get out and one roll made for every 20 minutes spent in the tunnels. The Direction Sense Merit brings the time between rolls to 15 minutes. If the characters expect to use a compass to find their way, they're egregiously mistaken. The amount of iron, copper and magnetic debris left over from the electric trains that once ran down here renders compasses worthless.

If the characters wander through the Undercity for more than two hours, or if they threaten their guide, they encounter Max Maurey, the Ventrue Priscus. Maurey may have been tracking them for a time, or a frightened and angry guide may lead them into Maurey's feeding grounds to get them into trouble.

Maurey is a terrifying figure, even when he doesn't intend to be. He is accustomed to visitors, but not to strangers. He finds newcomers — especially young Kindred — fascinating, and the intensity of his interest is disturbing. He gets right in characters' faces, touches them when he talks and looks at the wrong parts of characters' faces when they talk to him.

If the characters offer Vitae to Maurey, he might be inclined to help them, but he's very much the gentleman about it. He has neither the need nor the urge to take blood from the characters by force. Maurey is not interested in combat with the characters, and he can easily avoid a fight. He would much rather end the meeting peacefully, with the characters willingly allowing him to feed from them, but he's not averse to beating them into torpor and draining them dry, either, if things come to that. Maurey is so used to Kindred Vitae — taken from respectful visitors and the like — that the blood of unfamiliar Kindred is a rare delicacy to him. If the characters are already low on Vitae, this idea may not appeal to them, but Maurey can use the twin goads of love (Majesty) and fear (Nightmare) to convince the characters that giving him a little taste of their Vitae is in the best interest of all involved. Maurey is only down three Vitae, and that's all he wants from the characters, divided however they like. He will then get them to the surface in just a short while. If the characters attack Maurey, and cause him to *expend* Vitae, he will take as much blood as necessary to slake his thirst and bring his blood pool back up to full.

The characters have an opportunity here to make a good impression on one of the most powerful Kindred in Chicago. If they act with intelligence and civility, they could wind up with a powerful ally who could come into play later in this story or later in the chronicle. If they're not careful, they wind up with a potent enemy, assuming they get out of the tunnels at all. Whatever happens here, use it to set up a meaningful consequence later — either Maurey helps the characters locate the last of the Brood when the cult is finally broken or he lumps them in with his enemies when the Undercity is tapped by the Carthians or the Invictus in the political row that follows the Hell-raising.

Phase Two: Cry Havoc

Once the characters have had their first taste of Belial's Brood, they'll have a better idea of what to expect. Or they may think they do. If they encountered the weaker of the Brood coteries, the characters may have no idea what lies in store for them when they face the stronger of the two coteries. If the characters met the stronger coterie first, they may be *very* hesitant to face another such coterie or, worse, two of them at once.

All that said, the characters still know more about what the city's up against than anyone else (who's talking, anyway). The characters can return to Loki (or McLean, or Maxwell) with information. The characters are now the front-line reporters, of sorts, on the city's new enemy.

Politics

While the infernalist infiltration is a major issue for the city, the infiltration is by no means the only thing that Chicago's Kindred are paying attention to. On the contrary, all of this is playing out against a backdrop of increasing tensions between the Invictus (and their allies in the Lancea Sanctum) and the Carthians (and their allies in the Circle of the Crone). The activities of Belial's Brood are just the catalyst that brings the inter-covenant antagonism to a head. If the characters side with any of the covenants named above, the characters are well positioned to fan (or smother) the flames of war.

The Carthians and the Acolytes

There are conflicts aplenty within the Carthian sect. Lillian Vanderpool knows the full scoop on the infernalists. She's been watching them for some time with her advanced Auspex techniques, and, with her help, the Prince could easily track the infernalists down in very little time, without even a slight breach of the Masquerade. Vanderpool doesn't tell the characters what she knows unless a Carthian character has taken her as an Ally or a Mentor. At the most, she's likely to allude to "difficult times for the Kindred" and "political nightmares," but she's not likely to say any more than that unless expertly persuaded.

(If you're drawing this story out over a long period of time, you might allow a character to make a Manipulation + Persuade roll as an extended action to get Lillian to open roll. Each roll might represent days or even weeks of "buttering up" or building trust, with Lillian's Resolve subtracted from each roll. You might choose to base the target number of successes on a trait of Lillian's; say, five times her Resolve.)

For his part, Walt Barowski is exultant over Norris' demise and feels a hint of gratitude toward Belial's Brood (which is mostly countered by the resentment Barowski feels toward Brood members for using his covenant as their cover story). As far as he's concerned, the sneaky old spy had it coming. Barowski is well aware that Vanderpool wants to reveal everything now, but he'd rather not. He wants to leave the infernalists alone in hopes that they might destroy another member of the Prince's Inner Circle, further undermining Maxwell's claim to praxis.

Meanwhile, the Carthians are expecting to get blamed for the infernalists' bad behavior. This is hardly jumping to conclusions, as the Carthians are frequently held accountable for the indiscretions of independent-minded Kindred. Only the unaligned take more shit from the Prince than the Carthians.

In order to buffer themselves from the political consequences, the Carthians are looking for allies in both the unaligned of Cicero and both factions of the Circle of the Crone. Barowski himself is more solicitous toward both Rowen and Bella Dravnzie as he tries to cement an alliance between his covenant and theirs.

What the characters can do: Carthian characters can learn about the conflict between Vanderpool and Barowski fairly easily, although learning the specifics — 1) that Vanderpool knows who the infernalists are and where they're holed up, 2) that she wants to tell the Prince and 3) that Barowski adamantly refuses to let her say anything — is next to impossible without having one or the other as an Ally or a Mentor, having three or more dots of Carthian Status, or making a fairly blatant use of the Majesty Discipline. But if that's what it takes . . . .

Should the characters learn the nature of the disagreement, they can tip the balance toward either the Prefect or the Myrmidon without too much trouble.

Alternatively, the characters could approach politics from a slightly different direction if they're deployed as diplomats between the Carthians and the Circle of the Crone (or even the unaligned). This is only likely if the characters' coterie has two or more members from one (or preferably both) of these covenants. In such circumstances, members of the coterie might fall under an unspoken suspicion if they're from the Invictus or Lancea Sanctum, even if they're perfectly loyal to the group.

The Invictus and the Sanctified

As far as the Invictus is concerned, the Carthians are somehow connected (and intimately so) to both the infernalists and the destruction of Norris. The Prince wants to take this opportunity to be rid of Barowski, whose envy and resentment the Prince has been wary of for years. As Prince, Maxwell could probably do this on a whim, but even the acts of Princes have repercussions. In an attempt to at least mitigate the damage such an act would have on his PR, Prince Maxwell is strengthening his already thick ties with the Lancea Sanctum.

Maxwell may offer to include yet more of the Sanctified religious doctrines and prohibitions in Chicago's laws, for example. Given how beholden Solomon Birch is to the Prince, it's unlikely Birch refuses.

What the characters can do: Again, the characters can act as diplomats and go-betweens for the two covenants if the coterie has at least two members from one or the other. Situations like these breed paranoia and members of the Circle of the Crone or the Carthian Movement are likely to be scrutinized for disloyalty to the coterie, even if the members' loyalty is beyond reproach.

If the characters are more focused on finding the infernalists, the characters can be out trying to track down clues to lead them to Belial's Brood. Let the characters slowly piece together the puzzle that leads them to the Hell-raising. First they find out that it takes place at the University of Chicago, then they find out that it's to be held in the quadrangle, then they find out which night, and so on. Make use of a variety of Skills to gather all the pieces. A character with several dots in Computer might hack his way into an email account and learn where the event is going to take place. A character with dots of Occult can help the group figure out when the Hell-raising will take place, based on historic Satanic practices. Socialize might get the characters into a spot to overhear vital information. Investigation can bridge the gap between snippets of academic lore and evidence of current goings-on.

Two points are key: First, it's important to lend the Social and Mental characters an opportunity to shine here. There's likely going to be enough Brawling later on. Second, keeping the characters engaged in what's going to happen keeps them from engaging with the infernalists until the moment is right. Not only does this build suspense, but this way the action won't come to a head too soon.

Deep Cover Two

If the characters have gone deep undercover, they'll be hanging out with Belial's Brood at this point. There won't likely be much politicking going on or any opportunity to have a lengthy chat with Prince Maxwell or anyone else. Even if the characters are allowed to head back to Elysium (after some sort of formal, and likely bloody, induction into Belial's Brood) and have the opportunity, the infernalists are almost certainly monitoring the characters for signs of duplicity. More likely, their newfound allies keep them far from Elysium, possibly sending them to get supplies for the Hell-raising or otherwise pulling their weight for the Brood.

This is the moment when Brood members are planning the bloody event that they call a "Hell-raising." It is a violent, bloody event designed to breach the Masquerade and strike terror into the heart of mortals by showing them that the world they live in is, in truth, much closer to Hell than to Heaven.

This is the time when characters should start to have serious second thoughts about associating with Belial's Brood, undercover or not. This is when the characters start learning more about the covenant they claimed to join.

Get medieval. Play up the drama of the situation, the weird ambiance of the Brood's cramped temple of Belial (if the Brood trusts the characters enough to reveal the temple's whereabouts — a fairly large "if"), the devotion the infernalists have toward their demonic master, the grimness of the Brood's outlook. More frighteningly, the characters may find themselves agreeing with small portions of what the Brood believes. The infernalists shouldn't — and aren't — always be bestial, psychotic monsters, after all. They're likeable. They can pass for normal. They're probably making themselves particularly likeable to the characters, their new converts.

If you really want to take the players for a dark ride, make the infernalists sympathetic. They're just like any other Kindred — they too feed on Vitae, they too have a Beast within — they just believe, perhaps understandably, that Kindred are unearthly beings with an awful purpose to serve. The infernalists have senses of humor, personal stories about what brought them to this point in their Requiem, stories about what they've gone through to get this far — and those stories might seem to rationalize what the infernalists are going to do. If possible, get the characters hating the Hell-raising, but not the Brood.

Alternatively, you might not opt to make all of the infernalists sympathetic — just one of them. Maybe one was Embraced young and has a sob story for the characters' coterie. Maybe the sympathetic infernalist is a young woman who never intended to get this far into Satanism, but doesn't know how to get out now that she's in deep (a position the characters might well empathize with at this point).

These kinds of development make the events more interesting for the characters, but these developments also make Storytelling more interesting. The cackling Satanist stereotype only goes so far. Making the infernalists real, believable characters who've just made some very bad decisions based on some easily misunderstood circumstances is both more challenging and more rewarding dramatically. It also sets the characters up for some difficult decisions later on.



Phase Three: The Stench of Blood and Fear

In the final Phase, the infernalists carry out their violent plan unless the characters can somehow keep it from coming to pass. Directly opposing Belial's Brood is not easy, even if the characters are experienced and powerful.

Mayhem

The vampires of Belial's Brood are going as far over the top as they can — as Storyteller, you may as well too. Emphasize the unbearable fear on the contorted faces of the victims, the rapt terror in the eyes of those watching, the emptiness and leaden weight of a body that's been

drained of life. If your players smirk, you're doing it wrong. One thing this scene should *not* be is funny.

Once the characters begin fighting the infernalists, combat is likely to overpower the narrative, and that's okay, but it's why the initial impressions the characters get have to drive home just how horrible this event truly is. Fill out your description of the scene — the wet ground, the sweaty stench, the warm wind — up front, so you can evoke quick details later on, referencing the imagery you already established.

Crossover: Dangerous Assistance

At some point in the uproar of the Hell-raising, the characters may notice that a new element has come into the picture. Mortals with unusual abilities are counterattacking the vampires of Belial's Brood. These attackers may be mortals with psychic powers, mystically powerful witch-hunters, mages or something else entirely. Unless you as Storyteller have a specific idea of what you want these mortals to be, we recommend making them mages (see **Mage: The Awakening**). This could be an opportunity for an enterprising Storyteller to introduce crossover characters or new antagonists, or to let friends from outside the troupe take part in a one-shot game.

If the Storyteller opts to make these mortal characters mages, they can be just the backup the characters need to cut the Hell-raising short, helping to save lives and minimizing damage to the Masquerade.

Deep Cover Three: The Reckoning

If the characters have been undercover with Belial's Brood, this is the point at which the characters will want to reveal their real agenda. If they don't, and if they take part in the Hell-raising, they're in for several degeneration rolls at the very least.

The characters may get the advantage of surprise on their first attack (if they choose to attack). It's the Storyteller's call how surprised the infernalists really are; the infernalists may really think the characters had seen the wisdom of Belial or the infernalists could have known the score the whole time. All of the characters' time with Belial's Brood could have been a fraud perpetrated by both sides, to see just how far the characters would really go — where their loyalties really were — and now they are the Brood's first targets once the Hell-raising begins.

In either case, the characters are going to have to be able to fight or flee two coteries of vampires. If the characters somehow communicated a message to the Prince or other authority, they may have the benefit of some big guns like Garret McLean; otherwise, the characters had better be prepared to do anything it takes to escape their "allies."

The Carthian Attack

When the city's resistance (be it from police or other vampires) becomes too fierce, and about a quarter of the Brood has been put down, the remaining Satanists flee. They head out from the university on foot, into Hyde Park and, from there, into the dodgier reaches of the South Side. Let the characters keep up with them with a few Stamina + Athletics rolls, pursue them with Wits + Streetwise or otherwise find them again without losing the climactic momentum.

The last stand for Belial's Brood (or most of them, anyway) takes place about a quarter-mile north of the campus in one of the South Side's burned-out housing projects. The Carthians, directed by their Myrmidon, Lillian Vanderpool, turn up in SUVs to take out the vampires who've dragged their name through the mud. Foremost among these is Zhoniqua Jefferson, a fearsome Gangrel and occasional neighborhood heroine. The Storyteller should make it clear that Jefferson is a skilled fighter and a righteous woman. She goes after the infernalists like a pit bull hunts down rats. If things make it to this point, it's important that you focus on Jefferson's disregard of the Masquerade in favor of slaying Satanists, as it may be important later in the story.

This is where the characters' actions up to this point really pay off. Which vampires come out to put down the Brood depends on who the characters talked to and who their friends are. If the Invictus and the Carthians are still at each other's throats at this point, what happens tonight is what the higher-ups will condemn and judge at court tomorrow.

If the characters have weakened the Brood, it pays off here, with the Satanists surrounded and trapped in a dead high-rise of chain-link fences and chipped concrete.

If the characters made the Brood stronger, this is where the characters pay for it, as too few Chicago Kindred struggle to find and defeat the hellish fanatics in a claustrophobic cage of abandoned apartments and trash-clogged stairwells.

If the characters worked with the Brood — undercover or for real — this is when the characters have to convince others that they should be spared a fiery demise.

The Clean-Up

As Masquerade breaches go, the Hell-raising is intended to be a big one. It is the *intent* of Belial's Brood to make the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* at the very least, and hopefully the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and a few other publications as well. The Brood's goal is to kill as many students and use as many Disciplines as blatantly as possible in the shortest amount of time.

If the characters are unable to prevent most (or all) of the carnage, the media will catch wind of the mayhem and there will need to be an enormous, balls-out effort by the Prince and many of Chicago's Kindred to control the

damage done by Belial's Brood. Reporters will need to have their memories rewoven. Videotape will need to be destroyed. Bribes will have to go out to editors, police, university officials and countless others.

Worse, parents who lose sons and daughters will want to know why. The grieving families will hire investigators and lawyers and talk to senators if they need to. The enormity of the Kindred's mission can't be overstated at this point. The moment the word "vampires" comes up, there could easily be Hell to pay.

And even as it is, with all of the city's Kindred doing what they can, there will still be witch-hunters who *sense* a cover-up and come sniffing around to see if something deeply horrible is happening in Chicago.

Prince Maxwell requests that all Kindred with suitable contacts use them to help control and minimize the Masquerade breach. If the characters are particularly well connected and make a good effort at covering up the breach, the Prince may take notice.

Or he may not. Maxwell also has other matters weighing on his mind.

The issues here hinge on how bad the characters let things get before the end. If the situation between the Carthians and the Invictus is bad enough, the Brood's damage may already be done. On the other hand, if the characters got Lillian Vanderpool to talk and warned Prince Maxwell — or otherwise demonstrably lessened the threat of Belial's Brood — the tensions between the covenants should be surmountable. The Danse Macabre in Chicago slowly settles back down, but with the characters in a very different position from where they started the story.

It's possible that the destruction of the Belial's Brood vampires doesn't end the escalated tensions in the city. If the characters played one side against the other, accidentally spread misinformation or otherwise let things get worse up until the end, the following epilogues (or follow-up stories) might develop. These ugly aftermaths only occur, however, as worst-case scenarios.

The Trial and the War

Immediately after the Hell-raising, the Prince goes looking for a scapegoat (or scapegoats, as the case may be). He'll briefly look to his own Inner Circle, but shit, as they say, rolls downhill. If the characters get caught in its path, they could be in trouble. Walt Barowski is an obvious scapegoat, but the Prince may not know that. Barowski went out of his way to keep information about the Brood to himself, and that's how things managed to get out of hand. The characters might become unpopular with the Carthians if the characters rat out Barowski, but they'll be respected by the Invictus. In the end, though, the Carthians won't revolt over Barowski's punishment if evidence can be shown or the characters' story can be corroborated (say, by Lillian Vanderpool). The real trouble for the Carthians is if Zhoniqua Jefferson gets chosen as the scapegoat (see below).

If Prince Maxwell looks to pin this Masquerade breach on the characters (and he most definitely will if they stayed "undercover" for too long, fraternizing with the enemy), they'll have to use every ally, every connection and every bit of charm and charisma they've got to avoid taking the heat for the enormous breach of the Masquerade. Chances are, even if they're cleared of wrongdoing, they'll be considered questionable allies for some time if they kept things to themselves or made the wrong allies. If the coterie has



made powerful enemies (such as the Prince, Solomon Birch or Tobias Rieff), now is when they'll get their payback. Use this as a means of plunging the characters down the rungs of Kindred society, giving them a view of the city from the very bottom. It can also set the stage for a nomad chronicle if the characters are banished or choose to lay low, outside of town, for a time.

What the characters can do: Contact Kindred allies, call in favors, appeal to character witnesses, promise favors to more-established Kindred in exchange for their support. The characters are hard-pressed to make their argument, especially if they'd disappeared for a long time to go "undercover."

The Trial of the Whore

If things went so poorly that the arrival of the Carthians was all that kept the monsters of Belial's Brood from winning the night, the Prince makes an example of Zhoniqua Jefferson as a warning to other Carthians who seemingly knew about the cult but didn't report them. While Jefferson had hoped for more justice from a black Prince, she won't be surprised when he sides with his Invictus allies over her. (Of course, if one of the players' characters was more ferocious or blatantly monstrous than Jefferson, he might be made an example of instead.)

Characters who fought alongside Jefferson should see what an injustice this is. She may have been out of line, but the damage to the Masquerade had been done already, that night, and she was just fighting fire with fire. If the characters take the easy way out and let the Prince pillory Jefferson after seeing how ferociously she fought the infernalists, they've done a bad thing — possibly bad enough to call for a degeneration roll.

If the characters defend Jefferson and her role in the events following the Hell-raising, and especially if they spend personal and political capital to do so, consider granting an extra experience award for that session.

If Jefferson is found guilty, the Prince turns her into one of his mindless blood-bound revenants. Although he claims that this is for breaching the Masquerade in the fight with Belial's Brood, this punishment really has much more to do with Jefferson's Carthian affiliation and the fact that she's complicated the prostitution industry on the South Side by killing pimps and helping whores turn their lives around.

More importantly, punishing Jefferson could incite a full-on revolution by the Carthians and their allies in the Circle of the Crone (including Rowen, but not Loki). The Carthian Movement could start acting in a more decisive, cohesive fashion than it has in years and the war against the Invictus (and its Sanctified allies) will be on. The Tranquility will be a thing of the past, and violence in Chicago will go through the roof.

What the characters can do: Choose sides or make peace. The first thing the characters' coterie is going to want to do once the Carthians declare war is pick a side. If a coterie has members from both sides of the conflict, the group has to decide which side it's going to ally itself with. If the characters are younger Kindred, the Carthian model may be much more appealing than the Invictus model. Likewise, if the characters are elders or more powerful ancillae, siding with the Invictus might be their best bet. Or maybe it's time to renounce covenants and go unbound.

If a war begins, the chronicle will change tone dramatically. Chicago will no longer be the safe city that it was under the Tranquility. Instead, the city will be a contested city, the prize in a war that can only be fought secretly. The Hell-raising was a major strain on the Masquerade, and the one thing both sides agree on in this war is that the Masquerade *must* be maintained. Furthermore, it's entirely possible that the Hell-raising has caught the attention of witch-hunters or mages or werewolves who may themselves come looking to lay blame on Kindred. Everything that's been won and achieved in Chicago could be at risk.

So it may fall to the characters — as the protagonists in your chronicle — to make peace before war can break out. The fact is that most of the Kindred don't want to fight and bleed and risk their Requiems, but no one wants to lose face either. If the characters are willing to take on some responsibility, to make some public sacrifices or secret deals, they may be able to keep the peace. If they can convince Prince Maxwell not to punish Jefferson, they can prevent a lot of trouble for themselves and the whole city.

Everyone wants the balance restored, but no one wants to take their weight off the scales. Maybe the characters can restore balance by putting their own weights on the pans of the political scale. If their negotiations and their ideas calm the potential revolt, they become meaningful players in the Danse Macabre — and Chicago really becomes their city.




WEREWOLF
THE FORSAKEN


BRIDGES '05

THE JUNGLE

Hunting Grounds: Chicago

At the heart of every werewolf is the struggle between Nature and Man — and most werewolves become more Nature than Man, whether they consider that losing or winning the struggle.

Chicago is a place of Man. Humans are strong in Chicago — but they are also flawed and self-destructive, turning their strength against themselves as well as whatever else is nearby. They have the power, but seem to lack the strength of will and wisdom to use their power for a greater good. Werewolves move among the human herd of Chicago like wolves among sheep, but this is a herd on edge, prone to violent riots and desperate brutality.

The city has a long history of violence, and a painful disaster in its past to boot. The Shadow of Chicago is scarred in ways not seen in many other cities, and these scars affect the human residents in ways they don't understand. The humans are on edge, the spirits are on edge and the Uratha are on edge as well. In many ways, Chicago is a powder keg just waiting for a match.

And that's where your visit begins.

Chicago is a city in balance, with neither the Tribes of the Moon or the Pure Tribes managing to hold sway. The two factions are of roughly equal strength in the city and its environs, with a slight edge in the Forsaken's numbers. To some extent, this balance can be attributed to third parties. The Forsaken have managed to make a few more connections throughout the city than the Pure have, which makes it difficult for the Pure to be certain they've isolated their prey sufficiently before they strike. Although it isn't common by any means for a Pure pack to go hunting for Forsaken and wind up fighting vampires as well, it's happened before (and even recently).

Not that this prevents the Pure from striking; they have made continual bloody forays against the Forsaken over the years, with mixed success. Some Forsaken packs have been exterminated entirely, and some have torn apart their Pure attackers. At the moment, the situation between the two groups has settled into the tension that passes for the norm. The Pure Tribes are sure to take advantage of weakness in their hated foes if they see it, and the Forsaken are likely to do the same "out of self-defense."

The presence and actions of a new pack can make a tremendous impact on the state of werewolf politics and conflict in Chicago. Just by getting involved, the characters can make a tenuous truce break into outright war or bring about a truce where previously there's been constant skirmishing.

Where will you get started?

The Region

Chicago is a city that has survived quite a bit, more than the humans who live there realize. The Great Chicago Fire was more damaging to the Shadow of the city than to the physical city itself, and yet the city was not one of the areas unlucky enough to face an idigam when the ancients broke loose 35 years ago. Strife between the Forsaken and Pure has hit the city and the surrounding plains for centuries, and yet Chicago was a place that the Forsaken held on and didn't lose ground when the Brethren War hit. Chicago is a beacon of Essence, which both nourishes the city and gives strength to the spirits that would devour it like parasites infesting flesh; the city is infused by flows of living energy and crossed by terrible burn scars. Humans can look at Chicago and see a rich and often tragic history; werewolves can testify that the humans don't know the half of it.

> I give you Chicago. It is not London and Harvard. It is not Paris and buttermilk. It is American in every chitling and spareribs. It is alive from snout to tail.
>
> — H.L. Mencken

Downtown

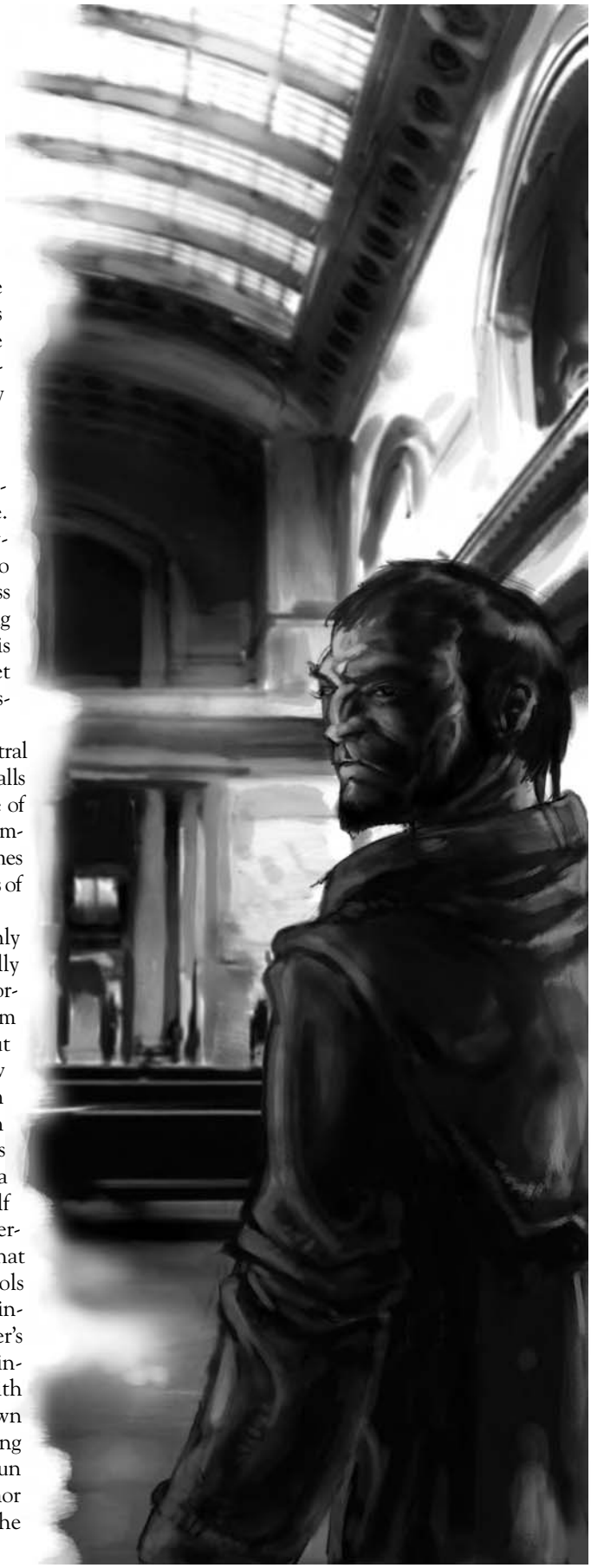
The heaviest-hitting packs claim downtown for their own. There is just so much to do. The downtown area is home to many Barrens, but it's also prone to spawn loci at a more rapid rate than most areas. Certainly the press of humanity has something to do with this, but some mystically inclined werewolves suggest that there's something more. The land itself is thick with Essence here, generated by the city and funneled along invisible flows from the surrounding regions. There are more scarred areas that need some measure of spiritual rebuilding and balm, and there are more loci that need to be either tapped or policed. Spirit activity is high in downtown, and a potent werewolf pack could see great results from attempting to "garden" a territory into something finer. There's plenty of motivation to take territory downtown — and of course, plenty of competition.

Union Station

Vampires and mages both recognize that Union Station is werewolf territory, and has been for some time. There aren't many supernaturals who understand the dynamics between the local packs; it's a rare outsider who could accurately name more than one pack, much less keep track of which pack holds what turf. The word among Chicago's supernatural groups is that Union Station is where a particularly diverse and influential pack has set up shop, and that's all the information that's really necessary.

The truth is that Union Station is considered *tur*, neutral territory for all the Tribes of the Moon. No one pack calls Union Station home; a small locus has developed in one of the turnstiles of the station, but the station is seen as a common spot for werewolf gatherings and a rallying point in times of crisis. The tunnels down below are the site of many Rites of Initiation, particularly among the Iron Masters.

Of course, Union Station works as neutral ground only if the werewolves don't have to worry about potentially dangerous outsiders passing through all the time. The Forsaken work hard at locking down potential threats from the other side of the Gauntlet, and are aggressive about making certain that vampires, mages and the like know "werewolves own this place." The Forsaken are aided in this endeavor by the train-spirit Bright Iron Worm, which was made to swear an oath of loyalty to Chicago's Tribes of the Moon almost a decade ago. Bright Iron Worm is a Lesser Jaggling, and while it may not look on its werewolf "allies" with love, it understands its obligation — and certainly doesn't have any more love for those others that would be considered trespassers. The spirit typically patrols the tunnels around the station, moving along a labyrinthine track structure in the Shadow that is as much spider's web or madhouse roller coaster as anything else. The train-spirit sees a good deal, and shares that information with werewolves when asked. The spirit has even been known to act openly in defense of the station, once materializing in a brief and terrible moment of shining steel glory to run down a Beshilu that had fled onto the wrong track. Rumor among the Forsaken is that Bright Iron Worm enjoyed the



experience, and is looking for an excuse to bear down on another small creature of flesh and blood.

Bright Iron Worm is typically assisted in its vigil by at least one werewolf from one of the local packs and, sometimes, younger packs from the outskirts of town. It's common practice to ask a pack that owes their brethren some sort of minor favor to stand watch over Union Station for a time, reinforcing the perception of werewolf presence there. Guarding the station is not the most exciting task in the city, but the work has a lot of potential: so many people pass in and out of the station that a werewolf watching over the *tur* can never be entirely certain who or what will show up next. There's always the possibility of some new arrival from out of town who doesn't know that the station is werewolf turf, and such an encounter could go in any direction.

Ticket, Please

The players' pack is asked to spend a tour of duty watching over Union Station to make sure that everything's running according to plan. Perhaps the characters want to curry favor with their peers, or maybe the characters owe someone a favor and have little wiggle room to get out of it. They spend a little time getting to know Bright Iron Worm, a little time exploring, but may wind up being somewhat disenchanted with the unglamorous task of guard duty. Naturally, something arrives to alleviate their boredom — perhaps one of the local Pure packs, who have recently learned Bright Steel Worm's ban and plan to exploit it. If the characters get to kill some Forsaken at the same time, all the better.

Suburbia

There's less competition for territory out in the suburbs of Chicago, and a pack has a better chance of establishing itself. Out on the western tip of the Rust Belt, werewolf packs nest in abandoned factories or warehouses, hunting their prey through outlying towns in Illinois or Indiana. The urban blight of Chicago creeps out into the suburbs, giving werewolves who take the Oath seriously plenty of things to do.

Chicago has its nicer portions of town, of course. But even a spotless development with bright, new houses and children running and playing still casts a Shadow. A quiet neighborhood might spawn spirits of silence that do a good job at keeping things quiet — and yes, people are happier there. Some aren't; some may be abused or fallen into addiction or desperately unhappy with their lives, but the silence-spirits make certain the neighbors don't hear about it. All part of the ecology, after all.

Eighty Acres of Hell

On the south side of Chicago are the Lake Meadows Condominiums; the ground on which they're built once housed a notorious prison for Confederates during the Civil War called Camp Douglas. In the Shadow today, the place is a breeding ground for spirits of disease and suffering. Werewolves could become aware of the spiritual threat perhaps due to a wolf-blooded human being attached by one such spirit. Another option would be to have one of the spirits claim a human as a possessed Host. Either way, this is one more place in the Windy City that needs some housecleaning.

Rural Wolves

Farther out from Chicago, the rural areas are prime werewolf country. Towns become farther and farther apart, and the wide plains are broken up by patches of forest or even swamp. The small towns and back roads sometimes see werewolves claiming them for their own.

The farther one gets from Chicago, the more the balance tends to shift in favor of the Pure. The Predator Kings have a strong presence in southern Illinois, and those Forsaken who heard of the 2001 "werewolf sighting" in Galatia have their suspicions that it was either a *Zi'ir* or one of Dire Wolf's get. Forsaken packs who manage to hold on to territory in the rural areas have to be either strong enough to withstand the Pure or small or lucky enough to slip under their radar. The latter sort of pack, sadly enough, tends to be the more successful; the strong can inevitably be dragged down. As a result, the countryside is dotted here and there with isolated Forsaken packs, unsure whether to try making a break for Chicago where the numbers are said to be more even or to keep their heads down.

The most successful pack of Forsaken to make a name for themselves in the rural heartlands around Chicago are the Black Sky Walkers, an eight-strong mixed pack of Blood Talons and Hunters in Darkness. The Walkers are a nomadic pack, dividing their time and their concept of "territory" between small safehouses and hideaways across the state. Led by the potent Blood Talon Cahalith called Murder Jack, the Walkers devote themselves to searching out *nuzusul* or new-Changed werewolves and bringing them into the Tribes of the Moon before the Pure catch them. Jack's prophetic dreams are potent, and combined with his knowledge of the state's towns and back roads, he's wound up picking up several recruits for the Forsaken. Most often, the Walkers take these new recruits to Chicago, where they can be placed with a pack that can look after them. For their part, the Walkers have a dangerous and unwelcome job evading (or ambushing, if they can get the upper hand) the packs of the Pure with all the contested territory they cross.

Dark Cauldron

Bubbly Creek, a south branch of the Chicago River, used to be a runoff for the stockyards. The



place was so incredibly disgusting that Upton Sinclair described it as a "dark cauldron bubbling with evil monsters" and told of how the banks were "plastered thick with hairs." Years have passed since the stockyards were in use, but the filth of Bubbly Creek remains in the Shadow (the physical creek is still none too pleasant). Bubbly Creek can serve as a proving ground for newly Changed werewolves or as a place of challenge for those more experienced. The denizens of Bubbly Creek change from time to time, but any collection of powerful evil spirits should serve the Storyteller's needs.

The Tribes of the Moon

The werewolves of Chicago are the epitome of the modern urban werewolf. Some are deliberately modern primitives, choosing to celebrate their primal heritage by affecting the trappings of their predatory ancestors. Other werewolves still try to think of themselves as the same people they were when they believed they were human, answering only to their human-given names and attempting to treat the hunt as a profession rather than an instinctual imperative.

Multi-tribal packs are a fact of life in Chicago. The constant pressures of city life have prevented any one tribe from establishing too permanent a dynasty. Some packs are fairly proud of this arrangement, scorning the concept of exclusively tribal packs as a rural affectation.

The Blood Talons

The tribe of Destroyer Wolf doesn't have a powerful presence in central Chicago, though those who have set up camp there find plenty to do. The tribe's fortunes have generally ebbed and flowed locally, reflecting the relative strength of those they consider foes. When the Pure grew strong, the Blood Talons came to Chicago in greater numbers to beat their errant cousins back. When the Beshilu population spiked suddenly, the *Suthar Anzuth* took command to launch a reprisal.

At the moment, the prevailing tribal sentiment seems to be disgust with the spiritual texture of the city and its environs. The cloying despair that hangs on the Rust Belt can infuriate a Blood Talon: what sort of person willingly lets himself and his home go to rust? The fact that some humans don't have much of a choice in the matter doesn't stir much sympathy. Blood Talons don't let themselves give up on something just because it looks bad, and they don't have any respect for people who do differently. Usually, family ties have the greatest effect on convincing a Blood Talon to fight for a place like Chicago; kin are kin, no matter what else.

Those Blood Talons who do come to the city often find themselves getting involved with the criminal element — not necessarily at the highest levels, but certainly crossing paths with the lower ranks, the guys with the shitty errands and the low life expectancy. Talons sometimes go cruising through Englewood or other dangerous sections of town; some Talons have reputations there as genuine badasses and get treated like visiting royalty of the most dangerous sort, while others are quickly challenged by territorial gangs who have no real way of knowing better.

Lodges

Many Blood Talon groups, both packs and lodges, have risen to power and then fallen to attrition during the constant struggle of life in Chicago. The Lodge of Garm is a good example — an entire pack of Garm devotees tore a long swath through Chicago's Pure in the '30s before eventually dying gloriously in battle. In the '70s, it happened all over again. Yussef Mahudi, of the Architects of Steel, is the highest-ranking lodge member in the city, and as such presides over the lodge's semi-annual rites. The rites are traditionally held in the stockyards, and draw adherents from across Illinois and Indiana. Yussef is somewhat distracted from his duties to the lodge, however, which is stirring up some discontent in the Garmir who make their homes in the outlying area. Soon he'll be challenged for leadership, and the outcome of that fight may affect how quickly the next Garmir fighting pack is formed.

The Lodge of Swords doesn't have much of a presence in the Chicago area, but lodge members have an opportunity. The various conflicts over the city have been constant and disorganized, with the balance of power teetering so quickly that it's hard for packs to maintain even the loosest alliances. Chicago would be a good place for an ambitious lodge member to try coordinating the war against the Pure more effectively and perhaps gaining a bit more ground or an equally good place for the lodge to send a prospective recruit to prove herself.

The Lodge of Wendigo operates mainly outside city limits. Murder Jack is a prominent member of the lodge, as are several of his Black Sky Walkers. Therefore, the lodge is often instrumental in bringing other werewolves to town where there is safety. Some members of the lodge are drawn to hunt in the city once in a while, seeing Chicago's Pure as weakened by their overall lack of Predator King strength.

The Bone Shadows

Chicago has a complicated spiritual reflection with a lot of recent history and a great many hidden dangers. Once new-Changed Uratha look past the mirrors and see the history of the city laid out in a pattern of scars, ash and rust, many of them can't help but want to learn more. The Bone Shadows may share a common interest in the spirit world that is painted in the broadest strokes overall, but there's nothing abstract about the relations the *Hirfathra Hissu* have with the spirits of their hometown. Learning the ways of the Bone Shadows in Chicago means dealing with the peculiarities of the city's spiritual reflection, and, as a result, the Bone Shadows of the area contain anyone from pseudo-Taoist sorcerers setting up in Chinatown to rust-speakers who scavenge the corroded hulks of the outer lots.

The tribe is fairly strong at the heart of the city; the alpha pack known as the Whispers are mostly Bone Shadows, and other tribe members are scattered throughout a number of other packs. The Bone Shadows are frequently concerned with territorial advancement, as there are a number of allegedly mystical sites in the city that aren't under Forsaken control. In some cases, the solution seems obvious: for instance, the Pure pack that controls the Graceland Cemetery can't be negotiated with and should just be driven off (and beaten badly in the process). But what of the sites that are under the control of other supernaturals? What could be done with the Shedd Aquarium if it weren't for the vampires? What sort of things could be learned or accomplished if the Bone Shadows could come to terms with a mage cabal — and what would the tribe have to give up to achieve such a thing?

A recurring element in Chicago's mystical history is the idea of occult architecture. Most werewolves who care at all about improving their territory already know the basics of the concept: build or plant something that fits the resonance you want in the physical world or tear down something that is generating the wrong kind of resonance, and the Shadow will respond in kind. But, gradually, the Forsaken have been uncovering more evidence that the humans who designed the city may have been doing much the same thing. Did they know about the Shadow? Did they believe that their creations would have a different effect — and for that matter, were they right? It's the kind of question that has driven Death Wolf's tribe to search for answers high and low.

Lodges

The Lodge of Harbingers have a deep interest in the city of Chicago. The last 150 years of history have seen a great deal of upheaval and spiritual change, from the trading post's growth into a full-fledged city to the remarkable evolution of artificial-spirits that came with the information age. There's almost too much information to digest. But that doesn't stop the Harbingers from trying; Sarah Rainbringer is the most prominent lodge member to be working on unraveling the city's secrets, but there are others. At present, the Harbingers most covet the lore that might be kept by the vampires and mages of Chicago. The werewolf or pack that could effectively bring some of that information home to the Forsaken would make the lodge very happy indeed.

The Lodge of Death also has a number of adherents in Chicago, and in fact has for some time. The Great Fire, Prohibition-era violence, riots, gang warfare, vampiric predation — Chicago has seen quite a bit of untimely death, and untimely death often leaves the greatest mark. Current members of the lodge can point to a local tradition that stretches back for more than a century within city limits. One of the current outstanding bits of lodge business has to do with the Graceland Cemetery. A ranking lodge member had control of the place for a time, but without a pack, he wasn't able to fight off the Pure pack that murdered him and took the cemetery for their own. The lodge would like the territory back, and some members certainly would like some revenge in the bargain.

It's rare to see members of the Lodge of Prophecy gather in numbers. Chicago is no exception. In fact, there are no known members of the lodge within the area; those who go seeking a Prophet usually have quite the journey ahead. If a member of the lodge were to arrive in Chicago, it's certain that she'd draw a lot of attention from her fellow Forsaken – and perhaps from the Pure, who might be interested in what all the fuss is about.

The Hunters in Darkness

Although they don't have a strong presence in the very heart of the city, the Hunters in Darkness can still be found throughout Chicago and its environs. Some Hunters feel that the city's heart is no real place for werewolves to thrive, and avoid downtown for both practical and personal reasons. Certainly those who attempt to live as wolves as much as they can don't have much room to do so in the city. But the Hunters in Darkness are werewolves, and are as capable of walking in human skin as anyone. Some people, born and raised in Chicago only to undergo the Change, find the ideals of the Hunters compelling, even fulfilling. The fact that they spend most of their time hunting on concrete and asphalt doesn't drown out dreams of a purer world.

One of the reasons that the *Meninna* aren't as populous as they could be is that some feel the most important battle is over with and lost. To many Hunters in Darkness, Chicago has no real sacred places: what the city had was lost long ago, if not in the fire, then in the waves of vice and violence that swept the city. This point of view is somewhat nihilistic, and a few of the younger Hunters are challenging it vociferously. A few solo Hunters try to move from territory to territory, asking permission if they can, sniffing around to see what has fallen between the cracks. A few promising leads have emerged, such as stories of a human Buddhist temple of subtle yet profound spiritual weight in Chinatown, or the rumors surrounding the Sears Tower. A young Hunter in Darkness who managed to discover one of these lost holy sites and reclaim it would certainly be hailed for his service to the principles of Purity.

Some Hunters in Darkness have taken to using the tunnels under Chicago, both subway and sewer, as a means of traveling through the city. Certainly, extraordinary prey can be found down there. Some Hosts prefer to hide underground, and the tunnels are an obvious choice. There are also vampires in the tunnels here and there, though there's not too much of a reason to hunt them, save for sport. A bloodsucker who's taken refuge beneath the streets rather than in a fine home must not have anything worth taking, and a bloodsucker is not even good to eat. Those *Meninna* who enjoy prowling in the city's darkest parts are more prone to volunteer for the defense of Union Station.

Lodges

The Lodge of Harmony is largely represented by Gina Calder, a Hunter in Darkness who runs with the Slaughterhouse Five. She serves as the contact point for other lodge members who enter the city. There's plenty of work in the area that suits the lodge, but, for now, members focus their efforts on the surrounding areas rather than the core of the city. For the most part, the outer regions are suffering almost as badly in the Shadow, and there's less competition from werewolves (or otherwise) to get in the way of the healing mission. A notable exception is the town of Stickney, where the Shadow is in particularly poor repair, but — surprisingly enough — a small cadre of vampires has settled in. The lodge members aren't sure what to do about the vampires yet: would it be easier to carry out the members' mission if they were to remove the vampires, or would that complicate things?

Chicago was almost tailor-made for the Lodge of Seasons. During the heat of the summers, humans more readily explode into violence, particularly when nudged by errant spirits. So, during the summer, the lodge goes to war. When the harsh Chicago winter settles in, it's a time for healing — and there's much to do then as well. A werewolf of the Lodge of Seasons could work herself into exhaustion throughout the year here. The only trouble is that when winter comes, it becomes harder to peacefully carry out the lodge's imperative. Winter-aspected members of the Lodge of Seasons also have a real enemy in the presence of the Ivory Claw pack the Seekers of Silenced Voices, whose members are delving into the secrets of Chicago's dead for less-than-charitable reasons.

The Lodge of Wrath only rarely operates in the city; the lodge's members have chosen sacred places that "are still worth protecting." Even if the Hunters in Darkness were to find a demonstrably valuable and sacred site, devotees of Wrath would still have a hard time protecting an urban territory in the manner to which they have become accustomed. You just can't disappear that many humans without causing a stink, dammit. Members of the lodge are more likely to enter the city on missions of vengeance, pursuing targets who committed sins against the holy places and then fled to the city. It's said that the Blanot cousins of the Ivory Claws are two such targets — but then again, it's also said that there are a few Forsaken in Chicago who've been marked for a similar expression of fury.

The Iron Masters

The Iron Masters are well represented in Chicago; their tribal philosophy has proven quite attractive to many emerging young werewolves for a long time now. In particular, the Iron Masters have done well attracting new recruits after each of the successive troubles that have hit the city, from the Great Fire and the Depression to the rising problems with gang violence. "Adaptation is key," the Iron Masters say, "and we'll show you how to adapt to all this. We'll teach you how to rebuild your life." At present, they are the most populous Forsaken tribe in the central Chicago area, and hold a commensurate amount of influence.

Of course, having the prominent place in the city also means that it's generally expected of the Iron Masters to lead by example in challenging the enemies of the Forsaken. And there the Iron Masters have some difficulty. Their practice of adaptation doesn't do wonders for impressing the other tribes with their leadership. The Iron Masters don't take an aggressive enough tack with the Pure for the Blood Talons' tastes, and the Iron Masters aren't quite as adept at solving spiritual troubles as the Bone Shadows. The Storm Lords can see the Iron Masters' weaknesses a little too easily, and the Hunters in Darkness aren't impressed with the current state of Chicago at all. Many members of the Iron Masters tribe feel a great political pressure, even where such isn't necessarily implied.

The Iron Masters are also the tribe most likely to cross paths with the other supernaturals in Chicago, at least out-

side special circumstances. Certainly, a Bone Shadow might be more likely to stumble across the spirit-spoor of a Thyrsus mage, but the Iron Master has a greater chance of running into a vampire or mage of any description. And, of the tribes, the *Farsil Luhal* are the most likely to consider cultivating such entities as potential contacts. Adaptation is key. If the vampires are arriving in force, you find a way to adapt to that circumstance and come out stronger.

Lodges

The Lodge of Scrolls is the most prominently entrenched in Chicago; three of the more powerful Iron Masters in the city have been initiated into the brotherhood, and they're evangelical about it. Most of the city's prominent *Farsil Luhal* have already been approached about joining together to share in the lodge's reserves of lore. The many changes that Chicago has undergone are the lodge's primary area of focus, though some members have become more interested in attempting to acquire the lore of other supernatural subcultures. It's difficult going, attempting to set up an information exchange with a vampire or mage, though it would make quite a coup.

The Lodge of Metal has lingered in Chicago for a long time, reaching their heights with the rise of the Industrial Age. Their activities have tended to focus on the manufacturing areas of Chicago, where they invoked spirits of fire and steel and machinery during the glory days. Those days are gone now; though Chicago still has a number of active manufacturing plants, the press of rust has taken its toll both on local industry and on the Lodge of Metal's spirits. At present, the lodge seems to be infected with the same sort of spiritual rust that plagues the area. Most of its members are older werewolves, too frequently lost in dreams of the past or falling into despair when they look at the present or future. Sam Austenfeld is one of the most promising new recruits, but he seems to have set the lodge's aims to the side in favor of chasing pack ambition. The lodge is much in need of a fresh infusion of zeal, before the members give in to the rust entirely.

The Lodge of Lightning has only a scattered presence in the city, with no members among the ranking packs of the central area. There are no clear leaders among the Iron Masters who've entered the lodge, and each member seems to pursue a different area of application — one might be fascinated by the electrical-spirits empowering the el train, while another plans field trips out to the nearest hydroelectric plant. The one thing that seems to catch on the imaginations of each one, though, is the Sears Tower — there's a prevailing thought that the locus rumored to exist at the tower's top channels the power of the sky through the metal of the tower. If this rumor is true, that would be one of the greatest acquisitions the lodge could make. The only thing stopping the lodge is the reputation that's built up around the tower. Nobody's ready to make the first move. Yet.

The Storm Lords

The Storm Lords like it around Chicago. Winter Wolf is said to be pleased with a land that can endure such harsh winters, and with those of his children who show similar fortitude. To some extent, the tribe looks on the city as a fine testing ground for *nuzusul*. People tough enough not just to make it but to thrive in the city have all the more chance of being strong enough to impress Winter Wolf and be inducted into his tribe.



Chicago's Storm Lords are well aware that they aren't the most influential and numerous tribe in town; that honor belongs to the Iron Masters and, to a lesser extent, the Bone Shadows. The Lords don't begrudge either of these tribes their numerical advantage; not everyone can live up to Winter Wolf's demanding standards, and it's only natural that other, less stringent tribes would allow a greater number of new werewolves through initiation. The Storm Lords also say that they don't begrudge these tribes the current political edge, but that's less true. The current tense balance between Pure and Forsaken has set everyone on edge, and the Storm Lords are more nervous than most. What kind of leader would Olivia Citysmith be in times of trouble if she's lost much of her pack in the last bout of strife? How much strength can the Whispers bring to bear if their contacts and information network proves not to be the solution? Cateria Kensas is a good leader, and one of their own, but is she enough? Presently the Storm Lords of Chicago are watching the other powerful leaders very carefully, watching for signs of weakness. They probably watch a little too closely, and some (such as James Fulton) are even willing to quietly pay for information on the weak points of their peers. In order to help, of course.

Once each year, the Storm Lords of Chicago hold a tribal gathering in the coldest part of the winter, where they ritually renew their oaths to Skolis-Ur, exchange information and boasts, and formally welcome any new recruits to the tribe. The location shifts from year to year, but it's is always outdoors with full exposure to the elements — it might be on a rooftop one year and a bleak snowy field the next. The gathering is one where many plots and ambitious plans are conceived for the following year. Sometimes, these plans are even shared with the rest of the tribe.

Lodges

Cateria Kensas, the alpha of the Slaughterhouse Five, actively represents the Lodge of Thunder in Chicago. She is very much a lead-by-example type, and exemplifies the lodge's belief that even if might doesn't precisely *make* right, it's the best damn weapon that right can have. Most of the other local members are younger Lords from the outlying territories, some of whom look up to Cateria with hero-worship. Every now and then, one overestimates his personal strength and makes a bid for power or rash play against the Pure, somewhat to the embarrassment of the lodge; lodge members don't like to see their members overestimate themselves, because that leads to failure. A pack who helped extricate a too-brash lodge member from a predicament of his own making might receive reward not in the form of praise, but in the form of hush money. And yet, Cateria has said on more than one occasion that she looks forward to seeing another of the lodge's champions arise, which gives the sons and daughters of Thunder extra motivation to rise to the top.

The Lodge of Winter has a number of members throughout the area who keep loose contact with one another. Although they certainly don't set their personal pride aside, in Chicago they're the Storm Lords most likely to contact other tribes to share important information. They assist Bone Shadows with divinatory rituals made to interpret threats to the city's Shadow, and collaborate with Hunters of Darkness and Blood Talons to more clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local Pure. Lodge members have a great interest in the theories of occult architecture that are promoted by werewolves such as Olivia Citysmith, and will go to some lengths to unravel these mysteries and their applications in Chicago.

The Storm Lords in the Lodge of Crows, of course, keep largely quiet about their ambitions. There aren't many, of course; it's a tricky place to be a puppeteer when there are so many other hands reaching out for the strings. The lodge's local representatives are mostly young werewolves acting on behalf of their reclusive "patrons," laying the groundwork for plans the young ones don't really understand. A young Crow is in an interesting position, as she's sure to have plenty to do and a lot of hints about where she could gather information she can use herself. And if she's clever enough to piece out what sort of plot she's enabling, she might even be able to take control and reap the benefits herself. It's a form of betrayal, certainly, but the sort that other Crows would have no choice but to applaud.

Ghost Wolves

And then there are the tribeless. Those *Thihirtha Numea* who choose to operate in the Chicago area are a difficult group to predict; it's uncertain how many of them actually have sworn the Oath of the Moon.

The greatest resource available to Chicago's Ghost Wolves is the Hair of the Dog, a West Side bar run by three of their own that generally serves as a neutral watering hole for the Forsaken. The Hair of the Dog doesn't necessarily offer a place to crash or a free sip of Essence — the owners are still werewolves, and too territorial to freely welcome anyone into the backrooms that are *theirs*. But the owners will usually help out fellow Ghost Wolves with problems that can't really be solved anywhere else, such as performing the Rite of the Spirit Brand. However, it's definitely possible to overstay one's welcome at the Hair of the Dog.

The Pure

The last decade has seen the Pure Tribes take several blows as a whole. Several of their packs, even the stronger ones, lost members in skirmishes with the Forsaken, while a few packs were driven from the city and have yet to return. At present, the Pure are still not quite as strong as they were 10 years ago, but they're already strong enough to claim a heavy share of the balance of power.

The Fire-Touched

The children of Rabid Wolf treat Chicago almost as a holy place of sorts. Local priests of the Fire-Touched have spoken many times about the Great Fire, painting it not as a great tragedy but as a missed opportunity. The city was almost cleansed, almost purged — but whether it was the lack of the spirits' will or the weakness of the Pure, the task wasn't finished. The city was rebuilt, and the humans regained strength. Yet, the priests cry, the burn marks remain. And there is much to be learned there.

That said, the Fire-Touched aren't the most numerous of the Pure in Chicago. The Ivory Claws are possessive about the best swaths of territory toward the center of town, leaving the Fire-Touched to claim larger portions of the surrounding area. A Pure pack in the western portion of Chicago is more likely to be led by the Fire-Touched than any other tribe. The most notable pack with Fire-Touched leadership in central Chicago is the Scorched Heavens pack, a young and somewhat inexperienced gang with the fevered ambition of igniting a second Great Fire.

The Ivory Claws

The Ivory Claws have entrenched themselves in Chicago more successfully than the rest of their Pure brethren. The Ivory Claws have long ties with the area, and many strains of Ivory Claw blood run through families in the city itself and its surrounding towns. It's a common sentiment among the children of Winter Wolf that the area should rightfully be theirs — the problem lies with the Forsaken who have managed to resist the Pure for so long.

It actually sticks in the tribe's collective craw that the Forsaken have proved so resilient. Unfortunately, the long history of conflict hasn't had a clear-cut winner for over a century. The Ivory Claws don't hold the same nostalgic view for the Great Fire that their Fire-Touched cousins do. According to the Ivory Claws' lore, the Pure had greatly outnumbered the Forsaken prior to the fire, and would have exterminated the heretics had not the fire acted as a leveler and forced both sides to rebuild. This side of the story conflicts with the Fire-Touched version, however, and so the Ivory Claws don't speak of it too openly. It wouldn't do to suggest too firmly that one of the Pure Tribes might have an incomplete view of things.

Most of the strong packs in the heart of the city have Ivory Claw leadership, such as the Hooked Claws and the Cold River Hunters. Patrick Keeneye leads the Lex Talionis, arguably the strongest Pure pack in the area, and the Seekers of Silenced Voices are a mostly Ivory Claw pack that focuses more on a particular spiritual mission than on tribal politics.

The Predator Kings

Unsurprisingly, the Predator Kings are the least numerous of the Pure in and around Chicago. The city is a hellhole as far as the children of Dire Wolf are concerned, and many of them don't think it's worth trying to take back. A further complication is the elaborate balance of power between Pure and Forsaken, flesh and spirit, werewolves and vampires and mages. There are too damn many potential rivals in the city, which just exaggerates the perception that Chicago is too much trouble for too little reward. If another Great Fire were to begin, the Predator Kings from the surrounding areas might move in to hunt while the ashes were still cooling or take apart prey in the confusion, particularly if they were convinced it would hurt the odds of rebuilding. Until then, the Predator Kings most likely to be found in Chicago are those who treat the city more as a place to hunt for sport and the young ones who are still trying to reconcile the path of Dire Wolf with their urban upbringings.

There are no Predator King-dominant packs in the central Chicago area. Some may be found in the outlying suburbs, but they are more likely to be "tourists" — werewolves who have come to hunt for a time, looking to get exercise, sport and maybe a little bit of information before they return to the rural spaces where they thrive.

Out for a Bite

One of the hallmarks of Chicago is its food, and werewolves are renowned for their appetites. A few establishments even seem tailor-made to cater to werewolf tastes, offering game meats such as venison, elk and boar alongside the gloriously American giant hamburgers and immense slabs of steak, even buffalo. Naturally, werewolves of truly high Harmony would rather hunt their own food and eat it raw. But a pack with more human tastes might find such an establishment the perfect place to go to kick back some beers and devour platefuls of meat, particularly if the members have been recently wounded and need to replenish their resources.

Of course, if a restaurant/bar can draw one pack in this fashion, it can draw two — and werewolves aren't bad at sniffing one another out. What happens when the players' characters cross paths with a rival pack in a public location, particularly after they've been drinking? And what if the other pack are Pure? Which side will make the first move — or leave first, exposing their backs to the other? Will one pack decide that it'll be easier to stake a claim by threatening the humans or easier to cover up a brawl by murdering the humans and burning the place down? And all they wanted was a night out . . . .

Bale Hounds

The werewolves who have given themselves to the Maeljin show no greater organization in Chicago than they do in other locales. Two sub-cults of Bale Hounds could exist within half a mile of one another and not know each other's true allegiances — because most Bale Hounds, for the sake of safety, hide their loyalties even from one another. There's no secret gesture or password to identify themselves, no central organization; a werewolf who swore to serve Thurifuge because she believed that the ascendant rule of Violence was inevitable doesn't necessarily have anything in common with the werewolf who sold his soul to Carnala in exchange for blasphemous delights.

There are several signs of Bale Hound activity for those werewolves looking for them — and who know what to look for. In the shifting mire of street gangs, a few have arisen that are reputed strangely occult initiation rituals; these gangs, whether in Chinatown or Vega Baja, punish their rivals with almost formally brutal violence and dis-

play their wealth ostentatiously. From time to time, the ritually dismembered body of a homeless person or runaway is found in a stockyard or on a street corner where a shooting took place. Chicago's long history of violence has left a legacy that the servants of Thurifuge gladly exploit. The whispers of Mammon draw in those who fall into the culture of greed, and the long decay of the Rust Belt has convinced some that perhaps Beliar's aspect of sloth will ultimately triumph over industry. The Bale Hounds of the Chicago area tend to be drawn to one of these three, and operate either singly or in cells of two to four. Most Bale Hounds probably fit into the "beta" level of power; experienced enough to cover their trails fairly well, yet not so powerful that the other werewolves are watching them closely enough to out them quickly.

But the most dangerous Bale Hound in the city has yet to leave any real sign of her loyalties. She doesn't indulge in carnage or depravity, though her plans may gradually encourage both to skyrocket in the city. Her devotion is to the Calipha of Pride, an arrangement less like worship and more like a business transaction. She is subtle as any werewolf has a right to be, and she has no Bale Hound underlings to accidentally betray her — those who assist her in her works are her own unwitting pack, and even those of her tribe.

Alphas, Betas and Omegas

This book groups packs of werewolves by their general amount of influence and overall ability. "Alpha packs" are the leaders among the Uratha, those packs that hold the largest territories and wield the greatest influence over their fellow packs. Members of these packs hold the positions of power, and correspondingly are also leaders within their lodges and tribes. "Beta packs" have earned some amount of recognition, and have carved out desirable territories that they've held for some time, but can't generally compete with the alpha packs. Finally, the "omega packs" are the lowest rung of the werewolf hierarchy — the inexperienced, the recent arrivals or the unlucky and disenfranchised. Many of Chicago's "omegas" aren't even in packs at all.

While this book tends to discuss werewolves in terms of alpha, beta or omega for simplicity's sake, these aren't common terms thrown around by the Forsaken themselves. Werewolf society isn't as closely knit as the wolf packs that provide this metaphor; a beta pack won't take orders from an alpha pack just because the more powerful pack "outranks" it. Similarly, an omega pack isn't the "omega of werewolf society" in the same way the omega of a wolf pack would be — the omega pack may suffer some abuse and disrespect from a senior pack, but that usually derives from the personalities of the two packs involved rather than any social trend.

That said, when one pack first hears about or meets another, it's inevitable that the werewolves size up the other pack in terms of relative strength. Werewolves are social animals and at least as status-conscious as the humans they walk among. Even if two packs have promised mutual support, they're sure to have worked it out in their heads what to do if the alliance goes sour and they wind up at each other's throats. A pack may not think of their neighbors as "alpha to our beta," but they're sure to recognize "too strong for us to challenge — yet."

The Others

One of the things that werewolves of Chicago learn quickly is that they aren't alone; they share their streets with things that have great supernatural power but do not draw such power from the Shadow. Some werewolves don't take well to the idea. It's hard enough to share a territory with the teeming humans who cross the borders this way and that out of sheer ignorance. To be asked to accept that there are people — if "people" is the right word — just as ignorant but with many times the power? It's a difficult thing to accept.

Basic Knowledge

A werewolf with some level of both Survival and Occult can be assumed to know some of the basic facts of life in Chicago's supernatural world. Having a dot in each, for instance, would imply that the character knows about burn scars and spiritual rust, and that the stockyards are spiritually a dangerous place. The more dots in each, the more knowledgeable the character is; a werewolf with Survival ••• and Occult ••• probably could point out most of the city's worst Barrens, shoals and Wounds on a map, would know that the Beshilu are problematic in Chinatown, and the proper etiquette for getting Bright Steel Worm's attention.

Streetwise and Politics can also add to the general pool of knowledge for werewolves. A dot of Streetwise is enough to know the names of all the alpha packs, or the location of the drop point where one can contact the Whispers; four dots might represent obscure knowledge such as the names of the Pure beta packs in town and their alphas. Politics helps with the overall context of which packs have rivalries with which others or knowledge of a pack's general ambitions.

With high Streetwise, Occult and Politics, a werewolf might also have access to some information about the other supernaturals in Chicago. High Occult implies some knowledge of the mages in the area, whereas Politics is useful for understanding the vampires' power games. A werewolf with three dots in Streetwise and Politics might know the basics of vampire territory — certainly not where the local vampires sleep but which areas they consider their private hunting grounds.

Vampires Bearing Gifts

A vampire, or a coterie of vampires, has managed to acquire some territory that contains a locus. More remarkably, the vampires recognize what they have. Perhaps they're making an intuitive leap based on the Ordo Dracul lore of dragon nests, or maybe they were tipped off by wrangling the information out of another pack.

Whatever the instance, the undead know that the locus is something that would be coveted by the characters' pack and are willing to bargain with them. The obvious deal is one of violence — the locus can be theirs, if they're willing to take out one of the vampires' enemies. How much investigation will the characters' pack do before agreeing or disagreeing to the deal? This is another opportunity for people new to the Chicago scene to learn something about the movers-and-shakers, and potentially make a few contacts outside the ties of tribe.

The Hosts

The 20th century was a time of relative inactivity for the local Hosts, at least for most of the time. Many of the latent "seeds" with the possibility of giving birth to new *shartha* perished in the disasters plaguing the area, and many of the remainder were found and devoured by spirits thereafter. It was awfully quiet for a while. It didn't last.

As best as the Forsaken can figure, the new influx of Hosts can be attributed to new *shartha* being born in the surrounding areas and growing strong where there are fewer werewolves to notice, then gradually gravitating to the city proper. The Azlu have many loci to ensnare there, and the Beshilu intuitively sense that certain areas of the Gauntlet are already weak and ripe for the gnawing. The tunnels under Chicago in particular serve as a fertile breeding ground and convenient lair for the Hosts, where they can hide and grow strong down in the warm dark.

The Beshilu

The Rat Hosts of Chicago's presence has waxed and waned over the years. During the 19th century, they reached their height in numbers and strength, concentrated around the South Side and the stockyards, a perfect place to gnaw the Gauntlet and loosen the constraints on the spirit worlds. After the Great Fire, however, the Rat Hosts declined in power — but now they've gotten most of it back. An explosion in the rat population in Chinatown has served as fodder for an up-and-coming nest of Beshilu. Over the years, various external building projects political changes have shrunk Chinatown and shifted its location farther south. A newer, northern Chinatown around the Argyle and Broadway that encompasses a large Vietnamese community has afforded some expansion for the Rat Hosts.

The Azlu

The Spider Hosts tend to keep to themselves, having even less association with one another than the Beshilu. Since the 1980s, some have been in fierce competition with the Beshilu over Chinatown. The Beshilu have a position of strength there, but the Azlu continue to launch attacks against their hated rivals with uncharacteristic lack of caution for their own safety. Downtown is generally seen as unsafe, and only the younger and more foolish Azlu try to establish lairs there; it's not just werewolves who might notice the strange signs of a Spider Host. The tunnels are a perennial favorite, though, and some Azlu enjoy abandoned warehouses and factories above all other potential lairs.



The Shadow

Chicago's spiritual reflection is part Shadow and part scar. The Great Fire of so long ago marked the city's Shadow in ways that have not yet been healed. What's more, the slow degeneration and decline of the Rust Belt as a whole have also exacted their toll on the *Hisil*.

The outer regions of Chicago are equal parts Great Plains and classic American Rust Belt, and the Shadow they cast is shaped accordingly. The *Hisil* is oddly silent around the suburbs — still alive, but quiet. Ithaeur often characterize the spirit world as waiting for something, either for prey to wander into its jaws, or simply waiting to die. The shoals of the region are sadly common, and often manifest as patches of spiritual rust (see below). Bad neighborhoods are dark jungles of brick, chain link and broken glass teeming with spiritual vermin, becoming loud and violent in sudden bursts of energy.

The river itself is a foreboding thing in Shadow, dark and thick. At first, the Chicago River almost seems not to move at all, but anyone who enters the river will find that terrible currents wait just below the surface. Some of these currents travel in the direction that the physical river now flows — others pull in the opposite direction, doggedly remembering the way the river was for millennia before the humans came. Some werewolves tell stories of visitors who tried to seek refuge from the spirits in the river itself, and were torn apart by the deceptive currents before they could drown.

The heart of the city, though, is almost beautiful. Ghostly skeletons of old fire-ruined buildings cluster around baroque towers, the quirks of their architecture exaggerated. The city flickers with light now and again, with luminous patches of something like St. Elmo's fire clustering around buildings before a storm. The tracks for trolleys and trains that no longer run still criss-cross the city streets, and occasionally the spirit of such an engine rattles along on a route that ended long ago. There are more Barrens in the heart of Chicago than in most cities, but there are also more spikes of spiritual energy littering the lakefront. The Bone Shadows claim that Chicago sits in a nexus of Essence flows from around the region, which has given its Shadow such strength.

The Great-Fire-Spirit

The Great Chicago Fire was an event that could not help but scar the Shadow. Three hundred people and many more animals died, and 90,000 people lost their homes in the blaze. And the fire erupted in the Shadow as well. The *Hisil* practically exploded with Essence even as the flames devoured those mirror-replicas of buildings that had managed to establish themselves. Spirits perished in the phantom flames, which themselves took on consciousness and independence. Hundreds of Gafflings were born during the fire — but one spirit began to prey on the newborns as well. Within the course of the night, it had devoured so many and fed on so much Essence that it was nearly unstoppable.

The Forsaken called it *Hulhu-Kuuz*, "the city-devourer," while the Pure remember it as *Ulukhirin*, "the godly scepter of light." But nobody ever learned the Great-Fire-Spirit's true name. None were able to speak to it or reason with it; those who saw it and survived did so from a distance. The spirit raged across the *Hisil* as the fire devoured the city, and some say that the spirit even forced its way across the Gauntlet.

If the spirit had pushed its way into the material world, it's possible that act was what led to its ultimate defeat. The last of the Great Chicago Fire was extinguished by a rainfall, and some Ithaeur have speculated that the natural rain acted on the Great-Fire-Spirit's ban. Since its ban, like its name, was never really known, nobody can say for certain. But after the fire itself had been quelled, the Great-Fire-Spirit itself fell into dormancy. It wasn't destroyed — that much is certain. If a spirit of such power had been destroyed, it seems inevitable that another spirit would have fallen on its remains and reached a similar level of power through cannibalism.

To the werewolves of Chicago — and certain others mystically "in the know" — the Great-Fire-Spirit is now a thing of urban legend. The spirit certainly must have gone dormant somewhere in Chicago, but nobody knows precisely where the spirit sleeps, what form it may have taken or what might wake it once more. To this day, though, the Forsaken of Chicago have always been that extra bit wary of arson, out of fear that a sufficient fire will rouse *Hulhu-Kuuz* once again.

And, for their part, some of the Pure anticipate such a day . . . .

Fire from the Sky

The Chicago Fire, terrible as it was, was only one of three major fires that happened at largely the same time. Several towns and villages also burned to the ground, most notably Peshtigo, Wisconsin — the deadliest fire in American history. For some time there have been persistent theories that these fires were all started by the same source, most likely fragments from a comet such as Biela's Comet.

Some werewolves who've heard the theories take them a step further. Legend states that the idigam were banished out beyond the moon in the days of Father Wolf — could the fires have been started by one of those monstrous spirits breaking free? Was the Great-Fire-Spirit a fragmented part of an idigam that worked its way to freedom nearly a century before its brethren followed? A pack could easily be caught up in a race to investigate the possibility; after all, if the theory is true, no matter how improbable, it would imply the existence of a previously unknown idigam of tremendous power.

Symptoms of the Shadow

Chicago has its glades and shoals, its Woundss and Barrens, much like any other location. But no two spirit land-

scapes are precisely the same. Just as the unmarked Shadow casts a reflection of Chicago rather than a generic city, the pockmarks and pools across that reflection mirror the scars and dreams of the Windy City. A shoal in Chicago could resemble a shoal in Los Angeles, but it's more likely that it represents the color of the Rust Belt.

Burn Scars

Some sections of Chicago's spirit world are still seared to this day. The shadows of buildings erected on the spot quickly darken with soot and ash, and the smell of smoke and burnt flesh lingers faintly in the area. A slight visual distortion, like rising heat, fills the area. These places can easily set werewolves on edge, sensitive as the Uratha are to places of spiritual discord.

A few burn scars are worse. Even after more than 130 years, they have not healed. Embers still glow in the ashes underfoot and a spiritual substance like human fat oozes from the blackened walls. These scars are usually the site of a fire that had a particularly ugly effect — devouring a family in their beds or consuming victims that had been deliberately abandoned or locked inside. The scars have lingered through the years partly from the violence that created them and partly from being nourished by the spirits that tend them, watering their blisters and cracks like a bed of flowers.

A lesser burn scar in the Shadow imposes a –1 penalty to all Harmony rolls and all rolls made to resist Death Rage for those that are within its area of influence. The largest scars, those that refuse to heal, are Wounds in their own right (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 259), and are inevitably populated by tainted fire elementals, burn elementals or conceptuals of pain, destruction or death.

Scorched Shadow

Several portions of Chicago, even in the heart of the city, have been seared virtually beyond repair. If the burn scars recall the livid pain of the city, the scorched earth of the *Hisil* has burned away the very nerves until pain is no longer possible. While a certain lingering heat remains in a burn scar, the temperature in a swath of scorched Shadow is just a touch cooler than usual, as if the ashes drink up all the ambient heat. There is no visual distortion whatsoever, and the outlines of the territory are picked out very clearly in the burn marks.

Sections of scorched Shadow are the most common expression of Chicago's Barrens. They manifest almost exclusively in the central areas where Chicago burned in 1871, though the occasional one has been known to appear elsewhere, perhaps created by a copycat instance. Barrens created by other circumstances are, of course, as likely to crop up in Chicago as anywhere else.

Rust

Chicago and its environs define the western edge of the Rust Belt, a section of America where loss and despair have corroded the Shadow as well as the human spirit. Here, when negative resonance and Essence pool to create shoals, they tend to manifest as a shadowy form of rust.

Patches of spiritual rust are usually easy to spot. Buildings have lost their outer coverings, and the support girders crumble and flake. Hulks of corroded machinery squat on trash-strewn floors — machines that sometimes have no material counterpart or recognizable function. Even organic shadows such as trees flake and rust, their skin or bark peeling away to show oxidized metal beneath. The spirits that skulk through these places seem rusted themselves as well, with patches appearing like scabs on their forms.

Most sections of spiritual rust follow the rules for shoals (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 258). Some, however, are Wounds — places where despair gave rise to murderous desperation. A rusted Wound might seem at first little different from its shoal counterpart, but the signs are visible enough. The spirit rust is a touch redder and smells more like infected flesh, the exposed jags of corroded metal are sharper and darkly stained or the creaking and groaning of metal whisper blasphemous words in the First Tongue.

Winter

The Shadow reflects even the seasons of the physical world, though generally not quite to the same extremes. The spirit world is called the Shadow for a reason, and sunlight is never quite as bright there; the shadow cast by summer may pulse with heat in the *Hisil*, but the heat emanates from the entire land rather than beating down from above. Nature-spirits may become more agitated during spring, but the Shadow isn't charged with the popular mass-media images of sunlight and flowers. If the spiritual reflection seems properly autumnal when fall rolls around, it's as much because the physical world is temporarily in synch with the overall feel of the Shadow itself. A particularly hot summer might lend strength to the spirit landscape when tempers flare and it's impossible to think about anything but the heat, but overall, Chicago's Shadow doesn't change as dramatically with the seasons.

The exception is winter. Chicago winters are fierce and harsh, often burying the city under snow and ice. Water elementals undergo a seasonal shift in demeanor, becoming colder and sharper by nature. Flame-spirits rebel against the reigning spirits of ice and snow, drawing power from the many fires people light to stay warm. Artificial-spirits may become erratic as cold weather immobilizes cars and beats down unprotected machinery. And conceptual-spirits grow stronger or weaker as the city's psyche shifts — spirits of despair are particularly strong during the coldest part of the season, when the sun is mostly missing and the holidays weigh heavily on the lonely.

During winter, the shift in spiritual power affects werewolves and spirits alike. In game terms, all rolls made for Numina, Influences, Gifts or rites that invoke the prevailing forces of winter (such as a winter-spirit's Blast (ice) Numen or the Gifts: Killing Frost or Silent Fog) gain a +1 modifier. Conversely, spiritual powers that are stifled by the winter (such as Influence: Warmth or the Gift: Plant Growth) suffer a –1 penalty.

Terrible winter storms can also wrack the Shadow, with or without a corresponding winter storm on the physical side. Such storms double the modifiers and penalties listed above, though only if the user is currently within the *Hisil* or within a locus' area of effect.

Spirits of the Windy City

There is no single spirit of the city of Chicago. At present, two spirits are struggling for that eminently desirable niche, and there is no clear winner in sight. One is the former city-spirit of Chicago, which was badly scarred during the Great Fire and had trouble rebuilding its power during Prohibition and the Depression. The other is a relative newcomer that has gained strength quickly, a potent spirit of industry. Each one insists on being called "Master Chicago," "Lord Chicago" or some other respectful variation on the occasion that a werewolf or mage makes contact with one or the other. The Forsaken comply when face-to-visage with one of the would-be city-spirits, but among themselves they tend to keep things clear by saying "Old Town" or "New Town."

As in most other places, the vast majority of Chicago's spirit denizens aren't big guns; they're Gafflings. The Shadow is teeming with these lesser entities, the lower rungs on the spiritual food chain. Most Gafflings wrestle unceasingly with the acquisition of Essence and let human and werewolf affairs run normally.

• **Nature:** Like most major cities, Chicago boasts a nature-spirit population that is mostly confined to spirits that have physical analogues within the city and a few "immigrants"— that is to say, spirits that appear more due to a symbolic presence. For instance, the Lake Howlers pack follows the totem Salmon Against the Stream, which manifests not due to a local presence of salmon but as a nature-spirit that embodies perseverance.

• **Artificial:** Spirits of the artificial choirs abound in Chicago. Most of them are reflections of the current machines that populate the city, but many have survived past their physical analogues. Spirits of long-gone trains and trolleys still survive in the city's Shadow, and gun-spirits still incorporate the form of the infamous Thompson submachine gun. Artificial-spirits are the most susceptible to the debilitating effects of spiritual rust, a fact many recognize. The Chicago area is currently seeing a growing spike in the numbers of artificial-spirits that force their way through the Gauntlet in order to escape the corrosion of the Shadow.

• **Elementals:** Urban and industrial as it is, Chicago plays host to an unusually large population of elementals. Water elementals are the most common, dominating the shorelines and rising in power with each winter. Though these elementals aren't prone to moving too far inland, they are arguably *the* force to be reckoned with along the waterfront. As expected, the Windy City is also home to a number of air elementals, though their population tends to fluctuate with the weather. Both water and air elementals can be affected by pollution, and long-term exposure to the resonance generated by smog or water pollution tends to infect these spirits with an extra level of oily malice. A water elemental born of heavily polluted waters wants to "share" its extra taint, largely because the taint has become an entity of its own. Lore holds that the spirit of the river itself is a patiently malicious entity, one that slumbers in the deepest portions of the river and only rarely shows itself on the banks.

Earth elementals in their purest form are rare. Most have been affected by the industrial nature of the city; metal and concrete are more common than stone and soil. However, the fire-spirits of Chicago are more numerous and powerful than those of many other cities. The city *remembers* burning on some level, and the memory fuels spirits of flame. Each one has some fragmentary memory of the glory that once was, and each one aspires to become the next Great-Fire-Spirit.

As for the Great-Fire-Spirit itself, it is presumed to still be present, although in Slumber. If it were to awaken, it would probably have the potency of a Greater Jaggling, and a powerful one at that. Its ambitions would be quite clear: to finish the job it started.

• **Celestials:** Lunes and Helions are rarely seen in Chicago, but this is not an unusual circumstance; celestial-spirits rarely descend to Earth without a mandate of some sort. The only real local quirk is that celestials are more rarely seen during the winter, in part due to the clouds that often cover the Shadow's sky.

• **Conceptuals:** Conceptual-spirits may represent abstractions invented by humanity, but the spirits themselves don't always take form from human emotion. Although Chicago has historically always done great business in the meatpacking industry, the spirits that populate the region of the stockyards are less nature-spirits and more conceptuals. They were spawned by the pain, fear and death of countless animals, not by the animals themselves.

That said, naturally entire legions of conceptuals are born from the hope, fear and pain of the teeming human population. Spirits of greed, violence, desperation and despair flower in rundown neighborhoods like Englewood, while the shining towers of the Loop attract spirits of avarice, ambition and pride. Some of the worst of these squirm through the blistered Wounds that dot the spiritscape here and there, and conceptuals of all stripes take advantage of the greater number of loci that come into being in the city.

• **Magath:** The very nature of the composite spirits called magath makes it nearly impossible to include them in sweeping statements. However, it's important to remember that not all hybrid spirits are necessarily magath. Pain-of-Animals, the powerful spirit born of the stockyards, represents both animals and suffering, but is not a magath. The actual pain of animals, strong enough to generate this spirit, is a force in its own right. In similar fashion, a burn elemental that fused with a death-spirit might not technically be a magath, presuming that the death-spirit was not wholly unrelated to death by fire. Chicago is home to a number of hybrid spirits, but only the most bizarre and unnatural can be considered magath.

The Pissing Man

The urban legend goes something like this — an old man from Chinatown, his mind addled and his English poor, one day wandered from his home. He ended up at an el station (some say near the Michael Reese Hospital, others suggest he made it much farther), and unsure where he even was, realized he had to urinate. He did so — on the third rail of the el tracks. Electricity

from this high-voltage rail shot up the piss stream and fried him where he stood.

The legend, it seems, is true (or, at the very least, has been made manifest through its many retellings). While the electricity killed him, it didn't diminish his presence — instead, the ghost of this old man hobbled back to Chinatown, where he can be seen from time to time during dusk, spraying his spectral piss on anything and everything. Legend tells, however, that the Pissing Man (as he's called) knows a great deal about the activity of the spirits in the area, and holds a great many secrets. The trick is getting him to talk — and when he does, trying to understand his thick Cantonese dialect.



Arrival

Getting to Chicago is the easy part. Whether a pack travels by train at noon or slinks into the city on four feet under the cover of a clouded moon, arriving in Chicago isn't the problem. Once the pack has arrived, however, everything changes, becoming a matter of survival and stubbornness. How willing are the Forsaken when it comes to fighting for an inch of territory with tooth and claw? How committed are they in regards to getting what they want from the Windy City? Are their goals even possible? Is it worth coming to this overcrowded, sickened place, a metropolis whose spirits dream of a burning city, whose very spiritual fundament frays at the edges?

Goals

The Forsaken do not travel to Chicago for trifling reasons. Newcomers to the city arrive here with some purpose in mind, enough of a purpose to warrant getting one's hide torn off in a fight, because that could very well be the end result. What goals do werewolves have that makes it worth the struggle to carve out a niche here in the Windy City? How can they achieve such objectives?

Atonement

Werewolves are Forsaken for a reason, and now they are left fettered to their duty to heal the spiritual world, cutting free the cancerous skin and letting the healthy tissue of that other place grow.

Chicago, as mentioned in other chapters, is a place of sickness. The spiritual reflection of the city still bears the scabs of those fires that have burned over the years. The city is like a burn victim whose healthy flesh is overshadowed by the raw red blisters still covering much of the body.

Some werewolves come to this place out of duty. Many come to try to eke out some kind of existence or gain some kind of temporal power base, and many undergo the First Change here and choose to remain, but a number of immigrants arrive here because this place is diseased, and the Forsaken reluctantly adhere to their mission to heal the spiritually sick. In Chicago, men are corrupt, the ground is poisoned, and the scar tissue is thick and inflamed. Many Forsaken come to cut out the corruption, the poison and the ailing tissue. The city is a hunting ground in great need of dedicated predators.

Hunting and Tracking

Werewolves hunt. It's in their nature, sewn into the fabric of their souls. Some werewolves hunt enemies — bad men, Bane Howlers, dark spirits, cruel vampires, selfish mages, the Pure, the Ridden. Some werewolves hunt allies — werewolves, helpful spirits, other supernaturals. From time to time, the prey comes to Chicago, and a pack must follow its quarry into the urban decay and the fire-seared spirit world. However, such a task is not without complications.

Assuming that an enemy isn't just passing through Chicago, what other reasons exist for a pack's prey to come to the city? For one, the quarry may come here for safety. Should the enemy have even the subtlest hint that he is being hunted, he may come here seeking asylum from allies. An enemy taking refuge in this manner becomes embedded — once a sole agent, he now gains connections to a support system of allies. Do the enemy's allies become new adversaries for the pack? If the pack must go through these new opponents to get to its prey, they run the risk of making an insurmountable army of new foes.

The alliances public and private of Chicago run together like a convoluted spider's web. Tug one string, and who knows how many eyes turn toward you? Every action in the city, however small, comes with untold repercussions, and such repercussions could make the basis for a brief story or a long chronicle. For instance, the pack comes to Chicago pursuing a Machiavellian mage who stole an artifact of great spiritual value from the pack. Once the mage reaches the city, she hooks up with a coterie of vampires whom she helped in the past, who still owe her for the favor and choose to stand in the way of the pack's pursuit. Destroying the vampires remains an option, but doing so could set off a chain of events that could bring a tidal wave of opposition down upon the werewolves' heads, as the vampires are part of a well-connected network of obligations and allegiances. What does the pack choose to do? Crush the vampires? Attempt an alliance with them? Remain patient and hope fortune presents a future opportunity?

Tracking an ally (or potential ally) to the city comes with its own complications. First, simply finding the ally in the city could be a chore unto itself. Second, just because he's the pack's ally doesn't mean he doesn't have enemies of his own. Such enemies are unlikely to allow the ally to escape unharmed, and may seek to end his life prematurely. To protect the ally, the pack will have to undo any malfeasance intended for the ally, but doing so may involve gaining additional enemies. Is the ally worth such a risk? Can the pack even get to the ally, or his enemies, in time?

Opportunity

Foolish or prideful Uratha see Chicago as a land of opportunity. For the most part, they're wrong. Opportu-

nity here is gained only at the end of a raked claw or a lead pipe. Available territory is down to paltry scraps — even gaining the favor of local spirits is a competition of fierce proportions. That's not to say opportunity doesn't exist here. Chicago is a place of much power. Many spirits know secret or hard-to-learn Gifts, and moreover the Windy City is home to forgotten lore — tales about the separation of the Shadow Realm from the reality of flesh, fragments of rumor about the death of Father Wolf, hidden truths about fire, sickness, rage and madness. In more mundane areas, Chicago is a big city with big money and temporal power for those werewolves who seek it. The issue isn't that Chicago is devoid of prospects — the problem is that finding and exploiting those prospects is a dangerous and difficult struggle.

First Change

Not all Forsaken newcomers travel *to* Chicago — some are "born" here as werewolves for the first time, experiencing their First Changes in or around the metropolitan area. Life for a newly Changed werewolf in Chicago is significantly different from that of an older Uratha coming to the city for the first time. For the neophyte Forsaken, the city is far stranger, the shadows running darker and the buildings growing taller. Who will help her? Where can she go?

First Contact

Because of the densely packed supernatural population, a werewolf's First Change is going to be noted. It distorts the local spirit wilds and sets the nearby spirits into a tumult. A lucky cub is spotted by a watchful Ithaeur or Elodoth who claims nearby territory. An unlucky one is preyed upon any number of potential threats — spirits, Ridden, Hosts, the Pure, even vampires or wizards. For this reason, immediately after experiencing the First Change, a young Forsaken is tossed into a world of instantaneous danger. Not only could other predators come with minds set on murder or manipulation, but it's also possible that local Forsaken will come and fight over claimant's rights in regard to the new Uratha. (And that new Uratha may very well suffer in such a battle.) Alternately, some particularly brutal werewolves of low Harmony want nothing to do with a First Changer, and will either ignore such an event or instead flock to it with the sole purpose of exiling or even murdering the *nuzusul*. After all, who wants competition in this already bloodthirsty city?

Even if such danger isn't intrinsic to the moment, the harrying chase for a bite afterward can be. In rural areas, this chase is hampered by less of a population — but when such a hunt takes place in the city, anything can happen. Some cubs are taken by police, hit by cars or accidentally cross over into less forgivable territory as they flee.

Once caught and bitten, a newly Changing werewolf is secreted away, usually to some clandestine spot within the claiming pack's territory. The *nuzusul* will be harangued by spirits and driven to the borders of madness itself, her body shifting grotesquely and uncontrollably. Obviously, this can't happen in full sight of the city, and, hence, why most packs hide a werewolf in the throes of the Change away somewhere — a meat locker, an apartment building's sub-basement, even chained up in the city dump. This isn't to be cruel, but such seclusion is necessary both for the *nuzusul* and for the spirit world of Chicago. (Out of necessity, many Ithaeur and Bone Shadows will go out after the new Forsaken is claimed and attempt to "fix" the damage done by the event, for those strange spirit ripples can cause lasting problems.)

Urban Hallucinations

A werewolf undergoing the First Change in Chicago has a whole different set of experiences than one changing out in the country somewhere, and one of those differences is in just how the world warps and shifts around him. He may experience several of city-specific "hallucinations," most of which are horrifying.

Streetlights flicker and go out as the buildings grow taller and cast shadows that seem more like ragged pits than simple silhouettes. Many First Change Uratha hear not just a few dissonant whispers but the thoughts of the entire city. The spirits that manifest on and around the cub are often city-specific: chittering spiders, rat-spirits, urban elementals of glass or metal.

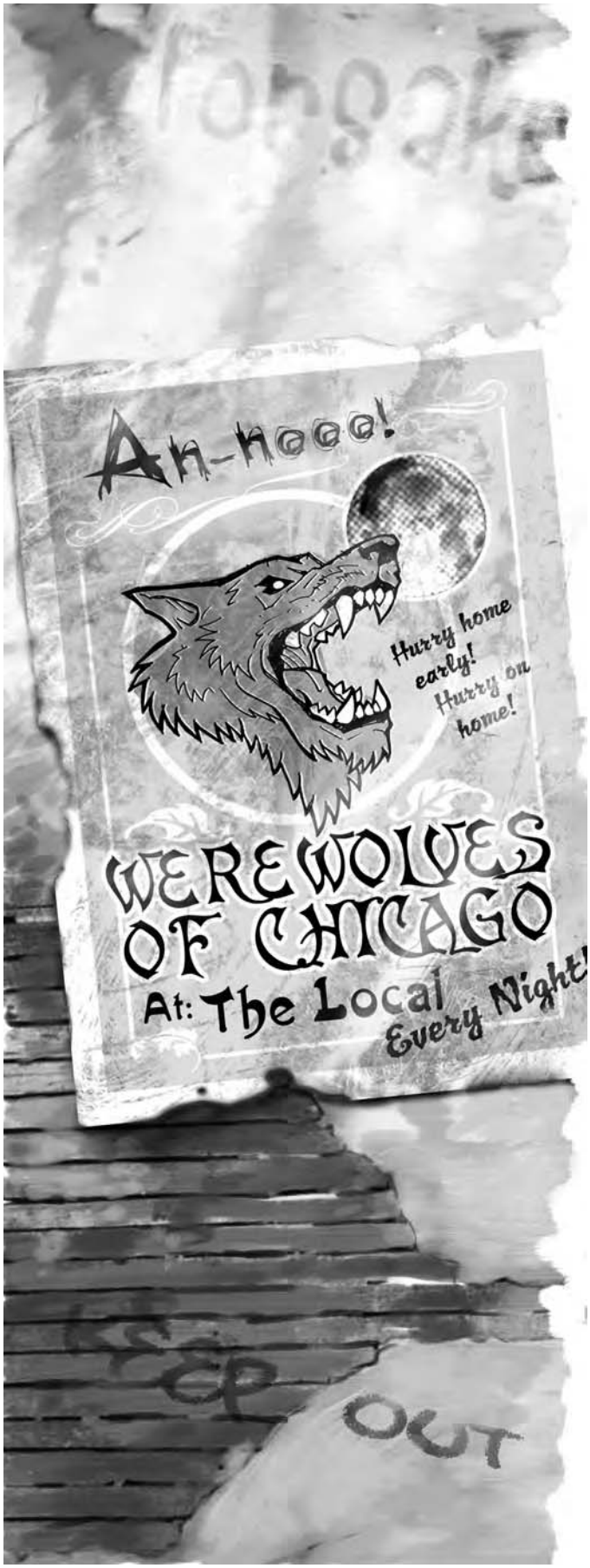
Victims of the First Change may also experience a number of Chicago-specific events. Many claim to have flashbacks (or, more disturbingly, what some believe to be "flash-forwards") of the several fires that have plagued Chicago over the last century-and-a-half. Others find that the el train seems to doggedly pursue them, jumping the tracks and chasing after them. Some even hear the screaming sounds of slaughtered animals or hear the gunshots from gangsters and gangstas, past and present.

Joining a Pack

Hopefully, a freshly Changed werewolf is lucky enough to be adopted into a pack. Some aren't — a new and unwanted pack member is the Uratha equivalent to "another mouth to feed." Forsaken with particularly small territory or a highly focused goal in the city may want some unproven werewolf like a bag on the hip. In most cases, the new Uratha is offered at a local gathering for adoption, with the presumption being that someone will offer to take in the lone cub. If other Uratha have Changed at or around the same time, it will be 'suggested" that all of these neophytes band together in a single pack. (Of course, should this happen, managing to stay alive and find some kind of meager territory is a Herculean task.)

Gatherings

Territory being as sensitive as it is in Chicago means that gatherings don't happen all that frequently, particu-



larly between three packs or more. Going to a gathering means leaving a territory relatively unguarded, and with so many predators out there waiting to take advantage of such a vacancy, however brief, most Forsaken are reluctant to partake in unnecessary meetings. Even so, the arrival of a new pack naturally touches off a series of meetings as the newcomers and the current residents feel out the implicit changes to the social structure.

A new arrival tends to have his first meeting with the locals just before or after he's picked a place to live and has begun treating it as a territory. Once the neighbors are aware that a new werewolf or pack is moving in, they'll want to see what he's made of. Such meetings can be tense affairs. It usually helps if there's a tribal connection between the neighbors and the new arrival: a tribe entails an Oath of common cause that can make both parties a bit more comfortable with one another. Sometimes the gathering can get fairly large, as multiple neighboring packs decide to investigate the newcomers at the same time. This saves time, but is usually far more harrowing for the immigrants. Nobody in their right mind enjoys being the center of attention for multiple, potentially hostile werewolf packs at once.

Other Uratha, however, may justify a gathering due to their very presence. Should a pack of high enough Renown (or at least have some allies in the city who are prominent and powerful Forsaken) come into the city, the occurrence may gain enough momentum to warrant a gathering of more than two packs or of ranking members of many packs. This gathering may be called out of social propriety or may instead be invoked to allow the new pack to hash out its plans while staying in Chicago — which could be a permanent stay. It's in this manner that a new and prominent pack may gain territory, through negotiations at a gathering or via ritual combat. Of course, should a pack be prominent but not necessarily trustworthy, a gathering might be invoked for so-called introductions, but may instead be used as a forum for veiled threats and to make sure that these "outsiders" know their place in the grand scheme of things.

Newly changed Uratha are the exception to the rule in that — provided they're known about — a gathering is always held, even if only to determine where they belong and what form their Rites of Passage will take.

Gatherings can technically be held anywhere in the city, but for the sake of survival and necessity, are usually held in the most remote areas possible. Meets that aren't held outside the city proper (as some are) can be located in many of Chicago's abandoned areas, especially those areas already guarded by a pack or more of local Forsaken. Gatherings might be held in the deserted CTC tunnels below the city, on rooftops, even at one of the many city dumps. Plus, the city is home

to a number of abandoned and condemned buildings. The derelict industrial buildings and empty homes or tenements of the South Side make for reasonable gathering locations. The city is home to other "neutral ground" locations for the Forsaken, as well. The closed-down Utrecht Mental Asylum on the North Side and the Hair of the Dog tavern are both home to occasional gatherings.

One area outside the city that has in the past been a popular ground for gatherings is the Chicagoland Airport in Wheeling. This meager, overgrown airfield has been vacant for just over 30 years, but many of its hangars remain.

Territory

In Chicago, territory is hard fought and even harder won. Rural Uratha are used to having territories of several square miles, if not more. Urban Forsaken are never so lucky. Rarely does a pack's territory go beyond a full block or two; some are small enough to be contained within individual buildings such as tenements, condemned warehouses or water processing stations. Harder still, Forsaken are not just contended with one another's tooth and claw for space in this town — other creatures of the night are afoot, each and every one seeking to stake a claim on his or her or its own little slice of the city, as if the frontier spirit has merged with a bloody street gang attitude, and few are better for it. How can a newcomer to the city negotiate these challenges and find her niche?

Territorial Boundaries

Any werewolves new to Chicago must be wary of territorial boundaries. Werewolves instinctively gravitate toward gaining and keeping territories both big and small. Such territory could be as big as a whole neighborhood or as small as a single apartment building, parking garage or motel. As it's next to impossible to traverse any part of the city without crossing into some pack's territory or werewolf's hunting ground, it's key to know what to look for, and what such potential invasion could entail.

Markings

Fact is, werewolves mark their territory. To avoid doing so only invites interlopers — werewolves *want* others of their kind to know that they've just crossed into somebody else's backyard. Unfortunately, werewolves don't maintain a unified "code" of territorial markings that are easily identified and referenced. Because of this, each pack has its own preferred ways of marking its territory. What follows are a few methods used by the packs of Chicago, though Storytellers and players are encouraged to come up with their own unique ways.

Graffiti: One of the simplest ways of marking territory is in the manner utilized by mortal gang members — graffiti. The tagging process is pretty simple – spray paint some kind of message or pack indicator along the boundaries and crucial thoroughfares of the territory. The means of such painted markings can come in many forms. Some packs tag walls with elaborate murals (ostensibly considered "artwork"), perhaps showing some hyperbolized image of the pack or its exploits, perhaps couched in symbolic imagery; a pack's totem often makes for a symbol that other packs will recognize without giving anyone else a clue that "werewolves live nearby." Other packs aim for simpler messages — a symbol representing the pack marked on street corners or sidewalks, or perhaps a single message (*"The Gutcutter Pack Lives Here"*) painted throughout the territory. One pack may mark only mailboxes, another may choose to mark walls or abandoned cars.

Fliers/Signs: Eschewing graffiti (usually because it's illegal and may attract the needless attention of police or even local gangs), some packs go for a subtler route and post fliers. Street corners are populous with such signage, usually colored sheets of paper taped to light poles, phone booths or construction sites. Werewolves can use such fliers to mark territorial boundaries, though such pages rarely advertise a pack's presence directly. Instead, the pack often disguises its mark as more mundane notices (though still notices that a smart werewolf knows what to look for, otherwise such signage becomes useless). A sign may say LOST DOGS: FIVE WOLFHOUNDS, CALL LUNA IF FOUND, (312) 555-1234. A wise werewolf should get the hint that he's just crossed over into some pack's hunting grounds. Other signs may take the form of concert notices or *faux* advertisements.

Colors: The presence of the hometown American Hockey League team, the Chicago Wolves, provides werewolves with another potential way of hiding in plain sight. Some Uratha wear Chicago Wolves gear as a sort of tell, almost like gang colors. Other Uratha steal promotional posters or flyers and paste them to the walls. What humans read as "Diehard Chicago Wolves boosters live here," werewolves and perhaps other supernaturals may see as "Werewolves own this neighborhood."

Bodily Fluids: Werewolves have the noses of their *lupus* counterparts, and can scent things that might normally seem innocuous or invisible to anybody else. Hence, some werewolves will mark territory not with any man-made technique, but with their own bodily humors — usually blood or piss. Werewolves who rely on this method of territorial marking are typically more primal, often with many years since their First Change that have eroded away some of their learned human propriety. This technique obviously works best in areas that see little enough traffic that a werewolf can mark his boundaries in peace without being harassed by bystanders.

Hi-Tech: At the other end of the spectrum comes the idea of not really "marking" territory at all — at least, not marking the actual boundaries. No, instead the marking takes place online, in newsletters or over wireless transmissions. Werewolves who take to such a system of alerting others to their territory are obviously beings comfortable with technology (packs with Iron Masters come to mind, but higher-tech werewolves needn't be relegated to that tribe alone), and usually maintain territory that holds some kind of modern merit — a werewolf is unlikely to use the Internet to advertise that his territory is the blown-out tenement of Cabrini Green. He might, however, use a website to indicate that his pack holds a few blocks of the

city surrounding Northwestern University's Medical Center or around the Magnificent Mile. Although this method is easy enough for a modern werewolf to pull off, it has the least practical use. There aren't many werewolves who hit the Internet to search for potential territorial keywords before passing through an area.

Urban Legend: One method favored by either particularly prominent packs or the more violent Pure Tribes Forsaken is one that actually requires little-to-no physical markings at all. Instead, a pack establishes its boundaries abstractly, through action that translates into a kind of "whisper down the lane" technique. A pack may, for instance, mark its territorial boundaries over a period of nights by leaving a circuit of fresh-killed corpses (animal or human) around the perimeter. Or instead, the pack may do other things at the boundaries of the territory, such as killing all the drug dealers who walk those streets, forcing spirits to make an area deeper and darker despite the streetlights or even using a selection of nightly howls. This serves to establish a kind of "urban legend" about the place in regards to the pack. When humans whisper "Don't cross Fullerton after dark, or the Ghost Dogs will get you," that's when the territory is successfully marked. Such marking isn't particularly concrete, but it gets the message across and doesn't rely on physical designations.

Werewolf Task Force

Naturally, the Chicago Police Department has several task forces dedicated to combating various gang activities, and as a result also has several officers who are skilled at recognizing and decoding various signs of gang membership. While the preponderance of "ordinary" human gangs provide plenty of work to keep the most diligent officer busy, the various werewolf territorial markings get noticed as well. When a detective begins to gather the various signs and put them together, he's sure to try finding out more. What happens when undercover police start sniffing around a pack's territory, trying to find out more about this secretive new "trend" in gang activity? What if the police officer finds out what those marks really mean?

Possession

Territorial markings are one thing, useful to know when a character has crossed into somebody else's protectorate. Question is — who is that somebody? Who haunts each territory, stalking the avenues and alleyways? Such information is key because it could help a newcomer to the city navigate away from werewolf territories, or at least through territories that *may* be less hostile than others. All werewolves don't instantly want to rend each other's throats into gory ribbons — but *some* certainly do.

Thus, one of the first things a wise pack does upon entering the city is gather information on what packs are in town, and what territory belongs to what pack. Knowing that a pack of Fire-Touched hunt the Cook County forest preserves outside of town or that some pack calling itself the "Kings of No Mercy" haunts the area around the old Union Stock Yard gives good indication that these areas are to be avoided — unless the visitors are spoiling for a fight or have no other choice but to cross such dangerous grounds. If, on the other hand, the pack learns that an area near the Union Stock Yards — Bridgeport, for instance — is protected by a fairly neutral pack composed of an Iron Master and a few Bone Shadows, pack members may choose instead to travel through that territory, believing their chances are greater to get through unscathed.

That begs further questions, however — first, how does a pack or an individual learn the ever-changing composition of werewolf territories in Chicago without doing a year's worth of very dangerous legwork? And, moreover, once a werewolf knows who is where and protects what, how can he make relative peace — peace enough to allow him safe passage and perhaps to carve out a small territory of his own?

Finding Information

Chicago is a big city, just shy of about three million people. How exactly are newcomers going to gather information about werewolves, who make up a very small percentage of that very big population?

An ignorant or foolish pack is going to end up doing its own legwork, which is a monumental task. However, wise werewolves know that there are options in regards to sniffing out the proper information.

First, a werewolf can use local spirits. Many spirits maintain a low-key hostility toward the Forsaken, but that's not to say spirits are immediately going to be violent or obstructive. Some spirits, generally speaking, are very "in-the-know" regarding the local werewolf population and will give up such information — for a price. No spirit does things for free, after all. Spirits may require a donation of Essence or may instead ask that the pack does a small favor or complete a seemingly insignificant task. (Usually, such "insignificant" tasks end up being bigger than hoped, often opening a far larger can of worms than intended, but a pack may have little choice but to oblige.) Some spirits are also susceptible to intimidation or violence, and will answer questions if duly threatened. Though, werewolves taking such a tack should be aware that without any sort of supernatural enforcement, there's little guarantee that a spirit will be truthful — and may even lead werewolves into violent territory under supposedly safe indications.

What kind of spirits give up such information? Local nature-spirits can be useful, such as pigeon-spirits or rat-spirits. Spirits of transportation can be particularly useful because, obviously, such artificial-spirits get around the city quite often.

Another tactic is eschewing spirits altogether and tracking down local werewolves. The locals will not be blind to the werewolf situation in Chicago: some knowledge must

be in-hand for a pack not to get itself killed. Of course, nothing demands that such knowledge will be accurate or up-to-date, either. A pack on the South Side may only have fleeting knowledge about what packs are running the North Side — and might give erroneous information that might get a newcomer pack clawed to pieces. Moreover, who says that the first pack encountered is going to freely give such information? Such a pack might be unsympathetic or downright antagonistic from the get-go. What can newcomers do to help ameliorate such a situation?

Maynards Property

The characters come across a territory that bears no visible ownership — no vampires, no werewolves, no mages. But the characters see graffiti sprayed haphazardly here and there in an erratic script. Some tags read *Maynard's Land*, others say, *All Hail Maynard!* Did some bloodsucker or witch write it there to scare off potential gatecrashers? Or is somebody — or *several* somebodies — actually dwelling here, venerating that boogeyman who is said to have helped start the fires of 1871? Worse still — could it be Maynard himself?

Dealing with Werewolves

Very few packs will allow another pack through its territory without some kind of motion or overture; brashly crossing territory without any kind of humility or appeasement is both dishonorable and insulting.

Some packs expect only minor conciliation from a visiting pack. Such appeasement may be as simple as asking for permission to cross one's territory. An unassuming — and largely submissive — act like this could go a long way toward attaining safe passage through an otherwise hazardous protectorate.

It's not always that easy, however. Different packs demand different things, with little consistency between them. One pack may require tribute from a visiting pack. A tribute is usually a contribution of money, Essence or if the pack is particularly demanding, a fetish. Other packs may refuse tribute and ask for a task to be completed. Such tasks are usually minor, and might require travelers to gain favor from a stubborn local spirit, spy on a nearby coterie of young vampires or carry an item or message to a neighboring pack's territory. Alternately, a pack might ask that visitors first do something to help improve its territory, perhaps to enrich the area in the local Shadow or maybe to help do a small part to "take a bite out of crime." If the visiting Forsaken can show proof that they have improved the pack's territory in some manner, they are likely to gain access to that territory in some fashion or another. (If they do a good enough job, it's even possible that the residing pack could annex a small part of its territory to the newcomers, should that be what they desire.)

Of course, werewolves being creatures of primal violence, a pack may not want tribute or a task completed and may opt instead for an outright challenge. Any such contest may be a battle of wits or strategy, but, for the most part, is going to be a challenge requiring tooth and claw. Rarely do such contests lead to anybody's death, but that doesn't mean werewolves won't limp away ragged and bloody when all's said and done. Should the visiting werewolves win the challenge (or, if the residing pack is more merciful, should the visiting werewolves at least make a good effort), they may be allowed passage or favor. If they lose, too bad. Losers are sometimes escorted to the territory's edge; other times, they're beaten bloody and put on a truck bound for the city limits.

The Others

A lot of the above doesn't take into account the territories of the *other* supernaturals. Vampires, mages and all manner of stranger fiends sustain their own fiefdoms and urban niches here in Chicago, but information on such beings is far harder to come by than knowledge of other Forsaken. When the spirits whisper that "no pack dwells here," it's likely an unfortunate sign that something *else* does.

In some ways, entering the territory of another supernatural is actually less dangerous than violating the boundaries of Forsaken territory. Werewolves, Forsaken or Pure, tend to be instinctually territorial, whereas most others protect territory based more on practical desires. Breaching Forsaken or Pure Tribe territory is more likely to earn a interloper an immediate upbraiding (or a jaw clamped around her throat). Werewolves also understand one another better, so it's easier for a werewolf pack to recognize a potential territory violation and it takes them little time to decide what to do about it. A vampire or mage might play it safer, analyzing the new "threat" (if they recognize it at all) and perhaps making no move against the werewolf if the sojourn is brief.

Of course, crossing over into werewolf territory can be made safer by the appropriate acts of humility and honor. Sometimes, simply asking for permission or performing a favor for the lording pack will do the trick. With other supernaturals, werewolves don't necessarily have that luxury. While it's certainly possible that a nest of vampires might be willing to cut a deal, that means the werewolves have to *find* the bloodsuckers first. Vampires don't mark their territory as the shapechangers do — vampires don't leave the same sort of markers dictating which block is theirs or where their "pack alpha" dwells. The same holds true for mages, who tend to be far more cloistered than even vampires. Yes, some mages travel in street gangs or other more visible configurations, but such roving marauders are less likely to be open and friendly.

What this means, ultimately, is that crossing over into unknown (or known supernatural) territory is a tense, even frightening experience. Even knowing who controls what only solves a part of the puzzle. Other creatures are unpredictable and ultimately untrustworthy — traveling through their territory means keeping vigilant guard against sudden threat or unexpected favor. They may not even no-

tice. But if they do turn their attention toward the pack, then what? Will mages come out and offer a hand of friendship — and try to tweak a werewolf's heartstrings with a momentary tug of magic? Will vampires try to draw the pack into a web of deceit and a dubious "alliance" — or will they just attack outright, taking a few potshots with a couple lucky, long-held silver bullets? Werewolves are certainly entitled to a little paranoia when crossing into territory not their own. The wisest among them are those who aren't ruled by that fear, though, and who are capable of accurately identifying when a neighbor can be trusted to uphold her end of a bargain. When settling into a city like Chicago, few things are more important than figuring out how best to pursue one's enlightened self-interest.

Is Ignorance Bliss?

Why can't werewolves just — ignore territorial boundaries and just get through the city like normal people? Millions of human beings traverse the city's broad avenues and byways daily, and the werewolves don't hunt *them* down and demand some kind of tribute or bloody battle. Can't a werewolf just get on the el and go where he wants to go?

The answer is, of course, yes. Werewolves may travel through the city without ever being worse for wear. However, such a practice is dangerous. Packs are not wholly oblivious to what goes on in their territory. While they clearly cannot have eyes and ears on every street corner and alleyway, they do maintain ways to watch for those intruding upon their protectorates. Spirits allied with (or enslaved to) packs keep vigilant watch for other werewolves. Also, many packs use rites or Gifts to set-up mystical "trip-wires" that trigger whenever another werewolf blatantly crosses boundaries.

Werewolves *can* get through another's territory unscathed. But it isn't easy. Packs watch for intruders one way or another, and those who violate the periphery of a protectorate will be followed, harried, and hounded if at all possible.

Claiming Territory

A pack of Forsaken coming to Chicago with any plans beyond the short-term cannot exist without its own territory. However, claiming territory is far easier said than done, and in the Windy City, involves a lot of strategy and luck. Still, while newcomers should expect a great deal of adversity in establishing their own niche in the city, finding and claiming new territory isn't impossible, and could serve as the basis for an entire game.

Unclaimed Territory

The supernatural population of Chicago is packed shoulder-to-shoulder. The metropolitan area features an unusual density of vampires, werewolves, mages and other creatures. This leaves little room for new werewolves to carve out their own territory, if they want something of moderate size that has little overlap with territory claimed by other parties. A new or rootless pack seeking territory in or around Chicago does have options, however.

Outskirts: Chicago's population density, both mortal and supernatural, gets higher as one gets deeper into the city. The opposite holds true, obviously — the farther one gets from the city, the less population, and, subsequently, the more territory becomes available for an aspiring pack. Going 10 to 20 miles outside of the city into suburban Illinois or Indiana means that the area opens up a little bit. Moreover, whereas in Chicago a territory might literally be as small as a single building, outside of the city a pack's territory may be measured in square miles, not square feet.

The outskirts of the city are not free for the taking, however. Few vampires take an interest in areas of lower population density, but other werewolves are free to fill in the gaps. In particular, packs with Hunters of Darkness leadership and Pure Tribe packs, particularly Predator Kings, tend to flourish outside the metro area. Some mages, as well, prefer to keep their work away from the prying eyes of the city. Worse still, *other* things, things that remain nameless, live in the darkness away from the city lights . . . .

Unwanted Areas: The Forsaken have left alone some parts of the city. This is not without reason; such areas typically come with too many problems or risks. Although some werewolves are perhaps foolish enough to bite off more than they can chew in the name of "atonement," most are wise enough to know that saddling one's pack with a grossly hazardous territory allows for little good to be done.

Areas that may be too "high-risk" for the Forsaken come in many forms. Claiming a territory nestled too close to the hunting grounds of particularly powerful vampires is asking for trouble. Some areas of the city also retain a spirit reflection that is so badly-burned that the spirits there are violent and mad — better to improve the surrounding areas first (if that's even possible), and attend to the spiritual burn-hole later. Pockets of high-risk areas dot the cityscape — one of the public housing buildings down on South State Street was once home to a cadre of "murder-for-hire" witches, who performed some ritual so heinous that it opened up a Wound that has festered since. Some of the old stockyard areas of the city are home to herds of ghost cattle, half-butchered and mad with hunger; these wretched livestock gather around and make awful bellowing sounds, driving most Forsaken who stay in the area

mad. Discorporating the spirits only means that more come. Areas such as these are territories most Forsaken won't touch — but the characters might.

High Traffic Areas: Parts of the city have high volumes of traffic — not necessarily from cars or buses, but from mortals in general. Areas of the Loop, for instance, are densely traveled every day by human beings who live both within the city and outside of it. Werewolves, even Iron Masters, have a hard time adapting to such a high density of humans. The Forsaken find it too easy to let anger overwhelm them. If such an urge happens in a place where thousands of people are walking just to get to work — the morning commute could become a parade of spraying blood and gobbets of raining flesh. A high-traffic area is actually much more suitable for a newcomer pack, as the young werewolves are likely to have lower Primal Urge and higher Harmony, and thus greater ability to cope with a denser human population. Gradually, as their power grows, they may find themselves less able to cope with the press of their territory. Of course, by that time they have the clout to go try for another locale.

Sharing Space: Werewolf packs don't share territory with other werewolf packs well at all; it's damn hard for an Uratha to say that another werewolf not of his own pack has equal rights to a stretch of land he thinks of as *his*. Yet most werewolves aren't utterly incapable of sharing territory, at least a little bit. Particularly in the city — urban werewolves aren't going to get any of the choice bits of territory if they can't handle humans crossing their borders without permission (or even knowledge that they're crossing a border). A pack might find it has some success if it works out an arrangement to share territory with some other supernatural entities. A common example is a pack blackmailing a powerful spirit by means of its ban; the spirit is typically allowed to remain in the area and draw a given ration of Essence from the locale in return for assisting the pack in repelling other threats from the Shadow's side. It's not a particularly safe arrangement, but the pack that can pull it off certainly has less to fear from rival werewolves. Less frequently, a pack might strike a deal with supernatural beings such as vampires or mages. Unlike the Ridden or the Hosts, a vampire isn't an example of a spirit being where it shouldn't, and, therefore, a vampire isn't necessarily prey. In fact, a vampire or even a coterie can share a territory with werewolves surprisingly well; the vampires aren't competing for Essence, and the werewolves don't have to prey on humans to survive. It's rare that two groups can trust one another for an extended period of time, but such a relationship can have its distinct benefits. Mages make for slightly more eccentric neighbors, and are more likely to pursue supernatural resources that the werewolf pack might be interested in, but there's no innate reason that an arrangement of this nature can't work out.

Yielding Territory

The most common way for a pack new to Chicago to gain territory is to be given it. In such situations, a pack already in control of a particular territory cedes a small portion (usually no more than 25%, though some more gracious packs may go as high as half) to an incoming pack. While this is arguably the easiest and most frequent method of acquiring new territory, it isn't an action the controlling pack takes lightly. Theoretically, the conceding pack is losing ground and power — why give to a pack of neophytes or travelers?

Of course, in reality, a pack may have several reasons for yielding some territory to others. Most Forsaken are highly territorial and may distrust others snapping at their borders, but purposefully ceding part of one's territory can be a strategic move. Not only does the pack now have a semi-friendly pack as its neighbor (hypothetically), but that new pack serves as a buffer against other territories and supernaturals. A pack, realizing that the north border of its territory along West 79th Street shares the border of a small protectorate held by a cadre of surly Asian mystics may grant that small part of its own territory to a newcomer pack. In other words, let the *new* pack deal with the mages.

A pack allowing the secession of some of its territory usually does so out of a presumed alliance. A powerful, high-Renown pack may grant territory to a smaller pack in an effort to hand off some of its lesser problems. A smaller pack may concede a part of its territory to a larger one in an effort to gain a strong ally. Such alliances don't always end as favorably as they started – sometimes the higher-Renown Forsaken take advantage of the inferior werewolves, or, other times, the more powerful pack loses its edge and power as the lesser Forsaken gain unexpected ground. At the very least, it ends up that the Devil one knows is better than the Devil one doesn't.

Taking Territory

The last remaining option to claim territory in the overcrowded City of Big Shoulders is to take it away from somebody else. The Forsaken needn't all be allies (and in fact, many packs may have vast ideological or territorial disagreements), but, for the most part, a pack seeking to forcefully take its own territory will first look away from the protectorates of other werewolves of their own camp. If a prime territory is available and currently held by an assemblage of lower-class vampires or Pure werewolves, then a pack may consider options and consequences as part of a plan to seize the area. If that territory is guarded by some local Forsaken, the pack may look the other way and attempt first to find something that doesn't require shitting on one's own "people." However, if that's the only option or if such an option remains the most advantageous to the pack's goals, so be it.

A pack has several options available in regards to seizing territory, which essentially boil down to either overt action or covert strategy.



Taking a territory by force is the most obvious route the Forsaken can take. Nature has cursed them with bestial natures that come with the weapons of tooth-and-claw, hence physical domination seems an instinctive course of action. Such overt action involves attacking the territory's current controllers. From there, a pack may destroy its current occupants, exile them from the territory or even attempt some kind of symbiotic living arrangement should the pack be a merciful one. It's a selfish reason to fight with another pack, but plenty of werewolves are willing to incur the risk to their own Harmony. If one of their rivals falls in battle, they may think twice — or they may simply become inured to such things.

However, many Forsaken will want to rely on more subtle methods to take a territory. Simply attacking an area's current controllers may bring more trouble than its worth, especially if taking the territory only means having to immediately protect it from a new regiment of adversaries.

One of the subtler tactics involves using the Shadow Realm. The spirit world can provide something of a secret weapon to the Forsaken, for those able to reach it by accessing a locus. Inside the Shadow, a werewolf can make an enemy's territory inhospitable. Through the usage of Forsaken Gifts and with the help of allied or enslaved spirits, a werewolf can cause all manner of havoc. A werewolf can cause the spiritual deterioration of another's territory through several methods. She could ritually summon spirits that are anathema to the residents, or use wards to divide the local spirit population. She could also exploit the bans of potent local spirits in order to turn them against the territory's "owners." Of course, such a tactic is a risky one; any spiritual harm done will need to somehow be *undone* before the pack takes full control. While damaging a territory in any manner may make the area easier to control, it also lessens the potential value of such an area, while making the job of the Forsaken there doubly difficult. And, of course, all the usual hazards of entering the Shadow are present as well — the territory's owners may have pacified the local spirits to some extent, but perhaps not toward the invaders.

Some packs are also able to call in favors to make an area unlivable — in fact, resorting to more "real world" techniques instead of supernatural methods may be easier to achieve, and easier to deal with in the long run. The pack may call in favors — or threaten the appropriate parties — to get the dilapidated haven of a couple of vampires boarded up because of real or imag-

ined building code violations. Alternately, the werewolves may use these connections to benefit such vampires in order to enlist the vampires' help against a rival. In fact, favors and threats are useful for getting a whole host of things done. Werewolves with such connections or wherewithal can get phone lines turned off, temporarily disable the local power grid, even get an area rezoned. Not all Forsaken have such information available to them, but many are capable of achieving all manner of things with a simple phone call and a few menacing hints.

Wolf-Blooded

The wolf-blooded of Chicago are a mixed affair. For the most part, those with a touch of the "old bloodlines" don't know what they are — if they know anything, it's veiled in seemingly absurd rumor and antiquated ways. Alternately, most kinfolk who *are* in the know come from immigrant families. These families tend to gravitate toward others of the same ethnic and historical background, if only to practice the strange Old Ways without persecution and stigma.

Chicago is home to a number of ethnic neighborhoods, from Lithuanian to Chinese, Swedish to Vietnamese. The wolf-blooded who live among these neighborhoods may be more knowledgeable about their families' pasts. Their information may not be particularly accurate, but they may be familiar with the bizarre blood connection to the spirit world and to the Uratha. At the very least, these wolf-blooded may have old family superstitions that explain why things are different for them. Some wolf-blooded are particularly connected to the local Forsaken, actively sharing meals and conversation with the werewolves, and providing a small network of support for the Uratha. Some wolf-blooded offer hospice and small protection to any Forsaken pack that needs it.

For the most part, the wolf-blooded who are "in the know" live exclusively within Uratha territory, often within the aforementioned ethnic neighborhoods of the city. This serves a dual purpose: not only are the wolf-blooded closer to the world from which they really come, a world of spirit and Rage, but also the Uratha can keep a closer eye on the family in case a potential *nuzusul* begins the First Change.

Chicago is home to a few specific pedigrees of wolf blood that are more aware than others, and have the potential to be particularly friendly toward newly arrived Uratha:

Zilinskas: The Zilinskas family lives within blocks of the Archer Avenue section of, appropriately, Little Lithuania. The family is no small affair, and numbers in the dozens, featuring members of every generation, from newborns to octogenarians. The family almost exclusively works among the stores and restaurants of Archer Ave, and actually owns its own bakery and delicatessen called the American Deli.

This Lithuanian family still pays homage to old pagan ways — nothing too overt, of course, but small gestures of superstition and custom. Much of this custom comes in the form of appeasing the local Uratha, which the family does with almost obsessive diligence. They leave small gifts for the local packs to find, they offer prayers to local spirits (which they cannot see), they even deliver food to the werewolves. Another way the family helps appease their lineage and pagan ways is to offer their homes as points of relative safety to newcomer Uratha (and this is done with the approval of the local packs that share this territory). The Zilinskas family gives room and board to newcomers, provided these Forsaken abide by a few rules. First, they mustn't cause problems with the packs that share this territory. And second, they may not stay more than three nights. Moreover, if the family deems the visiting Forsaken likable enough, the elders may share their knowledge of the local Forsaken — which is reasonably complete, though not always up-to-date — with the visitors.

The Zilinskas are under the protection of a pair of packs, mostly Hunters in Darkness, who spend more time outside the city than in. To some werewolves, they may even seem unguarded, but that's not the case; their patron packs check back regularly and crash with the Zilinskas whenever they visit the city. This can lead to some conflict if a pack gets too presumptuous with the wolf-blooded, or perhaps to a potential alliance if they pitch in to help the Zilinskas while the family's patrons are otherwise engaged.

Soo: The Argyle Park neighborhood of Chicago has the city's second largest pan-Asian population. In addition to the Chinese, the Vietnamese also represent a large portion of that neighborhood's ethnic makeup. The Soo family is a small group of Vietnamese wolf-blooded who are aware of the Uratha's existence, with only four members: Victor Soo (father), Mary Soo (mother), June Soo (daughter) and Ken Soo (son). All four of them (excepting the daughter, who is only 14 and attends school) work in some capacity at the el station on the corner of Argyle and Broadway. Victor operates a small noodle stand across the street, Mary works at the ticket booth and late-teenaged Ken (who dropped out of school with the approval of his family) performs both maintenance and custodial duties at the station.

This small group of wolf-blooded isn't directly friendly toward new Uratha, and may initially seem standoffish or hostile. But, given a small favor, Victor Soo will offer a few key things to a traveling pack. First, he'll offer free el passes that are good for a month's worth of travel on the train — though he won't necessarily tell the pack that the tickets are "CTA Accommodation" passes, good for disabled travelers. While few check such tickets with any



regularity, werewolves using them to travel can still get busted. Second, Victor will direct a pack to a few of the less-hostile high-Renown Uratha in the city.

Soo Family Kidnapping

Recently, 17-year-old Ken Soo has gone missing. The spirits whisper that he was taken by a number of "pale men." The family asserts he must've been kidnapped, but rumor suggests he went willingly. The Soo family seeks his return at any cost, and want to know where he went and who took him. The family has made pleas to several of the local Uratha, but, as yet, none have had the time or inclination to devote any more than cursory investigation into the incident. As such, Victor Soo has begun trying to find a pack new to the city to help him find his son. What is the truth of the situation? Was Ken kidnapped, and, if so, by whom? Vampires, witches or something altogether more sinister? Is it possible that he went willingly?

Victor has offered a year's worth of food at his noodle stand and a clean bed to whatever pack can return his son to him. Though, if the truth is not to his liking, there's no telling how he will react to such misfortune.

Spirits

As with any other major city, Chicago is "blessed" with a Shadow that constantly boils with activity. The innumerable moments of pain, joy, anger and fear broadcast by the masses of mortal residents feed thousands upon thousands of spirits, supercharging the cycle of spirit predation. A spirit here cannot help but be concerned with survival, first and foremost. Unsurprisingly, as potential contacts for new arrivals to town, the spirits of Chicago are dodgy at best. The majority of them are openly hostile toward Forsaken (especially ones new to the city). Some spirits appear sick, as if weakened by disease, and others appear as if part of their ephemeral bodies have been burned and are healing badly. At the bare minimum, spirits will be openly suspicious of any new Forsaken, and will only offer aid or information for a predetermined price. Given the anger of some of the city's spirits, such a price may not be one the pack is willing to pay. (For instance, an occasional spirit of any stripe might actually ask that the pack burn down a specific building.)

Whether a pack concedes to whatever price a spirit asks or uses more forceful interrogations, the local Jagglings and Gafflings might be able to offer a few different types of information:

Secrets: Spirits of lower Rank and, thereby, intellect have more difficulty understanding the concept of secrets. Knowledge is knowledge, truth is truth; secrets are a human concept. The only common exception is a spirit's ban; even a spirit of low

intellect can see the wisdom in concealing such knowledge from enemies. Without an ulterior motive, lower-Rank spirits rarely seek to conceal information as "secret." However, they do understand the motive of negotiating on a price to reveal said information. Many spirits will tell what they know, whether or not that information was supposed to remain hidden. However, two qualifications exist for a spirit to give up someone else's secrets. First, a proper price must be negotiated — usually the completion of a task or the granting of appropriate Essence. Second, the Uratha must *know what to ask*. Spirits don't give out generic information; they give honest answers to specific questions. If a newcomer doesn't know what kind of question to ask, then too bad; spirits are intensely literal entities, at least most of the time. Ambiguous questions get imprecise answers. (And, of course, the spirit must actually know the information to tell it. Spirits are not reservoirs of collective information. If the spirit didn't see Olivia Citysmith prowling around an unclaimed territory on the South Side, the spirit can't mention it.) An important side note is that a new Forsaken asking a spirit about anything is now fodder for the spirit's betrayal — meaning, if any other Uratha comes to that spirit asking about newcomers (and offering the proper reward), the spirit is highly likely to share what it knows about the curious neophytes.

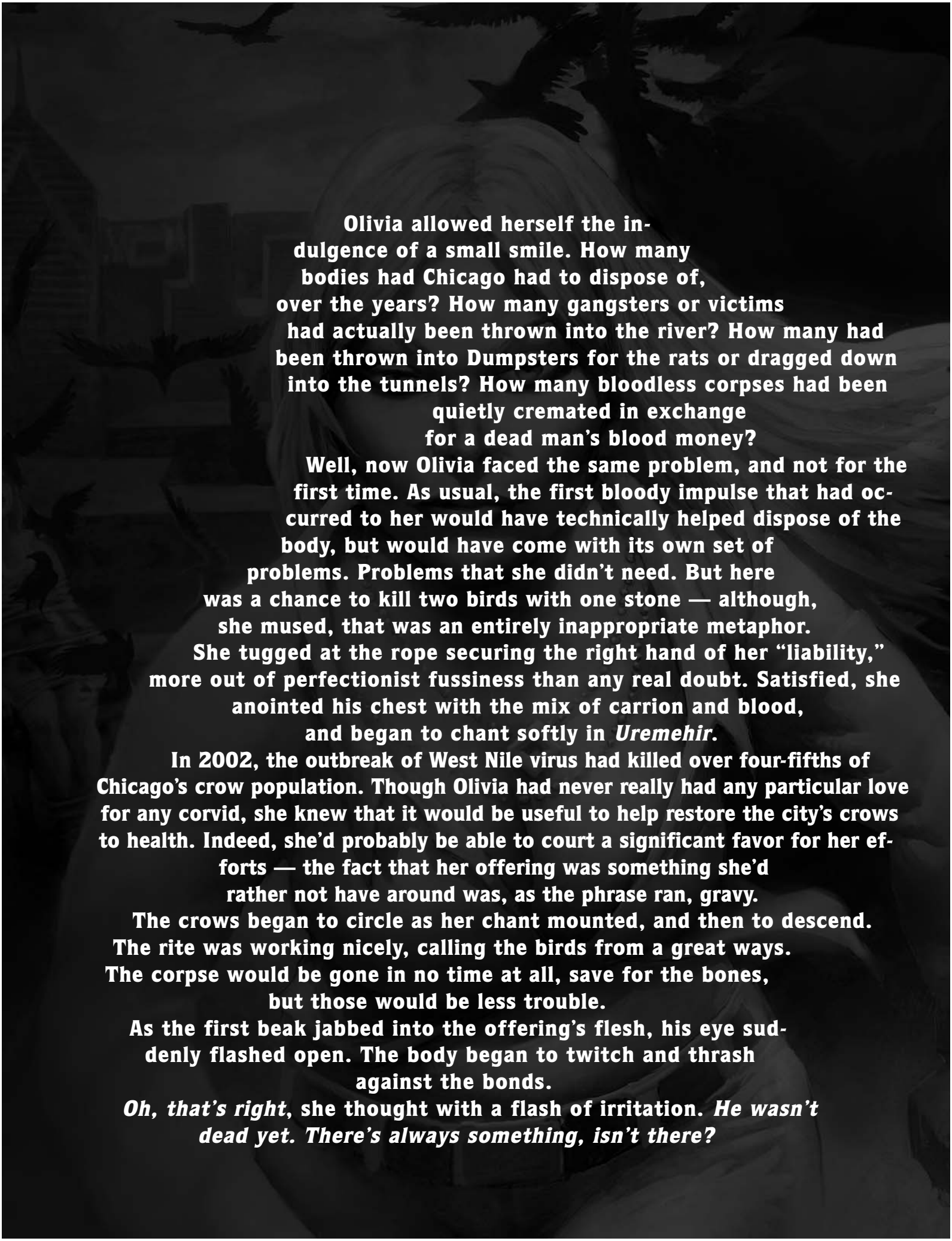
Directions: It sounds strange, but spirits can provide directions to newcomers in the city. Obviously, directions as how to get to 35th Street or where Grant Park is aren't important — any guidebook or guy on the street can help. No, the directions that matter to newcomer Forsaken are the ones that involve the Uratha, and in other cases, spirits. Spirits can help Uratha to locate (and stay away from) the territory of other Forsaken. Spirits can also show where important spiritual landmarks are (particularly places in the city's Shadow), as well as what gateways to various spirit kingdoms are where around the city. Spirits can even identify where "problem spots" are in and around Chicago's reflection — places where a Wound is slowly tearing open or where the Spider Hosts spin snares for the unwary.

Gifts: Some of the lesser spirits have Gifts they can teach young or newcomer Forsaken to the city. The spirits can almost always teach gifts associated with fire (Command Fire, for instance) — that proximity to fire also helps many spirits teach many Rage Gifts, such as Mask of Rage or Hone Rage. Standard rules apply when a werewolf seeks to learn the Gifts offered by local spirits.

The Old Veteran

The "secret vault of Al Capone" may have been a huge media embarrassment, but Chicago still has a number of secrets left to find. Some of them may even have grown old and hungry over the years spent in the darkness. In the rusted trunk of a long-forgotten car a ways out of town lies an awakened gun, abandoned with nothing but memories of its glory days. Finally, it gets its wish when it's discovered — maybe by werewolves, maybe by a salvage crew, maybe by a homeless man or even children at play. Now the gun wants to go back to Chicago, and start all over.


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Olivia allowed herself the indulgence of a small smile. How many bodies had Chicago had to dispose of, over the years? How many gangsters or victims had actually been thrown into the river? How many had been thrown into Dumpsters for the rats or dragged down into the tunnels? How many bloodless corpses had been quietly cremated in exchange for a dead man's blood money?

Well, now Olivia faced the same problem, and not for the first time. As usual, the first bloody impulse that had occurred to her would have technically helped dispose of the body, but would have come with its own set of problems. Problems that she didn't need. But here was a chance to kill two birds with one stone — although, she mused, that was an entirely inappropriate metaphor.

She tugged at the rope securing the right hand of her "liability," more out of perfectionist fussiness than any real doubt. Satisfied, she anointed his chest with the mix of carrion and blood, and began to chant softly in *Uremehir*.

In 2002, the outbreak of West Nile virus had killed over four-fifths of Chicago's crow population. Though Olivia had never really had any particular love for any corvid, she knew that it would be useful to help restore the city's crows to health. Indeed, she'd probably be able to court a significant favor for her efforts — the fact that her offering was something she'd rather not have around was, as the phrase ran, gravy.

The crows began to circle as her chant mounted, and then to descend. The rite was working nicely, calling the birds from a great ways. The corpse would be gone in no time at all, save for the bones, but those would be less trouble.

As the first beak jabbed into the offering's flesh, his eye suddenly flashed open. The body began to twitch and thrash against the bonds.

Oh, that's right, she thought with a flash of irritation. *He wasn't dead yet. There's always something, isn't there?*

WOLVES OF THE CITY

Alphas

Chicago is a competitive city with a lot of potential rivals, but the city's Uratha have plenty of good reasons for carving out a niche in the Windy City. First of all, as most Ithaeur are quick to point out, the city is actually quite a rich place in a spiritual sense; while most spirits found there may count as enemies, others can be cajoled, bullied or bound to serve as well. For those who have sworn the Oath of the Moon, the city is as much in need of hunters in wolf form as any other place. But the bottom line about Chicago is that it has something to offer for every tribe, and packs serving every agenda have been born and raised in Chicago or have come there in search of something.

The leaders among Chicago's werewolves are a varied group. Among the Tribes of the Moon, it's perhaps natural that the Iron Masters have a strong presence in the city, drawing much inspiration from the shifting tides of human endeavor. The Bone Shadows easily match them in numbers and influence, either drawn to the power of Chicago's Shadow or taking their place among the tribe after catching a glimpse of where the secret power lies. The Pure Tribes have a generous representation as well, especially among the Ivory Claws. Chicago is, in many ways, a prime place to be a werewolf; the city boasts natural areas, such as the beaches, as well as a rich spiritual realm. But Chicago also has a long, dark history, full of death and upheaval. The "alpha packs," those who stand highest in the eyes of their fellows, are generally trying to work for the city's benefit, but they get more and more desperate with each passing day. The next steps are not particularly clear. Is the present a time to stand with tradition and batten down the hatches — or an opportunity for renewal and a sense of hope? The alphas have a chance to lead the way.

> The city was like a pack of dogs sniffing wildly for his trail. And when they found it they would come whooping toward him for a leap at his throat.
>
> — Ben Hecht, "The Man Hunt"

Pack Relations

Werewolves have a penchant to run with packmates whom they can consider peers. A Rahu scarred by decades of conflict isn't likely to try recruiting a just-Changed Ithaeur to provide him with backup. As a result, the most powerful packs in Chicago are composed of the strongest werewolves in the city. Most of these packs tend to favor the idea of having a pack alpha and beta; these are determined by combat or tradition, depending on the dominant tribal beliefs or personalities within each pack.

Tribes of the Moon

Three packs are at the forefront of affairs for the Tribes of the Moon; these are the Architects of Steel, the Whispers and the Slaughterhouse Five. The Architects of Steel are primarily Iron Masters, with a single Blood Talon, while the Whispers combine Bone Shadows and Iron Masters. The Slaughterhouse Five is a thoroughly mixed pack. Each pack has its own specialty. The Architects are strong fighters who also have connections among humans in the business community; the Architects have taken on a sort of internal affairs role among werewolves at all ranks, as self-appointed judges and jurors. The Whispers are gatherers of knowledge and brokers of information; they, among all the werewolves, tend to be most familiar with other supernatural entities, such as mages and vampires. The Whispers are also interested in collecting prophecies related to the city or the People. Finally, the Slaughterhouse Five has generally the strongest raw fighting power among the alpha packs; they're well trained in tactics and have extensive combat experience as a unit.

These three packs get along and share intelligence and information — most of the time. The Slaughterhouse Five get a little impatient with the distasteful "politicking" that the Architects of Steel employ; the Slaughterhouse

Five likewise tend to be leery of Shuck O'Connor and the Whisperer's dealings with the vampires and mages. It doesn't particularly concern the Slaughterhouse Five that the Architects and Whispers alike take them for granted.

Both the Architects and the Whispers personally control loci of fairly notable strength. The Slaughterhouse Five don't have a single potent locus under control; they've risen to a prominent position based on physical prowess and frequent raids on smaller, unattended loci. They'd not hesitate to fight the Pure Tribes for a locus, should the opportunity arise. As far as fighting other Forsaken — that's a tougher question and would probably depend on the circumstances involved.

Enmity between Olivia Citysmith, alpha of the Architects of Steel, and the lead Rahu of the Whispers, Heather Hammond, simmers like soup on a low boil. Shuck O'Connor, leader of the Whispers, doesn't exactly like Citysmith, and he doesn't completely trust her ability to put the welfare of all werewolves above her own personal agendas, but he'd rather keep her as an ally if possible. In O'Connor's opinion, it's good to have a contact who holds influence among the business community and the humans.

Blood Talons

Considering that the two strongest Blood Talons in the city don't particularly like each other, the tribe has no real cohesion in Chicago at the highest level. Yussef Mahudi is too tied to Olivia Citysmith to care overly much about tribal affairs, and Calvin Ripear has an equally intense focus on protecting his pack and territory from the Pure Tribes and worse. Yussef holds membership in the Lodge of Garm, but, if Calvin is in a lodge, he keeps his affiliations to himself. Neither one is likely to call a gathering of the Chicago Talons on his own initiative or to initiate a meeting between their two packs. Despite their general antipathy, they do share an oath to Fenris-Ur and a common view of Chicago as a consistently dangerous battleground. Either Blood Talon might serve as a potential advisor (if not mentor) to a younger Blood Talon searching for a place, offering some curt words of advice on using the city as a crucible to forge greater strength. Like most Blood Talons, though, Calvin and Yussef are more likely to offer advice to young and inexperienced Talons than to those who have struggled up to "beta" status (or, worse, who have gone for years without earning any real merit).

Bone Shadows

The most senior Bone Shadows meet in private about once a month, usually at some secluded spot in neutral territory. Such a meeting usually consists of the Bone Shadows from the Whispers and Caseem Snaketooth, along with any *Hirfathra Hissu* of lesser experience who have merited an invitation. Such gatherings usually begin by discussing any activities of the Whispers that might affect the tribe's greater calling, then move onto discussions of more general tribal affairs. Shuck usually defers to Sarah at these gatherings; she's a member of the Lodge of Harbingers and respected for the amount of information and lore she willingly shares with the tribe. Sleepless William has ties to the Lodge of Death, but he keeps silent on that group's affairs. Shuck and Caseem are not apparently affiliates of any lodge. Beta members of the tribe may attend the tribe meetings, and several do on a regular basis. One thing the Bone Shadows of Chicago have done is alert each other to the whereabouts of their respective wolf-blooded relations; the Bone Shadows know that the wolf-blooded are the future, and these Uratha take drastic steps to protect them. The other unspoken rule the Bone Shadows respect is admittance to territory. If, for example, William needs to cross over into Slaughterhouse Five territory on a matter of importance to the tribe, Caseem will insure him safe passage. It may earn him some grief from his pack, but he'll work it out.

Hunters in Darkness

Gina Calder, a devotee of the Lodge of Harmony, is the most highly esteemed Hunter in Darkness living in the city proper. She seeks the redemption of the city as her ultimate goal, but she usually puts her pack's interests above that of her lodge and even her tribe on occasion. She regularly keeps in contact with two younger tribe members, Jafar and Amelia of the Skyfire pack, because Gina knows that one day, the younger and less experienced Uratha will be in the alpha positions. She wants them to be ready and have no illusions about what's to come when they rise to greater rank and station.

Iron Masters

A few times a year, Paul Lessner holds a soiree of sorts for his fellow tribe members. He, along with Thomas Cushner and Francesca D'Arbo, belong to the Lodge of Scrolls; more than once, the gatherings have simply become excuses for them to attempt to persuade Iron Masters outside their pack, namely Heather Hammond and Michael Petruskey, to consider joining the lodge. Heather has zero interest in the esoterica of the lodge and usually attends these gatherings with gritted teeth and only at the request of her pack leader, to gather information; she and Olivia Citysmith steer wide of one another. Michael, though, is intrigued and has intimated he'd like to know more. Occasionally, some werewolves lower on the overall hierarchy will get an invite, and Paul imagines he's paying them quite a compliment. Outside of these gatherings, the Iron Masters have no regularly scheduled contact. By simple courtesy, most stay in touch through the occasional secure email or chat, especially if matters arise that affect the tribe's specific interests in the commercial or technological world.

Storm Lords

Cateria Kensas is the most renowned Storm Lord in the city, a fact her tribal brother and packmate James Fulton envies, but accepts for the time being. James hasn't joined a lodge, but he knows Cateria claims membership in the Lodge of Thunder. The only activities they enjoin as a tribe per se are keeping an eye on the younger Storm Lords with promise, such as Hollie Lester, and honoring the tribal totem one day a year, deep in the heart of winter. For this occasion, all the Storm Lords gather, with Cateria and James usually making the proper arrangements.

Pure Tribes

Among the Pure Tribes, the Ivory Claws hold most key positions within the individual packs of Chicago, with the Fire-Touched serving as spiritual backup and the few Predator Kings as the heavies. The Lex Talionis pack is home to the single most powerful Pure werewolf in the city, the Ivory Claw Patrick Keeneye. He's a powerful and charismatic leader, with

a dedicated pack that shares his vision of purifying Chicago of the hated Forsaken. Unfortunately, the things Patrick and company don't have are hard cash and certain intangible resources, such as contacts with mortals or supernatural beings outside the circles of Pure blood. The Lex Talionis are very hands-on and forthright, and have more experience with the vicious politics of the Shadow Realm than the more complicated workings of a human city. Acquisition of such material assets is among Patrick's top goals as leader of the Pure Tribes in Chicago; it's not going to be easy, and he finds the idea of courting favor rather than claiming power distasteful. But he realizes it's a tradeoff for living in the city.

The other alpha Pure Tribes pack, the Hooked Claw pack, is in a state of transition. They once held the lead role, but of late, they've come on hard times. Pack leader Zapporah Miredsoul is experiencing a secret inner struggle that pits her lifetime of training and culture against her stubborn streak of logic. Her doubts about the Pure Tribes' mission are hovering between the conscious and the subconscious, but this is enough to make her packmates edgy. If the pack is to survive, they've got to get on the same page — and possibly form an alliance with another group of Pure Tribes. Keeneye isn't opposed to this, but he's waiting for them to make the first move. The Hooked Claw pack may have better luck looking to the betas or even the omegas to reinforce their ranks.

Currently, there are only two alpha Pure Tribes packs, and neither has a locus of particularly great power, but number for number, they match the Tribes of the Moon. This is the main reason the Pure packs have been able to remain a serious threat, and these alphas are always on the lookout for converts or fresh cubs to bring on their side.

Fire-Touched

Ashala Ravi, Ursa Tuvaos, Antonio Amador and Levon Phillips are the only four Fire-Touched among the alpha Pure Tribes. These Fire-Touched are spread across two different packs, so this is all the more reason to keep in close contact. As long as the information doesn't affect the sanctity of their territories, totems or other pack members, these two packs are willing to share. They've not yet gotten wind of what the Scorched Heavens pack is up to, or else they'd be all over it — either to stop the betas or help them, depending on how well the younger werewolves make their case. Ashala serves both figuratively and spiritually as her pack's main sounding board, and she's been taking on this role more and more for her tribe as well. Should Zapporah Miredsoul lose her position as pack leader, Ashala might become one of the leaders among Chicago's Pure.

Ivory Claws

Members of this tribe are most numerous among Chicago's Pure Tribes, and they've held the reins of leadership for as long as anyone can remember. Patrick Keeneye is unquestionably the head of all the Ivory Claws, and he pays scant attention to Zapporah Miredsoul's equivalent rank and expertise. The Claws in Keeneye's pack side with him on almost everything, so Zapporah has no real choice but to agree; she knows she's no match for her tribal brother, and it's clear to all the Ivory Claws that Patrick Keeneye *deserves* to lead the tribe locally. It's not just a matter of tradition, but also a point of having the toughest werewolf on top. The younger Ivory Claws give Keeneye their allegiance, but they've also got plans and agendas of their own that don't really infringe on the alphas' activities. If a call for war went out, they would come, and it's as simple as that.

Predator Kings

Little cohesion exists among this tribe, despite several members living in Chicago. Mordred, who is little more than a barbarian, and Rasia Lujanov, who lives to avenge her father's death, are in the same pack. They don't see much need to discuss tribal politics since the focus of their world *is* their pack. Still, they admit on grudging occasion that the tribe should come together, usually during certain ceremonial gatherings. This happens only rarely; the betas Gretchen ten Huisen and Kegan MacDonald are likewise too busy following their pack leaders' orders to be bothered with tribal social niceties.

The Alpha Packs

The following sections describe the composition of each alpha pack with an interest in downtown Chicago, along with the pack's totem. There's room to add other alpha packs toward the western part of Chicago and its environs, of course; these packs are simply those that are the most pivotal within the heart of the city.

The Architects of Steel

The Architects are movers-and-shakers, as far as getting business done in the city. Not in the least content to maintain the *status quo*, the various pack members share a common ambition to empower and improve the city they live in both in the flesh and the Shadow. Among other Uratha, they have a rep for being tough fighters as well as the most adept at managing to get along in day-to-day affairs, where werewolf existence brushes too close to humans and others. The Architects' information networks are quite impressive, and any particularly unsubtle conflict involving other supernaturals or even powerful humans will likely come to the Architects' notice. Olivia Citysmith, an Iron Master Ithaeur, leads the Architects by example — she is the foremost proponent of "shaping the city," and the rest have fallen in behind her. However, Olivia keeps a very dark secret from the rest of her pack, as well as from the other werewolves of the city.

A recent ongoing clash with the Pure pack Lex Talionis left several members of both packs dead. The Architects are currently putting out feelers for other potential recruits to build up their numbers, but it's difficult finding werewolves who meet their high standards. The Architects have already turned down a few applicants who didn't seem strong enough to pull their own weight. Thomas Cushner, the pack beta, is currently scouting out werewolves from the other alpha packs with the intention of headhunting any likely recruits. The other pack members are Paul Lessner (Iron Master Irraka), Yussef Mahudi (Blood Talon Rahu) and Francesca D'Arbo (Iron Master Rahu). Cushner is aware of his pack's lack of a Cahalith, and he'd probably give a finger to pull James Fulton away from the Slaughterhouse Five. (Cushner doesn't have a chance in hell at getting Heather Hammond away from the Whispers, and he doesn't even want to try for "that troublesome creature.")

The Architects of Steel have staked out a section of downtown around West Quincy and West Adams for their own. They're fairly realistic about other supernaturals who might be passing through — you can't keep everyone out of downtown — but the Architects are quick to note a visitor who seems to be lingering.

Olivia Citysmith

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Iron Masters (Bale Hound)
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4 (3/4/1/4), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Research) 2, Computer 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4 (Resonance, Essence Flows), Politics (Chicago) 2, Science 3 (Architecture)
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Weapons 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Motives) 3, Expression 4, Intimidation (Veiled Threats) 3, Persuasion (Sales Pitch) 5, Socialize 2, Status (Corporate Executive) 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Misdirection, Spotting Lies) 4
Merits: Allies 4, Contacts (Finance, Industry, Legal) 3, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fresh Start, Languages (French, Spanish, First Tongue) 3, Meditative Mind, Resources 4, Striking Looks 2, Totem 12
Primal Urge: 5
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 14/2
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Pride
Derangements: Fixation
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 5, Glory 1, Honor 2, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Two-World Eyes, Left-Handed Spanner, Sense Malice, Straighten; (2) Nightfall, Read Spirit, Ruin, Traveler's Blessing; (3) Gauntlet Cloak, Iron Treachery, Sagacity, Sculpt; (4) Know the Path, Shatter; (5) Commune with the Land
Rituals: 4; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Gaffling, Fortify the Border Marches, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Bind Human, Bind Spirit, Call Jaggling, Rite of Initiation, Sacred Hunt, Wake the Spirit; (4) Rite of the Fetish

Olivia Citysmith, *née* Olivia Lang, is a proud woman. Her tribal name reflects a great ambition and the ability to match — she has dedicated years to the pursuit of re-shaping cities spiritually by influencing urban design. As her occult research indicates, properly designed buildings can channel Essence flows by casting the right shadows at the right times, by absorbing sunlight or catching lightning strikes. With the right skill and connections, a person could change the spiritual makeup of an entire city. Of course, that might be more than even a werewolf could accomplish in her mortal lifetime. But Olivia has hedged her bets, in ways that her packmates don't suspect. Her pride has driven her to a fall — into the embrace of the Bale Hounds.

Though even her packmates don't know it, Olivia has sworn a dark pledge to Lamashtu, the twisted Incarna of Pride. She does not lead or participate in an active cult, and keeps only loose connections to other followers of her patron, though she can call on friends in low places if need be. She considers herself not a worshipper, but a client; Lamashtu offered her a blessing of unending youth and vigor in exchange for certain — services, a bargain that Olivia initiated herself. The thought of dying before she could complete her ambition was utterly anathema, and she feels that she's gotten the better end of the deal.

Naturally, Olivia hides her true affiliation quite well. She comes across as cold and professional to other Uratha, somewhat condescending but otherwise reliable and powerful. She has a crushing disdain for weakness that makes some wonder if she wouldn't be happier in the Storm Lords; she does not let slip that she has come to see the Forsaken tribes' dysfunctional relationship with Luna as one of the most contemptible weaknesses of all. She isn't above acting as an "ally" to another pack if it suits her own purposes, though she has difficulty treating other werewolves as peers. Olivia is an obsessive personality, and her need for personal control borders on the pathological. She is a major shareholder in several companies and has a controlling interest in a conglomerate of several construction and architectural firms. Her favorite haunts are the skyscrapers and trendy social establishments in her own territory, around West Quincy Street.

Olivia carries herself with a cold, regal grace that is in every way predatory. She has managed to function among human society for years since her Change, and has become so skilled at repressing her casual passions that she at first seems to be almost emotionless. When her bestial heart does get the better of her, though, she becomes almost rabid with anger. She dresses well and immaculately, usually preferring white suits or dresses that nicely offset her pale, blonde elegance. Her eyes are an icy blue, and remain so even when she becomes a pallid-furred wolf monster.

No Honor Among Murderers

Olivia Citysmith has become aware of the existence of another pack of Bale Hounds in Chicago — a small group of adherents of Thurifuge, Architect of Violence, who are causing a number of "disappearances" along the river. But, with no actual orders from Lamashtu or his minions to assist these newcomers or even leave them alone, Olivia has decided they're a problem that needs to be removed. However, she doesn't want to move against them herself, as she would run a small but unnecessary risk of calling attention to her own affiliations. Consequently, she decides to set another pack on the trail, and chooses the players' pack. Depending on the pack's reputation, she may

either appeal to their sense of duty (explaining how the marauders are creating a disharmonious effect in the overall Essence flows of the city) or their mercenary nature (placing a cash or similar bounty on the newcomers). She doesn't mention that the troublemakers are Bale Hounds, and will feign surprise if the players' pack discovers this fact and informs her. But, what if in the course of the struggle, the players uncover that — unbeknownst to Olivia — the children of Thurifuge had discovered that a servant of Lamashtu is hidden among the Architects of Steel?

Thomas Cushner

Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4 (3/2/1/2), Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Investigation (Shadow Realm) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics (Uratha Packs) 2, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival (Tracking) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Reasoned Argument) 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Logical) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Feigned Sympathy) 3
Merits: Allies (City Hall) 2, Allies (Police) 1, Contacts (Newspapers) 1, Resources 3, Retainer 3, Totem 9, Toxin Resistance
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 9
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Pride
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 4, Glory 2, Honor 4, Purity 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Left-Handed Spanner, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice, Straighten, The Right Words, Ward Versus Predators, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Nightfall, Ruin, Scent of Taint, Snarl of Command, Traveler's Blessing, Ward Versus Humans; (3) Aura of Truce, Iron Treachery, Primal Howl, Sagacity, Sculpt; (4) Fuel Rage, Know the Path, Shadow Ward
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of the Spirit Brand, Shared Scent; (2) Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition; (3) Rite of Healing

Thomas Cushner is Olivia's idea of an ideal beta — someone who is entirely devoted to her and who acts almost as an extension of her will. It's not that Cushner is a sycophant or weak of mind — far from it. The Architects' Elodoth is an incisive and creative thinker who also happens to be of those people who are simply more comfortable following a strong leader. He's a well-spoken advocate of his pack, often negotiating with rivals in order to "help them see reason." When push comes to shove, he tends to use Gifts more liberally than most werewolves, usually carrying a touchstone to ensure that he can continue to use his not-inconsiderable arsenal of supernatural blessings.

If the truth were to come out about Olivia's true affiliations, Cushner would be the packmate most likely to stand beside her no matter what — in fact, he'd be the one most likely to join her in her pact with the Calipha of Pride. Olivia herself suspects that his loyalty is enough that he could withstand the truth and continue to assist her all the better. She has yet to test him on the matter, however. She's not an evangelist for the Bale Hounds — she considers herself a businesswoman, and right now she's not entirely convinced that headhunting Cushner for Lamashtu would help enough to be worth the risk.

Cushner is a middle-aged black man in excellent condition. He prefers nice but not overly formal clothes, usually a neatly pressed, buttoned-down shirt and slacks, and could almost be mistaken for a harmless accountant or clerk if not for the intense sensation of heat that follows him. In wolf form, his coat is surprisingly tawny, almost the color of a lion's.

Raul Lessner

Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Computer 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Politics 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Urshul) 3, Drive (Sports Cars) 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Charming) 3, Socialize (Galas) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Secrets) 3
Merits: Allies (Local TV) 2, Contacts (Libraries, High Society) 2, Resources 4, Totem 9
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)

Renown: Cunning 4, Glory 1, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 2

Gifts: (1) Blending, Know Name, Loose Tongue, Sense Weakness, Straighten; (2) Feet of Mist, Ruin, Sand in the Eyes, Slip Away; (3) Distractions, Running Shadow, Sculpt; (4) Double Back, Shadow Flesh

Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Renunciation; (2) Call Human

If possible, Paul is almost Olivia's equal in terms of planning and plotting. A teenage savant, he'd already acquired wealth and assets by the time of his Change, with some seed money from "relatives" (older family members who'd been keeping an eye on the young man). Now that he's in his 30s, he's got the time and resources to focus solely on the problems of the city, namely helping his pack defend and strengthen their territory. He applauds Olivia's leadership and her ideas about "refurbishing" the spiritual side of Chicago. However, what he can't quite grasp is her big picture. Paul has tried to second-guess her, as a No Moon is wont to do, and pry loose a harmless secret or two, but her occasional outbursts and rebuffs frustrate him. He's too much an idealist to consider that she might have ulterior motives, and he'd attack first and question later if anyone threatened his alpha. His best guess is that Olivia knows some important things but is holding back for the protection of her pack. The wretched truth is something that would never cross his mind.

Paul comes from a patchwork of ethnicities; his hair is long and straight black, but his skin is of a medium-dark tone. His eyes are hazel, and he likes wearing expensive clothes and sunglasses. When in wolf form, he's equally well groomed, with coal-black fur that is glossy and thick. His high Primal Urge manifests itself as a heated aura of intensity that makes women in particular uncomfortable around him.

Yussef Mahudi

Auspice: Rahu

Tribe: Blood Talons

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 5 (6/7/7/6)

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Gunsmith, Weaponsmith) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine (Field Medicine) 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science (Chemistry) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Gauru) 4, Drive 1, Firearms (Automatic Pistols) 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (Wordless) 4, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Kung Fu 2, Resources 2, Strong Lungs, Totem 10

Primal Urge: 5

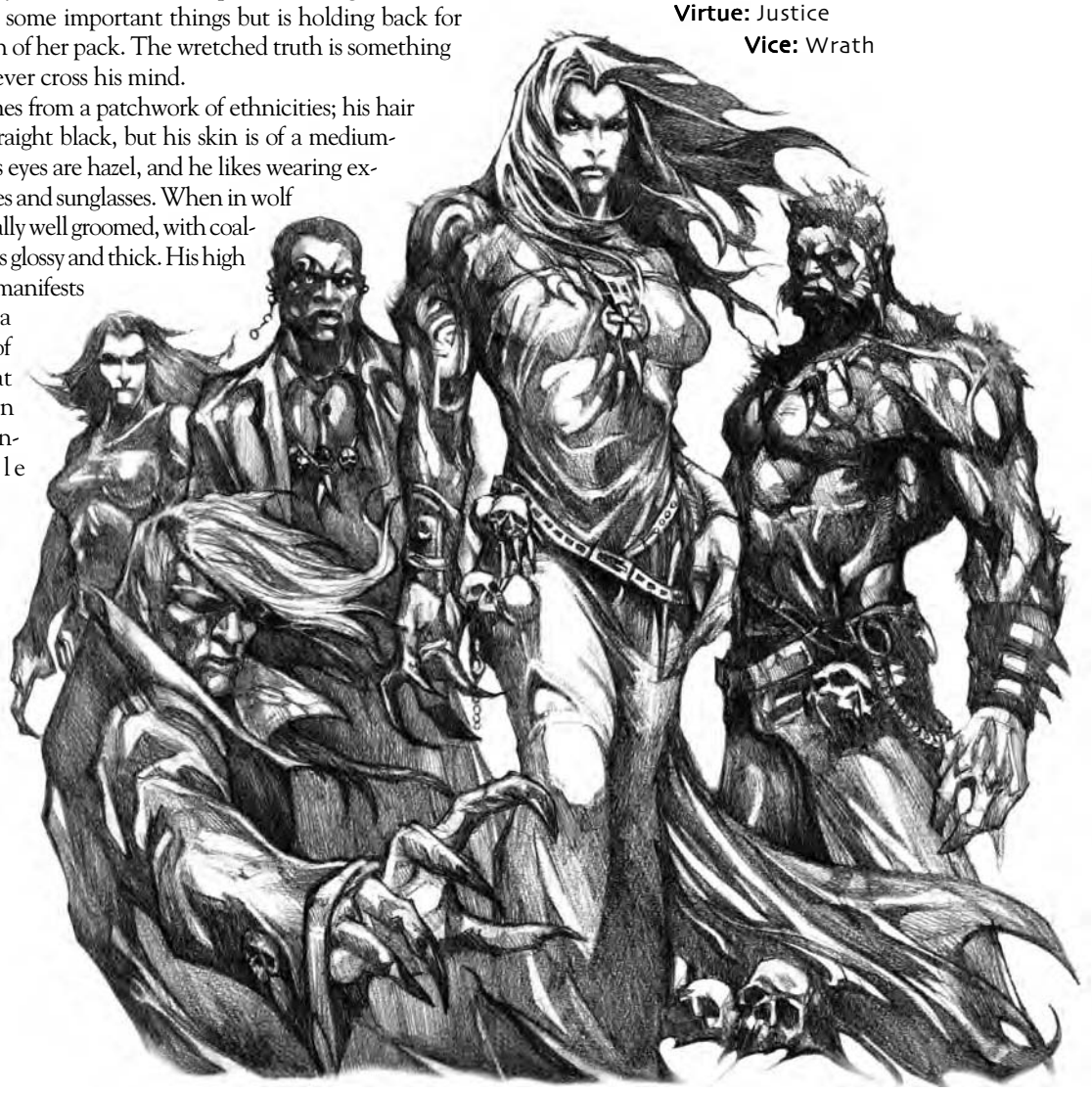
Willpower: 9

Harmony: 5

Essence Max/Per Turn: 14/2

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath



Health: 10 (12/14/13/10)
Initiative: 10 (10/11/12/12) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)
Speed: 13 (14/17/20/18)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 4, Honor 3, Purity 4, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, Partial Change, The Right Words, Warning Growl; (2) Attunement, Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Mighty Bound; (3) Death Grip, Leach Rage, Silver Jaws; (4) Rage Armor, Rekindled Rage
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent; (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt

Yussef is a tense fellow, even more so than the average Blood Talon. He Changed under a particularly bright full moon, in circumstances even more violent than one might expect. Though it isn't something he often speaks of, he sees himself as a complete monster, good for nothing but killing. He swore the Oath of Destroyer Wolf out of a belief that it would be impossible to deny or suppress his murderous nature, and he thought that, by learning the ways of Fenris-Ur, he would be able to channel his fury. By walking with the Blood Talons, he has come to direct the greatest part of his Rage against his foes. By working with the Architects of Steel, he has done something even more — he has helped to build something. That feeling is often his only consolation, as his wolf nature makes him barely able to move among human society at this point.

Olivia, who openly shows great respect for Yussef's fighting skills, secretly prizes him as little more than her pet killer, a fact that would humiliate Yussef to no end should he realize her true feelings. He has a keen sense of honor and follows the Oaths of the Moon passionately; thus, he respects Olivia as pack leader but also realizes that the Architects would be incomplete without the voices of all pack members. Paul and Yussef regularly discuss the Oaths and their interpretations, an intellectual exercise both enjoy.

Yussef is of medium build, but he's rippling with muscles under his olive skin, even in human form. His hair is dark, close-cropped, and his eyes are a startlingly clear blue-green. As a wolf, his coat is thick and black. Yussef's favorite clothes are jeans and muscle shirts.

Francesca D'Arbo

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Fisticuffs, Claw) 4, Firearms 1, Larceny (Jimmying Locks) 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry (Knives) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation (Ugly Threats) 3, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (Construction Workers) 1, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style (Boxing) 2, Iron Stamina 2, Language (Spanish) 1, Strong Back, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 2, Purity 2, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Crushing Blow, Know Name, Mask of Rage, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Attunement, Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Ruin; (3) Death Grip
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent

Francesca is a recent recruit to the Architects of Steel, enlisted in the wake of the recent and bloody conflicts with the Lex Talionis werewolves. Her prior pack, the Devil Moons, held territory out in the outskirts of town before they were torn apart by bad leadership and a lightning strike by the Pure. About half her pack survived, and the pack members didn't regroup. Francesca blames the rest of her pack for not being ready to meet the challenge, and she doesn't miss them much. Her new pack has strong leadership and good territory, and she's proud to stand among them.

As the "beta Full Moon" of the pack, Francesca applies herself to learning the arts of violence from Yussef and spiritual tactics from Olivia. For her part, she brings a healthy dose of dirty fighting to the Architects. She has what Paul has called "the bully's eye," a remarkable knack for picking out an enemy's soft spots and full willingness to hit them as hard as she can. She knows how to apply this on a larger scale as well, and has recommended some ugly and effective battle plans to her packmates during her tenure. Although Yussef has some doubts about such plans' long-term effects on discipline and honor, Olivia praises Francesca for her pains.

Francesca is short but not petite, solidly built without having much fat. She keeps her dark hair fairly short, and doesn't smile much. She looks almost masculine when dressing in baggy sweats, but can easily bring out her femininity with the right clothes; she has just enough curves to be eye-catching with the right outfit.

Warbuilder (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 4
Willpower: 8
Essence: 15
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 13
Size: 2
Corpus: 6
Influences: Ants •, Diligence •
Numina: Chorus, Know the Path, Material Vision

Bonuses: +1 Resolve (pack), +1 Strength (pack)

Ban: Warbuilder abhors sloth. The pack must spend several hours daily in productive activity, whether building or moving things, patrolling, or fighting. Even if one of the Architects is badly injured, she cannot engage in bed rest for the entire day without offending the pack totem.

Cost: 43

Warbuilder is a potent urban ant-spirit, a totem of both war and construction. It is virtually without emotion, a trait Olivia finds endearing. Warbuilder appears as an ant roughly the size of a cat, with a particularly ornate and heavy carapace scarred with strange patterns.

Spring in an Apple Orchard (Locus Rating ••••)

Resonance: Stillness

The Architects' locus is the result of an exceptionally successful bit of spiritual engineering on Olivia Citysmith's part. Some years ago, Olivia managed to acquire a previously unknown George Caleb Bingham painting of spring in an apple orchard, one that clearly had some remnants of spiritual resonance clinging to it. After carefully studying the local Essence flows around her pack's favored sanctum, she hung the painting at the very center of the optimal flow and nurtured it into a locus in its own right. The painting is the pride of the Architects, the very example that their approach to urban spiritual design can bear fruit. The painting is about 10 by 12 inches in size, in a tasteful wood frame, protected by the best security systems Olivia's money could buy.

Devil Moon Rising

The totem of the now-fragmented Devil Moons, Francesca D'Arbo's old pack, is greatly angry at the pack's dissolution. In a fit of wholly unjust rage, the pack totem forced its way into a human host and began stalking its former children. It has so far murdered two of the former Devil Moons, and now only Francesca is left. Unfortunately for the spirit — a nasty thing out of urban legend called "Devil Amos" — Francesca runs with particularly strong protection these days. Consequently, Devil Amos decides to try and soften up the Architects by setting the players' pack against them, hoping to murder Francesca in the confusion. The totem may do so by murdering people under the pack's protection and leading clues to the Architects or vice versa. Devil Amos' scheme may not be the height of subtlety, but it has one thing going for it: it's not hard to make a werewolf lose his temper.

The Slaughterhouse Five

Chicago's Forsaken have to give credit to the Slaughterhouse Five — the pack members are not just survivors, they're mean bastards. The pack hasn't lost a member from the original five werewolves who came together in the old Union Stock Yards to take the fight to a pack of Pure. Part of that has to be attributed to luck, but a large part of it comes from the sort of mix of skill, toughness, tight teamwork and flat-out grit that characterizes the pack. The Slaughterhouse Five consider themselves at the forefront of the fight against the Pure in Chicago, and tend to judge other Forsaken packs on how vigorously they carry on that same fight.

The Slaughterhouse Five are a fairly mixed pack, but their diversity of auspice inclinations and tribal loyalties does nothing to undercut their teamwork. Cateria Kensas (Storm Lord Elodoth) is the pack leader in most situations, though in a scrap the Five work together without anyone giving orders as such. The other pack members are Caseem Snaketooth (Bone Shadow Elodoth), James Fulton (Storm Lord Cahalith), Gina Calder (Hunter in Darkness Irraka) and Calvin Ripear (Blood Talon Rahu).

The Five don't actually claim territory in the old stockyards (which were closed in 1971); they've staked out a section of turf for themselves around Washington Park. However, they do keep their ears open for any rumors of trouble gathering in the places where they came together. They're willing to roll down to the old slaughterhouses and shed a bit more blood whenever it looks like the wrong sort is moving in again.

Cateria Kensas

Auspice: Elodoth

Tribe: Storm Lords

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Art History) 2, Crafts 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl (Gauru) 4, Drive (Shaking Tails) 3, Firearms 2, Stealth (Back Alleys, Walking Quietly) 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Body Language) 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Inspiration) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Family Members) 2, Contacts (Art World) 1, Danger Sense, Inspiring, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2, Totem 9

Primal Urge: 4

Willpower: 8

Harmony: 6

Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Pride

Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)

Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)

Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)

Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 3, Honor 5, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Partial Change, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Luna's Dictum, Sand in the Eyes, Snarl of Command; (3) Aura of Truce, Primal Howl, Voice of Command; (4) Double Back, Fuel Rage, Savage Rending; (5) Bind or Sunder
Rituals: 2; **Rites**: (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication; (2) Hallow Touchstone

Descended from Exodusters who made their home in and around Chicago in the late 19th century, Cateria is a fine example of the Storm Lords' ideals at their purest and most effective. She listens carefully to her packmates' ideas and has the foresight of a ship captain in the midst of enemy territory, seemingly always one step ahead of her foes. Moreover, Cateria has a knack for making her pack feel appreciated and valuable, even when they fall upon challenging times. She's occasionally frustrated with the older packs, like the Whispers and the Architects, for being reactive, not pro-active, but she doesn't usually badmouth other Uratha in public; it's undignified.

Of course, if Cateria exemplifies all of the positive elements of the Storm Lords philosophy, she also demonstrates some of its negative aspects. She's very proud of her pack's achievements but equally sensitive to how other werewolves perceive them. Just as she won't let anyone else witness or perceive her weakness, she tears into anyone who intimates that her pack may have its flaws. Her packmates are all proud to fight alongside her, but those outside the Five can find her just about impossible to deal with.

Cateria is an imposing woman in just about every respect — she stands almost 6' barefoot in human form, with a sculpted build, rich ebony skin and a low, commanding voice. Humans find her almost impossibly intimidating; her dark eyes in particular not-so-subtly hint at the beast that lies underneath. She's large in wolf form and has brown fur tinged with gold. She likes to dress nicely now and again, and is fond of jewelry, but wears the most practical of clothes on the hunt. Presently, she works part-time as an art dealer, specializing in African and African American artworks.

Before a Falls

Cateria is a very proud werewolf, and she doesn't hide it under layers of false humility. Unfortunately, that means that a pride-spirit with connections to the Maeljin Lamashtu has noticed that she would make an ideal target for conversion. And with Olivia Citysmith having already established a beachhead for the Calipha of Pride, Cateria would be a doubly valuable asset.

One of her packmates (likely Fulton) soon notices that Cateria seems to be afflicted by the influence of some spirit, one that's subtle enough never to be witnessed directly. Cateria won't discuss the matter with him, particularly as the spirit's influence on her already strong pride won't let her show weakness — and Fulton knows all too well that a Storm Lord has no business exposing weakness to another. Realizing that an Ithaeur's experience might be the key to catching this spirit, Fulton approaches a pack with a likely-seeming Ithaeur, presumably the players' pack. (Alternately, Fulton may confide in a fellow Storm Lord; if one of the players is running a Storm Lord Ithaeur, all the better.) If the pack can catch and bind the pride-spirit without triggering Cateria's fury along the way, they'll have one of the strongest packs in Chicago owing them a favor. But if they wind up offending Cateria's pride before the spirit's influence has been removed, they may be in for a world of pain.

Caseem Snaketooth

Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/2), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Auto Repair) 2, Investigation (Rumors) 3, Medicine 1, Occult 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Claw) 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Knives) 4
Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation (Spirits) 4, Persuasion (Rational) 4, Socialize (Nightclubs) 2, Streetwise (Muscle Jobs) 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies 1, Contacts (Bartenders, Organized Crime) 2, Disarm, Fetish 4, Fighting Finesse, Languages (First Tongue, Turkish) 2, Totem 10
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Envy
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 3, Honor 4, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Call Water, Death Sight, Father Wolf's Speed, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Ghost Knife, Scent of Taint, Snarl of Command, (3) Aura of Truce, Echo Dream; (4) Fuel Rage, Soul Read
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Hallow Touchstone; Bind Spirit



Fetish: Caseem's klaive dagger is a prize of war, taken from a Fire-Touched whom he slew in battle. The klaive has roughly the shape of a bowie knife, but appears to be made of the bone of some unknown thing. When he activates the knife, it emanates a faint green sheen and ignores up to two points of Armor for the duration of the scene. Furthermore, after a successful strike, Caseem may spend an Essence point as a reflexive action to inject the target with a Toxicity 4 spiritual venom.

Like the rest of the Slaughterhouse Five, Caseem Snaketooth is a dangerous fighter. However, he's also a canny negotiator who has experience threatening and cajoling humans and spirits alike. The most spiritually aware of his pack siblings, Caseem is the one most likely to sense an incipient spiritual threat or to propose a tactic other than violence; as a Bone Shadow, he takes a great interest in the spirit world, and somewhat regrets his pack's lack of a Crescent Moon. He plays a key role in maintaining good relationships with other packs, wolf-bloods and even a few mortals (not that they know anything of his real nature). Like the rest of the Slaughterhouse Five, he has a deep devotion and respect for his pack leader, Cateria. He earns enough cash to stay afloat as a bouncer and occasional bodyguard; he has something of a reputation on the streets as a man "who is *not* to be fucked with."

Caseem has long curly hair that he wears in a ponytail. He's originally from an immigrant family of Turkish origin, many of them wolf-blooded, who came to Chicago in the early 20th century. The young Half-Moon is fairly good looking, with tawny skin and hazel eyes, but he bears a bad scar that runs from his right ear down to his collarbone — like his knife, a souvenir of the fight at the stockyards.

James "Bloody Jim" Fulton

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Storm Lords
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (History, Local Folklore) 3, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation (Research) 3, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Urshul) 3, Larceny 1, Stealth (Indoors) 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Troubles) 3, Expression (Singing, Howls) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (University) 2, Contacts (Museum) 1, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 1, Inspiring, Totem 9
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Lust

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 4, Honor 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Call the Breeze, Loose Tongue, Pack Awareness, Partial Change, The Right Words, Warning Growl; (2) Camaraderie, Luna's Dictum, Resist Pain, Sand in the Eyes, Silent Fog; (3) Rallying Cry, Silver Jaws, Voice of Command; (4) Break the Defiant, Unspoken Communication
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Shared Scent

James is Cateria's right hand, and when the weight of her responsibilities begins to get too heavy, he's the one who keeps her spirits up. If she's the head of the pack, then he's the heart. James has deep, abiding affection for all his pack, but he's also a realist; he knows that most of them, if not all, will probably die painful, brutal deaths. It hasn't happened yet, but as long as they keep fighting, it's inevitable. What *he* wants is for them all to die well, and that's where his role as a creative muse comes in. If he can help his pack leader push the group to do their utmost in their responsibility to protect the city and their territory, then he'll die satisfied. James manages to hold down a part-time job as a research librarian at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Though not the most physically impressive of the Five, James is an excellent coordinator. He uses his Gifts such as Silent Fog and Unspoken Communication to increase his pack's efficiency while disrupting that of their foes. In a tight spot, he may use his Silver Jaws Gift to tear apart a foe, but he hates resorting to that with a passion.

James is a short, barrel-chested man with some Italian blood. He would look unimpressive in a photograph, but, in person, his presence is almost palpable. In wolf form, he's equally plain, with mixed fur of brown and gray. He has an almost photographic memory and a deep bass voice, both excellent assets for a Cahalith.

Gina "Cinderskin" Calder

Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Hunters in Darkness
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts (Woodcraft) 3, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics (Forsaken) 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Cheap Shots) 3, Firearms (Rifles) 1, Stealth (Concealment) 4, Survival (Camping) 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 2, Empathy 2, Persuasion X, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Fast-Talk) 3
Merits: Allies (Couriers) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina, Resources 1, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Envy
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 9 (9/10/11/11) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)
Speed: 13 (14/17/20/19) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 4, Glory 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Blending, Loose Tongue, Sense Weakness, Speak with Beasts; (2) Feet of Mist, Plant Growth, Sand in the Eyes, Slip Away; (3) Forest Commune, Playing Possum, Running Shadow; (4) Beast Ride
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent

Gina is the pack's main scout and coordinates their gathering of intelligence. She's a vital asset and essential for any planning that Cateria undertakes. Gina got her name by hiding in the smoldering remains of a ritual bonfire near the Lex Talionis' territory; she got a little singed and coated with ash, but she also managed to kill one of the enemy pack's wolf-blooded informers for her troubles. Gina earns a scant living acting as a courier in the city.

Gina is of average height and a bit on the thin side, almost unassuming from a distance until she breaks into motion. She's got brown hair, fair skin and a scattering of freckles beneath her large blue eyes. Gina purposely wears cheap, nondescript clothes such as jeans, hooded sweatshirts and no ornaments; such clothing helps her blend in with the crowd as best as she can with the predator's aura that surrounds her.

Calvin Rirear

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Blood Talons
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/7), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 2, Medicine (Burns) 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 3, Brawl (Claw, Grapple) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth (Alleys) 2, Survival (Camping) 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Iron Stomach, Language (Italian) 1, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Sloth
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 9 (9/10/11/11)
Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)
Speed: 13 (14/17/20/18)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 4, Honor 2, Purity 2, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Mask of Rage, Partial Change, The Right Words, Warning Growl; (2) Attunement, Camaraderie,

Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage; (3) Death Grip, Leach Rage; (4) Rage Armor, Savage Rending

Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication; (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Cleansed Blood

Calvin isn't what one would ordinarily expect from a Blood Talon baptized under the Full Moon. It's not that he doesn't have the skill demanded of a Rahu or the dedication to discipline and the warrior's code demanded by Fenris-Ur; he has both in no short supply. What throws other Uratha is his disarming sense of humor. Calvin Spicoli may have Changed under a warrior's moon, sworn blood oath to a destroyer god and chosen to stand with a pack of dangerous brutes, but he still manages to laugh. He was the one to suggest the name "Slaughterhouse Five" for the pack, even though he hadn't personally read any Vonnegut — and still hasn't.

Though Calvin jokes around easily enough outside of a hunt, he is all business when there's flesh and blood at stake. His sobriquet comes from two different but related sources — the notch taken out of his right ear, and the ear of the Pure werewolf that he spat out at the close of the old stockyards fight.

Calvin is a tall, lean Italian American man in his late 20s. He tends to keep clean-shaven, and wears his hair a bit longer than his family finds fashionable. He tends to scar when he regenerates, and his body is criss-crossed with the marks of old fights. He grins easily, but it's more intimidating than reassuring even when he's in a good mood. In wolf form, he's a massive timber wolf with bright yellow eyes.

The Fightin' Spirit (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 2, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 15

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 17

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influences: Aggression •, Courage •

Numina: Blast, Material Vision

Bonuses: Stamina +1 (pack), 2 Brawl (given); +3 Willpower/story

Ban: Never let an intentional slight or combat challenge go unanswered.

Cost: 44

Those who hear the name of the Slaughterhouse Five's pack totem are frequently taken aback — it sounds something like a sports mascot, for Luna's sake. The truth is that "the Fightin' Spirit" is a sobriquet coined by Calvin Ripear. The spirit itself doesn't like having its actual First Tongue name thrown about by people who aren't its pack. It's a mostly abstract manifestation, a blur of color that speaks like a series of explosions, but it will sometimes manifest it in a human-like form. When the spirit does, it usually takes the shape of a bloodstained man with the general build of a gorilla, with large and bony fists and an ever-shifting number of teeth.

Pack Tactics

The alpha packs are damn good fighters, and they're all skilled in basic small group melee techniques. Here are some sample strategies used by the Slaughterhouse Five and the Lex Talionis that compare and contrast how two packs take different approaches to similar problems.

Tactically speaking, a normal goal is to implement one's maximum strength against an opponent's weakness. This premise is true for both offense and defense. The Slaughterhouse Five are a bit more concerned about the latter, since their numbers are fewer than their opposing packs among the Pure Tribes. In battle, one of the first things the Slaughterhouse Five will do is establish something called a kill pocket. With this technique, the pack forms a semi-circle either behind or in front of the opening of some kind of barrier, such as a bridge or a doorway. Only a few of the enemy can engage at any given time, and if the defending pack has some kind of ranged weapon, they can attack from behind the barrier as well. A related defensive tactic is the *cul de sac*, in which the defenders open up a small portion of their defensive line, allowing a few of the enemy to engage, and then surround and crush the enemy.

In contrast, the Lex Talionis, with their greater numbers, tend to divide their pack into two groups, one that flanks the enemy's defensive position and another that charges forward or on the oblique in a full-strength attack line. Occasionally, the pack will modify the technique to be an isolated charge, in which the two strongest werewolves form a point to penetrate the enemy's defense with one or two blows, theoretically. Consequently, a defensive response is to engage these strongest fighters away from the point of the charge, although this usually requires more numbers than the Slaughterhouse Five possess. Both packs have learned that communication and following the leader's orders are vital in a combat situation.

The Whispers

Information is power — at least, that's what the Whispers believe. While the Architects of Steel work at turning temporal power in the human world into spiritual power and the Slaughterhouse Five pursue the immediate power of strength at arms, the Whispers collect secrets of all sorts to give them an edge in the complicated supernatural underworld of Chicago. They're the alpha pack most interested in the goings-on of other supernatural entities, and they do their best to understand the occult ways of vampires and mages as well as the myriad spawn of the Shadow. It's not just secrets that interest the Whispers, though — they also pick up debts wherever they can, weaving themselves into the heart of a web of favors and gossip.

The Whispers have probably collected more misinformation than information, and they know not to trust any one bit of knowledge or rumor too carefully. Even those with contacts among the vampires of Chicago (namely Shuck and Sarah) don't consider themselves even close to experts on vampiric doings. But the more secrets and tidbits that the pack accumulates, the closer they come to assembling the underlying stories of Chicago from the urban legends and lies.

The Whispers are not a large pack, consisting of various Bone Shadows and Iron Masters who came together out of common cause. Shuck O'Connor, Bone Shadow Rahu, leads the pack. The other Bone Shadows are Sarah Rainbringer (Cahalith and pack beta) and Sleepless William (Ithaeur); the pack's Iron Masters are Heather "Goreheart" Hammond (Rahu) and Michael Petruskey (Ithaeur). The knowledge the pack's Bone Shadows hold works in powerful combination with the Iron Masters' ability to adapt and manipulate technology to their needs.

The pack holds territory along the Magnificent Mile, the shopping area in north downtown. They are more nocturnal than most of Chicago's packs, preferring to hunt almost exclusively by night.

Morgan "Shuck" O'Connor

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Research) 4, Computer 3, Occult 3, Medicine 2, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry (Improvised Weapons) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Rumors) 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (University, Subculture Newspapers, Museums, Petty Crime, Norris' Agents) 5, Academic Status 2, Resources 3, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Envy
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 5
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Crushing Blow, Death Sight, Luna's Dictum, Sense Malice, Warning Growl, (2) Attunement, Ghost Knife, Iron Rending, Scent of Taint; (3) Death Grip, Echo Dream; (4) Rage Armor, Soul Read; (5) Omen Gazing
Rituals: 5; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Silver Brand, (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Fortify the Border Marches; (3) Rite of Initiation, Sacred Hunt; (4) Rite of Chosen Ground; (5) Rending the Gauntlet

Morgan was born a warrior, even if he didn't know it then. Unlike many other werewolves, he took to his new role with little trouble and no glances back to his old life. That was a number of years ago, and now Morgan (or now "Shuck") is among the older werewolves in the city. In his maturity, the warrior is starting to give more attention to the mystical than ever before; of course, as a Bone Shadow, this is not something he's ignored over the years. For example, his list of spirit allies is long, and though he doesn't tell his secrets to everyone, Shuck has some knowledge of both mages and vampires (as in, he's on speaking terms with some of them). His packmates suspect that possibly even a member or two of the Pure Tribes owes Shuck a favor. He's held a number of jobs over the years, but currently, he teaches part-time at the University of Illinois at Chicago' campus, mostly online classes in sociology. The academic credentials allow him to go behind the scenes at some of the city's numerous museums and take a closer look at the exhibits.

Shuck has sold information to a diverse collection of individuals, including the vampire Norris and Max Roman of Denver. Shuck and Norris have something of a minor trade agreement going; although the two aren't allies by any stretch of the imagination, they do treat one another as primary contacts for exchange of information or even subcontracting other small deals between vampires and werewolves.

Shuck is a big fellow, with thinning red hair, full of gray streaks. The nickname "Shuck" came from an old story of "the Black Shuck," a sort of hound of ill omen with whom Morgan readily came to identify. His werewolf forms have black fur likewise streaked with white, and show off a number of scars and other strange marks. He prefers plain, simple clothing, such as jeans and flannel shirts.

Roman Holiday

Shuck has a working relationship with Max Roman, one of the power players in the Colorado Rockies area. The two aren't precisely friendly to one another — Roman thinks Shuck's too much on the mercenary side, and Shuck finds Roman a bit too intense for comfort — but they exchange information and favors from time to time. This relationship can be used as the springboard for a Chicago pack to go visit the Rockies setting (described in **Werewolf: The Forsaken** and **Hunting Ground: The Rockies**) or vice versa. Perhaps a potent fetish or an important prisoner needs to go from one leader to the other, and they're willing to reward the players' pack handsomely for making the escort



job. Or perhaps the players' pack has recently distinguished their skills in a particular arena, making them the perfect ones to pull off an out-of-town errand. If they're looking to move territories, perhaps Roman will tell them to go talk to Shuck to find out what's available in Chicago or vice versa. If it's a temporary job, the players will also have the fun of arranging for someone else to watch over their territory while they're gone. Travel is a risky business for werewolves, but it certainly makes for interesting times. . . . .

Sarah Rainbringer

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/5/5/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Music) 2, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Cold Weather) 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Personality) 3, Expression (Song, Storytelling) 4, Persuasion 1, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2
Merits: Barfly, Contacts (Clubs) 1, Language (First Tongue) 1, Resources 1, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Lust
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 2 (2/3/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 4, Honor 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Pack Awareness, The Right Words, Ward versus Predators; (2) Camaraderie, Resist Pain, (3) Rallying Cry, (4) Unspoken Communication
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Human; (3) Bind Human

Sarah makes a scant living as a blues singer and could probably be "rich and famous" if she didn't have other things (like being a werewolf) on her plate. Consequently, her face is known at several of the smaller blues clubs in the city. Sarah came to Chicago about 15 years ago, and as Shuck has aged, Sarah has taken on more and more the role of his second-in-command. She's probably the one who will replace her alpha should he fall in battle. Sarah also maintains most of the pack's "lore collection" on a series of CDs.

Sarah recently came to the unanticipated realization that she's fallen deeply for her packmate Heather "Goreheart" Hammond, a feeling that Sarah works hard to suppress, for fear of disrupting her pack and (if Heather proved receptive) affronting the Oath of the Moon. Moreover, as a Cahalith, she *knows* the usual outcomes for love affairs of this nature; Uratha history is full of such tales that never end happily. It's an unpleasant feeling of division for Sarah, who had previously thought herself "too mature" for this sort of thing. So far, Heather doesn't seem to have any idea of Sarah's feelings; if Sarah seems a bit tense now and again, it's certainly not unexpected for a werewolf.

Sarah is of medium height and stocky build; she has glossy black-brown hair, fair skin and brown eyes. Her wolf form is small and wiry, with dark brown fur. She prefers loose clothing and likes cold weather; she tends to go without jackets in winter and avoid the daytime entirely during summer.

Heather "Goreheart" Hammond

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics (Networking) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Claw) 3, Drive 2, Larceny (Fraud) 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Intimidation (Cruel) 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Covering Up) 3
Merits: Contacts (Financial) 1, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Resources 3, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, Partial Change; (2) Anybeast, Attunement, Mighty Bound; (3) Death Grip, Silver Jaws
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt

When Heather arrived in Chicago three years ago, she met a welcoming committee from the Hooked Claws pack. Against all odds, she beat them soundly, and several died of their wounds. That, at least, is her story — and although it's the story the Whispers promote, it seems damn unfeasible to anyone who's crossed paths with the Hooked Claws. Heather is tough as nails, but she would have to be some sort of incarnate wolf-god to survive an attack from a Pure pack on her own, much less kill three or four of them.

The truth is that Heather didn't really do the majority of the work. To be sure, she carried her share of the fight, including finishing off an old and tough Predator King, but the real fight that went down was between the Hooked Claws and a gang of unaligned vampires. It was apparently some sort of deal with the vampires who had brought Heather to Chicago, but the Pure caught her scent and crashed the meet. Heather escaped with terrible wounds, and as luck would have it, was found by the Architects of Steel two nights later as she lay feverish in an alley. Olivia thanked Heather for weakening the Hooked Claws, and saw to it that Heather was nursed back to health — and then politely invited her to move right along.

Heather might not have made her way out of Chicago successfully if not for a Bone Shadow spirit watcher giving Sarah Rainbringer a heads up. The Whispers were more than pleased to have a proven Rahu join their pack. In return for her service, though, Heather didn't want the details of her deal with the vampires to get out. The Whispers agreed to keep that secret, but Heather suspects that Olivia knows all about it. Between that little bit of information and the brusque brush-off she received, Heather cannot stand Olivia Citysmith, and gets agitated even hearing the Architect's name.

Heather makes a decent living as a day trader and is in charge of managing the pack's "real-world" resources. She is tall and lean, with shoulder-length ash blonde hair. The name "Goreheart" was acquired in that fateful fight, when she pushed her hand through the heart of a Predator King a few years back (Rasia Lujanov's father, to be exact). Heather's wolf form is large, with tawny brown fur. In human shape, she often wears some variety of yoga pants with a sweatshirt or T-shirt.

Michael Petruskey

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer (Speed-Coding, Cracking) 4, Crafts (Electronics) 3, Investigation 3, Occult (Urban Spirits) 3, Politics 1, Science 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Hackers, Banks) 2, Mentor 3, Resources 3, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Pride

Health: 7 (9/11/10/9)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Left Handed Spanner, Two-World Eyes, Wolf's-Blood Lure; (2) Nightfall, Traveler's Blessing; (3) Sagacity
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Call Gaffling, Fortify the Border Marches, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition; (3) Bind Spirit

Like Michael's friend, packmate and tribemate Heather, Michael does some computer "consulting" (read: cracking) and rakes in a goodly amount of money. He's generous in supporting his pack both financially and emotionally, and he's pleased to have been chosen as William's unofficial successor. That said, Michael has a lot to learn. He's still fairly young, even though he's seen a lot via the exploits of his pack, and he lacks a certain humility that others hope will come with time.

Michael is rakishly handsome in his human form, with green eyes and darkish brown hair. Michael's wolf form has chocolate brown fur, and his eyes are a bit more yellow-green than in his human form. He likes "cool" clothes: lots of expensive leather jackets and name brands.

Sleepless William

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Local History) 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 3, Occult (Healing) 4, Politics 1, Science (Anthropology) 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Larceny 2, Stealth (Crowds) 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Spirits) 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (Chicago Library) 2, Contacts (Bone Shadows, Bookstores) 2, Meditative Mind, Resources 1, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Sloth
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 4
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Sense Malice, Two-World Eyes, Ward versus Predators; (2) Read Spirit, Scent of Taint, Ward versus Mortals, (3) Echo Dream, Technology Ward; (4) Soul Read
Rituals: 4; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Call Gaffling, Fortify the Border Marches, Hallow Touchstone; (3) Bind Spirit, Call Jaggling, Rite of Healing, Rite of Initiation, Sacred Hunt; (4) Rite of Chosen Ground

Sleepless William is the lead Crescent Moon in the Silent Whispers pack. Like his friend and leader Shuck, Sleepless William has got a lot of experience dealing with spirits and takes as his personal mission the "healing" of the city's spiritual sicknesses. This has sapped him physically and mentally, since he's been at it for over a decade. It was William who convinced Cleansing Rain to act as the pack totem, and he is the Whisper most concerned with keeping their totem appeased. He views Michael Petruskey as his eventual successor and protégé, but Sleepless William is also concerned that the younger werewolf lacks some of the maturity and understanding needed to get the job done. William comes from a long line of Uratha and has several wolf-bloods who make sure he's got money and a place to stay when he's not with his pack (which doesn't happen often).

William is of medium height and weight; he's got a hawkish face, thinning silvery hair and blue eyes. He has black fur heavily flecked with gray in his wolf form. He cares little for clothes and other mortal trappings, but in public usually wears T-shirts and blue jeans. He seems perpetually tired, as his desire to do "just a bit more" usually wins out over his urge to just lie down and rest for a good long time.

Cleansing Rain (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 5, Resistance 3
Willpower: 6
Essence: 15
Initiative: 8
Defense: 6
Speed: 18
Size: 8
Corpus: 12
Influences: Healing •, Rain •
Numina: Material Vision, Wilds Sense
Bonuses: Gift: Deluge (story), +18 Essence pool/story
Cost: 36
Ban: The pack must ritually purify themselves after every battle or hunt, washing the blood from their bodies with clean water. If the blood is left long enough to dry thoroughly, Cleansing Rain will become offended.

The Whispers are bound to an elemental of surprisingly gentle aspect. Although Cleansing Rain is still not especially capable of pure compassion or acting without self-interest, its aspect as a healer softens its dealings with its pack. The totem dislikes winter and prefers that the Whispers be less active during that time, as the spirit's power wanes in the face of freezing weather and snow. Cleansing Rain typically appears as an ever-flowing downpour of rain without cloud or mist, sometimes manifesting vague facial features within itself.

The Scrawl (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Mystery

In one of the alleys off the Magnificent Mile, a strange design is painted on the wall. The design is faded, though whatever it was painted in was once dark. Although most people take it for a gang tag or the like, the Whispers know it's some kind of mystic design, used to mark the site of some conflict or ritual that happened over 20 years ago. They're not sure why it became a locus or what the original event it was meant to mark was. It's a question that gnaws on each of the pack members, though Shuck has forbidden looking too deeply into it. He believes, perhaps superstitiously but perhaps rightly, that if the pack gets their answers the mystery will fade, and the locus with it.

The Lex Talionis

The Lex Talionis pack is an alpha-level threat almost by virtue of numbers alone. Although only roughly half the pack are actual veterans on the same level as the Forsaken alphas, that's still an impressive number when you consider that the Lex Talionis are nearly double the size of the average alpha Forsaken pack.

The Ivory Claw Patrick Keeneye greatly wants to cull Chicago and claim it for the Pure, and his pack is in the forefront of Pure attacks against Chicago's Forsaken. The Lex Talionis have done a remarkably decent job over the years, with their most notable victories scored against the Architects. Right now, only the Slaughterhouse Five match this Pure pack in terms of tactics, cunning and raw combat ability. Luckily for the other Tribes of the Moon packs, the Lex Talionis lack a similar amount of connections and information gleaned from mortal and other supernatural sources; the pack members don't have a comparable amount of contacts anywhere but in the Shadow. For now, this lack of connections has meant that the Pure have yet to exploit the greatest weaknesses of their eternal rivals. However, the Lex Talionis are beginning to make some tenuous contacts among the vampires and mages of the city, and this might prove to be just the wedge they need to destroy more of the Forsaken.

Most of the pack are Ivory Claws, including their alpha. The other Ivory Claws under Keeneye are the veterans Juanita Vejo Mendez and Wilder Douglas, and the new recruits Diana Bishku, Jasper Casaletto, Gray and Nabil Luoma. Two Fire-Touched round out the Lex Talionis: Keeneye's second-in-command, Levon Phillips, and the newcomer Ursa Tuvaos.

The Lex Talionis claim territory in Kane County, around the Kishwaukee River.

Patrick Keeneye

Tribe: Ivory Claws

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Uratha Spoor) 3, Occult 1, Politics 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Dirty Tricks) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth (Move in Darkness) 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 3, Intimidation (Stare Down) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Rumors) 3, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 2

Merits: Common Sense, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fetish (Fireflash) 2, Iron Stamina 2, Resources 1, Totem 7

Primal Urge: 5

Willpower: 8

Harmony: 4

Essence Max/Per Turn: 14/2

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Envy

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)

Initiative: 9 (9/10/12/12) with Fast Reflexes

Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)

Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)

Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 4, Honor 2, Purity 3, Wisdom 2

Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Mask of Rage, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Home Range, Luna's Dictum, Ward Versus Humans; (3) Leach Rage, Primal Howl, Voice of Command; (4) Rekindle Rage, Savage Rending

Rituals: 4; Rites: (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Fortify the Border Marches, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Rite of Initiation; (4) Rite of Chosen Ground

Even his enemies have to grudgingly admire Patrick, as he draws together the strongest elements of man and wolf. He's a consummate planner and takes care of his pack. Patrick is always the first into battle and the last to leave, and he doesn't shirk from making hard decisions, such as putting a pack member in imminent danger for the greater good. For all these reasons, the older and wiser werewolves of the city, both Pure Tribes and those from the Tribes of the Moon, have a healthy dose of fear and respect for this Ivory Claw, dangerous fanatic that he is. The one weakness Patrick has is a lack of resources; he makes what money he does have through gambling scams and other petty crimes. Unlike some of the Iron Masters, he lacks the contacts and influence needed to stay one step ahead of his enemies; likewise, he doesn't have the Bone Shadows' carefully cultivated relations with some of the city's strongest spirit denizens. Until he figures out a way to acquire these things, Keeneye's wits and innate wisdom are his best weapons.

Tall, fair-featured, and handsome, he has all the marks of a powerful leader. He's in his mid-30s, and would probably fit in very well at high-society gatherings if it weren't for the fact that humans can easily sense the predatory hatred that pours out of his frame. In his wolf form, his fur is a deep, rich gray. Patrick always dresses neatly, even if his clothes are off the rack at the local super shopping center.

Levon "Emberclaw" Phillips

Tribe: Fire-Touched

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Religion) 3, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival (Forests) 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Oratory) 4, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Emotional Appeals) 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 1, Resources 2, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 5
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 14/2
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Pride
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/18) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 3, Honor 2, Purity 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Call Fire, Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, The Right Words, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Manipulate Fire, Mighty Bound; (3) Command Fire, Iron Rending, Primal Howl

Note: Some of the Fire-Touched in this chapter use variants on the Elemental Gift list that substitute fire for the other appropriate elements, an option described on p. 111 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. If the Storyteller would rather not employ this variant rule, substitute the usual Elemental Gifts instead.

Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Call Human, Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition; (3) Bind Human, Rite of Initiation, Sacred Hunt

Levon follows his pack leader unswervingly. But that doesn't stop Levon from offering counsel. From time to time, Emberclaw speaks to his alpha of the other path, that of converting rather than butchering. This isn't to say Emberclaw is squeamish or balks at killing; just the opposite is true, as he's right in the center of the fray when fighting the heretic Forsaken. But he also thinks that the ranks of Rabid Wolf's packs can be swelled with converts, giving the Pure Tribes even more weapons to fight their enemies. Realistically, Levon underestimates the conviction of most of the Tribes of the Moon; he's a gifted speaker, like many in his tribe, but is too set in his faith that the Pure Tribes' view is the *only* view. Levon, unlike Keeneye, just might be willing to talk before killing his enemies, but his attention span is quite short.

Levon is a good-looking man of African American descent, just about to enter middle age. He dresses as well as he can afford (and gets much of his assets through illegal means) and in wolf form has a tawny, gold coat. He has great trouble moving through human society, as the rabid wolf within consistently strains and snaps at the minds of men and women around him.

Juanita Vejo Mendez

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics (Tribal) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Gauru) 3, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Wolves) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Kane County Sheriff) 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 4, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Mask of Rage, Partial Change, Sense Malice, Warning Growl, Ward Versus Predators, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Anybeast, Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Scent of Taint; (3) Leach Rage, Primal Howl; (4) Savage Rending
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent; (2) Fortify the Border Marches

Juanita almost didn't survive the critical clash with the Architects of Steel. She was taken down, her throat half-torn out and she survived only because Yussef Mahudi refused to finish the job. And she hates him for it. Ever since that battle, she has felt doubt gnawing at her — not doubt for her cause, but for her own ability. She failed. She was beaten. And the only reason she isn't dead is because a piece of Forsaken scum thought he could prove he was better than her by sparing her life.

Before that fight, Juanita relied mostly on her natural prowess as a werewolf to see her through, along with some moderate training and the weight of numbers. Now she's vigorously devoted to bettering her combat ability, and has come quite a way over the past few months. She can be particularly harsh with the new recruits, having felt firsthand how being over-reliant on numbers can fail you. Her insistence that they get better faster hasn't made her many friends, but most can respect her reasoning.

Juanita is a darker-skinned Hispanic woman in her late 30s, with longish hair that's beginning to pick up some premature streaks of white. She usually wears turtlenecks in the city to cover the ugly scarring on her neck. She's much stronger and tougher than she appears at first, the result of heavy physical conditioning.



Wilder Douglas

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation (Smell of Blood) 3, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 4, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Fast Reflexes 1, Fetish (Blesssing of Vigor) 1, Totem 5
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Envy
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Death Sight, Warning Growl; (2) Luna's Dictum, Father Wolf's Speed, Mighty Bound; (3) Iron-Rending, Primal Howl
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Rite of Contrition

Wilder is one of the survivors of the Lex Talionis' last clash with the Architects of Steel, and he couldn't be more embittered about it. Although intellectually he knows his pack wasn't guaranteed victory against the Architects, it still holds true that they had greater numbers and moral superiority on their side, and they still lost. Wilder desperately needs to blame someone for the loss, and right now he's settled on Emberclaw. As he sees it, the Fire-Touched beta must be confusing or misleading Keeneye, something that probably wouldn't have happened if Keeneye had kept his pack exclusive to the Ivory Claws alone. If something were to happen to Emberclaw, Wilder wouldn't shed a tear.

Wilder is a tall and lean man who's let his grooming go since his Change. In human form, he looks like a weather-beaten hitchhiker, though anyone who gets close enough to see the look in his eye might revise her description to include the word "murderous."

The Newcomers

For convenience's sake, a single block of traits is provided for the five new recruits of the Lex Talionis pack.

This isn't meant to imply that all members of the Pure Tribes are alike; it's an abstraction for the sake of simplicity (and making it easier to keep track of nine werewolves at once). Storytellers who are interested in further fleshing out the five junior Pure are encouraged to develop them in separate directions, adjusting traits to bring out their individual quirks and strengths.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Fast Reflexes 1, Language (First Tongue) 1, Resources 2, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Varies; usually Faith or Fortitude
Vice: Varies; usually Wrath or Pride
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 2, Purity 2
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, Partial Change, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Mighty Bound, Father Wolf's Speed
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Any one rite

• **Diana Bishku:** Diana was the first of the new recruits to be inducted into Lex Talionis, and she takes the compliment very seriously. She is exceptionally status-conscious, quick to defer to Keeneye and the other senior members but equally quick to grow angry if she feels any of her fellow recruits are being disrespectful to her. The fact that she can claim a stronger measure of Ivory Claw blood than most doesn't help her humility, either.

Ironically, Diana comes from no one strong human ethnic heritage; she could pass for having Hispanic, Middle Eastern or even Polynesian blood. She is somewhat small-framed, and given to sharp movements and angry looks.

• **Jasper Casaletto:** Jasper found religion with his indoctrination into the Ivory Claws, and an unhealthy religion at that. The patronage of Silver Wolf feeds a powerful elitist streak in Jasper's soul. He follows the zealous credo of hate because it makes him feel good about himself at the expense of others. As a result, he's as poisonously self-centered as a werewolf can get without being thrown from his pack. Emberclaw recognizes that Jasper has the lowest sort of nature found in the Pure Tribes, but lets the young Ivory Claw do as he pleases. Either he'll find his way to a healthier (for the Pure) state of mind, or he'll achieve grace by dying for the cause.

Jasper is fairly unattractive, a small and skinny man with a hooked nose and greasy hair. Despite his religious sense of superiority, he can be quite polite if the situation demands it; he takes a certain amusement in being "merciful" to those beneath him. It's only temporary, though, and if he gets the chance to victimize someone in the name of Silver Wolf, he won't hesitate.

• **Gray:** Gray can no longer remember the name he was born with. He wasn't quite strong enough to survive the ritual of indoctrination intact. As best as he can figure, he came from a human family that his fellow Ivory Claws detested for some reason, and he thinks he's been conditioned not to remember them so he can't speak of them. Gray actually accepts this with surprising aplomb — he trusts that if his memories were repressed, it was for a good reason, and he values his tribemates more than the abstract thought of a human family he can't remember. He gets his money from a rich Ivory Claw benefactor in Michigan, whom Gray thinks may be a blood relative.

Gray's name comes from an obvious source; he has gray eyes in every form, and a gray coat as a wolf. He looks to be in his mid-30s, a bit weathered and in good shape. He remains uncannily calm in most situations, letting the mad wolf inside out only when pushed to the brink.

• **Nabil Luoma:** Nabil isn't happy with his lot. He got over the loss of his wife some time back, and has made plans to take a new mate soon. He likes to shapeshift, and loves the brute power of Urshul and the raw fury of Gauru. But he cannot stand the Shadow. Everything about it — its smell, its lack of light, the constant undulating movement of things that move through it — all repulse and frighten him. He knows it's a terrible weakness to have, and he fights it as best he can. But if the Lex Talionis are preparing to move on another pack, Nabil always volunteers to move in on the physical front.

Nabil is a moderately tall, middle-aged man of mixed Middle Eastern and African American descent. He speaks softly, with a slightly mocking edge to his voice, and rarely howls or snarls when hunting in a wolf or half-wolf form.

• **Ursa Tuvaos:** Ursa is the most recent initiate into the Lex Talionis pack, and is having a difficult time fitting in. During her indoctrination, she was continually surrounded by other Fire-Touched, and she came to rely on their shared faith as the foundation of her new life. But upon being given over to Keeneye's pack, she found herself bound to a group almost entirely made up of Ivory Claws, and has been quite disconcerted. Her only tribemate in the pack spends most of his attention on bringing over converts to the Pure and little time on providing Ursa with moral support. She keeps her mouth quiet and devotes her strength to the pack as she was taught is appropriate for acolytes, but she can't help but feel somewhat alienated by her new family.

Ursa has thick, brown hair, dark eyes and a solid build, all qualities that add to the "bearish" image that won her a tribal name. She doesn't talk much unless directly addressed, but her low and quiet voice betrays something of the inner fanaticism that's become the cornerstone of her soul.

Blind Justice (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 4, Resistance 4
Willpower: 8
Essence: 15
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 14
Size: 6
Corpus: 10
Influences: Truth ••
Numina: Material Sense, Reaching
Bonuses: Gift: Soul Read (pack),16 Essence pool/story
Ban: The pack must punish themselves once per month, under the new moon, for any sins they may have committed in the "sight" of Blind Justice. They must make ritual offerings of blood for any sins of violence, sacrifice material goods to repay acts of theft or destruction, and so forth. Blind Justice's demands are more symbolic than literally equal — the spirit may ask for a blood offering if one of its children murders a Forsaken werewolf, but it will not ask for a life in return for a life. The spirit's own prejudices against the Uratha inform the punishments it demands from its adopted pack.

The Lex Talionis' totem is a spirit of imperfect justice, one that embodies the subtle corruption that often takes root in a nobler ideal. The pack is aware that their totem does not embody justice in its purest state, but they have come to terms with that; they realize that a spirit of imperfect justice thrives better in the cities of humanity than a "nobler" spirit would. Blind Justice manifests in human-like form, an animated statue of cracked marble and dark wood with a bleeding cloth draped around where its eyes would be.

The Blooded Stone (Locus Rating ••••)

Resonance: Vengeance

At the heart of Lex Talionis territory is a flat rock, just about large enough for a person to stretch out on. According to the pack's lore, the rock was used back in the days of the natives to punish people who wronged their brethren, by tying them down and then smashing their brains out with a weapon or sharp stone. When the white man came, the tradition secretly continued among the settlers in the area, who were drawn to the stone for the same purposes. Whether the legend is true or not, the Lex Talionis use the stone to formally execute any captives they take, human or Forsaken. The stone generates a rich quantity of Essence, though the taste of vengeance that comes with it is hot and bitter.

The Hooked Claws

The Hooked Claws are old and weary, yet still pack a punch. Like the Lex Talionis, the Hooked Claws too have had to replace a few fallen veterans with newcomers in the past couple of years. However, the Hooked Claws lost most of their old members not to the Forsaken, but to a group of vampires. In the fight, the old pack leader, Sergei Lujanov, was killed not by a vampire, but by the newcomer Iron Master Heather Hammond, who'd been meeting with the vampires. For this, Rasia would love to kill the young Rahu. The current pack leader, Zapporah, unbeknownst to her fellows, is starting to question the ways of the past. She would never dream of betraying the Pure Tribes, but her faint doubts are causing subtle cracks in the packs' veneer of strength. Rasia especially is troubled by her alpha's brooding, though she doesn't know its source. Fredrick is a visionary and wants to strengthen the pack's ties to the Lex Talionis, in hopes of waging a successful attack and wiping out one of the Tribes of the Moon packs completely; he's thinking the Architects might fit the bill nicely. Discussing this possible attack occupies much of the pack's time at present.

The Hooked Claws are a thoroughly mixed pack of Pure, even including a pair of Predator Kings. The survivors of the vampiric conflict are the pack alpha Zapporah Miredsoul (Ivory Claws), Rasia Lujanov (Predator Kings), Fredrick Mills (Ivory Claws) and Anala Ravi (Fire-Touched). The three newest recruits are Antonio Amador (Fire-Touched), Mordred (Predator Kings) and Stanton McGarahan (Ivory Claws). They claim territory around the South Loop.

Zapporah Miredsoul

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Gauru) 4, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Pack) 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Family) 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Local Wealthy Families) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Resources 4, Totem 10
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/18)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 3, Honor 2, Purity 4, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Death Sight, Sense Malice, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Luna's Dictum, Mighty Bound; (3) Iron-Rending, Primal Howl, (4) Hero's Arm, Savage Rending
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Rite of Initiation

Zapporah is a fervent supporter of the Ivory Claws' point of view — and she'd likely kill any who said otherwise. But Zapporah keeps to herself that

she does, in fact, have some faint doubts. These don't center so much on the betrayal of the Forsaken; she's certain of the fact that those wayward children slew their father, and fully believes the legends and history preserved by her tribe. What absorbs her thoughts is a terrible little question: Wasn't it perhaps part of the natural order that Father Wolf was slain? Was he weak? Had his time to die come? If so, why was it such a crime that he pass into the next life? What would the results have been if he'd been left to die on his own?

If she has a flaw, it's that Zapporah has questioned the ways of the world all her life; as her mind untangled from her initiation, an elder foretold that the girl would spend her days contemplating the past, present and future. This introspection grates on the nerves of her Predator King packmate, Rasia. Only Zapporah's continued physical prowess, ability to work with her fellow Pure Tribes and high status keep things in check within the pack.

Zapporah comes from a long line of Ivory Claws, the finest of families from a variety of backgrounds and walks in life; this is also where she gets her considerable wealth. At present, she's deep in middle age; most of her dark hair is now silver, and her once-firm tan skin is starting to show some wrinkles and worry lines. Still, she's in fine shape and regal, wearing well-made clothes in her human form and silver fur in her wolf form. From a distance or in a photograph, she might seem like a society matron — up close, though, her supernatural power and bestial nature press on the mind.



Enemy of My Enemy

Zapporah Miredsoul needs intel on the Forsaken, more on their belief systems than their pack tactics. Her subconscious doubts have been creeping ever closer to the surface, and she decides that it's time to act. Unknown to her pack, she attempts to capture one of the characters and thoroughly interrogates him — mostly about his and his pack's core beliefs, their totem and the very nature of their connection to the Shadow Realm. (The attempt may be best handled in a solo game or via chat room or some other isolated forum). The character may elude her, or be captured and interrogated — which may be a plum chance to try and convince the Pure alpha to mend her ways.

Miredsoul finds a suitable way to dump the character when they're done so she can go mull over her new info in private. The character may not even know who she is — but he'll likely want to find out. He and his pack will need to tread carefully, lest they get into a major conflict with the Pure Tribes. Still, this could be a turning point in the chronicle. Will the characters convince a leader among the Pure Tribes to change her allegiance? And what effect might this have on the balance of power in Chicago?

Rasia Lusanov

Tribe: Predator Kings
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/4), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts (Tanning, Leatherworking) 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 4, Stealth (Urshul) 3, Survival (Urban, Tracking) 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation (Savage) 3, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Ambidextrous, Iron Stamina, Strong Back, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/18)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Mask of Rage, Speak with Beasts, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Plant Growth; (3) Forest Commune, Primal Howl
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Shared Scent; (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone

Rasia is a staunch traditionalist, which explains why she's still loyal to Zapporah, at least for the present. Predator Kings are warriors, not leaders; that role has historically fallen to the Ivory Claws, and Rasia sees no reason to question customs. Still, there are times she'd like to seize her pack leader by the neck and shake her long and hard, to get her to see reason. Their packmate Fredrick's ideas of allying with the Lex Talionis are good; why aren't plans being laid? The treacherous Forsaken have left their stench all over the city; why aren't they being stopped? Rasia's doubts, heretofore unspoken, are creeping ever near the surface. If she should ever get a hint that Zapporah is weakening in her resolve, even the smallest fraction, then the Predator King would gladly transfer her loyalty to a potential new pack leader, one who would *do* something rather than sit around and think too much.

Rasia is tall and thin, with short, reddish hair, ruddy skin and dark eyes. Mortal onlookers get shivers from the raw fury emanating from her. When she appears in public, she usually wears a leather jacket she tanned herself, but her preferred state is her lean, red-coated wolf form. She occasionally does manual labor and construction if she finds there's something she needs to buy and can't steal, but she never holds a job for long, and sometimes one of her coworkers goes missing not long after she quits.

Fredrick Wills

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4 (3/4/1/4), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 2, Investigation (Rumor Mill) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics (Packs) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Fears) 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Harmless) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Allies (Private Investigator) 2, Contacts (Media, Local Government) 2, Languages (First Tongue, French, Spanish) 3, Resources 2, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Sloth
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 2, Honor 2, Purity 4, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Loose Tongue, Partial Change, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Anybeast, Camaraderie, Father Wolf's Speed, Sand in the Eyes; (3) Playing Possum, Primal Howl; (4) Savage Rending
Rituals: 4; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Call Gaffling, Call Human, Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Bind Human, Call Jaggling, Rite of Healing, Rite of Initiation, Wake the Spirit; (4) Rite of Chosen Ground

Fredrick's loyalties are divided. He has followed Zapporah for several years, and there's a lot of mutually shed blood that keeps him close to his alpha. But at the same time, recent meetings with Patrick Keeneye have left Frederick very impressed with the Lex Talionis leader. Keeneye's vision is clearly unwavering and strong even in

the light of his recent losses at the claws of the Architects of Steel — but the same can't be said for Zapporah. Even so, where Rasia grows sullen and suspicious, Fredrick remains optimistic. The way he sees things, the Hooked Claws need a major victory to get back to full vigor. Allying with Lex Talionis would not only provide that victory, but could offer the possibility of many more victories, perhaps even claiming all of Chicago for the Pure. The thought thrills him.

Fredrick is a slender blond man in his early 20s, not quite good-looking but with a wry twist to his smile that some women find charming. He's usually the one to do any negotiations with humans that can't be delegated to younger pack members. His coat in wolf form is pale tan.

Anala Ravi

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Research) 2, Occult 1, Politics (City) 4, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Larceny (Forgery) 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Written) 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Languages (First Tongue, Hindi) 2, Mentor 2, Totem 8
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Pride
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Call Water, Partial Change, Loose Tongue, The Right Words Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Camaraderie, Father Wolf's Speed, Manipulate Earth, Sand in the Eyes; (3) Command Fire, Primal Howl
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone

Anala was born Chandrani Ravi, to an Indian immigrant family who had little idea that the blood of werewolves ran in their veins. She changed her name upon her indoctrination — Chandrani meant "bride of the moon," and she felt it would be a terrible omen. Now she answers to "Anala," meaning "fiery." It suits the woman she has become. Certainly, her parents would not recognize their daughter if they were to see her again. The polite young woman who entered city government is dead, replaced with a werewolf fanatic in human skin. Zapporah finds it unfortunate that Anala cannot call on her old contacts in City Hall without raising a tremendous fuss, but Anala doesn't agree. She resents the woman she once was, and, to some extent, fears that that woman is still within her somewhere.

Anala is an Indian woman in her late-20s, with thick hair raggedly cut shoulder-length and dark eyes that smolder with latent fury. She likes to sing in the First Tongue as she fights, though her songs are always terrible hymns about blood and fire and madness that devolve into howls as she changes form.

The Bride of the Moon

Though Anala doesn't know it, her family actually has a stronger strain of wolf blood than the Fire-Touched who took her in realized. Some of her ancestors were wolf princes in the long-ago days of India, righteous warriors who fought in the name of a terrible wolf that howled down storms. And recently, one of the Forsaken with an interest in genealogy has discovered the Riva family's heritage.

The Storm Lords are, of course, interested in bringing the Riva bloodline "home." A Storm Lord among the players' pack might be tasked with looking after the family for a time, or perhaps even encouraged to go court one of Anala's siblings. But with a little more investigation, the pack may find out that the Riva family's missing daughter is now among the Fire-Touched. It would be a great coup for the Storm Lords to bring the wayward Chandrani home — but how possible is it to break the conditioning of Rabid Wolf?

The New Blood

Like the Lex Talionis, the Hooked Claws have had to recruit younger werewolves to their cause of late. The three newer recruits are described only in brief here; for simplicity's sake, they can be assumed to use the same basic traits given on p. 217.

• **Antonio Amador:** Antonio is one of the most enthusiastic of the pack, eager to take revenge on the Hooked Claws' enemies or to start a war against someone entirely new. He greatly respects Zapporah, and feels certain that her seeming hesitance of late masks some incipient plan for a glorious victory. He is mostly valuable to the pack for his mechanical expertise; he's the best with cars, and can pop locks and hotwire ignition quickly when Urhan form won't be fast enough.

Antonio is a fairly nondescript Hispanic man in his early 30s. He used to be slightly pudgy, but his werewolf metabolism burnt off the excess, and all his old clothes are now a bit on the baggy side. When he gets excited, he begins breathing quickly through clenched teeth, a habit that people outside his pack find very unnerving.

• **Mordred:** The vicious werewolf called Mordred got his name shortly after indoctrination, when he turned on an older Predator King and tore out his rival's throat. It was a treacherous piece of work — he wouldn't have won in a fair fight — but the ranking Predator King in the territory, Beast-of-Rage, was amused at the youngster's pluck. A treacherous killer of a blood elder, of a King: the name Mordred seemed to fit. He claims to be happy with the honor of serving with the Hooked Claws, and eagerly anticipates proving his worth against the Forsaken. Still, there's something about the way he sometimes looks at Zapporah that seems — hungry.

Mordred is a muscular, young black man with a great many tattoos. He wears stitched-together patchwork taken from his kills, including a hooded sweatshirt made from the gear of several street gang members. He's been known to wander into the worst parts of town at night wearing his ensemble, looking for people dumb enough to laugh at him. His coat in wolf forms is a deep brown, not quite black, and his wolf-form eyes are yellow.

• **Stanton McGarahan:** Stanton is the quiet one, a werewolf of unusually reserved demeanor. He keeps his inner beast well-hidden most of the time, though humans still find him slightly creepy and off-putting. The truth is that Stanton has lost quite a bit of Harmony in the process of joining the Pure, and the usual ceremonies and practices that help bolster that weakness aren't really taking. Stanton is just this close from losing himself and becoming a sociopath whom even the rest of his pack would have to put down.

Stanton is, appropriately enough, physically unremarkable. He's a white man of average height and indeterminate age, usually dressed in ordinary, casual clothes. When he shifts forms to fight, he becomes noticeably more violent than even his packmates, as if channeling all his insanity into his inhuman side.

Silent Crow (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 4, Resistance 3
Willpower: 6
Essence: 15
Initiative: 12
Defense: 6
Speed: 13
Size: 3
Corpus: 6
Influences: Death •, Silence •
Numina: Call the Breeze, Material Sense, Reaching, Wilds Sense
Bonuses: Wits +2 (pack); Stealth 2 (pack), +12 Essence pool/story
Ban: The recipient of Silent Crow's blessings must herself remain silent while drawing on the totem's powers. Thus, whoever is currently benefiting from the Wits or Stealth bonus cannot speak until she forfeits that bonus, and anyone who draws on the totem's extra Essence pool cannot make a sound during the turn that she does so.

The Hooked Claws' totem is an old scavenger-spirit that draws on the power of death and stillness. Like many of the Pure's pack totems, the spirit dislikes its adopted children, but will not refuse their service. Silent Crow tends to manifest as a hulking corvid about the size of a border collie, with a fleshless black skull and bony, black talons.

The Basement Door (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Death

Back in the 1980s, a man named Joseph Clay found himself in the most desperate of straits, homeless along with his whole family. Driven mad by desperation, he found a small basement for his family to rest in for the night, then murdered them one by one in their sleep and slit his own throat afterwards. The door to that basement has become a locus in its own right, one that the Hooked Claws were guided to by their totem spirit. Resting in the basement and drawing on the door's Essence always turns the pack's mood grimmer, but Zapporah has always maintained that the resonance is a fine fit for the gravity of their mission.

Mortal Contacts

Wolf-Blooded of the Alphas

The wolf-blooded are both a blessing and a liability. Thus far in Chicago, slayings of wolf-blooded have been kept to a minimum, but should the tension between the Tribes of the Moon and the Pure Tribes escalate, the wolf-blooded would be some of the first targets. The following persons are the "knowing" and most closely connected wolf-blooded — and the vast majority of them have only superficial knowledge of the Uratha and their purpose. Some wolf-blooded have close relatives in the city; other wolf-blooded are just connected to a certain tribe without having specific werewolf relatives. In a city the size of Chicago, probably a number of totally unknowing wolf-blooded humans may be wandering around, and they could make some potentially intriguing Storyteller "surprises" for the characters.

• **Carolyn Andrews (Bone Shadows):** Carolyn is the sister of Sleepless William of the Whispers, and when she can spare the time, a strong supporter of his pack and the tribe in general. Carolyn, though, has her own challenging career as a family nurse practitioner. She's spent time in several foreign countries as a volunteer and has considerable respect for alternative medicine (being wolf-blooded, she's pretty well aware that there are things beyond what can be explained by science). Right now, Carolyn is torn between what she feels is a duty to the Uratha and a duty to humanity; she doesn't believe she's doing either group much good being split in two all the time. Carolyn's usual look includes khaki pants and a matching dress T-shirt; she's about 35 years old and favors her brother.

• **Jean Bannister (Iron Masters):** A transportation engineer with the Chicago Transit Authority, Jean works with the design of the el system. She has no particular family among the Iron Masters, but she's shared her contact info with Heather Hammond and Michael Petruskey. Jean has also learned about the uncharted sections of the subway system and has in her position a more "complete" map than is displayed at the el stations; these secret tunnel branches and hidden passages would make great hidey holes for something

the Iron Masters wanted no one to find. Jean is in her early 40s and wears business casual attire most days.

• **Jim Flannigan (Ivory Claws):** Jim runs a boxing club off 33rd Street. It's a grubby place, but he's a good man to have around should trouble occur. Not only is Jim a talented hand-to-hand fighter, who could probably tackle most human opponents and win, he's also got an interesting array of hand-to-hand and projectile weapons cached in a special locker at his gym. Most Ivory Claws know how to contact him, should they need the kind of help he can provide.

• **Karen Hamrick (Blood Talons):** Once an Olympic hopeful, Karen is a consummate athlete with a tough, well-honed body. Now in her mid-30s, she runs a training facility on the South Side and caters to youth interested in learning gymnastics and tumbling. While Karen isn't terribly overt about her commitment, she's got a fairly strong commitment to helping promising youth stay off the street and accomplish something with their minds and bodies. She's also got some contacts among the petty criminals of the city. Yussef Mahudi occasionally drops by to check on Karen, and his presence usually sends any potential young troublemakers, who'd like to threaten Karen or her students, running for the streets.

• **Don Hecht (Fire-Touched):** Don is both a source of amusement and curiosity to his tribe — for the moment. He's a stand-up evangelist and has developed a small following among some of the "lost souls" of the city. Don knows the back streets and the missions, and he craves the adulation his followers provide. He has, on occasion, provided needed funds to some of the city's Fire-Touched, and likewise, has pulled them out of challenging situations and provided a place to lay low at his mission on 49th Street, "back" of the old stockyards. However, Don also is prone to speaking in tongues and spouting off odd prophecies. Some of the Fire-Touched think he may be blessed in some strange fashion; others think he's a liability. Don's in his 50s and slightly on the portly side, with balding hair.

• **Portia Kensas (Storm Lords):** Portia grew up with her paternal cousin, Cateria, and when the other woman turned into a werewolf, Portia managed to accept it far better than some of the other family members. Now, Portia serves as Cateria's chief liaison to other Storm Lord wolf-bloods and to the mortal world in general. Portia has her own lucrative career as a civil rights activist and attorney, but the tribe comes first. If a Storm Lord in Chicago needs help, Portia is the woman to contact. She's about 30 years old, dark skinned and usually dresses in her own eclectic style that she calls "business ethnic."

• **Julian Lessner (Iron Masters):** Julian is the younger brother of Paul Lessner — and Julian can't help but think he should have been the one who turned into a werewolf. Of course, he has no idea about Olivia Citysmith's true intentions, but he does know he doesn't particularly like her attitude. He thinks Paul is selling himself short and is being used by his pack leader; Julian insists he'd never put up with that sort of treatment. He, like his brother, inherited considerable family investments, and he's parlayed these into more wealth. Julian has influence in high society and could conceivably coerce or bribe any number of officials to "look the other way." Julian has sharply angled features, a light frame and fair hair.

• **Colleen O'Connor (Bone Shadows):** Colleen has been married to Morgan O'Connor for almost 20 years, none of them easy. She wasn't the first person in her family to be mated to a werewolf, and she'd been told enough that she wasn't exactly ignorant of the risks and challenges. Colleen loves Shuck, and she's proud to be a member of the family, but the years have been lonely ones. How could they not be, with Shuck never home, and constantly on edge even if he is there? The couple's two pre-teenage sons have been a comfort to her, yet she fears for the future. What if the boys themselves Change? Colleen struggles to balance the sense of obligation and duty she feels with her natural maternal instinct. She works as a preschool teacher and has a natural affinity with children. Should any Bone Shadows have need for a guardian for their children, Colleen would be an ideal choice. She's an attractive woman in her mid-40s, usually with a look of worry and concern on her face.

• **Pablo Dehoya Salvedo (Hunters in Darkness):** Pablo is an employee of the Lincoln Park Zoo, where he's worked for about 20 years. He's moved up the ranks from a being a groundskeeper to supervise the maintenance and upkeep of the conservatory and several other buildings. His main contact among the Forsaken is Gina Calder, for whom he's developed a fatherly affection. Pablo knows the zoo grounds and the staff quite well; he could certainly manage to get Uratha in need onto the property or in contact with zoo personnel. Pedro is in his mid-50s and of average height. He usually wears a jumpsuit or work pants while on the job.

• **Tyus Searles (Ivory Claws):** Elder brother to Zapporah Miredsoul, Tyus is a wealthy, self-made man. In the early '90s, he got an excellent hunch that cellular technology was the way of the future, and Tyus entered the business on the ground floor. Now, he has a six-figure salary and is well respected by both mortals and the wolf-blooded among the Ivory Claws. He's a major supplier of resources to the tribe, but he tends to favor his sister's pack and interests far more than Patrick Keeneye and his crowd. Tyus is a handsome Caucasian man in his early 60s; he dresses well and lives a fairly comfortable life.

Alpha Contacts

The alphas know how to get things done, quickly and quietly. And naturally, one of the lynchpins of their power is who they know.

• **Professor Margaret Harrier:** Harrier is a faculty member at the University of Chicago and an affiliate curator with the Oriental Institute. She's in her late 50s and on the sedate side, but the professor has traveled to some of the remotest regions of the world and has seen a generous share of oddities over the years. Harrier is fluent in several languages and has a fairly open mind; in other words, she's not going to dismiss a weird question or event as mere delusion. She's much more likely to want to help with a given puzzle than freak out about it. Sarah Rainbringer has con-

sulted with Harrier on several occasions about matters related to myth lore.

• **Detective Ralph Moody:** Moody has just recently acquired his detective's shield, and the stereotypical cynicism hasn't had a chance to develop fully. He's a fairly snappy dresser and handles his humble salary wisely. What makes Moody valuable as a contact is a seeming flaw—his idealism and his strong streak of justice. If there's a wrong done in the city, he wants to fix it. This is why he and Caseem Snaketooth hit it off a few years back, when Moody was a beat cop; he appreciated the strong arm from a concerned citizen. If his help will serve to curb some injustice, Moody'll be there.

• **Rick Pettit, City Architect and Planner:** Pettit has been on the City's staff for a number of years, and if a building exists, he can probably provide its history and a fairly recent floor plan. Given time, he could give details on most aspects of city planning. Olivia Citysmith cultivated his friendship when she first arrived in Chicago, but Pettit could become a contact for almost any werewolf who invested some time in making the planner's acquaintance.

• **Skeezer:** In a mazelike shop in the West Loop Market district, the bookseller known to casual customer and specialty seeker alike as Skeezer has some equally labyrinthine business practices. He's in his mid-40s, wears glasses and has thinning, brown hair; he's also got a near-photogenic memory and a keen business sense. Most people coming to his shop are looking to buy or sell rare books, such as signed first editions. A few, though, visit to get rid of hot property. Skeezer has acted as a fence for any willing to pay his 30% commission — no questions asked. He's been in business about 15 years and has managed to develop a sizeable customer base and avoid any risky legal entanglements. Patrick Keeneye is numbered among Skeezer's clients.

• **Patricia Volkerich, Banker:** Volkerich is an entry-level exec at Citibank, and she seems to have a promising future ahead. The young woman, always impeccably attired, has an innate understanding of the American economic system at the macro and micro levels. She's comfortable giving investment advice and also fairly knowledgeable about tax law. Paul Lessner met her several years ago, and his portfolio, which helps support his pack's interests, has grown at a slow but steady rate. Volkerich is an excellent contact in regards to almost any type of money matter.

• **Haichia Xu, Attorney at Law:** Working out of a small firm in Chinatown, Xu immigrated from China when she was in elementary school. She's fluent in English, Mandarin and Spanish; her specialty is immigration law, and she has many resources for acquiring legal residency documents. Xu also has an intimate knowledge of Chinatown and nearby environs; this has made her an asset for Ashala Ravi, who's been seeking information about the Beshilu threat. Xu also has contacts among police officials and a couple of private investigators.

Spirits

Urban spirits not serving as totems are a rather fickle, flighty lot. They tend to work with any who pay the right price and give the appropriate respect. The following are an assortment of spirits that are known to the Chicago alphas. Some of which might be willing to act as contacts and some of which — are not. The spirit of the river might be one, and the spirit born of the Great Fire would be another. Chicago would also be an ideal city for Razor Annie (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 245) to haunt.

Compulsion of Civic Duty

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 4, Resistance 7
Willpower: 12
Essence: 18
Initiative: 7
Defense: 5
Speed: 17
Size: 5
Corpus: 12
Influences: Duty •••
Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Harrow, Living Fetter, Material Vision, Possession, Reaching

This ideological spirit is drawn to places where mortals have given of themselves to serve a larger purpose. The spirit enjoys watching acts of bravery and self-sacrifice, particularly those involving creatures who strengthen what the spirit perceives as a boon to the city. If properly cultivated as an ally, the spirit could help encourage a greater sense of civic responsibility in a neighborhood, a gift of no small value. As an antagonist, though, the spirit would compel civic duty even when inappropriate, sublimating the individual to the will of the Whole. Compulsion of Civic Duty usually manifests as a shadowy and faceless human form, inevitably wearing its interpretation of the uniform of a public official, such as a police officer or fire fighter.

Downtown Glitter

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 5
Willpower: 12
Essence: 20
Initiative: 12
Defense: 7
Speed: 20
Size: 4
Corpus: 9
Influences: Glamour •••
Numina: Blast (light), Discorporation, Fetter, Material Vision, Materialize, Possession, Reaching

Downtown Glitter is a strange, vain entity that adores observing the "good life" on the physical side of the Gauntlet. This spirit represents the beauty and glamorous aspects of urban life, such as the popular culture, the high society and the chic trendiness of Chicago. Downtown Glitter could be useful to a pack seeking information about living high in the Windy City or figuring out ways to fit in among high-class mortals. This spirit could also be a dangerous antagonist, a brightly colored lure that entices young runaways to come to the big city only to fall prey to the myriad

predators there. The spirit's favored form is a strange, almost cubist mélange of facets, each one a different slice of color or brilliance, the whole coming together in the human-like approximation of a woman.

Pain-of-Animals

Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 8, Resistance 11
Willpower: 20
Essence: 25
Initiative: 19
Defense: 9
Speed: 25
Size: 10
Corpus: 21
Influences: Domestic Animals ••, Pain ••
Numina: Blast (bone and blood), Chorus, Discorporation, Living Fetter, Harrow, Material Vision, Primal Howl, Reaching, Silent Fog
Ban: Pain-of-Animals is said to lose much of its power when presented with an animal that has not suffered at human hands and that feels love toward humans in return. An urban legend among the Forsaken claims that the spirit fears the bark of a dog.

In 1890, nine million animals were butchered a year at the Union Stock Yards in Chicago. This went on for a period of decades, causing an insurmountable amount of animal death and all the accoutrements that come with it — blood pouring into the river, the screams and squeals of dying animals, the smell of rotten fat and fetid flesh. Something awful and overwhelming in the physical world is sure to leave its mark in the Shadow, and all this death was no exception. It built up, millions of gallons of blood, miles and miles of bone and intestine. From this death and suffering, a spirit was born, and that spirit is the collective herd known as Pain-of-Animals.

Pain-of-Animals is a huge composite entity very much like a chaotic mass of stock animals — cattle, hogs, chickens, even mice and rats (inevitable casualties of stockyard killing). All the animals are bloodied and battered. Some chickens are without heads. The skins of the bulls are patchy and foaming with putrid blood. Hogs are missing eyes or have cracked skulls. Pain-of-Animals is usually attended by a small herd of lesser spirits of similar sort, which it avoids feeding on unless other prey is unavailable.

Not long after its "birth," Pain-of-Animals and its swarm began a campaign of revenge against the physical. Individual spirits began Urging or Claiming stockyard workers or their families, even people who just happened live within a few *miles* of the Union Stock Yards. It wasn't long before the local Forsaken noticed — how could they not? Three Ithaeur, Hunters in Darkness each, came together irrespective of their own packs and pleaded with the spirit, negotiating a sacrifice of a single human family to be paid every decade. It was a high, unfortunate cost, and these three Forsaken accepted it without the knowledge of the other Chicago Uratha. Since the dawn of the 20th century, this sacrifice has been taking place,



passed down from three generations of Forsaken until it reached its most recent pack of Ithaeur known as the Wolves of the Wheat. But something destroyed this pack recently, killing two and leaving one a useless wreck. The sacrifice was missed.

Pain-of-Animals smelled sudden freedom. It felt pent up, tied down, and here it saw that escape was within its grasp. Seeing the pact broken, now the spirit is free again, gaining power and letting its individual animals go out and possess the unwitting mortals of Chicago, like Tariq Anderson (see p. 266).

Quelling Pain-of-Animals

Pain-of-Animals is technically many spirits (even though each manifestation thinks of itself as "one"), and those spirits are now on their way toward resurfacing since the sacrifice has lapsed.

However, one pack of werewolves is willing to help quash this potential spirit riot before it happens again, but aren't willing to go at it alone. This pack approaches the characters in an effort to gain their help in performing the same ritual (meaning, the sacrifice of one human family) to stop Pain-of-Animals. Will the characters agree to help, despite the grotesque nature of the sacrifice? Or will they try to find their own way of doing it, one that doesn't require the expenditure of innocent life? It's possible of course that they choose to stay out of it altogether, but eventually the spirits of Pain-of-Animals will bring havoc down upon all the Uratha if given enough time to fester and swell . . . .

That Which Lives Behind the Door

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 6
Willpower: 12
Essence: 20
Initiative: 9
Defense: 6
Speed: 14
Size: 6
Corpus: 16
Influences: Earth ••, Hunger •
Numina: Gauntlet Breach, Wild Sense

For now, That Which Lives (the name it favors) works closely with the Azlu, specifically Sable Song. Their bargain is simple and efficient: she provides the spirit succulent morsels of Essence, and it guards her secret "back door" into the Shadow. Sable Song found long ago that having a quick entrance and exit into the spirit world was handy, especially as she and her cohorts worked hard to make certain that the wall between flesh and Shadow couldn't easily be breached elsewhere. That Which Lives is a shadowy thing that cannot be seen entirely clearly, though its general silhouette seems to indicate a low-slung thing with great claws like a scorpion or lobster. The spirit not particularly intelligent, but it can be bribed. Right now, the Azlu treat it well; Sable Song finds the spirit too useful an ally to risk losing.

Hosts

The following *shartha* are threats at the alpha level not from their raw physical power, but from their minds — each one is quite intelligent for its kind, and both have greater facility at posing as a human and doing a lot of damage in a most subtle manner.

Stephen Peersol (Beshilu)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Skills: Animal Ken 3 (Rodents), Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Larceny 3, Occult 2, Science 1, Stealth 4 (Hiding), Streetwise 3 (Gather Information), Survival 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Fighting Finesse, Iron Stomach, Toxin Resistance
Willpower: 7
Essence: 4
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 9
Initiative: 10 with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Aspects: Discorporation, Gnaw Gauntlet, Speak with Beasts, Toxic Bite

Stephen works at a great place, even if his job isn't too prestigious. He has the singular honor of being a professional custodian at the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago on the city's south side. Stephen has ample opportunity to keep in touch with other Rat Hosts, as he maintains an apartment south of Cermak Street (crawling with his brethren). He's also got the means to access any of a number of rare and possibly dangerous manuscripts and books. Any werewolves or others who venture into the library and its environs have a chance at interaction with Stephen and his associates.

Stephen isn't pretty, but he's not hideous, either. He has a balding head, twitchy fingers and a right eye that stares a bit off-center. A dark coverall is his usual attire (lots of pockets). If his human skin is torn away, the Beshilu within is revealed as a vaguely humanoid rat-thing with three tails, multiple rat snouts growing from one skull and extra vestigial forearms sprouting from its elbows.

Martina Ballantine/Sable Song (Azlu)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Skills: Animal Ken (Spiders) 3, Athletics 3 (Climbing), Brawl 1, Expression 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Occult 2, Persuasion 4 (Selling), Politics 2, Socialize 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts 4, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 5
Essence: 5
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Pride
Health: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Aspects: Discorporation, Gauntlet Webs, Strong Memory*, Toxic Bite, Wall Climb

• **Strong Memory:** Sable Song has unusually strong access to its host body's memories, and is much more capable of "playing normal." It receives a +2 to any Social rolls made to impersonate Martina Ballantine.

Sable Song is a clever, clever little crawler. It has devoured enough of its own kind to attain a respectable amount of intelligence, yet it has stopped short at actually making the full transformation into a hybrid Host. Having discovered an interesting human shell, Sable Song uses the body and contacts of "Martina Ballantine" to draw in others and set them to work as unknowing partners in its weaving ambitions. She runs, on a part-time yet stable schedule, a small art gallery in the River North Gallery District. Her specialty is any kind of minutiae, from tiny porcelain figurines to *pysanki* eggs and intricate textiles. The artists she tends to favor are unfocused and need self-confidence. Martina gives this to them in ample amounts while also asking them about the city and its denizens; in short, she has a respectable network of mortal spies and contacts. Some of these are cultivated as other potential bodies, and others are given as "presents" to other Azlu in the area — Sable Song would rather keep its "sisters" happy and at a distance than risk another struggle over who devours whom. Any werewolves or other supernaturals might brush up against Martina's doings if they also had contacts or interests in the art world.

Martina is quite attractive — tall, dark-haired, slender and pale in a way that puts one in mind of smooth and flawless skin rather than an unhealthy body. She favors dark clothing overall with orange accents here and there, the same color as the fist-sized spider that secretly nests within her cranium. She smiles a little too often to be 100% sincere, and she still manifests odd little behavioral eccentricities, but patrons of her gallery seem to be happy consumers.

The Open Door Policy

For some time, Sable Song and certain other Azlu have been using a powerful spirit, That Which Lives Behind the Door, as the guardian of their secret "trap door" across the Gauntlet into the spirit world. Not only is the back door a quick means of escape, one way or another, it's also a nice lure for getting rid of enemies by sending them right into a powerful spirit's lair. That Which Lives is well pleased with the bargain, as the morsels it has captured keeps its Essence sated. Storytellers can use this lair in a couple of ways. First, the characters could stumble upon it during an strike into the Shadow, where it's obvious that the spirit has been hanging around for a while. From there, they can pursue the connection to the Azlu. Another scenario is that the characters themselves are victims of the Azlu and have to fight their way clear of That Which Lives and its den.

The Betas

The beta packs are sort of a motley crew; they're a combination of up and coming werewolves as well as some who've toppled from the upper echelons. Like the alphas, tradition and strength usually determine who leads and who's second in command. One thing that contributes to the betas being, well, betas, is that sometimes, they put tribal allegiances before pack loyalty. They'll probably learn what's more important as time passes and brings experience.

Pack Relations

Similar to the alpha packs, the betas are usually in mixed in terms of tribe and auspice, if applicable, and they usually have at least an alpha, if not a beta as well. The interesting thing to note about the betas is that they're sort of balanced in the middle of things. Some individuals may have the potential to get invited to join an alpha pack at some point, yet most of the betas would rather work with their own packs than leave and join an alpha group.

Tribes of the Moon

The unofficial leaders among the beta packs are probably the Skyfire pack; they've got diverse interests, yet a clear mission and a couple of strong arms to boot. The Lake Howlers are a bit less focused, and their competition with the Pure werewolves in the Cold River Hunters pack keeps them preoccupied. The Hull House Haunts and the Crossroads packs have taken severe losses, and both groups are trying to reestablish their goals and find their "places" among the betas.

Blood Talons

Joanna Blackmon and Louis Silverstein are the only Blood Talons betas, and both are in the same pack. Neither get along particularly well with the alphas, and the latter don't exactly encourage tribal cohesion. Whenever Joanna and Louis want assistance from their tribe, they go outside the city's heart to the suburbs or beyond. Neither of the two betas belong to a lodge.

Bone Shadows

Safa Patel and Atu Egeweke are the most prominent Bone Shadows among the betas, and Safa fancies herself of higher standing. She's got lofty ambitions for the betas, which her tribemates don't particularly share. Atu, though he doesn't think about it, is the most respected of the three by those outside the tribe. Whenever one of the other Forsaken has a question for the Bone Shadows, it's Atu who's called on for answers. The young man recently became an

initiate of the Lodge of Prophecy; the other two beta Bone Shadows currently don't belong to any lodge.

Hunters in Darkness

Amelia Glaze, Jafar Beshami and Little Blue are the beta Hunters in Darkness. These three receive regular mentoring from the alpha member of their tribe, Gina Calder, and like their teacher, have eased into the fact that they occupy a more precarious position than most tribes in the city. Little Blue has wholly embraced the "urban primitive" concept, while Amelia and Jafar pay more attention to the idea of balance and subtlety necessary for a city to be healthy and thrive. The three realize they've got their work cut out for them.

Iron Masters

The Iron Masters are fewer in number among the betas than the alphas. Their highest-ranking member is Nolan Dougherty; others include Kiaria "Glass" Welch, Sam Austenfeld and Erik Bleeding. Sam, for one, would like to see the tribe create some stronger bonds and alliances with the Iron Masters alphas, whom he reveres as the quintessential werewolves to emulate. Nolan occasionally hears about the alphas getting together and tries to wrangle invites for the betas, with mixed success. Sam is a new member of the Lodge of Metal, while Nolan belongs to the Lodge of Scrolls.

Storm Lords

Hollie Silvertooth is the preeminent beta Storm Lord; other tribe members include Gil Sinclair and Mercedes Childseeker. None of the three belong to a lodge, and much like the alphas of their tribe, they don't mingle often. The regular winter festival is their main contact with the alphas. Mercedes tends more closely to the needs of her pack than the tribe, in any case. Hollie has entertained the notion of eventually moving on to lead an alpha pack, perhaps one composed solely of Storm Lords, but has yet to meet the werewolves whom she'd prefer to have in the pack over her Skyfire comrades.

Pure Tribes

Similar to the alphas, the beta Pure Tribes match the Tribes of the Moon in number; among the betas, the Pure are almost equal in number of packs. Moreover, the Pure Tribes' pack totems are incredibly powerful. Certainly the alphas of both factions are well matched, but among the betas, some observers think the Pure Tribes may have a slight advantage.

Ivory Claws

One of the Pure Tribes packs, the Seekers of Silenced Voices, is driven by Ivory Claw leadership but is not that involved with secular affairs. This pack has its own unique focus, the ghosts of the city, which they find more important than the politicking that usually runs in the tribe. Thus, the unofficial leadership of the beta Ivory Claws tends to fall to a more war-like werewolf, Luc Blanot, who leads the Cold River Hunters. The other Ivory Claw from his pack is his cousin Madeleine Blanot, and the third Pure Tribes pack, the Scorched Heavens pack, has two from the tribe, Mockery and Peter Warbite. Like the Seekers, the Scorched Heavens pack has a specific agenda. Luc is not one to be crossed, and he hopes eventually to succeed (and do better than) the current main alpha of the tribe, Patrick Keeneye. Luc maintains contact with the other Ivory Claws in the city, especially the betas, despite their differing agendas.

Fire-Touched

Most of Chicago's Fire-Touched betas are in the Scorched Heavens pack; among their numbers are Cory Burton and Lian Chen. Two more are in the Seekers of Silenced Voices, though they owe loyalty to the Cult of Bones. Members of this tribe have frequent contact with each other and with the alphas, particularly Ashala Ravi. For the present, Cory and Lian haven't explained to any other tribe members their pack's agenda; they want to make sure everything's ready for the Great Burn before making a big announcement.

Predator Kings

Only two members of this tribe are numbered among the betas who care to live near the city's heart, Waterborn and Kegan the Hammer. Luc Blanot, their Ivory Claw pack leader, knows enough about the Predator Kings in general to keep these two busy and out of trouble. He provides them with targets and prey, and they respond with a fierce loyalty. They have little interest in politics, in or out of the tribe.

The Beta Packs

The following sections describe the composition of each beta pack in Chicago, along with the pack's totem. As with the alphas, these are the "current" set of betas in the city, but Storytellers should feel free to add and subtract pack members as they see fit.

The Crossroads

Formerly known as the Archer pack, the Crossroads pack took their new name after half their number were lost in action and their previous pack totem bolted into the Shadow. Now, with a totem representing a mix of hope and sadness, and their lives always caught between one form or another and one place or another, the pack takes their identity from the crossroads that is their existence.

The battered pack is presently at a turning point. Their previous mission, under the tutelage of their fallen pack leader, a Bone Shadows Elodoth, was building up things of beauty in the city, spiritual and material. He believed that for the pack to prosper, they needed to claim a stronger locus. They've not had any luck in that department, however. Joanna has reluctantly become default pack leader for the moment, though the three don't really think of themselves as "having an alpha." The question now is, what's next? Joanna's predecessor had one good vision, but is it the right one for now? These young betas aren't amateurs, but they're sure as hell not ready to play with the big wolves in town, either.

The three surviving members of the Crossroads Pack are Joanna Blackmon (Blood Talons Elodoth), Louis

Silverstein (Blood Talons Ithaeur) and Atu Egeweke (Bone Shadows Irraka). They hold territory on South Archer Avenue, near the crossing of the Dan Ryan and Stevenson Expressways, but may not be able to keep it for too much longer without somehow increasing their numbers. They don't have a strong locus to their name, instead relying on the Sacred Hunt to replenish their Essence.

Joanna Blackmon

Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Blood Talons
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts (Cooking) 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Weaponry (Knives) 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Sympathetic) 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Illicit Goods) 2
Merits: Allies (Restaurateur) 2, Contacts (Nightclubs, Food Distributors) 2, Direction Sense, Resources 2, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Glory 2, Honor 3, Purity 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Scent Beneath the Surface, The Right Words; (2) Mighty Bound, Snarl of Command; (3) Aura of Truce
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication; (2) Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone

Joanna still thinks of Mannfred the Rune-Marked as the alpha of the pack, even after the name change. He and the three other lost packmates were torn apart in the Shadow near the Chicago River estuary, presumably by the ruling river-spirit. It's been almost two years since this happened, and the pack has resigned itself to the loss. Joanna is eager to find new werewolves willing to join her cause. For now, she's willing to continue her predecessor's vision of improving their territory in whatever ways possible. New blood in the pack might cause her to alter this plan, if there's a better option. Joanna's also open to joining with another pack or perhaps getting aid from a stronger group of werewolves. But at present, she sees no reason to give up just because things are bad — she's a Blood Talon, and a Blood Talon keeps fightin' no matter what.

Joanna is short, with wavy, brown hair and fair skin. Her eyes are penetrating, an intense green-gray in color. In wolf form, her fur is brown with gold and black flecks. Most of the time, she's stressed and worried. The added responsibility of sharing leadership came to her before she was truly ready for it, but the young Elodoth has done the best job she can in trying circumstances.

Louis Silverstein

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Blood Talons
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Interviews) 3, Politics (Municipal) 2, Occult (Vampires, Mages) 3, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Dalu) 3, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Journalism) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Territories) 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Newspaper Staff) 1, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Resources 1, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Sloth
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, The Right Words, Two-World Eyes; (2) Hone Rage, Read Spirit; (3) Gauntlet Cloak, Leach Rage
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Gaffling; (3) Call Jaggling, Sacred Hunt

Louis doesn't seem to share Atu's unshakeable optimism or Joanna's staunch practicality; he's much more of a doomsayer. For the past year or so, he's been a freelance contributor to the *Chicago Tribune*; it pays for the things he can't or won't steal, and the hours are very flexible. The job also gives Louis occasional "heads up" on potential supernatural goings-on in the city. Most rumors, of course, turn out to be unsubstantiated, but the Crescent Moon's seen more than a fair share of reports that bore some fruit, rotten fruit at that. Louis has a general feel for the "hotspots" where vampires or mages congregate in the city, and is happy to avoid them. He's more concerned about the Pure Tribes who lurk around; it's his opinion they may have had something to do with the disappearance of most of the pack two years earlier. Like Atu, Louis would be relieved to have the friendship of an older, wiser pack.

Louis is lanky and tall, with pasty skin, brown eyes and unkempt, brown hair. He's a very focused young man, always looking out for the next spooky thing around the corner. His preferred dress is anything common and nondescript, such as jeans, a polo shirt and sneakers. His fur in wolf form is long and shaggy, in colors of mixed brown and gray.

Atu Egeweke

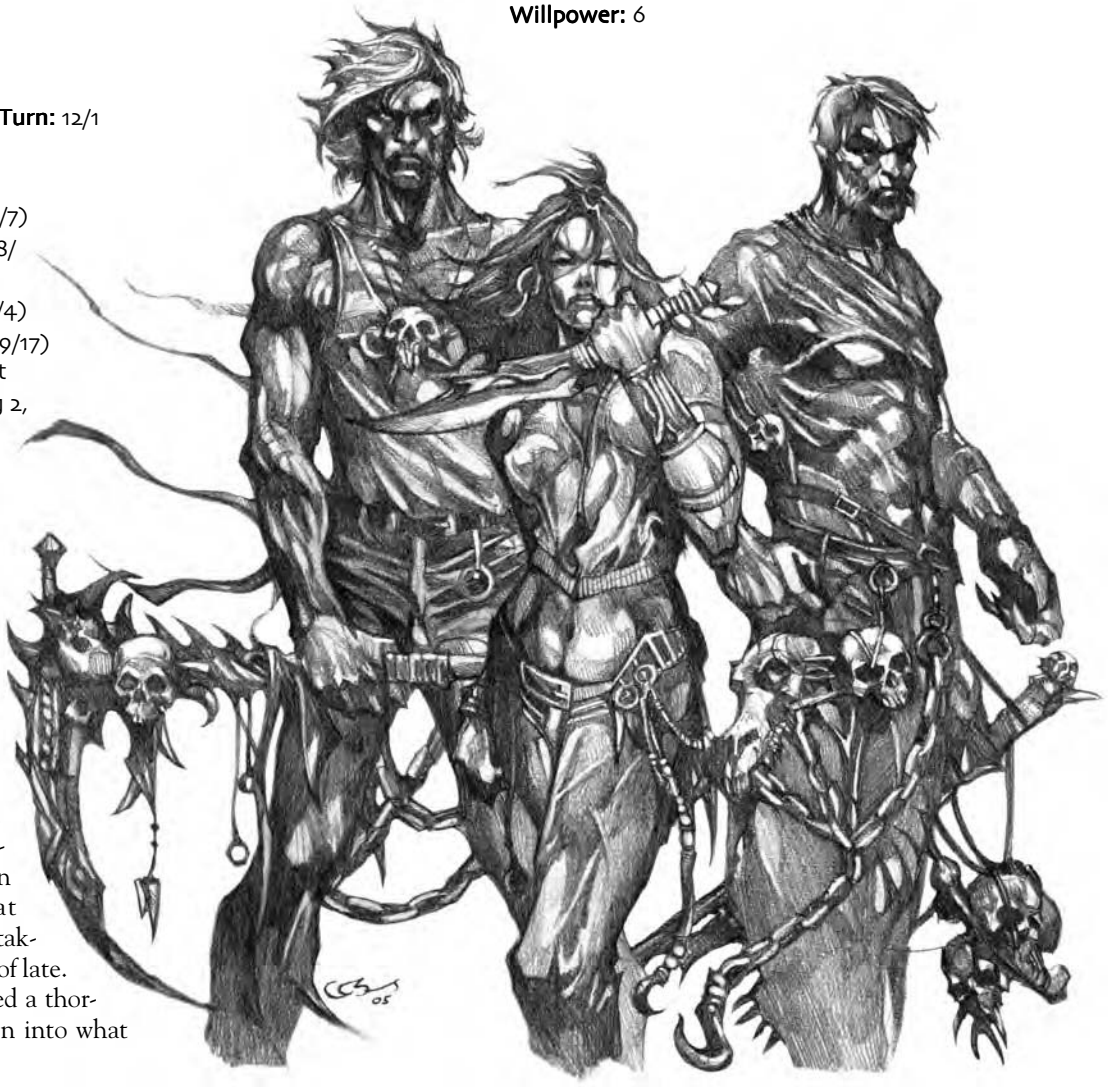
Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/4/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (History) 3, Computer 3, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Larceny (Picking Pockets) 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 3, Persuasion (Leading Questions) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Allies (Students) 1, Contacts (University) 1, Fleet of Foot 2, Resources 1, Strong Back, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 8
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Lust
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 12 (14/16/19/17) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Loose Tongue, Sense Malice, Sense Weakness; (2) Sand in the Eyes, Slip Away
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Shared Scent, (2) Call Human

Atu doesn't much care for inaction, so he's been relieved that Joanna has been taking the initiative of late. First, she launched a thorough investigation into what happened to the other pack members on the Chicago River estuary. Next, she kept up with the former pack leader's plan on strengthening the cleaner parts of the city, limiting the spreading of contamination and destruction. Now, though, Atu is ready for some plans of his own to gain Joanna's ear. He'd like to go out and make overtures to packs of equal or greater strength and form some alliances, if not more formal ties. Atu has nothing against bringing newer werewolves into the pack, but he thinks looking up rather than down is what the trio needs most. The Irraka likes to be around humans well enough; in fact, he dabbles in classes at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he's worked odd jobs and collected financial aid enough to stay afloat. He also loves exercise and pops into various gyms from time to time.

Atu is tall, with dark skin and short black hair, and usually dons some variety of gym or workout clothes. He's got a pleasant face and wide-set brown eyes that are always watching the people and things around him, though hints of the storm beneath the surface break through from time to time. His wolf form also has black fur.

Streetlevel Blues (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 3
Willpower: 6



Essence: 12
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 16
Size: 5
Corpus: 9
Influences: Music •, Misfortune •
Numina: Material Vision, Reaching
Bonuses: +1 Expression (pack), Empathy Specialty (Pain)
Ban: Pack members must create an expression of their own pain or misfortune, once per lunar month. The pain must be real, if slightly exaggerated. If, for some reason, the pack member is having an exceptional run of luck, he'd better find himself a bad relationship.
Cost: 12

As best as Louis understands, Streetlevel Blues is a spirit that only appears to those who've been beaten down. It's a peculiar conceptual-spirit, part emotional and part music, an example of a spirit with multiple aspects that isn't quite magath. The spirit has so far seemed quite willing to act as the Crossroads pack's patron, but Louis suspects that the spirit might leave them if their run of luck changes. Streetlevel Blues sometimes appears as a blues musician made of smoke, but usually manifests as strains of music.

The Hull House Haunts

The Hull House Haunts consider their namesake their spiritual home, one that they want to protect and cleanse. They've also taken on Jane Addams' vision of caring for the poor and unfortunate, especially those of the Near West Side. Problem is, they can hardly take care of one issue before another one appears. The pack has come to believe that many troubles in their territory come from the Devil-Baby, a longtime haunt of Hull House. The pack hasn't been able to rid Hull House of the Devil-Baby, and the pack members are running out of ideas on how to do so. And if that weren't bad enough, the Scorched Heavens pack has been making in-runs deeper and deeper into the Near West Side . . . .

At present, the Haunts have only three members: Mercedes Childseeker (Storm Lords Cahalith), Eric Bleeding (Iron Masters Rahu) and Little Blue (Hunters in Darkness Ithaeur). They recently lost their fourth member, which has hit them quite hard; it's the first time any of them have had to bury a packmate, and they're finding out firsthand just how strong the pack bond is. For now, they're moving on as best they can having lost someone closer than family.

Mercedes Childseeker

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Storm Lords
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Local History) 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Paranormal) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth (Doors) 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Patient) 2, Streetwise 2
Merits: Common Sense, Languages (First Tongue, Spanish) 2, Resources 2, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 8
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 2 (2/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/17/17/15)
Renown: Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Call the Breeze, Pack Awareness, Sense Malice, The Right Words, Warning Growl; (2) Luna's Dictum, Resist Pain, Silent Fog; (3) Voice of Command
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Cleansed Blood

No one ever misses the fact that Mercedes is an alpha; she's a woman used to being taken seriously by her pack, her human associates and probably by those higher up on the werewolf ranking system, too. Even in her sleep, her confidence in her own abilities is crystal clear. Yet, she's kind of stuck in a rut at present. She's got a rep as a sort of paragon amongst werewolves, yet she's in the throes of ennui as she continues to try to come to terms with the loss of her packmate. Mercedes, not unlike the city itself, has to work through her present problems and concerns, and move on to a more active role in Uratha affairs. For the moment, she throws herself into her unofficial work with child welfare in the nearby housing projects; helping kids gives her very concrete and very vital way to focus her attention.

Mercedes is a Hispanic woman in her late 30s, with completely average looks. Her hair is wavy brown, and she falls on the short end of the yardstick. She's a practical dresser, preferring plain shirts and jeans, which conceal her rippling muscles. In wolf form, her fur is silvery gray and slightly curled. Mercedes wears several pieces of distinctive Southwestern style jewelry with turquoise and carnelian; whether these are sentimental or of spiritual value (or both) is anyone's guess. She carries a .45 (without a permit) as a means of looking after herself in the projects; she knows she doesn't need it, but she hopes having the gun will keep her from having to rely on the monster inside her.

Eric Bleeding

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (5/6/7/7), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 1,

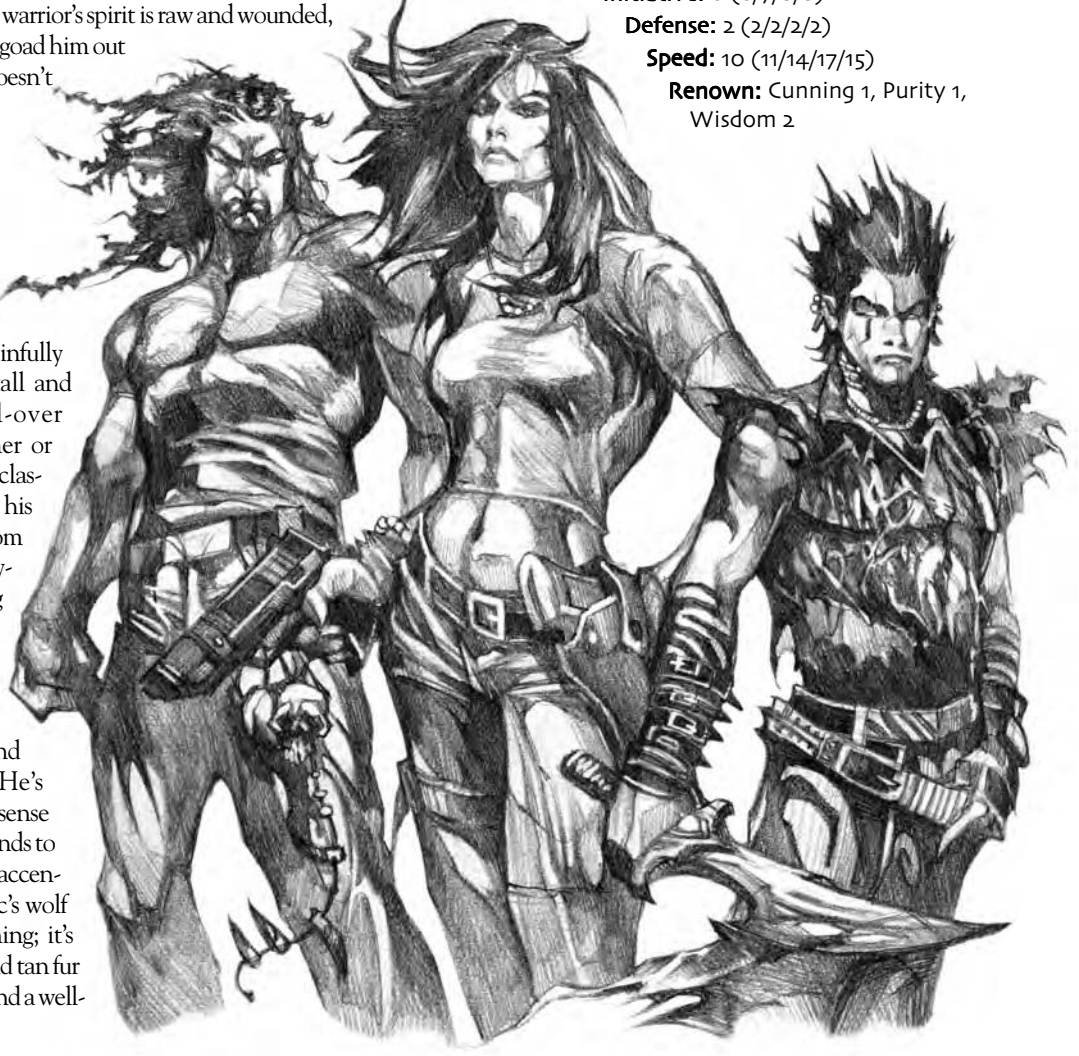
Medicine 1, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 2, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation (Disapproving) 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Approachable) 2, Streetwise (Geography) 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Resources 2, Striking Looks 2, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 1
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 1, Purity 2
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Left-Handed Spanner, Know Name; (2) Attunement
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent

Since the death of his packmate and lover, Kyle Wolf-at-the-Door, Eric's quick grin is seen less, and he broods much of the time. His warrior's spirit is raw and wounded, and nothing seems to goad him out of his depression. It doesn't help that his packmates are also suffering from the loss; having people to mourn with him may not be what Eric needs at the moment.

Eric is almost painfully good-looking. He's tall and lean, with the all-over muscles of a swimmer or triathlete. His nose is classically beautiful, and his eyes range in color from greenish hazel to gray-green-blue, depending on his mood and dress. Eric's hair is dark and curly, and he's always at pains to be clean-shaven and decently groomed. He's got more of a fashion sense than Mercedes and tends to choose garments that accentuate his features. Eric's wolf form is equally stunning; it's rangy, with graying and tan fur attractively mingled and a well-shaped skull.

Little Blue

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Hunters in Darkness
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1 (0/1/0/1), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Ghosts, Spirits) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival (Tracking) 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Eidetic Memory, Language (First Tongue) 1, Meditative Mind, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Lust
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 2



Gifts: (1) Blending, Call Water, Speak with Beasts, Two-World Eyes; (2) Read Spirit

Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Gaffling, Fortify the Border Marches

Little Blue is an urban "primitive" child through and through. He's got a feral streak and a body that fits awkwardly in its shell, as if he didn't quite know how to sit on furniture or otherwise comprehend general social mores. Still, the boy innately carries a sense of hope with him; it's possible that, right now, he's the main glue holding the pack together, with the emotional troubles of Mercedes and Eric casting a pall on the group's affairs.

Little Blue has no concern whatsoever for clothes; he picks up what he can at cheap thrift stores and ornaments himself with items he finds personally symbolic off the street, such as paper clips, bottle caps and even torn and bloody pieces of fabric. In human form, his hair is dark normally but usually dyed blue. He looks like he did his own hack job on his disarrayed locks, so that it's a bit spiky yet of varying lengths from front to back. Little Blue looks to be around 15 years old, but has a knack for sometimes appearing even younger and more vulnerable. The young Ithaeur's wolf form is dark gray, with a few scattered black hairs. Depending on his dye job, sometimes a few blue hairs are mixed into the gray.

The Garbageman (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

Willpower: 6

Essence: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Corpus: 8

Influences: Trash ••

Numina: Left-Handed Spanner, Material Vision, Reaching

Bonuses: +1 Investigation (given), 1 Willpower/story

Ban: Once each week, the Garbageman asks for its pack to remove a particular "piece of refuse" from its area. This might be something as simple as clearing all the trash out of an alley and taking it to a landfill, or as bloody as rooting out a Beshilu nest and disposing of the corpses properly.

Cost: 10

The Garbageman is a crusader of sorts, though it's not a particularly glamorous crusade. The spirit owes some of its strength to Jane Addams' struggle to improve sanitation in the neighborhood, and has a share of her mentality; the Garbageman prefers to remove refuse left lying around in its area, and has been known to classify dangerous spirits or other entities as "refuse." The spirit is "sentimental," or at least as close as a spirit can approximate, and is gradually learning a fondness for children in its time spent with the Haunts. The Garbageman tends to manifest as a roughly human-shaped mound of trash and refuse, as much the broken cast-offs of garage sales and attics than the wet compost of kitchen garbage.

The Stepping Stone (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Endurance

The Haunts' locus is not in Hull House proper, but is an old cobblestone nearby that has, over the years, been worn down more than its brethren. Perhaps due to its slight discoloration, children deliberately stepped on it more, and older pedestrians unconsciously did the same.

Murder Castle

Dr. H. H. Holmes, aka Herman Mudgett, was Chicago's first serial killer. Holmes worked for a while as a pharmacist in the Englewood community, and he purchased an enormous lot across the street from the pharmacy. Originally intended to be a hotel for the World's Columbian Expedition of 1893, the home he built on the lot became Mudgett's own private house of horrors. It was three stories tall and had over 60 rooms; moreover, Holmes/Mudgett included secret rooms, trap doors and various chutes and tunnels. He tortured and murdered dozens in the house, including children, using elaborate and sadistic techniques, including suffocation, poisoning and dissection. Holmes was eventually caught and executed for his crimes, and the house burned to the ground — but the story doesn't quite end there. The Murder Castle still has a presence in the Shadow, and reports of various ghosts and haunts regularly circulate among the werewolves. It's exactly the sort of place that would come to the attention of the Hull House Haunts. But with their time devoted to solving the mystery of the Devil-Baby, they may call in the players' pack to assist when the rumors become too unpleasant to leave be.

The Lake Howlers

Intentionally or not, the Lake Howlers pack is in a state of competition with the Cold River Hunters. In investigating the Shadow around Lincoln Park and several of the beaches, the two packs have crossed paths once, ending in both sides retreating to lick their wounds. Nolan detests the Pure, but he also believes much more is at stake in protecting and nourishing the waters of the city; he takes the idea of keeping a territory pure and honored very seriously, and he leads his pack with an interest toward heavily improving both the physical and spiritual ecology. He wishes the two packs could come to some sort of agreement, even if it's only to disagree, but he doesn't even know the name of the rival Pure pack, much less how to get them to stop and listen. Nolan is about to lose his temper and plan a major strike on the Cold River Hunters.

Meanwhile, even though his pack supports each other, there's some tension between Safa and Sam. Each one has a different idea of how the pack should develop. Sam thinks that all the Iron Masters of the city should band together across pack lines; Safa thinks they'd have more luck creating a more solid alliance among packs of their relative standing (though she would never use the term "beta"), possibly making a case to the more-powerful Forsaken. Both agree that the Pure are becoming more and more problematic each day, it's just a matter of how to deal with them.

Nolan Dougherty (Iron Masters Cahalith) has the unenviable position of leader-by-default, while Safa Patel (Bone Shadows Elodoth) and Sam Austenfeld (Iron Masters Irraka) follow close behind. Kiaria "Glass" Welch (Iron Masters Ithaeur) is the final pack member, and the least ambitious. The Lake Howlers patrol near the waters bordering on Lincoln Park and North Avenue Beach.

Nolan Dougherty

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Elementals) 2, Politics 2, Science (Ecology) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny (Break-Ins) 2, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Rational) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Local Environmental Groups) 2, Contacts (EPA, Shipping, Animal Control) 3, Resources 2, Totem 5
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 8
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Pack Awareness, The Right Words, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Resist Pain, Traveler's Blessing; (3) Primal Howl, Rallying Cry
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication; (2) Rite of Contrition

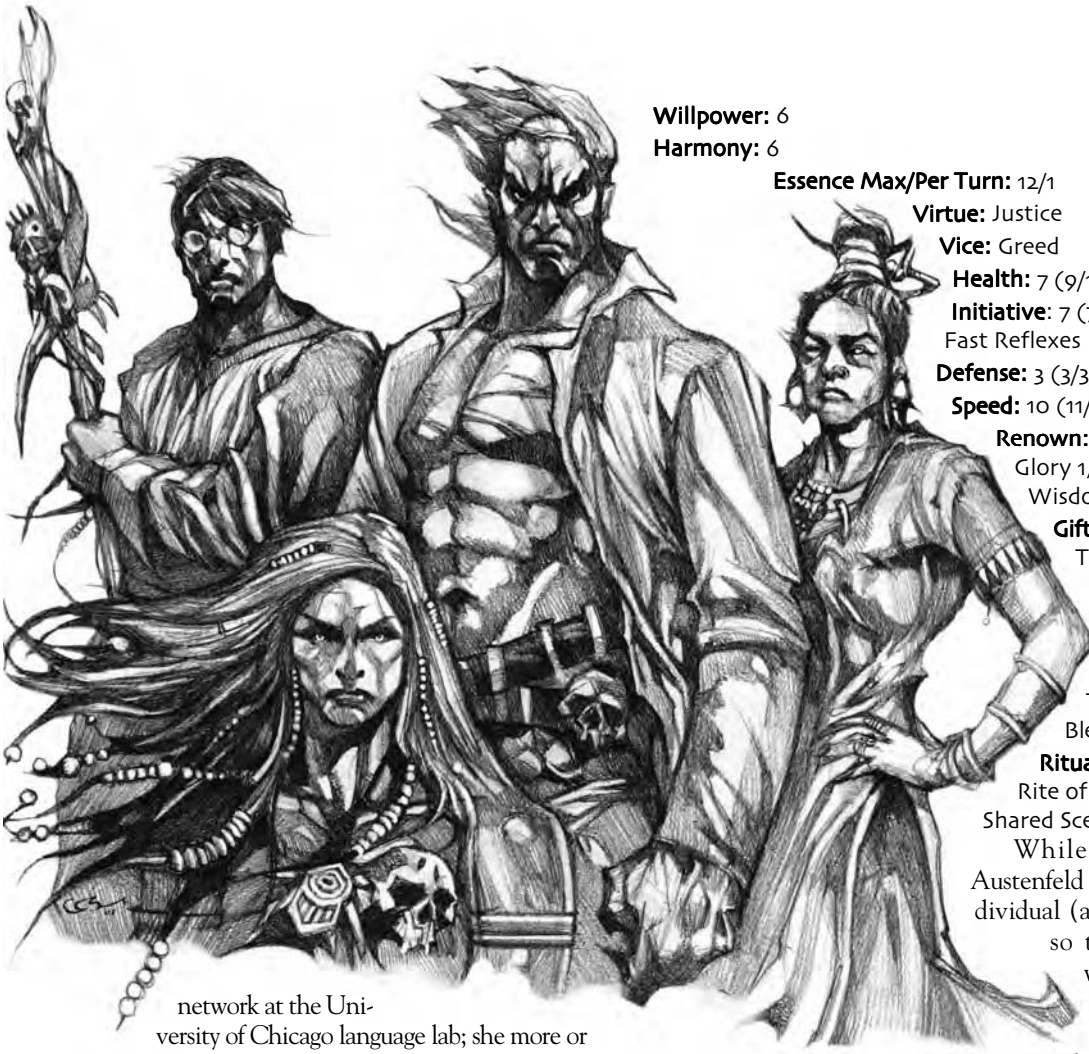
Nolan is struggling with his vision of where to take the Lake Howlers. Should he continue trying to protect and nourish the city's troubled waterways, or would it be better to throw the pack's energies towards getting rid of the Pure Tribes threat? He knows that his temper probably isn't the best guide, since he'd like nothing better than a scrap to the death. As alpha, he realizes he's got to think about the big, long-term picture instead. This is why he's leaning towards Sam's position as a potential beta; Nolan looks up to folks like Olivia Citysmith and Heather Hammond as prime examples of what the Iron Masters do best. He also thinks that the Iron Masters probably have the best take on urban renewal; isn't that what "honoring your territory in all things" is about?

Nolan is in early middle age. He's of average height, but has a broad chest and a deep booming voice. His dark hair is starting to recede a bit, and some early crow's-feet are paying visits to his tanned skin. He tends to wear casual clothes, such as canvas shirts and fitted cotton pants. He gets some money doing odd jobs, such as electrician and plumbing subcontracts. In his wolf form, the Cahalith's fur is dark brown with gray patches.

Safa Patel

Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer (Networks) 3, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Occult (Resonance, Rituals) 3, Politics 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 1, Brawl 2, Larceny (Computerized) 2, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Environmentalists) 1, Contacts (Academic) 1, Language (Hindi) 1, Resources 2, Status (Academic) 1, Totem 5
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 4 (4/5/6/6)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 1, Honor 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice, Ward Versus Predators; (2) Snarl of Command, Ward Versus Humans; (3) Technology Ward
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Blessing of the Spirit Hunt

Safa is ambitious; she wants to gain Nolan's ear and start having a larger say in pack affairs on her own terms. Rather than a source of threats or a place that has to be continually policed, Safa sees the waterways of Chicago as a potential wealth of information. She'd like to explore the rivers and lakes of the city, gather knowledge and create stronger links to the spirits residing in the depths. She's of the opinion that one can learn more from one's enemies than one's allies — a dangerous mantra, but one that seems to ring true. Safa runs the computer



Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Greed
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Honor 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Loose Tongue, Know Name, Partial Change, Sense Weakness; (2) Slip Away, Traveler's Blessing
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent

network at the University of Chicago language lab; she more or less sets her own hours and just has to make sure everything is working when the students show up. Safa usually works in the early evenings, then heads out with the pack on patrol.

Safa is petite, with amber skin and dark eyes. She usually wears her long, black hair piled up in a stylish knot. Her preferred style of clothing is the *salwar kameez*, a two-piece gauzy pantsuit, in attractive cotton prints. In wolf form, her coat is glistening white.

Sam Austenfeld

Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (English) 3, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics (Iron Masters) 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 1, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Stealth (Shadowing) 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Writing) 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Publishing, Photographic Labs) 2, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 2, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 3

While at heart Sam Austenfeld isn't a terrible individual (at least, no more so than any other werewolf), he still has enough of an appetite for power that he's not quite sated with what he's got. He yearns for a chance to make his mark on this world, for the betterment of Uratha and their allies everywhere — yet he can't seem to get an opportunity to do. It frustrates Sam that Nolan seems reluctant to pick a side and set forth a solid plan for the pack, but Sam would not dream of unjustly challenging the alpha. Sam is vocal and constantly talks about how the Iron Masters, as a united front, should start making plans for the city. He wants to meet Olivia Citysmith and her pack in a formal setting and start networking. For now, though, his pack leader Nolan is advising patience, which is not something the Irraka possesses in great quantity. If Sam got the chance, he'd figure out a politic way to make his name known to the higher-ups of the city. Sam would not outright break the Oath of the Moon, but he wouldn't mind bending the tenets a little to get his way. The No Moon makes his living as a textbook editor; he's paid by the project, so his funds are often feast or famine.

Looking more like a college professor than a werewolf, Sam wears attitude glasses with small, wire frames when moving among humans; he certainly doesn't need them, but he likes the appeal. Keeping in line with the professorial theme, he wears khakis, sweaters and buttoned-down shirts along with Rockports or Birkenstocks. He's tall, with light, straight, brown hair and a thin frame. His wolf form is rangy, with short brown fur.

Kiaria "Glass" Welch

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Graphics) 2, Crafts (Sculpting) 2, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 3, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Nightlife) 1
Merits: Contacts (Software Manufacturers, University, Art Galleries) 3, Language (First Tongue) 1, Resources 3, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 2 (2/3/3/3)
Speed: 9 (10/13/16/14)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Left Handed Spanner, Two-World Eyes; (2) Nightfall, Read Spirit, Traveler's Blessing; (3) Sagacity
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Banish Spirit, Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Call Gaffling, Fortify the Border Marches, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Bind Spirit

Glass tends to raise her hackles when Sam and Safa fuss about the pack's "mission." Who says a pack needs to have a formal mission statement? Survival's tricky enough, and it isn't hard to figure out what's important beyond that. To the Crescent Moon, nothing is more important than making her section of Chicago a better place, and whatever method is most successful should be the one the pack employs. She does feel a lot of loyalty to her tribe, but the prime characteristic of adaptability is "go with what works," and that's the more valid viewpoint in her opinion. She's heard about the Devil-Baby and feels a compulsion to contact the Hull House Haunts and offer her assistance. Glass sculpts part-time, and she also does some 3D image modeling on a consultant basis.

Unbound, Kiaria's hair probably hangs down to her waist; for the sake of neatness and ease, she usually keeps it in multiple braids with decorative beads. Her clothing is whatever the trendy fashion stores have on sale, from peasant style to classic urban Americana. Her fur in wolf form is a gorgeous tawny gold.

Salmon Against the Stream (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 4
Willpower: 7
Essence: 12
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 14
Size: 2
Corpus: 6
Influences: Fish •, Fortitude •
Numina: Material Vision, Wilds Sense
Bonuses: +1 Resolve (Pack), Athletics Specialty (Swimming)
Ban: Never catch or eat fish.
Cost: 18

Salmon Against the Stream is a spirit of perseverance and stubbornness, which sometimes works against the Lake Howlers. It's harder for the pack to come to a compromise when they start arguing about the long view when Salmon Against the Stream is looking over them. However, the totem makes up for this by also getting the pack moving when there's a clear task at hand. If there's a current of trouble, then swimming against that current is what needs to be done.

The Bench (Locus Rating ••)

Resonance: Rest

One of the benches in Lincoln Park benefits from being at the crossing point of two Essence flows that, though weak, combine in a fashion that is just *so*. People find it oddly more comfortable than the others, and often sit there a bit longer than they'd otherwise planned to. The Howlers are happy enough to let them most of the time; the bench is a fine example of what has the possibility of going right for the rest of Chicago. And if one of the pack needs to rest on the bench, it's not too difficult to convince a human to move with just a subtle flash of the predator within.

The Skyfire

All the members of this pack are interested in amplifying the primal side of Chicago. For a large urban center, Chicago has amazing natural resources — the lake, the rivers, the surrounding countryside. But in the eyes of many Hunters in Darkness, it's a pity that so much of the natural landscape has been corrupted or maligned in some way. The Skyfire pack has the spiritual renewal of Chicago as an ambitious and very long-term goal. They see this not just as a house cleaning to get rid of the decay, but also strengthening what's here already that's good.

The Skyfire pack is composed of the Hunters in Darkness Jafar Beshami (Ithaeur) and Amelia Glaze (Elodoth) and the Storm Lords Hollie Silvertooth (Rahu) and Gilbert Sinclair (Storm Lord). They claim territory in Jackson Park.

Jafar Beshami

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Hunters in Darkness
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation (Mystical) 3, Medicine 2, Occult (Local) 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Urban) 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Bars) 2, Streetwise 3
Merits: Contacts 3 (Hospital, Bar Scene), Language (First Tongue) 1, Resources 2, Strong Back, Totem 7
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Blending, Death Sight, Two-World Eyes; (2) Feet of Mist, Ghost Knife, Read Spirit; (3) Gauntlet Cloak
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** All one-dot and two-dot rites from **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, plus the three-dot rites Bind Spirit and Call Jaggling

While Amelia may focus on human and Uratha facts, figures and legends, Jafar is much more attuned to the spirits' perspectives on Chicago. He's the veteran of a number of risky struggles in the Shadow, matching his pack leader for determination in puzzling out ways to improve the city. He takes command on spiritual matters, and he's seldom been wrong in his hunches, but he is willing to let Amelia act as alpha when dealing with more terrestrial negotiations. Perhaps because making mistakes could mean the death of pack members, Jafar's a keen fighter and extremely cautious. His sense of humor is not very strong; there's not much to laugh about when the needs of the city and the pack are at stake. Jafar has no steady job; he's worked as a bouncer, courier and orderly in the past few years.

Jafar is of mixed heritage, probably a mélange of African American, Asian and European ancestors. He likes taking advantage of different ethnic styles in his clothing, although most are in muted colors. Jafar is of medium height and has a solid build. His hair is slightly wavy and dark brown; his eyes are steely gray. In wolf form, Jafar's fur is dark brown with reddish flecks.

Amelia Glaze

Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Hunters in Darkness
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 3, Computer 2, Investigation (Online) 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Resonance) 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy (Suffering) 2, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1
Merits: Contacts (Computer Repair) 1, Common Sense, Encyclopedic Knowledge Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 1, Totem 7
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 8
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 0, Honor 2, Purity 3, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Blending, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice, Speak with Beasts; (2) Feet of Mist, Scent of Taint, Snarl of Command; (3) Aura of Truth
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Call Gaffling, Hallow Touchstone; (3) Rite of Healing

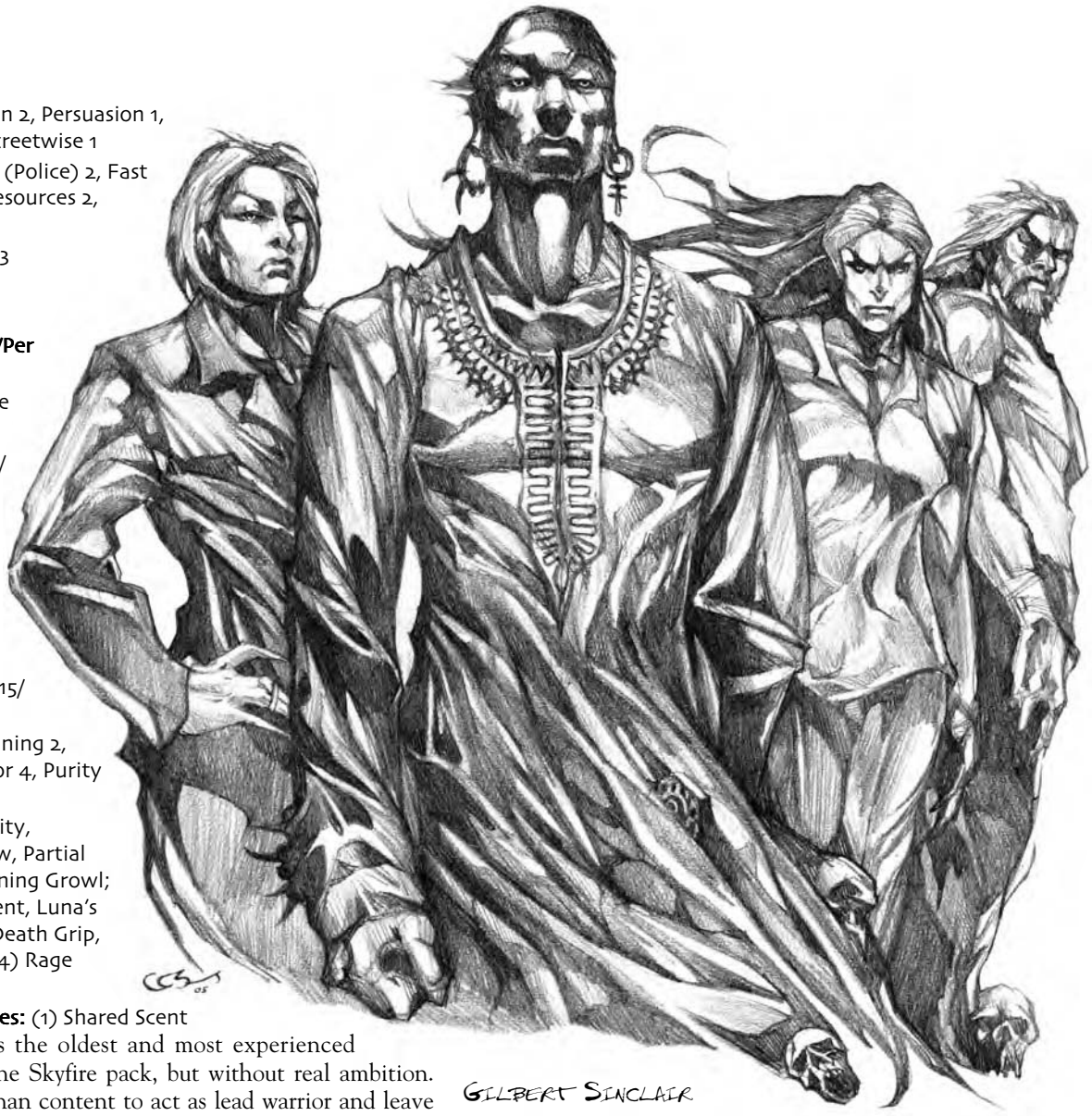
Amelia is a visionary who's also quick thinking on her feet. She pores over various tales in both human and Uratha history and legend for precedents, examples from the past that can impact the present. What were the first cities like? How have the werewolves over the years survived in cities and helped them thrive? What keeps the spirits of urban environs happy and well? The pack spends much of their downtime debating these subjects.

Amelia's not outright weak in combat per se, but she knows her main strength is intellectual, not physical. To those who don't know her well, she comes across as focused and no-nonsense; her packmates know that she's got more of a sense of humor than one might expect from a Forsaken, but it often stays submerged in the face of the pack's self-imposed mission. The Half-Moon lives frugally from working as an insurance coder out of her own home.

Amelia has a sort of bookish appearance — narrowed blue eyes and a thoughtful expression. However, she's extremely fit and moves gracefully. Her hair is straight brown; she prefers conservative "business casual" clothing most of the time. In wolf form, she's quick and lithe, with a brown coat and black tipped ears.

Hollie Silvertooth

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Storm Lords
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Dance) 3, Brawl (Dalu) 3, Firearms 1, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Dance, Instruction)



3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1
Merits: Allies (Police) 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Resources 2, Totem 7
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 9 (9/10/11/11) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 3, Honor 4, Purity 3, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Crushing Blow, Partial Change, Warning Growl; (2) Attunement, Luna's Dictum; (3) Death Grip, Silver Jaws; (4) Rage Armor
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Shared Scent

Hollie is the oldest and most experienced member of the Skyfire pack, but without real ambition. She's more than content to act as lead warrior and leave the bulk of the planning up to Amelia and Jafar. For her, combat is almost symphonic — the various pack members each have a part to play, and hers is the lead melody. Hollie occasionally becomes frustrated that Amelia lacks a bit in the martial arts, but the Rahu has no complaints about the pack's mission and planning. She makes a living teaching dance and tumbling part-time and has a rep as a tough teacher. Her deed-name comes from the fact that she's known to be able to shift her teeth into silver; she hopes never to have to do so again, but realistically knows it's probably inevitable. She's a good-enough fighter that she could have a place in an alpha pack if she wanted it, but she doesn't particularly want to abandon the Skyfire wolves unless it were to lead an alpha pack of her own.

Hollie is of slightly above average height; she's graceful and lithe, but well muscled. In battle, she moves as if in a dance in Hishu and Dalu, and with the predatory precision of a great cat when she shifts. She has long, black hair, dark eyes and tanned skin, and favors loose-fitting clothes that allow good freedom of movement (and that won't shred if she takes Dalu form). Her wolf form has long, shiny black fur.

Gilbert Sinclair

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Storm Lords
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Woodcarving) 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1X, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms (Rifles) 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Forests) 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Quick Healer, Resources 1, Strong Back, Totem 7
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Lust
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Loose Tongue, Pack Awareness, Partial Change; (2) Resist Pain, Skin Stealing
Rituals: None

Gil's a ways from home, at least by most werewolf standards. His packmates know that he's from Virginia, for reasons that he explains as "I just had to leave." The newly formed Skyfire pack took him in, figuring nobody had any real reason to judge too harshly. After all, there are more werewolves who have something to be ashamed of in their past than those who don't, thanks to the often bloody nature of the First Change alone. To make spare cash, Gilbert does construction; it pays pretty well and doesn't tie him down.

Gilbert is tall, with a craggy face, rough beard and reddish brown hair. His brown eyes are often narrowed in appraisal of those around him. Gil's demeanor is half sarcastic, half doomsayer, and because he's a Gibbous Moon, folks tend to take what he's saying seriously even when he isn't.

Gil's Secret

Gilbert could be hiding just about anything the Storyteller so desires; Gil might be the only survivor of a pack or have been responsible for an ugly crime back home. One of the most likely scenarios, though — and one that might easily get the players involved — is that Gil is the father of a Ghost Child. Gil might have been able to get away from the other werewolves back home who knew of his error in judgment, but an *unihar* isn't nearly so easy to avoid. When it comes calling, the Skyfire pack may request help from the characters' pack to somehow drive off or defeat this implacable enemy. But what happens if they win? It's entirely possible that Gil might have to leave his pack afterwards — will the characters take him in? And if they fail to defend the errant Storm Lord, will Gil's loss force the Skyfire pack to disband or merge with another pack, changing the political landscape?

Electricity Across the Night Sky (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 3, Resistance 3
Willpower: 7
Essence: 9
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4
Speed: 17
Size: 7
Corpus: 10
Influences: Electricity ••
Numina: Blast, Reaching, Material Vision
Bonuses: Dexterity +1 (Pack), Gift: Thunderbolt (Story)
Ban: The pack must expose themselves to dangerous electricity on a weekly basis, preferably on a high rooftop during a thunderstorm climbing a high-tension tower or squatting by a third rail will also work. The pack needs to praise the power of the totem during such acts.
Cost: 28

The Skyfire pack takes its name from its totem, an electricity elemental with a preference for manifesting at night. Electricity Across the Night Sky has a strange sense of aesthetics, which sometimes expresses as vanity. The totem usually manifests as an abstract collage of sparks, small electrical arcs and neon glow.

Neon Knot (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Light

The locus held by the Skyfire pack is a collection of old neon signs heaped in a basement, empowered by the Essence flow that runs through them. The locus has practically become one sign, and remains lit even during blackouts (though it generates Essence more quickly when it is fed electricity). Gil has discovered that if he sleeps near the locus when setting his mind to dream, he has more success; the neon knot often appears in his dreams, spelling out various messages with the various neon letters that coil within its form.

The Cold River Hunters

The Chicago River, in many ways, is a symbol of all that's good and bad in the city. Some parts of the river are beautiful, and others are brutal and ugly. The Cold River Hunters pack is sworn to service to the river — but not to the humans that piss and shit in it. The pack consistently prowls along the river's banks, especially near the river's terminus into the Great Lakes. The pack believes that the inherent difficulty of this task tempers their pack so that one day, they might just be the strongest among the Pure Tribes of the city.

The Ivory Claw cousins Luc and Madeleine Blanot came to Chicago from Toronto a few years back, and more-or-less single-handedly put the pack together and shaped its mission. Luc is a ruthless pack leader and doesn't accept failure or excuses. The other pack members include the Predator Kings Waterborn and Kegan the Hammer, and the Fire-Touched Anne "Burning Coal" Cole. The Cold River Hunters tend to move around a lot, but the territory they truly consider "theirs" is a portion of Gateway Park.

Luc Blanot

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Investigation (Forsaken) 2, Occult 1, Politics (Pure) 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3
Social Skills: Empathy (Weakness) 1, Expression 2,

Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Compelling) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Toronto Ivory Claws) 1, Contacts (Port Authority, Chicago DOT) 2, Languages (First Tongue, French) 2, Resources 3, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Pride
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Mask of Rage, Ward Versus Predators, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Luna's Dictum; (3) Voice of Command
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Dormancy

Luc thinks quite highly of himself. After all, he's done quite well for himself so far, no? He has successfully established himself as alpha of a strong pack and carved out a territory near the heart of the city. It does tend to lend some extra credence to the idea that Silver Wolf's rule of breeding has produced a strong tribe with many prodigious children.

The next logical step would be to eliminate one of the Forsaken packs, wouldn't it? And as fate would have it, one pack in particular seems destined to cross paths with the Cold River Hunters. The Lake Howlers now occupy the greater portion of Luc's thoughts, both as an object of revenge for their prior skirmish (Luc didn't take well to being denied a clear victory) and as a stepping stone to his greater ambitions.

Luc is a handsome, dark-haired man in his 20s with just a trace of an accent. He smiles easily, though his smile takes on an undeniable malevolence when Luc is dealing with affairs of tribe or pack. He lives mostly off wealth established by Ivory Claw relations, and dresses well but not ostentatiously. In wolf form, he has a dark coat with a pale splash of fur across his throat and breastbone.

Waterborn

Tribe: Predator Kings
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/6)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Spirits) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth (Urshul) 4, Survival (Tracking) 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Language (First Tongue) 1, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 4
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 8 (8/9/10/10) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 3, Purity 3, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Call Water, Call the Breeze, Mask of Rage, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Silent Fog; (3) Primal Howl
Rituals: 3;
Rites: (1) Banish Human, Shared Scent; (2) Call Gaffling, Rite of Dormancy; (3) Bind Spirit

Gretchen ten Huisen was born en route to the United States from the Netherlands, aboard a ship in the Atlantic; when she later underwent her First Change, her werewolf name was a logical one. Gretchen has a seeming affinity for water; she's in tune with spirits of the water, especially those near the shores of Lake Michigan. The young woman also likes just being in and around water, no matter how brackish or how clean. Even more than the other werewolves in her pack, she's tense and ill at ease around the human herd, so she avoids dealings with humans she's not permitted to kill. Gretchen is a creature of primal instincts and killing force, an attack animal that is leashed only by her alpha's word. She's devoted to her pack, especially Luc, and they make sure her basic needs are met.

Gretchen has an extremely athletic build; she's of average height with blondish red hair and blue eyes. Her skin is fair and has the occasional freckle. Although not huge, she has a large personality and a commanding presence. Unless forced to appear in public, she shuns clothes (often preferring wolf form to keep warm) or wears a buffalo robe that she stole some years back.

Kegan the Hammer

Tribe: Predator Kings
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Feats of Strength) 3, Brawl (Dalu) 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 1, Intimidation (Hungry Grin) 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fleet of Foot 1, Strong Lungs, Toxin Resistance, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)

Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 4, Honor 1, Purity 2
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, Speak with Beasts, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Mighty Bound; (3) Iron-Rending, Primal Howl; (4) Savage Rending
Rituals: None

Along with Gretchen, Kegan is the brute force of the pack. He may not be particularly subtle or imaginative, but he's cunning, ruthless and unshakably loyal. Kegan tends to lie low and avoid human contact, recognizing that killing humans in a fit of temper might draw unwanted attention to the pack, but he's quick to attack and kill any members of the Tribes of the Moon he might see, no questions asked. The Predator King has a streak of stubborn pride that runs deep, and he takes his tribe's mission of culling the weak quite seriously. He might even apply that maxim to his own pack, if it came to it.

Kegan has spent his entire life preparing his body for battle. He's not a huge werewolf, but what he lacks in height, he makes up for in rock hard muscle. The mid-30s Predator King has a square jaw, often covered with a day-old stubble. His hair, shoulder length, is dirty blond, and his eyes are a cold greenish gray. In wolf form, his fur is unusually short and of brownish gold color.

Madeleine Blanot

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Occult 1, Politics 3, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression (Poetry) 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Sympathetic) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Concealing Emotions) 3
Merits: Contacts (Toronto Ivory Claws) 1, Languages (First Tongue, French) 2, Resources 2, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Honor 2, Purity 3, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Call Water, Loose Tongue, Partial Change, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Anybeast, Luna's Dictum; (3) Voice of Command
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Call Gaffling, Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition; (3) Rite of Healing, Wake the Spirit

Madeleine secretly despises her cousin Luc, and she's become quite good at it. The



rest of her pack doesn't seem to realize that she'd tear out his throat if she thought she could get away with it. It wasn't always that way, but ever since he gained pack leadership and a solid territory in downtown Chicago, he has become more and more insufferable. Worst of all are the late-night visits, full of his groping hands and sickeningly sweet breath. Madeleine suspects that if Luc gets his coveted victory over the Lake Howlers, then he'll become so full of himself that he'll try to go even further. She doesn't know what she'll do then, only what she could do and how her Ivory Claws relatives would retaliate if she did. For now, she typically defers to Luc in pack affairs, but is slowly working to shift her other packmates' loyalties closer in her direction. So far, she's had some success in bonding with Burning Coal over religious discussion, but the Predator Kings are harder to reach.

Madeleine is an attractive brunette with an atypically calm demeanor for a werewolf. She tends to favor monochromatic outfits, usually white shirts and black skirts, pants or jackets; these match her coloration in wolf forms, as she has a mostly black coat with a streak of white along her breast. Her accent is just a bit stronger than Luc's.

Anne "Burning Coal" Cole

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Elemental) 3, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression (Oratory) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Cunning) 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 1, Resources 1, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Sloth
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 6 (7/10/13/11) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Purity 3, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Call Water, Partial Change, Sense Malice; (2) Manipulate Earth, Scent of Taint; (3) Command Fire, Echo Dream
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Funeral Rite, Shared Scent; (2) Rite of Contrition

Some Fire-Touched give their new initiates names that deny the human life the acolyte once led; others prefer to twist a human "slave name" into a true "wolf name." Such was the case for Anne, who now thinks of herself exclusively as "Burning Coal," or simply "Coal" to her packmates. She's unhappy with her pack's choice of totem and mission and hates swimming in the cold river, but remains submissive just as she's been told to do. She enjoys building bonfires along the beach both to warm herself and as homage to her old initiation rite; this doesn't please the pack totem much, but Coal usually offers good sacrifices to appease it in turn.

Burning Coal is a skinny woman in her early 30s, the kind of sharp-featured woman who would look at home taking orders in a greasy diner. She has dark hair with several patches that have gone bright red, apparently without having been dyed. This pleases her no end, and she's become somewhat vain about what she perceives to be a sign of favor from Rabid Wolf.

Ice from the Rivers (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 4
Willpower: 8
Essence: 15
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Size: 8
Corpus: 12
Influences: Cold ••
Numina: Blast (ice), Material Vision
Bonuses: +1 Composure (Pack), +1 Stamina (Pack), Survival Specialty (Cold)
Ban: So long as there is any ice on the river or lake, the pack must swim among the floes once per week. During the warm seasons when the ban is not so easily observed, Ice from the Rivers does not grant the Stamina bonus to the pack.
Cost: 30

Ice from the Rivers tends to manifest itself as patterns in broken ice floating in nearby water or in frost on glass. Sometimes a face emerges, sometimes simply abstract designs. When the spirit goes to battle it emerges as a shambling, roughly bipedal mass of broken ice.

The Anchor (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Cold

The Hunters control a locus in the form of an anchor sunk in the riverbed near the Navy Pier. The locus' area of influence is wide enough that the pack doesn't have to go underwater to reap its benefits, though they must still swim out to do so. Several chains are attached to the anchor so that the pack can hold on and not be swept downriver by the current. It's a grueling amount of trouble to go to, but the location ensures that it's unlikely that any other pack, spirit or Host will be able to take it while the Cold River Hunters aren't looking.

The Scorched Heavens

It was perhaps inevitable that a werewolf pack would eventually strike a pact with a flame-spirit that remembered the days of the Great Chicago Fire. Unfortunately, the Scorched Heavens pack have gone one step further and accepted such a spirit as their totem. The pack has as their key agenda the possible rekindling of a spiritual Great Fire. Such a plot would likely wreak total havoc on the city's Shadow — or the plot might uninten-

tionally cleanse as it destroys. Whichever happens, these werewolves feel driven to find out more how this might be brought about. The greatest asset the pack has to call on is their pack totem, which is powerful beyond the bounds of most spirits that would pact with werewolves of their strength, Pure or Forsaken. It might prove too tough for them to please in the end.

The four members of the Scorched Heavens are Cory "Ambereyes" Burton (Fire-Touched), Lian Chen (Fire-Touched), Peter Warbite (Ivory Claws) and Mockery (Ivory Claws). They claim territory near West Side, and their forays down to DeKoven Street sometimes bring them into the Hull House Haunts' territory. They have no single locus of their own, instead having to feed their totem spirit with fires and hunt spirits for Essence.

Cory "Ambereyes" Burton

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Crafts (Incendiaries) 3, Investigation 2, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation (Creative Threats) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (Fire-Touched Wolf-Blooded) 1, Contacts (Shipping) 1, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 2
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Purity 1
Gifts: (1) Call Fire, Straighten, Warning Growl; (2) Ruin
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication; (2) Banish Spirit, Rite of Dormancy

Cory never discusses the deal that his pack made with the spirit Incandescent Destruction, but behind his eyes is a fleeting look of desperation and fanaticism, occasionally tinged with madness. His single-minded and desperate goal is the complete destruction and cleansing of the city via fire, but he's not yet figured out how to do this. Cory's convinced that this is the ultimate spiritual goal for the city on both sides of the Gauntlet. The Scorched Heavens pack may have enough spiritual and temporal power and ability to play with the Pure Tribes alphas, except that the leaders among the Ivory Claws, like Patrick Keeneye, don't particularly trust these betas. Cory works in a shipping warehouse doing physical labor; the hours aren't too steady, but that's fine with him.

Small and wiry, Cory seems younger than his 25 years. His hair is pale blond, and his eyes are dark blue with gray tinges; they seem to bore into everyone who attracts his attention. His fur in wolf form is creamy beige. Corey liked dressing in trendy, youthful fashions before his induction, but now his fashion sense is just a bit off-kilter. He isn't the most powerful member of his pack in most respects, but he's the one that drew Incandescent Destruction's attention, and has become the linchpin of the Scorched Heavens.

Lian Chen

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Calligraphy) 2, Medicine (Herbal) 2, Occult 1, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Chinatown) 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Allies (Uncle) 1, Fast Reflexes 1, Fighting Style (Kung Fu) 3, Fleet of Foot 1, Languages (First Tongue, Japanese, Mandarin) 3, Resources 1, Striking Looks 2
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Blending, Crushing Blow, Sense Malice; (2) Feet of Mist, Mighty Bound, Scent of Taint; (3) Echo Dream
Rituals: None

Lian is single-minded and precise in all that she does, drawing upon tremendous inner strength and iron will. This is a big problem — because her pack has a fearsome vision of the city's future. Lian is the creature who would, beyond all reason, follow the plan of scorching Chicago from the inside out, even if her packmates foundered or changed their minds along the way. To Lian, once a course is set, the right thing to do is follow it to the end, victorious or bitter, and nothing can be allowed to stand in the way, whether friend or foe. She's supported by an elderly uncle, who lives in Chinatown.

With large brown eyes and porcelain skin, Lian is quite beautiful —except that she's aloof and cool to everyone. Sometimes her pack thinks she actually a slumming Ivory Claw, her focus and fury are so intense. She's of average height and has a light frame; her clothes are usually no more than plain cotton pants and a matching shirt.

Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent

Peter Warbite

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Bite) 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry (Bludgeons) 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise (Gangs) 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (Petty Crime) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Language (First Tongue) 1, Strong Back, Strong Lungs
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 2 (2/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Glory 3, Honor 1, Purity 3
Gifts: (1) Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage, Partial Change, Warning Growl; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Hone Rage, Mighty Bound; (3) Iron-Rending, Silver Jaws
Rituals: None

The Ivory Claws may have their elegant monsters, but they also have their unsubtle brutes. Peter Warbite is one such brute, a scion of a long-standing Ivory Claws bloodline who has no greater ambitions than spilling blood and claiming the spoils of war. He Changed under the full moon, and it's uncertain whether the indoctrination burned all the scraps of that blessing out of him; he fights like it's his instinct. He joined with the Scorched Heavens pack primarily because the others were roughly of his age, but quickly gave them his full loyalty. He admires, even worships, the totem Incandescent Destruction, and looks forward to the glorious day when the city burns and he'll be free to kill during the chaos. The fire is just a means to an end. He's the first to encourage his pack to attack a rival pack of Forsaken, but he's not stupid: running into a pack that the Scorched Heavens can't defeat on their own might trigger Peter to start talking his packmates into making alliances with other packs of Pure for the greater war effort.

Peter is blond, blue-eyed, tall and broad-shouldered, and could pass for a former varsity athlete if he dressed the part. Instead, he wears clothes mostly stolen from Salvation Army bins and army surplus stores, spoiling the "all-American" look. Much of his arms are decorated with tribal tattoos of mostly human design, with a distinct fire pattern on his back surrounding a variant of his pack's mark.

Mockery

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics (Ivory Claws) 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Acrobatic) 3, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Manipulative) 3
Merits: Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 1
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Feet of Mist, Loose Tongue, Partial Change, Warning Growl; (2) Anybeast, Blending, Sand in the Eyes; (3) Playing Possum
Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication; (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Call Gaffling, Cleansed Blood, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition; (2) Bind Human

Mockery isn't in particularly good standing with the rest of his tribe, and it burns. Although Silver Wolf accepted him, the talk is that it was only grudgingly so. Most other Ivory Claws treat him more as a court jester than as a fellow aristocrat, with the sole exception of his packmate Peter Warbite. Mockery stands with the rest of his pack partly out of the desire to belong, but partly out of a long, vengeful streak. If Chicago does burn, then the Scorched Heavens pack will be justly famous. And then perhaps Mockery can get a new name.

The much-vaunted Ivory Claw breeding doesn't make a good showing in Mockery's blood. He has a thin face and a very weak chin, and his feet and hands are a bit too large for his small and spindly body. Even when shapeshifted, his coat's a bit patchy and lacks a healthy sheen. Though he resents his appearance, he can use it to his advantage, blending into a crowd or being easily overlooked. A wise Uratha who watches him move, though, might not be as inclined to underestimate him — Mockery is quite fast, and stronger than his frame would indicate.

Incandescent Destruction (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 4
Willpower: 11
Essence: 18
Initiative: 7
Defense: 7
Speed: 20
Size: 10
Corpus: 14

Influences: Fire •••

Numina: Blast (fire), Chorus, Fetter, Materialize, Material Vision, Wilds Sense

Bonuses: Stamina +1 (Pack), Gift: Command Fire (Pack), Gift: Create Fire (Pack), Larceny Specialty (Arson)

Ban: The pack must be dedicated to turning Chicago into a firestorm. Furthermore, every week that they don't commit some act of arson (bigger than a car or small room), they must submit to the flames (third-degree burns over a couple of square inches of flesh will suffice).

Cost: Special

Incandescent Destruction shouldn't, by most rights, be a pack totem. As a Lesser Jaggling, service to a pack should be beneath it. But such is the nature of the pact between the Pure and the lords of the Shadow — sometimes the spirits will give more than is asked for, and the Pure must offer more than they desired to give in return. The fire elemental appears as a rolling fire, burning unclean colors and giving off strangely colored smoke as if it were fed by some sort of chemical fuel.

Powder Keg

The characters' pack comes into possession of the real story behind the Scorched Heavens and their totem. Clearly, the Pure shouldn't be allowed to run around with a spirit that powerful and volatile following them. Outright killing off the Scorched Heavens may be trickier than it looks, though; not only is it a violation of the Oath, but their totem would likely become involved in the battle to protect its favored servants. A more suitable solution would be either getting the Pure to somehow violate the ban laid on them or, better, unintentionally doing something that goes against Incandescent Destruction's personal ban. But how to pull off that particular task of trickery?

The Seekers of Silenced Voices

Chicago is a place with many ghosts, and the Seekers are quite intrigued by the notion. The women of this pack are members of the Cult of Bones, a Pure splinter religion intrigued by the spirits and resonance of death, followers of a teaching that claim that the dead spirit of Father Wolf may yet be recovered. While the Seekers are not a particularly powerful pack, they're capable of several minor feats of necromancy. They have settled into Chicago as a potential source of many ghosts, and at the moment are vigorously searching for ghosts left behind by the Great Fire itself.



All of the Seekers are Ivory Claws or Fire-Touched. The Ivory Claws of the pack are Gillian Gordon, Amanda Knox and Lillie "Wrath" Rathgren; the Fire-Touched are Clio Bonner and Shepherd. The pack operates out of Graceland Cemetery on North Clark Street; the cemetery is one of the oldest and largest in Chicago, and even humans have stories of Graceland being haunted. In game terms, the Seekers are part of a lodge similar to the Bone Shadows Lodge of Death, and all have affinity for the Death Gifts list.

Gillian Gordon

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Folklore) 3, Crafts 1, Investigation (Research) 2, Occult (Death) 4, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (Cult of Bones) 1, Language (First Tongue) 1, Mentor 3, Resources 2, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 2 (2/3/3/3)
Speed: 9 (10/13/16/14)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Honor 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Know Name, Loose Tongue; (2) Ghost Knife, Sand in the Eyes; (3) Corpse Witness
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Gaffling, Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Dormancy

Gillian grew up among a wolf-blooded family, and throughout her childhood, she had "friends" that most people couldn't see. Whether because of her own abilities as a werewolf or because she was some sort of natural lure, spirits tended to encircle her. Some even came across the Gauntlet. Her relatives recognized this tendency as a valuable thing, and not long after her Change and subsequent indoctrination, she was initiated into the Cult of Bones. The trauma of her tribal induction only seemed to strengthen her connection to the shades of the dead, an omen that was greeted with delight.

Gillian is not quite the emotional fanatic that her packmate Wrath is, but it's true Gillian has no real life or ambitions beyond her pack and the Cult. She is dedicated to investigating the decades upon decades of death in the city — were the visitations of her youth meant to guide her here? What is it that can be gained from the ghosts found here? How did the shades of human dead correspond to the denizens of the Shadow, or was there no connection at all? Where is the link that leads to the legendary ghost of Father Wolf himself? This is the mission Gillian has set for the Seekers of Silenced Voices. Some of Chicago's other Ivory Claws look down on the pack as servants of a fringe belief, but they admit Gillian is always ready to lend a hand when a larger threat appears. Because of her lineage and her knowledge of things spiritual, even her detractors grudgingly admit she's useful — for now, at least.

Gillian's one of those people who radiates an aura of confidence, no matter what kind of clothes she's wearing. No one could say she's beautiful, but she gets a certain intimidating charisma from her wolfish aura of determination. She stands around five-and-a-half feet tall, is in her mid-30s and has medium brown hair, usually pulled into a manageable ponytail. Her eyes are green, with a touch of gold near the pupils, and her fur in wolf form roughly matches her human hair color.

Amanda Knox

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Politics (Pure) 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Stealth 3, Larceny (Palming Objects) 2, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Upper Class) 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (Father) 2, Common Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Languages (First Tongue, French) 2, Resources 3, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Pride
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 2, Purity 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Feet of Mist, Warning Growl, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Blending, Ghost Knife; (3) Corpse Witness
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand, (2) Blessing of the Spirit Hunt, Hallow Touchstone

While Gillian is slightly on the left of weird, her distant cousin has both feet planted firmly in the physical. Like Gillian, Amanda grew up among prosperous wolf-blooded relations, and she has no shortage of personal wealth and means. However, Amanda is all about results. She's voluntarily embroiled herself in the Cult of Bones and their mission, but she also

wants to see some resolution. Take, for example, the ghosts that inhabit their territory. The rest of the pack seems content to dawdle on what to do about them; Amanda wants to find out what they want and put them to rest, post haste. There are many, much worse problems in the city that need the pack's attention, sooner than later — most significant among them the Tribes of the Moon. Amanda has had litanies of those relatives who fell to the Forsaken impressed upon her memory, and it's for those fallen relatives that she both serves the Cult of Bones and longs for revenge.

Amanda is pretty, with long, curling, dark brown hair. Her eyes are deep blue and wide set, making her appear child-like to some extent — at least when she sleeps. When awake, she's got a serious demeanor and is all business; perhaps to compensate for her youthful appearance, she dresses somewhat severely, in dark suits with little ornamentation and heels to accentuate her already tall form. Her murderous inner nature is fairly evident, and will become even more pronounced as she grows in personal power.

Lillie "Wrath" Ratagren

Tribe: Ivory Claws
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (4/5/5/4)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1 (0/1/0/1), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Crafts (Bone Carving) 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Claw, Bite) 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Tracking) 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (Snarls) 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 2, Totem 5
Primal Urge: 4
Willpower: X
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Envy
Derangements: Suspicion
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 13 (14/17/20/18) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 2
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Crushing Blow, Mask of Rage; (2) Hone Rage, Ghost Knife
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent



Lillie's aunt gave her the name of "Wrath" upon the completion of Lillie's initiation. It was initially meant as a blessing and a hope for her future, as well as a play on her human name. It's proven prophetic. When her auspice was burnt from her, it took away a portion of the young werewolf's sanity as well. She is the most skilled tracker of the pack, due in part to her increasingly feral nature. She also has the most difficulty dealing with ordinary humans; Amanda has thought more than once that perhaps the pack should just give Wrath over to the Predator Kings, where perhaps she might fit in better.

Lillie is a small, lean, powerful woman in her late 20s with thick hair that went white after her initiation. She tends to wear casual street clothes like sweats and sneakers, sometimes with the occasional bloodstain to hint at how she acquired them. Her eyes are a golden brown, turning pale yellow when she shapeshifts. She constantly twitches with nervous energy on the brink of violent release.

Clio Bonner

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Bleeding) 3, Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Gauru) 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Knives) 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Language (First Tongue) 1, Totem 6
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 4
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Gluttony
Derangements: Irrationality
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Purity 1
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Mask of Rage Partial Change, Sense Malice; (2) Ghost Knife, Hone Rage
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Shared Scent

If Wrath is murderous because she cannot help herself, then Clio is murderous because being so appeals to her. She is addicted to bloodshed — the smell of a wound as it first opens on an enemy's flesh, the way blood quickly changes color as it reaches oxygen, the many little ways that bones give way when a Gauru paw smashes into a body. Of course, part of her recognizes that she shouldn't indulge in these pleasures simply because she can. And there lies the root of her interest in ghosts; to smell a ghost is to smell how it died. To be near a ghost is to be near a perpetually extended moment of death. It isn't quite the same — it's always cold, never warm as fresh lifeblood — but it's fascinating all the same.

Clio is in her early 30s, thin as a rail and with a terribly wolfish demeanor. She dresses in clothes that are as immaculate as she can keep them, even if they're usually somewhat dowdy and unflattering.

Shepherd

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1 Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (Broken Bones) 3, Occult (Rituals) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Persuasion (Gentle) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Direction Sense, Meditative Mind, Resources 1, Totem 5
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Greed
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Honor 1, Purity 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Know Name, Sense Malice; (2) Ghost Knife, Scent of Taint
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand; (2) Hallow Touchstone, Rite of Contrition

Shepherd's weakness is what some Forsaken would call a strength. She thinks of herself as a humble servant of the spirits of death, a tool to bring an end to suffering. When it's her turn to offer a sacrifice to Cold of the Grave, she does so mercifully, never prolonging her victim's anguish the way Wrath or Clio are prone to do. Shepherd's flashes of compassion might not last for long, and she may not truly think of humans as any more worthy of life than a rat or pigeon, but some flicker of the girl she once was still remains with her. If the Forsaken had reached her first, she might well have been happy among the Bone Shadows; the possibility might even still be there. But it would take some potent deprogramming to release the fetters of disease and pain that Rabid Wolf bit into her soul. Even if she wasn't brought into the fold of her own free will, she now follows the teachings of the Fire-Touched and the Cult of Bones by her own choice — or near enough to make no difference to her.

Shepherd could pass for a college student if she wore nicer clothing; right now, she seems more of a dropout than anything else. She wears a beatific smile most of the time that adds to her slightly distant demeanor, though it comes from inward contemplation of the Cult of Bones' philosophy rather than any sort of drug. Even when she takes on the Gauru form and begins to tear her enemies apart, she is more likely to fight with a low growl than a howl or snarl.

Cold of the Grave (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Willpower: 4
Essence: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Influences: Cold ••
Numina: Blast, Harrow, Material Vision, Reaching
Bonuses: Composure +1 (Pack), Gift: Silent Fog (Pack), Occult Specialty (Ghosts)
Ban: Weekly, the pack members must spend an hour conducting a ritual sacrifice by strangulation to the totem in a place touched by death (a recent murder site, the morgue or an eerie graveyard). The totem is satisfied with animal sacrifices, but grants the pack personal gifts from its Essence reserves if they make a human or Forsaken offering.
Cost: 28

Cold of the Grave does not like to manifest in clearly visible forms. It is usually seen only as a flutter of a pale shroud, a half-glimpsed silhouetted or the slow rake of bony fingertips against frosted glass.

Wolff's Tomb (Locus Rating •••)

Resonance: Dread

The impressive tomb of Ludwig Wolff is 30 feet long and 12 feet high, and has been a locus for almost as long as it's existed. The Seekers are the most recent pack to take advantage of the tomb, and encourage local superstition by terrifying the occasional straggler — or perhaps making sure that the would-be ghost-hunter disappears entirely. The actual locus is a stone within the tomb proper.

Enigma

An off-beat reporter for a local tabloid called *Windy City Weird* has been publishing odd articles that hint at the existence of supernatural elements in Chicago. The reporter, Al Napier, no doubt gets a few laughs and guffaws from the public, but lately, his writing has made some uncanny leaps of logic. For example, he's discussed seeing "human spider women" and "sightings of wolves" when no zoo escapes have been reported. The characters' pack may need to do some surveillance on Al, to see if he's really meeting with Uratha or others, or if he's just hitting too close for comfort by virtue of coincidence. If the pack do, they may be in time to prevent him from completing his next piece, dealing with haunts around the Graceland Cemetery — an assignment that would surely infuriate the Seekers of Silenced Voices to the point that they begin a series of indiscriminate reprisals.

Learning the Chain of Command

The betas don't quite have down the seemingly effortless pack strategies the alphas employ — yet. They're still learning the ropes. Here are some basic melee tactics they're trying to master:

1. Make the landscape work for you, not against you. This means trying to get the enemy in an unfavorable position, such as taking the low ground or standing in a marshy or otherwise slippery area.

2. Plan and practice. It's not stupid to draw out some basic plans and practice using them in mock combat. This could mean the difference between life or death.

3. Keep it simple. Unless a specialist in a particular variety of combat, stick to the weapons and attacks that are most familiar.

4. The pack is the sum of its parts. Every werewolf has one or two things in which he excels. Pack leaders need to assign combat duties that play to the strengths of the pack members.

5. Have a fallback plan. Sometimes, it's better to cut losses and regroup rather than fighting to the death. Most Uratha have a hell of a time with this concept.

6. Attack to maim. You don't have to battle an Ithaeur (or whomever) to the death to take him out of battle; sometimes, just a dire wound will keep him from bringing spirit allies into the fray.

7. Pack bonds, small successes and strict discipline help forge a mighty fighting force.

Mortal Contacts

Wolf-Bloods of the Betas

As with the alphas, the betas prize their wolf-blooded kin and fear for their safety. The following persons are the known and in-the-know wolf-blooded, those who aren't entirely ignorant of their ties with the supernatural. A few have connections with specific Uratha and packs, while others aren't really aware of tribes and bloodlines.

• **Gwen Barnabei (Storm Lords):** If Gwen had been born a werewolf, she'd have her own pack by now. As it is, she's a much-sought-after management consultant. When a small company is in trouble, the owners hire Gwen to come in and shake up matters. One day, she'd like to get her hands on the airline industry, but, for now, she specializes in saving corporations with between 500 and 1,000 employees. Gwen knows most of the beta Storm Lords and gets along quite well with Gilbert Sinclair. She'd like to become even more involved in the daily happenings of the tribe, except she's not exactly sure who (or what) the Uratha are really doing (she suspects they're some kind of urban vigilantes). Gwen is a tall, slender redhead, about 30 and with good taste in business clothes.

• **Chris Cain (Bone Shadows):** Broadcasting from station WCUT, Chris Cain is a minor celebrity. He plays quirky music that's on the cutting edge of trendy, and he always seems to have the latest news from the streets — even as it's happening. What the public doesn't know is that Chris gets much of his info from his tribe, especially thanks to his pal Atu. Chris doesn't mind putting a certain spin on his reports if it helps out his relatives. The station usually is in the midst of one financial crisis or another, but considering the wolf-blooded's influence, it would be worth it to the tribe to keep him in business. Chris is in his 30s, tall and lean, with fair skin and dark hair down to his waist.

• **Shing Chen (Fire-Touched):** Shing Chen is a Chinese man in his late 60s, with short gray hair and a thin moustache. He's an herbalist familiar with many traditional treatments, such as *zang-fu*, acupressure and *qi gong*. Chen is also knowledgeable about the politics of Chinatown and related environs. He's not so much a financial contributor as a sounding board for members of the tribe. Chen, like his niece Lian, is a deeply spiritual man who weighs all decisions carefully before moving ahead with any plans.

• **Albert Knox (Ivory Claws):** With Albert Knox, it's a case of "like father, like daughter." He comes from old steel money, and he's in large part responsible for supporting not only his daughter Amanda, but also her pack leader, Gillian Gordon. But more importantly, Knox instilled in both women pride of family and the determination to get results. He may be wolf-blooded and not werewolf, but the man has been quite influential on the girls' upbringing. Albert is in his late 50s and always wears clean, sharply pressed business attire. His dark hair is turning silver, and he's tall and svelte, like his daughter.

• **Sylvia Gamaliel Mele (Hunters in Darkness):** A vet tech by profession, Sylvia is also an advocate for animal rights and especially purebred dog rescue. She's only recently met the local Hunters in Darkness and seems most at ease with Amelia Glaze; Sylvia worries that Little Blue is going to be picked up by Child Services. Given some time, she'll be a valuable asset to have, especially with her experience in working with animals.

• **Kim Schofe (Iron Masters):** Kim is a rep for Interface IT, a networking and IT management firm that's landed a number of lucrative and high-profile contracts in recent years. She's great at her job, and hey, if she leaves a personal back door in some of the programs she installs, there's no one to know the difference. Kim makes sure no one other than herself can ever get into a network, and she also covers her tracks quite well. To date, she's never used her back doors for anything other than information, and she'd like to keep it that way. If asked to do something more criminal by her friends in the tribe, she'd be in a difficult position. Kim is in her late 20s, with blonde hair and a nice figure for a desk jockey.

• **Yin Wang (Predator Kings):** Yin Wang is in danger, and she doesn't even realize it. The young woman is an unknowing wolf-blood of the Predator Kings, whose family lines were severed from their main branch during a chaotic immigration from China in the late 1800s. With help from some of the Fire-Touched, Kegan MacDonald has been looking for any wolf-blooded humans that may be in the city. If he finds Yin, he may force her into a relationship against her will.

Traitors Date

This seed works best if it targets the player who most enjoys building friendships and romances with Storyteller characters. An unknowing wolf-blooded from one of the Pure Tribes strikes up a relationship with the player's character. The relationship is completely innocent on the wolf-blooded's part; she doesn't know anything about her savage Uratha relations, and they've overlooked her presence in the city. In any case, the Storyteller can string this out, if he chooses. The relationship can develop and thrive — but inevitably, the fact comes out that the Pure Tribes are seeking their wolf-blooded kin. Will the two factions go to war over the wolf-blood? Or will the moon-crossed lovers escape the city?

Beta Contacts

These middle management folks serve as contacts for several of the beta-level characters.

• **Buzz Birch, Firefighter:** Buzz has been a firefighter for about 10 years; right out of high school, he took the required training at a tech school and has been on the job ever since. There's nothing supernatural about Buzz, but he's observant and has noticed that fires in Chicago seem to be more insidious than other places. Fires come about not just as a result of arson or accident, but almost as if the element had a life of its own. He can't quite explain it, but he's deeply concerned about this phenomenon. Buzz knows the geography of the city extremely well and has a sharp investigative streak, albeit no formal training.

• **Brian da Silva, Cleanup Specialist:** Brian isn't cheap, nor does he work for just anyone. But with the right price and no questions asked, he and a small crew will take on any extreme cleanup job. Brian does lots of legitimate work after wild parties and even messy deaths, called in by hotel managers and police respectively. He might arch his eyebrows a bit at certain messes, but as long as the tab is paid, he's

discreet. Brian doesn't know it, but he's already helped preserve the integrity of werewolf society on a number of occasions.

• **Kelly Girard, 911 Operator:** Kelly has been a 911 operator for about 10 years. She's good at her job and wouldn't dream of erasing tapes or ignoring a call for help. But she *has* shown herself willing to contact certain parties off-the-record if an emergency arises that directly affects their interests. In this manner, a character could arrive at a crime scene before the officials and take care of any awkward evidence, if needed. Beyond making the call, Kelly doesn't really want to know how a contact uses the info she passes along. It's not professional, but Kelly is somewhat desperate for money, enough so that she'll violate her professional ethics for a good payment.

• **Patti Morgan, ER Doc:** Having been an ER doctor for several years, there's not much Patti hasn't seen. She worked her way up from being a certified nursing assistant to a physician the hard way, scraping through college and medical school on a shoestring budget. It's given her an appreciation for the average working person and also the hospital staff who often don't get thanks or a decent salary. Patti works 75% time at two different hospitals to pay off her bills. She'd be a good person to know in case medical care was needed, with few questions asked. The health and well-being of a person is far more important to her than scaring off someone who needs help by officious paperwork.

• **June Ng, Grocer:** A grocer in the Little Saigon neighborhood, June is a wealthy widow who still goes into the family store and provides a personal touch every day. She has a keen eye for faces and knows most of the residents in Chinatown North, off Broadway and Argyle. June also has strong streaks of both curiosity and compassion; she's willing to help friends and often pokes her nose into affairs that aren't her own.

• **Ken Roney, El Conductor:** A veteran conductor of the el, Ken has seen all kinds of crazy things on his trains over the years. He's worked several routes and knows the system intimately. Ken isn't capricious or defiant of authority, but he likes a challenge and is open to a bribe; hey, his pension isn't all *that* much.

• **Marie Stennes, Reporter:** Marie is a great person to know. First of all, she's a talented reporter; she writes well, she remembers tiny details and she has a strong ethical streak. But Marie also has a keen nose for stories, not just front page headline stuff, but items that pull readers in, such as human interest accounts. Given the right set of circumstances, Marie may be willing to hold back on a certain report — or see to it that it gets into bigger typeset, depending on the needs of a reader and how much said reader is willing to swap info.

Spirit Contacts

Most of the spirits known to the betas fall in the rank of the Lesser Jagglings or Greater Gafflings. Like the more powerful spirits, they're a contrary and capricious lot, but they're always open to bargains that can increase their dominance and authority in the spirit world.

Murderwing

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 6, Resistance 5
Willpower: 10
Essence: 17
Initiative: 11
Defense: 6
Speed: 21
Size: 6
Corpus: 11
Influences: Crows ••, Illness •
Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Material Vision, Reaching, Wilds Sense
Ban: Murderwings are perpetually hungry for carrion.

In the year 2002, 81% of Chicago's crow population died of an outbreak of West Nile virus. The sudden loss of these scavenger birds gave rise to a dangerous new spirit, an amalgam of the lost murders of crows. A Murderwing looks much like a whirling mass of crows in flight, a swarm of sharp beaks, fleshless talons and ragged, half-denuded wings. It is preceded by a strong stench of carrion. Murderwings make for dangerous enemies, yet they can be bribed into sharing information, disposing of corpses or performing other appropriate tasks with the right offerings.

Yellow Cab 2019

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 4
Willpower: 7
Essence: 18
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 15
Size: 12
Corpus: 16
Influences: Cars ••
Numina: Chorus, Fetter, Know the Path, Material Vision, Wilds Sense
Ban: Yellow Cab 2019 cannot refuse an invitation to bargain with a new customer.

This spirit cannot really remember when it was awakened, or why. However, it has gained some small amount of recognition among the city's werewolves because of the spirit's willingness to come to a deal with Uratha — or, well, anyone capable of contacting it. While self-serving, as most spirits are, the vehicle-spirit cannot help itself when presented with a potential new "customer." It will always be open to negotiations — once. If it feels it got the best out of the deal, it may agree to further bargains with a given person (or thing). However, a ban that compels it to bargain does not compel it to agree to terms; if it is insulted by the bargain, it will close negotiations. Yellow Cab 2019 can find its way to virtually anywhere within the city, often proving a better tracker than a werewolf pack. The spirit



resembles an old, asymmetrical taxicab with mismatched parts held together with bright red metallic welds.

The Ridden

Chicago, a city teeming with cruel and capricious spirits, breeds an appropriate number of Ridden. Newspapers are full of weird stories about seemingly normal people going off the deep end and behaving in bizarre ways. In fact, this kind of story is almost as old as the city itself. Obviously not all behavioral anomalies are supernatural, but the cautious werewolf doesn't take too many chances.

The Ridden have no sort of network or contact between them. In fact, they tend to avoid each others' interests and physical dwellings if at all possible; many fear that gathering together would only bring down the werewolves on their heads all the sooner.

Rachael Foster

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2 (4), Resolve 2 (4)
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3 (5), Stamina 2 (5)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2 (5)
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computers 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 4
Physical Skills: Drive 3, Larceny 3
Social Skills: Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Contacts (Hospital) 2, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 3, Status (Medical) 2
Willpower: 9
Morality: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Pride
Health: 10
Initiative: 11 with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Numina: Sense Weakness (as the New Moon Gift)

Rachael was an up-and-coming surgeon of immense talent within the University of Chicago Hospitals health system. She was starting to find a niche for herself when another resident stole some of the innovative techniques she'd been working on and advertised them as his own. Suddenly, he was the prima donna, and she was yesterday's news. Furious, Rachael threw herself more and more into her job. In fact, the work became everything to her, an unhealthy obsession wherein she lost sight of the good of the people, her patients, and made *herself* the center of why she practiced medicine. This in turn attracted a conceptual-spirit, one of Enslavement, possibly left over from the days long ago when people were bought and sold like animals in the city. After a short period of merging, the spirit settled nicely into its new body. Now the creature that is an odd mix of flesh and spirit can enjoy dominating and controlling those around it, and because of the increased manual dexterity, Rachael's hands are even more skilled than before. She's in demand for her technique, but patients and medical staff alike despise her; she's rude, cold and impossible to please.

Rachael is blonde and has a heavyset build. Her usual attire is standard-issue scrubs and booties; these are usually stained with blood and Betadine. Technically, she's bril-

liant, but emotionally and socially, she's a wreck. Even what little empathy the young woman had is now lost in a desire to dominate others. She simply can't function well unless she's in charge, controlling someone else to her will and desires.

Omegas: Bottom of the Heap

The "omega packs" of Chicago are in the unenviable position of facing all of the danger that comes with being Uratha with the least amount of resources and allies at their disposal. Some omega packs have lost favor with their fellow werewolves through petty action and cowardly devices. Other omega packs have been pushed down to a foul and embattled position by those more accomplished or by other Forsaken with a stronger sense of self-interest. Some are omegas only by age and experience — packs that haven't yet been able to claw and bite their way to firmer ground.

One thing's for certain: being omega, whether within an individual pack or as a pack within a city or region, comes with little reward. Being omega means catching the last gristly scraps of food (realistically and metaphorically), fighting the bloodiest fights, doing the dirtiest work and getting kicked when on the ground. Can an omega transcend his position, helping to bring himself or his pack to a greater station in Uratha society? Or will a pack die as it lived, down in the streets?

Anatomy of an Omega

In Chicago, being an omega isn't much different from being a lower-status Forsaken anywhere else. Omegas may be lost, angry, disenfranchised, isolationist or maybe even just young. They sit at the bottom of the barrel, and everything gets piled on top of them. The problem is, in Chicago, however, that dooming weight is all the heavier, made so by the presence of an overpopulated glut of supernaturals. Not only must the omegas contend with other Uratha (many of whom are damningly more powerful), the omegas are under constant threat from the Pure. Worse, the omegas are forced to occasionally cross paths with bloodthirsty vampires and secretive mages —especially those other creatures who are similarly disenfranchised and hungry for something greater.

Characteristics

Chicago's population of gutter-dwelling Forsaken is a growing excess. Their number swells year by year. Sometimes newcomers arrive in town and are automatically relegated to the bottom of the heap, or the higher-ups take a tumble and topple from the dominance they once held.

The Windy City is a fierce struggle for social supremacy. Everybody wants to be on top, but not everybody can be. Those who take power usually have the wherewithal to keep it. Those who have no power must overcome Herculean tasks to take it. The middle ranks of the Forsaken were once the most populous of the Forsaken, and still are, for a time. But more and more, those "middling" Uratha find that it is getting harder to stay where they are, and many are losing ground and slipping lower in the social hierarchy.

It's no surprise that most of the omegas in the heart of the Windy City dwell in the areas oft-associated with the poor, lower-class humans. It makes sense. These areas are not highly sought after — as such, they are often a tangle of streets and buildings, and moreover feature mortals prone to violence or rioting (for they too struggle for dominance and advantage). Plus, such areas of town are crowded. All the bottom-dwellers are kicked down and forced to parcel out parts of the housing projects or crumbling neighborhoods. Such division is rarely pleasant or agreed upon, and leads often to swift and sudden violence. Also, many of the wolf-blooded of the omega Forsaken live in these neighborhoods — from Greektown to Cabrini Green, from the working-class Bridgeport to the ethnic bricolage of Devon Avenue. The wolf-blooded are working-class folk (butchers, janitors, plumbers) or worse off (homeless people, mental patients) — and these are the seeds from which the omegas are sprung.

Of course, omegas rarely hold much territory toward the heart of the city. Certainly nothing so grand as a city block or a whole building — unless the building is condemned or the city block is a brutal stretch of gangland. Most centralized omega territory is painfully small, likely taken in a bloody struggle, or gifted as a parcel (or a favor) from more powerful Uratha. The omegas may watch over a few tables of the New Maxwell Street Market, or may instead have control of only a few of the ugly reefer (refrigerated truck) bays down in South Water Market. Rarely does the omegas; territory encompass el Stations or highly-traveled thoroughfares. There's a much better chance to prosper out in the outlying areas of Chicago — less of a support network, which can be dangerous, but at least there's more room to run.

Territory roughly equates to status in the city. Omegas do not possess much; if they did, they probably wouldn't be so ill-regarded. The same goes for access to loci. The omegas don't have it. To use a locus, most omega packs must entreat more powerful Uratha and complete favors.

Bargain of the Burned

In a thoroughly unexpected move, a pack of local Fire-Touched approach the characters and offer to *cede* some of the Fire-Touched's territory to them. This offer comes with supposedly no strings attached — the Fire-Touched offer (almost *kindly*) a piece of their territory. If the pack is a low-ranked omega pack, will the characters consider the possibility? Especially if the territory is in a prime area? Or will they wisely reject the offer, knowing that the Pure werewolves must have some hidden plan to move against them?

If the characters say no, the *Izidakh* pack threatens them and their kin. The Fire-Touched threaten the characters with disease and death. The Fire-Touched threaten to spread lies about the characters and send spirits to work against them. The characters will take the territory offered, or they will be bullied time and time again. But why? To what advantage? Can the pack resist, or will they give into whatever gross machination the Fire-Touched pack has in mind?

Threats

For many, the lowest level of the social order might as well be the lowest circle of Hell. For one thing, its members are relegated to the most undesirable tasks imaginable. Worse, the bottom of the barrel is a grim, violent struggle to try to get *out* of the barrel. Nobody wants to be left behind, and everybody is clawing toward the light. Characters at this level are stepping stools, slaves, scum-suckers and worst of all, *competition*.

The bottom-scrapers of the Forsaken don't have it much different. "Shit runs downhill," they sometimes remind one another, and the phrase is apt. Realistically, a whole lot of Uratha above the omegas see the lowest echelon of the Forsaken as one of two things: Use or Abuse.

"Use" is simple. Other Forsaken have things they want or need done, but are sometimes unwilling (or uninterested) in doing them. Sometimes, this is scut-work like hunting rats to diminish the Beshilu, cleaning the area around a recently manifested locus in an alley or passing messages to the lowest and most unpleasant of spirits (spirits of garbage, sewage, smog or flies). Other times, these tasks are more "dirty" work — meaning, work some Forsaken don't want to touch for fear of repercussions. Assassinations, spy jobs, trailing hidden prey.

How do some Forsaken get the omegas to do this job? Some Forsaken dangle the carrot of prestige. The Forsaken are willing to paint a grandiloquent picture of a way out of the barrel, a way into the light. It's true, sometimes. Some Uratha are willing to help their less socially fortunate brethren get a leg up for a small price; this is especially true of tribes. A veteran Blood Talon may not look at a freshly Changed fellow Talon with few scars as a true peer, but he still may have some respect for the younger one who's sworn the same oaths of endurance before Fenris-Ur. Other Forsaken, though, feel that keeping the omegas where they belong only makes them more useful — after all, the dangling carrot only works when it remains at the end of the stick. Other deals are offered, as well — pieces of territory, favors, spiritual items — but rarely does the reward match its description.

"Abuse," on the other hand, is a whole different animal, given over less to pragmatism and more to instinct. The Forsaken are intuitively driven toward their hierarchy. The battle for dominance, as well as the quest to keep it once it's gained, is always present in a werewolf's hindbrain even when it's not at the top of his conscious thought. Part of asserting one's dominance means occasionally reminding those below of one's elevated station. Unfortunately for the omegas, they're below everybody. Any Uratha, at any time, is free to exert his power and authority over these social bottom-dwellers. The omegas don't have to like it, and are certainly welcome to make a move for their own dominance, but such a maneuver is risky. Failure invites only more pain and abuse, and only confirms their sorry position on the totem pole. But still, they try, for like those above them, they are forever driven by the instinct to earn a higher place in the social order.

Abuse is rarely egregious. It's usually a small thing, a brief and painful reminder of one's own place. Some Forsaken offer a few harsh words, possibly a rake of a single nail or a snap of teeth around a tail. Occasionally, some Forsaken carry it much farther, and actively seek to harm those beneath them — scarring them or otherwise marking them as the "cattle" they are supposed to be.

Like everywhere, Chicago's omegas exist at the bloodiest strata of the social sphere. Rarely are disagreements solved by a handshake and a trade – they are usually left to tooth, claw, crowbar or .38 snubnose. This violence occurs for many reasons. First is that those above the omegas have something to lose. Open warfare is risky, and most know it could mean giving up certain advantages, territories, items or information. The higher one climbs on the social ladder, the more regimented and static the order becomes. Down low, though, nobody has a damn thing to lose — and, if they do, somebody else wants to take it real fast. War happens over small things, here. They might fight over who gets control over the street corner at 18th and Halsted or who owns a single alley off of Division Street. Who gets to dwell at the illegal dump site on 23rd Street, who gets first pick out of the trash in Little Italy, who gets first crack at talking to the mad firecracker-spirits of Chinatown? All of this will be decided by the omegas, and it will be decided with blood spilling into the storm drains.

Of course, the biggest threats don't come from the People, but from outside their society. This city is a melting pot of strange creatures and supernatural killers, and discord waits in every alley and on every street corner. For omegas, this amalgamation of monsters affects them perhaps worst of all. The omegas tend to cross paths with the "others" more often than their brethren. Chicago is a city with a swollen lower class, and that goes for the monsters, as well. Cadres of Nosferatu and Gangrel vampires gather in the abandoned warehouses of West 35th, mad mages sit homeless outside old asylums and other *unknown* beings shamble through the dark, piss-lit streets of Chicago's slums.

Spirits, too, grow hungry at this depraved level of existence, and constantly struggle to wrest power away from those who have it. Omegas must constantly contend with desperate entities trying to come into this world, Urging or Claiming those poor souls who have been beaten down on life. The homeless make prime targets for this spirits, as do drunks, addicts, abusers and the abused. The omegas *see* more of this, and are affected because the humans they sur-

round themselves with are often the ones easily preyed upon by hungry spirits. The Ridden pop up at every turn.

Far and away, the biggest threat to the omegas of Chicago is attacks from the Pure Tribes. To the Pure, the omegas represent the sick members of the herd. They don't belong with the rest of the animals, and so they wander afield from the other Uratha. Like a limping gazelle or a weak bison, they are all too easy to pick off before tackling the others. Killing the omegas first isn't necessarily cruel. In the eyes of the Pure, it's just good thinking.

Advantages

Oscar Wilde said it best: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." Being on the lower end of the totem pole isn't without *some* small advantage. While having nothing to lose can be bad, it can also be good; less-influential packs are freer to act as they choose, for they have little to give up and they certainly can't fall much lower than they already are. At this level, one ostensibly feels far less social pressure and can generally move unseen (for few care to keep an eye on the dregs of Uratha society). Plus, in theory, the only way to go is up.

Perhaps more importantly, though, are the level of secrets available only to those of this most unenviable social order. Some secrets are too small or too dirty to be noticed by the more powerful Uratha of Chicago. Omegas are close to the bottom, close to the grunge, the dirt, the castaway spirits. Omegas know where the hidden pathways in and out of the spirit world are. They know that some of the manholes in the State Street corridor lead to a stranger Shadow sewer larger and more expansive than its physical counterpart. They know that the bathroom stall with the broken toilet in Schaller's Pump tavern conceals a spirit who holds a key to unlocking a frightening Wound. Omegas know that the graffiti of Bridgeport offers secret poems from exiled spirits, that the crows atop the St. Nicholas Ukrainian Cathedral will spy for you (for the right price), and that the *baklava* bought in the markets down on Randolph Street are soaked in brandy and blood and will give you powerful, prophetic dreams. These are all things that the "alpha packs" don't know – and the betas don't know it, either. Such mysteries are left only for the omegas, for they live here, breed here, and are kept here. It's only natural that they claim the forgotten secrets, for they themselves are often forgotten.

The Second Locus

It's not easy for a pack of omega Forsaken to find or maintain a locus, particularly if they haven't been pointed in the right direction by a more-established pack. What happens when the characters' pack finds more than one locus? Maybe it's a phone booth, a ratty couch on the side of a highway or even a powerful cell phone antenna atop a skyscraper that seems to be getting interference from outside the physical world.

Whatever the case, the characters find the locus first — but can they hold it? Will they attempt to conceal it, or will they make its presence known in a boastful maneuver to give themselves greater renown? What happens if the locus borders — or sits upon — another pack's territory? Will the pack cede the locus to a greater pack if they will be allowed access to it from time to time? What happens if they can't decide, and, in the meantime, the vicious Azlu come hunting for it and them?

Tribes of the Moon

Omega packs in Chicago have a hard road ahead of them, and, for some, it's a short one to boot. Either they crawl or claw their way up from the gutters, get the hell out of the city or die. But everyone has to start somewhere, and the werewolf who survives life at the lower end of Chicago is going to be all the stronger for it.

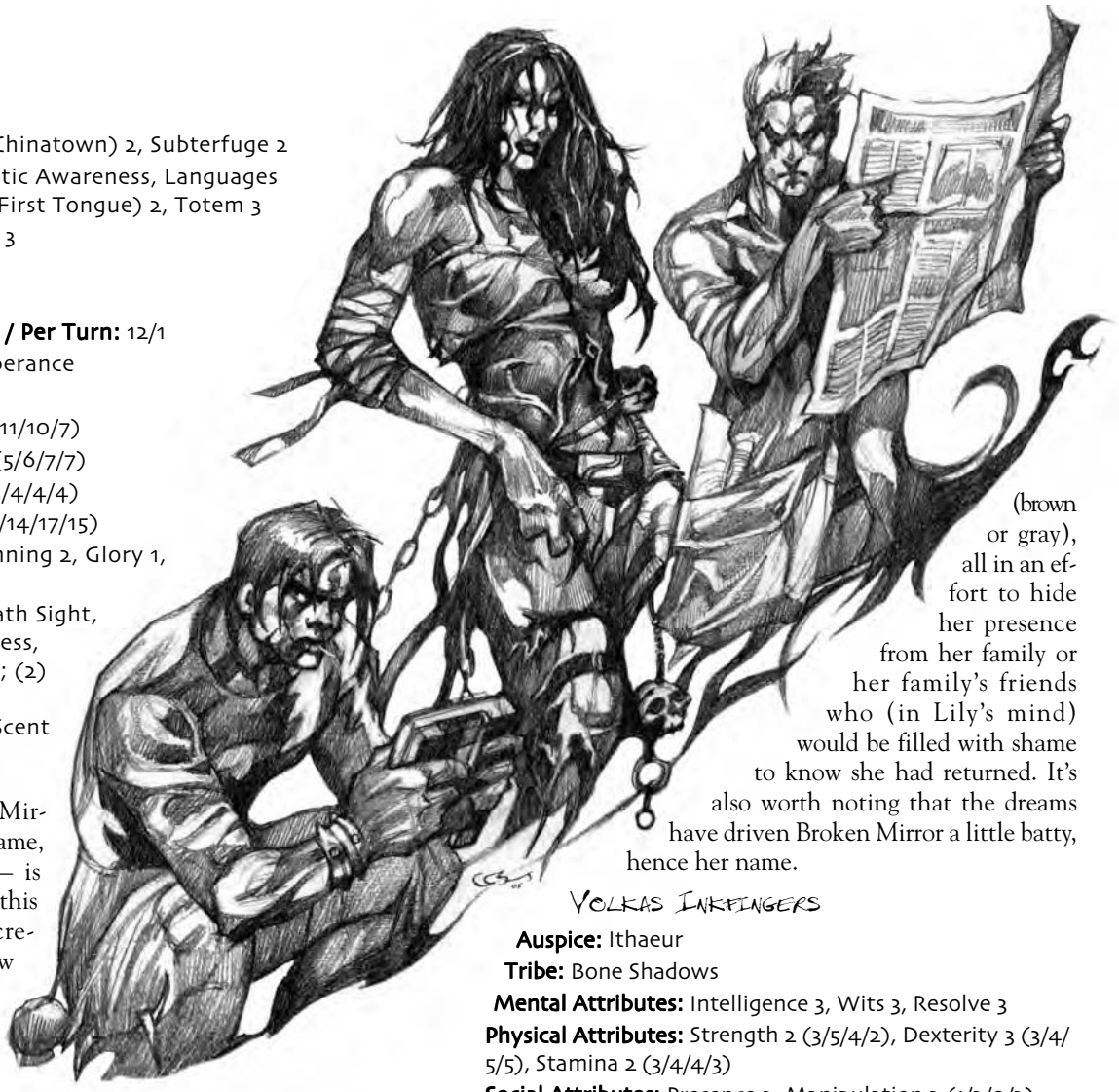
The Ratcatchers

The Chicago City Council thinks it has controlled the city's rat population. The council members are wrong. Since 1996 (appropriately, the Year of the Rat), the population of rats has exploded, and oddly, most of them are in Chinatown. The rats act different there, too — normally, rats from different colonies attack one another. Here, they treat each other like they're all from one big family, even if they're from different *breeds* of rat. Worse, disease is on the rise, and the Gauntlet is getting gnawed and things are bleeding through. The Beshilu are working overtime in Chinatown.

The Ratcatchers do the job nobody else wants. They hunt rats. Not just Rat Hosts but *all* rats. It's unpleasant hunting, nothing so glorious as spearing a running elk or sniffing out a rogue totem, but its work nevertheless. The Ratcatchers hope that one day they'll find a big nest and curtail the rat population, and then they'll have respect. So far, the job has only earned then scorn and ridicule.

Broken Mirror

Auspice: Cahalith
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation (Spiritual) 2, Occult (Hosts) 3, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 1, Empathy (Suffering) 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1,



Streetwise (Chinatown) 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Holistic Awareness, Languages (Cantonese, First Tongue) 2, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 7
Max Essence / Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)
Defense: 3 (3/4/4/4)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Wisdom 3
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Pack Awareness, Sense Malice; (2) Ghost Knife, Resist Pain, Scent of Taint; (3) Echo Dream

Broken Mirror — real name, Lily Chen — is the alpha of this pack of miscreants. She grew up in Chinatown, third of seven daughters, but fled her family and the neighborhood years ago after a particularly brutal First Change caused her to nearly kill a few of her sisters. Feeling mad and outcast, she was eventually picked up by a nomadic pack of spirit hunters (calling themselves the "Dragon's Scales") and traveled with them for a number of years.

Most Cahalith receive visions of prophecy once in a while. Broken Mirror, as the years went on, found those visions increasing in frequency, to the point where such disturbing dreams happened every night. Some happened; others didn't. She had little way to tell which dreams would manifest in reality, and which were fallacies planted by her subconscious (or by something else entirely). It was just over a year ago that Lily had a terrible dream of Chicago. While sleeping overnight under an overpass in Philadelphia, she dreamt that her home neighborhood of Chinatown became overwhelmed by a Wound. She watched as sickness and decay spread like brushfire, and the people who dwelled there suffered as the balance between worlds collapsed like a house of cards. That morning, she said her goodbyes and came back to Chinatown to find that her prophetic dream had not come true — but that it might, should the Rat Hosts be allowed to flourish.

Broken Mirror is a diminutive girl, quiet and unassuming. Most times, she's unkempt and dirty, stringy hair hanging across her face. She wears muted colors most times (brown or gray), all in an effort to hide her presence from her family or her family's friends who (in Lily's mind) would be filled with shame to know she had returned. It's also worth noting that the dreams have driven Broken Mirror a little batty, hence her name.

Volkas Inkfingers

Auspice: Ithaeur
Tribe: Bone Shadows
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation (Research) 3, Medicine 1, Occult (Riddles) 2, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Rats) 1, Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise (Gossip) 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (Grazna Family) 1, Eidetic Memory, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Know Name, Sense Malice, Two-World Eyes; (2) Read Spirit
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Rite of Dedication; (2) Banish Spirit, Call Gaffling, Rite of Contrition

Volkas, even more than Broken Mirror, doesn't really belong in Chicago. He's not from here, and he doesn't like

it. It's not cities he loathes — he has lived and hunted in Baltimore, DC, even the Big Apple. But Chicago is a vicious hole, a plague pit with sickness and pain. Every avenue and office building is home to some other creature or another, and the balance swings wildly day-to-day. The spirits are aggressive and mad, each with a twinkle of fire glowing in their eyes (if they have eyes, that is).

Still, an ally from a few years back asked for his help. Volkas received a phone call from Broken Mirror, ranting on and on about rats and sickness and the Gauntlet crashing down. Broken Mirror was quite mad, that he knew, but madness was not antithetical to truth. Sometimes, the two coincided more than they should.

Moreover, Volkas has relatives here, wolf-blooded family who demand his attention. The Grazna family lives just on the outskirts of Chinatown, and Volkas knew that the city would at least offer him some solace, even if it was nothing more than good food and a comfortable bed once in a while. So, he came here to help his friend and watch over family.

Volkas derives his deed-name from his obsessive devotion to the newspaper. He believes that the printed news (magazines, too) offer hints and secrets accessible to those who know how to look. Perhaps patterns lie in the way the print whorls around stock quotes, or maybe putting together every fifth word bears a secret missive. Volkas has little interest in really cleaning up a rat population, as they're notoriously hard to track and find. But, with the newspaper, combined with Broken Mirror's odd dreams, he believes he can hunt all the shard-bearers and destroy them outright. Per his name, his fingers are usually shadowed with newspaper ink.

Mikey Wu

Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Iron Masters
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Investigation (Locations) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 2, Brawl 1, Larceny (Shoplifting) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Lower Class) 2, Streetwise (Chinatown) 4, Subterfuge (Evasive) 2
Merits: Contacts (Chinatown Businesses, Chinatown Gangs) 2, Fast Reflexes 1, Fleet of Foot 1, Languages (Cantonese, Mandarin) 2, Totem 1
Primal Urge: 1
Willpower: 4
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Sand in the Eyes, Sense Weakness; (2) Slip Away
Rituals: None

Mikey is only a year and a half out of his First Change. He's 17, willful, angry and filled with bad habits. He's addicted to video games. He chain-smokes cigarettes. He gets into fights wherever he goes. Mikey doesn't even like the notion of having a pack — he'd rather do things on his own, by himself. Of course, every time he tries, he gets slapped down with the harsh reality of being Uratha in the Windy City, and he has a few scars and lumps to show for it.

Volkas thinks Mikey is worthless, but Broken Mirror claims that Mikey will one day earn a truly notable deed-name, and will become a full-fledged part of the pack. In the meantime, Mikey is good for some things. For one, he knows Chinatown better than the back of his hand, he knows it like the back of his *eyelids*. Not a big fan of attending school, Mikey played in and around Chinatown, and knows all the nooks and crannies — every alleyway, store-room, sewer drain and rooftop. He's ideal for finding the rats. And, as the omega of a pack of omegas, Mikey gets all the crap work. Planting traps and leaving poisons, crawling through ductwork to sniff out vermin, *checking* all the traps week after week. He hates it. But something instinctive drives him to it, and he knows if he doesn't that Volkas will bite one of his ears off for disobeying.

Rat Hound (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 3
Willpower: 6
Essence: 15
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 13
Size: 4
Corpus: 7
Influences: Dogs •, Scent •
Numina: Chorus, Material Vision
Bonuses: +2 Stealth (pack), Survival Specialty (Tracking)
Ban: The pack must be kind to dogs and defend them from harm.
Cost: 8

Rat Hound manifests as a dark-eyed dog slinking through the shadows. Rat Hound is a spirit known for its diligence in the hunt and for being able to scent out its prey no matter where it hides. Some Uratha, however, note that the spirit is sad and perhaps appropriate that such a lowly pack takes on a lowly *hound*-spirit as its totem.

Marked Territory

The pack's territory winds in and around the center of Chinatown, cutting across Cermak and going past Gan's Market and the Happy Bird Dim Sum Palace, into alleyways and covering some apartment buildings and even the Horizon Sun Massage Parlor. The territory isn't easy to define, even on a map. The Ratcatchers mark the boundaries of their territory in one manner only — by hanging small, bamboo placemat signs from nails and hooks around Chinatown (on posts, sandwich boards, bulletin boards, unused alley doorways). Upon these bamboo signs, the Ratcatchers paint the Chinese symbol indicating "wolves."

Someone has been stealing these signs and replacing them with *different* bamboo mats. Upon these mats are pictographic icons that look like cat faces. Stranger still, the icons seem painted in blood. Nobody is sure who is leaving them, and the Ratcatchers haven't caught anyone in the act yet. They may enlist outside help — a new pack coming into town, for instance — to see if they can find out who is daring to violate their territory so brashly.

The Dog Boys

These three Ghost Wolves wanted to keep away from the Tribes of the Moon. These Ghost Wolves wanted a little peace and sanity away from the violence and horror, and so they banded together to find a little solidarity and keep their own corner of the city clean, safe, and sound. Together, they opened a bar not far from the Polish neighborhoods of the West Side. This bar — the Hair of the Dog — was meant to be just another neighborhood drinking hole, a dimly-lit, working-class tavern with a few good beers to drink and the Cubs on the TV.

It didn't work out that way. The first problem was that the human clientele didn't want to stick around. The locals tried it out. They had a few drinks, ate a few pretzels and left. They seemed nervous, twitchy, like they were unknowingly swimming with sharks (and, in a manner, they were). The second problem was that, in the vacuum left by the humans, the Forsaken started showing up.

At first, the bar was just a drinking spot for the local Uratha. The pack alpha (and bar manager), Charlie, tried to ban them from coming in, but such demands were temporary. The People always came back. And they fought. Breaking chairs, bottles, pinball machines. Charlie made one proclamation then — and it's been the only one that has stood since he made it. The Uratha were welcome to drink there, but they weren't welcome to fight. It was neutral ground, safe territory.

That worked, but it took on a life of its own. Now, the local Forsaken use the bar as more than just a drinking joint. They come here to plan attacks, to negotiate territory, to have contests of renown. The Pure don't recognize the agreement, of course, but they're playing it careful for now, as it's hard to predict when there just might be one pack too many for them to challenge. The Dog Boys don't want the place any more, and have tried to pawn the bar off on other Forsaken, but are met with eye-rolling and laughter. If the Ghost Wolves sell the bar, say the other Forsaken, it loses its status as neutral territory. And so, the bar stays, and the Dog Boys remain grudgingly saddled to it.

Charlie Rutkowski

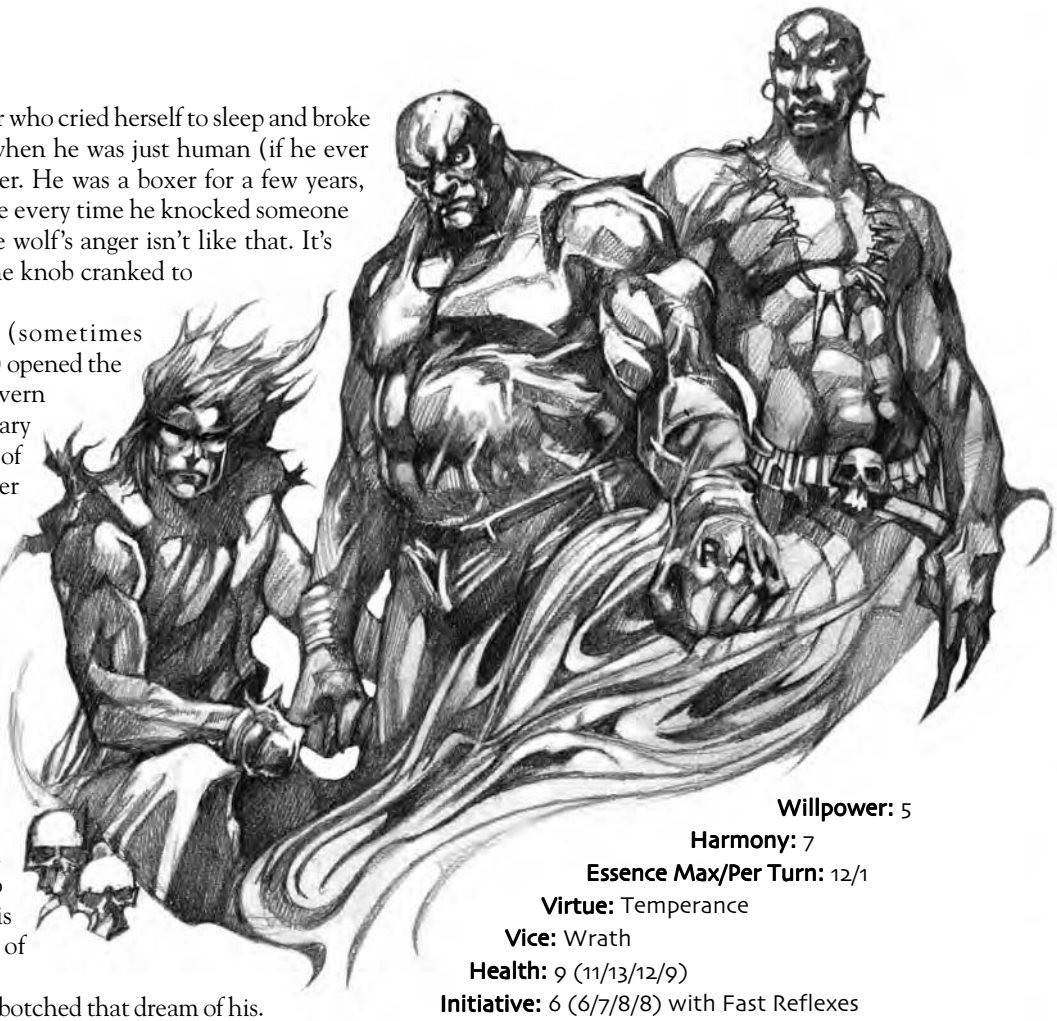
Auspice: Elodoth
Tribe: Ghost Wolves
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Boxing) 4, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Good Listener) 2, Expression (Cursing) 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Gossip) 2
Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fighting Style (Boxing) 3, Resources 2, Totem 4
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 8
Harmony: 6
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 2, Honor 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Partial Change, Scent Beneath the Surface, Sense Malice, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Snarl of Command
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication

Charlie likes his humanity. The wolf side, not so much. The human world is great. Beer, good TV, beautiful women. Charlie relishes that world. He's had a lot of affairs, fathered a few children here and there (and pays his child support like any honorable, red-blooded American male), and just wants to live in relative peace. The wolf-side, on the other hand, is ugly. His instincts are brutal. A cab horn honks, and Charlie wants to tear out the driver's throat. Some suit bumps him with a briefcase, and he dreams of taking that briefcase and cramming it in a very uncomfortable spot, and then pissing on the pompous bastard. The wolf-side, as it turns out, is very angry.

And Charlie knows anger. He grew up in an angry family. Parents screaming at one another, a father who came home from the slaughterhouses every night reeking of blood

and death, a mother who cried herself to sleep and broke plates. And even when he was just human (if he ever was), he knew anger. He was a boxer for a few years, and he felt that rage every time he knocked someone to the mat. But the wolf's anger isn't like that. It's worse, like a volume knob cranked to 11.

Rutkowski (sometimes called "Charlie R.") opened the Hair of the Dog tavern as a kind of sanctuary for him and a few of his buddies — other Forsaken who had abandoned the tribal ways of the People. He and his buddies all have a financial stake in the bar, and they hoped to live out a quiet life in this homespun eye of the hurricane. The bar was a place he hoped to someday show to his children, a place of pride.



But the others botched that dream of his. At any given hour of the day, the Hair of the Dog may have at least one Uratha patron, and not a single human. At night, the Forsaken come in, a few packs at a time, whether to drink or play or make deals. Charlie and his bar are just tools, and that's starting to make him very angry, indeed.

Charlie's got the look of an ex-boxer gone to pot. Big arms, big fists and a big gut. He's all bald, and has a mean bulldog mug of a face.

Isaiah English

Auspice: Rahu
Tribe: Ghost Wolves
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/5)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1 (0/1/0/1), Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Weaving) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Dalu) 3, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival (Desert) 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation (Growl) 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise (Old Neighborhood) 2
Merits: Contacts (Church) 1, Fast Reflexes 1, Languages (Arabic, Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language, First Tongue) 3, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 7
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Wrath
Health: 9 (11/13/12/9)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)
Speed: 12 (13/16/19/17)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 2
Gifts: (1) Clarity, Feet of Mist, Partial Change, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Attunement, Father Wolf's Speed
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of Renunciation

Isaiah came from a poor, black family, but thought he had a way out of that world — and a way to bring his family with him. Isaiah was big, tough and smart. He excelled on the football field and in the classroom, and saw college as a refuge and a gateway. But scholarships weren't enough to get him into the good schools. He needed something more — and so he joined the United States Army. It would only be a year later that Isaiah would be deployed to Iraq in the first Gulf War, where his fate waited for him.

He was sent to Kuwait to protect the oil fields — fields that were already on fire, scorching the sky with clots of black smoke, fields forever burning. Even on the trip down, things didn't seem right. The stars seemed to skirt away from his gaze. The moon — full and fat-bellied — seemed overly large in the sky. On-duty for several days and several nights, things only got worse. He saw faces in that dark smoke. He heard the whispers of men buried in mass graves. The world turned upside down for him, and when the moon rose full that night, Isaiah changed. The rage shot through his heart as his new fur bristled, and he found himself rending the flesh of an enemy — an enemy who was not an

enemy at all, but was a buddy of his, Private C. P. Milliken. Milliken's death came quick at the ends of Isaiah's claws, and he realized with horror what he had done.

He deserted his post, and left the Army — but he did not know where he was, he had no idea what the desert would do to him. It almost killed him, and would have had he not been tracked by a number of other Forsaken — Bedouin Hunters in Darkness, who took him in. With them, he learned simple tasks — weaving wool, braiding goat's hair into tent ropes, making jewelry from pearls. He also learned how to hunt spirits, how to sniff out monsters and tear them to ragged ribbons and just how powerful he really was. Even when that first war was over, Isaiah saw the world as a violent struggle, a horrible cycle of pain. His packmates called him Isaiah Painbringer, for he was nearly unstoppable at ravaging his enemies.

What eventually stopped him was horror at his own actions. He knew he was doing the right thing, but it didn't feel right. The blood and sand under his claws was a constant reminder. One night, he made a decision that this was no longer his life. He discarded it like old clothing, and found his way back to his home of Chicago, where he soon made friends with another angry soul like him, Charlie Rutkowski. The two are close friends.

Isaiah is a calm, quiet man who also happens to be built like an industrial freezer. He rarely smiles or shows any emotional affectations, though sometimes his eyes flare with fury. He can often be found at the Hair of the Dog, sitting in a back booth, reading Buddhist philosophy or playing chess with one of his packmates.

Southpaw O'Donnell

Auspice: Irraka
Tribe: Ghost Wolves
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation (Scents) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Larceny (Locks) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy (Werewolves) 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Territories) 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Irish Gangs) 1, Fetish (Mercy Gem) 2, Toxin Resistance, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 3
Willpower: 6
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 2 (2/3/4/4)
Speed: 9 (10/13/16/14)
Renown: Cunning 3, Glory 2, Honor 1, Purity 1, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Know Name, Left-Handed Spanner, Partial Change, Sense Weakness, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Father Wolf's Speed, Nightfall, Slip Away; (3) Distractions
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of Renunciation, Rite of the Spirit Brand, Shared Scent; (2) Banish Spirit, Cleansed Blood

For someone who has been given short shrift in the latter half of his life, Southpaw O'Donnell (once Ciaran O'Donnell, later called Steelclaw) maintains an oddly sunny disposition — though one peppered with off-color jokes and somewhat morbid humor.

He was once a man who wanted to be an architect, but his First Change cut those dreams to ribbons. But he found some solace with a pack of forward-thinking Iron Masters, rare Uratha in the mid-1950s who were willing to cross into the Shadow and speak to the so-called elementals of electricity, steel and data. These Iron Masters developed quite a reputation for their progressive actions, and earned quite a bit of ire as well. The pack, known eventually as the Copper Crows, enjoyed its reputation among other more intellectual Forsaken, and was happy to help other, lesser packs get on their feet in a city that that was growing meaner and more tightly packed as the decades wore on. Over time, the Copper Crows left the city and took a broader and less contested patch of territory in Gurnee.

It was only a few years ago that the pack — still together as older Forsaken in their 70s — left the city for a time. They headed out to the suburb of Cicero to commune with a spirit that had purportedly taken over the old Bel-Air Drive-In Theater — but there was no spirit. It was a trap, a duplicitous summoning brought about by false rumors. A rural Fire-Touched pack attacked them on the way in to Cicero, overturning their truck and gaining the advantage of surprise. Two of the three other Copper Crows died there on that empty stretch of nighttime highway. Steelclaw survived, but barely. The other survivor of his pack, a Cahalith they called "Pa Bell," wanted to keep the pack together and go after those that destroyed them. Steelclaw — now with his left hand missing, bitten off in the attack — wishes for no more of it, and has retired from Forsaken life (or so he thinks). He can often be found pickling himself in the Hair of the Dog, muttering about how he's "too old for this shit." Most other Forsaken mock him (hence his new "deed-name"), but to those willing to sit with him, Southpaw will tell many wild tales of his youth.

Southpaw looks every inch the veteran with his tangle of gray hair and his stump hand. He likes to mix it up with the local Forsaken who come to drink at the bar, and he's friends with most of them (much to the disappointment of his two packmates).

Black Walnut (Pack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 4
Willpower: 7
Essence: 15
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10

Size: 4
Corpus: 9
Influences: Wood ••
Numina: Material Vision, Wilds Sense
Bonuses: Stamina +1 (pack)
Ban: The pack must plant a walnut tree or care for an existing walnut tree once a week.
Cost: 10

The pack found an appropriate totem that manifests as part of the Hair of the Dog bar. The actual bar-top is made of polished black walnut, and so the pack's totem is representative of that. The spirit manifests as tree roots in the ground or as a whorl of dark leaves. Black Walnut is a tough spirit that brooks no nonsense.

The Bouncers

The Dog Boys need help. The local Forsaken have been getting pretty rowdy at the Hair of the Dog lately — another pool table broken to bits, another head through another jukebox. Alcohol and werewolves is not always a kind combination.

So, Charlie R. and the boys come to the characters' pack for help. The Dog Boys need help keeping the peace at the bar. The place is supposed to be neutral territory, and the characters can be the enforcers of that will. Hopefully, he tells them, their presence will be enough to dissuade too many jerkoffs from getting out of line. But is it enough? Will the characters have to step up and exert a little pressure now and again? Is the situation much worse than Charlie painted it, with fights going on nightly?

Maybe, out of the deal, the characters will find some newfound alliances in the city and get their names out among some of the more prominent packs. Or, maybe they end up on the shit-lists of some of those packs, which only serves to make things worse.

Other Packs

The Water Tower Wastrels

The Water Tower Wastrels are a pack of young Uratha who claim territory over one of Chicago's most popular malls, the 125-store Water Tower Place. Truth of the matter is, the pack is chided for its presumptuous behavior, purportedly claiming territory that was agreed by many parties to be left alone for reasons unknown. The Wastrels, despite their arrogance and inexperience, claim to have made a pact with the presiding spirit of the mall (a spirit no other Uratha have seen or felt), and protect it from evening vampires and mad Azlu. Are the Wastrels just lying? When confronted, they flee — usually within the mall, hiding in dressing rooms or blending into the throngs of food court patrons. They also resort to wearing not-so-clever disguises in an attempt to keep clear of security guards. The pack is young and impetuous, and no one has yet determined whether or not they are really doing what they say. They claim to follow the totem of the mall, a spirit called the Glass Elevator.

The pack comprises Jack-of-the-Box (Irraka Iron Master), a young, tattooed punk with a penchant for loud music; Abra Drake (Ithaeur Iron Master), the willowy sylph of a girl wearing a PVC dress and kohl smeared around her eyes and Carson Chinvaty (Rahu Blood Talon), a hirsute and heavyset Pakistani teen addicted to wild-eyed confrontations.

The Lake-Eyes

Whereas the Water Tower Wastrels are at the bottom of the heap due to their youth and relative inexperience, the Lake-Eyes pack is low because of its "mature" members. Of the four werewolves of this pack, the youngest is 66, and the oldest is 84. These Uratha weren't always bottom-feeders; no, once upon a time they were quite well-known in the Windy City. But time and battle have winnowed their original packs down to nothing, and so these lingering Forsaken have come together to form one "last" pack. The pack watches the beaches of Lake Michigan, walking among the crowds in summer and the desolate sands in winter. The pack watches the lake — they blow it off as saying that they've "retired" and are just keeping an eye out for anything weird, but the truth is all the stranger. In fact, the pack is watching the lake for a resurgence of a creature that two of them fought some 45 years ago, a sickly serpent with many eyes and leathery, vestigial limbs. Of course, nobody *else* saw this creature (those who did have passed on), but the Lake-Eyes pack fears that this monster will come again — and that it is boring a hole between worlds, an apocalyptic rupture between the spirit world and the material one that will not be easily repaired.

Members of the pack are "One-Eye" Burnham (Elodoth Iron Master), the 86-year-old cyclops with a phenomenal drinking problem and an obsession regarding the "lake creature" that ate his eye; Dim Jackson (Cahalith Iron Master), who sits at the end of the piers playing an old hand-carved flute; Florence Armour (Cahalith Bone Shadow), aka the Ice Maiden, who claims that when she was young, the spirit of Lake Michigan showed her the image of a sword made of bone beneath the ice; and Fishtail (Irraka Hunter in Darkness), the wiry, thin old man with one leg (also purportedly taken by the lake monster) and an overly morbid sense of humor. The pack follows the silent and mostly distant totem of Steam-Rising-From-Icy-Water.

The Wolf-Blooded

The city is home to a number of "low" wolf-blooded, as well. Some of these wolf-blooded are lowly-regarded because of their actions, whereas others are held in such es-

teem simply because of their associations (or relations) with other omega Forsaken.

• **Draugas:** Draugas is a prick. Those who know him know that, including Forsaken and other wolf-blooded. Born Petras Birute in the Lithuanian city of Vilnius in the late 1960s, Draugas is part of a family who knows of its werewolf heritage. The family not only knows it, but still works in Chicago and other cities to provide some manner of support to the Uratha. Being working-class, the family never provided much more than moral support or a roof overhead; financial assistance was never in the cards. Petras was unhappy with this arrangement, and wished to pursue the great American dream — *greed*. Believing that he was in this world only for himself, Petras began calling himself Draugas (Lithuanian for "friend") and began selling information to various werewolves in exchange for cash — or other information. Over time (and after a few concussions, cuts and broken bones), Draugas established quite the nest of tips and tricks, and continues to be a bit player in the city's Uratha politics. Rumor suggests that he works with several *wempti* ("drinkers," or vampires) and even knows some secret cabals of *other* creatures, as well. For this reason, some do not call him Draugas — they call him G*yvat*, or snake.

• **Karen Grazna:** A few months ago, Karen was a relatively normal teenager. She liked shopping, chatting on the Internet and worried about her weight (even though she's thin as a willow branch). Her heredity — as part of a lineage of werewolves, Bone Shadows to be specific — was alien and unknown to her, an impossible nightmare. A nightmare that, unfortunately, has come to bear. A recent attack by a Fire-Touched werewolf left Karen's mother and aunt beheaded in the family's kitchen, and Karen was witness to the attack that caused such damage. The following night, her father tried to explain to her, but it was no use. She ran, then, away from home, away from the family and the horror. She's out there now, all alone in the city. Surviving in shelters, sleeping with the clusters of homeless by the dumps, eating whatever food comes her way. Her uncle — Volkas Inkfingers — searches diligently for her, because if what the spirits are whispering is correct, then Karen may very well be experiencing her First Change before too long.

• **Theresa Kopecki:** Theresa is the only wolf-blooded with whom Charlie Rutkowski has (knowingly) been. Their few months of dating resulted in a child, Madeline. Theresa does not have a support system of other wolf-blooded; she only has Charlie, who is often not there. She's angry, bitter and has a growing problem with alcohol that she has kept hidden up until now. She and Charlie both know (and rarely admit) that Madeline may very well be more than human. Theresa often weeps herself to sleep at night, horrified at how she may have inadvertently cursed and destroyed her daughter.

Seduction and Protection

Theresa is sad and lonely. She knows she has a child who may be — or eventually become — vulnerable to the monsters or a monster herself. This wolf-blooded mother knows that she is only one fragile woman in the face of potentially overwhelming danger, and the child's father doesn't seem ready to help.

As such, Theresa will attempt to befriend or seduce one of the pack. She doesn't do so maliciously; this is no succubus. Theresa very legitimately wants help and feels genuinely abandoned, and will do anything to fill that void and protect her daughter. Not helping her means leaving her to the wolves. Helping Theresa means developing a co-dependent relationship with her. And, contrary to her beliefs, Charlie Rutkowski *has* been keeping an eye on his daughter from a distance. Once he knows another of the People is moving in on the situation, his hackles will raise as he feels his "territory" has been violated.

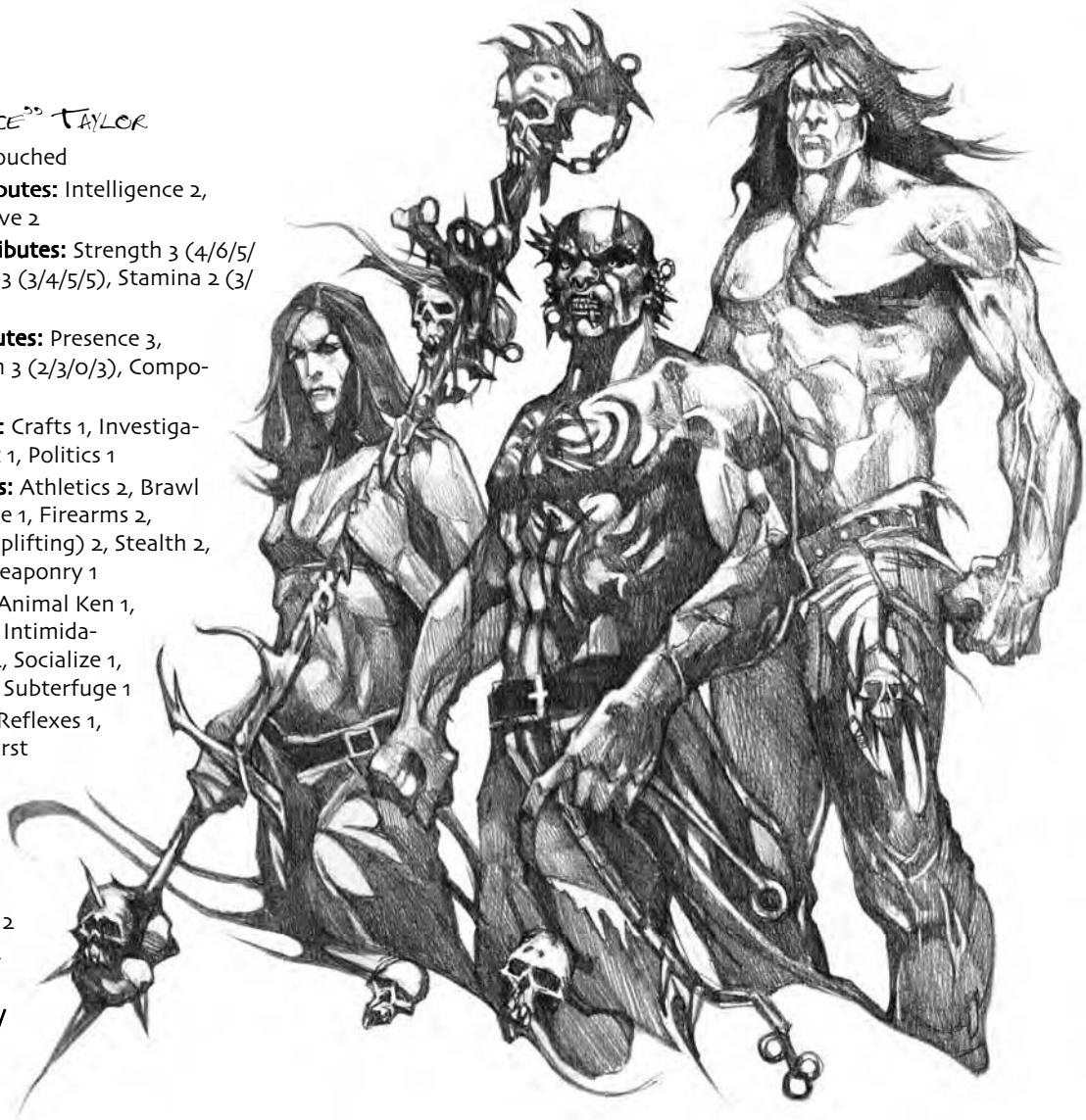
The Pure Tribes

Chicago is a sickening clot of supernatural activity — and the Forsaken here make up a good portion of that population. That's something the Pure Tribes here wish to fix. The Pure ostensibly see themselves as above the Forsaken, superior to the cursed whelps. And yet, even the Pure Tribes have their "lower class" citizens.

The Executioners

The Executioners are a young Fire-Touched pack of Pure werewolves who have recently come out of Milwaukee and hope to make a name for themselves in Chicago. They are a pack of punks and brutes who have established dominance over some of the tunnels beneath the city. They're largely untested, and as such, more than a little bit stupid. Still, their zeal makes up for what they lack in skills and strategy, and if the other Pure Tribes in town stop sneering at them and give them a leg up, the Executioners might had a shot at their ultimate goal: to collect the heads of the Forsaken betrayers as trophies.

Note that the Executioners are a fairly weak pack, only three in number, and none of them remarkably skilled at physical combat. They can easily be boosted with extra members, preferably with the sort of personality that continues rather than quells the pack's internal tension.



Jason "Jace" Taylor

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 1
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny (Shoplifting) 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 1, Intimidation (Bluff) 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Fast Reflexes 1, Language (First Tongue) 1, Mentor 1, Quick Healer, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 4
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7) with Fast Reflexes
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)
Renown: Cunning 1, Glory 1, Purity 1
Gifts: (1) Mask of Rage, Partial Change, Sense Malice
Rituals: 1; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Shared Scent

Jace is a real firebrand. Shaved-head, more metal piercings than actual face and a number of self-inflicted brands up his ropy biceps all give him a fiercely intimidating appearance. He's a scrapper, to be sure, fighting with anything and everyone. Or, at least, so goes the appearance. The reality of Jace is that he's terrified of the world around him, because he knows that just being Fire-Touched isn't enough. He has to have the skills to back up the verve and rhetoric that pours constantly out of his mouth, and he's afraid he doesn't have what it takes. As a result, Jace tends to take on opponents he *knows* he can beat. Like a bully, he picks on those he believes to be weaker than him (including his packmates), and avoids fights with those who he sees as a genuine threat.

Across Jace's chest is a homemade tattoo, etched there with an ink-dipped stiletto. The tattoo is Jace's best alphabetic approximation of the First Tongue word *gazha-kha*, meaning "warlord."

Shelley "Strangleraw" Durwich

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 1 (2/4/3/1), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Brawl (Choking) 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation (Cold Glare) 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Easily Underestimated) 2
Merits: Fleet of Foot 2, Mentor 1 Resources 1, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 2
Willpower: 5
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/2
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)

Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16) with Fleet of Foot
Renown: Cunning 1, Purity 1
Gifts: (1) Call Fire, Sense Malice
Rituals: None

Shelley is remarkably cool and calculating for a werewolf. Emotion has long been off her list of useful tools or petty excuses. Emotion was whipped out of her at an early age, bled from her scar-striped back by her Fire-Touched and Ivory Claw forebears. Being among the Pure Tribes from such an early age is both an advantage and a drawback. The advantage is that her mission in this world is clear, not muddied by paltry human needs. The drawback is that she doesn't *understand* these purportedly paltry human needs. She is so far removed from the human world that she cannot easily interact with "regular" people; navigating that social realm only brings problems. Worse still, trying to "be human" in any respect only causes her frustration levels to rise. As mentioned, Shelley remains the pinnacle of detachment — *most* of the time. When her frustration and anger peaks, however, she goes from calm and clinical to a firestorm of unmanageable rage.

She loathes Jace and the way he abuses her and their other packmate, Ghost. She plans to usurp Jace eventually, and she can see that he is secretly weak. To prepare, she has been practicing away from the pack. This "practice" takes the form of slaying whatever local wolf-blooded she can find. Destroying the kin of the Uratha is, to her, like crushing eggs before they can hatch.

Ghost

Tribe: Fire-Touched
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 1 (2/3/3/2)
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Survival (Tracking) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Compelling) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Omissions) 2
Merits: Giant, Language (First Tongue) 1, Mentor 1, Totem 3
Primal Urge: 1
Willpower: 7
Harmony: 5
Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 7 (7/8/9/9)
Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)
Speed: 10 (11/14/17/15)
Renown: Cunning 2, Wisdom 1
Gifts: (1) Sense Malice, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Scent of Taint
Rituals: None

Ghost wasn't accepted, growing up. Physically, he seems a freak. He is abnormally tall (and was even at a young age), and worse, he's an albino. His skin is the color of chalk, and his eyes are a sickening pink. The world always seemed different to him. Everything seemed washed-out and withdrawn. Until his First Change, that is. Then, the world became alive, painfully so. It only seemed natural to him, and after some nearby Fire-Touched found him, all the pieces began to fit. No longer was he cast aside to the very edges, but he was *accepted*. Better than that, he was given a place, given a task, shown that the treacherous Forsaken were really the outcasts, not him.

Recently, though, he's begun to question that. Not that the Tribes of the Moon aren't traitors — he has seen the truth of that. But he is not so zealously driven to murder them all, at least not with the same tenacity of his packmates. Ghost has been formulating plans to convert the Forsaken, believing that they can still be saved from their vile ways. He has been watching them, from afar, and identifying those targets who seem the likeliest to hear what he has to preach. In the meantime, he stays quiet and agrees with whatever Jace and Shelley have to say.

Seeing a Ghost

Ghost, the Fire-Touched, believes that the characters can be "saved" from themselves, and he will attempt to proselytize to them about the treachery of their kind. He won't come on that strong, not at first — ultimately, he'll play like he wants to be their friend (and in a way, he does, for he feels sympathy toward their "plight" of being outcast). If the characters give him a little breathing room to continue, his friendliness will become wide-eyed rhetoric as his kind words turn to manic preaching.

How do characters react? Can they string him along long enough to get a lead on the other Pure? If they rebuke him or fight him, he will threaten their families and friends. What happens if his words make sense to some of the characters — could they actually consider *joining* those ardent psychopaths of the Fire-Touched?

Roaring Cyclone (Rack Totem)

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 4
Willpower: 7
Essence: 15
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 16
Size: 5
Corpus: 9

Influences: Fire •, Wind •
Numina: Blast (fire), Material Vision
Bonuses: Gift: Command Fire (Story)
Ban: The pack must howl loudly before entering any combat.
Cost: 9

Roaring Cyclone is a violent and unpredictable totem, a whirling configuration of rage and fire. For now, the spirit dwells in the tunnels beneath the city with the pack, ready to engulf any who come near. Roaring Cyclone is unfocused and uncontrollable, and even this fervent pack has a hard time communicating with this chaotic spirit.

The Hosts

Omegas often find themselves embroiled in struggles right out of urban legend, particularly thanks to the Hosts. A *shartha* at this level isn't going to be a threat to the city or the master of a teeming nest, but that doesn't mean the *shartha* aren't trouble. They're the creeping threats that prey on people walking home late at night, the creatures that scurry through the storm drains at the edge of a playground. And because it's harder for them to survive, they too know what it means to be reliant on cunning . . . .

Turnstile (Beshilu)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 1, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Iron Stomach, Fleet of Foot 2
Willpower: 4
Essence: 6
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 6
Initiative: 6
Defense: 1
Speed: 14
Aspects: Discorporation, Gnaw Gauntlet, Sense Weakness

Turnstile was — and in a way, still is — an old, homeless crank addict who used to sleep near the turnstiles at various el stations on the West Side. He'd beg for change, sometimes food. When he'd get run out of one station, he'd go to another. Whenever he got food, he wasn't usually hungry (as were the effects of the methamphetamines he was usually tweaked on), and he shared the food with whatever creatures happened to be around — including rats. One night, Turnstile fell asleep, and a Rat Host began nibbling away at his innards, cleaning him out so it could take over.

Unfortunately, taking over also meant subsuming his addiction. Now, Turnstile is a meth-addicted human-looking Rat Host. His teeth are mostly broken off, and he smells of ammonia, and will do just about anything to get a fix. He's skinny as hell, and if one were to spot him without his normal blanketed covering of rags, they might see rat heads poking out from between his ribs, from his belly button or other skin tears and orifices. He's no kind of physical threat for a single werewolf, much less a pack, and he knows it. And that's why he might be willing to cut a deal . . . .

Strange Alliance

The Uratha do not work with the *shartha*. There's little reason to, and moreover, there's not much the two can do for one another. Sometimes, the Forsaken may turn a blind eye if the Azlu help to calcify an area of particular chaos — and the same goes if a nest of Beshilu settles in near Azlu (or Pure) territory. But, by and large, the two groups can offer nothing to one another.

And then there's Turnstile. Turnstile is a rat among rats — he'll give up his rat brothers in an instant if he can get a temporary fix. Rumor says that the city is home to more Rat Hosts than has been normally estimated — some even say the Rat Hosts gathering strength beneath the city in a squirming labyrinth of chattering vermin. Can the Uratha provide Turnstile with what he needs? Will this addicted ratman show them the way to the infestation beneath the city — or will he sell them out, too? Addicts are not known to be particularly reliable, after all.

The White Scourge

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Skills: Animal Ken (Rats) 2, Athletics 2, Brawl (Bite) 3, Intimidation 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Language (English) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Strong Lungs
Willpower: 6
Essence: 10
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Health: 7
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Aspects: Chorus, Discorporate, Toxic Bite, Wall Climb

The White Scourge is a cluster of ex-lab rats — a writhing nest of white fur, red eyes and pink skin. Currently, the Scourge inhabits the gutted flesh of Carl Kitner, a janitor

for Merex Pharmaceuticals just north of the city. The Beshilu feels some sort of inherited grudge against the company, thanks to memories absorbed from the rats the company has consumed— some of the rats contained within were once part of unfortunate experiments where drugs and other prescription-level products were used upon the creatures. Many of the rats contained within Carl have bent and shriveled limbs, missing eyes, burned-out tongues and other grotesqueries. The Scourge is doing its best to work off the radar (mopping floors, wiping windows) within the company first to watch many of the technicians and scientists responsible for its half-remembered suffering. When the time comes, the Scourge intends to murder as many of the bastards as it can manage, and then move on to another company (and, possibly, the skin of another janitor). In the meantime, the rats within Carl have also begun to gnaw apart the spiritual fundament of the area inside the janitor's closet on the Clinical Studies Floor of the Merex Building.

Boris "Fat Boris" Tyvalt (Azlu)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Skills: Brawl (Grapple) 3, Intimidation 2, Occult 2, Survival 1
Merits: Giant, Iron Stomach
Willpower: 8
Essence: 4
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Gluttony
Health: 11
Initiative: 5
Defense: 1
Speed: 7
Aspects: Discorporation, Toxic Bite
Special: The extra layers of non-essential (and all but dead) flesh give Boris 1/1 armor, but subtract three from his Speed.

This Host overtook a massive human body, expecting the monstrous flesh to accommodate the Azlu's burgeoning power. It didn't work that way. Boris — the victim — was one of those rare humans so morbidly obese that he was unable to leave his apartment. Doorways could not accommodate his flesh, and even getting out of his bedroom was a Sisyphean task. Boris collected disability checks and had his food delivered to him. Now that he is a Spider *shartha*, he still has the same problem as before, but it is all the more maddening. The Host is too heavy to climb walls, too huge to leave the apartment. The creature isn't yet intelligent enough to know what to do. Will it consume some of the body, damaging itself just to escape? Or can the Host determine a way in which food can come to it, like Boris had done? Perhaps if the Azlu spins a cocoon and takes on a hybrid form, then it will be free again — it just needs something to eat first . . . .

The Ridden

All through Chicago, the Ridden are more of a symptom of the ailing Shadow than they are a deliberate force out to hunt down the Forsaken. But at every level, and particularly the level of the omegas, even a symptom can be deadly.

Tariq Anderson (Urged)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms (Semi-Automatics) 3, Larceny (Automotive) 3, Stealth 1, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise (Gangs) 3
Merits: Allies (Gang) 1, Contacts (Fence, Street Clinic) 2, Fast Reflexes 1, Language (Spanish) 1, Resources 2
Willpower: 5
Morality: 5
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Health: 8
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Numina: None personally; the Greater Gaffling that is currently Urging him has access to Chorus, Claim, Gauntlet Breach, Living Fetter and Possession.

Territory is at the top of Tariq's mind at all times. This isn't a new phenomenon for him. He has long been concerned about protecting his borders. Even at a young age, he protected the borders of his house, keeping bullies off his brothers, kicking landlords and tax-men out of his apartment to keep his mother safe and sane. His life — a fatherless one — was all about protection, about keeping his family and his world safe. Once upon a time, the gangs around his Prairie Court home were part of the problem. But by the time he was 13, Tariq came to see that those gangbangers weren't threatening his way of life, but were protecting it from the outside world. It wasn't long after that that Tariq joined the ranks of the Gangster Disciple Nation, *the* prominent gang guarding the Prairie Court housing project. In just a few years, he had already gone on drive-bys, sold all manner of narcotics and murdered a thug from a rival gang in cold blood on a playground. By 18, Tariq had gained prominence in the group, rising to the leadership position of "minister." Tariq oversaw the Prairie Courts, running his business out of there while keeping his own people safe.

Urban renewal came and went — leaving the future of Prairie Courts in limbo. The city evicted most of the residents, but then neglected to do anything else, causing the projects to fall into deeper disrepair than they had already been. Tariq saw good families leave and saw the dregs of the dregs move in — crackheads

who'd kill each other for half a rock, schizophrenic bums who talked to Jesus out loud, sore-laden prostitutes and their suckling piglet children.

The Gangster Disciples told Tariq to leave, to give up the territory, for it was no longer useful. Tariq would not. This was his home, his *mother's* home, and it had gone to the rats. He rejected his gang for the first time, and started his own splinter gang, the Pimp Sniper Disciples. They ran out the degenerates and deviants, and brought their families back to live at Prairie Courts no matter what the city said (and the city wasn't paying much attention anyway). Tariq declared war against his old gang and any other nearby thugs. His anger and frustration rose to a fever pitch, and his need to control his own herd overwhelmed him.

It was a small fracture, but it was wide enough. A brutal, angry spirit known as the Bloodied Bull (which is a part of, or a servant of, the spirit known as Pain-of-Animals) came into Tariq, urging him forward. Whenever Tariq was without strength, the Bull gave it to him. It gave him a tighter, more obsessive control over his own herd. As *hithisu*, Tariq is answerable to no one but himself and the Bull (whom he is barely aware of, and considers more of his own primal "conscience" as opposed to some outside force).

So far, Tariq has not come into direct conflict with any werewolves. But the Bull sees, and the Bull hates these betraying guardians. It will not be long before the Bloodied Bull begins urging Tariq away from gang warfare and into open conflict with nearby Forsaken. This is likely to destroy Tariq and the gang. But the Bloodied Bull cares little, and cannot control itself. If Tariq survives, the Bull will likely push him from merely Spirit-Urged to Spirit-Claimed.

The Immigrant (Claimed)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 6
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 6
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Stealth (Blending with the Crowd) 4, Survival 3
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Streetwise 4
Merits:
Willpower: 10
Essence: 16
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Envy
Health: 10
Initiative: 10
Defense: 4
Speed: 13
Numina: Gifts (Communion with the Land, Know Name, Know the Path, Sagacity), Harrow (Confusion)

Few Spirit-Claimed can pass as human after too long — the presiding spirit begins to show through, and the flesh molds uncomfortable around this image. This Ridden is a little different. Chicago, long a melting-pot city whose very foundation was built by (and upon) immigrants, was home to a *spirit* of foreign immigration, a patron entity born out of this melting pot. Like many spirits, this one was not content to remain on its side of the fence and it wanted to be free with its children, and so it claimed the body and soul of a nameless foreigner.

No telling how long this spirit has been Claiming the body it has, but legend suggests its been a long time, indeed. The Immigrant does not appear as one human, but changes day-to-day. He appears quite appropriately as a foreign man of indeterminate origin. His skin may be dusty one day, pale another. He may look Arab on Tuesday, African on Wednesday and Swiss on Thursday. The only thing that perhaps identifies him is his manner of speech. The Immigrant speaks in an awkward pastiche of various languages. A single sentence may comprise four or five wildly different languages, and as such, his words are nearly impossible to translate on the spot. He often seems happy and willing to communicate with whoever will listen, but rarely does anyone understand much of his message.

He doesn't seem interested in hurting anyone. He mostly wanders about, watching, clinging to the shadows, smiling all the while. It's for this reason, however, that some suspect he knows quite a bit about what's going on all over the city's ethnic neighborhoods, and might be exploited as a strong resource of information.

Spirits

At the omega level, there are a near-infinite number of spirits that might manifest and cause trouble. The Shadow of Chicago pulses with dark diversity, but a few spirits are common and problematic enough that most omega packs have had to deal with at least one.

Burn Elemental

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Willpower: 5
Essence: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Size: 3
Corpus: 5
Influences: Fire •
Numina: Blast (fire), Chorus, Command Fire
Ban: Burn elementals cannot resist an offering of something combustible, flammable or edible.

Burn elementals are of the Fire Choir. They have been seen outside of Chicago, but in the Windy City, they seem somehow more prevalent. Their spirit bodies are small, thin creatures. One Uratha described these entities as what a raccoon would look like if it was "burned to a crisp but still allowed to run around." They are hairless beings with four legs, and the "skin" covering their corpus is one continuous festering, suppurating burn. Their eyes look like ashen briquettes, and their mouths glow with a faint, internal flame.

Burn elementals are slow, but deliberate. Moreover, they do not battle or consume one another. Instead, they gather in small groups and when they attack, they do so *en masse*.

Muggerling

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 3
Willpower: 7
Essence: 13
Initiative: 5
Defense: 4
Speed: 16
Size: 5
Corpus: 8
Influences: Greed •, Violence •
Numina: Chorus, Harrow (fear), Material Vision, Possession, Sense Weakness

Muggerlings are conceptual spirits of armed robbery and assault, spirits that tend to become common in larger cities. These spirits tend to act much as human muggers do, preying on weaker prey for their Essence. Most Muggerlings tend to be on the weak side of Greater Gafflings, and, as such, prey almost exclusively on Rank 1 targets unless the Muggerlings can muster a large mob. They tend to appear as human-shaped shadows, swelling up to great size when they've found easy prey and shrinking with fear when confronted with a target that was stronger than expected.

Sideworm

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Willpower: 4
Essence: 12
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 8
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Influences: Foot Traffic •
Numina: Know the Path, Material Vision, Wilds Sense
Ban: Can only cross streets at crosswalks.

A Sideworm is a more slow, deliberate type of spirit, a Gaffling born of a sidewalk. It appears as a cracked, brownish-gray trail of cement that moves along like an inchworm, sometimes with strange patterns and sigils picked out on its "back" with phantom chalk. While some other spirits are canny about observing places and things, City Sidewalk likes to watch humans. Given plenty of time and enough descriptions, it could theoretically find any given mortal in the city.



Shadow Mongrels

Magath — those mutant cross-breed spirits resulting from unfortunate consumption — exist everywhere in small portions. But in Chicago, their numbers grow to unprecedented levels. Plus, in this city, the half-breed spirits are presaged by the rotten-egg smell of sulfur — a whiff of brimstone, perhaps?

Magath are consigned to the truly worst parts of town. They herd together in garbage dumps, in the tunnels and pipes leading away from sewage processing stations, under bridges and in piss-puddled alleyways. They don't seem to be working for anybody, and are in fact shunned from partaking in the spiritual reindeer games of war and ingestion. Even the rat-spirits and the Beshilu stay clear of these grotesqueries.

Still, the city's magath population is growing. Where one week there is one, the following week there are two, then three. Now they can be seen huddling together in abnormally large groups in the shadows of an old factory or peering through the glass of the wrecked reflection of some long-rusted car. One can only hope they don't suddenly become intelligent or aggressive, for there may be enough of them to finally matter. Could they revolt?

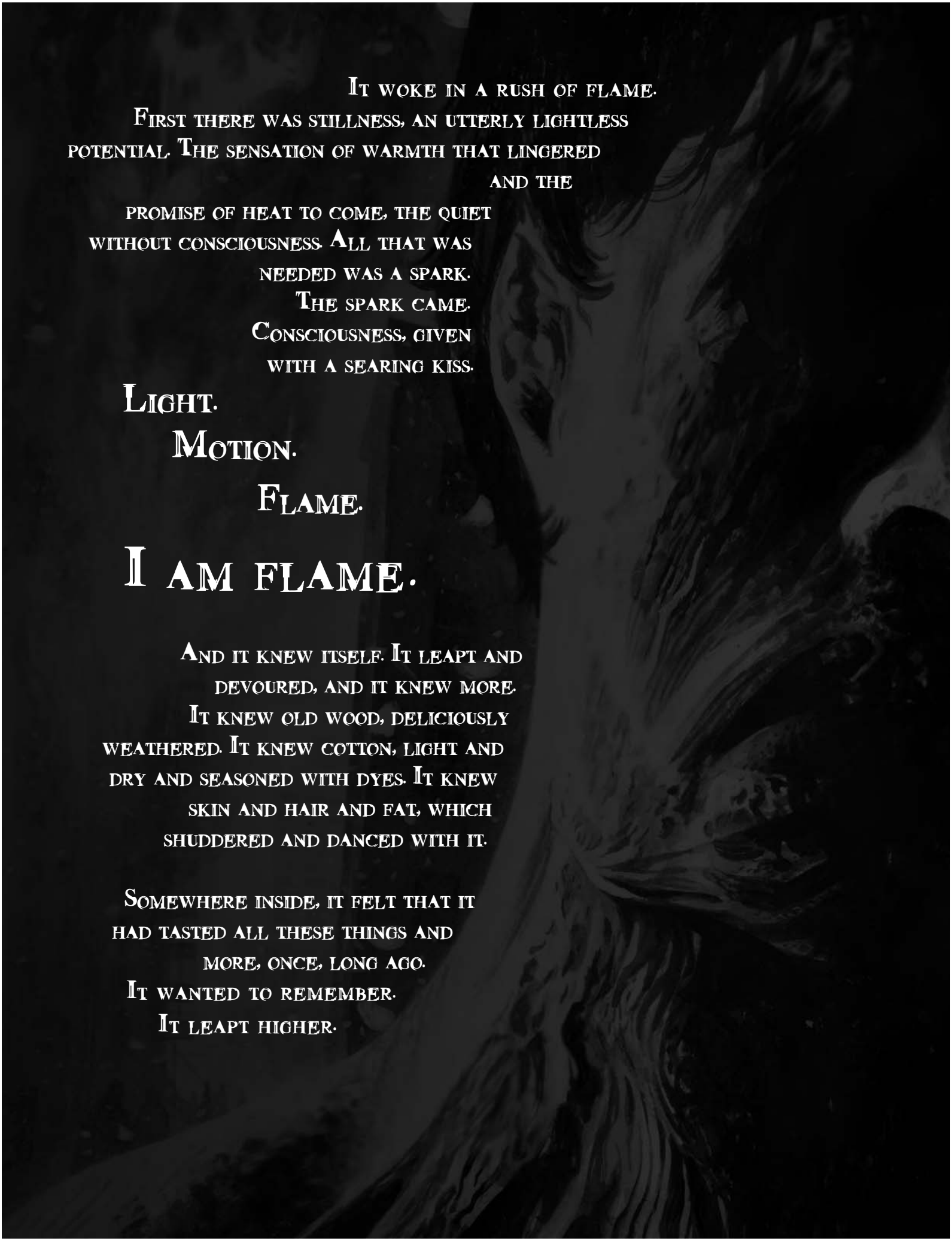
Romanesque

Someone is looking for the family of Max Roman. He calls himself Tristan, but that's not his real name. Tristan says he's "a very close relative" of Max Roman (who's described in **Werewolf: The Forsaken** and **Hunting Ground: The Rockies**), that he's trying to find some answers about the mysteries of their family. Tristan wants to know why his family is so plagued by the supernatural. Tristan, it seems, is a mage.

Or is he? Tristan has demonstrated a few abilities that could be magic, but he's not known to the local cabals. He says Tristan is his shadow name, and "what am I, crazy? I'm not going to tell you my *real* name!" Though, on one occasion, he also said, "I'm related to Max Roman. That should tell you part of my name." Tristan has only been pestering werewolf packs at night, but that could be a coincidence. He hasn't threatened anyone, but he seems maddeningly unwilling to offer up solid evidence of his story until he gets some kind of lead on the Romans.

That's the trouble. Where is Max Roman's family? Max left Chicago years ago, and the house he lived in is now being rented by some other family, but no one seems to know where his family went — or when. Local stories suggest they didn't all leave together, and their old neighbors certainly think it's odd that the Romans would leave without saying *something*. Have they fled the city? Are they in danger? Is Tristan for real? Where *is* Max Roman's family?





It woke in a rush of flame.

First there was stillness, an utterly lightless potential. The sensation of warmth that lingered and the promise of heat to come, the quiet without consciousness. All that was needed was a spark.

The spark came.

Consciousness, given with a searing kiss.

Light.

Motion.

Flame.

I am flame.

And it knew itself. It leapt and devoured, and it knew more. It knew old wood, deliciously weathered. It knew cotton, light and dry and seasoned with dyes. It knew skin and hair and fat, which shuddered and danced with it.

Somewhere inside, it felt that it had tasted all these things and more, once, long ago.

It wanted to remember.

It leapt higher.

Fires in the Winter

As fire refines gold, so suffering refines virtue.
— Chinese proverb

In this story, the werewolves of Chicago face a daunting winter. The season ends up as one for the record books, in regard to both snowfall and falling temperatures. The city, usually well-prepared to handle the normally tough winters, isn't prepared enough for winter's vicious bite this time around. To many Uratha, the snow and cold is more a nuisance than anything. They're nothing if not resilient creatures, survivors with tooth, claw and pelt. In time, the Forsaken know that the winter will pass, as all seasons do, and the city and its Shadow should remain relatively unchanged.

They are wrong. Things will change. Someone, or some*thing*, is setting fires. Arson is no easy task during a bad winter, and that in and of itself is odd — but not necessarily odd enough to draw the attention of the Uratha, who have other things to worry about. But these fires are different. Every fire small and large leaves behind a Wound in the spirit reflection, a suppurating cigarette burn seared into the Shadow. The spirits of the city grow strange and frightened. And the ugly, wretched elementals that crawl from those Wounds have little interest in playing nice with the spirits *or* the werewolves. Something must be done. The arsonist must be caught. But the Forsaken will find that hunting the enemy in the cramped and clustered territories of Chicago is a dangerous, if not fatal, proposition.

The Pack

Any kind of pack is suitable for this scenario. Players and Storytellers can run a pre-existing pack through this fiery and frigid tale, or they can create new werewolves for the occasion. Generally speaking, this scenario is meant for a pack of established Forsaken (meaning they have approximately 30 to 40 experience points above "new" werewolves). If you go above or below this level for the group, you may want to tailor the challenges and enemies accordingly.

Werewolves of any tribe or auspice will do. This is something that affects the whole city *and* its Shadow. Bone Shadows and Ithaeur Forsaken will see how the spirit world roils and recoils. The Hunters in Darkness will know that Chicago's hidden places and territories are threatened by the resultant chaos. Blood Talons and Rahu will see the growing impurity, and might seek to claim Glory by punishing those who dare to burn the city again. Storm Lords may not tolerate the weakness and chaos, and the Iron Masters know how fire can destroy progress and consume the future. The Elodoth will seek to reclaim the balance of the half-moon, the Irraka may recognize that new solutions are necessary in this strange time of fire and ice and the Cahalith will tell the tales of those fires that have come before.

Theme

The theme of this story is one of imbalance. Chicago is a city of a 1,000 spinning plates. At any point, any of those plates could come crashing down, and if one tumbles, the rest may fall. It is a city jam-packed with monsters, many of which would gladly cut out one another's eyes for a larger piece of the territorial pie. Even the Forsaken here exist on the razor's edge. They are caught in confining territories, nestled up dangerously close to the human herd, with Luna-knows-what as neighbors — vampires, occultists, Hosts or worse.

The city is ultimately a sick place; if it gets any sicker, all those aforementioned plates will spin off their poles, and Chicago and its Shadow will suffer for it. Now, with a bad winter and fires springing up left and right, the imbal-

ance grows to frightening levels. The Wounds now branded across the city's spirit reflection only deepen the disease. If the Forsaken don't act to correct the balance, they could lose their territories or worse.

Mood

The primary mood is one of mounting desperation. More fires mean more Wounds, and the bad weather just keeps on coming. The werewolves aren't the only desperate ones in this story, either. The spirits *and* the humans are growing cagey, reticent with help or sanity.

Secondarily, the mood is one of horror and mystery. The horror comes in because fires are awful things to behold: wrecked homes, blackened bodies with boiled eyes and gleaming white teeth and a palpable sense of fear that it could happen to anyone at any time. The mystery comes into play because the pack doesn't know just what is really going on. Who is causing these fires? And why? If they can't crack the mystery and hunt down the perpetrator, the Shadow may become irretrievably scarred and the balance forever lost.

Preliminary Events

Every story has events that build up the drama and involve the characters. These events are meant to set the stage and give a glimpse of the horrors to come.

Winter

The first snow of the year falls on January 17th, early morning on a Monday, with a moon that has just waned past gibbous. It is, as they say, a doozy. Thirty-one inches of snow fall over the next two-and-a-half days. (For comparison, note that during an average winter in the Windy City, only 33 inches fall during the whole season.) On January 19th, the temperatures drop to just below freezing, and winds pick up to over 20 MPH, creating awful drifting and whiteout conditions. This one-two wintry punch affects the city in a number of unfortunate ways:

• Transportation grinds to a halt during this time. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) does not have enough salt or plow trucks to handle the sudden snowfall. Buses stop running, as does taxi service. O'Hare International Airport shuts down flights coming into or going out of the airport. The el train isn't quite as hobbled, since much of it runs on trestles, and the snow can fall through. Plus, many trains can be fitted with emergency plows. Still, the trains move terribly slow and, due to the shutdown of all other transportation avenues, are overcrowded enough where people get hurt, sometimes even trampled. The el is up and running almost immediately after the snow. The rest of the city is shut down for the subsequent four days.

• Many of Chicago's citizens underestimate the snow and attempt to drive regardless. Those who do usually end up stranded, sometimes with the car engines burned out from the effort.

• Some old buildings in the poorer and immigrant neighborhoods of Chicago collapse under the weight of so much snow. Roofs bow and tumble inward.

• Many of the city's homeless freeze to death, but they are not its only victims. Some foolish motorists suffer from hypothermia. Other citizens suffer heart attacks when they attempt to shovel so much snow.

The snow and following cold snap also have an effect on the local Shadow and its spirit denizens:

• Much of the Essence available to spirits during this time (either raw or by consuming one another) becomes tainted with a cold, frozen resonance. Spirits eating this Essence develop a hoarfrost rime across their ephemeral bodies. Their personalities and behaviors become similarly icy and cold.

• Some of the artificial- or city-spirits associated with Chicago's failing transportation and technology begin to go a little mad. Some hop into human bodies, creating Ridden (Urged and Claimed) who madly scramble to "fix" everything in sight. Other spirits use their Influences to restart failing technology, which isn't always a good thing (the third rail goes active again as workers strive to clear snow, a car starts suddenly and backs into a house, a surge of electricity goes through wires and damages circuits within various electronic devices). None of the spirits do anything particularly violent, but the accumulation of a lot of little insanities build up and have a negative effect.

• Elementals of cold and water gain sudden power during this time, more so than in a normal winter storm. Many of them begin to assume dominance over lesser spirits, consuming them or forcing them to perform tasks for them.

Fires

The first fire occurs late on the 19th (the day that the cold snap begins). The victim of this fire is the Heritage Unitarian Church on North Broadway, found in the Lakeview East district. The building burns, but does not entirely collapse. The flat roof of the church caves in toward the back of the building, and the heavy load of snow that falls inward helps put out the fire even before firefighters arrive. It is gutted by fire, but the exterior remains standing.

Over the next four days, the city suffers one fire per day, even in the unusual wintry conditions. These fires are in wildly different areas of the city. The second fire is in a small, predominantly Hispanic apartment building in the Pilsen/Little Village area of southwest Chicago. The fire is mostly contained, and fails to burn down the entire apartment building, but does kill the family in the apartment where the fire originates. The third fire takes place in Oak Park. An old, three-story Victorian home catches fire just past midnight, and burns all the way to the ground, thankfully not spreading to the nearby homes.

The fourth fire is perhaps the strangest. It occurs on the 20th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago building in the heart of the city's commercial center. The fire happens in a men's room toward the close of business that day. The bathroom burns quickly, and the metal stalls warp from the heat. The building's fire alarm

goes off, and the sprinkler system immediately contains the sudden blaze. Two men are left dead, and one man leaving the bathroom is burned head-to-toe with second- and third-degree burns.

Part of the problem with fighting these fires is that the city is hobbled by the weather. The snow is nearly unmanageable, and the below-freezing conditions have turned the lower echelon of snow into compacted ice. Firefighters can still respond to the fires, but cannot do so with the speed necessary. Moreover, the fire department is being used in other ways. Firefighters are helping to move stranded cards, rescuing people trapped in their automobiles or abandoned buildings and helping crews restore electricity where lost.

Note that this is not the end of the fires. They will continue, approximately one a day, for as long as allowed (meaning, until the characters or *somebody* stops the madness).

Scorch Marks

The worst part about the fires for the Forsaken is the result they have on the *Hisil*. Each fire causes a Wound to open in and around the area where the fire occurs. This does not happen over time; the Wound opens immediately upon the start of the fire.

The Wounds have a number of elements in common. The smell is the most immediate and obvious connection. In the Shadow, the Uratha will be aware of a number of overwhelming odors. First is the sickly sweet smell of cooked flesh. Second is the acrid scent of burnt wood and plastic. Third is an underlying smell of infection, like that which comes from a gangrenous limb.

These disturbed parts of the Shadow all look similar, as well. The air here is filled with a thin veneer of dark smoke. (Characters suffer –1 to any sight-related perception rolls while within one of these Wounds.) Past the smoke, the ground and walls look like human skin that has been badly burned. The surface is red and dark, seared and scarred. But the skin is split in areas, as well, and from these fissures erupt occasional rivulets of cloudy pink fluid, or sometimes chunky blood. If characters get any of this fluid on them, it cannot be washed off. In fact, it doesn't leave them until they leave the Shadow. These fluids stink bitterly, which makes the tainted werewolf easier to track by scent (+2 to any scent-related tracking rolls).



The worst part of these burned Wounds are the spirits present. The spirits that had previously occupied the area are now changed. They smolder with a haze of heat and smoke, and their eyes (if they have them) show fire in the pupils. Such spirits are immediately hostile to invading Forsaken. Also present in the area are a number of fire elementals of varying descants (flames, burns, inferno). These spirits are curiously less violent than other spirits in and around one of these Wounds. The fire-spirits are still hostile, but more *socially* hostile to the Forsaken. The spirits will spit invective and threat, and may even openly mock the werewolves. The fire elementals will not attack unless assaulted first, however.

The rules for these Wounds are the same as any; see p. 259 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**.

Arson in Chicago

Some quick notes about arson in Chicago are probably worth noting at this stage:

• Chicago has the highest fire death rate among all American cities.

• Chicago makes fewer arson arrests per year than cities such Philadelphia (i.e., *smaller* cities).

• Investigating arson in Chicago is not the domain of the police department. The fire department is in charge of arson investigations, and only sends out investigators once a fire battalion chief determines potential suspicion. This is often long after evidence is useful.

The majority of arson investigations in the city yield little information. Suspected arson fires usually become downgraded to "fires of undetermined origin."

Engaging the Characters

The Forsaken are not superheroes. Upon seeing a potential crisis, they do not all band together in an effort to solve the criminal mystery that is afoot. The city in this case is besieged by bad weather and weird fires, but the characters won't necessarily be driven to help solving these problems without the proper impulsion. You must engage the characters, involving them in this horrifying mystery that is unfolding around them. How you do that up to you, but here are a few options that may draw them headlong into the conflict:

• The fires occur in their territory. You can take one of the first four fires and change it so it fits into their territory (or near to it, at least), or you can make one of the subsequent blazes happen there. When the pack finds a Wound has opened on their watch, on their *land*, they have little choice but to step in and do something. It isn't even a matter of duty or responsibility — a threat to a werewolf's territory becomes a personal affair very quickly.

• The pack's allies are affected. This might mean a fellow pack with whom they are friendly or maybe even a close family of wolf-blooded who have helped the pack in the past. These allies might have witnessed the fires, been hurt by them or be attempting to uncover answers by themselves (which, the pack might note, could get their allies killed).

• If a Cahalith is in the pack, he has a particularly disturbing dream or vision. In this dream, the pack is dead. The sky is filled with spirits battling over their corpses. It seems a violent, bloody struggle between creatures of fire and of ice. Animals die. Human screams are cut short by the sizzling crackle of a sweeping conflagration. This vision should be dizzying and sickening. (It should also not count as "a use" of the Cahalith's auspice ability if used as the hook for the story. The Cahalith should still retain the ability to attempt a prophetic dream once during the events of Fires in Winter.)

• Alternately, perhaps the pack isn't immediately drawn into the conflict. Other Forsaken are certainly content to remain on the sidelines, dealing with their own issues. The pack may continue to operate as normal as this story unfolds outside of them. They hear of it, and perhaps even see some of its effects. Eventually, though, they should cross the path of this story in some awful, violent way further down the line, at which point it will be impossible to ignore its effects upon the city and it Shadow.

Initial Investigation

The pack might very well try to investigate the goings-on surrounding these fires in an effort to understand them. It's okay if characters choose to skip all the investigation, as well, and instead choose to jump right in with action. Not all characters are going to be suited to uncover a mystery piece-by-piece, and the story can work that way. If that's the case, just drop one or two pieces of information in their laps, let them run with it and see where it takes them. Don't railroad them into doing something the players might feel is boring or otherwise against their characters' natures.

Below are some of the ways and means of obtaining information about the fires.

Humans

Firemen, arson investigators and journalists are going to be the individuals likeliest to know anything about the fires. Unfortunately for the Forsaken, humans tend to be a little unnerved in the presence of werewolves. Worse, the fires have set everyone on edge, and the seared Wounds behind the Gauntlet aren't making the situation any better. Normal Social rolls made in an effort to coax information from human beings will be made at the normal penalty (as per a character's Primal Urge score), but will also suffer an

additional –1 modifier because of this general unease. Intimidation rolls, however, are unaffected by this penalty. In fact, if a human's Willpower score is four or less, assume that Intimidation rolls can be made at a +1 modifier to reflect their vulnerability and edginess.

One thing to consider: if the characters threaten fire personnel at all, the characters will mark themselves as potential suspects. With one dead firefighter and one dead arson investigator, it seems to the city that someone is targeting the department. If the characters go menacing the people involved, the characters are likely to paint targets on their heads.

Information potentially gleaned from the appropriate human subjects includes the following:

• The fire battalion chief has ordered an arson investigation.

• The arson investigators believe the fires to be related. The investigators won't offer any more information than that, although, on an exceptional success, they might tell characters that the fires seem to be "targeting fire personnel."

• Arson investigations have not found any kind of accelerant, or any indication at all as to how the fires were started.

• The investigators have no suspects, though they believe the fires to be the work of a single arsonist because, statistically, most fire-starters work alone.

The characters may also learn the body count, as well as the identities of who died where. If the characters don't learn this information from investigators or journalists now, they can learn it a few days later in the *Tribune*.

• At the church, one of the bodies appears to be the minister, Joe Brown. The other body isn't yet identified, but appears to be male. If characters contact Joe's wife, Regina, she will offer a tidbit of information *only* if they succeed on a Social roll (such as Manipulation + Persuasion) versus her Resolve + Composure. This information is that Brown received a call late on the night of the 19th from a worried church member, Daniel Rebworth. Characters can learn from her or other sources (a library, for instance) that Rebworth is an author of various books on Chicago history, including books and articles about the various fires in the Windy City.

• The apartment in Pilsen/Little Village was rented by a firefighter named Cesar Flores. He lived there with his wife, Carmen, and their three little girls. All died in the fire. No other casualties were reported. Witnesses on the scene didn't see any potential perpetrators, but reported that when Cesar got home that evening, he seemed nervous and agitated.

• Two people died in the house in Oak Park, a husband and wife, both in their mid-60s. The man, Gregory Schrieber, was a retired arson investigator for the city. His wife, Gina, died in the blaze, in bed.

• The fire in the bank building is an anomaly compared to the others. Nobody with any connections to fire, arson or fire history died in the blaze. Two men died, both from the bank's acquisitions department. One (Tom Porter) burned up while sitting on the toilet, another (Nicklaus van der Beulen) perished while standing at the sink, indicating that the fire swept through fast and at incredible temperatures. One man, Carl Chen, survived. He was walking out the door, and the fire burned his back terribly. He was sent to the hospital, where he remains alive but in critical condition.

Characters may choose to follow up on all this information. Potential follow-ups can be found below, under "Further Investigation."

Ghosts

One avenue for investigation involves the ghosts of the dead. The fires were sudden, and not everybody was so ready to die. What ghosts are left behind are up to you. Carmen Flores is one potential soul who lingers behind, but she's far from calm or sane at this stage. Carmen is a traditional weeping woman, *La Llorona*, her ghost barely able to speak through the tears. What information she gives is probably minimal, spoken through broken sentences. She may say phrases like, "Why did he do this to us?" or "His skin, *his skin!*" before falling back into hitching sobs.

Bone Shadows might also use the Corpse Witness Gift on some of the fire victims. To get to the bodies, the characters will need to break into the cold-storage morgues at varying hospitals (Northwestern Memorial, University of Chicago). The day leading up to each victim's demise is otherwise unexceptional, a normal day for each individual. But once the time gets closer to the fire, the story begins to get murky. All of the bodies will tell a similar story, of there being "many shadows" and "a sudden wave of heat and fire." They might say, "he didn't look right," or note something about "red skin" or a "bad sunburn." As the corpse breathes out its report, the werewolves listening may note that its breath smells of sulfur and ash.

Spirits

The spirits in the general area of the fires (where the Wounds have burned deep into the Shadow) are not friendly. They will not accept gifts of Essence, nor will they demand favors in return for information. The fire elementals mock the pack, and the other spirits have become feral and will attack the characters on sight.

This doesn't mean that spirits can't offer information or aid, however. Some spirits dwelling on the fringes of the Wound were not negatively affected by whatever force it was that corrupted the others. They *are* scared, however, which makes them anxious and easily upset. As it stands, they already blame the Forsaken for let-

ting this happen, and won't hand out information to the pack for free. (It's not particularly just, but few spirits comprehend or care about an abstraction like justice.) They also won't take gifts of Essence; they seem afraid that the other spirits will come and take it from them. No, instead the spirits will ask for some task to be completed. They might want the spirits in the Wound destroyed, or they might ask that the pack creates or invokes whatever the spirits reflect in the physical world around the Wound (to give them strength). A house-spirit might want the burned-down walls to be partially rebuilt. Nearby air elementals may demand that the cold be swept into the physical area, even if that means destroying heating systems or punching holes in walls.

It is possible that the pack can intimidate the spirits into giving up information. Doing so works – *this* time. After that, word gets around. The spirits refuse to deal with the pack, or the spirits attack them on sight. If the pack want to work again with the spirits in the future, the characters will have to make large restitutions to various Choirs.

Here are a few of the things characters may learn from the spirits found on the periphery of a Wound:

• Spirits are cagey in regard to what they know. The spirits will refer to "them" when speaking of the perpetrators of the Wound, thus indicating that more than one individual (mortal or supernatural creature) are at work. The spirits offer no more information than that.

• They might tell of a hideous whisper that came through the Shadow moments before the Wound burned open. It was a phrase in the First Tongue: *Izikhul-farakh*. It means, roughly, the "King of Unforgiving Fire." Others hear a different phrase: *Imin U'Izich*, "The Seven Conflagrations."

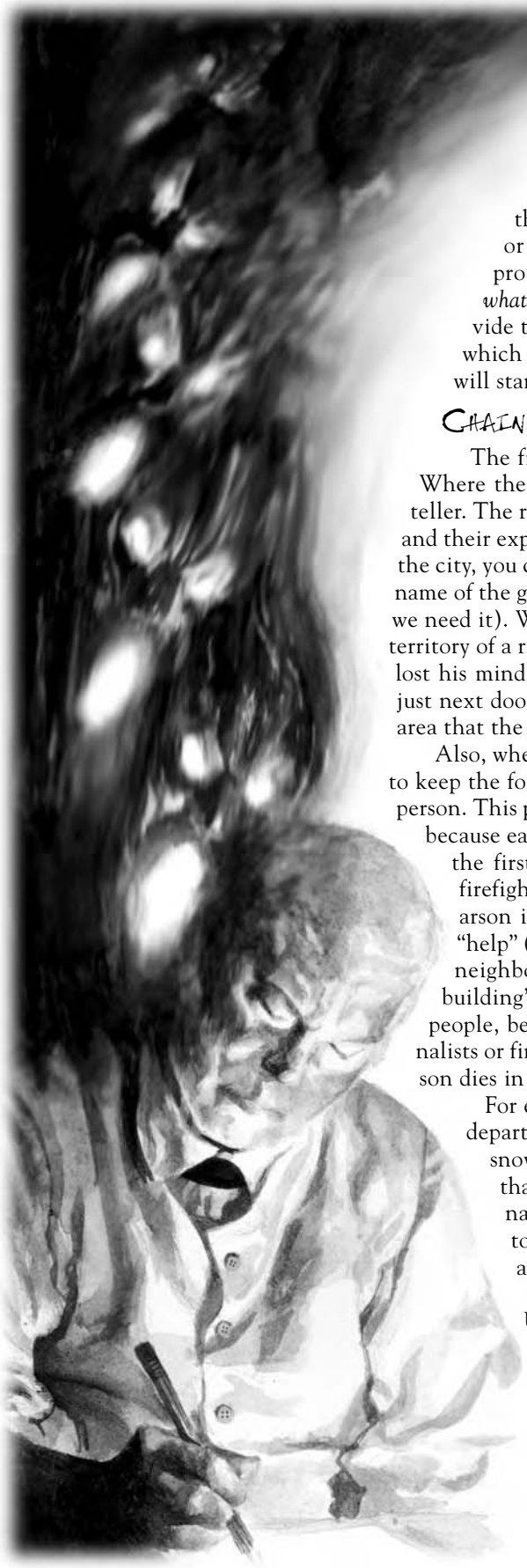
• Many spirits will blame the fire elementals now residing in the Wounds. Those spirits of flame won't admit complicity, but they *will* throw insults in the Forsaken's faces, calling the characters "weak" and "watery." The fire elementals might say something along the lines of, "They will destroy you" or "They'll burn the city down once more." The spirits seem pleased with this course of events, and may even note that one day they wish to "join" the crusade.

Rising Action

This part of the story effectively begins on the day of the fifth fire, which should be January 23rd. While the winter hasn't exactly gotten worse, it damn sure refuses to weaken. It continues to snow on and off — an inch here, an inch there — and temperatures stay consistently frigid. Transportation in the city is up and running, but not with great efficiency. Bus and trains run late, roads are constantly blocked with accidents and even walking on the sidewalks means slipping on snow-concealed patches of black ice. The city simply cannot keep up with winter. It should also be troublesome for the pack to do anything or go anywhere. Feel free to institute penalties when appropriate (icy conditions, for instance, will invoke at least a –1 penalty to any actions involving most athletic outdoor endeavors).

By this point in the story, the characters should be summarily invested in figuring out just what is going on with these fires. The fires should have personally affected the characters, even if it means only in a peripheral way (perhaps mad, fire-eyed spirits keep roving into the pack's territory and attacking them, and the source of this madness seems to be a fire-scarred Wound a few blocks away).





The characters have probably figured out some things, but more questions have popped up instead of answers. Who is causing these fires? Is it one person, or many? Is the arsonist supernatural? Does the creature exist only in the Shadow? And why does each fire result in a terrible scorch-mark Wound seared into the spirit world? At this stage, characters may want to continue investigating, or they might feel that it's time to jump in and begin a more pro-active and visceral hunt for the fire-starter, whoever or *what*ever it might be. Either avenue is fine: the story will provide tips and hooks on running either style of game. No matter which path the pack chooses, however, resistance and violence will stand in their way at various turns.

Chain of Fire

The fires don't end. They continue, about one every 24 hours. Where the blazes occur, and how they play out, is up to the Storyteller. The reason for this is so that you can tie them to the characters and their exploits. By putting the fires in problematic places all around the city, you cause conflict for the characters. Conflict is, of course, the name of the game (in real life we strive to avoid conflict, but in fiction, we need it). What if the characters go to investigate a fire found in the territory of a rival pack? Or of a century-old vampire who seems to have lost his mind? Perhaps another fire happens in the pack's territory, or just next door. Could be that a fire happens just outside the city in an area that the pack finds unfamiliar and controlled by unseen forces.

Also, when deciding how and where the fires happen, you will have to keep the following rule in mind: each fire has a common link of one person. This person isn't the same person each time (in fact, it can't be, because each individual dies in the subsequent fire). For example, at the first fire where the author dies, Cesar Flores is one of the firefighters. At the fire in Cesar's apartment the next night, ex-arson investigator Gregory Schreiber shows up to see if he can "help" (he can't, and they send him home). In Oak Park, Gregory's neighbor is Nicklaus van der Beulen, a manager in the bank building's acquisitions department. Around every fire are living people, be they neighbors, witnesses, homeless people, EMTs, journalists or firefighters. Pick one appropriate for each fire, and that person dies in a fire within the next day or night.

For example, in the fire at the bank building, the acquisitions department is filled with employees who made it in despite the snow and the cold. Perhaps the janitor on that floor goes home that night, and dies in a fire in his kitchen. Or maybe a journalist reporting on the weird fire goes to a bar that night, or to the newspaper office or to her boyfriend's house — and, again, a fire consumes her and those around her.

This "chain of victims" shouldn't be readily apparent. Uncovering it will require a modicum of research or interviews. (An Intelligence + Investigation roll is likely necessary. This should be an extended roll, requiring 10 total successes, with each roll being equal to an hour's worth of research or interviews.) The spirits do not know the particulars, but they *might* be able to share that there is a "strange and ethereal bond" between many of the victims, even if the spirits don't quite know what it is.

One other thing worth noting about the fires is that they don't need be effective fires. They don't need to

burn entire buildings down. The fires certainly can (and should in some cases), but sometimes the fires should seem almost *small*, like the fire in the bank building. People always die, of course, but some fires just don't seem to take hold like the others. This doesn't stop the fact that each fire opens up a Wound, however, and corrupts the spirits within.

Harbingers of Shadow

The Shadow Realm should grow more troublesome for the Forsaken. The pack should by now notice some worrisome changes taking place on the other side, particularly with spirits. This includes the following:

• The city's Shadow now seems home to more elementals, particularly fire, air and water. The air and water elementals are indicative of winter, each one reflecting icy flesh or whorls of snow coming off them. They seem to be gathering in distant broods that silently flee when approached. The fire elementals seem frenzied, chaotic and angry. They, too, seem to be gathering together in broods, but they do not flee. If anything, they try to goad the Forsaken, or other spirits, into fights.

• The rest of the spirits seem particularly on edge. Characters can make a Wits + Empathy roll to sense their tremulous unease. A Wits + Composure roll will let characters know that more spirits also seem to be either dusted in a light coating of ice crystals and snow dust, or have the twinkle of sparks and fire in their eyes.

• Many spirits are also assaulting the city's loci, making desperate attempts to leech as much Essence as possible, even when the locus is controlled by a pack of Pure or Forsaken.

• The pack's own totem seems unaffected by the strange agitation plaguing most spirits, but the totem sees the situation, and is likely to comment on the "growing imbalance."

• Alongside the aforementioned elementals, there also seems to be an unusual proliferation of fear-spirits agglomerating around the city's Shadow. Many of these fear-spirits take on the appearances of burn victims skirting along the shadows, laughing and weeping in a discomfiting cacophony.

Legends of Fire

With more fires popping up and the Shadow becoming all the more dangerous, an old legend will start to pop up. The characters may already know of it, or be reminded of it at this time. If not, another Forsaken is likely to relate the tale.

The legend is that the Great Chicago Fire spawned an angry spirit, a powerful entity driven to consume everything in a terrible conflagration. It has passed down into secondhand Forsaken legend and lore as the Great Fire Spirit, though others have referred to it as The King of Unforgiving Fire (a name that may be known to characters from their investigations).

On the night of the massive fire in 1871, stories suggest that some of the packs at that time saw the terrible spirit rising up above the city both in the *Hisil* and in the physical realm. This spirit, legend suggests, looked like an insurmountable wave of fire with a thousand eyes and mouths. In its cries, the Uratha heard the baying of dying animals, the keening of widows, the squalls of burning infants. And then, like that, it was gone.

The fear is that the spirit is slumbering somewhere in the city, and that these fires are going to wake it up by accident or are perhaps a hidden effort to stir the turbulent firestorm spirit. No werewolf alive has seen the spirit nor seen any indication of its slumbering. But Chicago is a city of many fires, and this legend will resurface with growing desperation.

Further Investigations

The pack may decide to pursue the leads it has uncovered thus far:

• If the characters visit Carl Chen in the hospital, they will find him mostly unresponsive, and the hospital isn't allowing him visitors. If the pack members go in anyway (lying or sneaking in), they can get very few answers from him. The Storyteller may require a Wits + Medicine roll to get him to wake up without hurting him. (This roll is at a –3 penalty because of Chen's fragile condition.) What Chen can tell them before passing out again into a morphine haze is that Nicklaus looked sick, had red skin or was "covered in blisters."

• Going to the homes of either Nicklaus van der Beulen or Daniel Rebworth turns up something bizarre with success on a Wits + Investigation roll. The pack finds an ugly approximation of the First Tongue scrawled in various places. It's worse in Rebworth's townhouse than it is in van der Beulen's home. In Rebworth's place, he scrawled various phonetic interpretations of First Tongue words on mirrors, on the walls, on torn-out pages of the phone book. He also scrawled it in blood on a Bible. Nicklaus, on the other hand, simply left notes behind, mad scrawlings on little slips of paper. Characters sounding out these First Tongue terms find that it is a general repetition of various words: *fire, pain, burning, wrath, fire-touched.*

• Spirits will be more insistent at this point that it is not one perpetrator, but *many*. If characters make any exceptional successes when dealing with spirits, the spirits might even admit that there are "seven" of them.

The Hunt

By now it's likely that the pack wants to hunt whoever or whatever is causing these fires. The characters should not only be personally invested in ending this, but they should also recognize that things aren't right in the Shadow and in the city. The Wounds, the agitated spirits, a frightened human populace — all of it adds up and doesn't paint a pretty picture of the future.

How the pack handles this hunt is up to them. They should be given enough freedom to pursue this story in whatever manner suits their characters. If they want to cut a swath across the city with tooth and claw, bullying everybody left and right into giving them a direc-

tion, that's fine. If they take it slow and stealthy, sticking to the shadows and relying on patience, that's okay too. Each method has a series of repercussions. Going in hard and fast means that the pack might lose any allies it had, and might very well get killed before the characters can solve anything. Alternately, being patient and taking it slow only means that the arsonist has time to spread more fires *and* open more Wounds across the Shadow. Too much of that, and the spirit world will be put in terrible danger as more and more spirits suffer the taint from these shadowy chancres.

No matter what happens, the hunt will have consequences and dangers for the pack. Following are some of the problems the characters will face when pursuing an end to these fires in winter.

Other Forsaken

Other packs will surely be attempting to curtail the madness and stop the fires, but that doesn't necessarily mean these other packs will be doing it alongside the characters' pack, or that such intervention will always have positive results.

First, consider that, in pursuit of the fire-starter, the characters may tread on the territories of other packs. Some packs will be amenable to this, especially if the characters are gracious and polite. Other packs care little, and might try to run the characters out of their territory or stage a ritual combat to see if the characters "deserve" to remain on the trail. In rural areas, the characters might only have this happen once or twice, but in Chicago, every city block is a potentially new territory with the probability for new conflict.

Other packs also might not approve of the characters' methods. The packs might believe the characters are stirring up a hornet's nest through their investigations, and that adding to the imbalance is anathema. Alternately, the characters' pack might realize that it's these other packs that are *doing* the unbalancing. Other packs (perhaps younger or more violence-prone Forsaken) may leave all manner of damage in their wakes, including frantic spirits, dead bodies or the mob effects of the Lunacy. Characters crossing paths with other Forsaken might have to deal with violence in the Shadow, police intervention, or an unruly crowd of hysterical humans.

Not every pack is going to be actively trying to unravel the mystery, either. Many are content to keep to their own territories, and leaving their own areas to pursue this wild goose chase only leaves themselves vulnerable. (Characters should worry about that, too. What happens when they abandon their territories in the pursuit of this larger goal? Do the Pure move in? Or other Forsaken?) While the Uratha are supposedly committed to keeping the balance between worlds, there's nothing that says they're all selfless or astute. The Forsaken are flawed, sometimes driven by self-interest above all. They might not lend a hand to the characters at all, or worse, may directly stand in the pack's way if they feel it'll help keep their own territory safe.

The Fire-Touched

Those packs of Fire-Touched in the city make for usual suspects. Clues may lead the characters to the territories of any of the Fire-Touched packs. (Not only did the spirits refer to "many" arsonists, but some of the First Tongue words scrawled at Rebworth's and van der Beulen's homes included *Izidakh*, or "Fire-Touched.")

Two Pure packs in particular are worthy of suspicion. The first is a pack of young, untested Fire-Touched calling themselves the Executioners. They're an elusive pack, hiding in many of the abandoned tunnels beneath the Lakeview region of the city. If cornered, they're wise enough to know that they're likely overpowered. These Pure will only attempt an attack if they feel they have some kind of advantage; otherwise, they will either flee the scene and hide, or they'll play nice if they've little other choice. It's possible that the pack will boast that it *is* behind the fires. However, its members seem to have little actual information regarding the fires, and actually don't know much about them at all. It shouldn't take long to determine that this pack isn't behind the fires. Not only are these werewolves ignorant of what's really going on, but they're simply not powerful enough to pull off a feat of this magnitude without having been caught already. This doesn't preclude the possibility that these Fire-Touched aren't otherwise dangerous, but it means that they aren't the culprits. (The Executioners can be found on **p. 262**.)

The other pack worth investigating is the one calling itself the Scorched Heavens. Rumor has it that this pack has arson already on its mind, and has been planning to bring fires to the city for some time now. (In fact, the characters may have heard that this pack's totem desires to be the "next" Great-Fire-Spirit, and hopes to accomplish this by burning the city down.) If the pack pursues the Scorched Heavens werewolves, the Pure will attack on sight, which seems like an obvious admission of guilt. The Pure will fight until they are nearly beaten, at which point they'll roll over and *finally* start asking questions — like, for instance, who the characters even *are*.

At this point, reality comes out. The Scorched Heavens pack is not responsible for the fires, though the pack would like to have been. The pack members act essentially as a red herring for characters. Fact is, this pack of Fire-Touched is so *out* of touch that the pack members isn't even aware that there's competition out there. They will probably seem alarmed that someone or something is out there stealing their thunder. It's not inconceivable that this pack could even become reluctant allies in this fight — though ones that come with a strong risk of betrayal. (The Scorched Heavens pack is found on **p. 242**.)

Wintry Tooth, Icy Claw

Combat is going to happen in this story. The Scorched Heavens pack, for instance, bites first and asks questions later. This means some

particularly brutal fights are probably going to happen outdoors, in the bitter cold, over both snow and ice.

So, make it evocative. These harsh environmental conditions make battles a grim and unpredictable affair. Trying to trudge through three feet of snow to land a blow is difficult. Going in for a punch or a claw rake means stepping on patches of slippery ice. The winter is sure to add varied penalties to any and all attack rolls, anywhere from –1 to –3 dice. Getting through that much snow probably halves a character's Speed (round up), as well. The environment can be used to one's advantage, too. Throwing hunks of ice and snow into an opponent's face may give the opponent an additional –1 penalty on her next attack. Trying to knock a foe down while he is on ice might give an additional bonus to the attack. Consider all the variables, and how they play into combat.

Oh, and don't forget the cool imagery. Blood spraying on a wall or dribbling down one's face will *freeze*. (And blood on snow is a pretty stark visual, too.)

Human Intervention

Like the spirits of the city, Chicago's human population is growing antsy and afraid. These fires have, for lack of a better term, spooked the herd. The feeling is similar to when a serial killer or rapist plagues the city, except here the worries have been compounded by an already bad winter. Humans fear that they will become trapped in their homes, and the ill weather will prevent a timely fire or ambulance response.

What does this mean for Forsaken? First, it means that garnering information from humans is difficult. In many cases, making Social rolls with most mortals will be at a –1 penalty (taken in addition to the penalties normally incurred by a werewolf's Primal Urge score).

Second, and worse, it means that cases of mass Lunacy are more likely to occur. Anywhere that a crowd of more than 10 people have gathered (hospitals, malls, parks, city streets, office buildings) could become an uncontrolled throng of hysterical humanity. When making the Resolve + Composure roll for the human with the highest Willpower in the crowd, assume that this roll is performed with a –3 penalty, making it more possible that the crowd will react madly and violently. Humans react particularly poorly during this time. Not only might they bring violence against the Uratha, but they might riot against one another. Negative spirits (pain, fear, murder) will feast on the resultant banquet of awful Essence.

Spirits

The city is alive, and right now, that's not such a good thing. On the other side of the Shadow, the air is growing cold and tense. Buildings seem taller than normal. The air smells a little of brimstone. Shadows seem like holes that go on forever. What follows are a few suggestions on how to paint the growing trouble the Forsaken will face on the hunt when in the Shadow:

• Spirits begin to war with one another. This isn't entirely uncommon, but its usually kept to a relatively small area. This war is city-wide, and predominantly features elementals fighting one another. Where air and water elementals win, snow falls and the temperature drops. In places where the fire elementals claim victory, fires start, snow melts, people grow angry and riot.

• As previously mentioned, various loci come under attack by desperate spirits. Some are drained, others corrupted with tainted Essence.

• The city begins to feature more "places-that-aren't." When hunting down information (or the arsonist's reflection) in the Shadow means that the pack might stumble into places that aren't really attached to the city's geography – strange labyrinthine tunnels, blood-soaked stockyards, phantom skyscrapers. The characters may get lost in these places, which only wastes time before the next fire is set.

• Spirits that are normally slumbering awaken. Although not all potential spirits come awake (which would be a happening of apocalyptic proportion), great numbers of suddenly active spirits affect the way their real-world counterparts operate, because now these objects (cars, trees, trains, weapons) act with a kind of hidden consciousness. And, with spirits being so restless and disturbed, there's no telling what will happen. A cop's gun might go off in its holster, blowing off his foot. A snowplow might drive right into the Carson Pirie Scott store on South State Street. A whole office building might act bizarre, with lights going on and off, fire alarms sounding suddenly (a red herring all its own) and elevators crashing.

Other Supernaturals

The landscape of Chicago isn't just diced up between the Forsaken and the Pure. The city is home to a vast number of other creatures, and the characters' pack might very well be ignorant of many of these fiends. Being Uratha in the Windy City doesn't automatically come with a colored map indicating who controls what part of the town. Traveling in the city — especially outside of known Forsaken territories — should be frightening, as if one has just stepped into a foreign country without knowing the language, culture or laws. A single misstep could get the pack targeted for extermination or experimentation.

To amp up the conflict and mystery of the city, try to take the characters' hunt and investigation into some particularly unknown parts of the city. What happens when characters go investigating a fire in some vampire's backyard? What happens if the fire consumed the apartment of prominent mage's family member, and he won't let the pack get close because "they" (meaning the mages) are handling it?

Ultimately, you can use this story as a reason to get the characters' pack to traverse the perilous landscape of a seemingly mundane city. Like Alice, the characters should sometimes feel like they are lost in a lunatic Wonderland, confronted by a number of strangers who may want to use them, kill them, or both.

Below are a few options on what you might do with some of the other supernatural types in the City of Broad Shoulders.

Ridden: The Ridden, like the spirits, are growing apprehensive. In the case of the Urged, it's possible that the riding spirits are spooking their mounts. As a result, many *Hithimu* take unexpectedly drastic actions, including violence or plain old inexplicable behavior. The Claimed, on the other hand, are potentially acting *very* strange. If a pack wanders into an area controlled by a Claimed, the pack might find that the Claimed attacks on sight (when normally it would've fled), or maybe it offers its help to them because the imbalance is affecting it, too. Alternately, maybe many of the city's Claimed are getting out of town in a kind of mass exodus, leaving their little territories behind. That should frighten the Forsaken most of all.

Hosts: The Hosts can be used in any number of ways. Forsaken wandering near a Beshilu nest might find that the Rat *shartha* are using the fires and other weirdness as a cover to spread their influence and disease. Or, it could be that the Rat Hosts have tried to build nests over the burn-hole Wounds and met with bad results. The Wounds might *change* the Beshilu, and not for the better. Perhaps the Rat Hosts frenzy against one another, chewing themselves apart. Or perhaps they become all the worse, each Rat Host now a home to a dozen bad diseases. The Azlu, on the other hand, may still be openly hostile to the Uratha, but *if* an accord (however temporary) can be struck, the Spider *shartha* could be a useful ally in helping to close up some of these Wounds. The grave inequities of the city's Shadow may mobilize the Azlu, and the Forsaken may find that, when investigating a new fire, the Spider Hosts are *already there*.

Vampires: Vampires don't claim territory quite like the werewolves do, but that doesn't mean vampires don't control areas of the city. First, a group of them (the Ordo Dracul, or "Dragons") controls a number of loci around the city. If the characters' pack is desperate to get into the Shadow and try to hunt some spirits, the characters might seek to use one of these loci that the vampires call "Wyrm's Nests." If the Forsaken go mucking around in "vampire land," the werewolves won't necessarily find honorable combat waiting for them. No, most vampires use others to do their dirty work, and that means calling the police, the FBI, a street gang or anybody to stand in the pack's way. Of course, that's not to say vampires are immediately hostile to the pack. Some bloodsuckers are willing to listen, and others are more than happy to have the characters "handle this arson thing" for them. Some bloodsuckers might be downright friendly. If the pack wanders near Stickney, they might find that a vampire there (Mike Czarnecki, p. 73) will offer them hospice and some information if he has it. Of course, he doesn't do this selflessly, hoping to perhaps make the pack part of his cadre of errand-runners and favor-getters, but the pack isn't likely to know that. Vampires from the Circle of the Crone — perhaps the most likely group of bloodsuckers to help — have some rituals like the Rite of the Circle Path that could help hunt the arsonist, as well (**p. 74**). It's even possible that a group of young vampires comes to help the characters, mostly because the vampires in awe of the werewolves. (In fact, the vampires might have stolen a spirit mirror called *Vanitas* that can help the characters' pack. Accepting the gift and the vampires' help then means that the pack has a new enemy, the mirror's original owner, a vampire named Justine. More information can be found on **p. 90**)

Mages: Mages are tricky, each as individual as a snowflake. Many of them know when someone stumbles blindly into their chantry territories, because they have *magic* to help them. Their eyes and ears are everywhere. A pack may find that they've come across a hidden locus that a group of mages has been cultivating or just plain draining. Or, the characters' pack might simply discover that mages play by a number of Arcane and occulted rules — laws and by-laws that the werewolves damn sure don't know about. The mages don't care, because violating those laws is anathema, and, for them, ignorance is no excuse. The pack needs to be careful. Some mages will want to help them solve this, other mages will want to capture the pack, dissect them, run them through a battery of bizarre (and likely painful) magical "tests." Mages can be excellent allies in this investigation, for their magic is far-reaching in its power. But they are also unpredictable. Any encounters with mages should invoke a palpable level of tension.

Other: This is an opportunity to play up the mystery and horror of Chicago. The pack is likely aware of the other supernaturals on *some* level. But that doesn't mean the pack knows the end-all of what's out there. Feel free to give a little bit of territory to "things" that remain uncategorized and unknown. What happens when the characters' pack stumbles across an alley that is home to some hive of single-minded cannibal vagrants? Or a cult that worships "the Serpent of the Lake" and wants to bring their Serpent-God phials of Forsaken blood as a sacrifice? Maybe the pack is assaulted by a stampeding herd of ghostly stockyard bulls and hogs. Feel free to throw things at them that they wouldn't expect, thus deepening the strangeness of the city.

It Isn't All Bad . . .

Although the pack members should certainly be desperate in their struggles to find a solid lead, it doesn't mean you can't throw them a bone now and again. If it gets too difficult and

the pack isn't making enough headway, the game stops being fun, which is really the whole point of the thing. Here are just a handful of ideas to make it easier on a frustrated pack of characters:

• Drop a clue into their laps. Provided they're trying and making headway, don't punish them. Let them organically come across a clue without a roll. Maybe someone has seen what they believe to be the arsonist, a "sunburned man with blistered skin."

• Give them dreams or nightmares with salient information. Not only is this good for lending them a bit of direction, but it's a good way to deepen the desperate, horrific mood. Dreams of fire and blood, of burned skin and erupting Shadow Wounds — these can be good for reminding the characters of the horror that awaits. Naturally, if the pack has a Cahalith, they can call on this avenue of investigation themselves.

• Give them a safe haven from which to operate. This might be their territory, but if the characters' pack doesn't control territory, maybe they can plot and plan from a safe place like the Hair of the Dog bar, a blue-collar Ghost Wolf joint that tends to be a place of calmness and diplomacy. (See **p. 258**.)

• The city isn't filled only with enemies. If the pack doesn't have any natural allies of its own, give the characters some. Let another pack of Forsaken — or even a cabal of elusive mages — offer aid. This alliance doesn't need to be optimistic and generous; it can exist with tension and distrust, but even a guarded alliance is better than none at all.

The Blister Man

During the course of the hunt, the pack is going to run across a man (or a woman) with hideously sunburned skin. This person's flesh is as red as a lobster's carapace, and covered in moist boils and clustered blisters. How the characters find him is up to you, but it should involve a modicum of work on the part of the characters. Perhaps when investigating the latest fire, they catch a whiff of burned skin and fresh infection. Or maybe in the hospital when visiting Carl Chen (or the morgue) they catch sight of the sickly, sunburned individual across a crowded lobby. Perhaps spirits or other allies actively direct characters as to where they might find this being. The pack will likely be interested in pursuing this lead because they have probably heard tell of a man with red or sunburned skin being tied to the fires.

Whatever the case, characters can attempt to track down this "blister man" by sight or smell. This shouldn't be easy. Not only will this diseased stranger flee, but he's likely to be found in a crowded place such as a hospital, a city street or an apartment building. The pack will not be necessarily free to simply change forms and go rampaging after him, though circumstance may certainly drive them into the throes of Death Rage if not careful. If one of the characters happens to get a bite on the subject and taste his blood, the character can attempt to invoke the Prey's Blood rule. Doing so only grants the werewolf a +2 bonus to the tracking roll as opposed to the normal +4. Moreover, upon tasting the blood, the werewolf must succeed on a Stamina + Primal Urge roll. Failure on this roll means that the werewolf becomes dizzy and feverish, and must spend a turn vomiting. (Vomiting does not cause her to lose the benefit gained by Prey's Blood, however.) Information on tracking and Prey's Blood can be found on p. 178 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**.

Catching Him

When the pack finally catches up to the Blister Man, they're in for a surprise. The first surprise is that he's very unpredictable. His behavior is erratic, he's shaking and he smells genuinely frightened. One minute he will beg for his life, claim that he doesn't know what's happening, that he feels like he's dying. The next second, his face will contort into a grotesque rictus, and he'll launch an all-out attack on the characters. While his physical attacks (punching, kicking, biting) are probably ineffectual against them, he *can* summon fire out of nowhere. Worse, this fire does aggravated damage to the characters. (For the Blister Man's stats, see below.)

In between attacks, he'll implore the characters for clemency. He will weep (and his tears will turn to steam upon his raw, red face) and seem genuinely cowed – that is, until he attacks again. If they grapple him, they will note just how hot his skin is, as if a consumptive fever is chewing him apart from the inside out.

The pack is likely to win the fight, but not without some burns of their own. Whether the characters capture him to ask him questions or simply kill him is their prerogative. The ending is the same no matter how it plays out, except if they capture him they might have time to ask him some questions.

Either way, at the end of the battle, the Blister Man expires rather grotesquely. His head cranes back suddenly, his mouth opens wide and he belches fire. In the matter of seconds, the immediate area is engulfed in a sudden blaze of fire that seems to erupt from all parts of him. Treat this like an incendiary explosive (p. 179, see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), except with a Blast Area of 3 and a Damage of 3. The characters may have some warning of this before it happens. If they succeed on a Wits + Primal Urge roll, they then have the chance to move out of the way before this abrupt gout of room-filling flame. (This fire does *not* do aggravated damage, however.)

The real kicker is this: the next night, there is another fire, and another Wound opens. The characters may believe they caught the arsonist until they hear that news.



The Real Story

This is what's really going on. Chicago hasn't seen a winter this bad since the late 1970s, and even then it didn't start out quite so severe. The extreme snowfall, the plummeting temperatures, adds up to an unusually fierce season, so much so that the spirits grow affected by the winter. Some grow cold in demeanor, others develop a hoary carapace of ice crystals upon their ephemeral flesh.

The Shadow, in its own way, strives for balance, but the modern world has made this an unpredictable ecology. Any manner of rebalancing is not always done with a sane hand. That is the case with Chicago. Winter comes and changes the spiritual landscape and its denizens. Some spirits — fire elementals in particular — seek to rebuke this oppression and reestablish equilibrium. They care little for the fact that winter is temporary and will inevitably go away. The fire-spirits' solution is not one of moderation, and it makes the attempt to tip the scale too far in the other direction. Seven of the city's most powerful fire elementals come together with one goal in mind: to awaken the slumbering elemental behind the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

The Seven Conflagrations

The seven elementals — calling themselves the Seven Conflagrations — decide that to rebalance the city's Shadow and reawaken the Great-Fire-Spirit, they must start a number of fires. These fires, to the spirits, are cleansing, like cutting out the dead parts of cancerous flesh. This healing process begins with sacrificing parts of the city to the slumbering spirit.

This brood of seven spirits cannot do this on their own. They cannot manage it from the Shadow, because the winter has lessened their powers. Any use of Influences or Numina will be weakened by the winter's effect. The spirits recognize that, to do this, they must do so from the physical world. Becoming *duguthim* is not enough for them, however. As Claimed, they would not have enough power to bring fires that could sear through the physical world and *brand* the Shadow.

So, the seven spirits do something new. They all Claim a single body at the same time, the author and historian Daniel Rebworth. The spirits know of Rebworth, for he has spoken of their work (and the work of the Great-Fire-Spirit) many times in both his books and in lectures. To them, he is something of an avatar, a physical representation of the past being made the present.

Unfortunately, it does not work precisely as planned. The goal was to have Rebworth act as their host until the Great-Fire-Spirit awak-

ened, and long after if possible. But the presence of seven strong fire elementals inside Rebworth's flesh is not enough. Moreover, they cannot control him quite as easily; the merging of eight personalities is chaotic at best. Rebworth *knows* something is wrong with him. He changes physically, quite quickly. His skin grows red, as if blistered in the sun, and he finds himself with a dizzying fever. He would go to the hospital if it weren't for the whispers of the fire elementals pleading with him to *burn down the city*. Feeling as if he were possessed by demons, he flees to his church in a late-night wintry meeting with his minister, Joe Brown. It is at this point that Rebworth bursts into flames, an unexpected immolation. It burns him, the minister and the church, and the spirits are now left without a body.

Stranger still, the seven spirits are no longer seven individual spirits: it is now one grotesque amalgamation of burned flesh and limbs of flame. The Wound that opened beneath it only worsened the spirit's condition *and* its sanity. The weirdest part of all is the fact that the spirit seems to have fragments of Rebworth's personality — it certainly has many of his memories, and even some of his mannerisms and vocal patterns. The result is something singular, a spirit manifestation in a form not yet seen.

Hungry for more, the spirit hides until it finds the next body it can easily possess. It is not long before this fiery monstrosity has found a new home in the flesh of firefighter Cesar Flores.

What Is the Blister Man?

The so-called Blister Man (which can be a woman) is a Ridden that is possessed by a composite fire elemental. However, the elemental also shares some similarities with the Hosts, due to its aggregate nature. During the times the elemental dwells in a body, it also "collects" other fire elementals that dwell nearby, if possible. These spirits become one with the riding elemental, much as a Rat Host would consume lesser rats with which to merge.

This monstrous agglomeration of fire elementals mostly assumes the traits of whatever body within which it dwells (which grants extra freedom to scale its traits over the course of the story if need be). Some additional rules apply to its various forms.

• The spirit adds +3 Strength, +3 Dexterity and +2 Stamina to the host's Attributes.

• The Blister Man has following Numina: Claim (a slightly flawed version), Harrow, Magnetic Disruption. The Blister Man also possesses the Forsaken gift, Command Fire (see p. 111, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**), but it can use this to *summon* fire instead of just command it. Moreover, the damage caused by this flame is always aggravated. The Blister Man rolls its host body's Strength, after boosts, as a dice pool to use Command Fire.

• Assume that upon taking a body, the Blister Man gains one of the following mild derangements: Suspicion, Narcissism, Irrationality. If the subject already possesses these at mild levels, then he takes one in its severe form.

• The body lasts for six hours per point of Stamina. That means it exists for a minimum of six hours or a maximum of 30 hours before expiring in a bodily gout of flame.

The resultant explosion when a body expires is equal to an incendiary • explosion (see p. 179, the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) with a Blast Area of 3 and a Damage of 3. This damage is lethal, not aggravated.

• When taking the next body, the spirit doesn't necessarily take the first body it sees. The elemental waits for a body that the spirit assesses (correctly or incorrectly) to be robust of physique, but weak of mind.

• The Blister Man has (or, believes it has) parts of all of its host body memories. No matter the physical shell, the spirit bounces between personalities and vocalizations like a ricocheting bullet.

The Seven Conflagrations (Imin U'Izich)

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 7, Resistance 4
Willpower: 5 (reduced by the spirit's inner turmoil)
Essence: 12 (20 max)
Initiative: 11
Defense: 8
Speed: 20
Size: 5
Corpus: 9
Influences: Fire ••, Temperature •
Numina: Claim, Command Fire, Harrow, Magnetic Disruption
Ban: The Seven Conflagrations are tied to the solar cycle, one of the reasons that they must start one fire per day. The composite spirit is at its weakest at midnight; at that point, its Defense is halved, and the spirit suffers a –2 penalty to use any Influences.

Spirits are already removed from the patterns of human thought, and this one has gone insane. It is, in effect, seven lesser spirits with seven slightly variant personalities smashed into one. That's not considering the other *human* minds that the spirit thinks are not a part of it (but really aren't). The spirit pursues the burning of the city of Chicago with single-minded zeal, whispering little prayers to the Great-Fire-Spirit before committing itself to another body.

Note that when taking a body for itself, the spirit does not abide exactly by the rules found on p. 276 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. The rules are mostly the same, except that, in the contested Claim roll, each roll for the spirit only represents one *minute* of time instead of one *hour*. The spirit, however, only has 15 minutes (i.e., 15 rolls) available to it to try to take over a body. If the spirit fails to accumulate the 50 successes in that time, the spirit must reject the body and attempt to find another. This does cost three Essence each time, as normal.

Ending It

Ending this story involves dealing in some way with the Blister Man and its controlling spirit, the Seven Conflagrations. How characters deal with this should be left to them. They have some options available.

Destruction: Destruction of the entity is the likeliest course of action for most Forsaken. They are creatures of war, meant to tear and rend flesh from bone. Destroying the Blister Man is tricky, however. Obliterating its physical form only causes it to explode as it normally would. If the spirit of the Seven Conflagrations isn't caught, it will flee into the Shadow, hiding until it finds another human mount. As such, the pack must also venture into the Shadow and destroy this spirit before it manages to take another body. Killing the physical shell in a populated area means the spirit has a veritable buffet of bodies from which to choose. However, luring it into an abandoned area (old stockyards, the tunnels beneath the city, an abandoned tenement) means that the spirit cannot immediately hit another body. This gives the pack more time to attack the spirit in the Shadow. Battling both the Blister Man and the Seven Conflagrations should not be at all easy. Give this battle the weight of a climactic struggle. The pack might not be alone in the fight, either — any allies they've picked up along the way may contribute to the entity's total destruction. Once the spirit is destroyed, it may discorporate and reform if its Essence is not somehow drained.

Vulnerabilities

While not intrinsically tied to the spirit's ban, you are free to give the characters a boost by penalizing the spirit with a vulnerability to water, ice or snow. A gift like Killing Frost (see p. 147, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**) can then be made to do great harm against the creature.

This vulnerability can manifest in one of two ways. Either the spirit suffers additional damage from water or ice, or it assumes penalties on rolls when the temperature drops below freezing. Because winter is prevalently cold at this juncture, this gives the pack an edge over the mad spirit.

Other Spirits: Other spirits can be made to contribute to the battle, or even handle the fight themselves. A number of other elementals do not like the fact that their fiery brothers have gotten so out-of-hand. As it stands, the elementals do not know the reality of the situation. If the pack were to convince them of the truth and point them in the right direction, they might very well swarm the Seven Conflagrations in an effort to consume and destroy it. (If this is the case, the physical shell of the Blister Man must first be destroyed to send the spirit back to the Shadow.)

Binding: Characters can attempt to bind the spirit using various methods. The Bind Spirit ritual will secure the spirit to an area. Ultimately, this means the spirit can still cause fires and other forms of havoc, unless the Forsaken choose a particularly appropriate spot (such as out on the lake) where the spirit can do minimal damage. Alternately, the pack can try to bind this being into a fetish using the Fetish Rite. This will be difficult (the spirit is certainly hostile), and whatever it is bound into will grow more tainted over time. Finally, the Ward of Spirit Slumber Gift can send the spirit into a very temporary slumber. This allows the characters to gain advantage over the spirit when using the previously mentioned binding rites (+1 on the appropriate rolls). For a rare twist, consider what happens if the characters (or another pack of Forsaken) try to take this spirit as a totem. Or worse, what happens when the Scorched Heavens pack rejects their own totem and begs for this spirit to be their fiery patron?

Diplomacy: While not necessarily the assumed conclusion to this story, don't disregard the possibility that the characters' pack can reason with the spirit. Cater the story to the pack's strengths. If they're a patient, methodical, investigative group, they may not be so willing to go in, claws bared. They might want to try subtler tactics. Ultimately, this spirit must be cowed in some way, and it *will* attack. But that's not to say that characters cannot reason with it or offer it something. Its demands will not be small, however. It may ask for something extreme like a single skyscraper given as "food" for its fire. (Most Forsaken won't allow such chiminage, but *may* feel that such a sacrifice is better than losing most of the city to fire once more.) The spirit may ask for a large number of other elementals (non-fire) to be killed. The spirit might instead ask to be given a locus all its own and a massive tithing of Essence daily. All diplomacy should be given to great tension, not knowing how long the chiminage holds up. The spirit is mad, though not altogether impractical.

Just Beginning?

It's up to you and the players to determine if this story is a self-contained piece, or really just an opening chapter. Chicago has a long history of fire and sickness, and this story can ultimately be a lead-in to a much bigger story. For one thing, the city is now peppered with little scorching Wounds all across its Shadow. While the characters aren't ultimately responsible for closing all of these up (most Forsaken

have interest in helping seal shut these vicious spiritual scars), the characters may want to lend a hand.

The bigger issues at hand are those of imbalance. Destroying this spirit and its physical host doesn't necessarily end the imbalance. The winter is still tough, and the Forsaken are likely to realize what a toll that has had on the city's Shadow. Can the characters help to dampen the ferocity of winter's embrace? Plus, what was sacrificed during this story? Things have changed. Some werewolves may have perished. Some, including the characters, may have lost territory or loci in the struggle. The balance of power is potentially also off its axis, and in times of such uncertainty, there's no telling who or what will come into the game.

Most worrisome of all is that constant threat of fire that hangs over the city like a choking cloud. No, the supposed Great-Fire-Spirit didn't stir from its slumber and burn the whole city down, but the spirit *could* have. And just because it didn't this time doesn't mean that other spirits — or packs of Fire-Touched — aren't now all the more interested in awakening the hungry spirit. Chicago has long had a worrying relationship with fire, and this story might be the signal flare to let the characters know that bigger blazes are coming.


MAGE
THE AWAKENING



SECOND AGE OF THE SECOND CITY

No object is mysterious. The mystery is in your eye.

—Elizabeth Bowen

Chicago is the Windy City, and here the winds of change scour the community of mages who call this metropolis their home. The heartland of America bears the stamp of its history, from its earliest days as a center of trade and, perhaps, spirituality for the various native tribes that lived or crossed through the land around the "Great Water" to its modern history as one of the world's busiest cities and a magnet for violence and discord.

The first Chicago mages may have been shamans or medicine men of the Potawatomi tribe, but the influx of white settlers to the area led to the ultimate disappearance of those first practitioners of magic.

Before the Fire

The first western mages traveled to Chicago with the early settlers. Some believe that a small number of members of the Adamantine Arrow arrived with the army and fought — and died — defending Fort Dearborn's first, bloody incarnation. Indeed, legends within the mage community tell of great magical battles between the Arrow mages and Indian shamans, where volleys of magical power flew back and forth and, often, grounded themselves in the earth. Some say the earth awoke that day.

The second Fort Dearborn signaled the rise of Chicago as the center for trade and the rise of the famous Chicago stockyards. Mages returned to claim territory in a land to which they seemed inexorably drawn. First in line to assert their sovereignty were the Silver Ladder and the Adamantine Arrow, eager to pick up where they had left off, due to the Fort Dearborn Massacre.

Shamans in Hiding?

Did the soldiers and settlers eradicate the Potawatomi shamans? The mounds and earthwork structures that remain as a testimony to those early inhabitants of the area may not be just architectural and anthropological curiosities. Area mages have reported strange resonances coming not only from parts of the city that once served as centers for Native American activity, but also from certain items and artifacts in the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in nearby Evanston, Illinois.

Other mages, particularly those of the Acanthus and Thyrsus Paths, have sensed the presence of ghostly mages around them. These shadowy figures dance in and around the observers' peripheral vision and lurk in their dreams. Whether these appearances are a warning or a plea for assistance, no one has yet been able to discover. The debate also looms large among recipients of these dreams or visions as to whether they are actually receiving messages — for good or ill — from hidden shamans or whether they are merely picking up some eternal ghostly residue of a civilization long past.

While the Arrow strove to keep order (at least among other mages) in an increasingly lawless town, the Silver Ladder sought to climb its way to the top of the power and influence heap. But just as there were mages at the high end of the social spectrum, there were also mages in the shanty towns and workers' part of town. Made up mostly of apostates, these less-than-savory mages led lives fully as savage and corrupt as those around them.

The Banishers entered Chicago along with the influx of traveling evangelists. The Banishers' extravagant and often vulgar approach to quashing magical displays and striking down the unholy drew attention away from the real threat to mages that was creeping into the city.

For reasons as varied as there are speculators, Chicago burned in 1871. In one night, many mages found their sanctums burned, their power bases gutted as the winds blew heat and fire throughout the city. Not long after, however, Chicago rose from its ashes like the phoenix. This time, the buildings were stronger, and they carried with them the spirit of something new.

After the Fire

The new Chicago held out hope for many groups in America seeking to build a life or make their fortune in a land far from the old world of the East Coast. In this desire to find a bastion of strength and safety, mages were no different. They, too, flocked to Chicago in search of knowledge, opportunity and power.

Not surprisingly, wars broke out among factions of mages both within the Pentacle and between Pentacle mages and Seers of the Throne. Most often, these groups struggled for possession of knowledge. The Chicago Public Library became the focus for decades of conflict as first the Seers and then one or the other mage orders claimed territorial rights over the building and its contents. Most prominent among the mages seeking to establish their sovereignty over the library was the Mysterium. During the course of the late 19th and early 20th century, a secret war for knowledge simmered throughout the libraries of the city, fought with disinformation and lies hidden in the pages of seemingly ancient books, hidden away in the libraries like landmines.

Currently, the Seers hold ascendancy over the main library building and its contents. Their hold is not likely to change anytime soon unless a concerted effort is made to remove them from the premises.

Exposition and Imposition

The World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 forever changed the tenor of Chicago, setting it on a course for the future, giving the city an instant reputation as a city of progress, change and great social experimentation. For mages, this grand exhibit was both a celebration and a caution. Some factions urged their members to be wary of growing too enamored of the so-called enlightened atmosphere of the Exposition. Atlantis fell, they said, from hubris. Others, in particular the Free Council mages, saw the Exposition as a sign that the world had moved one step closer to total world awareness, or enlightenment.

The emphasis on science and progress suited the Seers, since the ability to explain away magical workings as products of natural law or human invention bolstered their agenda of keeping Sleepers unaware of the presence of mages among them.

On the other hand, the growing popularity of theosophical religions, spiritualism and other mystical fads lent credence to the belief in magic and made it easier for the mages of the Pentacle to go about their business with only a minimal attempt at disguising their workings. These groups also provided an effective camouflage for the mages who gathered together with other self-professed "seers" and spiritualists to protest the reversal of the Chicago River in 1900. To this day, the Consilium mages are undecided whether this travesty of nature was effected with the help of greedy Pentacle mages or whether the Seers of the Throne backed the change to the river in hopes of draining its potential to serve as a source of magical power.

The Roaring '20s and Beyond

When Prohibition brought the culture of the speakeasy, bathtub gin and illegal alcohol to Chicago, the city erupted in gang warfare. The city's mages found themselves caught up in the tenor of violence and corruption sweeping the area. This, for them, was the ideal time to carry out old vendettas, fuelling the anger that had been building up between rival mage factions and eliminating the competition.

The Irish-Italian polarization of the city found its way into mage factions as well, sometimes dividing cabals and even affecting the harmony of the magic community at the level of the orders. The Guardians of the Veil fell out of favor at one point when other mages observed a preponderance of Italian members. Only an outside directive and the threat of a general purge from the highest levels of the orders forced a restriction of the violence to largely non-lethal brouhahas. During this period, the Consilium tried to maintain a careful balance between these two groups, with only limited success.

The influx of blacks from the Deep South in the years following the World War I not only expanded the city's ethnic variety but also brought mages whose practices reflected either their Southern or African roots, and sometimes both. The concurrent birth of the Chicago blues culture provided a base for mages of the ecstatic and charismatic practices, whose rotes emphasized a spontaneity and intuitive outpouring, unlike their more formal and cerebral counterparts. Mages arising from these population groups generally joined the Free Council or the Mysterium orders.

Political Machines and Magical Workings

The growth of the great Chicago political machine in the latter half of the 20th century likewise mirrored a change in the tenor of magic in the Windy City. Echoing the prevailing atmosphere of political machinations on both the national and local levels, mages divided into conservative and liberal camps according to their goals and methods. The Silver Ladder and Guardians of the Veil continued to stratify their organization and limit advancement of members of their orders to those who met "approved" standards. Opposite them, the Free Council mages developed a more egalitarian approach to their membership. The political turmoil of the 1960s served as cover for upheavals within the magical community.

This divisiveness set the stage for a major rift in the society of mages, which, until now, had managed to retain at least some commonality of purpose and a modicum of solidarity against greater foes.

The War of Mages

In the early 1980s, rumors began circulating among mages in the Chicago area of the discovery of an ancient artifact, thought to be lost in the fall of Atlantis. This item, the Celestial Flange, had long fascinated members of the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil, in particular. Now, the possibility of the artifact's existence in Chicago would occupy the attention of the majority of the city's mages — and their enemies.

Tension built as cabals faced off against one another, each believing that another cabal possessed secret information about the Flange. Finally, in 1987, the competition to be the first to find and claim the Flange erupted in open warfare among the cabals. The Sleepers saw a rise in gang and neighborhood violence as cabals hid their attacks behind gang wars and civil disturbances. That summer, many fires, outbreaks of illness, strange accidents and even a fatal heat wave were seen by some mages as attacks from their enemies.

Trusts and friendships eroded in an environment of magical disguises, petty lies and human strife projected onto a backdrop of mythic significance. In the still, stifling air of that humid year, many mages died in the name of an Atlantean artifact, but many more were killed for much more earthly reasons. Cabals peeled apart when careless emotional outbursts stirred up old grudges. Alliances dried up when the spark of magical power ignited the fuel of love triangles, jealousy and simple greed. In the Fallen Realm, the heirs to Atlantis did not seem so high or mighty.

The Seers of the Throne involved themselves as well, determined to prevent any of the mage factions from discovering the whereabouts of the Flange — or even ascertaining proof of its existence.

During the course of the war, the whole Delphi cabal, which had served as the primary Mysterium presence in Chicago, was destroyed. Other cabals were broken by curses and internal dissent. Wizards were found washed up on the shoreline near Belmont Avenue and crushed under the iron wheels of a Red Line train. Many mages fled the city, never to return. Others simply vanished.

The Hierarch of Chicago's Consilium fell in what would be the final battle of this war. The city's oldest mage, Airyaman, assumed a mournful leadership of the Consilium. When Manipra (otherwise known as Theodore Walsh) arrived in Chicago in 1989, Airyaman recognized that this newcomer possessed the abilities of a true leader and turned over the leadership of the Consilium to him. Manipra wisely sought to bring together cabals of different orders to strengthen the mage community and to attempt to heal the wounds of the war.

The Present Day

The last decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st have been spent picking up the pieces and attempting to re-forge a communal identity for the various mage cabals of the city. Once more, mages are coming to Chicago to stake their claim to its strong magical presence and investigate the city's mysteries. Chicago's magic is laced with violence, debauchery and the taint of corruption, but the city's magic is also rich with enterprise and invention, a heady brew for new and old mages alike.

This is an era of caution and uncertainty. Many new cabals are unaware of their nearest neighbors. Many new mages must relearn the secrets and truths uncovered by the wizards who lived in Chicago before them. The winter that followed the Mage War is thawing, and new seeds are starting to bud — new roots must be put down in the old soil.

The Consilium

The Consilium in Chicago has remained relatively stable since Manipra assumed the position of Hierarch in 1989, following the interim rule of Airyaman. Each of the five orders is represented by a Councilor (including the Hierarch). Five Provosts, one chosen by each Councilor, serve as personal assistants to the persons who appointed them. There are currently two Heralds and three Sentinels to serve the needs of the Consilium, but recent events surrounding the search for the Celestial Flange and indications of greater interference by groups such as the Seers of the Throne and the Banishers has led Council members to believe that more Sentinels and Heralds may be needed in the near future.

The Consilium meets once a month on the 13th at the Glessner House in the Prairie Avenue Historical District. Manipra, *de facto* head of the Guardians of the Veil in Chicago and head of the Walsh Industries cabal, serves as the Hierarch, a position he has held since Airyaman stepped down in his favor. Manipra seeks to bring a business-like expertise and confidence as well as

his considerable monetary resources and social clout to the Consilium of mages. He is assisted by fellow Guardian Saena, who serves as his Provost.

Mages of the Consilium

Hierarch: Manipra (Guardians of the Veil)
Councilor 1 — Adamantine Arrow: Deathsong
Councilor 2 — Silver Ladder: Altus Vulcanis
Councilor 3 — Mysterium: Libra
Councilor 4 — Free Council: Laplace
Provost (Hierarch's): Saena (Guardians of the Veil)
Provost (Adamantine Arrow): Princess Kundalini
Provost (Silver Ladder): L'Etranger
Provost (Mysterium): Melpomene
Provost (Free Council): Southpaw
Herald 1: Rose
Herald 2: Triplex
Sentinel 1: Chevalier
Sentinel 2: Mimir
Sentinel 3: Kid Chaillot

Demesnes

Most of the established cabals in Chicago have their sanctums in a Demesne. Younger cabals sometimes have to wait to create a Demesne until the members trust one another enough to create the soul stone or stones necessary to form the heart of a Demesne. The most prominent Demesnes are described below, but they are by no means the only such places in Chicago.

Glessner House

(Sanctum •••••, Hallow •••••)

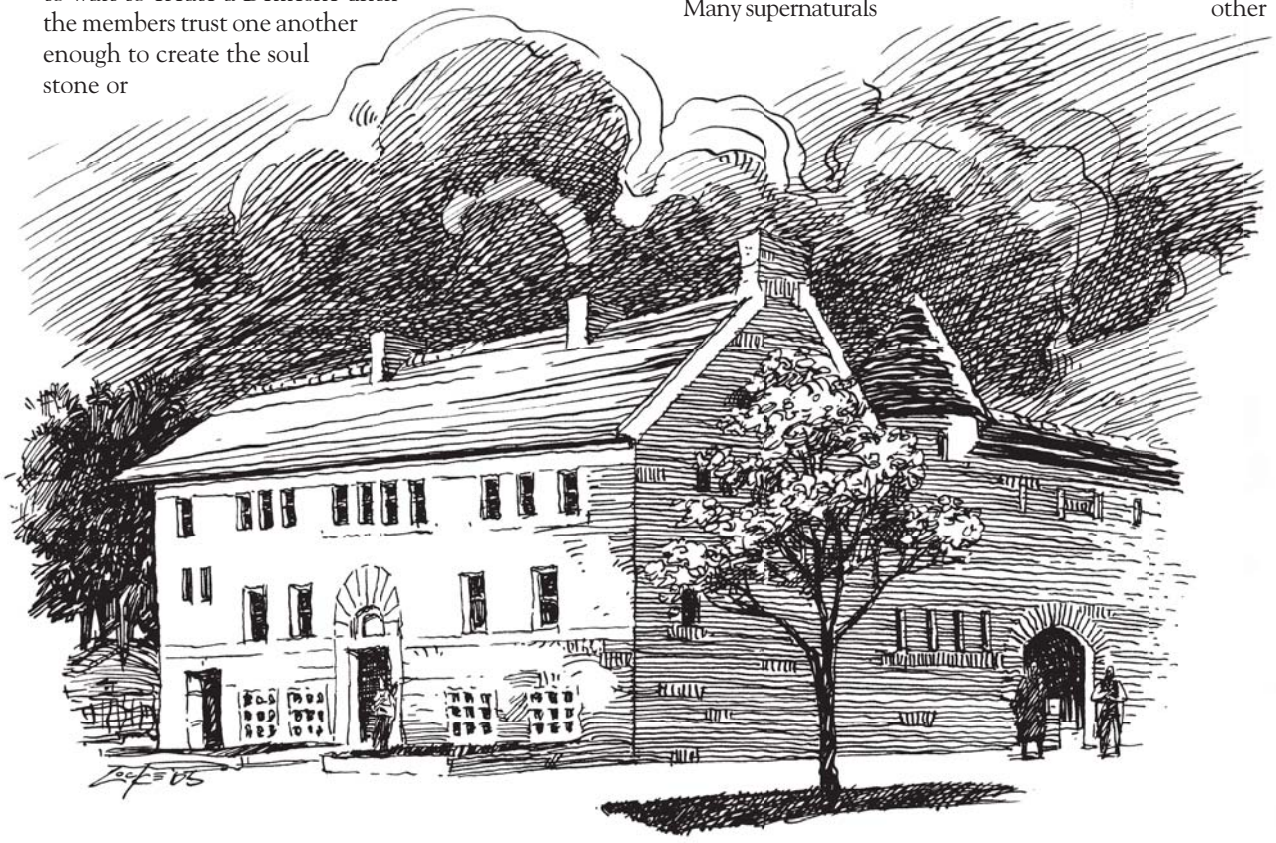
This 10th century house designed by H.H. Richardson, the Boston architect, and built in 1886, resembles an English stone abbey. The Romanesque structure and its carriage house are all that remain of a block once filled with fashionable mansions. As an historic building, Glessner House has been preserved as a museum and hosts escorted tours daily, except for Mondays, when the house is closed.

Surrounded by emptiness, this warmly elegant mansion and its grounds contain powerful wards that protect its "shadow life" as the headquarters of the Chicago Consilium. Glessner House resonates with warmth and tradition, reinforced by its William Morris wallpaper and fabrics, original furnishings and hand-carved picture frames.

The Abattoir

(Sanctum••, Hallow •••)

Located in Old Town among several other mid- to high-end dance and performance clubs, the Abattoir serves as the home of one of Chicago's most diverse and important mixed-order cabals, taking it name from the club. The unique atmosphere of the specialty club and its official policy of tolerance gives it a resonance that imbues all who enter with a sense of peace and a tendency toward non-violence. Many supernaturals other



than mages congregate here and the Abattoir has become a frequent meeting ground for small groups wishing to resolve problems in an area of neutrality and pacification.

U.S. Cellular Field (New Comiskey Park) (Sanctum •••, Hallow •••)

Built in 1991 to replace the antiquated old Comiskey Park, New Comiskey Park features an old-fashioned look with up-to-date accommodations for spectators, including an exploding scoreboard and over 40,000 seats. Though the baseball field was renamed U.S. Cellular Field in 2003, it retained its ties to the old park in more than just the memories of the fans. When the park was first built, the dirt from the infield of old Comiskey Park was transferred to the new field.

This was more than a touch of sentimentality, for, over the years, the old park had become saturated with Mana, thus making it a Hallow. The resonance of energy, excitement and the thrill of competition attracted the members of the Game of Geometric Perfection cabal. Through the placement of the park's soul stone deep under the earth in the infield, the entire park has become a Demesne.

Walsh Industries Headquarters (The Loop) (Sanctum ••••, Hallow •••••)

The top 10 floors of the 50-story Edwards-Hagen Building, near the bend in the Chicago River that marks the northwest corner of the Loop, serves as the sanctum for the Walsh Industries cabal, named after its leader and the Consilium's Hierarch, Theodore J. Walsh. Since the location almost abuts the NW Loop Hallow, the building is an ideal place for the cabal to draw upon the nearby supply of Mana. Though Walsh Industries owns the upper part of the building outright, in reality, Walsh owns the rest of the building as well, having purchased it through one of his holding companies, TJW Ltd. The other tenants of the building have been carefully vetted by Walsh and the other members of his cabal, who have screened out potential troublemakers of both the natural and supernatural variety.

The Adler Planetarium (Northerly Island/Southern Grant Park) (Sanctum ••••, Hallow ••••)

Located on Northerly Island across the Burnham Park Harbor, the Adler Planetarium is a striking building, with 12 sides corresponding to the zodiac. Presenting adult and children's programming with sky shows and closed circuit link-ups with the Doane Observatory telescope, the planetarium also offers exhibits featuring the history of astronomy as well as exploration of outer space. The cosmic nature of this building as well as its picturesque location have reinforced the strength of the Mana that has gathered here over the years. Currently the home of the Starry Night cabal, this building resonates with a feeling of undiscovered secrets and limitless possibilities overlying an uneasy sense of cosmic dread.

Flinty Strummer Mansion (Gold Coast) (Sanctum ••, Hallow •••)

The Castle cabal has its sanctum in this large, three-story mansion near Lincoln Park. Located along Chicago's northern shore amid the gentrified houses of the rising monied classes, the Castle seems part and parcel of the area's ambience. Two kinds of power are present in this area and contribute to the "flavor" of the Mana that gathers in this Hallow — the power of money and privilege and the power of nature to persist amid urban sprawl. Secret passages within the house lead to the basement sanctum, a place as luxuriously appointed as the house proper. Though only a minor Hallow, the Demesne it incorporates shows every sign of growing, if the Silver Ladder has its way.

Cassandra's Visions Bookstore (West Side) (Sanctum •••, Hallow ••••)

Near a site ravaged by the Great Chicago Fire, the magical emanations are powerful and the cabal known as Cassandra's Visions has made a home for itself in this volatile area. The mages who meet here profess loyalty as a cabal to the Guardians of the Veil, and this site, with its violent and volatile history, seems to warrant special attention. The nature of the bookstore, which specializes in rare and occult books, also attracts a measure of Mana and magical attention. Cabal members have decided to limit the power of their sanctum since the Mana here is powerful enough to overwhelm them if they are not careful.

Embers and Ash

Fire sleeps. In the timbers of old buildings, in the coals buried in the earth, the Fire slumbers, waiting for its next night of rule over the city.

Fragments of the Great Chicago Fire lurk in the buildings around Cassandra's Visions in the form of minor spirits. Every few years, one of these spirits grows agitated with its diet of cigarettes and gas ranges and conspires with others of its kind. Now someone else is conspiring with them to orchestrate an effort on behalf of a handful of fire spirits. For the bookstore, such an event would be disastrous. Who is this spiritual conspirator? Is it a mage or a vengeful Uratha? Do the characters combat the fire spirits, provoking their ire and risking Cassandra's Visions, or do they quietly try to convince the cabal to move to a safer location?

Northhall Manor (The Ridge) (Sanctum ••, Hallow ••••)

This elegant three-story mansion is the home for the Hip Flask cabal. Because the mansion is filled with curios and antiquities as well as a large collection of arcane lore, much

of the area's resonance comes from the house's contents as well as from the area itself. The Hip Flash's sanctum proper, where the cabal performs magical workings, is in a hidden room near the basement's vault, where the cabal's most valuable and dangerous possessions are stored. The entire house, however, amplifies the power of the Hallow upon which the building stands.

Greenstone Church (Pullman District)
(Sanctum •••, Hallow •••)

The basement of this nondenominational church built by George Pullman in the 1880s is home to the Banishers' cabal, the Other Shore. The Mana that gathers here has a very neutral aspect to it that lends itself to accommodating any group. The members of the Other Shore have skewed the magic of the area toward their anti-mage, pseudo-religious persuasion, causing the neighborhood to radiate an aura of polarization and fanaticism.

The Field Museum of Natural History
(Burnham Park) (Hallow ••••)

A forgotten storage area in this marble structure modeled after Greek Classical style serves as an occasional meeting ground for all manner of occultists historically minded intellectuals, Awakened, undead and other. Surrounded by ancient history, both human and prehistoric, such folks are able to take advantage of a place filled with old power that has more than a touch of primal nature permeating it from the dinosaur skeletons, authentic Egyptian mummies and stuffed, man-eating lions of Tsavo, called the Ghost and the Darkness. The treasures of the Field Museum are too precious to be gambled in a turf war, so the place has been something of an informal neutral ground for decades.

Disciples' Retreat (Hammond, Indiana)
(Sanctum •••, Hallow ••••)

This fringe suburb of Chicago serves as a retreat for the Disciples of Nehjarra. A complex of buildings on several acres of land house the cabal members as well as various "disciples." The main building serves as the sanctum, while the entire property makes up a Demesne. The Mana that gathers in the Hallow on this property is strangely twisted and touched with both fanaticism and zealotry. There is a latent sense of violence here, as if a *jihad* could erupt in this place, given enough provocation.

Monroe West Tower (The Loop)
(Sanctum ••, Hallow •••)

Headquarters for the Seer pylon known as Executive Suite, this spacious skyscraper built in the 1980s occupies a position near the center of the Loop. Modern in both its architecture and its furnishings, this building focuses its Mana, which comes from an underground well beneath the building's foundation, on the pylon's goal to eradicate the practice of magic by Atlantean mages. The overall sense of power associated with this building has a distinct feeling of frantic effort and corporate negotiations.

Harold Washington Library Center
(The Loop, Dearborn Street)
(Sanctum •••, Hallow ••••)

Bibliotech, another Seer pylon, has its sanctum in the city's center for information preservation and dissemination. The heart of Chicago's extensive library system and the location for many of the city's special collections, the Washington Center is replete with a sense of knowledge. The pylon that uses this building as their sanctum reveres knowledge, properly controlled, and believes that those who understand the tyranny of magic will undoubtedly reject its use.

The dramatically winged green roof of this huge, red building is layered in sharp-edged decorative flourishes. These lick like flames off the building and shine like jade. Some mages speculate these are "arcane sails," designed to collect spirits and magical power from throughout the city. Thus, the whole bladed roof is a kind of mystic battery — if the rumors are to be believed.

Hallows and Ley Lines

Chicago is the focus of several major ley lines and Hallows. The most prominent of these are described here. The web of Hallows and ley lines sets the magical boundaries of the Chicago area and affects the practice of magic within the city and its surroundings.

Ley Lines

The most powerful lines of power that traverse the Chicago area are the Chicago River, the shoreline of Lake Michigan and the borders of the Loop. Other, smaller ley lines connect various Hallows within Chicago, but these three serve as major life lines for the mage community.

The Chicago River

One of the area's most powerful ley lines, despite the pollution over the centuries since the city's founding, the Chicago River occupies a central position in the city; its Y-shape divides the city into the North, South and West sides (with the lake forming what would have been the "East" side of the city). That very division into quarters has powerful magical correspondences with the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons and the four corners of the earth. The three parts of the river's Y-shape further divide the city into a region that is three parts earth to one part water — Lake Michigan. The element of earth is the least changeable of the primary four elements, indicative of Chicago's reluctance to change even when that alteration is for the better. The water in both the lake and river recalls the certainty that, however reluctant the city may be, change will come

river to double back on itself and produce some strange resonances.

The Lake Michigan Shoreline

The shoreline of Lake Michigan is a separate ley line that circumscribes the city's eastern side. As part of the massive waterway of the Great Lakes, Lake Michigan holds an almost infinite supply of power, making it both a powerful Hallow and a dynamic ley line that disperses its Mana all along the city's eastern shore. By feeding the Hallow of Lake Michigan, the shoreline's ley line serves to connect Chicago with every other city on the Great Lakes, from Chicago and Milwaukee to Erie and Buffalo.

The Loop Perimeter

Not only do the streets of the Loop delineate the area of financial power and commerce, they also funnel the flow of Mana laced with the power of business and industry into and out of the region. Those who know how to tap the power of this concrete and plastic ley line discover a lifeline into the heart of the city itself.

Arriving in the City

Raising a new generation of mages requires 10 to 20 years. The Mages War of the late 1980s resulted in the almost total breakdown of Atlantean magic in Chicago. The mages who did not die in the war or flee the city for less hostile climes went undercover to lick their wounds and try to figure out what went wrong.

The city's oldest surviving mage, Airyaman, held the Consilium together and maintained a holding pattern until the arrival of Manipra (Theodore Walsh) from England provided him with a strong leader to coax the mages of Chicago into some semblance of cohesiveness.

Manipra's ideas, taken from his business expertise, have gone far to pull together the remaining mages in Chicago, but their numbers are pitifully few. It has taken almost 20 years for new mages either to Awaken in the city or to migrate here from other places. Many of the new mages were children when Chicago's Mages War took place. Now they come together, new and old, to forge a new future, for better or worse.



Awakening in Chicago

In some cities, the Awakening of a new mage brings out the sharks as well as the dolphins, as mages who recognize one of their own try to round up the new mage before members of a rival order either usurp the new mage or, in some places, kill her before she can add to the strength of an order other than their own. At one time, Chicago was a city much like that. Orders fought one another each time a new mage Awakened.

This was especially evident when "Flange Fever" hit the magical community. Newly Awakened mages became cannon fodder, some without even knowing why they died. Others were grabbed up and forced into the fray, which burned out many new mages and sacrificed others to the ravages of Paradox in service to the race to solve the puzzle of and locate the Atlantean artifact. And all to no avail.

Currently, the newly Awakened find themselves courted by many factions, each of eager to rebuild their ranks. Once again, new mages become collateral of sorts, but this time they serve as a means for the orders to form alliances, rather than becoming casualties of a wasteful war.

The unwritten rule among Chicago's mages is that the nearest Demesne to an Awakened mage has the first right to "claim" that mage for the order. In truth, most mages realize that an individual's temperament and worldview governs the order he joins and that mages who are ill-suited to their first order often join the ranks of apostates later in life. Rather than see an increase in the number of unaligned mages, the orders in Chicago often act as brokers for one another, trading a new mage to an order more suited to him in return for some later favor.

Whether or not this practice survives the initial build-up of the orders' strength remains to be seen.

The Discovery

When a new mage Awakens in Chicago, the ingathering of magical energy that surrounds the newly Awakened alerts every mage within a long city block. Usually, as many mages as possible turn out to meet the new mage. While most mages come with the best of intentions, hoping to welcome another ally into the fold, some mages and the followers of the Exarchs do not have as benign motivations.

Downtown and the Loop

When a mage Awakens in the down-

block. Usually, as many mages as possible turn out to meet the new mage. While most mages come with the best of intentions, hoping to welcome another ally into the fold, some mages and the followers of the Exarchs do not have as benign motivations.

Downtown and the Loop

When a mage Awakens in the downtown area of Chicago, that individual becomes a candidate for recruitment by Walsh Industries' Guardians of the Veil or by one of the two Seer pylons, Executive Suite or Bibliotech. The critical factor lies in whether or not the Seers or the Atlantean mages reach the newly Awakened individual first.

In the race to reach the new mage first, the Seers have the edge in numbers, though Walsh Industries pursues new mages with a ruthlessness that only a business-oriented cabal can maintain. Both Kukulkan, lawyer and the member most connected to the Sleepers' reality, and Mimir, the cabal's spymaster, have ways of detecting and reaching the newly Awakened. These mages also have no qualms about causing an unfortunate accident for the same new mage if they see that their quarry is in danger of falling into the hands of the Seers.

Once Walsh Industries has claimed a mage and determined the individual's Path, the cabal makes an effort to determine the order best suited for the mage to join and then sees that the individual is turned over to the appropriate order.

This process has three advantages. First, it enables Manipra, the cabal leader and Hierarch of the city's Atlantean mages, to meet personally with every newly Awakened mage and assess her capabilities and weaknesses. Second, by turning over the mage to a rival order, Walsh Industries increases the number of favors owed to the cabal. Third, through this show of power and largesse, the other cabals in the city have a clear demonstration of Manipra's right to lead the city's mages.

Executive Suite, the Seers' pylon located nearest the business section of Chicago, is in direct competition with Walsh Industries for new members. While the Executive Suite would rather see a Sleeper remain asleep, they do acknowledge that they must fight fire with fire, and, in order to maintain a parity of power with the Atlantean mages, they must reluctantly allow promising Sleepers to Awaken and attempt to be on hand to spirit them away before Walsh Industries can stake their claim.

Lucretiana and Argent, the pylon's information-gatherer and enforcer, respectively, keep a keen eye out for such Awakenings. Their *modus operandi* involves a "ride" in a black stretch limo, during which a quick interview occurs. If the prospective new mage cannot be persuaded to join the Seers, the ride often results in a body appearing down by the waterside or in a back alley in the South Side.

Bibliotech rarely has to resort to such extreme methods. This pylon of Seers excels in the early identification of Sleepers on the verge of Awakening. Most of the individuals who Awaken within this pylon's territory are already predisposed to joining the Seers. Their emphasis on learning and the importance of information often succeeds in drawing many potential Atlantean mages into the Seer camp.

Hide and Seer

A strong magical sensation announces the Awakening of a new mage in the vicinity of the Harold Washington Library Center, and the characters happen to be nearly on top of the individual when it happens. Quick investigation can determine that the new mage is most likely an Atlantean, but the neighborhood is Seer territory.

The characters can involve themselves in the rescue of a mage who might be destroyed or forcibly converted, but they might have to resort to magic to do so. Furthermore, they may have to fight against a group of Seers sent to collect the newly Awakened mage. What if the characters have interpreted their magical senses wrongly, and the individual is a budding Seer? The actions of the characters may well determine the nature of their relationship with the Seers in Chicago.

Grant Park

The Grant Park region of Chicago is home to two Mysterium cabals, the Starry Night and the Mercurials. Mages who Awaken near this part of Chicago generally get snapped up by one or the other of these two cabals. The Mercurials, the older of the two cabals, through an unspoken agreement, gets first pass on any new mages, though Airyaman more often acts as a guide to help mages find their correct path than a proselytizer for his order. Orion Aeternum also keeps an eye out for mages who might seem a good addition to the Starry Night cabal, although, remembering the kindness shown to him by Airyaman as a new arrival, the Starry Night mage also tries to find the best suited order for any discovered mages.

Neither of these cabals deals violently with mages who don't suit their requirements, though they usually turn over any new Seers they find to the Consilium for disposal or, occasionally, for barter with the known Seer pylons.

The North Side

Individuals who Awaken in Chicago's North Side fall under the purview of a trio of Atlantean cabals. Farther north, in the suburbs, an apostate cult make efforts to recruit the newly Awakened into their eccentric society.

Old Town

The area surrounding and including Chicago's Old Town is the Demesne of the Adamantine Arrow cabal

known as the Abattoir. Operating out of the club named after the cabal, the Abattoir serves a central role in the community of Atlantean mages. The Chicago Hierarch Manipra was instrumental in persuading the former nomadic cabal of performance artists to remain in Chicago to assist with the rebuilding of the Consilium. The Abattoir, therefore, acts as a broker for the various orders in addition to providing defensive power for the city's mages.

New mages who Awaken in Old Town are invariably found by one of the Abattoir members and brought to the club for evaluation and eventual placement in an appropriate order. Because the Abattoir serves as a neutral meeting place for many of the city's supernaturals, the new mage also receives a quick and dirty education in the numbers and types of Awakened creatures who inhabit the Windy City.

Mages sent to other orders through the devices of the Abattoir become collateral in the metastructure of give and take, favor and obligation that helps maintain the delicate truce between rival mages in Chicago. On the occasion that the cabal finds a mage more suited to the Seers of the Throne or one who has had a vision of the Exarch rather than the Watchtowers, the Abattoir finds a way to manage the discreet disappearance of that individual, though occasionally an undercover recruiter for the Seers manages to identify and warn the potential Seer, giving an opportunity for an escape.

Though always on the lookout for a potential new member of the Abattoir, Chevalier, the cabal's leader (or ringmaster), has also been considering sponsoring a junior offshoot of the Abattoir, populated with the best and brightest of Chicago's Old Town newly Awakened.

New Kids in Town

A group of new mages (perhaps the characters) have Awakened at approximately the same time in the Old Town area, or else have gathered together at the Abattoir for some other reason. Cabal leader Chevalier helps them form into a cabal under the aegis of the Abattoir and the Adamantine Arrow, and gives them an assignment to help cement their identity.

An undercover recruiter for the Seers has been stealing new mages in the Old Town area and subjecting them to the Seers' standard "covert or die" routine. The body of a young, newly Awakened mage has been found in a Dumpster behind one of the area's night sites. The new cabal is being used as bait to identify and, if possible, capture the Seer spy alive for delivery to the Abattoir for "questioning."

The Gold Coast

Mages Awakening among the moneyed families of Chicago's Gold Coast usually find themselves approached by Llewellyn ap Pwyll, who is sometimes accompanied by Bella Lundi of the Silver Castle cabal. The order of the Silver Ladder once dominated Chicago's mages and now the order seeks to re-establish itself by increasing its numbers and eventually gaining the lead spot in the Consilium. As soon as order members sense the resonance caused by an Awakening mage, at least one of their number travels to the location and collects the new mage, who is usually in no shape to protest. Once safely ensconced in Flint-Strummer Mansion, where the Castle has its sanctum, the new mage receives a rigorous examination to ascertain her Path and her most likely order. In most cases, the Silver Ladder only keeps those mages already destined for their order. In some instances, they try to convince a mage who seems more qualified for another order to join the Silver Ladder instead. Though they do not yet resort to extreme measures when they host a new mage who refuses their invitation and does not accept initiation into the order of the Silver Ladder, the day may come when they find such a measure a necessity. For now, they play the diplomatic game and turn over mages to their most appropriate orders, all for a small price in favors, of course.

The South Side

Mages who Awaken in the vicinity of Chicago's U.S. Cellular Field draw the attention of members of the Game of Geometric Perfection, a Free Council cabal that is known for its unorthodox approach toward the philosophy of magic. The members known as Southpaw and Grand Slam are usually on the lookout for echoes of resonance from a new mage's Awakening and rush to the scene when they receive an alert.

The Geos are usually more concerned with making certain that a new mage finds her way to the most appropriate order than building up any of the orders, including their own Free Council. The Geos do, however, try to uncover any trace of original thought or especial creativity among the newly Awakened. Any who fits this definition is encouraged to join the Free Council. And, if a new mage happens to display a profound love of baseball, the cabal is always open for a new member with the right stuff.

The Ridge

The area of Chicago known as "the Ridge" serves as the Demesne of the Hip Flask, a cabal nominally in the Mysterium's camp but more interested in gaining knowledge than in hewing to any political line. Mages Awakening in this part of the city draw the attention of Rose, a no-nonsense, middle-aged woman, or Protagoras, an attractively stylish young man with a philosophical bent. Whichever cabal member locates the new mage sees that he is brought to Northhall Manor, where the Hip Flask lives and works. If the mage demonstrates an affinity with the work of the Hip Flask, he is deemed an ally and welcomed into the fellowship of Chicago's mages. Since the Hip Flask includes both members of the Mysterium and

a member of the Guardians of the Veil, the cabal is more than willing to initiate a new mage into either of these orders. If the mage proves to belong to another order, the Hip Flask will trade him to the appropriate order, usually in return for knowledge of one sort or another.

Largely made up of philosophers, thinkers and artists, the Hip Flask is not likely to resort to violent measures, except when members run across a mage who has Awoken into the order of the Seers of the Throne. Whenever this happens, the Hip Flask finds some way of solving the problem permanently.

The Pullman Historic District

Mages unlucky enough to Awaken near the Pullman Historic District on Chicago's South Side risk falling prey to the Banisher cabal called the Other Shore. These pan-religious zealots seek out the newly Awakened and give them three options: return to their Sleeping life, join the Banishers or be "purified," an exhausting and torturous ordeal that their bodies rarely survive. Those who realize that "purification" means execution usually accept one of the first two options.

The Banishers also conduct raids into other parts of Chicago, trying to get to the newly Awakened before one of the cabals or pylons can reach them. Confrontations between Banishers and Atlantean mages over the fate of a new mage are usually violent, resulting in high collateral damage at times and often resulting in the death of one or the other combatants. Attempts to establish the Duel Arcane as a means of deciding disputes of this nature have failed due to the Other Shore's refusal to "deal with the Devil."

The West Side

Mages who Awaken in Chicago's West Side neighborhoods generally receive attention first from the members of Cassandra's Visions cabal. Either Taliesin or, rarely, Cassandra herself responds after one of several cabal members senses the presence of a person about to Awaken. Some mages have claimed that one of the cabal's members even arrived several minutes before the Awakening epiphany occurred, as if she had either foreseen it or manipulated time in order to be there from the beginning.

The mages of Cassandra's Visions try to ascertain the best placement for any mages the cabal discovers. Since they are primarily associated with the Guardians of the Veil, they sometimes share information with members of Walsh Industries. Since Cassandra's Visions' headquarters is located not far from the site of the Great Chicago Fire, any new mages who Awaken in that vicinity are subjected to close scrutiny to make certain that they do not bear any taint from the hot, violent resonance of the Fire.

Fiery Visions

Since giving temporary shelter to a newly Awakened mage, members of Cassandra's Visions have had a series of dreams revolving around the Great Chicago Fire in which their new resident plays a significant part. Another vision leads them to the characters as a possible means of exploring the places touched by the Fire and uncovering its link to the new mage, whose future may depend on the results of the characters' investigation.

Does the new mage bear some sort of taint or act as a host for a spirit connected to the Fire? Is a malicious ghost trying to cause trouble on the West Side? Or is something even stranger going on?

The Indiana Border

Mages Awakening in Chicago's southern suburbs run the danger of being hijacked by members of the Disciples of Nehjarra, who reside in a large rural complex outside Hammond, Indiana, east of Chicago. Though they do not formally acknowledge themselves as apostates, the Disciples have been labeled such by the Consilium mages, due to the Disciples' unorthodox beliefs and approaches to magic and their refusal to participate in Consilium politics.

The Disciples are anxious to make as many converts as possible, whether Awakened or not, since the cabal maintains a support group of Sleepers to sustain their Awakened cabal. In fact, a mage might very well come from those who are already followers of the being known as Nehjarra (see Chapter Two). Other mages who Awaken in the area but are not already members of the cult find themselves spirited into a car or a van late at night and driven to the complex. There, if they do not accept Nehjarra, they simply disappear.

Something Rotten

Word has spread that the Disciples of Nehjarra are moving farther and farther out of their territory to proselytize and recruit new mages. In addition, the bodies of Awakened mages have been turning up in police stations south of Chicago, all bearing signs of some grisly cult murder. The Consilium fears that this blatant display of quasi-magical activity may launch a wholesale purge of magic in Chicago. Thus, the Consilium has formed an inquiry and potential strike team to investigate the situation and take whatever measures deemed necessary to halt the offending practice. The investigators have not been told to destroy the Disciples, however, but to stop those actions that may endanger the lives of Chicago's mages.

As an added complication, a small contingent of Seers is also on the lookout for the Disciples, since Seers do not distinguish between Consilium and Exarch-allied mages in the Seers' readiness to dispatch those who do not willingly join them. The characters may or may not choose to form a temporary alliance with the Seers against this common threat.

New Arrivals

Though the Windy City has a reputation as a "tough" town, mages who do their homework and advance cautiously through the city can find it not only hospitable but stimulating. Or, they can find themselves at the bottom of the river, if they do the wrong thing.

Before the Journey

A mage intending to move to Chicago, or even just visit the city, should take the time to prepare herself and become familiar with Chicago's magical geography and history. If the mage is in good standing with her current city's Consilium, she can find out some information through consulting with the leaders, such as the name and order of Chicago's Hierarch, the general Demesnes and the overall tenor of Chicago.

Information is not always reliable or current, and today's Hierarch could be tomorrow's apostate with a change in the political wind. But some knowledge is usually better than no knowledge at all, though the wrong knowledge can be worse than ignorance. Mages who attempt to find out beforehand who heads Chicago's Consilium or any other significant information about the city's magical community should make certain that their sources are reliable.

Who's Who

Finding out who the important mages in Chicago are before arriving in the city is always a good idea and can save the visitor a lot of trouble. Though no worldwide "Directory of Mages" exists, ways exist to find out the shadow names and perhaps something about the most prominent mages in any city.

Any contacts with the ruling mages of one's old city are useful for discovering the leadership of a new city. Most mages, for example, know that Manipra of the Guardians of the Veil heads Chicago's Consilium and that he has a reputation both in the magical community and in the outside world as a man of keen business acumen. More delving into his background through judicious use of the Contacts Merit can discover that he came from England after the Chicago Mage War in 1987 and that he has helped to restructure the city's mages and inject new life into a casualty-ridden society. Access to any sources of gossip about the magical community might dig up a hint of scandal about the Hierarch, such as the fact that he appears to have "lost" his wife, also a mage.

Another fact that is not difficult to discover about Chicago's magical society is that the club known as the Abattoir serves as a meeting place not only for the city's mages but for Chicago's supernatural population in general, and that the club is considered neutral ground. Another neutral meeting place is the Field Museum of Natural History.



Occasionally, the Internet can prove a valuable resource, particularly if the visiting mage has any connections to one of the online magical communities or cabals. Those mages who have managed to discover the Open Source's online presence may find out from them some carefully vetted information about the city's magical community.

Some of the more traditional cabals actually have phone listings accessible through their order. Consulting one of the higher-ups within a mage's own order can sometimes provide invaluable information, though it might also incur a debt of some sort.

Unfortunately, sometimes information about the goings-on in a particular city is less than current. Sudden changes in the Consilium's composition are always possible, so the mage who arrives in Chicago today runs a slight risk of discovering after the fact that the Hierarch has been replaced or that the entire city is under siege.

Who's Best Left Unnamed

In addition to finding out which mages are prominent in Chicago and which are the most approachable, discovering whether any mages are currently out of favor — and pose a danger if seen in their company — can also prove useful to the visiting mage. Of use as well is the knowledge of any enemies or rivals of the mage group a visitor desires to contact once in the city. Hooking up with the arch-rival of the mage whose help is needed to assist with breaking into Chicago's mage society is, at the very least, unwise.

What's Where

A fairly comprehensive knowledge of the magical borders within Chicago is not impossible to acquire through any of the above sources. If a mage is on good terms with his former city's Consilium, he can most likely receive information from that group as to the main regions occupied by Chicago's magical groups. This knowledge alone can avert many problems and avoid trespass on another cabal's Demesne.

Arriving in Chicago

A mage arriving in Chicago from out of town should have already conducted some research or received information about the magical make-up of the city. Mages on official business usually arrive prepared with the appropriate articles of introduction and a listing of the main cabals and gathering places. Such newcomers rarely cause problems since their arrivals are usually expected.

Not all mages travel to Chicago on official business. Many are fleeing bad situations in their former cities or are simply relocating because they believe they can better themselves or because they seek a change of scenery. These mages need to follow a few guidelines to ease their transition from one magical community to another.

Respect the Property of Others

A general knowledge of the Demesnes is always helpful. Knowing that the Free Council, for example, has a base near the home of the White Sox as well as an online community can prove invaluable for mages who tend toward less formal customs.

When a mage enters a territory he suspects is claimed by an existing cabal, sending out feelers of introduction is never a bad idea. Most cabals frown on the use of magic by a visiting mage until he or she has been properly vetted.

In Chicago, knowing that mages can meet in a neutral territory such as the Abattoir club may make the difference between a gentle introduction to the mages of the city or a hostile and sometimes violent response.

Trespass

Most territory isn't well marked. Some is outright disguised. Word has it that a cabal of mages operating out of O'Hare airport has been hiding from the Consilium for years, but a vampire body called the Carthians seem to know something about them. Who are these mages and why are they hiding?

The reason their turf isn't publicized among the Awakened is that these mages don't want visitors, they want victims. By tapping into the population of travelers moving through O'Hare every day, these mages can scrutinize all manner of mysterious Sleepers and the occasional Awakened stranger without having to share anything of their own. Sometimes these travelers go missing or leave the airport with the bizarre feeling that they've lost time. Do these victims have anything in common other than the fact they've trespassed on the secret territory of these hidden mages?

Know Where You Are

Not knowing that you are treading upon ground that belongs to a certain cabal can involve a visiting mage in a lot of trouble. Though open warfare among the orders no longer infests the city's streets, most cabals will accost or confront a strange mage who enters their territory unannounced.

The best of all possible situations consists of learning who is in charge of the territory you're entering and calling ahead in some form or another. Some mages use a simple magical utterance to announce their presence in a given territory. Others simply find a way to access a cell phone or pager. Older mages use the time-honored tradition of introductory letters, which can be presented when challenged and then delivered in person to the head of a particular cabal or to the Hierarch.

Know the Laws

Each city has its own rules and customs that cover most aspects of life in a magical community. For the most part, a visiting mage needs to know only one rule when he arrives. (With luck and the assistance of resident mages, the other rules will follow.) That rule is No Magic Before the Introductions Are Made.

For an out-of-town mage to come into town rotes blazing is the epitome of bad manners and a sure way to draw down the ire of most, if not all, the resident mages in the city. A spell of introduction or announcement is permitted if the magic is not vulgar in nature, but anything more than that is considered a lapse of good conduct at best and a violation of the Consilium's dictates at worst.

If the magic is either vulgar or results in harm to a resident Atlantean mage, the repercussions are usually direct and follow hard upon the "crime." Any mage is allowed to dispatch an out-of-towner who causes harm to a Chicago-based mage unless there is some compelling reason for the harm-causing action. Most mages will defend themselves regardless of rules, and if self-defense can be quickly proven, the offending mage may stand a chance of living to present his introductory letter or defend himself at a hearing.

And for the Defense . . .

The characters arrive in Chicago, and, before they can make appropriate introductions to the Hierarch and the heads of their respective orders, they are approached by a frantic mage formerly known to one or more of the characters. This mage is in trouble for publicly casting a spell that severely damaged a resident mage of Chicago. As the mage appeals to the characters for help, he is accosted by Sentinels and some drafted mages. The Sentinels insist that the characters come along, since they know the accused mage.

The characters face a dilemma. If they are allowed to speak with their friend, they find that he was acting in self-defense. A decision in his favor, however, might prejudice the Consilium against the characters. Do they involve themselves to the extent of helping their acquaintance? Why are they in Chicago and will risking the favor of the Hierarch jeopardize their business in the city?

When in Doubt, Be Silent and Inconspicuous

Regardless of how well a visiting mage attempts to remain unnoticed, she will be discovered eventually. If a mage has problems connecting with the resident mages of the city, her best bet is to remain under the radar. Find a modest hotel or, for a longer stay, acquire a residence in a part of town with little magical resonance and stay there until someone approaches.

Once the initial approach is made, the new mage can proceed with any introductions, messages or requests for permissions she wishes.

Good Behavior Is Safe Behavior

Once a mage has made the proper introductions and received a brief overview of Chicago's mage community, the responsibility falls upon the visitor to conduct herself appropriately. Until a community has accepted the mage, she should be cautious about exhibiting any behaviors that might call her up before a tribunal. Actions that might warrant such a repercussion include using potentially disruptive magic without receiving a clearance to do so, gathering Mana from a Hallow without permission, attempting to set up a cabal without permission from the appropriate order or failing to attend required meetings of the order. The fewer problems an out-of-town mage causes, the more quickly she is likely to become assimilated into Chicago's community of willworkers.

The Search for the Celestial Flange

Mages entering Chicago for the first time, whether or not they have come with an invitation, will most likely become caught up in the city-wide epidemic of "Flange Fever." Perhaps a newcomer may have information about this alleged Atlantean artifact that will buy him a warm welcome in Chicago's mage society.

Learning About the Celestial Flange

Discovering that Chicago's mages are involved in a race to find and claim something called the Celestial Flange is not difficult, provided a visiting mage does some research into the affairs of the magical community of Chicago. Recent history (i.e., events of the last 50 years) points to rumors of the Celestial Flange's existence in Chicago as one of the primary causes of the Mage War of 1987.

The most notable casualty of that war was the prominent Delphi cabal, the primary representative of the order of the Mysterium in Chicago. The knowledge that these older mages collected and stored reportedly contained important information about the Flange's location. Some sources even claimed that Delphi possessed the artifact itself. The Mage War overwhelmed the largely research-oriented cabal, leaving the mages dead or fled and their sanctum destroyed and ransacked for any information concerning the Flange.

The Mage War didn't so much end as peter out; most of the city's mages were either dead, had left the city or were so depleted of magical resources as well as the

will to fight that a truce was eventually hammered out. New mages were invited to enter the city to help revitalize the mage population, and a concentrated effort to enforce the co-existence of the various Atlantean orders became part of the Consilium's prime dictum.

Facts About the Flange

Research conducted before entering the city can educe a few bits of information about the Celestial Flange. First, the name "Celestial Flange" is an approximate translation from High Speech. The actual name of the artifact has passed into the mists of history, but the name seems to mean something along the lines of "cosmic unifying principle."

This tidbit has many mages believing that the Celestial Flange is an integral part of some larger mechanism or device or formula that could restore the glory and grandeur of the lost Atlantis. That fact alone would be enough to start a war for the artifact's possession. In addition, other bits and pieces of information grant unusual powers to the possessor, such as an extended lifespan (some even say the word *immortality*) and initiation into ranks of magic known only to the ancient Atlantean mages.

Other rumors hold that the Flange is a tool of the Exarchs and that it caused the destruction of Atlantis to begin with. The Flange's discovery, therefore, would not bode well for any continent in which the artifact now exists. The Seers of the Throne and the Banishers have become involved in the search for the Flange to prevent it from falling into the hands of any of the Atlantean mages and, particularly, to keep it out of the hands of Sleepers, who might unconsciously trigger its awesome powers.

A debate has ensued among the more cerebral and philosophical mages as to whether or not the Flange is actually a material object or if it is something more intangible, such as a formula or an entire ritual. A few suspect that the Flange is actually a person who bears the spirit of the Celestial Flange within her body.

Some mages believe that the Flange is a hoax. Either it is a red herring designed to occupy the mages of Chicago in a fruitless search and thus keep them from undertaking any projects of real importance, or else it is a deliberate trap set by the Seers or some other enemy group in order to lure Chicago's best mages to their deaths.

A rumor comes to the characters that the demise of the Delphi cabal is actually a hoax and that the mages of Delphi still exist in hiding somewhere in Chicago. Clues point to the vast underground network of tunnels and sewers or the lost railway stations, while other indications place the cabal somewhere within territory controlled by some other supernatural group.

The Flange and Chicago

Another part of the Flange's history links it to the city of Chicago, but the records are none too clear on just how this link was established. Some mages believe that the Delphi cabal possessed the information that made the Flange's relation to Chicago clear, but there is no way of recovering the cabal's information from the ruins of what was once their sanctum's library.

The most common belief concerning this bond is that the Flange came to the area that would eventually become Chicago with some mages fleeing the destruction of Atlantis. Cast out of their home, they traveled across continental North America until they discovered a place that felt "right." There, they built an edifice to house the Flange against the time when it could be used to rebuild Atlantis. This edifice, in later years, became one of the mounds attributed to the early mound builders. Later centuries saw the razing of the mound, without, apparently, finding the Flange, and the population of the region by various American Indian tribes. Eventually, American colonists, European immigrants and pioneers traveled from the East Coast to establish a settlement in Chicago, and most of the memories of the Flange were lost, until recently.

Another common rumor associates the Flange with the Great Chicago Fire. Those who hold this belief maintain that the Fire was caused by a botched attempt to use the artifact. Others believe that enemies of Atlantis caused the Fire in an attempt to destroy the Flange.

Finding information about the Flange is a challenge for any characters new to the city. Even more of a dilemma, though, is deciding whether or not to get involved in the city-wide search for this item. Almost all the cabals of the city are trying in one way or another to solve the mystery of the Flange and claim possession of it if it, in fact, exists. It may be impossible for the characters to avoid some form of involvement in so widespread and essential a search.

What Happened to Delphi

Characters who have researched the history of Chicago have undoubtedly heard of the Delphi cabal, destroyed in the Mage War of the 1980s. Since then, other Mysterium mages have come into the city to establish the order's presence and to continue Delphi's work. But most of the cabal's research has been destroyed, particularly their records concerning the Celestial Flange.

Flange Fever Returns

The search for the Celestial Flange nearly destroyed the mages in Chicago in the 1980s. For the most part, efforts to find the Flange have currently become largely a matter of scholarly research and pursuit. Until now.

Recently, information has come to the surface indicating that the Flange can be found somewhere in

the vicinity of U.S. Cellular Field. The characters are asked to approach the Game of Geometric Perfection cabal and attempt to gain permission to search the stadium. Depending on the characters' conduct and skill in persuasion, they may succeed.

If they manage to acquire permission and are allowed to be part of the search team, do they find the Flange? Storytellers should decide, first of all, whether or not the Flange is a real item and, if so, what its powers are. Second, Storytellers need to determine the actual location of the Flange or of information leading to its discovery.

A City on the Edge

Almost 20 years ago, the mages of Chicago engaged in a costly war, ostensibly over the search for an Atlantean artifact. Today, the city's magical community exists in a rare atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation. This spirit of unity was necessary to build up the broken mage community after the war, but there are those who believe that the time for cooperation is coming to an end.

In particular, the mages of the Silver Ladder are committed to gaining the leadership of the Consilium, either by peaceful means or by engineering the downfall of Manipra and his cabal. The Game of Geometric Perfection, while not overtly subversive, desperately wants to see a change in model from the Atlantean tradition to one more timely. While the cabal might not start a revolution against the leaders of the Consilium, the cabal would be strongly tempted to join one in progress.

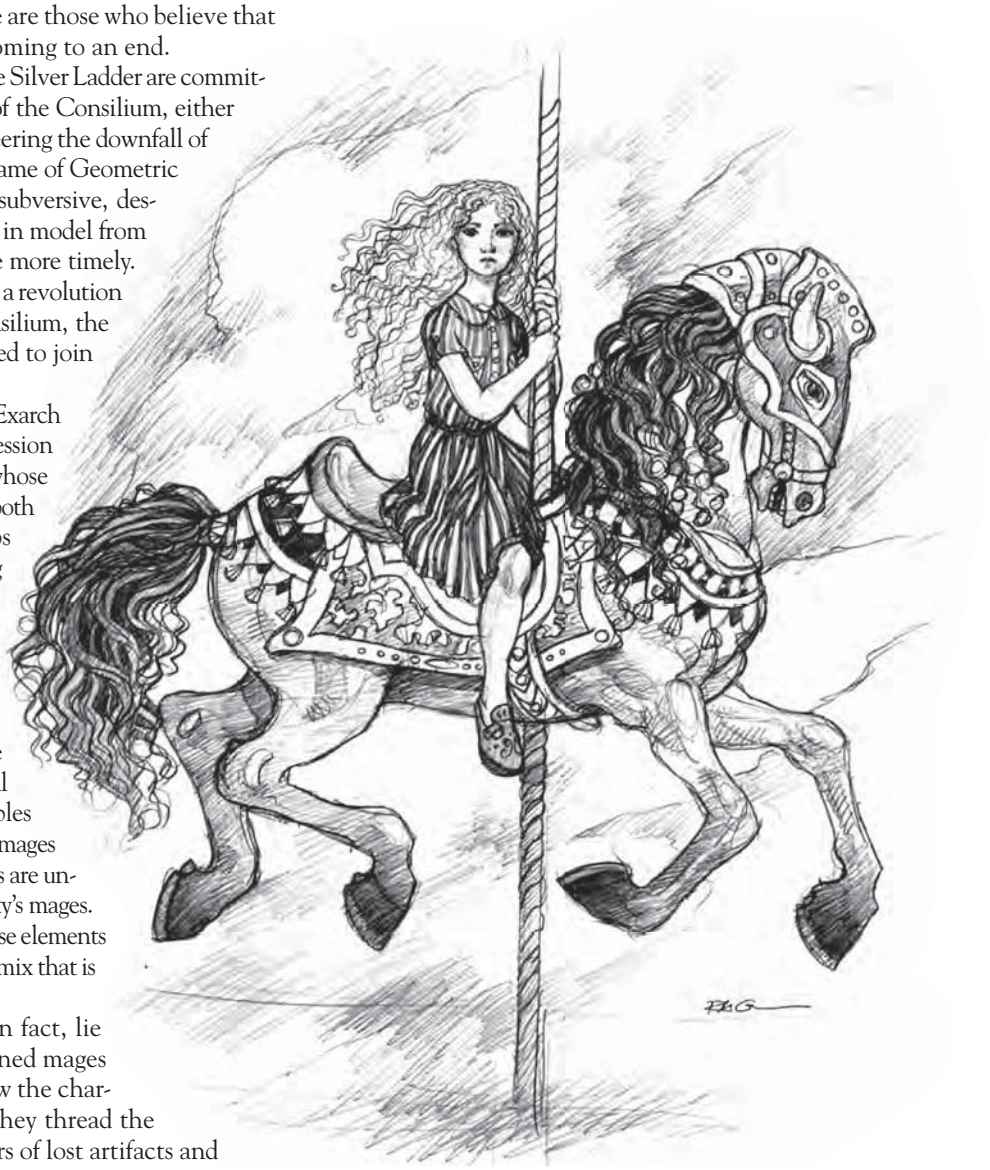
In addition, there are the two Exarch pylons dedicated to the suppression of magic and the Banishers, whose interests lie in the destruction of both magic and mages. Both groups would only profit by a war among mages, provided these Exarchs and the Banishers can keep themselves intact to celebrate their victory. These are real threats that involve all the mages of the Consilium. Then there are the odd members of the magical community, such as the Disciples of Nehjarra and the few solitary mages whose allegiances or motivations are unknown to the majority of the city's mages. Sparks might rise from any of these elements as yet not figured in the political mix that is Chicago's magical community.

The fate of the city may, in fact, lie in the hands of newly Awakened mages or newcomers to the city. How the characters handle themselves as they thread the maze of arcane politics, rumors of lost artifacts and mysteries involving historical conflagrations and lost cabals may go a long way toward deciding the outcome of the truce that has lasted for nearly 20 years.

Weird Chicago

Chicago is more than the physical city, with its skyscrapers, its cultural centers, its slums and its human cesspools, its middle-class mediocrity and its high-society decadence. The city is more than a political machine or a haven for sports fans or a bastion of learning in the Midwest. Chicago is many cities, each existing in a different time and each co-existing along a time/space continuum half-made of "hard" physics and "soft" memory.

Chicago's shadows embody these different times and places, and where the real city intersects with one of these older places (or even Chicagos yet to come), Twilight reigns. This chapter presents some of the different aspects of Twilight that Chicago's mages may have to confront, overcome or learn to endure.



Just a Song at Twilight: Chicago's "Other Side"

So much of Chicago's history has left an imprint on the Shadow Realm that many creatures and places exist in that halfway place between the material and immaterial universes. These Twilight phenomena are readily perceived by mages who are attuned to them or who make an effort to "see" them (i.e., use one of the various spells regarding seeing or sensing). Other supernaturals sense these places or creatures as well without much effort. Even mortals catch fleeting glimpses of what lies in Twilight, feeling an eerie chill or a sense of dread, perhaps hearing an odd noise just beyond the range of their usual perceptions. "*That old house down by the docks*" that no one likes to walk past or the strange, fey little girl that looks like the Little Match Girl and appears on cold nights outside a particular restaurant and disappears in the middle of the street whenever anyone tries to bring her inside to get warm are part of local legend.

The Twilight effects described below may interest mages in particular, though they are by no means the only aspects of Twilight in the Windy City.

A Place Apart: The Oldest House in Chicago

Built in 1836, before the city of Chicago officially existed, the house built by the Clarke family of Buffalo stands today as a monument to the history of the city itself. The Greek Revival style house, boasting a prominent portico with supporting columns as well as an Italianate finial and cupola (added later), has survived two fires and over 17 decades. Strangest of all, however, the Clarke house has weathered two physical moves.

Located first on 16th Street and Michigan Avenue, in 1872, the new owner, John Chrimes, relocated the house to 45th Street and Wabash Avenue, purportedly to escape from the noise and dirt of the growing city. In 1941, the house became the parish hall, community center and parsonage for the St. Paul Church of God in Christ. Finally, in 1977, the house was bought by the city of Chicago and moved once more, this time to a site in the Prairie Avenue Historic District not far from its original location.

Mages visiting the house during the hours in which it is open for tours have sensed an uneasy resonance, as if some restless spirit presses to move once more. While Sleepers seem to notice nothing unusual, more than one mage has sensed a strange emanation from the house itself, hinting of rooms where no rooms should be and passageways between non-existent rooms on floors that have no tangible shape in the material world.

Other tales link this house with the defunct Delphi cabal, either as a former sanctum or as a repository for hidden lore — thus explaining the presence of portions of the house that exist only in Twilight. A popular story circulating through the mage community tells how one cabal several years ago decided to investigate the house to search for some of these hidden rooms. They never returned, but mages who visit the house can sometimes hear faint noises that sound like the footsteps of a group of people, accompanied by voice-like murmurs. Attempts to locate the source of these noises have always led the investigator to a particular corner of the east side of the house's formal parlor. Those who persisted in trying to find an entryway to Twilight have been seized with a powerful feeling of dread and icy cold.

Down Under

Perhaps, some mages say, the cause of the odd resonances coming from the Clarke House lies (literally) in the ground where each incarnation of the house has rested. A local woman who, though not a mage herself, does receive glimpses from Twilight, has seen visions of cross-dimensional creatures bound beneath the ground in the former sites of the Clarke House. It's almost as if something were trapped in the "basement."

A few years ago, the Consilium put together an ad hoc cabal of mages, making use of all five Paths' particular talents, to investigate the former sites of the Clarke House, both on Chicago's South Side. Though the investigators received the proper permits from city authorities to gain access to the buildings that now occupied those sites, the cabal disappeared, though sources are unclear as to whether or not the cabal did so after visiting one or both of the sites.

Did the cabal run afoul of South Side gang politics? Or were the mages, instead, accosted by something more sinister, and their voices added to the many murmurs heard by mages visiting Clarke House in its third location?

Wanderer's Blues

Most of Chicago's best blues clubs are located in the city's Near North Side. Places like B.L.U.E.S. Etcetera, Kingston Mines and the New Checkerboard Lounge preserve a tradition that has been part of Chicago's history for many decades. One club in particular, however, has some very special properties.

The Wanderer's Blues has an entrance in an alley, where a small placard the size of a brick proclaims its presence. The doorway to this club is difficult to see, since it, too, appears made of the same brick as the alley. Anyone who sees the placard can push on the bricks next to the sign and the door will open.

Inside, the sound of blues as only Chicago can create permeates the smoky air. A tiny room with a few rickety tables showcases a plain wooden stage with an old-fashioned microphone and sound system. On most nights, an old black man perches on a stool as he wrenches the most exquisite sounds from his battered guitar and sings in a brandy-soaked voice that calls

to mind the sweat of hard labor and the profound despair of a cheating woman. This is blues at its most authentic.

Unfortunately, the club does not exist in any directories of the city or on any maps. The Wanderer's Blues is a club that is made entirely of Twilight. The original club, for those who track down its history, burned down in 1935 and a large brick apartment building has taken its place. (The club's entryway is in the alley next to that apartment building.)

Only Awakened individuals can see the club and, therefore, run the risk of being drawn inside. Time inside the club runs differently, and those who dally too long before leaving find that they have missed months or even years on the outside. But then, the music *is* excellent . . . .

Stormy Weather

A young blues singer who is a friend to one of the characters happily announces that she has a gig playing in an authentic Chicago blues club. She invites the characters to come hear her play but tells them to wait a couple of nights until she gets used to the feel of the club and gets over her customary case of nerves.

Characters who wait to see her have no trouble finding the club, but the singer performing looks like an older version (by about 10 years) of their friend. They may deduce from this that the club is not what it seems and that even as they sit in the club, they are losing more time on the outside than they are spending inside. They may realize that they must rescue their friend before she ages further.

Characters who do not wait, but attend on the first night, can see her visibly age as she sings song after song. They may, in fact, feel themselves aging and decide that it's time to leave. But can they leave? Or are there "regulars" in the club who try to prevent their leaving with the night's entertainment?

Home Plate: U.S. Cellular Field

Chicago has two baseball clubs, the American League's Chicago White Sox and the National League's Chicago Cubs. Though both teams have their passionate fans and their equally committed detractors, only the White Sox have lived through a scandal that might have destroyed any other team. In 1919, in the incident that came to be known as the Black Sox scandal, eight players, including the legendary "Shoeless Joe" Jackson, were alleged to have accepted bribes from the city's bookmakers to throw that year's World Series. The eight men were banned from baseball for life.

The Game of Geometric Perfection cabal, which claims U.S. Cellular Field as its Demesne, has attuned itself to the resonance of the ballpark, so much so that cabal members have sensed lingering spirits that re-enact that ill-fated World Series on an infield that was transferred from the old Comiskey Park when the new park was built.

Close examination of the emanations surrounding the infield indicate heavy saturation with temporal energies, and the cabal suspects that a portal through time may exist near home plate. Whether material beings or only the tormented spirits of the Black Sox scandal can traverse this portal has not yet been determined, but it seems that if such a portal exists, it links only the present with that brief period of time in 1919 during which the scandal took place.

No one has yet attempted to test this theory since the possibilities of sending temporal ripples both forward and backward are still under investigation.

"Shoeless" Joe Jackson: Ghost of a Fallen Hero

Background: Born in 1887 in the town of Brandon Mills, South Carolina, "Shoeless" Joe started playing professional baseball with the Philadelphia Athletics but was traded to Cleveland in 1911, establishing a record .408 batting average for rookies that has yet to be broken and leading the league in 1912 with a .551 batting average, or hitting just over half the balls thrown to him. Traded to the Chicago White Sox in 1915, Jackson continued breaking records and helped the White Sox to a World Series title in 1917 battling the New York Giants. Another World Series attempt in 1919 fared less successfully, as the White Sox lost to the Cincinnati Reds.

Jackson's career came to an abrupt end in 1920, when, in August, he and seven other team members were suspended for supposedly taking bribes to throw the Series. Later, in 1921, a Chicago jury found Jackson not guilty of the charges. Baseball's first commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, defied the jury and overruled their findings, thus banning Jackson and his co-defendants from the game for life. Shoeless Joe died in 1951.

Description: Standing 6'1" tall, Jackson's lanky figure and long, sad-eyed face epitomizes the attitude and image of professional baseball in its formative years. A left-handed batter who threw right, Joe was moved from pitcher to outfield and first base due to his bone-breakingly hard pitches. His nickname "Shoeless" came from a game which he played in stocking feet due to a serious case of blisters. A slow, thoughtful talker, he speaks with a slight southern drawl. He carries a ghostly image of his favorite bat, "Black Betsy."

Storytelling Hints: Joe's ghost hangs around the ball park, hoping to find a way to have himself absolved of his alleged crime. He maintains his innocence to all who listen, and grows outraged at any who suggest he might have deserved his lifetime ban. He wants nothing more than for his name and reputation to be restored and to be eligible for inclusion in the Baseball Hall of Fame, an honor denied him due to the ban. He tries to communicate with people who might help him; on rare occasions, he has attempted to possess a ball player for the duration of an at bat or an inning, just for the sensation of being in the game once more.

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 2
Willpower: 5
Morality: 5
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 4
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Essence: 8
Numina: Compulsion, Ghost Speech, Possession, Telekinesis

"Say It Ain't So, Joe!"

The ghost of Shoeless Joe has been active of late, wandering in the locker rooms of the White Sox and their opponents after hours and haunting the outfield of U.S. Cellular Field after the stadium has closed for the night. The local cabal, the Geos, want nothing more than to meet him and help him get out of Twilight.

But Joe's not alone out there. A spirit of corruption is following Joe, mimicking him and influencing ball players, fans and gamblers in his wake. This deceptive spirit even looks like Shoeless Joe and pretends to be him. At first, it's content to compel humans to wager on the games and get high on the job. Before long, however, the spirit is compelling players to cheat, take drugs and throw games. It's driving fans to curse and fight in the stands. The resonance of vice and corruption is getting so strong that other spirits are coming to get in on the action.

And, all the while, the Geos are blinded by Shoeless Joe's ghost. They believe Joe to be innocent (is he?), and aren't lending any credence to theories of spiritual maliciousness. It's all just "human failings." Can the characters save the White Sox, even if it means showing the Geos that Shoeless Joe can never be free of corruption?

Passages: Chicago on the Verge

If the history of Chicago were placed inside a magical tome that reflected its contents in its form, the book would have its blood-spattered pages bound in the hides of slaughtered cattle, while a tracery of bullet holes would form a tooled design down its spine. From the massacre at the first Fort Dearborn to the river of blood flowing from the slaughterhouses to the sounds of Tommy guns and squealing tires to the screams of protestors and the snaps of police officers wielding billy clubs, Chicago has had a history of violence and bloodshed. All of this has left its impression on both sides of the Gauntlet, in some cases rending or stretching the fabric between the worlds to an almost unbearable thinness.

Over the centuries since the city's founding, Chicago's mages and, sometimes, other supernaturals have forced open the thinning barrier, forming portals or gates that lead the unwary traveler (or even the wary one for that matter) away from the familiar world to the altogether strange and usually menacing Shadow Realm in which the spirits of things, places and beings go about their mysterious business.

The Chicago River

This waterway once served as the lifeline for the city. Later, the river became the divider between Chicago's North, South and West sides. The river's flow was reversed to prevent the meatpacking industry from dumping trash, sewage and by-products from into the waters of Lake Michigan. The unnatural means used to trigger this reversal caused a shock to the environmental harmonies and opened at least one portal along the length of the river.

Anyone unlucky enough to pass through one of these portals, either through an accidental fall into the river or by coming too close to its bank at the site of the portal, finds herself transported into a land of unbelievable filth and sewage, where animated trash heaps, desiccated bodies of animals and the odd human corpse and fetid swarms of flies and other carrion-feeders clamor for their release into the material world.

These portals were created at the time of the river's reversal. Only a cleansing of the river can render them inactive and only a return to the natural course of the river can permanently close these portals.

Some mages theorize that not all the portals along the river open into this Sewage Realm. At least one other portal opens into a time before the turning point in the river's history. Only someone with a mastery of Time would consider crossing through this portal through time.

Sewage Spirit

Background: First spawned when the flow of the Chicago River was reversed and became the city's garbage dump, sewage-spirits have proliferated ever since, though their numbers are perhaps slightly less now than in the past. Encompassing all the various kinds of garbage, from animal by-products to raw sewage to chemical waste and trash of various kinds, sewage-spirits are powered by the desire to spread their filth throughout the Sleeping world.

Description: Vaguely human-sized and shaped like a bipedal creature, these spirits seem to be composed of many different substances. Some spirits appear as glutinous masses of bloody flesh and bones compacted together into a close-knit solid form. Other spirits have the appearance (and stench) of raw sewage straight from the toilets of the city. Still other spirits have an oily, poisonous appearance and an acrid, burning stench. Those that have the power of speech form orifices in the appropriate head-like appendage in order to do so. They do not need eyes.

Storytelling Hints: Of limited intelligence and consciousness, these spirits seek only to proliferate and to

grow larger and claim more territory in the spirit wilds and in the Sleeping world as their own. They attack by filling the mouths and noses of their victims with sewage, to drown them.

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 1, Resistance 2
Willpower: 5
Essence: 6
Initiative: 3
Defense: 3
Speed: 15
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Influence: Waste •
Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Magnetic Disruption, **Materialize,** Possession

Ban: When interacting with a physical creature or character, all dice pools to contest or resist a sewage-spirit gain a +1 bonus if the opponent — or the portion of the opponent being affected — is truly clean and unsoiled.



Revenge by the River

Several bodies have been found floating in the Chicago River. The victims are varied in age, race and economic class. They all appear to have been suffocated by sewage or trash before they drowned, faces fixed in a rictus of terror.

Police have tried to investigate the apparent murders but can find nothing linking the bodies to a person, known or unknown. DNA testing has turned up nothing. The victims are all residents of Chicago, ruling out the possibility that the bodies were planted in the river from outside the city.

A police Contact who believes that one of the characters is a "psychic" comes to her as a last-ditch effort and asks her to see if she can discover anything about the murders. Investigation using magical detections can uncover the portal and, perhaps, find the spirits involved in the killings.

The Pullman Historic District

When George Pullman opened his Pullman Palace Car Company in 1865 to build the Pullman railway sleeping car, he also instituted a practice that could have set him apart as an enlightened employer in an age of autocratic company owners and underpaid, overworked employees. Rather than gouge his workers for every penny of their hard-earned pay by renting them spaces in firetrap tenements, Pullman built a village for his workers, providing them with safe homes as well as food and other necessities. Unfortunately, he also required that employees of lower rank live in smaller, plainer houses than those of higher rank and more responsibility. The dissent among his workers over this enforced stratification eventually led to the Pullman Strike of 1894, a failure that eventually won more rights for workers and the divestment by George Pullman of all his non-industrial property.

Pullman's reputation suffered a great blow during this period, and, today, his ghost seeks retribution. All his anger has carved a portal between the material world and a realm of his own fancying.

The Ticket Taker: Spirit of a Vengeful Idealist

Background: Once the ghost of the founder of the Pullman Palace Car Company, this spirit has become less of an individual and more of an idea. Devoted to the community he envisioned, in which every worker lived according to his station and remained that way, Pullman's concept has transformed into a vengeance-powered spirit of an ideal. This makes the spirit less susceptible to attempts to contact the individual; on the other hand, those canny enough to counter it with forceful reasoning against its ideals may weaken or temporarily discorporate the spirit.

Description: This spirit takes the form of a railroad ticket-taker of the latter half of the 19th century. The Ticket-Taker's size and appearance are perfectly ordinary — medium height, weight and build, with short, dark hair, a mustache and hazel eyes. The Ticket-Taker guards the portal to Pullman's idealized town and allows no one to pass back into the material world without a "ticket."

Storytelling Hints: Anger and a desire for vengeance are the forces that drive this spirit. It is angry for a lost ideal and desires to avenge itself against anyone who it perceives as keeping it from realizing that ideal, i.e., anyone who attempts to put it to rest or otherwise battle it. Possession and Compulsion are its favored tools. Strikes or protests of any kind tend to draw it from its resting place.

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 3, Resistance 7
Willpower: 9
Essence: 12
Initiative: 10
Defense: 7
Speed: 15
Size: 5
Corpus: 12
Influence: Order •
Numina: Chorus, Iron Rending (as the werewolf Gift), Possession
Bar the Gate: No Gifts, Numina, spells or other powers that affect the material world from Twilight, the Shadow Realm or other such areas can be used within 20 yards of the Ticket-Taker without succeeding in a contested roll of Resolve + Presence versus the Ticket-Taker's Power + Resistance.
Ban: The Ticket-Taker cannot oppose any character or creature that bears a ticket for a Pullman train.

All Aboard

Children in the Pullman Historic District area of Chicago have been accosted by a strange man dressed in a "funny uniform" who has been handing out tickets good for a "free ride on a special train." A young girl and her brother followed the man and disappeared three days ago. Now the other children are hearing the sounds of a train passing through the night, and they claim to hear the voices of their missing friends calling out to them.

The parents of the boy and girl are naturally distraught and have offered a reward for anyone who can find this "trainman." So far, they have turned up nothing, not even a suspect to question.

Characters passing through that part of Chicago may hear the sound of a train and realize that there are no trains running at that place at that time. Searching magically can discover the portal and enter Pullman's Realm, an orderly place of utter stratification. They may also find the children and bring them home, if they can defeat the Ticket-Taker and his minions.

Fermilab (Fermi National Laboratory)

Batavia, Illinois, just west of Chicago, houses the Fermi National Laboratory. This complex, which is open to the public for guided tours, holds the Tevatron, the world's highest energy particle accelerator. Fermilab, named in honor of Enrico Fermi, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist famous for his work on neutrons and other high-energy particles as well as his work on the Manhattan Project to develop the atom bomb, consists of several buildings notable for their distinctive architecture as well as 6,800 acres of ecologically managed land designated as a National Environmental Research Park.

The scientists and researchers who work at Fermilab are involved in experiments that delve into the fundamental structure of the universe. By dealing with the smallest building blocks of matter, the Fermilab crew constantly (and usually unknowingly) comes up against the fine thread of energy that mages call the Gauntlet.

Not surprisingly, this kind of high-speed battering ram has shaken open a portal on the grounds of the complex. This gateway seems to move about according to some pattern determined by the event cycle of the Tevatron. Though the gateway most often occurs somewhere in the middle of the prairie or marshland that makes up the parklands of the complex, occasionally the gateway anchors itself within a building, using a normal doorway as its material locus.

When the portal is in the middle of prairie or marsh, the only ones to cross from the material world into the Shadow are occasional buffalo or waterfowl. Indoors, however, the portal poses a greater danger. On at least two separate occasions, employees of Fermilab have disappeared, only to return some hours later with only vague memories of strange landscapes and an eerie sense of time dilation.

Life in the (Super) Fast Lane

Agnes Burton, a senior technician in charge of overseeing the evening shift monitoring the Tevatron, has disappeared quite suddenly. She left her station for her break and never returned. A co-worker reported that Agnes entered a storage closet, apparently in search of coffee filters for the small employee lounge, and never returned.

Attempts to call her home have been unsuccessful in tracing her. Her neighbors have not seen her and neither has her landlord.

Sometimes the stress of technical work around machines such as the Tevatron can cause a breakdown in personnel, forcing them to retire early or take extended leave. Agnes showed no signs of an impending crisis, however, and her supervisor is loathe to simply write her off. Moreover, her leaving without warning may pose a security risk.

The supervisors were near the point of notifying federal authorities of a possible security problem at the laboratory complex when a number of co-workers began claiming to have seen her. The figure they all identify as Agnes Burton seems very hazy, almost translucent, and moves rapidly, executing a repetitive series of motions that seem to involve taking a pack of coffee filters from a shelf in the storeroom and turning to leave by the door she used to gain entry. This pattern repeats itself over and over, dozens of times, from approximately 2:00 A.M. until 2:30 A.M. Agnes was known to take her break from 2:00 A.M. until 2:30 A.M.

Word comes to the characters of this strange happening. Examinations of the storage room reveal traces of Time magic. Some force is causing time to unfold at a different rate in the building, but the force is unstable. A cloud of time is drifting through the lab like a pocket realm, where days go by in seconds. What's causing it? Is it centered on Agnes, or has she been trapped within it? How can the characters free a woman from a torrent of time?

Frank Lloyd Wright and the Unity Temple

Oak Park, on the western border of Chicago, draws tourists and students of architecture throughout the year since it possesses the highest concentration of structures in existence designed by noted architect and innovator Frank Lloyd Wright. In designing the Unity Temple for the local Unitarian/Universalist congregation, he combined a mixture of styles to achieve an edifice both overpowering and unpredictably intimate, combining geometric principles with Native American touches to create his own unique vision.

The touch of the artist can sometimes open a gate between worlds, and the Unity Temple, with its resonance of worship and meditation, has done just that. A portal that opens at midnight over one of the building's windows leads into a world of architectural symbiosis, a realm that could have been designed by Wright himself.

In this place, the spirits of houses and other buildings have sentience and purpose, and the lesser spirits of people that dwell here exist to serve the conscious structures.

House Spirit

Background: House spirits are created when so much care and attention is lavished in the building and design of the house that it seems to take on a life of its own. The spirit may later change in form and attitude, depending on the subsequent history of the house. A residence that knows domestic warfare and spousal or child abuse may become an angry, bullying spirit, while a house governed by mutual love and respect among its inhabitants develops an aura of love and giving. Many house-spirits are mistaken for ghosts.

Description: These spirits are very large — house-sized as a matter of fact — and they manifest in several different ways. Essentially, a house-spirit looks like a house. The spirit never moves, able only to remain in its own neighborhood in the Shadow Realm. When the spirit has need of communicating with someone from the material world, it does so either through one of its resident spirits or else it forms a minor proxy from its own Essence to speak for it. These formed spirits are somewhat shapeless, missing significant parts. For example, the messenger may be nothing more than a face in a wisp of smoke or a mouth in a beam of sunlight falling through the window. Some houses only make these manifestations in their own "bodies," so that messengers appear to be people trapped within the walls or ghosts in the wiring. Facial features of these appendages of the house are usually blurry, as if the house doesn't really care to waste too much time on detail simply to create a messenger.

Storytelling Hints: These spirits are interested primarily in being admired and in having their interiors and exteriors maintained. They also have a need for companionship and often try to lure people from the material world into their clutches. If they choose to terrify someone, they can use a variety of phantasmal images to prey on the already vulnerable minds of anyone who has encountered these sentient houses.

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 2, Resistance 6
Willpower: 12
Essence: 10
Initiative: 8
Defense: 6
Speed: 0
Size: 10
Corpus: 16
Influence: Varies. The life of the house determines the spirit's Influences. Examples include Peace, Loneliness, Violence, Marriage and Fear. Many house-spirits, however, have the Influence "Home ••," which they use to keep humans in residence despite great turmoil or danger.
Numina: Every house-spirit is different, but these Numina are common to house-spirits: Claim, Ghost Sign, Ghost Speech, Harrow, Living Fetter, Telekinesis, Terrify
Ban: A house-spirit cannot move.

Prairie Home Eternal

The characters visit Oak Park for a tour of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's most concentrated collection of structures. As they visit Unity Temple, they see a door open at the rear of the temple and witness a man walk through, leaving the door open behind him. This would not usually be strange, but no one can remember seeing a door there to begin with. Furthermore, the man could have come from nowhere inside the temple without being visible to everyone long before he was actually seen.

The characters may attempt to enter the door immediately, provided there are no Sleepers around, and enter the architectural realm of Frank Lloyd Wright, or they may try to find the portal later (at night, for example) to avoid alerting anyone to its presence. Either way, they can discover the entry and explore this land of sentient houses and their human servants. They need to beware, however, that the longer they stay, the greater the chance of their being trapped in the realm to serve the houses in spirit form while their bodies slowly decay in the outer world.

Union Stock Yards Gate: Innocent Blood

One of Chicago's landmark structures, the Union Stock Yard Gate stands as a reminder to the city's past reputation as a center of the meatpacking and meat processing industries. Carved from limestone, this grandiose structure crowned by a limestone steer's head (supposedly representing a prize bull named Sherman after one of the founders of the stockyard) has overseen the passage of countless numbers of livestock on their way to the slaughterhouses within. Built around 1875, the stockyard closed in 1971, marking the end of an era. At that date, however, a portal opened into a realm of bloody butchery.

Though the portal stands open at all times, only Awakened beings can see it for what it is. Likewise, only individuals with strong connections to the supernatural (i.e., mages, vampires and werewolves) can pass through the portal. Normal humans go through the gate without noticing anything strange, or, at most, a twinge of anxiety as if momentarily facing some unexplained danger. Individuals with some small connection to the Awakened universe may have a strong aversion to passing under the archway or may experience horrific visions involving rivers of blood and gutted animal carcasses. Rarely, one of these psychically attuned individuals stumbles through the gate. When this happens, the experiences on the other side are usually so overwhelming that if the individual finds a way out again, his mind is permanently broken by his encounters.

Spirits of Slaughtered Animals

Background: These simple spirits came into being when the psychic echo of fear and slaughter became greater than the material world could wash away with simple water and brushes. These echoes resonate in the Shadow Realm, trapped in the shadows and dirt where so much death was wrought so casually.

Description: The spirits of slaughtered animals know nothing but panic and fear. They linger in the world just to desperately prolong their existence before the blades come down. They appear as spectral animals, dripping with blood and splitting open, seemingly at random, under the invisible edges of remembered cleavers. These beings would be ghosts, except they lack Morality and have no relationship to specific animals that once lived in the material world.

Storytelling Hints: Slaughtered-animal-spirits usually appear in groups. What one does, the others do — there is no clear leader. The first one to act determines the actions of the others, usually meaning crowding, crushing or fleeing.

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 1, Resistance 3
Willpower: 5
Essence: 8
Initiative: 4
Defense: 5
Speed: 13 (hog), 15 (sheep), 17 (steer)
Size: 3 (hog), 5 (sheep), 7 (steer)
Corpus: 6 (hog), 8 (sheep), 10 (steer)
Influence: Terror •
Numina: Chorus, Gauntlet Breach, Magnetic Disruption, Telekinesis, Terrify
Ban: Slaughter spirits are forever bound together by their common death. When one is discorporated, all others in its pack instantly lose 2 Corpus as well.

Blood Thing: Spirit of Slaughter

Background: These spirits are spawned from the fear and pain of slaughtered cattle and hogs before more humane methods of killing these animals were put into practice. Bolstered by the sheer numbers of meat-producing animals killed in the slaughterhouses, these spirits became numerous and fat. In the spirit wilds, the essence of death and butchery is still fresh, though the material world shows few signs of the buildings that once served as holding pens and meat-processing plants. With the slaughterhouses gone, however, these spirits are beginning to starve.

Description: Blood things usually assume the vague form of one of the creatures slaughtered for its meat — steer, hog or sheep. Occasionally, a blood thing appears as a formless mass of steaming, bloody pulp. A grating, animal cry comes from its open mouth while sightless eyes drip blood as it shambles toward its victims. Blood things bristle with broken bone and dangle meat-hooks. Some attack with the swift, blunt swing of a cleaver.

Storytelling Hints: These creatures exist to give voice to pain and to inflict suffering on living creatures, thus gaining Essence for themselves. They revel in the fear of death. The moment before they attack is their favorite moment of all.

Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 4
Willpower: 10
Essence: 15
Initiative: 7
Defense: 6
Speed: 15
Size: 5
Corpus: 9
Influence: Terror •, Death •
Numina: Chorus, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Material Vision, Possession, Sense Weakness (as the werewolf Gift)

Ban: Slaughter-spirits do not fight, they slaughter. They cannot leave one victim behind in favor of another until the first victim is dead, but neither can they continue to attack a creature that has successfully hurt them in that same scene.

When Animals Dream

Word has reached the characters of a strange phenomenon taking place near the old Union Stock Yards Gate. Passers-by walking their dogs have noticed that their pets refuse to go past the gate itself, barking and whining and pulling on their leashes to force their owners to cross on the opposite side of the street, something sometimes difficult in a city as busy as Chicago.

The fact that the Stock Yard Gate affects more than dogs becomes evident when a child carrying a ferret is attacked by his pet when crossing the arched gateway. Experiments carried out by the characters with various animals turns up the same reaction. None of the animals wants to go anywhere near the gate, going to great lengths to avoid it.

Awakened persons have no trouble seeing the portal, but the characters may wish to make their investigations at nighttime to keep away from the prying eyes of Sleepers. The characters, if they enter the realm beyond the gate, may have to confront more than one of the blood thing spirits before the characters can figure out how to close the portal and stop the odd manifestations among the animal population of the city.

The Others: Supernatural Encounters

Mages know they are not the only supernaturals that exist. Some mages even attempt to make a study of other supernaturals, focusing on one of the "big three": vampires, werewolves or ghosts (a catch-all phrase that may include spirits). Rarely, however, do mages seek face-to-face interaction with these creatures, particularly vampires and werewolves, on their own turf.

A notable exception to this state of affairs centers around the Abbatoir, a nightclub in Chicago's Old Town run by a cabal of the same name made up of primarily Adamantine Arrow mages. Since the club's opening a few years ago, the Abbatoir has become a gathering place for several of the city's Kindred and Uratha. A strong resonance of camaraderie fills the club, helping vampires to avoid frenzy and werewolves to hold off their rage. Some say the club is even laced with spells to facilitate peace and defuse thoughts of violence.



When the need for cooperation among supernaturals arises, the Abbatoir might serve as a meeting ground for hammering out pacts or other agreements between supernatural groups. Some of the back rooms are tailor-made for these highly private meetings, and the local cabal members see to it that Sleepers do not disturb the discussions within.

Things Fall Apart

The characters hear of a meeting between some of the city's Kindred and Uratha leaders to settle a dispute between the two groups. This meeting is taking place in a back room at the Abbatoir on a night in which the characters customarily go to the club for drinks and entertainment.

The atmosphere is tense as the characters enter, and they deduce that the meeting is underway. Suddenly, a loud commotion is heard, and the door to the meeting room bursts open. A Uratha in his man-wolf form hurls himself from the room, trampling one of the customers on his way through the door. Following him is one of the Kindred, moving almost too quickly for the eye to see.

The characters may realize the nature of these creatures, but many people in the club have never seen (or heard of) vampires or werewolves in the flesh. The Sleepers in the club are distraught and must be taken care of. In the meantime, the other members of the meeting hastily leave the room, voicing concern over the strange actions of their respective comrades.

If a character dares to approach either a vampire or a werewolf, she may learn that each side is worried that the actions of the two fleeing comrades may touch off a witch hunt as the world discovers the existence of monsters in their midst. Anyone who offers to take care of the problem for the city's Kindred and Uratha populations may win a sizeable favor from each group.

Most contact between mages and vampires or mages and werewolves outside places like the Abbatoir comes about accidentally, when one or the other strays into unfamiliar territory and meets the local area's "representatives." Depending on how much knowledge a mage possesses about supernatural protocol, these unplanned encounters can provide an unexpected boon for both parties or can result in a violent confrontation with potentially lethal results for one or the other of the combatants.

Werewolves

Although most werewolf packs mark the territory they claim in ways that other packs can understand, some of these signs (such as scent markings or coded messages on posters) are undecipherable by non-Uratha. All too often, a mage wanders into a part of town claimed by a pack of werewolves. How the mage is treated and whether or not he even notices his error depends on his conduct.

Any mage who intends to make trouble in a werewolf's territory will undoubtedly answer to the pack; if the mage reveals to the Uratha that he, too, is part of a group, the werewolves may allow the mage to leave with a warning, since they respect the strength of the "pack." A long mage, however, may face severe penalties, even death, for trespassing with malice in a werewolf's lands.

"But He Belongs to Us!"

A young man has just Awakened in the city, and a group of mages of his most likely Path have picked up traces of his location from his resonance. They find him in the middle of Jackson Park, near the Museum of Science and Industry. He seems very nervous and edgy, not atypical of a newly Awakened mage. As a mage comes up to him to make the approach, another figure appears out of nowhere, snarling like a wolf at the intruders.

Some quick sorting out of details may reveal that the young man who has Awakened is also kinfolk to a Uratha tribe. Can the werewolves be induced to give up one of their own blood to a group of mages for rearing? What happens if the werewolves don't? What sort of bargaining chip can the mages offer the werewolves?

Starting with the discovery, this encounter might lead to subsequent dealings with the werewolves and a demand that the characters perform some service to them in return for turning over their kinfolk to his new family of mages.

Vampires

During the day, mages can pass in and out of a vampire's territory with little to no repercussions. At best, a vampire's human servants may issue a subtle (or not so subtle warning) to any supernatural trespasser. Only if a mage appears to hunt actively for a vampire will she provoke a violent response from a vampire's minions.

At night, the world changes. Vampires, creatures condemned to the darkness, rule the streets of Chicago. Mages who happen to wander into a club that caters primarily to vampires and their prey may run the risk of never wandering out again unless they exercise extreme caution and a hefty dose of luck (or Fate).

Haggling for Mages

A group of vampires has absconded with a friend of the characters, also a mage. Investigation into the cause of the disappearance reveals that the missing mage had stumbled into the haven of a vampire just as the creature awoke for the evening.



Caught by surprise, the mage fell to the vampire's seductive powers and is now in thrall to him.

The characters may arrange a meeting to discuss how to go about freeing their friend from the vampire's control. They can discover that the vampire considers the mage a security risk and has spared his life because he may be useful. The vampire does not take the characters to its lair, nor does he give any information to them as to where they can find it.

If negotiations go bad, the characters must find the mage and liberate him. If they are successful in retrieving their friend through bargaining, they may find that they owe the vampire some service before they can part amicably.

Ghosts

Some mages go looking for ghosts, while others try to avoid haunted places. Mages with high scores in Spirit or who specialize in the necromantic applications of some Arcana may spend a great deal of their time associating with ghosts and haunting the places where spirits are likely to make an appearance.

Spirits of the dead — ghosts — can provide many useful services to mages interested in communing with the spirits. Ghosts can supply mages with information, assistance, message-carrying and, of course, the "haunting-for-hire."

Other mages, who see ghosts as unhappy creatures that need to find rest in order for their souls to complete their cosmic journey, seek out the spirits of the dead in order to put them to rest. These mages



are most likely to incur opposition from the ghostly creatures they encounter. Such mages are the most likely to visit Chicago's cemeteries (and, incidentally, the most likely to encounter any vampires who hang out near cemeteries).

Mages who follow a shamanic or druidic tradition that views the entire world as populated with spirits may see these "ghosts" as spirits. These mages are also likely to encounter the spirits of objects or animals and to find their way to the spirit wilds (or at least to the edge of this portion of the Shadow Realm).

Ambulance 11

The characters consult an oracle, experience a Mana-induced vision or get some other sort of occult clue about a persistent dilemma. The prophecy (or hallucination, or vision) directs the seer to seek "the chariot of daily death, whose number is 11."

Presumably, this is pretty obscure, but with good research, a few dots in the Occult Skill, the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit or a lot of luck, they may learn that it's "Daley death," not "daily death." Chicago's famous Mayor Richard J. Daley died in Ambulance Number 11 in 1976. Shockingly, Ambulance Number 11 still serves City Hall to this day — and the ambulance is renowned for having a much higher-than-average number of fatalities among its unfortunate passengers.

What's haunting the so-called Death Ambulance? The ghost of the man who was possibly Chicago's greatest mayor (or greatest player)? Some spirit that ghoulishly collects the souls of the departed? All of the above? And what does it have to do with the characters' problem, anyhow?

Resurrection Mary

Background: Perhaps the best-known ghost in Chicago is Resurrection Mary, the young spectral hitchhiker sometimes found on Archer Avenue in Justice, Illinois. Her manifestations contain all the common elements of the ghostly hitcher: drivers report picking up a quiet or palpably chilly young woman in a white dress as she's walking along the road, but when they drive by Resurrection Cemetery she vanishes. What makes Resurrection Mary so beloved (and feared) by Chicagoans is her familiarity. She's been haunting Archer Avenue and Resurrection Cemetery since the 1930s, when she was killed by a hit-and-run driver while walking — some say heartbroken — home of the Willowbrook Ballroom in the chill of night.

Resurrection Mary's anchor seems to be Archer Avenue itself, though the street's renovations and alterations over the year may have shortened the stretch of it that can be considered mystically linked to her.

Description: Mary's appearance varies a bit, depending on who's describing her. She is always blonde, always a young woman and typically in some sort of white dress, whether it's an evening dress or some sort of nightgown. In some cases, she appears deathly pale or strangely calm and cold, but in other cases she has seemed lively and jovial or panicky and frightened. Some nights she's oblivious to the Chicago weather and others she's soaked by the rain or trembling from the cold.

Storytelling Hints: Resurrection Mary gains a degree of power from the disparity between her state and her own demeanor. She may seem sympathetic when herself is terrified on a mundane stretch of

road or she may seem frighteningly serene while out in a terrible storm or poking around the scene of a gruesome car wreck. On some occasions, she seeks to get back to the cemetery but on others she wants out. Ultimately, what she wants when she gets into a character's car could be anything — and therein lies the story. On a dark stretch of road, in the midst of a power outage, her sudden spectral appearance might even spark a disastrous car accident that plunges the characters into a night of terror and mystery.

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Willpower: 5
Essence: 10 max
Morality: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 15
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Numina: Ghost Speech (dice pool 5), Magnetic Disruption

Sympathetic Manifestation: Despite the alterations to the anchor of Archer Avenue over the years, Resurrection Mary has retained an ability to manifest in its vicinity, despite factors that might otherwise penalize her attempts. All she needs is a car nearby. The presence of an automobile or motorcycle grants Resurrection Mary a +2 bonus to Power + Finesse rolls to manifest. Further, the manifestation penalty for mortals present after the first is halved for all mortals in automobiles when she manifests.

Haunted, Dead or Alive

The characters have found the perfect house for their sanctum, near enough to a Hallow to provide them with a fair amount of Mana and located in a part of town where no other cabals can cause territorial problems. The only problem with the house, a large, three-story Victorian masterpiece in a low-rent district on Chicago's South Side, is that it seems to be haunted.

Several people have met untimely deaths in this house. A young girl suffocated in an upstairs bedroom, probably originally a servant's room. An elderly man was pushed down the main staircase, and a young man hanged himself in the downstairs bathroom.

The characters must discover the reasons for the hauntings, possibly involving themselves in several cold cases, and try to put the ghosts to rest. If the characters avoid doing this and try to live with the hauntings, the characters find themselves succumbing to suicidal despair until they decide to take action.

Collateral Damage

Sometimes mages incur problems from mortals interested in other supernaturals. A group of vampire hunters entering Chicago may become alerted to the presence of a "coven of witches" and decide to include them on their "to kill" list. Likewise, an exorcist who has come to town to drive a ghost out of a house in Chicago's Gold Coast may encounter magical activity and decide to do something about that as well.

Though mages do not usually associate with other types of supernaturals on a regular basis, most mages recognize the fact that they share some common enemies with other supernaturals. Most hunters do not distinguish among witches, vampires or werewolves. They are just as happy to claim the pelt or scalp of one as the other. Ghost "busters" may blame an excess of supernatural activity on the presence of Necromancers and may seek to put an end to the "foul practice."

Hunting Season

A group of humans have come to town dressed as if they were hunting some truly "big" game. They are armed with stakes and crucifixes, holy water and garlic. Though they attempt to hide their purpose in Chicago (and succeed, for the most part, in fooling Sleeper authorities), the characters know them for what they are: vampire hunters.

Something goes wrong and the hunters discover the existence of a cabal of mages, attacking them in their sanctum and causing some damage to several members. Suddenly, Chicago's mages find themselves in the midst of a war. Which cabals turn out to help their fellow mages who are now under siege? Do the characters render assistance to the mages, or do they see this as an opportunity for them to be ready to fill a void when the hunter scare blows over?

Voices From the Ashes

The legacy of Jeremiah Maynard and the Maynard party loom large over Chicago's supernatural community. The self-styled doomsayer and his followers saw too clearly the presence of vampires, mages and werewolves in the city. Only Maynard's ill-fated journey westward and the mysterious deaths of his remaining followers prevented a catastrophe with regard to Awakened creatures.

Soon after his disappearance, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 erupted, destroying in its passage any evidence Maynard and his followers might have

possessed, including supposed lists of cabals and names of vampires.

Some mages believe that the Fire was deliberately set by interested persons who desired to destroy any possibility of scrying through time to uncover the real reasons for Maynard's disappearance and the demise of his following.

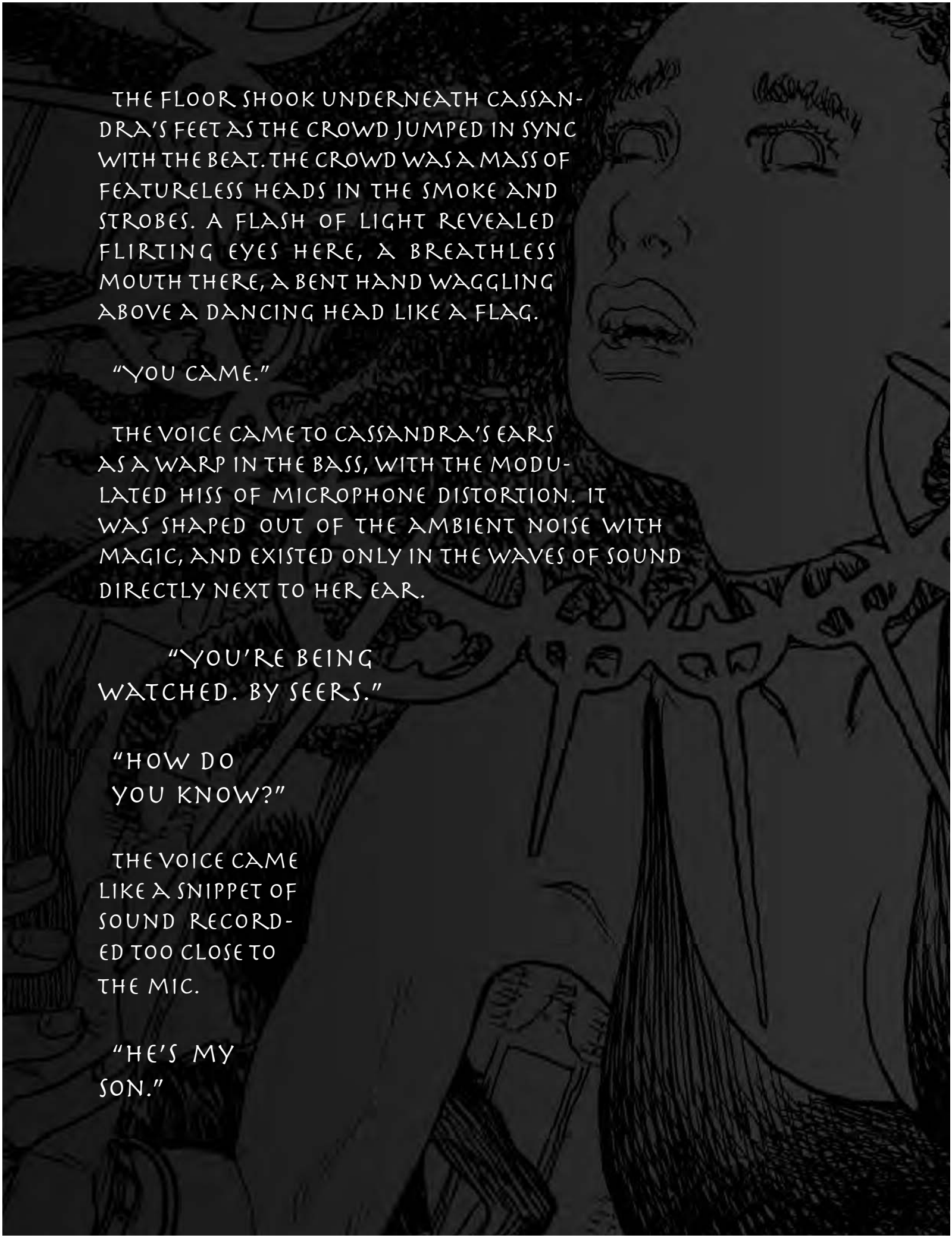
Recently, new indicators have arisen suggesting that Twilight may hold the key to discovering the truth. The Cassandra's Visions cabal has specialized in studying the aftermath of the Fire and its relationship to the Maynard party.

Ghostly Arsonist

The area around Cassandra's Visions cabal has recently become the site of a number of deliberately set fires. Some of these fires have damaged houses, while others target warehouses, a night club, an empty lot and a church. The cabal has noticed that all these places have some significance in relationship to both the Maynard party and the Great Chicago Fire. Cabal members suspect that the source of the fires exists in Twilight and has crossed over from the Shadow Realm.

Some Awakened individuals who have arrived at the scene of one of these fires in its early stages claim to have seen an individual dressed in 19th-century garb walking away from the fire. Old likenesses of Jeremiah Maynard bear an uncanny resemblance to this figure, leading some to believe that Maynard's ghost has been setting the fires. But to what purpose?





THE FLOOR SHOOK UNDERNEATH CASSANDRA'S FEET AS THE CROWD JUMPED IN SYNC WITH THE BEAT. THE CROWD WAS A MASS OF FEATURELESS HEADS IN THE SMOKE AND STROBES. A FLASH OF LIGHT REVEALED FLIRTING EYES HERE, A BREATHLESS MOUTH THERE, A BENT HAND WAGGLING ABOVE A DANCING HEAD LIKE A FLAG.

"YOU CAME."

THE VOICE CAME TO CASSANDRA'S EARS AS A WARP IN THE BASS, WITH THE MODULATED HISS OF MICROPHONE DISTORTION. IT WAS SHAPED OUT OF THE AMBIENT NOISE WITH MAGIC, AND EXISTED ONLY IN THE WAVES OF SOUND DIRECTLY NEXT TO HER EAR.

"YOU'RE BEING WATCHED. BY SEERS."

"HOW DO YOU KNOW?"

THE VOICE CAME LIKE A SNIPPET OF SOUND RECORDED TOO CLOSE TO THE MIC.

"HE'S MY SON."

MAGES OF THE SECOND CITY

> The entire sum of existence is the magic of being needed by just one other person.
>
> —Vi Putnam

The Guardians of the Veil

The Guardians of the Veil currently enjoy leadership status among the mages of the Consilium. If any can be said to be the true "winners" of the Mage War of 1987, the Guardians can, simply because they have succeeded in rising to the top of the magical superstructure. Their initial job was to establish damage control throughout the city and repair information "leaks" about the existence of the mage community as well as their more esoteric knowledge. The mysterious disappearance of certain self-proclaimed occultists was the result of the Guardians' first pass through the city. Since that initial foray into sealing borders between the magical and non-magical populations, the Guardians have contented themselves with merely keeping tabs on the other cabals, letting it be known that they do not intend to throw their weight around so long as others hew to the straight and narrow.

Walsh Industries

In 1989, in the wake of Chicago's Mage War, Theodore Walsh brought his family from England to the city in search of information surrounding the mysterious artifact the mages there were fighting over. Highly charismatic, and already a successful businessman in the Sleeper world, Walsh put the gears in motion and moved the headquarters for his global import/export company to Chicago. Walsh Industries bought the top 10 floors of the Edwards-Hagen Building, located near the corner of Franklin and Wacker, where the river forks. He carefully chose a skyscraper that touched a naturally occurring Hallow.

Airyaman, the leader of the Hip Flask, was acting as Hierarch pro tem at the time, and the 89-year-old man was looking for someone else to fill the role. Most of the powerful mages of Chicago had either been destroyed or had fled after the war, and Walsh, having served in England as an epopt of his order for a number of years, was an obvious choice. Airyaman gladly stepped down, under the condition that he be allowed to continue service on the Consilium, and Walsh accepted those terms without question.

Walsh Industries appears to be first a corporation and then a cabal, but the mages who belong to this group know better. The day-to-day Sleeper affairs they tend to are secondary to the needs of the mages of Chicago. The importing and exporting they deal in carries over into their Awakened lives. Often times, Walsh Industries works with the Hip Flask when they need some Arcane object of art to be transported safely to or from their city.

One thing the company definitely has is resources. As a wealthy corporation with a good deal of Sleeper influence and a team of legal specialists (headed by a mage), Walsh Industries is held in high regard by any Chicago willworker who's ever needed a break when "real-world" pressures come knocking. As helpful as this can be, most of the city's mages would do well to remember that favors, especially from Walsh, come with a hefty price, and Theodore Walsh has a very good memory.

Because Walsh Industries publicly traded company, the fact that the firm is also a Guardians of the Veil cabal is something of a dichotomy. The mages who make up their "board of directors" use powerful magics to keep the truth a secret, and they expect other mages in the city to follow their example. The cabal's connectedness

to other powerful cabals and so-called generosity has proven to be an efficient means of keeping tabs on most of the other mages in Chicago. Walsh Industries cabal members are intolerant of any transgression that threatens the sanctity of magical pursuit, and they certainly have the means to ensure that most mistakes are made but once.

Manipra

Quote: "*Forget the consequences you're afraid of. Let me deal with that. How can we work together to make this happen?*"

Background: Over 30 years ago, Theodore Walsh and his wife, Vanessa, took part in one of those breeding rituals discussed in hushed tones by the local members of their order. Throughout her pregnancy, however, Vanessa seemed to waver in her resolve after finding out that she was not merely with child, but was carrying twins. She felt that putting two children up to the tests and scrutiny of their order would not allow them to mature with any sense of personality beyond that which was expected of them.

Theodore comforted her through this time, and assured her that the Guardians had no intentions of tampering with the development of their progeny until they were Awake like their parents. After all, there was no guarantee that they *would* be mages, since the magics they performed before conception were experimental, at best.

"Then what?" Vanessa would insist, never giving in to being cajoled into complacency. "Do we then discard our own children like rubbish for the morning carrier? Or do we love them and nurture them, as parents are expected to?"

Eventually, his wife saw that her constant questioning was not getting her anywhere, and she made up her mind to take matters into her own hands. Some accounts say she fled her husband, her order and her past, intending a safer life for her children. Wherever she went, Theodore Walsh must have found her.

Theodore has always downplayed Vanessa's doubts and weaknesses, though, especially to the twins, Michael and Cynthia. Theodore's version of the story says that after their births, their mother fell victim to strange Paradox forces due to the powerful ritual that surrounded her pregnancy. She went mad, he says, and eventually vanished without a trace — possibly to some strange pocket realm, facing the consequences of this unnatural reproduction. When asked why he didn't suffer the same effects, his response is always one of melancholy: his wife knew she would be the primary target, and she wanted their children to have at least one parent to guide them, so she used what was left of her power to ensure that she alone suffered. Theodore rejects the notion that she ran from him at all, and assures the children that things are exactly as she would have wanted.

Cynthia has always behaved as though she believes this account of events, and she draws great strength from the idea of her mother's resolve. If Cynthia's ever thought otherwise, she's kept her mouth shut, knowing better than to question the methods of the order she grew up beneath.

Michael is another story. Though, growing up, he learned the same lessons as his sister, rebellion came easier to him. He Awakened later than she did, and suffered from a desire to catch up and prove himself while retaining some sense of individuality and dignity. He *did* eventually accept the tenets of the Guardians of the Veil, but his approach has always been a cautious one.



For this reason, Theodore was always particularly harsh with his son, until they left England for Chicago. Once in the United States, Theodore's focus was dedicated to his company and finding out anything he could about the Celestial Flange that supposedly caused the Mage War of '87.

The truth about what happened to Walsh's wife may never be known, but one thing is certain: the Hierarch of Chicago never does *anything* without an agenda, even things that seem to be acts of compassion. Michael suspects that the only reason his father has been so accepting of his son's departure from the company and allegiance with the Hip Flask is that now, through his son, Theodore has a strong connection to the oldest cabal in the city.

Michael Walsh is nearly correct. Theodore would certainly have preferred to have both of his children at his side running the family business and working to further the agenda of their common order, but, knowing his son to be far more capable while asserting his own individuality, Theodore has intentionally led Michael to believe that he accepts his son's absence begrudgingly. To think that his father, not to mention the Eye of the Dragon, would let Michael continue his life without close scrutiny would be folly. Still a member of the order, Theodore's son proves to be more valuable in an unintentional manner than he might ever have been otherwise.

Once Walsh Industries grew its American base of operations, and Theodore had established himself as leader of the city, it took a while to cement the rest of the Consiliar mages of the city into a comfortable routine. With a shadow name like Manipra (the solar-plexus *chakra* and seat of the body's power in Hindu spirituality) and a background with the order best known for strict adherence to secrecy, many of the city's mages took a long while accepting Theodore in a leadership role.

For nearly a decade and a half, he has proven to be a solid leader, though, if nothing else. His understanding of bureaucratic procedure and parliamentary methods of dealing with dissent and personal conflict have countered allegations that he's only here to expand his personal wealth and power at the expense of the city's other occultists.

Now his focus on finding the artifact that drew him here in the first place is reaching a peak. Rumors are surfacing again, and with his web of connections and powerful allies, Manipra expects it won't be long before his connection to the Supernal Realm will be unrivaled in Chicago.

Description: Nearing 60, Theodore Walsh is a strikingly handsome man who seems to wear nothing but imported business attire. He has graying brown hair and stern eyes framed by distinguished crow's feet. He still wears his golden wedding ring, lined with Celtic knotwork, and can be seen from time to time turning it slowly with his thumb.

His Nimbus is a deep, low sound, like the rumbling sound of a distant drum, more felt than heard.

Storytelling Hints: Manipra speaks softly and eloquently at all times. Even when angered, he seems calm and collected; usually the only thing that gives away strong emotions is the pulsing of a tiny vein in his forehead. He seems capable of remembering obscure bits of every conversation he's ever had, and seemingly never forgets a face or a name.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass pentagram necklace
Real Name: Theodore Walsh
Path: Mastigos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Business) 3, Computer 2, *Investigation 3, Occult 3, Politics (Consilium) 4
Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Closing the Deal) 4, Socialize 3, *Subterfuge (Misdirection) 4
Merits: Contacts (Big Business, Local Government), Eidetic Memory, High Speech, Resources 5, Sanctum (Shared) 5, Status: Consilium (Hierarch) 4, Status: Guardians of the Veil 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Mind 5, Space 3, Forces 2, Prime 2
Rotes: Mind — Aura Perception (•), Third Eye (•), First Impressions (••), Mental Shield (••), Misperception (••), Telepathy (•••), Breach the Vault of Memory (••••), Psychic Domination (•••••); Space — Spatial Map (•), Ward (••), Ban (•••); Forces — Nightsight (•), Invisible Object (••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Transform Aura (••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 5 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

Saena

Quote: "*I see. So we've resorted to idle threats, have we? Well, congratulations. You've just missed an opportunity to double your net worth, and, in fact, you'll be hearing from our lawyers about the liquidation of your holdings within the next three business days. That's a promise.*"

Background: Cynthia Walsh is everything to her father that her twin brother, Michael, has failed to be. Even though she's grown up with the feeling that her father always wanted a *son* who'd follow in his footsteps, she's come to accept the fact that her father is settling for a daughter who's willing to work twice as hard to gain his favor.

Cynthia always excelled at everything she put her mind to, and frankly feels that she is far better than her brother (not to mention *most* people). Having

Awakened at a slightly younger age than Michael, she's had a bit more time to hone her Arcane skills. Pushing extra hard to compensate for what are, according to her father, her gender's inherent weaknesses has made her a cold and vicious woman willing to do whatever it takes to succeed.

After traditional schooling in England, Cynthia attended college in Chicago while helping her father establish his company. She has become an expert in financial matters, and has struggled to prove herself worthy of a place at her father's side. Her position as chief financial officer of Walsh Industries is not the result of nepotism. Cynthia has earned every bit of esteem granted her and intends to earn more. Her colleagues respect her knowledge and expertise, and those who don't aren't kept around long enough to create problems.

Shrewd in business, Cynthia is equally capable as a mage. Calling herself Saena, after the mythological first tree in Persian creation myths, she seeks to one day master the powers of her soul and hopes her father will keep his seat as Hierarch warm for her. Saena realizes that regardless, of the wealth and influence in the world around her, it's bridging the abyss and understanding the secrets of the Supernal Realm that will lead to *true* power. For this reason, the stories of the Celestial Flange intrigue her even more than they do Theodore Walsh himself, and she intends to find it before he does. Believing it to be the key to an unbreakable link to those highest realms — and her father's love — Saena has her own agenda. It's her intention to snatch the artifact from under everyone's nose when it's finally discovered.

Description: Cynthia is an attractive, if severe, woman in her early 30s with a trim, athletic build honed in her private gym. She has light brown hair that is kept in a tight knot at the back of her head unless she's sleeping. She shares her brother's brilliant green eyes, but her fashion sense leans toward the expensive business-attire end of the spectrum. Her nails are closely trimmed to allow for faster typing, and she sparingly augments her features with neutral shades of make-up.

Her Nimbus is a brief, eye-straining bit of glare, like a moment of sunlight flashing off a car's windshield.

Storytelling Hints: Ms. Walsh, as she prefers to be called in the Sleeper world, is every bit the British conservative. She speaks quickly and clearly, and does not like to repeat herself. When confronted with a challenge, she barks commands at her subordinates and expects them to trust that she's already considered every contingency and to follow her orders without question.

She has her own schemes simmering, but doesn't let this get in the way of her role with Walsh Industries. Constantly feeling the need to prove herself on every front gives her the appearance of a tightly wound woman who may very well unravel some day.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Tiny, golden pentagram necklace
Real Name: Cynthia Walsh
Path: Obrimos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Economics) 3, Computer 2, *Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 3 (Corporate)
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Fencing) 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Blunt) 3, Socialize 1, *Subterfuge 4
Merits: Contacts (Big Business), High Speech, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5, Sanctum: Security 5, Status: Guardians of the Veil 2
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Forces 3, Prime 3, Mind 2
Rotes: Forces — Read Matrices (•), Unseen Shield (••), Telekinesis (•••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Counterspell Prime (••), Ley Lines (•••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Mental Shield (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)

Kukulkan

Quote: "*Oh, for Christ's sake. There's no reason this should take all night. Just sign the damn papers. Honestly, do you want my representation, or just to jerk me around here?*"

Background: Fred Tazwell has been a colleague of Theodore Walsh's since the company was founded in 1982 and has been his attorney even longer. Having Awakened at a very early age and trained with some of the best mages of the Guardians of the Veil, Tazwell is a powerful ally and friend.

He was purportedly involved in the ritual of reproduction that brought Atlantean children to his employer, and is loyal to the entire Walsh family. Magic is in his soul, but law is his forte. Tazwell understands it well enough to make it work for him and the people he cares for. This understanding is one of the reasons the Walsh family has made it this far, and Tazwell intends to keep trouble away from them at all costs.

When the Walsh family moved to the States, it was understood that he would travel with them. It took him a little while to get used to the subtle differences in American legal practices, but every system has its loopholes, and, without him, Walsh Industries might never have secured its foothold in the Chicago business market as quickly as the company did. The firm certainly wouldn't have closed on such a valuable portion of real estate as it did.

Fred is always present when legal concerns plague the company, but when it comes to family matters, he conspicuously takes a backseat and minds his own

business. He doesn't fully trust either of Theodore's children, but Fred still offers his advice where they're concerned, never entirely shaking the image of them as children who need the protection of their father's friends. Tazwell behaves as though he feels that eventually their loyalty will be unquestionable, and gives them the benefit of the doubt more often than he probably should. Regardless, he knows that one or both of them will inherit their father's dynasty one day, and, if he's still around, he wants to remain a part of it.

When it comes to his Arcane life, Fred uses the shadow name Kukulkan and plays a similar role to his public one. He's made it his business to understand the Arcanum of Fate, and when there are oaths to be made and pacts to be sealed, his presence is mandatory. Kukulkan is a loyal member of the Guardians, and does not question the authority of those who know more about the secret agendas that map their lives than he does. For this reason, Michael Walsh suspects Tazwell of having something to do with his mother's disappearance, though he's yet to do anything to investigate this (perhaps out of fear of the truth).

When it comes to the current agenda of Fred's cabal, he supports the others with every capability at his disposal. He gathers information and contacts for Theodore and Cynthia, and helps them put the pieces together with a sharp, rational approach. When they need to put mundane "heat" on other mages to disrupt their conspiracies, Tazwell always has a trick up his sleeve. A number of Chicago's mages have spent the night in jail for petty crimes they might not even have committed, only to find out that while they were incarcerated, their sanctums have been violated. Investigations into these strange coincidences usually only lead to more trouble, and the Walshes haven't been officially called suspects, as yet.

Description: Fred Tazwell is a meaty, balding man in his mid-50s. What little hair that hasn't receded to the back of his head is jet-black, and he keeps it neatly combed. He tends to dress in suits slightly below his means, hoping to disarm others into taking a more comfortable attitude with him. He keeps his face clean-shaven, his nails well groomed, and he smells of a delicately spicy aftershave and spearmint gum.

His Nimbus is a faint, even weak, earthy odor of sweat and soil.

Storytelling Hints: Kukulkan may seem to be too busy with the Sleeper world to even entertain the notion of studying magic, but he actually balances the two aspects of his life quite well. He gives the impression of being an open and honest friend, but has a way of ensuring that other people talk more than he does.

He is always looking for new ways to use his abilities to assist him in maneuvering politically within the world of Sleepers without drawing too much attention to himself, preferring to operate behind the scenes, letting others have the outward power while he quietly ensures his place at the table.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Iron wand with leather-wrapped tips
Real Name: Fred Tazwell
Path: Mastigos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Law, Research) 4, Computer 2, *Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics (Corporate) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Bribes) 1, *Subterfuge (Finding Loopholes) 3
Merits: City Status: Lawyer 2, Contacts (Big Business, Government, Police), High Speech, Iron Stomach, Language (Latin), Library (Contracts), Resources 3, Sanctum: Size 2, Sanctum: Security 2
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Mind 3, Fate 3, Space 2
Rotes: Mind — Aura Perception (•), Third Eye (•), Misperception (••), Mood Adjustment (•••); Fate — Interconnections (•), Swearing an Oath (••), Alter Oaths (•••); Space — Correspondence (•), Scrying (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

Mimir

Quote: "*We're going to need you to wait right here until we can grant you clearance. Don't hold back, though, I kinda hope you try to run…*"

Background: Phillip Reidl, the head of security for Walsh Industries, is the only member of the Walsh Industries cabal who didn't come from England. Once they had established their holdings in America, he joined the cabal out of a common order background and a desire to use his abilities for something more exciting than the usual "cleanups" requested by his order.

His past is not something he chooses to discuss, preferring to live in the present and move forward without looking back. The truth is that for many years he was a gun for hire, killing for money and keeping it quiet, though he's never liked the term "assassin." He has a background in law enforcement, but only insofar as having gone to the police academy to become a

cop — he never graduated. When he Awakened and learned of an order that was interested very specifically in his kinds of skills, he felt he had finally arrived. As a Necromancer, he embraces the idea that death is inevitable, and as an agent of its realm, he hopes to understand death well enough that when his time comes he will be ready to understand its secrets when they reveal themselves.

Phillip does not technically sit on the board of directors of the corporation, but, as head of security, his counsel is required on a regular basis. He's in charge of a team of about 15 special operations personnel, all skilled Sleepers, and they use some of the latest security technology to protect against non-magical threats. He operates from a central command room in the heart of the 18th floor of the Walsh Industries building, able to pull up feeds from countless security cameras and microphones throughout the offices of Walsh Industries.

When it comes to cabal responsibilities, Reidl naturally acts as the muscle of the group. He is quick to respond to directives from the leadership of his cabal and his order. He's considered a valuable asset, but his quick temper places him in a position to be watched carefully. Theodore and Cynthia both have the understanding that they must be the voice of discretion for him, otherwise he might jeopardize their secrecy with his penchant for the heavy-handed approach.

Description: Phillip is 35-years-old, tall, muscular, and not particularly memorable-looking. A nondescript appearance helps him blend into crowds and travel unnoticed. When working, he wears a standard Walsh Industries security uniform, consisting of a navy blue polyester suit with a special all-clearance badge and belt for his gun and walkie-talkie. When off security duty, he dresses mostly in black, comfortable clothes that allow for freedom of movement in combat situations. He usually has a five o'-clock shadow, no matter what time of day, and his hair and eyes are both dark brown.

His Nimbus manifests as a moment of weak noise, like the sensation of ears filled with water being suddenly drained.

Storytelling Hints: Mimir is a mage with a thing or two to learn about patience. He exhibits self-control, but when situations get tense, he always seems like he'd rather be kicking ass than waiting for answers. He smokes about two packs of full-flavor cigarettes a day and has a voice like Tom Waits.

Mimir has no qualms about killing, when necessary (or when, as he says, it's "for the best"), but, while working with Walsh, he generally waits for the directive before delivering a fatal strike. When he does take a life, he always pauses for a moment of quiet reflection over the body, seeming to communicate in some way to his victims as their souls depart.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Obsidian mirror necklace

Real Name: Phillip Reidl
Path: Moros
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 1, Computer 1, *Investigation (Crime Scenes) 3, Occult 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms (Pistol) 4, *Stealth (Shadow) 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Streetwise 2, *Subterfuge (Disguise) 2
Merits: Danger Sense, High Speech, Iron Stamina 1, Occultation 3, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size 1, Sanctum: Security 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 4 (Suspicion, mild: 4)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 3, Matter 3, Space 2
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•), Entropic Guard (••), Devouring the Slain (•••); Matter — Dark Matter (•), Alter Accuracy (••), Armor Piercing (•••); Space — Omnivision (•), Conceal Sympathy (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: 3 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)

Masterpiece

There is a painting in the Art Institute. A painting of a Mysterium mage, though few know that. It was painted by a lesser-known portrait artist during the Dutch Golden Age of the 17th century, and it was painted to hide a collection of arcane notes passed down from antiquity. Some say the portrait is painted over a whole other work, a copy of a wall mural the Mysterium mage discovered in Turkey. Others say the under-painting is little more than a collection of scribbles and notes made by the mage, recording theories and evidence of the Celestial Flange.

The portrait itself is a magical shield. The sight of mages cannot penetrate it. The key to lifting that shield is encoded in the details of the painting itself. With sufficient study, an astute mage can piece together the rote within the painting, lift the protective spell and learn that secrets of that Mysterium mage. The painting, however, would be ruined in the process.

Cassandra's Visions Bookstore

Tucked away in an unremarkable part of the Near West Side, the tiny storefront bookstore called Cassandra's Visions maintains an ever-shifting inventory of rare and occult books as well as more trendy metaphysical "best-sellers." The owners of the bookstore, a brother and sister, not only have degrees in preservation science and linguistics, respectively, but also serve as leaders of a mage cabal named after the bookstore.

While the shop holds public programs on various metaphysical topics such as astrology, deciphering prophecy, symbols and their meanings and similar subjects, it also hosts private meetings of cabal members in the fortified and warded basement of the two-story building. The stairs to the basement lead to a storage room and book restoration workshop, as well as a room that houses the heating and cooling system for the shop. A concealed door next to the furnace leads to the cabal's meeting room and sanctum.

Cassandra

Quote: "*If I could tell you precisely what my visions meant, I would be a prophet. I can't, and that's why I call myself a visionary*."

Background: Martina Tessanopoulis and her brother Martin were born three minutes apart just before and just after midnight on December 31/January 1. Their parents were part of an active Greek Orthodox community on Chicago's Near West Side. Their father owned the Acropolis, a family-style restaurant featuring Greek and Italian food as well as American "home cooking" in the Midwestern tradition. Their mother, a respected "wise woman" of the community whose much-trusted knowledge of herbal cures was inherited from her mother, died not long after childbirth, bequeathing her power to her children as she gave up her last breath.

Both children Awoke on their first birthdays, making their upbringing a special challenge for their father and grandmother, who saw them as mediums for their mother's spirit to communicate with her beloved family. Martina's mother had been a member of the Guardians of the Veil.

The most obvious channel was Martina, older than her brother by three minutes and the more precocious of the pair. She began talking early, and her first words seemed prophetic. Her birth sent out a mystical summons for a teacher for her brother and her. A young Warlock called Taliesin — who had lived in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England before emigrating to the United States — came to Chicago when he heard the dual cries of childbirth, or so he said. He instructed the children, and, when they were in their mid-teens, he helped them form their cabal and stayed on as their Mentor.

Martina, who took the shadow name Cassandra, seemed a natural leader for the cabal, though she insisted that her usually silent brother share the position. She used her portion of her inheritance from her mother to start a bookstore that shares the same name as her cabal. She is aware of the fact that, with Walsh Industries and Cassandra's Visions, the Guardians have virtual control of the Chicago Consilium. For now, she is willing to concede overall leadership to Manipra, leaving her cabal to work in more subtle directions to fulfill the mission of her order.

Description: Martina is a slightly plump woman in her early 20s. She wears her dark, curly hair in a barely tamed up-do, with long curls trailing down either side of her face. Her naturally red lips and pale green eyes emphasize her olive complexion. She dresses in sweaters and skirts for the most part, particularly when working at her bookstore or giving lectures in the evenings. Her normal speaking voice is soft and breathy, like an excited student's. When she imparts her visions, however, her voice deepens and takes on the sonorous inflections of a channel for "the gods."

Her Nimbus appears as a silvery, salt-smelling wave that flows around her body, accompanied by the sounds of the ocean.

Storytelling Hints: Cassandra likes to lead but does not like to be bossy about it. She makes "suggestions" instead of giving orders. Her natural charisma, however, ensures that people often *want* to follow her lead. She dotes on her brother and tries to bring him fully into participating in the activities of the cabal. She is also using her bookstore's inventory to research information concerning the Celestial Flange.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Ceremonial goblet made of petrified wood
Real Name: Martina Electra Tessanopoulis
Path: Obrimos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Literature) 3, Crafts (Book-Binding) 3, *Investigation (Great Chicago Fire) 3, Occult (Spirit Lore) 2
Physical Skills: Brawl (Self-Defense) 2, Drive 2, *Stealth 1
Social Skills: Empathy (Emotions) 3, Persuasion (Customers) 4, Socialize (Book Dealers) 3
Merits: Contacts (Booksellers), Hallow 5, High Speech, Library: Bookstore (British Isles Folk Wisdom, Chicago Magical Lore, Pagan Rituals), Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Forces 4, Prime 4, Time 3
Rotes: Forces — Read Matrices (•), Unseen Shield(••), Bestow Unseen Shield (•••), Thunderbolt (••••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••), Channel Mana (•••), Awaken Hallow (••••); Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Shield of Chronos (••), Divination (•••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 4 (Prime ••)

Rebus

Quote: "*It's too loud. Too bright. Make it stop!*"

Background: Like his sister Martina, Martin Tessanopoulis Awakened while still in infancy, but unlike Martina, he had a much harsher experience as the sights and sounds and other sensations flooded through his immature nervous system and overwhelmed him. When his father and grandmother noticed his failure to respond to outside stimuli, they called in a doctor who diagnosed the boy as suffering from autism.

Though the doctor recommended institutionalization for Martin in order to prevent him from impeding his sister's development, Mr. Tessanopoulis refused to send his little boy away. Martin's father sought help from experts and learned as much about autism as he could.

Martina instinctively knew how to reach her brother and provided an essential link between Martin and the world outside. She learned to interpret his odd cries and strange, repetitive gestures.

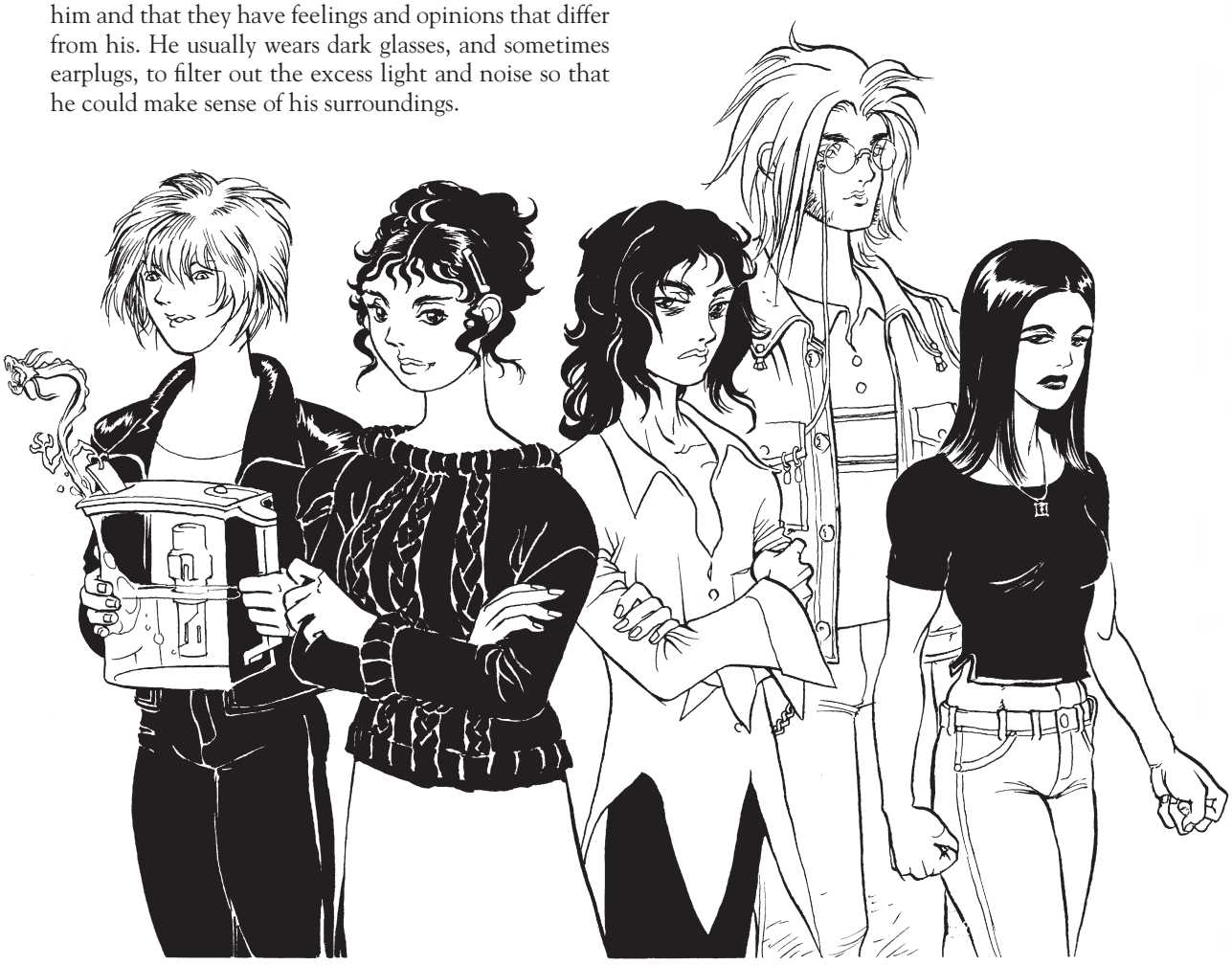
Eventually, Martin learned to reach out through the crush of information that battered his perceptions and to focus on the world outside. He still needed to be told certain facts that most people take for granted, such as the need not to obsess about his favorite topics — numbers and puzzles.

He has had to learn that other people exist apart from him and that they have feelings and opinions that differ from his. He usually wears dark glasses, and sometimes earplugs, to filter out the excess light and noise so that he could make sense of his surroundings.

As a mage, Martin works his magic instinctively. Like his sister, he studied with Taliesin, who learned how to communicate with the withdrawn and distant youth. Martin chose the shadow name Rebus after the puzzles that combine letters and pictures to create a phrase or a word, mirroring almost exactly the puzzle that is Martin's Awakened mind.

Description: Martin is obviously Martina's twin brother, but there are significant differences. He is thin and wiry, almost pathologically so, due to his oversensitive taste buds that limit the kinds and amounts of food he can tolerate. His dark, curly hair is worn long and unrestrained (cutting his hair hurts him), though it never looks disheveled. He dresses in very lightweight clothing, either 100% silk or cotton — his sensitive skin cannot tolerate direct contact with anything coarser or any synthetics. He dislikes wearing shoes and goes barefoot whenever possible, though he grudgingly dons shoes for outdoor activities. His olive skin is paler than his sister's, though he has the same green eyes and full lips. His face rarely registers an expression unless someone makes an effort to gain his attention. In repose, he resembles a statue of a young Greek demi-god.

Martin's Nimbus is almost the same as his sister's.



Storytelling Hints: Martin is not unaware of his surroundings. On the contrary, he is hyperaware of them, and so he tunes most things out, focusing only on one thing at a time. This results in many repetitive behaviors. He often becomes trapped in a certain behavior pattern, such as rocking back and forth or snapping his fingers in elaborate but cyclic rhythms.

He responds to direct stimuli and answers questions but rarely volunteer statements unless something profound occurs to him, in which case he says what is literally on his mind, whether it is relevant to the immediate conversation or not. When he works magic, however, he seems fully present in the world, as if only when his Awakened self acts, do his body and mind come together in the same time and place.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Hand-tooled and wound-leather wand without sharp edges or pointed tips
Real Name: Martin Achilles Tessanopoulis
Path: Mastigos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Mathematics) 4, Computer (Advanced Programming, Cryptography) 4, Crafts (Leatherworking) 2, *Investigation (Intuitive) 3, Occult (Symbology) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics (Repetitive Exercises) 2, Brawl (Defensive) 1, Larceny (Breaking Codes) 4, *Stealth 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Persuasion (Body Language) 3
Merits: Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Hallow 5, High Speech, Library: Bookstore (British Isles Folk Wisdom, Chicago Magical Lore, Pagan Rituals), Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Mind 4, Prime 4, Space 4
Rotes: Mind — Sense Consciousness (•), Mental Shield (••), Universal Language (•••), Psychic Sword (••••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••), Celestial Fire (•••), Supernal Dispellation (••••); Space — Correspondence (•), Untouchable (••), Multispatial Perception (•••), Pocket Realm(••••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Untouchable," Space ••)
Magic Shield: 4 (Prime ••)

Aquamundi

Quote: "*Magic is the world's water. Without its sustaining energy, the world would dry up. But only balance upholds the cyclic energy of magic, just as balance is needed in the water cycle. Like water, magic can be tainted and purified of taint.*"

Background: Mischa Oscik grew up in Chicago's Lithuanian community. As a teenager, she was drawn into the subculture of Lithuanian death metal and paganism, professing to worship the gods of light and darkness rather than adhering to the Orthodox Christianity of her parents' generation.

With her companions, she explored as much of the occult as she could, everything from Ouija boards to tarot to the Kabbalah. She also experimented with hallucinogens, seeking an ever-greater spiritual high.

Her Awakening came quickly and violently during one such experiment, resulting in a trip to the emergency room where she had to be physically restrained to keep from clawing her eyes out.

She refused to speak of what happened to any of the physicians and psychologists who saw her during her hospital stay, finally making up a story of paranoia and nebulous bogeymen to stop their incessant questions. In fact, she had traveled to a realm of Primal nature and had come to the Watchtower of the Stone Book, at the end of the Path of Thyrsus. She had been transformed into a giant cat and a river fish and had experienced the horror of humanity's pollution of the earth's lands and waters. In atonement, she had tried to mutilate herself as the planet had been savaged.

Her parents, when they heard of her involvement in drugs, had no sympathy for a daughter they did not understand and could not reach. They disowned her as a witch and a Satanist.

Mischa's self-destructive tendencies were enough to warrant a stay in a mental institution as a ward of the state. The confinement and treatment were hard on her, since she had to control her impulse to use raw magic in response to the grueling interviews, therapy sessions, drug therapies and electroshock treatments to which she was submitted.

Finally, she had a visitor who claimed to be her sister. Although Mischa had no sister, she went to the meeting with hope and curiosity in her heart. Cassandra was waiting for her. She had seen Mischa in one of her visions and had done her best to locate her through her brother Rebus' problem-solving abilities. Cassandra told Mischa that she would be leaving the institution soon and that Cassandra would give Mischa a home.

Two days later, Mischa was released from the institution. No reason was ever given for her release, but she was pronounced "cured" of her psychotic, self-destructive behavior. Mischa found a cab waiting for her. The driver took her to Cassandra's Visions Bookstore, where she was given a job in the bookstore, a place to live in a basement apartment and an initiation into the order of the Guardians of the Veil. She chose the shadow name Aquamundi to symbolize her dedication to magic and to the life of the planet.

Description: Mischa is often mistaken for a boy because she has a lean, straight-hipped body with no breasts to speak of. She wears her henna-dyed hair in a short shag with bangs that fall into her eyes. Her features combine Eastern European high cheek bones and a generous mouth with a waif-like expression. She has a volatile temper and is trying to learn more control of her emotions.

Her Nimbus appears as a wave of water running through a cycle of pollution to purification. The "quality" of the water also varies, depending on her mood.

Storytelling Hints: Mischa feels that the cabal, and Cassandra in particular, saved her life and her sanity and she owes them a loyalty that goes beyond death as far as she is concerned. She has dropped her pagan beliefs in favor of a natural pantheism and has become more of a shaman than a "witch" in her choice of rituals and practices. She has also become a passionate environmentalist. She regrets losing her family, but has tried to reconcile herself to the fact that they wouldn't understand the new person she has become any better than they did the pagan metalhead she used to be.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Mirror of highly polished, beaten copper
Real Name: Mischa Karolla Oscik
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Crafts (Beadwork) 2, *Investigation 2, Occult (Lithuanian Paganism) 2, Science (Environmental Studies) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny (Shoplifting) 2, *Stealth 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Overcoming Hostility) 3, Intimidation 2, Socialize (Group Rituals) 2, Streetwise 3, *Subterfuge 1
Merits: Contacts (Pagans) (Environmentalists), Hallow 5, High Speech, Library (British Isles Folk Wisdom, Chicago Magical Lore, Pagan Rituals) 4, Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5 (Vocalization, mild: 5)
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 3, Mind 1, Prime 2, Spirit 3
Rotes: Life — Cleanse the Body (•), Heal Flora and Fauna (••), Control Median Life (•••); Mind — Third Eye (•), Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••); Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Ephemeral Shield (••), Rouse Spirit (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Ephemeral Shield," Spirit ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Taliesin

Quote: *"I have been many things in many lifetimes. What matters, though, is what I am now."*

Background: Taliesin's true background is unknown except for the bits and pieces he "lets slip" when speaking to people. He claims to be from Ireland and Wales. He gives his profession as a motivational speaker or an itinerant bard or a professional explorer and salvage artist. He has never been married, has had three wives (at different times), prefers men, is a priest who honors the vow of celibacy and has numerous children. He has lived in Belfast, Paris, Cardiff, New York, Atlanta, Toronto, Mexico City and Vancouver and almost any place else one would care to mention.

He has stories of working as a bus driver, a ranch hand, a professional escort, a "no questions asked" courier and a door-to-door salesman. He has practiced law, medicine and accounting, among other things, either professionally or as a fraud. Those who spend time with him in conversation come away believing they have just met a spy, an assassin, a Fed or a missionary.

To the members of Cassandra's Visions cabal, however, he is Mentor and guide, shepherd and teacher, friend and counselor. Only they know what is perhaps the truest of the true stories. Taliesin does not remember who he really is — or was. He believes that when he first Awakened, he was involved in something so dangerous or so horrendous that in order to atone for his actions he requested that the order wipe his memory of anything pertaining to his worldly existence. He then pledged himself to the Guardians of the Veil for the life of his soul, through all its incarnations.

Taliesin is respected by all members of his order as one of their most powerful and most effective living mages. He arrives where he is most needed and stays until whatever situation called him there has been resolved. He chose the shadow name "Taliesin" because, he says, "I could in truth choose no other."

Description: Taliesin has the face and build of a man in his 30s, but his clear blue eyes hint of many more years than that, even of many more lifetimes. His hair is black streaked with silver, though the silver seems to outweigh the black, and is worn almost to his shoulders, giving him the look of a professor or a poet. He dresses in casual clothes, as if always ready to travel, but even his casual clothing shows touches of adornment. His jeans are embroidered with animal shapes, his jackets and shirts have tassels and other embellishments. His voice is a soft, fluid tenor that never tires the ear of the listener, and his hands are the graceful hands of a musician. He walks with a slight limp, as if from a very old wound.

Taliesin's Nimbus gives off shifting lights through his eyes, like a kaleidoscope of ever-changing shapes and colors.

Storytelling Hints: Taliesin does not take the lead in any situation, but he is always ready with advice for those who do step forward. He will assist his cabalmates with anything and is a willing listener as well as a teacher. He delights in storytelling and riddles and mysteries and sometimes deliberately speaks in cryptic phrases so that those who ask him for help have to use their brains to decipher his counsel.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Delicate crystal goblet
Real Name: Padraig Abernathy (his last known identity)
Path: Acanthus
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (History and Literature) 4, Crafts (Knot-Working) 3, *Investigation (Subtle) 3, Medicine (Natural Healing) 3, Occult (Creation Myths) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 3, Brawl (Dirty Tricks) 3, *Stealth (Surprise Entrances) 3, Weaponry (Sword) 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Befriending) 3, Empathy (Body Language) 3, Expression (Storytelling) 4, Persuasion (Silver-Tongued) 4, Socialize 3, *Subterfuge 4
Merits: Contacts (Storytellers, Entertainers, Animal Rights Activists), Hallow 5, High Speech, Library: Bookstore (British Isles Folk Wisdom, Chicago Magical Lore, Pagan Rituals), Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3, Status: Guardians of the Veil 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 5
Arcana: Fate 5, Life 4, Mind 3, Prime 4, Spirit 3, Time 4
Rotes: Fate — Quantum Flux (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Bestow Exceptional Luck (•••), Sanctify Oaths (••••), Geas (•••••); Life — Healer's Trance (•), Purify Bodies (••), Healing Heart (•••), Shapechanging (••••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Mental Shield (••), Telepathy (•••); Prime — Discern Phantasm (•), Magic Shield (••), Controlled Dispellation (•••), Phantasmal Weapon (••••); Spirit — Second Sight (•), Place of Power (••), Restore Lost Soul (•••); Time — Perfect Timing (•), Temporal Dodge (••), Divination (•••), Prophecy (••••)
Mana/per turn: 14/5
Armor: 5 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)
Magic Shield: 4 (Prime ••)

Deathsong

Quote: "*Blood sings as it runs through the body. It screams when it flows through a wound. It sighs as a life bleeds out the final soundless tune. Listen to your own deathsong. It is the last thing you will hear.*"

Background: Kaliki Sommers was born in Hawai'i to a Japanese Hawai'ian fitness instructor and an Anglo American father, an attorney. As a child growing up in Honolulu, Kaliki lived on the beaches when she wasn't taking lessons from her mother. An Olympic swimming hopeful at 15, Kaliki was on her way to the West Coast for the first round of Olympic trials when she received word that she had to return to Honolulu at once.

A police officer was waiting for her at LAX to assist her in boarding a return plane for Hawai'i. When she arrived, more police and her paternal grandparents met her with the news that her parents had been murdered, apparently during an attempted break-in at their home. The police questioned Kaliki as gently as they could to determine if she knew any reason why her parents had been targeted for a robbery or why someone would want to kill them and use a burglary attempt as a cover. Kaliki could give the police nothing useful, only vague feelings that there were some people her parents didn't like.

Kaliki was devastated. Though she went to live with her grandparents, who relocated her to Chicago in order to remove her from bad associations and help her start over, Kaliki could not reconcile herself with the death of her parents — particularly her mother, who had taught Kaliki not only how to keep her body healthy and fit but had also begun instructing her in karate and had told her that one day Kaliki would learn her mother's secret story.

Kaliki continued her martial arts lessons while living with her grandparents. After high school, she enrolled at the University of Chicago and moved into her own apartment. One night during her Christmas break, she received an unexpected visitor, an elderly Chinese man who called himself Mr. Soong. The old man said he knew Kaliki's mother and knew why she, along with her husband, had been killed. As Mr. Soong spoke to her, Kaliki found she couldn't tear her gaze away from his hands. Suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, Mr. Soong clapped his hands once, and Kaliki fell into a dream, in which she found herself at the Watchtower of the Lead Coin. Mr. Soong initiated her into the order of the Adamantine Arrow and continued her martial arts training as well as her instruction in magic. Before he left her, he arranged a meeting with the cabal called Cassandra's Visions. Cassandra, the cabal's head, realized the advantage of having a trained fighter in her cabal to help protect them, and Kaliki had no reason to resent the Guardians of the Veil. For now, she is content to remain in Chicago, but she knows that her future lies elsewhere. Because of that, she has chosen the shadow name Deathsong.

Description: Kaliki is small, with a trim figure and powerful arm muscles from swimming. She has long, straight black hair and dark eyes that always seem to smile even when she

is being serious. Her olive skin never pales in winter. She enjoys wearing colorful clothing but also wears black from time to time.

Her Nimbus is like a dark cloud that surrounds her and masks her shape. It seems an unlikely aura for someone who is usually serene and apparently untroubled.

Storytelling Hints: Kaliki is a study in contrasts. Part of her retains the cheery disposition she had before the death of her parents. The other part of Kaliki, however, is a dark person, the "Deathsong" of her shadow name. Now that she has learned from Mr. Soong that her mother was killed because she was a mage, Kaliki has sworn to avenge her mother.

Kaliki has put feelers out to attempt to track down the person or persons responsible for killing her parents. Once Kaliki knows who they are, she plans to arrange a personal meeting with them — one that will end in their deaths. In the meantime, she will learn from her cabal members. She also hopes to locate the mysterious Celestial Flange that everyone is talking about in the hopes that it may help her achieve her goal.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bone wand with a ruby tip
Real Name: Kaliki Emmaline Sommers
Path: Moros
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Science (Biology) 3
Physical Skills: *Athletics (Swimming) 4, Brawl (Karate) 4, Firearms 2, Stealth (Silent Entry) 3, Weaponry (Thrown Knives) 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Sensing Fear) 3, *Intimidation (Face-Offs) 3, Subterfuge (Hiding Thoughts) 4
Merits: Contacts (Mr. Soong), Hallow 5, High Speech, Library: Bookstore (British Isles Folk Wisdom, Chicago Magical Lore, Pagan Rituals) 4, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 7
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 3, Forces 2, Matter 3, Prime 2
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•), Decay (••), Sever the Sleeping Soul (•••); Forces — Nightsight (•), Influence Electricity (••); Matter — Alter Conductivity (•), Unseen Aegis (••), Armor Piercing (•••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Hounds of Atlantis

Late enough in the night, when the shot glasses are wet and empty, the Hip Flask tells tale of the Dogs of the Lake. As they tell it, the Dogs are roving creatures crafted by spells of the old "Indian wizards" to seek out mages in the wild and keep tabs on the European willworkers new to the region. Though the wizards who made (or summoned) the Dogs are long since gone, the Dogs remain. To this night they sniff out mages, sometimes pursuing them around the city. They seem to appear on the verge of important events, like agents of Fate. Some say the Dogs are a family of werewolves, bound in a debt of servitude to the mages of Chicago.

Banishers and witch-hunters have caught wind of the tales and are attempting to find out if the Dogs can be used to locate mages in the city for their own ends. One night, these dangerous people come to a pub frequented by the Hip Flask to hear the tales... and ask questions. What are the Dogs? What do they know and how do they know it? Are they the companions of mages or the hounds that hunt them?

The Silver Ladder

After the 1987 Mage War over the Celestial Flange, the Silver Ladder's presence was negligible to non-existent. Many Silver Ladder mages died in the conflict, while others left the city for more hospitable social climes. While the Guardians of the Veil, under the guidance of the Walsh Industries cabal, assumed the duties of leading the mages of Chicago, the Silver Ladder has spent the last two decades rebuilding its membership and its sense of purpose. With the appearance of a new cabal of vibrant young mages, some native to the city and some recent arrivals, the Silver Ladder is poised to begin its climb to power once again.

The Castle

In recent years the anonymous purchase of the Flint-Strumner Mansion in Chicago's Gold Coast area signaled a return of the Silver Ladder to those who could read the signs. The three-story, brick-and-stone mansion sits on a large walled-in estate on the south edge of Lincoln Park. The ground floor of the mansion contains several rooms of esoterica and curios, a small library and a formal reception room. The upper two floors contain bedroom suites and a music room, a conservatory and a gallery of rare and original paintings by American artists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Anyone so fortunate as to gain admission into the house itself can feel the influence of

money and power permeating the walls of the building. The grounds are impeccably landscaped and outfitted with state-of-the-art security. A pack of wolfhounds, led by a larger-than-usual pale gray specimen, patrols the grounds like silent ghosts padding through the sculpted lawns and gardens.

Here, amid the symbols of wealth and security, dwells Ptarmigan Whitehall, who, under the shadow name of Eleagia leads the cabal known as the Castle. The cabal's sanctum lies in the house's ample basement, accessed by a secret passage from the library on the ground floor or from a hidden stairwell in the gallery on the second floor.

Eleagia

Quote: "*Please, we are civilized people who happen to disagree about some very important issues. We can sit down and resolve our conflict without violence or — messiness. Now, sit!*"

Background: Ptarmigan Whitehall grew up in genteel poverty in the flatlands of eastern North Carolina. As a child, she spent most of her time indoors, playing with her mother's old dolls or putting together ancient jigsaw puzzles of lighthouses and kittens and bottletop caps because her mother and her Great-Aunt Virginia thought Ptarmigan was too good to play with the neighborhood children.

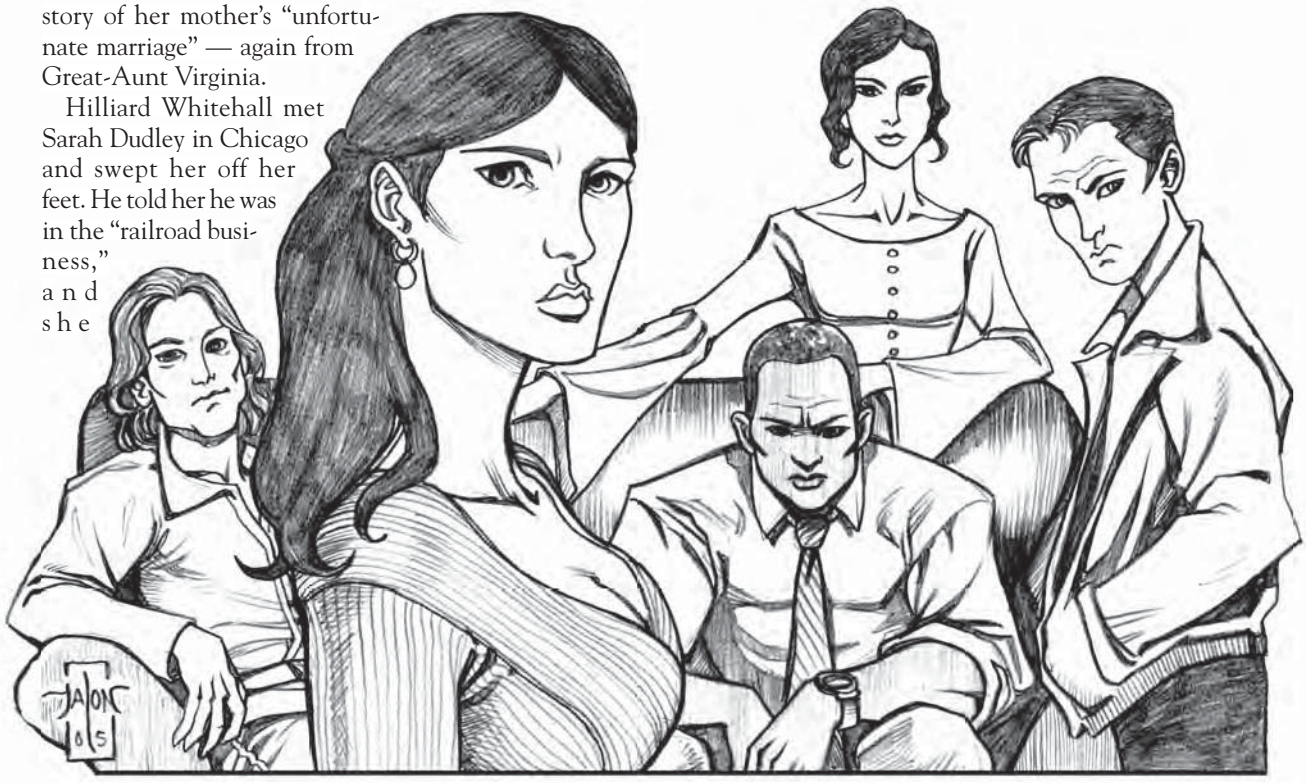
"Your mother was a member of the Chicago Dudleys," her great-aunt would tell the girl whenever she begged to be allowed to play dodgeball and ride her still-shiny bicycle with the other kids who lived on her block. "They would never associate with this poor white riffraff, and neither will you." When Ptarmigan, who never had a nickname, grew older, she heard the story of her mother's "unfortunate marriage" — again from Great-Aunt Virginia.

Hilliard Whitehall met Sarah Dudley in Chicago and swept her off her feet. He told her he was in the "railroad business," and she assumed he owned a railroad or two. Her family, though once wealthy, was declining in prosperity, so Sarah allowed herself to warm quickly to the dashing, young railroad tycoon. It was only after a whirlwind courtship and a small but thoroughly binding wedding that Hilliard confessed that he was only a lineman on the big freight engines that still moved coal and other raw materials from the Southeast to the industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest.

So it was that Ptarmigan found herself living in North Carolina, where her mother's dwindling money went further. When the money was gone, so was Hilliard, and Sarah was left on her own with a child to raise. Wisely, according to Great-Aunt Virginia, Sarah called on her family to help. Enter her Aunt Virginia.

By the time Ptarmigan graduated from high school, she was so tired of being poor that she could hardly wait to go off to college, even if it was on a work-study program and even if she did it without her mother's (or Great-Aunt Virginia's) blessing. Ptarmigan left North Carolina and went to Connecticut, where she attended Yale on a scholarship that included work-study. In the library, she met Edgar Lansdale, an up-and-coming law student from a wealthy family. She also met a charismatic woman called Martinique, who first seduced Ptarmigan and then Awakened her, took her to the Watchtower of the Golden Key and initiated her into the order of the Silver Ladder, giving her the shadow name "Eleagia."

Though Ptarmigan enjoyed her time with her Mentor, she knew she was destined for other things. Using her newfound power, she drew Edgar to her and married him; when he died suddenly of a heart attack, he left his wife all his money. Not long afterward, Ptarmigan received



an assignment from her Mentor, Martinique, who asked Ptarmigan to go to Chicago and form a Silver Ladder cabal in the city. She was to use that cabal to launch a restructuring of the mages of Chicago under the leadership of the Silver Ladder.

Description: Eleagia is a handsome woman in her mid-30s. She has a shapely body, a perfect complexion, aristocratic features and silky, black hair that falls in soft waves just past her shoulders. She dresses in elegant suits or in more casual wear that she orders direct from Paris. Her dark brown eyes rarely show any emotion, and she rarely smiles except for show. She carries herself with studied grace and projects an authority she hopes she can one day feel.

Her Nimbus is a garland of gold coins that surrounds her body. During the casting of particularly vulgar magic, the coins clink together in an audible cacophony of metallic jangling.

Storytelling Hints: Eleagia is in Chicago for a twofold purpose. First and foremost, she is here to help her order re-establish a power base in Chicago and oversee the activities of the other Atlantean mages. Secondly, she wishes to reclaim her family's status as part of the city's wealthy elite. When she is not involved in the affairs of her order, she is planning ways to advance herself in society, including finding a new husband — one whom she might keep around for awhile this time.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Platinum card, shaped and sized like a credit card
Real Name: Ptarmigan Whitehall
Path: Obrimos
Order: Silver Ladder
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Needlework) 3, Occult 3
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Weaponry (Household Objects) 3
Social Skills: Empathy (Ulterior Motives) 3, Intimidation (Social Status) 3, *Persuasion 4, Socialize (High Society) 4
Merits: Contacts (High Society, Silver Ladder), Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Faerie Lore, Finance, History: Chicago, Law, Magic Lore), Resources 5, Sanctum: Security 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5 (Fixation, mild: 5)
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Forces 3, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 4,
Rotes: Forces — Nightsight (•), Unseen Shield (••), Light Mastery(•••); Life — Cleanse the Body(•), Organic Resilience (••); Mind — Third Eye (•), First Impressions (••), Greater Beast Control (•••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Magic Shield (••), Channel Mana (•••), Siphon Essence (••••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 4 (Prime ••••)

Altus Vulcanis

Quote: "*If you want me to defend you, you had better be innocent. If you aren't, then you have come to the wrong place.*"

Background: Born to wealthy African American parents in San Francisco, Nathan Perriman decided early in life that he wanted to be a lawyer, indoctrinated by the many popular legal and criminal dramas in the movies and on television. His father, a doctor, and his mother, a social worker, had no objection and did everything they could to clear his path to law school. Nathan received his law degree from Stanford, passed the California bar exam and entered the competitive field of trial law. When he received his first high-profile case, a prominent businessman accused of the murder of a call girl, Nathan faced a moral dilemma. Retained by the businessman to defend him, Nathan found his investigations only confirmed his client's guilt. When Nathan confronted his client, he was reminded that he had been hired to win the case, not uncover the truth.

Nathan tried to withdraw from the case, but his client refused to release him, saying it would prejudice the judge and jury. When Nathan insisted that he couldn't in good conscience defend a guilty client, the businessman shrugged and told Nathan that he hoped he would change his mind. That evening, the campaign of terror began. Nathan's car was stolen; when it was found abandoned, it exploded just before Nathan touched the door handle. His apartment was next. This time, Nathan found a note in the ruins of his front door indicating that his family would be next on the list.

Nathan spent a sleepless night trying to decide what to do. As the sun rose, Nathan had made up his mind to refuse to be intimidated, but he knew he had to get his parents out of harm's way. He walked out of his apartment and found himself in a different landscape, a nightmarish realm of justice without mercy and willful madness. He followed a path leading to the Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet and the Path of the Warlock.

Almost before he could react to what had just happened to him, Nathan's Mentor found him — one of his law professors at Stanford and a member of the order of the Silver Ladder. When Nathan explained his moral dilemma, his Mentor told him to watch and wait. Within 24 hours, the businessman confessed to the murder of the call girl and to three other crimes, including embezzle-

ment, money laundering and trafficking in drugs. From that example, Nathan learned the power of magic.

Once he had demonstrated his considerable capabilities both as a mage and a lawyer, Nathan received orders to go to Chicago and bolster the dwindling numbers of his order in the Windy City. He soon met Eleagia, and together they formed the cabal known as the Castle. Though Eleagia held the position of cabal leader, Nathan, now known as Altus Vulcanis, became the order's Councilor in the Consilium, choosing his protégé, a young mage called "L'Etranger," as his Provost.

Description: Vulcanis is an attractive, if somewhat heavyset African American in his mid-30s. His short hair and clean-shaven face mark him as a professional. He has a broad nose, a high forehead and dark, intelligent eyes. His voice is deep and has a pleasing timbre, a quality that helps him in court. He exudes confidence.

His Nimbus consists of alternating bands of black-and-white — with no shades of gray.

Storytelling Hints: Nathan's experiences in San Francisco have distilled his sense of right and wrong to a high degree. He has a great deal of compassion for victims and the innocent, but no tolerance at all for the guilty, regardless of the nature of the crime or the age or gender of the criminal. He finds life in Chicago difficult, since moral and ethical ambiguities are common in the Windy City. He has become less interested in law and more involved in magic, particularly as a tool to ferret out the truth and expose corruption. He is hoping to eventually become a judge.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small brass gavel
Real Name: Nathan Frederick Perriman
Path: Mastigos
Order: Silver Ladder
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 4, Computer 1, Investigation (Legal Research) 4, Occult 2, Politics (Local) 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Victims) 3, *Expression (Trial Arguments) 3, Intimidation (Of Witnesses) 3, *Persuasion (Closing Statements) 4, Socialize (Cocktail Parties) 2, *Subterfuge (Legal) 4
Merits: Contacts (Judges, Law Enforcement, Order), Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Faerie Lore, Finance, History: Chicago, Law, Magic Lore) 4, Resources 4, Sanctum: Size (Shared), Status: Councilor 5
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Forces 4, Matter 3, Prime 4
Rotes: Forces — Read Matrices (•), Unseen Shield (••), Control Electricity (•••), Friction Knife (••••); Matter — Detect Substance (•), Unseen Aegis (••), Repair Object(•••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Counterspell Prime (••), Ley Lines (•••), Supernal Distillation (••••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 4 (Prime ••••)

Llewellyn ap Pwyll

Quote: *"We've forgotten the importance of history in America, of our ties to the past and to our ancestors. It's especially important for those of us who see the world differently, who work our will into the tapestry of reality. We cannot forget who we are, yes, but, more importantly, we cannot forget who came before us."*

Background: Lonny Davis was born into a Welsh coal mining family years after the mines had played out and thrown the already poor family into grinding poverty. His father got odd jobs that put food on the table and usually paid for their rent, but not always their electricity. The boy grew up knowing what he was missing and bitterly resenting it. As soon as he could, he ran away from home for the big city of Cardiff. From there, he made his way to London, trading on his boyish good looks to get him a bed for the night and food for the next day. Even though he had little more than he did back home in Wales, at least he was in the mainstream of the world, where he could look at or even touch what he couldn't have.

Lonny's life as he knew it ended one night when he went home with an attractive man who seemed taken with the scrappy Welsh teenager. When the stranger locked the door behind them and took out a long knife, Lonny knew he was in trouble. He tried to scream and fight his attacker, but he found himself immobilized, unable to more or make a sound. Just as he felt the blade pierce his throat, he heard a noise like displaced air. The world darkened around him, and he fell into blackness.

He awoke to the sound of laughter and music. The stranger with the knife was nowhere to be seen, but another man stood over him, offering him food and wine such as Lonny had never seen or tasted before. He was outside, lying on a hilltop and the music was coming from below, where a circle of beautiful, willowy people danced and piped, laughing and flirting with each other all the time. Lonny's rescuer, for he surmised that he had been rescued, was as handsome as the others and then some. His auburn hair hung halfway down his back and about his brow he wore a golden circlet. His clothing was all velvets and satins, and he had rings on all his fingers. He smiled, and Lonny was lost in ecstasy.

Later, the creature — for Lonny realized that this was not a "man" exactly, but one of the Fair Folk — who gave his name as Pwyll, told Lonny he had a choice. Lonny could either stay with Pwyll for a year and a day in the

realm of faerie, or Lonny could return to the world and know true power such that he need never sell himself for the price of a meal or a bed to sleep in. In fact, he alone would determine the extent of his power.

Lonny weighed his choices, even as Pwyll watched him hopefully. Finally, Lonny decided that the power to affect the world was more important than the ecstatic pleasure he would know with Pwyll and his companions. Pwyll accepted Lonny's decision philosophically; the Fair Folk do not know lasting attachments, and already Pwyll's infatuation with the young man whose blood smelled ever so faintly of darkness and coal was beginning to fade.

Pwyll took Lonny by the hand and led him past the dancers and walked with him down a thistle-lined path to the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn. As Lonny caught sight of the tower, he felt something inside him snap, and power surged through him as he Awakened.

Pwyll gave Lonny a farewell kiss and a new name to carry with him into the world beyond the Gauntlet. When Lonny re-entered the physical world, he felt the need to emigrate and start a new life. Following hunches, he ended up in Chicago, where he found a teacher waiting for him, an icily beautiful woman named Eleagia, who somehow knew of his coming. She took him into her cabal and initiated him into the order of the Silver Ladder, confirming his shadow name as "Llewellyn ap Pwyll."

Weeks later, Lonny found time to wonder what had happened to the man who had tried to butcher him with a knife. The answer came to him in a soft breeze that carried the sound of laughter and gay piping and a familiar voice that said, "even the faeries sometimes hunt in far places to bring home something for the feast."

Description: Lonny has dark auburn hair that ends in soft curls to just above his ears and the base of his neck. His fair skin burns easily in the sun, and when it does, his face becomes a field of freckles. He has blue eyes and a friendly smile and flirts constantly with both men and women. He dresses in casually expensive clothing. He has almost lost his Welsh accent, though it crops up occasionally when he is excited or angry.

His Nimbus is pale green and gold, but smells faintly of coal dust.

Storytelling Hints: Lonny cultivates a confidence he doesn't feel. He trades on his Welsh ancestry within magic circles because of the weight held by Welsh folklore such as the tales of the Mabinogen. He rarely speaks of his poor childhood or "the dark times" in London, glossing over that period of his life as if it were without true import. He is determined to help his order gain dominance among the Chicago mages and will assist Ptarmigan in any way he can.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Wire-wrapped crystal wand
Real Name: Lonny Math Davis
Path: Acanthus
Order: Silver Ladder
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Woodcarving) 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Faerie Lore) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics (Dancing) 3, Brawl (Donnybrooks) 3, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny (Pickpocketing) 2, Stealth 3, Survival (Cities) 3, Weaponry (Knives) 3
Social Skills: Empathy (Audiences) 4, *Expression (Storytelling) 3, *Persuasion (Smoothtalking) 3, Socialize (Parties) 2, Streetwise 3
Merits: Contacts (Storytellers), Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Faerie Lore, Finance, History: Chicago, Law, Magic Lore), Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared)
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 3, Life 2, Time 3
Rotes: Fate — Quantum Flux (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Superlative Luck (•••); Life — Pulse of the Living World (•), Self-Healing (••); Time — Momentary Flux (•), Augury(••), Shifting Sands (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Bella Lundi

Quote: *"It's not that I'm especially fond of violence. I just love guns."*

Background: When Carlotta was little, her daddy called her his "Princess," and he gave her whatever she wanted — kittens, a pony, a playhouse that looked like a castle and anything else that caught her fancy of the moment. As she grew older, she realized that her life was very different from that of other girls her age. For one thing, she didn't go to school like other kids. Her teachers came to her. She also never went "out" to play. Friends whom her family approved would come to her house and her father's big friends, Rudy and Gioppo, would keep an eye on them as they played in her house or on the lawn of their three-story house in Brooklyn.

Eventually she figured it out, and asked her mother for confirmation. Her mother reluctantly told her what Carlotta had feared. Her father and all the other men in the family were not just "businessmen," but leaders of organized crime. She didn't need to ask exactly what her father did; she'd seen enough crime shows on television to make an educated guess.

Though she had always thought of the law as the "good guys" and crime lords as "bad guys," she couldn't find it in herself to hate the father who was so good to her. Or the uncles and grown cousins that brought her presents and joked about marrying her when she grew up. (She soon realized they weren't joking.)

She received her high school diploma as a homeschooled student and begged her parents to send her to college somewhere out of state. She wanted a chance at a "normal life" before she married someone her father picked out for her. Her father finally agreed to send her to the University of Chicago, on the condition that she take Rudy and Gioppo with her to keep an eye on her and that she stay with her Uncle Theo's family and take a good look at his oldest son, Vincent.

Carlotta agreed and soon found herself enrolled in the University of Chicago and staying with her Aunt Stella and Uncle Theo in a townhouse two blocks from the campus. She majored in economics with a minor in history and went on chaperoned dates with Vincent, who was also a U of C student and a business major.

She decided that she could do a lot worse than Vincent, who treated her like spun glass and offered to teach her how to use a gun. Carlotta Awakened unexpectedly on the firing range between the report of her pistol and her awareness of the bullet striking its target. Though no time had passed in the physical world, Carlotta traveled in spirit to the realm of Stygia and stood before the Watchtower of the Lead Coin, where she realized that her life was intimately connected with the business of death and violence. She chose the shadow name Bella Lundi, the name of her favorite doll, and waited for a teacher.

Soon she was approached by Eleagia, who had somehow won the approval of Carlotta's aunt and uncle. Carlotta joined the Castle cabal and soon became an expert in security and "protection." Her fiancé, Vincent, helps smooth the cabal's road in dealing with certain parts of Chicago's underworld. He is unaware that Carlotta has influenced his thoughts and secured his loyalty through the practice of her magic.

Description: Carlotta looks like a Renaissance princess, with long, curly black hair and dark eyes, a flawless light olive complexion, full lips and a well-developed body. She dresses in designer clothing, not out of a desire to impress but because she has no experience shopping for cheaper clothing. She wears dresses except for occasions that require trousers, such as trips to the shooting range or bike rides along the lakefront bike paths.

Her Nimbus is gunmetal gray with dark red, blood-colored sparks of light snapping off from it at random moments.

Storytelling Hints: Carlotta manages to combine the utter self-confidence of an indulged only child with an innocent fragility that invokes a protective impulse in almost everyone she meets. She speaks with only a slight trace of a Brooklyn accent, but her voice is low and pleasing. She has developed a love of guns that borders on obsession, as if she has finally come to terms with the violence inherent in her family and decided to embrace it — in principle at least. As a mage, she is decisive and impulsive, though she always has the safety and protection of her cabal at heart.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bone dagger
Real Name: Carlotta Lucia Belioni
Path: Moros
Order: Silver Ladder
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Economics) 3, Computer (Spread Sheets) 3, Investigation (Financial Research) 4, Occult (Italian Folklore) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Cardiovascular) 2, Brawl 2, Drive (At Speed) 4, Firearms (Target Shooting) 4, Larceny (Security Systems) 3, Weaponry (Objects on Hand) 3
Social Skills: Intimidation (Badgering) 3, *Persuasion (Childlike) 2, Socialize (Informal Gatherings) 3
Merits: Allies (Bodyguards) 3, Contacts (Criminal Underground), Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Faerie Lore, Finance, History: Chicago, Law, Magic Lore), Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared)
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Death 2, Matter 2, Prime 1
Rotes: Death — Shadow Sculpting (•), Entropic Guard (••); Matter — Dark Matter (•), Steel Windows (••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: 2 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)

L'Etranger

Quote: "*We must never forget that our responsibility is not just to lead, but to lead with wisdom and responsibility. We are not doing this for ourselves, but for the good of all those who remember the greatness of Atlantis.*"

Background: Etienne Dubois was born in Montréal and grew up despising all things American as petty, corrupt, banal and commercial. He was aware of magic from the beginning, since his mother was a mage and his father acted as her bodyguard. Etienne knew in his heart that he would Awaken one day and hoped to join his mother in her practice of the craft.

What he did not expect was that a pylon of Seers would discover his mother. One evening, she did not return from a meeting of her cabal. Etienne, who was 16 and used to staying home alone on such nights, realized something was wrong when the sky took on a hint of light. Soon after that, he received a phone call from his father informing him that his mother had been taken, and he was ready to mount an assault from which he would probably not return. When Etienne pleaded with his father to come home, his father replied that secrets must be kept. He told Etienne to take the package from the bottom drawer of the desk in the study, pack one suitcase and leave their house. His last words to Etienne were, "We love you. Carry on."

Etienne did as he was instructed. When he opened the package, he found a one-way bus ticket to Chicago and one thousand dollars in 10's and 20's. During the long bus ride, Etienne drifted off to sleep. In his dreams, he traveled a path through a thick, wild jungle until his emerged at the base of the Watchtower of the Stone Book.

He woke up, dazed and Awake, as the bus pulled into Chicago. Instinct led him to a club called the Abbatoir, where an elderly man allowed Etienne entrance before hours, fed him a meal and said, in French, "I see how it is with you, my friend. Let me find a teacher for you."

Not more than a moment later, it seemed, a muscular black man with a kindly face, a pleasant voice and a "take charge" attitude introduced himself to Etienne as Altus Vulcanis. He took Etienne home with him and began Etienne's instruction in magic. Altus Vulcanis brought the young French Canadian to the next meeting of the black man's cabal and introduced Etienne to Eleagia and the other members.

Etienne took the shadow name "L'Etranger" (the stranger) to symbolize his aloneness in the world, despite his new family, and his feeling of separateness from a country he had looked down upon until now. When Altus Vulcanis asked Etienne to become his Provost in the Consilium, the boy accepted with only a little trepidation. He decided that if he were to make his home here, as his father had implied, he would throw himself wholeheartedly into the task and perhaps mask the pain he still feels from the disappearance and probable death of his parents.

Description: L'Etranger is a young man of medium height with short, clipped, dark brown hair, piercing green eyes and a perpetually worried look. He dresses in T-shirts and jeans, though he usually throws on a leather jacket for Consilium meetings. He speaks English haltingly, as if it tastes bad in his mouth, and prefers to speak French whenever possible. He seems unfamiliar with most of American pop culture, gravitating toward Euro-pop, opera and blues. He does not speak about his past to anyone.

His Nimbus is a vibrant but puzzling rush, making onlookers feel short of breath.

Storytelling Hints: The young boy who fled his home at his father's orders is gone forever. In his place is a hardened youth who feels out of place in Chicago but who is determined to become as powerful as possible. He hopes someday to wage his own war against the Seers, blaming them for the shattering of his family and his childhood. He shows great devotion toward Altus Vulcanis, his Mentor, and to Chevalier, who was kind to him when he first arrived. L'Etranger gets along with the others in his cabal but is especially close to no one. He is obsessed with learning as much as he can but is careful to avoid appearing greedy so that he won't bring down the censure of his cabal.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Coin shaped from a smooth river stone
Real Name: Etienne Claude Dubois
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Silver Ladder
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Survival 3, Weaponry (Knife) 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Lies) 3, Streetwise 2, *Subterfuge (Misdirection) 3
Merits: Allies (Chevalier) 2, Status: Consilium (Provost) 4, Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Faerie Lore, Finance, History: Chicago, Law, Magic Lore), Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 7
Defense: 4
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 3, Prime 2, Spirit 3
Rotes: Life — Healer's Trance (•), Body Control (••), Banish Plague (•••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••); Spirit — Spirit Tongue (•), Ephemeral Shield (••), Spirit Road (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Ephemeral Shield," Spirit ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

The Abyss Speaks Back To You

Practitioners of Forces magic might catch wind of mysterious broadcasts coming through the night, like radio waves from outer space. Some conspiracy nuts who've managed to hear static-shrouded snippets of the signal say it really is extraterrestrial in origin, but mages know better. The signal is a voice, speaking in a bizarre variant of High Speech peppered with mundane languages, but it comes across distorted and distressed, like a phonograph recording, and speaks only in fragments.

The voice might be some kind of Supernal oracle, a magical being speaking out in warning to the descendants of Atlantis. It might also be a voice from the Abyss, speaking incantations into the Fallen World to lull the Awakened to sleep and keep Sleepers in slumber. If the broadcast has power of those who hear it, what can mages to keep it from diminishing their power or preventing other souls from Awakening? Even if it has no magical power, it might lead enemies to uncover secrets about Chicago's mages. Where is the signal coming from? What does it mean? Can it be stopped?

The Adamantine Arrow

They say the ranks of the Arrow swelled during the years of the Mage War— and then collapsed in its gruesome final days as mages died, fled Chicago or returned to their pre-war Orders. Today, the Adamantine Arrow is under-represented in the city, possibly as a reflection of every mage's fear of another decade of violence.

Some evidence suggests that the number of Arrows in Chicago is gradually growing again. This time, however, Arrows are more often joining existing cabals or working alone rather than forming dedicated cells of magical protectors or warriors.

The Abattoir

In the late '90s, Sartordi's Satanic Sideshow toured America's growing underground fetish scene, performing at clubs in several major cities and catering to a young generation with a newfound fascination for piercing, body art, and sexual "uniqueness." The shows were brilliant displays of acrobatics, pyrotechnics and prestidigitation, adding macabre circus themes to weekly S&M bondage shows. The performance group members would swoop in for a week or two, perform for whatever payment they could find and leave as quickly and mysteriously as they arrived. Repeat performances were rare, even though the performance group attracted fans in nearly every city they visited.

There was a reason, of course, that this group of performers was *really* so transient. Four of the five of them are members of the Adamantine Arrow, and they've followed an agenda of "travel and protect" for nearly a decade. In every city where they've performed, there has also always some kind of conflict where their specialized forms of fighting and "diplomacy" could be best put to use by those in power. Ironically, the member who would most often choose their travel itinerary was Madame Strega, their "Gypsy fortune teller," and the only mage in their cabal from a different order: the Mysterium. Literally looking into her crystal ball, she was able to discern not only where the group was needed most, but also which plan of action would be most lucrative. At first, any given local Consilium would view the cabal with mistrust, but after years of fast, clean "solutions" to political stalemates and other adversity, the performance group has built quite a reputation as a powerful wild card.

Three years ago, after a performance at a small nightclub in Chicago, Theodore Walsh approached the Chevalier with a proposition. Walsh offered to provide a permanent venue for the cabal in return for the members' aid in protecting the city. Madame Strega had foreseen such an event, as well as cloudy impressions about some kind of powerful artifact, making the decision to stay an easy one. Within a month, the Abattoir, a new exclusive fetish club, opened its doors to those who could afford the cover and satisfy the doorman's criteria.

The club itself is a bizarre carnival of sensory showmanship. Renovated from the remains of a closed movie theater, the interior is decorated in black-, red- and white-striped circus patterns. Through what used to be a lobby are several small lounge areas with plush seating and subdued lighting, and everything is kept surprisingly clean. The air always smells like cotton candy, popcorn and a hint of fuel from the numerous performances that require fire. A main bar lines the back wall, where 30 years ago, concessions were sold instead of cocktails. Where there used to be seats, there is a gently downward sloping dance floor ending at the foot of a wide stage that was installed to accommodate performances. Along the sides of the dance floor are raised round platforms where scantily clad dancers can writhe seductively or perform exotic acts of contortion. Theater was huge for its time, and there's a VIP area in the back with several rooms providing more privacy and special treatment for those on the "A-list."

The upper floors of the theater used to be for office and storage space, and are now cleared out to provide enough room for the cabal members to each have plenty of living space to coexist comfortably. Though these upper rooms are a protected sanctum, the nightclub itself is open to a carefully selected public. Some of the other supernatural denizens of Chicago have become aware of the Abattoir and its uncanny way of making acts of violence seem — unnecessary, making the club an ideal meeting place or neutral ground when their own haunts are, for whatever reason, less appealing. Thus far, this kind of diversity is tolerated. The mages running this club are quite certain of their abilities to deal with any unexpected surprises.

Within the mage community, the cabal is now referred to by the same name as the nightclub. When tensions are running high, the Consilium frequently has but to threaten calling upon the Abattoir, and errant mages will think twice about causing trouble. To further reinforce this image, Walsh recently saw to it that the Chevalier was named Sentinel, and the other members of the Abattoir loyally support any action he must take to carry out the will of the Consilium. Usually the cabal members are less involved in protecting the Council directly, however, and are called upon more often when justice (or retribution) is unavoidable.

The Chevalier

Quote: *"I'd like to show you something — very special. I have to be sure I can trust you, though, no?"*

Background: The Chevalier grew up as Ramon Toulouse, with loving parents who performed as an acrobatic trapeze team with a traveling circus during the 1950s. Times were often harsh, but the family had a warm "home" life, and Ramon was never without the necessities of life. He lacked the talent for aerial stunts that his parents enjoyed, but they never pushed him to follow in their footsteps. Instead, he developed a love for circus life in general, and grew attached to the strange "swami" who worked with the sideshow.

Sri Swami Takitnananda would do amazing feats of bodily control, walking across red-hot coals and lying for hours on a bed of nails. Ramon knew these stunts were real, and not stage

magic, like so many of the other "weird" attractions, and, as a teenager, his curiosity led him to befriend the old Indian man. The swami taught Ramon that his greatest talent was his ability to accept all people as individuals, not judging any of the "freaks" who traveled with the troupe.

In the '60s, Ramon Awakened gently with the encouragement of the swami, who finally revealed that he was a mage and that Ramon was "special." For several years, he learned about aspects of reality he had never imagined, and the swami initiated Ramon into the Adamantine Arrow. The old Indian man broke the mold of his order, training Ramon with a sense of discipline and enlightenment, not harsh asceticism and struggle. Newly named Archard Sartordi, Ramon was at a crossroads. They had been able to keep his tutelage secret for a long time, but his desire to *do* something with what he'd learned was overpowering. In 1967, Ramon's father died. After several months of grieving his loss, his mother decided to retire to her childhood home in Paris. Archard and Takitnananda both felt Archard had learned enough to set off on his own and make a name for himself, freed from the ties of family. Though he grieved the loss of his father and wanted badly to comfort his mother, Archard knew it was time to see what the rest of the world had to teach him.

Eventually, his travels brought him to America, where he vowed to live up to the ideals of his aged Mentor. Attaching himself to one political structure or city seemed to be a mistake; with the right group of mages at his side, he could do more good by traveling where he was needed most. Knowing he would only be comfortable with a troupe of performers, Archard started his life in the United States by taking on the moniker "the Chevalier" and filling the role of ringleader for the mages he would induct into his unusual sideshow. His history and his true identity have faded into the past, making him a mysterious figure with powerful allies, rarely questioned and often feared.

The cabal he assembled has come to be his new family, all of them looking out for one another and aspiring toward similar goals. Even Madame Strega, the only non-Adamantine Arrow mage in their group, feels more closely bonded to her fellow "performers" than to any order hierarchy, mostly due to her romantic relationship with Archard. She was one of the first mages he found, and they fell in love almost instantly. Due to her special "sight," Sartordi's Satanic Sideshow, now the Abattoir, has nearly always been in the right place at the right time.

It's no surprise that the Chevalier does not intend to stay in Chicago forever. However, Madame Strega *knows* they need to be here, and he will stay put until they fulfill the purpose she sees in her cryptic visions. He does not entirely trust that the Consilium's intentions are pure, and when the truth about the obsession Chicago's mages have with the Celestial Flange is revealed, his cabal will be ready to act.



Description: The Chevalier is the oldest mage in his cabal, and a mane of salt-and-pepper hair frames his wizened face. Dressed more often than not in a meticulously clean, stylized, red and black ringleader uniform, he is a fiercely imposing figure when he chooses. His eyes are deep set and serious, but his wrinkles seem to come more from smiling than scowling.

His Nimbus is characteristic of an Acanthus mage, charged with an exciting synergy of synchronized heartbeats and emotional highs.

Storytelling Hints: The Chevalier is always ready to help those he feels are in need and deserve it, but usually there is a price. He almost always has a smile and a kind word, but underneath his genial exterior is his circus background of pulling in the mark and making money from "the illusion." He encourages the members of his cabal to have fun with life but to always be aware of those who would take advantage of perceived friendliness. The Chevalier is talkative and disarming; his delicate French accent adds an exotic allure that most Sleepers find irresistible.

When needed, this charming personality can melt away, revealing a calculating businessman. When an injustice is committed, the Chevalier will exact vengeance without hesitation. His lessons are never forgotten, and he believes the punishment must *always* match the crime.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Ruby-and-onyx tie pin
Real Name: Archard Sartordi (Ramon Toulouse)
Path: Acanthus
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: *Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics (Consilium) 3
Physical Skills: *Athletics 2, Firearms (Pistol) 2
Social Skills: Expression (Circus Ringleader) 3, *Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Fast-Talk) 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Fame 1, High Speech, Language (English), Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4, Sleeper Retainer (Jacques Levalle) 3, Status: Consilium 3
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Time 4, Fate 3, Space 2
Rotes: Time — Perfect Timing (•),Temporal Eddies (•), Postcognition (••), Temporal Dodge (••), Acceleration (••••), Temporal Pocket (••••); Fate — Interconnections (•), Exceptional Luck (••), Bestow Exceptional Luck (•••); Space — Correspondence (•)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Temporal Dodge," Time ••)

Madame Strega

Quote: "*The lines of your hands are a roadmap to much despair, my friend. Cross my palm with silver, and I shall help you to avoid these things.*"

Background: Isabel Munoz grew up in poverty, in a world punctuated by constant abuse, and ran away from home when she was 15, hitting the streets and expecting to find something to give her existence meaning. She stumbled across more men like her father — younger ones who were much better at lying. She was nearly coerced into replacing a life of misery with one of servitude, running drugs and selling her body to men she'd sooner kill than sleep with. After a time, though, it became mechanical — and that's when she started having the dreams.

Isabel would wake up almost every day knowing what it would bring, and her unique insight was the only thing that saved her life and woke her up. Suddenly, things became at once safer, yet infinitely more confusing.

She began to travel across the country, looking for answers, but everywhere she turned there were only more questions. Eventually, she attracted the attention of others who knew what she was going through and who were willing to teach her, but only after she swore oaths of secrecy and was initiated into their order. The Mysterium provided the guidance she lacked, and their philosophy was not out of line with her own quest for life's significance.

In the early '90s, she met the Chevalier, who was still trying to assemble a group of mages who were interested in working with his traveling performance troupe. There was an instant connection. Not only were his intentions pure, but she also realized immediately that he was an honest man, like no other she'd encountered. This seemed to be where her destiny had been leading, and she has been a loyal companion to Archard and his cabal ever since.

Isabel never speaks of her initiation into the Mysterium, and other than occasionally slipping away to one of their secret meetings, there is very little that betrays her background. The other members of her cabal see her allegiance to that order as more of an asset; her unique insights have yet to lead to suspicion. Other mystagogues welcome the bits of knowledge she obtains during her travels, and thus far, they trust her to keep her oaths. She will always have a sense of "walking the line," but she's managed to balance her obligations and her feelings for many years without creating trouble.

Madame Strega is convinced that the Celestial Flange is real, and that she and her companions will play an integral role in finding it or at least figuring out the mysteries surrounding it. She believes it's the key to much of the tension in Chicago, and that her cabal will soon be called to action.

Description: Isabel is a Latin American woman who

grew up in New York, but with the right make-up, wild, colorful clothing, and a hint of an Eastern European accent, she is believable as the "Gypsy" who tells gullible patrons what they want to hear. She has a head of full, thick, tightly curled black hair and intense, almond-shaped brown eyes.

Her Nimbus creates an aura of tense mystery, followed by a soothing relief.

Storytelling Hints: When not in her role as fortune-teller, Madame Strega is quiet and non-assuming, gathering information as it plays out before her eyes — making connections between what she sees and what her intuition tells her. When she's performing, she seems every bit the mysterious Gypsy. She knows just what to tell the marks who visit her "fortune room" in the nightclub. Even when she's acting, though, her instinct is to help people overcome their problems, so there is often an element of truth to her "readings." She tells of terrible problems and frighteningly personal issues, only to smooth things over by re-assuring someone that he has the inner strength to overcome any obstacle.

The rest of the time, she keeps a serious outlook, viewing life as a series of ordeals to be dealt with internally. Her love for the Chevalier runs deep, and she opens up more to him than anyone else. She treats the rest of her cabal like family, an emotional bond many might view as a weakness. To Isabel, however, the idea of anyone being able to tear this asunder is ridiculous.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Fist-sized, smoky quartz crystal ball
Real Name: Isabel Munoz
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: *Investigation 3, *Occult (Divination) 4
Physical Skills: Larceny (Pickpocketing) 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Lies) 4, Expression (Fortune-Telling) 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, *Subterfuge 2
Merits: Dream 2, Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 4, Time 3, Spirit 2
Rotes: Fate — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•), The Sybil's Sight (•), The Evil Eye (••), Fortune's Protection (••), Lucky Coin (•••), Probable Cause (••••); Time — Augury (•), Glipsing the Future (••), Divination (•••); Spirit — Spirit Tongue (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 4 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

The Red Jester

Quote: " . . . "

Background: The Red Jester is arguably the member of the Abattoir who most belongs with a creepy circus act. The performance group knows very little about his past, but the others believe he suffered greatly to come as far as he has. Because he's been mute since birth, most of what his cabal knows about him is from conjecture and from what they've pieced together during conversations with handwritten responses. He has fiercely supported every cause they've adopted, though, and has never given them any reason to question his motivations.

Sam is the newest member of the cabal, having been discovered after they started touring in the '90s. Twisting his body into impossible shapes and juggling anything from blades to torches with casual finesse, this sad, quiet creature impressed the Chevalier. The Red Jester was only expected to be an opening act for Sartordi's Sideshow, but once their paths crossed, the Red Jester became one of the family. It was like he'd been waiting for a place to belong; after the cabal realized how well his particular skills would augment their own and that he was a member of the Adamantine Arrow already, the troupe members were quick to offer him a place.

The reality of his past is not far off from what people think: an abusive mage did "train" him; the ways of the Talon were hammered into his mind during his late teenage years. His Mentor is no longer a fear, though — even powerful mages have to sleep. On the Red Jester's own, he felt it was prudent to disappear. He traveled and performed, keeping a very low profile, lest others of his order seek him out and punish him. Meeting the Chevalier's cabal was an unexpected relief. The Red Jester thought all members of the Adamantine Arrow were cruel tyrants, and the falsity of that perception restored some amount of his hope for a future. Now he understands what he considers to be the *true* goals of his order, and his fear of retribution has almost faded from memory. He does still keep an eye over his shoulder, unsure of what will come if anyone ever discovers the secret of his master's fate.

Description: The Red Jester is a tall, wiry figure, and his skin is a tightly stretched patchwork of scars and burns — a constant reminder of the harsh initiation he underwent to "graduate" from the teachings of a twisted Mentor. The Red Jester wears nothing but a red leather full-body suit, covered with black straps and buckles, with only one small oval opening for his face, which is usually painted white-and-black like a traditional mime. He brandishes two meat cleavers that are sharpened to a fine edge.

His Nimbus manifests as exaggerated, even impossible sounds, like the stretching sound of his leather suit to the metallic chord of scraping steel.

Storytelling Hints: Sam Deland has never uttered a word. When something needs to be "dealt" with, he does so swiftly and silently. He is a skilled performer and a deadly combatant; everything he does is measured and artful. His rudimentary knowledge of human anatomy is a rarely called-upon asset when there's a need for more *forceful* interrogation. The others generally drop his name as a scare tactic, his reputation being one of razor-sharp death.

If he has an agenda outside of the cabal, it's unknown to them. He's the most enigmatic member of the troupe, but has risked his life a number of times to save them, especially when Princess Kundalini is involved. He clearly has a soft place in his heart for her, and she reciprocates with the love of a sibling, never treating him with fear or mistrust.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver-plated meat cleaver; (he has two of these, but only the one wielded in his right hand is a dedicated tool)
Real Name: Sam Deland
Path: Moros
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Investigation 3, *Medicine (Anatomy) 2, Occult 2
Physical Skills: *Athletics (Acrobatics, Contortionism, Juggling) 4, Larceny (Sleight of Hand) 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Blades) 3
Social Skills: Expression (Mime) 2, *Intimidation 2
Merits: Ambidexterity, High Speech, Two Weapon Fighting 4
Flaws: Mute
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 4 (Paranoia, severe: 4)
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Matter 3, Death 3, Space 1
Rotes: Matter — Dark Matter (•), Detect Substance (•), Alter Accuracy (••), Unseen Aegis (••), Armor Piercing (•••); Death — Shadow Sculpting (•), Corpse Mask (••), Suppress Aura (••), Destroy Object (•••); Space — Finder (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Meat Cleaver	1 (L)	1		8

Armor: 3 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)

Maxwell Nightshade

Quote: "*Tonight we will, quite literally, cut through the illusion, ladies and gentlemen. Those with weak stomachs will surely want to avert their eyes or take leave until the next act… may I have a volunteer from the audience?*"

Background: This member of the Abattoir was the only mage who approached the Chevalier to join the cabal instead of being asked. Albert Hilliard spent several years on the performance circuit as "Dr. Malice," the brooding magician with a frightening edge to his act, and was ready for the companionship of others like him.

He Awakened in his late 30s, and the process almost drove him mad. Being forced to reconcile a strict Existentialist philosophy with a newfound perception of meaning to reality tested his sharp, skeptical mind and resulted in an inward struggle for purpose. Rather than giving in to the notion of insanity, Albert sought out a teacher, and found guidance from a cabal of Adamantine Arrow mages in California. Their stoic discipline and daily rituals made sense to him, and he learned how to keep his mind in order after spending nearly half a decade in their midst.

Eventually, as many performers do, Albert hungered once again for an audience. He realized that he could continue to do stage magic while learning about the Arcane truths of the world. In fact, dealing with Sleepers and learning how to pull the wool over their eyes while gaining their adoration (or, often more accurately, their shock and fear) has made him a remarkably shrewd mage.

He's had a few threatening run-ins with the Guardians of the Veil, and is, at best, not fond of their practices. One more warning about how he chose to perform for Sleeper audiences, and he might have done something rash. The solitary life was proving to be a dangerous one, and when the Chevalier's cabal traveled through Hilliard's town, he saw a golden opportunity. It turns out that Madame Strega had guided them to California to settle a problem that, in her words, "would have led to the loss of a mage who's time had yet to come to pass." Hilliard had become so good at hiding his true nature, though, that he had to make himself known. When he asked for Sartordi's help avoiding the wrath of the mages who would be Hilliard's undoing, the answer was obvious. The Chevalier assured the local Consilium that they'd be troubled no longer by the perceived indiscretions of one man, and Albert left for a life on the road.

To further represent this new beginning, he shed "Dr. Malice" like a moth-eaten coat and became the flashy "Maxwell Nightshade." His performances still have the edge he's known for, but the truly horrific parts of his performances are sandwiched comfortably between more traditional stage magic and the acts of his companions.

Description: Albert Hilliard is a slightly overweight, middle-aged man with wavy, black hair that's cut just a little too long for his frame. There are white streaks spaced unevenly through his hair and one tiny streak running down the length of the goatee he sports. Usually dressing in flashy black and lavender Victorian-style "ma-

gician's" clothes, he sometimes seems a bit out of place in more conventional settings. He has dark blue eyes that are framed by hypnotically pointed eyebrows and often exudes a faint smells of lavender and sandalwood.

His Nimbus is an effervescent aura of light around his hands, giving off drifting and glowing letters of light.

Storytelling Hints: Maxwell Nightshade knows that misdirection and planning ahead can sometimes be more powerful than actual willworking. Why force reality to bend to your whim when you can simply fool people into giving you what you want?

His primary goals are still personal ones. He's grown attached to his cabal, but he still feels like there's something about his life that will eventually lead him to a higher purpose. For the time being, he thinks the Abattoir will be a safe framework for his quest for meaning, but, if something ever calls to him with more force, his loyalty to the others might be tested. Maxwell will always appear to have something up his sleeve, but usually he's just contemplating where this strange life will take him next.

While performing, he is flamboyant and eerily masterful at his craft. Princess Kundalini acts as his "lovely assistant" when he performs, and their presence on stage is *always* a showstopper. He delights in performing a magical cliché — like sawing a woman in half — with a twisted outcome. When he separates the box, is it *supposed* to look like a vivisection?

Dedicated Magical Tool: Obsidian wand (fashioned to look like a stage magician's traditional wand)
Real Name: Albert Hilliard
Path: Mastigos
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Occult 4
Physical Skills: Larceny (Sleight of Hand, Escape) 4, Firearms (Pistol) 1
Social Skills: Expression (Stage Magic) 4, *Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4
Merits: High Speech, Occultation 2, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 4 (Narcissism, mild: 5)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Mind 4, Space 2, Forces 2
Rotes: Mind — Aura Perception (•), Third Eye (•), Mental Shield (••), Misperception (••), Psychic Assault (•••), Telepathy (•••), Breach the Vault of Memory (••••); Space — Finder (•), Ward (••); Forces — Influence Light (•), Invisible Object (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 4 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

Princess Kundalini

Quote: "*Shhh — she's sleeping. Don't be scared of Sheba — she's not venomous. Which is more than I can say for most people.*"

Background: Shaunda Monroe grew up in Florida with her father, who taught her everything she knows about animals. He was a zookeeper, and her mother died when Shaunda was too young to remember. She had an upbringing surrounded by animals and the people who cared for them. When she was old enough to be given her own responsibilities, she accepted them eagerly and hoped one day to follow in her father's footsteps. Shaunda preferred caring for the reptiles most, feeling that they were misunderstood and mysterious.

She Awakened when she was 22, and it changed everything. The animals were no longer *just* creatures she cared for; they began to take on an almost spiritual significance. Even though she knew they were well cared for, having them caged and on display started to seem like an injustice, because she *knew* they suffered for it and longed for a more natural environment.

Not fully understanding this new awareness, Shaunda felt she had to leave. She was overcome by wanderlust and traveled around the United States hoping to find herself. After months of hopping from one city to the next, she finally crossed paths with other mages in Texas. As if predestined, the first mage she encountered was an old woman on a horse ranch outside of Houston whose path was also Thyrsus. There, Shaunda learned the ways of Spirit magic, and she was initiated into the Adamantine Arrow. Her master taught her about how animals and spirits could be trained and worked with, assisting them in the fight for justice. Her days were filled with hard work and study from daybreak to sunset; she cared for the horses and had affinity for them, but longed for the reptiles she had looked over as a child.

When Shaunda was nearly 25, raiders overcame the ranch. To this day, she isn't sure if they were some kind of mages or Sleeper witch hunters. Her master was strong, and held them off long enough for Shaunda to get away, but a fire burned down the land and she's certain her Mentor was lost.

She found herself again on the road, and, with her newfound power and knowledge, it only made her angry. She would *not* be afraid, but she is not a stupid woman. Eventually, she found work with a circus as an animal handler. The workers before her had abused the animals with unspeakable practices to "keep them in line," and after a strange series of mishaps, these foolish men went missing. She was given her own act and a modest salary to travel with the circus for several years. As "Princess Kundalini, the Serpent Seductress," she found performing to be a fulfilling way of showing the world that animals are creatures that deserve compassion and respect.

Shaunda had separated herself from the rest of mage society; subconsciously she associated that part of her life with loss and confusion — but something was missing. Her abilities would one day be put to use, and the villains who killed her master would have to pay.

Her opportunity came one night when Madame Strega came to Shaunda's tent after a performance. They bonded instantly; Shaunda knew this woman spoke the truth, and after talking to each other until morning about destiny and troubling times, she packed up her things, collected her pets and slipped away from the circus, finally a part of something meaningful.

Description: Princess Kundalini is a beautiful black woman with long, silky hair and bright green eyes. She purposefully portrays herself as an exotic Haitian woman and uses voodoo symbology in her act. Her clothing usually consists of very little fabric, sometimes flowing, sometimes tight, but always provocative and accentuated with enough gold jewelry to support the notion that she might actually be royalty.

Her Nimbus appears as thick trails of smoke in the shape of working fingers and hands.

Storytelling Hints: Like the rest of the members of her cabal, the Princess relies nearly as much on deception and misdirection as she does her true abilities. Knowing what people believe and capitalizing on that has proven very profitable.

Shaunda protects her cabal with a fierce devotion, and the only tie she has that's stronger is with her familiar, Sheba the bull python. The Red Jester draws out Shaunda' deepest compassion. She feels his past has left him needing the comfort and support of others, and she treats him like a brother.

Her deepest desire has almost always been to have a sense of belonging, and, with that need fulfilled, her focus is one of genuine team support. Whatever the Chevalier says goes, and after having left behind a father she truly cared about, she finds that Archard has, in many ways, filled that role for her.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Gold, snake-shaped arm circlet
Real Name: Shaunda Monroe
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Reptiles) 2, *Medicine (First Aid) 1, Occult (Voodoo) 1
Physical Skills: *Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Reptiles) 4, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Persuasion (Seduction) 3
Merits: Familiar 4, High Speech, Resources 1, Striking Appearance 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4, Toxin Resistance
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Lust
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Life 3, Spirit 3, Mind 2
Rotes: Life — Pulse of the Living World (•), Body Control (••), Organic Resilience (••), Healing Heart (•••); Spirit — Spirit Tongue (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••), Familiar Pact (•••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Beast Control (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 3 ("Organic Resilience," Life •••)

Sheba

Princess Kundalini's familiar is a boa constrictor named Sheba. The snake is a compliment to her master's namesake, representing the rising serpent of power through the subtle energy body in Eastern mysticism. Sheba is a beautiful creature with hints of red in her markings, and is usually docile. When provoked, however, the boa moves more quickly than one might expect, and a creature that embodies the fiery qualities of human passion is not to be trifled with.
Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 4
Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Constriction) 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 7 (species factor: 2)
Size: 3
Health: 4
Influence: Passion 2
Numina: Innocuous, Blast: Fire (dice pool: 5)
Ban: Cold. All cold-based penalties and damage applied to Sheba are one point more severe. Thus, a chilling attack that should deal two lethal damage normally deals three lethal damage to Sheba.
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Constrict	2	8

Munitions

An untold number of offensive and defensive magic relics remain scattered throughout the city, like live explosives waiting to go off. Some of these spells were planted like bombs as part of unconsummated ambushes. Others were laid like booby traps to protect sites cherished by the mages of city two decades ago. In theory, every one of these left-

over spells indicates the presence of some treasure, artifact or location worth protecting — worth killing for — but in practice that's not always the case. The value of some of these sites died with the mages who once defended them.

What happens when the characters find one of these magically mined locations? With a mage's power and imagination, a booby trap could be anything — it might create or summon a terrible creature, magically transport the victim deep into the lake or to some remote pit in the city or it might create a catastrophic transformation in the building, hurting not only the intended victims but dozens of innocent bystanders. Can the characters outwit the most devious mages of the last century? What are they willing to risk to claim a choice sanctum or powerful treasure?

The Free Council

This order has re-formed recently after their near-extinction in the Mage War of 1987. Outside mages have come in to make contact and help bolster the Free Council presence in Chicago. In addition, as if to answer some cosmic sense of balance, since the late 1980s several new mages have Awakened into the Free Council. Though they support the idea of the Consilium and the need for some sort of superstructure to govern practitioners of magic, most of the members of the Free Council oppose the strict adherence to outdated traditions and work to make certain that the Consilium does not become hidebound or stagnant. The Free Council mages hope to prevent the ascendance of any one order as the dominant presence in Chicago.

In essence, the Free Council in Chicago occupies a position straddling the line between Consilium mages and outright apostates. Free Council mages work, usually in subtle ways, to promote a broader definition of "mage society" and a wider expression of magical practices and paradigms. One example of this, in Chicago, is the way these cabals organize around contemporary concepts, utilizing informal, sometimes even affectionate, shadow names.

Game of Geometric Perfection

Composed mainly of members of the Free Council, this cabal — also called "the Geos" — has based its imagery, symbolism and practices on baseball. The Geos believe they have captured the true expression of Awakened magic in America in the symbolic interplay of opposing teams. The Geos' belief that magic has too long been "ruled" by the Atlantean prototype and that mages need to seek new models has drawn this cabal to the study of baseball in its abstract or "true" form.

Starting with the diamond shape of the infield, the triad of basemen, the triad of outfielders and the mysterious interplay of pitcher, catcher and shortstop, the Geos have built an elaborate mathematical construct to support and uphold their magic.

The Geos have their sanctum on the grounds of U.S. Cellular Field. Their hidden complex of rooms is accessed through a rarely used door marked Locked Storage: Authorized Personnel Only. In the years since the opening of U.S. Cellular Field (originally called New Comiskey Park), this door has never been noticed by the ballpark's administration or security due to the strong aversion magic cast upon it by the Geos. So far, their precautions have proved sufficient to keep them under the radar of Seers and Sleepers alike.

Triplex

Quote: "*Some speak the language of astrology or tarot, we speak of symmetry, of box scores, of innings and sudden death.*"

Background: Benjamin "Triplex" Connelley grew up on Chicago's South Side, the middle child in a large Catholic, working-class family. As a child, he ate, slept and breathed baseball, and since he lived not far from Comiskey Park, he and his older brothers saw the White Sox play many times (and even paid to get in sometimes). As a teenager, Ben tried out for the baseball team in high school, but a weak throwing arm and a low batting average ended his career after his first high school season. His coach, however, realized that the boy had a comprehensive knowledge of the game and the ability to follow plays as they happened. Soon the boy was acting as an umpire and, eventually, as a student coach.

His Awakening happened during the middle of a particularly close game between the White Sox and the Yankees when Ben was 17. He lost awareness of the game as he was drawn in spirit to the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn, where he took his first steps along the Path of Thistle. Soon afterward, the Free Council recognized him as one of their own.

In the Sleeping world, Ben Connelley teaches physics and coaches baseball at a local high school and keeps up his certification as an umpire by refereeing Little League baseball during the summer. He tries to impart his cosmic vision of the game to his young students; some of them actually "get it," and one or two have gone on to Awaken.

Ben's love for baseball colored his approach to magic, making it difficult for him to hew to the tried-and-true traditions. Soon he found himself the leader of a cabal of like-minded mages, all of whom see the rhythm and structure of the game as a perfect synthesis of movement and stillness, balance and action, duality and plurality. Ben's goal is to use his cabal to influence the future of mages in the world through a gradual restructuring of mage society. The arrival of Laplace and the coming together of the Open Source

cabal has taken some of the heat off Triplex and his cabal. No longer are they the only iconoclasts within the Consilium.

Recently, he gladly ceded his position as Councilor to Laplace and accepted a post as one of the Heralds of the Consilium. This change has given him more time for the study of magic — and of baseball.

Description: Triplex has the compact, trim build of a pitcher. He wears his dark brown hair short and neat, in a style similar to the ball players of the 1950s and 1960s, and frequently hides his bright green eyes behind a pair of sport sunglasses. He dresses casually for his physics classes and wears sweats or warm-up suits when he does coach duty. He owns a number of White Sox T-shirts and baseball jackets, as well as a large collection of baseball caps. His face is weathered from time spent outside, and he has a perpetual squint from being out in the bright sunlight during games. He affects a "coach's scowl" so his teams will take him seriously, but in private and when he relaxes, he is genuinely personable and laughs easily.

His Nimbus blends the smell of popcorn and franks (Chicago-style, of course) with the sound of a cracking bat and the roar of the crowd.

Storytelling Hints: Triplex can and usually does interpret everything in terms of baseball. His speech is heavily salted with terms from the game. (*"He really struck out trying to get Judy to open up to him."* or *"Let's stop for a seventh-inning stretch before we finish with tonight's working."*) He thinks of his cabal as a team and expects the same kind of solidarity from them as baseball teammates show for each other. He's a firm believer that every game, whether baseball, life or magic, isn't over till the third out of the final inning, so he doesn't give up easily when he sets his mind to something.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small, silver wand in the shape of a baseball bat
Real Name: Benjamin Matthew Connelley
Path: Acanthus
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics (History of Mathematics) 4, *Crafts (Bat-Making) 2, Occult 3, *Science (Physics) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Baseball) 3, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Expression (Public Speaking, Teaching) 4, *Persuasion 2, Socialize (Baseball Fans) 3, Streetwise 1
Merits: Contacts (U.S. Cellular Field Administrative Staff, White Sox Fans, High School, Physics Community) 4, Hallow (Shared) 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Baseball History, Magical Workings, Physics), Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3, Status: Consilium (Herald) 2, Status: Free Council (Geo Leader) 2
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 6 (Fixation, mild: 6)
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 8
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 3, Forces 2, Matter 1, Time 3
Rotes: Fate — Interconnections (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Lucky Coin (•••); Forces — Nightsight (•), Control Sound (••); Matter — Detect Substance (•); Time — Momentary Flux (•), Flip of the Coin (••), Shifting Sands (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: 3 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Southpaw

Quote: "*Anything you can do, I can do left-handed — and also better!*"

Background: Patrice Waters began her life in Chicago's South Side, the fourth child in a family of eight children. Her father drove trucks for a living and his trips took him back and forth across the country, so he was almost never at home. Patrice's mother tried to stay at home when her children were little, but eventually had to find work as a hospital orderly, leaving Patrice in charge of her younger siblings. Patrice's older sister and two older brothers found things to do after school and, later on, after quitting school. Patrice didn't ask what they did, but somehow she knew that any household responsibilities were up to her.

Patrice attended school, along with her younger charges, with the fierceness of desperation. Only in the clarifying atmosphere of facts, numbers, problems and solutions, formulas and the precise rules of grammar did she find relief from the day-to-day demands of keeping her little brothers and sisters fed, clothed and out of trouble while Momma worked or slept the sleep of exhaustion. That, and baseball.

Patrice watched her brother Thaddeus play for the school baseball team. She brought him to practice every day and cheered him on. She played pitcher to his catcher every day to strengthen his eye and hand coordination. Finally, the team coach asked her to try out for the team. To her surprise, Patrice landed a position as pitcher, valued for her left-handed sliders and curve balls and used to shut down an opposing team's rally.

Life became harder when she entered high school, a year ahead of her oldest brother. She was unable to keep an eye on her siblings, and she felt them slipping away from her into that great tempting yaw of desperation that was life in South Side Chicago. She had to switch from baseball to girl's softball, but the essential exhilaration was there — and this time there was no

other competition. The game was the only thing in her life that made sense, the only thing that suddenly Awakened her from the sound Sleep of daily life.

Patrice thought she had toppled over the edge into insanity when she started seeing baseball plays in her sleep, in the patterns of pedestrians crossing the street, in exchanges between drug dealers on street corners and the movement of traffic through the busy streets.

Everything fell together, however, when a slightly older white man walked up to her and introduced himself as Triplex. He seemed unconcerned about being the only white face for blocks as he told Patrice that he had been watching her for several days and he thought he knew what she needed to stop her worries that she was going crazy. Patrice thought he was trying to sell her drugs, but something about him struck a resonance inside her. As they talked, he started walking toward his car, parked safely a few blocks from the school.

Without another thought, Patrice got in the car with him — something she had drilled into her siblings' heads not to do — and sat as if in a trance as he drove her all the way to U.S. Cellular Field — and to her first live White Sox game. Patrice saw the opening pitch, but that was all she ever remembered about that first game. Suddenly, she was in another world, traveling faster than thought through a landscape of forms and power, past lightning-blasted ground and flame-covered trees until she stood gazing up at the Watchtower of the Golden Key.

Just as the man sitting beside her who would be her Mentor, Patrice found her calling as the White Sox narrowly escaped victory, 4–2, on a spring afternoon.

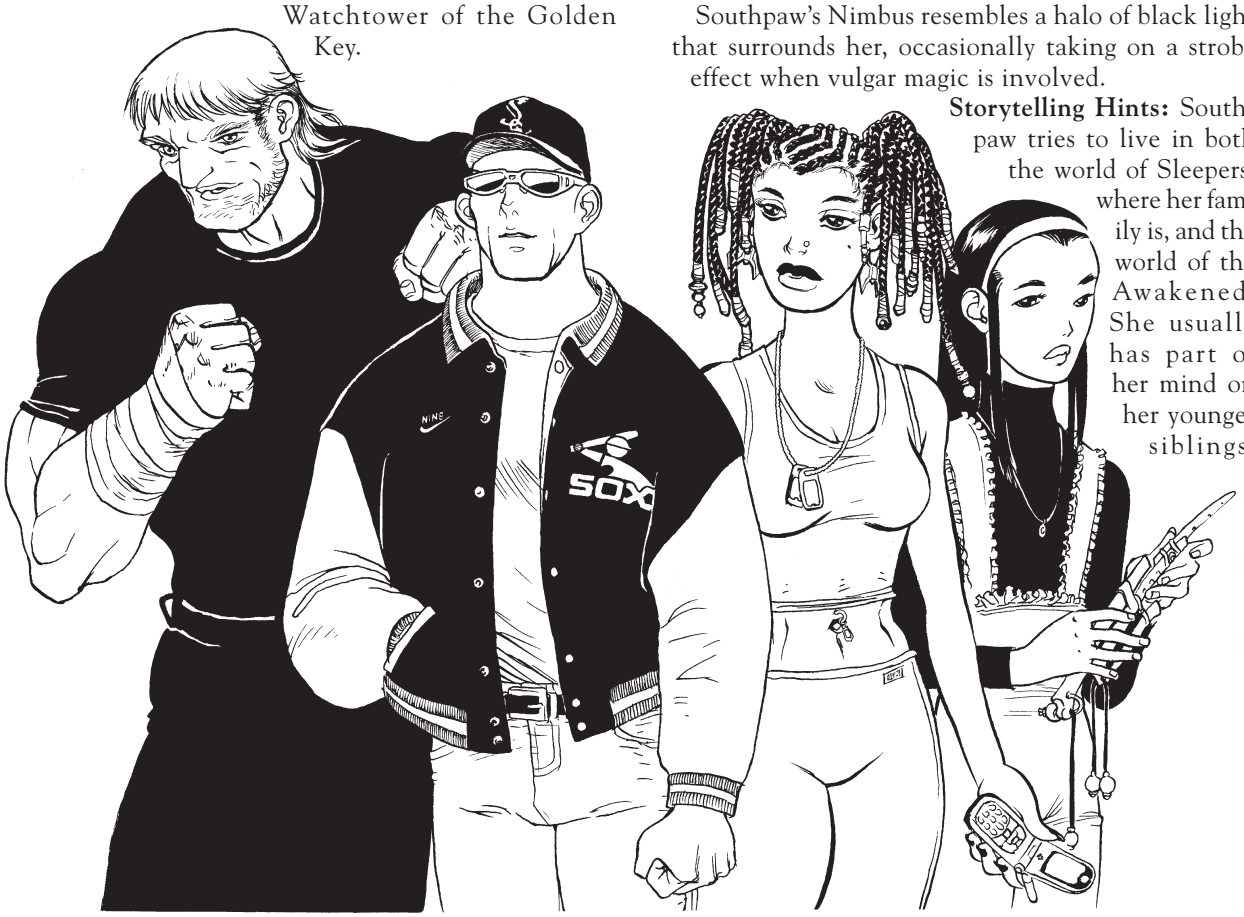
Since then, she has helped Triplex with the duties of the cabal, including training new members. As a gesture of solidarity with the Open Source, Patrice has recently agreed to serve as Laplace's Provost on the Consilium, bringing her poverty-born survivor's instincts and her street-smart savvy to meetings too often dominated by the well-born or at least semi-privileged.

Patrice has used her magic in small ways to make her family's life better without their knowing it, but although her newfound powers have opened up a whole new world for her, the strings of the old one still hold her very close to the lives of her family's Sleepers.

Description: Southpaw is a muscular, young black woman with long, black hair that she wears in elaborately beaded cornrows. Her face would be unremarkable except that her early responsibilities have worn "character" lines deep into her face, accentuating her high cheekbones and large, heavily lidded eyes. She smiles more now than she used to, but her face is most comfortable in repose. She usually dresses in sportswear, only occasionally dressing up for significant events, such as Consilium meetings and conferences with her siblings' teachers.

Southpaw's Nimbus resembles a halo of black light that surrounds her, occasionally taking on a strobe effect when vulgar magic is involved.

Storytelling Hints: Southpaw tries to live in both the world of Sleepers, where her family is, and the world of the Awakened. She usually has part of her mind on her younger siblings,



for whom she still feels responsible, and on her mother, who is growing more and more worn from her grueling work schedule. (Her father has not figured in Southpaw's life in years.)

She has become attracted to Triplex, her Mentor, but fears acting on her feelings lest she jeopardize their magical relationship. Her duties on the Consilium help keep her focused on her magical life. She makes an effort to resist the urge to "mother" the other members of her cabal, though she isn't always successful.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Cell phone, given to her by Triplex for keeping in touch; she is never without it

Real Name: Maya Patrice Waters
Path: Obrimos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Logic) 3, Investigation (Locating People) 2, *Crafts (Cooking) 1, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Occult 1, *Science (Geometry) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Thrown Objects, Baseball) 3, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation (Threats) 2, *Persuasion 1, Streetwise (South Side) 4
Merits: Contacts (South Side), Hallow (Shared) 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Baseball History, Magical Workings, Physics) 3, Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3, Status: Consilium 4, Status: Free Council 1
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Death 1, Forces 2, Prime 2
Rotes: Death — Shadow Sculpting (•); Forces — Nightsight (•), Unseen Shield (••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Counterspell Prime (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Grand Slam

Quote: "*Didn't I tell you to leave? Too late now —*"

Background: Bradley Dodson came to Chicago when his brother was traded from the Yankees to the White Sox as part of a multi-player package. Once a die-hard Yankees fan in his native New York, Bradley soon switched allegiances to his brother's new team. Even more than his brother-inspired loyalty to the Sox, Bradley found himself growing more and more attached to the ballpark, as if something in the packed dirt called out to him.

When his brother Joe was sent down to the minor leagues, Bradley remained in Chicago, attending every home game and rooting for the Sox with all his heart. To keep food on the table in his one-room apartment, Bradley worked nights as a bouncer at a sports bar where many of the Sox went after nighttime home games.

One night, Bradley escorted a particularly inebriated patron out the door at 2 A.M. and prepared to hail a cab. That was when Triplex (who wasn't as drunk as he had pretended to be) touched Bradley on the temple, and the large man's brain exploded into riotous, kaleidoscopic patters of light and color and sound. Bradley followed his outraged senses right up to the foot of the Watchtower of the Stone Book.

Bradley awoke in Triplex's apartment and spent the next 24 hours absorbing the fact that he was a mage as well as a bouncer. Since then, he has readily taken on the task of protecting the cabal from physical threats.

Though he doesn't quite understand everything his cabal-mates say about the relationship of baseball to magic, he finds that rotes and spellcasting come easily to him, provided he doesn't spend too much time thinking. Though far from stupid, Bradley hates lengthy thought processes and prefers to listen to his feelings and his gut instincts. Fortunately, the other Geos recognize the advantage in having an instinctive spellcaster in their midst.

Description: Grand Slam is a tall, bulky man with a canned tan and sandy brown hair cut just above his ears on the sides and just above his collar on the sides. He has an open, honest-looking face and bright, ingenuous blue eyes. His body is built like a wrestler, and he obviously works out regularly. He usually has more than one dirty joke on the tip of his tongue, never curses in the presence of women and is usually followed by at least one stray dog. He dresses in black pants and black T-shirts or in a black dress suit with black shirt and tie for formal occasions and for work.

His Nimbus appears as a crackling full-body aura of white energy, seeming innocent of malice while potent with destructive power.

Storytelling Hints: Bradley is intelligent without being an intellectual. He does not enjoy mental challenges or sophisticated conversation, but he takes to magic like a fish to water. His speech is ungrammatical and somewhat "thuggish," but he is serious about magic and does not use it spuriously or maliciously. He appears simple-minded to some people, and it suits him to be constantly underestimated mentally.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Heavy, copper wristband resembling the ones worn to combat arthritis or wrist pain

Real Name: Bradley ("Bo") Dodson
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Medicine (Fads) 1, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Weight Lifting) 4, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Weaponry (Improvised) 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 2, Intimidation (Physical) 4, Streetwise 3
Merits: Contacts (Bars), Danger Sense, Hallow (Shared) 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Baseball History, Magical Workings, Physics) 3, Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 9
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Forces 1, Life 2, Prime 2
Rotes: Forces — Influence Heat (•); Life — Cleanse the Body(•), Organic Resilience (••); Prime — Discern Phantasm (•)
Mana/per turn: 10/1
Weapons/Attacks:
Armor: none
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Pennant

Quote: "*Do you want this firewall down or what? Then back off and let me do my job!*"

Background: Anna Marie Chang came to Chicago from Iowa, where she was tired of being the only Asian on the block in her small hometown. She attended the University of Chicago, majoring in computer sciences and engineering. Her one passion was baseball, and she watched every televised game she could, indulging herself occasionally with trips to U.S. Cellular Field for a White Sox home game.

She Awakened suddenly during her final differential calculus exam, exhausted and open to the cosmic forces by lack of sleep and food while studying. In the midst of a complex calculation, Anna found herself trapped inside a tesseract of numbers, each digit seeming to represent a choice, and each choice leading to more numbers. Frantic to wake up from her dream and finish the exam she somehow knew she was taking, Anna made choice after choice, solved problem after problem until, finally, the numbers fell away and she stood face-to-face with the Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet.

Afterward, she returned to the world of final exams with a finished paper in her hand and no memory of taking the test — which she subsequently aced. A few nights later, she met Triplex, who invited her to join his cabal and used his influence with the administrators of U.S. Cellular Field to get Anna a part-time job overseeing the arena's computer system, with the guarantee of full-time employment as IT administrator after her graduation from the U of C.

Anna uses her specialized computer skills from the Geos' Sanctum, where she acts as sysop for the cabal and also performs what she prefers to think of as investigative database exploration (otherwise known as "hacking"). Her main focus recently has been to keep the Open Source Cabal from intruding into the Geos' netspace. So far, she has managed to be successful.

Description: Pennant is a pretty Chinese American woman in her late teens. She is slim, with excellent muscle tone from jogging, and flat-chested. Her almond-shaped eyes are a warm brown and she crinkles her eyes when she smiles or laughs. Her long, black hair is worn straight and sometimes held back with a simple headband or ribbon. She has a somewhat reserved demeanor in front of strangers or business colleagues, but among friends she is intelligently witty, though she tends to think more in numbers than ideas. She dresses conservatively and somewhat dowdily, favoring jumpers and pants suits to almost all other types of clothing.

Storytelling Hints: Anna eats, sleeps and breathes numbers. One of the reasons she loves baseball so much is that the game can be reduced to the numbers of the box score. She relates well to other people but prefers to spend time immersed in a mathematical problem or a magical conundrum. She tries to ignore Atlantean politics as much as possible so she can concentrate on the magic itself and on the inherent mathematical possibilities.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bone slide rule
Real Name: Anna Marie Chang
Path: Mastigos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer (Design, SysAdmin) 4, Investigation (Online) 3, Occult 3, Science (Engineering) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Bow, Tai Chi) 3, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge (Cryptic Speech) 3
Merits: Hallow (Shared) 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Baseball History, Magical Workings, Physics), Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3

Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Matter 1, Mind 3, Space 2, Spirit 2, Time 3
Rotes: Matter — Alter Conductivity (•); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Mental Shield (••), Psychic Assault (•••); Space — Correspondence (•), Untouchable; Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Place of Power (••); Time — Perfect Timing (•), Shield of Chronos (••), Shifting Sands (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Capacity	Special	Dice Pool
Compound bow	3	40/80/160	1		10

Armor: 2 ("Untouchable," Space ••)
Magic Shield: None

Ready To Believe You

Every few years it seems to happen. A handful of young mortals, moved by encounters with the supernatural and unwilling to deny what they've seen and felt any longer, decide to face their fears and explore the darkness. Even when these college students and store clerks and waitresses mean well and act more like explorers than hunters, they pose a risk to the secrecy mages depend on to protect themselves from the power-muffling scrutiny of Sleepers.

Now a crew of fortean investigators are onto the characters. Maybe one of them was a witness to some previous vulgar spell before joining up with the investigative outfit, maybe one of them is someone a character knew before his Awakening. Whatever has brought these next-gen Mulders to the characters' cabal, it's now up to the characters to deal with them. But these aren't bloodthirsty witch-hunters out to burn warlocks, they're frightened men and women operating out their depth in an effort to protect their homes and families. Can the cabal deter these investigators or stop their investigations without revealing the truth about themselves or leaving these mortals vulnerable to other supernatural forces?

Open Source

For years after the Mage War, the only presence of the Free Council in Chicago was the eccentric Geos. The order eventually felt they needed to send an emissary to have more input with the city's Consilium, now that there was enough evidence it was not going to fall apart. With the Guardians of the Veil in charge, the Free Council mages knew they'd be hard-pressed to keep the channels of communication open with only one cabal holding to their democratic ideal. Laplace was an easy choice to send; he is highly intelligent, likeable and capable of leading. After an Assembly was called, the Free Council chose a Libertine with few Sleeper ties and the ambition to further their cause, sending him alone to the city to recruit members and establish a Lorehouse.

After contracting briefly with Walsh Industries, Laplace got to know the Hierarch and had a good idea of the basic political structure of the city. Laplace had enough of a bankroll to set up a private residence and a top-of-the-line Internet server, and began the search for young mages to initiate into his order.

The search continues, but a growing cabal of brilliant young mages ripe with ideas has rallied around Laplace, using the latest technology to share the information the members find and keeping an eye on the magical developments happening in their region.

Dubbing themselves Open Source, they primarily use a secure website to keep in touch, via email and instant messaging. SanctumOpenSource.com, or SOS for short, is a kind of "virtual" Lorehouse, although Laplace has made his modest home into a physical sanctum where it is kept and the members of his cabal can feel safe.

The Open Source cabal has very few meetings that actually require the presence of its members. They've seen to it that their network is one of the most secure around, and when information is extra-sensitive, they are never so far away from one another that meeting in person is out of the question. The cabal also gathers most of its members when field investigative work is necessary. A few of the members live for this kind of adventure, to the point that Laplace has to remind them that the reward of uncovering more of their city's secrets is not, in fact, secondary to the thrill of the hunt.

Usually on such missions, one member stays behind, providing backup and network assistance when needed. Double Aught filled this role almost exclusively until a few months ago. He'd always wanted to get into the field more, and Player1 has proven to be better suited to such a role. They've all shown loyalty in situations ranging from challenging to deadly, and have become quite a team. One problem Laplace is trying to avoid is apathy and animosity toward other orders. He finds himself more and more reminding the young mages he's recruited that the world is big, and there will always be others with different Paths. One of their goals in Chicago must be to complete the Pentagram and ensure that no one power politically dominates the democracy of the Consilium.

The cabal has collected quite a database of information about most of the city's mages, and the strange

events leading up to the Mage War of '87. Open Source is one of the few cabals with only passing interest in the Celestial Flange itself, but the cabal members are passionately searching for reasons why a quest with so few leads has captured the minds and hearts of so many of Chicago's mages for so long.

Laplace

Quote: "*Just — give — me one — more — moment. There! As you can see (or if you can't, just trust me) from the equation on this slate, the moon should hit its zenith in exactly seventeen-and-a-half seconds, and the shadow it casts from that statue over there will be twenty-four inches long.* Then *we can open the tomb.*"

Background: Contrary to popular belief, Laplace *does* get out of his sanctum from time to time for fieldwork. His feeling, though, has always been that if you can do something remotely, why put yourself at greater risk by being somewhere in person? Unlike so many others, Laplace did *not* come to Chicago to look for the Celestial Flange. He arrived six years ago to do some consulting work on statistics for Walsh Industries, and the Free Council felt, that with more possible trouble brewing for the city, the rational presence of an emissary might be just what the city needed to round out its Consilium. An Assembly decision to establish a Lorehouse in the city served as a deeper agenda, and Laplace was asked to stay in Chicago and support the minimal Free Council presence there.

Born Glen Nelson, Laplace had a gift for numbers even before he Awakened. He has always felt that mathematics represents one truth of the universe that he could count on, and nearly everything can be reduced to a numeric principle if the right formulae are known.

He was initiated into the Free Council 12 years ago, when he was just 22, and was labeled immediately as a bright up-and-comer in their ranks. He's taken the time to learn about the other orders and what they stand for, but, as a Libertine, he's used to seeing most of them as outmoded and misguided. Working with mages who don't share his progressive views is pragmatic, though. In fact, he's viewed relations with other orders as a necessary evil for most of his Awakened life, and only recently paused to reflect on this attitude when he met Libra of the Mercurials. Laplace also has a responsibility to the mages he's training, and the Free Council expects Laplace to represent their order in a positive light, so he's always congenial when dealing with the Consilium.

He advanced in magical studies quickly, and at 34, is rising constantly to the challenge of training the students who've joined his cabal. The Free Council provides assistance in this, but when it comes to daily challenges, he alone has to be there for these apprentice mages. He wants to develop his acquaintance with Libra, and has recently begun seeking her advice more when the pressures of leadership seem to dominate other areas of his life.

One of his greatest hopes is that things will simmer down in Chicago to the point that the willworkers there can actually make some progress with studies that really matter, instead of fighting each other over the promise that they'll come out on top if another war breaks out. Even though he knows it's statistically a long shot for any Consilium to *fully* agree on a common purpose, it's worth every ounce of his effort to try and remind the mages around him that following ancient



practices doesn't have to mean they can't try for a more modern consensus that will promote the intellectual and magical growth of *all* mages.

Description: Laplace is an average-looking man in his mid-30s. He doesn't do much to ensure that his appearance is always at its best, spending the better part of most of his days in front of a computer or studying. He usually wears wrinkled, casual attire and is disheveled most of the time. His black hair looks to be about two weeks late for a trim, and he seems to sport a five-o'clock shadow no matter what time of day it is.

His Nimbus is an eye-straining, dizzying warp of vision, causing him to appear out of focus or briefly out of place.

Storytelling Hints: Having a thought process that is several steps ahead of the average person causes Laplace to seem somewhat detached from his day-to-day interactions with people. It seems he is always calculating every possible outcome of his decisions, sometimes to the point that he may appear to lack a level of mindfulness in his tasks. Nothing could be further from the truth, though. He is far more aware of his surroundings than he seems, because he's already taken everything in and formulated an opinion while others are still taking in the scenery.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Palm computer
Real Name: Glen Nelson
Path: Mastigos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer (Internet) 3, *Crafts (Electronics) 3, Investigation 2, *Science (Mathematics) 4, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: *Persuasion 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Internet) 2
Merits: Eidetic Memory, High Speech, Occultation 3, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3, Sanctum: Security 2
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 8
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Gluttony
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Space 4, Mind 2, Forces 2, Time 1
Rotes: Space — Spatial Awareness (•), Finder (•), Untouchable (••), Ward (••), Portal (•••), Pocket Realm (••••); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Incognito Presence (••); Forces — Receiver (•), Transmission (••); Time — Perfect Timing (•)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

Zerb

Quote: "*I prefer the term wizard, thank you very much. Not because it's more accurate or anything — it just sounds cooler. After sitting in front of a screen writing code all day, feeling cool is important.*"

Background: Edward Stacey grew up spending most of his time pretending to be someone he wasn't. In earlier years, he was constantly playing dice-and-paper roleplaying games with a small group of friends. As he got older, and had more money and less time, the growth of online roleplaying games filled the void, though he's never lost interest in a good table-top crawl through catacombs searching for treasure and monsters.

He spent his time in college majoring in computer science, hoping one day to apply his knowledge creatively in the gaming industries he'd become so attached to, but like so many people, his dream took unexpected directions. Currently, at 27, Edward writes code as a consultant for several major wireless Internet providers, focusing on consumer protection. He makes a good living, but, had he never Awakened, he'd have felt as though all the fantasy in his life were dead. He'd remained single, and spending late nights at the computer adventuring was beginning to take its toll. He drifted off one night three years ago, though, and after a dreamtime stroll along the Path of Thistle, he became aware of realms far more fantastic than any he'd imagined.

Things started getting more interesting after that, and he found his online experience seeming less important. Figuring out what was happening to him became his primary focus, and eventually an Internet search led him right to Laplace, and Edward was eager to learn as much as he could. He adopted the name "Zerb," after a childhood wizard character he played in a fantasy roleplaying game, and was initiated into the Free Council. His ability to find creative solutions to challenges and complete fascination with all things magical have worked well with his brilliant programmer's mind, making him a valuable asset to his order and to the Open Source cabal.

Zerb's approach to his Awakened life is one of insatiable curiosity. He looks up to Laplace and wants to impress the rest of the Libertines with his ambition, hoping one day to follow in his teacher's footsteps as an emissary. To that end, Zerb rarely questions the directions his leader metes out. Zerb arrives at conclusions quickly and usually finds a clever way of completing his goals with additional success in areas the others wouldn't have thought of.

Description: Zerb is an ordinary-looking man, standing about 6'3", with a tousled mop of light brown hair hanging around his rounded facial features. He sports a pair of expensive wire-framed titanium glasses and dresses casually unless he's meeting a business client. He has a very pale complexion and is slightly overweight.

His Nimbus is a melodic collection of sounds and smells, like acoustic musicians improvising in the woods.

Storytelling Hints: With his quick mind, Zerb is accused of jumping to conclusions more often than he deserves. If he weren't right so often, people would call him reckless. It's just that he's usually a few steps ahead of everybody else. He approaches most of his challenges like programming code or playing a game chess: he sees patterns where most people see chaos and usually doesn't see the point in taking the time to explain how he's arrived at his solutions. Over time, those closest to him have learned to trust his instincts, and they humor him more often than not.

He views magic less seriously than most of his contemporaries, and Laplace keeps an eye on Zerb more than he realizes. He sometimes takes a "cast first, ask questions later" approach once he thinks he knows what needs to be done, and his Mentor warns him constantly about the dangers of testing the waters of Paradox too flippantly. Zerb uses gaming terminology a lot when he's doing "fieldwork" with the cabal and refers to mistakes as "failing a roll."

Dedicated Magical Tool: Polyhedral dice
Real Name: Edward Stacey
Path: Acanthus
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer (Internet Security, Programming) 4, *Crafts (Computers) 3, *Science 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, *Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Eidetic Memory, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Compassion
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Time 2, Fate 2, Space 1, Mind 1
Rotes: Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Shield of Chronos (••); Fate — Winds of Chance (•), Exceptional Luck (••); Space — Finder (•); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Shield of Chronos," Time ••)

Double Aught

Quote: "*Just buy me one more minute… I know I can break this, but it's a tough one… oh shit… well, the good news is: I'm in, but they're gonna know I'm there- tell me what you need, quick, while I try to make them think I'm and ad-bot.*"

Background: If James Reszkie had never Awakened, he would probably be in prison. He grew up learning about computers, and focused on hacking for the thrill of it. His goal was never to do anything *terribly* illegal; usually, he just wanted to see if he could get into systems with restricted information and never did anything with it. The closest he ever came to theft was bypassing consumer systems where they require payment; James always enjoyed his Internet recreation for free. He came from a broken home and lived with his mother until he was 19. The money they got from his father wasn't enough to provide college tuition, and James' constant desire for the latest upgrades to his computer equipment meant that if he were going to continue his education, he'd have to work for it.

He had moved out and started living with too many roommates in a tiny apartment, and was *just* beginning to rationalize breaking into a banking system to solve his financial woes when he Awakened. Suddenly, the things that had simply been a means to an end took on a new depth, and he understood that risking his freedom to make rent was not a wise choice, regardless of how skilled he might be.

It wasn't long before he crossed virtual paths with Laplace, and to this day, James wonders if it was just a coincidence. (Laplace says it's all odds, that the human mind just perceives the unlikely as "lucky.") Reszkie was interested right away; understanding what he was now capable of doing was definitely appealing, and the Free Council seemed like the order to help him out more than any. He has since proven an invaluable member of his cabal. His uncanny knack for breaking computer security has been put to use more for covering his cabal's tracks than for doing anything that might get him in real trouble, but Open Source *does* sometimes need the occasional bit of information from a system that isn't open to just anyone.

Over the last year, James has grown into his mage persona, Double Aught, and has gotten more involved in the goals of his cabal and his order. He's only just started moving beyond understanding that the things he can do can truly have a higher purpose, and is showing greater interest in the subtle interactions that drive the Awakened society in Chicago.

Description: Double Aught is a very tall, lanky young man with long, blond hair usually tied in a ponytail. He has sharp, handsome features and dark blue eyes. At 22, he usually wears blue jeans and T-shirts with sneakers, and is *never* caught without his powerful laptop computer.

His Nimbus is a foreboding electrical hum and charge, like a shock about to go off, with the bone-grinding sound of a struggling hard drive.

Storytelling Hints: James is something of a social outcast in all senses of the word. He grew up looking like a skater-kid and thinking like a chess-club nerd, and has never (until now) found a niche where he felt like he belonged. Because of this, he is usually quiet when meeting new people, leaving the talking up to the others. The one exception is when he's online — he has a number of regular contacts online, some of whom actually know

him as Double Aught. Open Source members have some contact through this with other Free Council mages who chat with them on their secure server.

Double Aught knows when he's needed in the field, even if he's quiet about it. Usually when the situation calls for some delicate hacking, he's got his laptop hooked up before anyone can ask, and he's broken his own record for speed at getting into a secure system a handful of times in the last six months.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Laptop computer
Real Name: James Reszkie
Path: Mastigos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computer (Hacking) 4, *Crafts (Computers) 3, Investigation 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: *Persuasion 2, Socialize (Carousing) 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Encyclopedic Knowledge, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Space 3, Mind 2, Forces 1
Rotes: Space — Spatial Awareness (•), Untouchable (••), Multispatial Perception (•••); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Voice from Afar (••); Forces — Tune In (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 3 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

Ethernet

Quote: "*I need a bread board, that spool of wire, a pair of pliers and some chewing gum. What? . . . No the gum isn't to stick anything in place, stupid, I just have spaghetti-breath from lunch.*"

Background: Juniper grew up privileged and rebellious, shouldering her "geek-girl" stigma with dignity and plowing her way through her first year of technical college with high marks. She's intuitively smart when it comes to electronics and computers, and was hoping to branch into artificial intelligence research before she Awakened. She is still interested in learning more about computers, but now her time is filled with more metaphysical studies. Her college professors have taken a back seat to the central Mentor in her life, Laplace.

He recruited her about two years ago, when she'd just started undergrad school, and he helped her to make sense of the strange things that had begun happening in her life. Laplace spends more time in person with Juniper than any other member of the cabal, more because he sees her as a protégé than as someone needing extra attention. He's shown her how magical practice is not limited to candles and circles of salt — that she can find meaning in the technology she's already comfortable working with.

When Open Source began learning more about the latest struggles to find the Celestial Flange, Juniper, now called Ethernet, was the mage called on to buttress the security of their group's server. She's made sure that their mundane firewall protection is top of the line, and the group has worked together to place powerful wards around the equipment each of them use to stay in contact. Most other mages don't even know about SOS, and Ethernet goes to great lengths to keep it that way.

As the mood in Chicago intensifies, and political alliances become more important, Juniper just keeps to herself and makes sure she's ready. She's not sure what all the fuss is about, so there *might* be this artifact thing — so what? All she knows is that when the shit hits the fan, she will be there to protect herself and her friends from the fallout.

Storytelling Hints: Ethernet is talkative and friendly most of the time, but when things get serious, she usually retreats emotionally and lets others do the talking. When it comes to security and electronics, she's efficient and focused. She feels like timing is an integral part of making or breaking a system, and when her cabal-mates need entry or protection, they usually get out of her way.

She prefers to avoid conflict in general; most of her skills don't require the input of others and she's fine with that. She'll tie her hair back and get her hands dirty when needed, but leaves the fighting up to the others.

Description: Those who meet Juniper face-to-face are usually surprised at what a slight young woman she is. She's in her early 20s, about 5'6" and looks like a heavy wind might just carry her away. Her light brown hair falls just over shoulder length, framing a pretty face with brown doe-eyes. She doesn't really need to wear make-up and dresses like a typical college kid in jeans, T-shirts, backpack and tennis shoes.

Her Nimbus manifests as an aura of hyper-real detail around her, as though the air in her presence is a lens.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Cell phone
Real Name: Juniper Kaye
Path: Obrimos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Computer (Hacking) 3, *Crafts (Electronics) 3, *Science 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Larceny (Security Systems) 4, Stealth 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Internet) 1
Merits: Danger Sense, Meditative Mind, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Forces 2, Prime 2, Time 1
Rotes: Forces — Nightsight (•), Influence Electricity (••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••); Time — Momentary Flux (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)

Player1

Quote: "*Dude — we're definitely gonna need a power-up for this — have you seen the size of those guys?*"

Background: Christopher Yan grew up in inner-city Chicago, attending school where a young Asian American kid either has to belong to the right group or keep his mouth shut. Chris picked the latter, keeping to himself and preferring the company of a video game controller to that of other people any day.

He's only 18, and hasn't graduated from high school yet. His parents don't know, of course, that a year ago he Awakened and has been exploring other facets of reality from his bedroom at night. Fortunately, he is bussed far enough to school that his home life is one of quiet comfort most of the time. His parents both have well-paying jobs that keep them occupied, and he has top-of-the-line computer equipment and game consoles to fill his time when he's not at school.

He was contacted, like most of the other members of Open Source, by Laplace on the Internet one night while trying to sort out what his Awakened mind was beginning to reveal, and was eager to delve deeper into the mysteries he was told about. Over the last several months, Laplace has taught Chris a lot about the new abilities he's discovered, and has encouraged him to focus on the things he already excels in. When Open Source needs a quick thinker who can figure out a way around a puzzling challenge, they call upon their resident gamer.

Chris can count on his hands the number of times he's met the other members of his cabal in person, but they keep in touch via the Internet constantly. He has no trouble keeping the secrets he's learning; keeping to himself is second nature. While the others may be better at bypassing security, none of them is as quick to deduce a conclusion from stacks of data as Yan. Laplace uses Chris as a point man on a lot of their less-dangerous endeavors. Player1 is the youngest member of the cabal, and their leader wants him to live long enough to become the powerful mage he has the potential to become.

Description: Player1, at 18, is the youngest member of the cabal. He's an attractive, young Asian American with shoulder-length black hair and deep brown eyes that sparkle with intelligence beyond his years. He dresses like a typical teenager, and most of his T-shirts display sayings and logos that have something to do with computers or video games.

His Nimbus is a surge of energy, like the rush of a great idea, combined with the sound of a powering generator or camera flash.

Storytelling Hints: Chris is socially very quiet, and the most interaction he has with other people is when he's in school or around his family. When forced to speak his mind, he is usually very short and to the point, unless, however, the topic is video games or something he's interested in. It's almost uncanny how much more alive he seems when he's going on and on about his latest MMORPG character or computer game patch he's written.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Handheld video game system
Real Name: Christopher Yan
Path: Acanthus
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 4, *Crafts 2, Investigation (Solving Enigmas) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Survival 3
Social Skills: *Persuasion 2, Socialize (Chat Rooms) 3, Streetwise (High School) 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Common Sense, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Time 2, Fate 2, Space 2
Rotes: Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Glimpsing the Future (••); Fate — Interconnections (•), Exceptional Luck (••); Space — Omnivision (•), Untouchable (••)

Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

The Wizard's Apprentice

The work of a young, recently Awakened mage has caught the attention of the Consilium, though no mage has yet located and identified this new apostate. The evidence of a willworker in the projects on the South Side is undeniable, however, and it's only a matter of time before that evidence attracts unwanted attention from others in the city. This new mage is sloppy but powerful. The directive from the Consilium is: Bring him inside or put him in line.

The catch is that this young willworker is doing great deeds, making lives better throughout his neighborhood through his Arcana. He doesn't want to stop helping his friends and family, and he doesn't much care if a bunch of old strangers are put out by the good deeds he's doing on his corner. If the cabal tries to impose the will of the Consilium on this young man, they might make an enemy of him. They'll certainly make life in his neighborhood worse.

The Mysterium

Responding to the rumors of hidden lore and, in particular, the legends surrounding the location of the Celestial Flange, members of the Mysterium have been drawn in unprecedented numbers to Chicago during the last decade. Though the Mysterium are not yet the most powerful of the orders in the city, the order's numbers are growing as members search among the newly Awakened for one who might prove valuable in the search for forbidden or occult information.

The Mercurials

In the latter half of the '80s, after Chicago's Mage War, there was an insurgence of interested parties who wanted to "pick up the pieces." Understandably, the Mysterium had more interest than any other order in finding out the truth about the Celestial Flange, and the Mercurials were created out of necessity.

Prior to the war, a cabal called Delphi had represented the Mysterium in Chicago for more than 20 years. The Delphi cabal was very traditional and had less interest in politics than in the gathering of Arcane lore for the cabal's sizeable Athenaeum. Cabal members were mostly older mages who spent their time hoarding knowledge and protecting the cabal's secrets; they were not at all prepared for the trouble that was brewing. When rumors of the Flange began to circulate, they were the first mages to fall; powerful forces from numerous factions believed Delphi must have had what they were looking for. The Athenaeum was stormed, ransacked and ultimately destroyed. The Hip Flask, also primarily Mysterium, wasn't hit nearly as hard because that cabal had shirked the responsibility of maintaining an Athenaeum in favor of more investigative pursuits.

When the city's remaining mages were forced into a period of reconstruction, new Mysterium mages arrived. Even though a war had ravaged Chicago, the Celestial Flange remained at large. Clues could probably be sifted from the remains, and someone would have to protect the knowledge that was left behind.

One powerful mystagogue, a woman called Libra, swept onto the scene and began an effort to salvage any remnants of Delphi's Athenaeum. As a well-connected representative of her order with powerful allies, she formed a new cabal, the Mercurials. The Mercurials made it clear from the beginning that they would never find themselves as vulnerable as their predecessors, and would uphold Mysterium traditions for whatever new political order surfaced. There may be older cabals in the city, but the Mercurials are, without question, one of the most powerful.

After securing their sanctum at the Art Institute, the Mercurials set out to network with other mages in the city, hoping to avoid the mistake of cloistering the cabal away from the rest of society and pretending that the other willworkers in the city would never cross their paths. Libra forged careful alliances with important Chicago mages as quickly as she could, first making the acquaintance of Airyaman. The Hip Flask shares some of the goals of the Mercurials, and opening channels of communication and support was more important to her then petty competition. More recently, she's been working on gaining the trust of Laplace of Open Source. His cabal may have some unorthodox practices, but having been mistaken for a Free Council mage herself a time or two, she isn't as intolerant as some mystagogues when it comes to the allies she chooses.

The rest of the group made names for themselves by helping some of the other mages in the city with academic pursuits, finding leads and documents thought lost in the war. By slowly building a list of favors owed and friendly contacts without revealing just how powerful they actually are, the Mercurials have become respected members of the city's Arcane community.

They continue their research into the Celestial Flange, but they are not as biased as others in the city. The Mercurials do not make any claim as to the validity of stories about the Flange. They are open to the idea that it may be out there; it may be a metaphor for something non-physical, or it may not exist at all. One thing is certain, though, they are determined to find the truth at whatever cost. Libra has made

the point time and again that if they find out this whole thing is nothing more than a conspiracy, those responsible best be prepared to face the consequences for their actions.

Libra

Quote: "*It's better to do something right once than to do it wrong twice — so quit wasting our time here. The text says the circle must be nine measures wide, and that is exactly what we're going to do. Now give me the chalk, and go grab that violet taper — quickly!*"

Background: Adrianne Elgar has a background in anthropology, having worked as a professor at Berkley until her Awakening at the age of 37. For decades, she studied cultures and social mores with the skeptical mind of a scientist, and wrote her doctoral thesis about the importance of dismissing supernatural claims when dealing with primitive cultures while not replacing them with other, equally far-fetched beliefs (like so many British imperialist anthropologists had done historically, in her opinion).

When she learned of the true nature of reality, she considered it an epiphany, but kept her wits about her. Understanding that many might consider the power she was touching "Divine," she still prefers to look at magic and myth as something to be approached methodically and empirically, never buying into symbolic explanations. Rather, Dr. Elgar would prefer to understand *why* something is symbolized in such a way, and with that knowledge, form her own opinions.

For this reason, and because the Free Council didn't find her first, she learned about the Mysterium and was initiated into that order. She feels that finding out as much as she can about the true nature of things will lead to a greater understanding of the world in general. Her devotion to collecting information and her academic outlook toward the cataloging of data, coupled with her near-mastery of more than one Arcanum have earned her the title of Curator. Her methods are sometimes a bit non-traditional, however, and the rest of her order pays careful attention to her progress. She has yet to make a severe blunder, though, and after many years of faithful service, there is little doubt that she would ever betray the ideals of the Mysterium.

She is still sometimes mistaken as a member of the Free Council, because she refers to the other realms mages speak of in more scientific terms. To her, the "Supernal" Realm is some other vibrational frequency of reality, and "Awakened" individuals have evolved to the point that they're able to perceive and manipulate these qualities somehow. Rituals to her are mere tools to achieve the states of consciousness required to attain a goal, depending more on an adherence to precise mechanics than on actual belief in what the process represents.

She chose the shadow name Libra to represent balance. Prior to Awakening, Adrianne had no love for astrology, feeling that it was a typical lazy human desire to understand the cosmos without all the work. People weren't willing to learn that it was only a primitive version of *real* astronomy with supernatural trappings that were unnecessary. After discovering that there was some hint of truth to the symbolism behind the zodiacal progression of planets, she felt that naming herself after the most balanced of the air signs would remind her to keep her mind open about the things she once believed to be pitiful attempts to find meaning.

She came to Chicago after the Mage War, in search of information about the Celestial Flange. The Mysterium has a genuine interest in protecting this information; if the stories of the Flange's powers are true, the Mysterium feels that no other order will be able to decipher the Flange's exact purpose as well as the Mysterium will. For this reason, after the fall of Delphi, Libra decided, at the urging of other powerful members of her order, that Chicago needed a strong Mysterium presence.

Spending her days and nights investigating what was left of the previous Athenaeum and questioning the few mages left after the war dominated her time. Unfortunately, her cabal's intellectual focus kept the Mysterium out of the political arena for a time, and before she could maneuver her order into the seat to which she felt the Mysterium belonged, Theodore Walsh, representing the Guardians of the Veil, had assumed the role of Hierarch.

She doesn't trust him or his order to do any good toward the search for the truth, but tolerates things the way they are for now. The numbers are in her favor. The Mysterium has members in nearly every cabal in the city, and once the climate surrounding the search for the Flange simmers to a less volatile state, she is sure that the city will be ready for a change.

Description: Libra has short, blonde hair, brown eyes and otherwise unremarkable features for a woman approaching 50. She wears whatever is comfortable and never uses make-up or wears jewelry. She keeps her nails trimmed short and always has a large messenger bag over her shoulder to carry her laptop computer and an array of investigative tools and occult symbols.

Storytelling Hints: Dr. Elgar is a no-nonsense woman who is used to getting things done right. Her cabal operates with unrivaled efficiency, and she intends to keep it that way. She is direct and to the point, and sometimes comes across as arrogant, though this is more a lack of patience than a feeling of superiority. She feels that most people are just not willing to educate themselves well enough to hold a decent conversation about anything, and it comes through in her demeanor that she'd simply rather not waste her time when she's heard it all a thousand times before.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Journal
Real Name: Dr. Adrianne Elgar
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Anthropology) 4, Computer 2, *Investigation 4, *Occult (Superstitions) 3, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, *Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Lies) 3, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: High Speech, Library 5, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2, Status: Consilium 2
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Time 4, Fate 4, Prime 2, Spirit 2
Rotes: Time — Perfect Timing (•), Postcognition (••), Acceleration (•••), Present as Past (••••); Fate — The Sybil's Sight (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Superlative Luck (•••), Gift of Fortune (••••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Activate Enchanted Item (••); Spirit — Spirit Tongue (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Zarathustra

Quote: "*I'm sorry, but you're just wrong. I can show you in the Lexicon, that positioning of the crystal indicates the element of fire, not water. Sometimes they are reversed, but only for the following reasons . . .*"

Background: Before he Awakened, Adam Burnell was already a repository of knowledge. He spent his youth reading everything he could get his hands on, and soaked up information from all types of media, never forgetting a movie line or a solution to a puzzling computer game. As he matured, he could have excelled academically, but he found himself bored by the standard curriculum and focused his sharp mind instead on learning about the sorts of things that interested him. Still, he slid by in all his classes; people with a memory like Adam's test very well.

After Awakening in his early 20s, he began studying everything he could about the Arcane underground he'd discovered, not surprisingly attracting the attention of the Mysterium. As a Chicago native, his link to the order was through the Mercurials; Libra met him and, right away, saw him for the valuable asset he could be. She brought capable allies with her over a decade ago, but has been open to expanding membership in her cabal if she can find people with wits and determination that might match hers. Adam has proven capable of both, and with his ability to call up obscure information without books or computers at his fingertips, he has found himself included in most of the cabal's research missions.

He respects the goals laid out by Libra, but definitely hopes one day to leave Chicago and find out what secrets the rest of the world holds for the Awakened. Adam is eager to be involved in any task that requires him to leave the sanctum and explore, but he's almost as comfortable researching obscure texts and cataloging information for the Athenaeum. The search for the Flange, in his opinion, is a red herring. He honestly can't believe that mages have been searching for it for nearly 20 years, and thinks that it is either a distraction from another agenda or it is just something that's been dreamed up by an enemy of Chicago's mages, with hopes that the artifact will cause precisely the kind of dissent that it has. He begrudgingly accepts that there's evidence to the contrary, though, and continues to support the efforts of his cabal to find it.

Zarathustra believes that by learning as much as he can, he'll one day be as powerful as the other mages in his cabal. For this reason, he keeps his impetuous thoughts below the surface and tempers his behavior with maturity beyond his years. He knows that if he plays his cards right and remains patient, he'll be able to set off on his own one day, investigating forgotten temples and otherworldly places of power all over the world. Doing so prematurely, in his estimation, would only lead to trouble with his order and the other Mercurials, because they may not feel him ready and would surely suspect him of betrayal. Thus, he bides his time and pays attention, waiting for some indication that Libra feels he's made adequate progress along the road to Arcane mastery.

Description: Adam is just over 5'11", has short dark hair and brown eyes. He has attractive features and a warm smile that lights up his face when he laughs. He's only just approaching 30, making him the youngest of the Mercurials. He likes to wear cargo jeans and T-shirts with a sporty pair of sunglasses when it's bright, making him look even younger than he actually is. He grows a small patch of hair under his chin, and only shaves it when he is required to appear more formal.

Storytelling Hints: Adam is quick to point out when others are mistaken about details, because he seems to never forget them. He might give the impression that he's out to argue for the sake of the debate, but the truth is that he's just devoted to accuracy, a trait that has won the heart of Libra. He will admit when he's unsure about something; that's just not often the case. His method of communicating is clear and friendly, for the most part, and he's at least as good a listener as he is at proving a point, so he's avoided a reputation for arrogance so far.

Any time there's news of something happening elsewhere in the world, he's interested in hearing all the details. He's got his own private collection of journals and photographs outlining all the places he'd like to visit and rumors he's heard about them.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Iron knife
Real Name: Adam Burnell
Path: Mastigos
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Research) 3, Computer 1, *Investigation (Enigmas) 3, *Occult 2, Science 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, *Survival (Navigation) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion 2
Merits: Encyclopedic Knowledge, Eidetic Memory, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Mind 3, Space 2, Prime 1
Rotes: Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Third Eye (•), Misperception (••), Multi-Tasking (•••); Space — Finder (•), Ward (••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 3 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

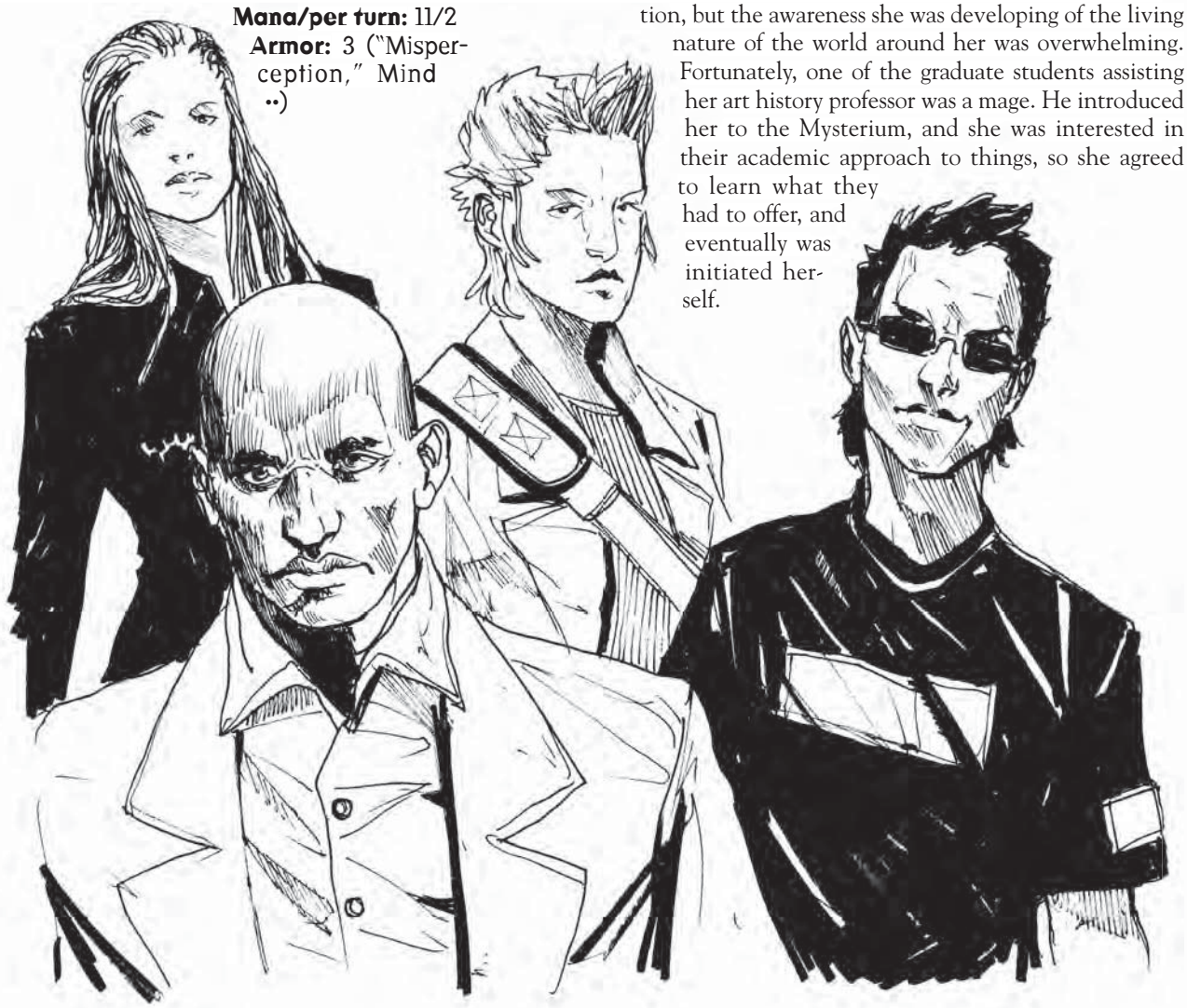
Frigga

Quote: '*They're saying it looks like rain. I say we take our chances — because to me it looks like the clouds are blowing over rather quickly, don't you think?*"

Background: When Marian Singer Awakened, she was dreaming of clouds. Ever since she had been a little girl, the weather had fascinated her. When her sisters would run inside, terrified of the thunder and lightening, she'd run out on the patio, hoping to see the bright webs of light spraying their power from the clouds to the earth. The ionization of the air excited her to the core, the idea of a funnel of wind that could tear a house down overwhelmed her with a sense of awe and she wouldn't rest until she knew everything about the weather.

She Awakened during college in 1979, while she was getting her degree in meteorology. She had taken LSD the night before, after studying for an exam, and had been out on the lawn with a few of her friends, talking about what the clouds *really* looked like — what they *represented*, *man*. She had dreams that night that will never leave her, and during her astral journey to the Supernal Realm, she touched the sky and felt its power.

After that, she was confused for days; she thought the journey she'd taken was an acid-induced hallucination, but the awareness she was developing of the living nature of the world around her was overwhelming. Fortunately, one of the graduate students assisting her art history professor was a mage. He introduced her to the Mysterium, and she was interested in their academic approach to things, so she agreed to learn what they had to offer, and eventually was initiated herself.



Marian adopted the name Frigga because of her fascination with the weather, and has lived up to her namesake. Other mystagogues can pour over dusty books for days straight; Marian wants to be outside learning what secrets the spirits of the wind might whisper, what tales hundred-year-old trees contain. Of course, she understands the value of reading ancient texts; she just feels that there are other places to gain magical knowledge than from the writings of other mages.

When Libra was searching for other powerful mages to round out her new cabal's membership, Frigga had just accepted a research position with Chicago news station WGN's meteorology team. Seeing the opportunity as a golden twist of fate, the two women agreed to work together with the full support of their order. Libra treats Frigga sometimes as though she's a "granola hippie," but the two women have grown to respect each other's different paths over the years.

To her credit, Frigga has produced a stack of journals detailing her own experiences for the last 25 years, which have become a valuable part of the Mercurials' Athenaeum. She's done a fair amount of research into the Mage War and what really happened to Delphi. There are secrets to be learned from the spirits of Chicago, but Frigga has yet to fully understand how all the stories she's collected fit together.

Description: Frigga is in her mid-40s, but looks more like she's in her 30s. She has brown hair with streaks of red and blonde and expressive hazel eyes. She wears smart-looking business attire when working, but any other time she's clothed in simple flowing skirts and blouses made of natural fibers.

Storytelling Hints: Marian Singer is a generally free-spirited individual who will come across as ambivalent with regard to most serious matters. Nothing could be further from the truth; she just doesn't see the point in letting external influences rule her. She is old enough to have developed a stubborn sense of security, which proves to be an asset far more often than a liability.

Feeling certain that the world around her teems with spiritual life means that loneliness is never an issue for her, and she volunteers more often than any other member of the Mercurials for solitary work. She doesn't dislike people or technology, though, and can commune with the spirit of urban sprawl with no less respect than with a sylvan waterfall. Her unique relationship with her surroundings has given her the reputation of being eccentric, open-minded and friendly.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small, antique sextet
Real Name: Marian Singer
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, *Investigation 2, Science (Meteorology) 4
Physical Skills: Stealth 1, *Survival (Wilderness) 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Calming the Wild) 3, Empathy 2, Persuasion 3
Merits: Common Sense, Contacts (News Station), High Speech, Meditative Mind 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 8
Virtue: Compassion
Vice: Lust
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Forces 4, Spirit 3, Life 2
Rotes: Forces — Read Matrices (•), Unseen Shield (••), Call Lightening (•••), Change Weather (••••); Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Lesser Spirit Summons (••), Control Spirit (•••); Life — Healer's Trance (•), Self-Healing (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)

Malkuth

Quote: "*It's interesting that you think that — and I'm not in any place to dispute your claim, but I honestly think you'll find that if you refer to the original translation, the text reads much differently.*"

Background: Gordon Terrelle's biggest obstacle to overcome after Awakening, in stark contrast to Libra's, is that he *wants* to believe in Divine providence. The more he learns about the Atlantean history of what he has become a part of, the harder it is to reconcile the way things are with the things he's been taught his whole life. With a background in the Baptist church, Gordon looks for God in everything. He does not, however, make irrational leaps to support that idea — he's entirely too smart for that.

He went to college to become a minister, and has never fully given up his search for God's plan. For Gordon, though, faith was something he felt was necessary to temper with knowledge. He would accept nothing without reason, and some of the "truths" espoused by his teachers were leaps he was not willing to take without further inquiry. It was during a crisis of faith that he Awakened. He prayed for answers for hours on end, reaching out to a God he was beginning to believe only existed as metaphor, and was answered with visions of a great Golden Key. What it unlocked was a higher realm of consciousness, and led to countless questions he's only now begun to feel there may be answers to.

Not long after Awakening, he was initiated into the Mysterium, and felt like he had found a place where the answers might actually one day be uncovered.

He has always felt that God doesn't leave loose ends, but the truth may be so elusive that it must require a certain amount of faith. He has seen and done miraculous things since then, but still yearns for some direct evidence that these happenings are the will of a higher being. It simply does not make sense to Gordon that the world *just* exists, and that human consciousness alone is responsible for providing meaning.

Joining Libra seemed like the last thing he'd do, for, in meetings of their order, they'd encountered nothing from one another but heated debate. She would insist that adding God into the equation was overcomplicating things unnecessarily, while he would remind her that, without some originating cause, reality seemed to teeter on an illogical assumption. Instead, they developed a healthy respect for one another, and when Libra was looking for mages to accompany her to Chicago and make sense of the violence that had occurred there, Gordon was perfectly willing to become a Mercurial.

As Malkuth, Gordon represents a grounding influence for the other members of his cabal. He constantly searches for the secrets that can be revealed by every challenge they face, and though Libra might not see this as evidence of a God or gods, she is frequently surprised by what he unearths.

Malkuth knows several languages, and provides translations for most of the ancient texts his cabal finds. When he can keep his personal beliefs from clouding his judgment, he is capable of drawing astounding conclusions from very little evidence. Since arriving in Chicago, he's uncovered a variety of dead ends while searching for the Celestial Flange. After a decade and a half of research, however, he's compiled quite a collection of journals, texts and statements, and has pieced together evidence that has him convinced the artifact actually has some sort of Biblical significance. Many accounts say that the Flange is some kind of circlet, and recent rumors that a group of errant mages believes they've found the crown of thorns worn by Christ himself have piqued his interest.

Description: Malkuth is a 57-year-old black man who's kept himself in peak physical condition. He shaves his head smooth and wears simple but distinguished clothing. Standing almost 6'4" and weighing in at nearly 200 pounds, he can be an imposing figure, but his facial expression is rarely one of menace. Rather, he is a compassionate man, feeling that all God's creatures have a chance for redemption.

Storytelling Hints: The one tenet of Malkuth's religious conviction that he rejects is the practice of proselytizing. He still believes that he'll be able to fit his Awakened understanding of life into a Christian model, but believes there are many paths that people must walk. It is not his place to educate others about what he thinks is the truth, for he does not claim to be certain of the answers he's comfortable with.

He speaks slowly and well, and to those who don't share his beliefs, he's careful to use terminology that is open-ended enough to be inclusive and non-judgmental. He is basically a pacifist, but will defend himself or his friends when push comes to shove. When all else fails him, he prays to his God for answers. The results are often enigmatic, but he sees a plan behind every deed.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bible
Real Name: Gordon Terrelle
Path: Obrimos
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 4, *Investigation (Deductive Reasoning) 3, *Occult (Ritual) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, *Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Oratory) 3, Persuasion 3
Merits: High Speech, Inspiring, Languages (Hebrew, Latin) 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 8
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Prime 4, Forces 3, Fate 2
Rotes: Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••), Channel Mana (•••), Supernal Dispellation (••••); Forces — Nightsight (•), Invisible Object (••), Personal Invisibility (•••); Fate — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•), Shifting the Odds (••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)

The People Versus

A mage — possibly one of the players' characters — is arrested in the course of another story for a crime or misdemeanor he did commit, using magic, that was justified under the (supernatural and secret) circumstances. He cannot tell the truth about what happened in court, so he needs help devising a legal strategy to protect himself. His appearance in court might also draw the attention of an old enemy who could oppose the efforts of any friendly mages in court, either magically or through legal means alone. The question is, how can the characters be sure that magic isn't being against them at trial?

The Hip Flask

The members of the Hip Flask are mostly members of the Mysterium, but this cabal doesn't seem to the casual observer to follow any particular set of traditions. The cabal's focus has always been on networking socially and finding things for people at a price. Many obscure rituals require strange components that one might be hard pressed to find locally, and Airyaman, the leader of this cabal, has been collecting these kinds of things for decades. The Hip Flask is, without a doubt, the oldest cabal in the city, and most of the local mages know that when they need anything, all they have to do is find a member and negotiate.

The Hip Flask's sanctum is a beautiful, three-story home in Beverly. Here, most of the members either live full-time or have a room to call their own. There is a huge vault in the basement where they store strange antiques of magical significance, and it's well protected from outsiders with magical wards and locks. Quite frequently, people ask the cabal to find something and the Hip Flask gives the impression that it will be difficult to procure, only to have the object of interest sitting in their vault. Cabal members prefer to give other mages the impression that the Hip Flask is good at finding things, not that there is a storehouse of Arcane curiosities at the cabal's fingertips.

Even though this cabal is primarily a Mysterium cabal, and its vault might make a perfect Athenaeum, the members remain conspicuously non-political. Airyaman prefers to leave such things to the Mercurials, freeing up his time for training the younger mages of his cabal. The Hip Flask adheres to the ideal of keeping Arcane knowledge and certainly protects the deepest secrets from others, but cabal members feel that simply cataloging information and hiding behind a musty tome doesn't get them out into the world, where the present moment is constantly creating new knowledge.

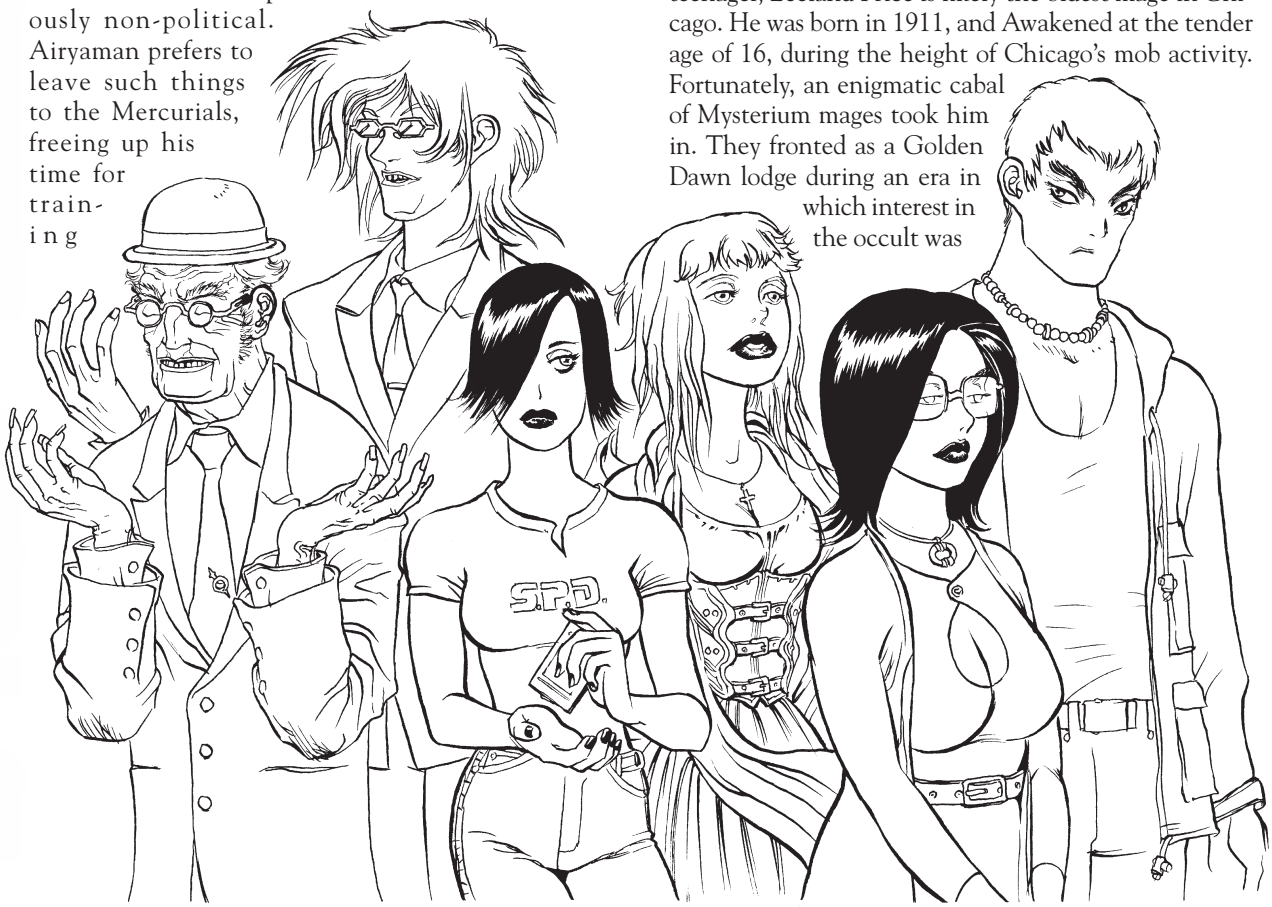
They spend most of their time educating one another and working the social scene of Chicago, constantly picking up bits of information and piecing them all together in an archive. Most of their attention for the last several years has been on the Celestial Flange, the legendary artifact that is somehow tied to Chicago's history, yet no one has claimed to see it yet.

With a leader approaching his 100th year and a couple of members who are barely 20, it's no wonder that this cabal has a wide perspective on any issue the Hip Flask faces. The cabal's basic tenet is one of open-mindedness with caution. The members talk to almost anybody and feel that every situation can be educational, but they are very careful what they reveal to outsiders.

Airyaman

Quote: "*Yes, I know where you can get powdered mummy. It's going to cost you, though. If you want me to get it for you it'll be more. What'd you say you needed it for again?*"

Background: Having lived through Prohibition as a teenager, Leeland Price is likely the oldest mage in Chicago. He was born in 1911, and Awakened at the tender age of 16, during the height of Chicago's mob activity. Fortunately, an enigmatic cabal of Mysterium mages took him in. They fronted as a Golden Dawn lodge during an era in which interest in the occult was



trendy, keeping their eyes and ears open for rumors of real magical activity and collecting archives of information.

Leeland realized early on that it isn't whom you are that makes a difference; it's whom (and what) you know. Still something of an impetuous youth, he broke away from the cabal that trained him after only two years, joining a group of younger mages that was just forming.

At the time, the Hip Flask took in almost anyone who was interested, and one of its main goals was to procure peculiar odds and ends for those who hadn't the means to find them. Airyaman was just the mage the cabal needed. He seemed to have a knack for being in the right place at the right time, and everyone who met him liked him instantly, a perfect fit for a cabal that networked in the speakeasy scene to learn everything they could about the powerful people who ran Chicago. Soon, he moved up in the ranks of the Flask, and when the original leader was killed in a magical duel, the other mages begged him to lead them, not wanting to disband a cabal that had the potential to grow into very influential player in the city's politics.

Airyaman is the only surviving founding member of his cabal, having seen mages come and go now for over 70 years. He believes in training younger mages to learn as much as they can, and takes on the role of Mentor to all the mages of the Flask.

He knows that, at 93, he doesn't have much longer to live. He certainly looks younger than he really is, and he doesn't make it a habit to reveal his actual age, but, over the last decade, he has collected as much data as he can about the Celestial Flange, and he wants to pass that torch on to someone he knows will be able to handle it.

When the Mage War of 1987 rattled the foundations of the city and the Hierarch was killed, Airyaman was the obvious choice to replace her. Never wanting a role with that much responsibility, he filled it only temporarily. When Theodore Walsh showed an interest, with the support of several of the city's mages, Airyaman gladly stepped down (though he occasionally reminds Walsh of the real *reason* he's Chicago's Hierarch). Airyaman is still a Councilor, though, and does his best to make sure that the search for the Flange never reaches the feverish pitch it did in the '80s.

Description: Leeland still has a full head of hair, white though it is, and wears tiny, round architect's spectacles. He tends to wear loose-fitting suits made of comfortable, breathable fabrics and frequently dons a derby, betraying tastes from an earlier time. He certainly doesn't look his age, keeping in step with the younger members of his cabal with an unexpected resilience.

His Nimbus is a vague aura of dark amber, like sunlight passing through a glass of ale.

Storytelling Hints: Airyaman is a very old man, and almost every action he takes in the present is in preparation for his impending demise. Several of the mages who've joined the Hip Flask are very young, and this reassures him that his ideals will be carried on. Chicago would not be the same without this cabal. When someone is in need, he calls the Flask, and that's just the way of things.

The Celestial Flange is the thorn in Airyaman's side. Having been able to find any supernatural good for any interested buyer for the better part of a century, *not* being able to make heads or tails of some rumored Atlantean relic is unacceptable. He's come to the conclusion at least three times that there is no Flange — only to find some piece of evidence that rekindles the search. Because of this, he feels that either there is some kind of cursed quality to it or there is some conspiracy behind its existence. Each of the members of this cabal has been warned over and over about how cautious to be in the pursuit of this artifact, and they all trust their leader to know what he's talking about. Thus, whenever the Flange is the topic of conversation, Airyaman will seem intrigued and frustrated.

Leeland knows Chicago better than anybody, and he reacts to most questions with the modest confidence of a man who's lived a long, fulfilling life.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver flask
Real Name: Leeland Price
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 2, *Investigation 3, *Occult (Artifacts) 4, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Firearms (Pistol) 3, Larceny 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion (Deal-Making) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Contacts (Chicago Underworld, Chicago Nightlife), High Speech, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5, Status: Concilium 3
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 9
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 8
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Fate 5, Time 4, Mind 3, Space 2
Rotes: Fate — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•), Sharpshooter's Eye (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Swearing an Oath (••), Alter Oaths (•••), Lucky Coin (•••), Sanctify Oaths (••••), Forge Destiny (•••••); Time — Perfect Timing (•), Flip of the Coin (••), Acceleration (•••), Temporal Pocket (••••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Mental Shield (••), Universal Language (•••); Space — Finder (•), Ward (••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 5 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Belisama

Quote: "*You wanna make something of it, asshole? Try me.*"

Background: Shay McGuiness joined the Hip Flask just over a year ago, after what she jokingly refers to as her "rude Awakening." She's only 22, and has spent most of her youth partying in Chicago's goth-punk scene. While many of her friends claimed to be "into the occult," studying books on witchcraft and Satanism that can be found at any bookstore, she shied away from such things, preferring to socialize and have fun on the weekends, focusing instead on getting by at school in spite of a fear of excelling, lest she be called a nerd.

She doesn't talk much about what happened the night she Awakened; only that she had finally been talked into joining some of her friends in some kind of "ritual" and the end result was a fire that nearly killed two people.

Word spread quickly about the strange incident, and Melpomene discovered that Shay was the cause of it. They became instant friends, and Shay joined the Hip Flask, hoping to learn more about what she was capable of.

With her affinity to fire and a passing interest in her Irish Celtic descent, she picked the shadow name "Belisama" and is growing into a powerful mage faster than anyone would have expected.

Description: Shay is a pretty, redheaded Irish girl, but she dyes her hair jet black so she won't be labeled. She dresses in thrift-store T-shirts and faded denim, wears very little jewelry and uses ivory face powder that gives her skin a pale glow. She's been smoking since she was 14, and now she's up to a pack of menthols a day.

Her Nimbus manifests as thin strands of smokes with the smell of cloves and burning pine.

Storytelling Hints: The others don't call her "firebrand" for nothing. She has a reputation for not putting up with anybody's crap, and has trouble respecting any kind of authority. She does not, however, question Airyaman, and he's the only authority figure she feels she must answer to. He has taught her most of what she knows, and she will protect him at any cost.

Shay loves fire, and most of her magical effects manifest with a Nimbus that reflects this. She usually has a pack of cigarettes and a lighter on her, and they have come in handy for the occasional "unlikely" conflagration.

She will always be ready for a fight, but it's pretty transparent that this is a defensive cover for an insecure young woman who wants very badly to be loved.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver flask
Real Name: Shay McGuiness
Path: Obrimos
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computer 2, *Occult (Celtic Paganism) 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny (Shop-Lifting) 3, *Survival 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise (Goth Scene) 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Barfly, Danger Sense, High Speech, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Forces 3, Prime 2
Rotes: Forces — Influence Heat (•), Read Matrices (•), Control Heat (••), Influence Fire (••), Control Fire (•••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Transform Aura (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)

Melpomene

Quote: "*Just relax, let me sing you a little song my mother used to sing to me when I was a baby… it'll make you feel better, I promise.*"

Background: Felicia is a year younger than Shay, but Awakened about six months earlier. Felicia's been a member of the Hip Flask only slightly longer, and the two young girls have become marvelous friends. They room together at the sanctum and have learned how to complement one another's magical styles.

Being trained by Airyaman has instilled a reverence for magical knowledge in Felicia, though she had grown up with very little respect for mundane academic pursuits. She aspires to be a singer, and most of her focus before her Awakening was on learning about music.

She sees the Hip Flask as the safest cabal in the city and keeps out of most of the political issues that arise. She helps Airyaman when there is schmoozing to be done, working different venues and collecting a wide variety of acquaintances. Felicia often comes across as a vacuous bimbo to other mages, and in doing so, disarms their sense of mistrust and manages to get more out of them than some of the more accomplished members of the cabal.

Description: Melpomene is a beautiful woman in her early 20s, with wavy, shoulder-length, blonde hair and delicate features. She dresses eccentrically, in soft flowing fabrics with colorful designs, accentuating peasant-girl skirts with sashes and jewelry with little bells on it.

Her Nimbus is a quiet hint of wordless song, as if an opera is coming through the wall from next door.

Storytelling Hints: Felicia feels that the purest magic in the world comes from a song. She is always performing in one way or another, and once strangers realize there's more depth behind her sky-blue eyes, they are moved to listen to her melodic voice. She speaks lyrically even when she's not singing, and is rarely seen without a smile

on her face. True to her shadow-namesake, she is capable of turning the most mournful situation into a ballad, opening even the casual listener to poetic catharsis.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Headphones
Real Name: Felicia Britt
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Music History) 1, *Investigation 2, Crafts 2, *Occult (Symbolism) 2
Physical Skills: Stealth 2, *Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Singing, Poetry) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2
Merits: High Speech, Inspiring, Resources 1, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 5
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 1
Arcana: Fate 2, Mind 2, Time 1
Rotes: Fate — The Sybil's Sight (•), Fortune's Protection (••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Emotional Urging (••), Voice From Afar (••); Time — Perfect Timing (•)
Mana/per turn: 10/1
Armor: 2 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Webber Wormwood

Quote: "Demons of the Lower Orders? *I know I have a copy of that in the back. Honestly, though, it's mostly drivel. What you really want is Faruk's* Lexicon of Fiends and Incorporeal Entities, *but for that, I must make a few phone calls*."

Background: Webber Wormwood has lived in Chicago for 12 years, and runs a tiny occult bookshop in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago, called Pentagram. He caters mostly to Sleepers with an interest in what he calls "paperback magic." A small slice of his customers are Kindred (or ghouls running errands on their behalf) — he's almost sure of it — but he's not ready to say whom. Nothing he has in the front of his store is really magical, but he does have a well-protected storage of more *useful* texts for other Awakened individuals he feels are trustworthy.

His bookish store-clerk personality is contrasted by the fact that most nights he paints the town red, working his way from one nightclub to the next, leading the other members of his cabal to wonder when he ever sleeps.

When he does need solace, and he isn't staying at the Hip Flask's sanctum, he's got a small apartment above his store where he listens to music, drinks whiskey (and when he can get it, absinthe) and reads. Webber owns a television, but it's covered in a layer of dust and is only turned on when he has guests who want to watch something.

He also writes, mostly poetry and personal accounts in thick, hardbound journals he keeps locked up in a chest at the foot of his bed. He'd like to make a contribution to the bodies of Arcane knowledge one day, and has been working on a treatise about his advancement in the Death Arcanum. He realizes that he's no master of the art, but figures an account of *how* one progresses through the stages of magical development might be helpful to future Necromancers.

Webber is fascinated with Michael Walsh, and they've become something of an item. Webber seems more interested in intellectual stimulation than carnal pleasures, but he's not above satisfying his libido. He has yet to fully trust anyone with his emotions, though, and he secretly believes that Michael is only pursuing companionship to upset his father.

Description: Webber is a very tall, skinny man with pointed features and a mop of stark-white hair. During the day, he wears a simple tweed suit, but when he's clubbing, he dons form-fitting outfits made of latex or leather with strange green-tinted sunglasses and jewelry that looks like was intended more for machine parts than to be worn.

His Nimbus is a whiff of musty paper and faint sounds like the clinking of glasses or the flipping of pages.

Storytelling Hints: Webber doesn't say much, and when he does he speaks in a quiet thoughtful manner. He has a measured cadence about everything he does, and gives an impression of apathy without usually meaning to. He's 28 years old, but looks like he's in his mid-30s. To counteract this impression, he sometimes wears a light covering of make-up.

Though he is interested in Michael Walsh, Webber never makes a move to promote the relationship. He feels that if Michael's interest in him is genuine, the proof will show itself when the time is right.

Webber respects Airyaman, and has been a member of the Hip Flask longer than anybody else. He is loyal to the Mysterium, but definitely feels a traditional approach leads to stagnation, and has learned more from his experience with this cabal than anywhere else.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver-rimmed architect's glasses with light green lenses
Real Name: Stephen Glaebenstien
Path: Moros
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Bibliophile) 4, Computer 2, *Investigation 2, *Occult (Ancient Texts) 4
Physical Skills: Firearms 2, Stealth 2, *Survival 1
Social Skills: Expression (Writing) 2, Socialize (Carousing) 2, Streetwise (Gay Nightclub Scene) 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: High Speech, Languages (Latin, Hebrew) 2, Library 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5

Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Lust
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 6
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 3, Matter 2, Mind 1, Prime 1
Rotes: Death — Grim Sight (•), Entropic Guard (••), Suppress Aura (••), Summon Shadows (•••); Matter — Craftsman's Eye (•), Steel Windows (••); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•); Prime — Inscribe Grimoire (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)

Rose

Quote: *"Now just take a sip of this every night before bedtime, sugar, and you'll feel right well in a few days."*

Background: Sandra Rainer grew up in southern Kentucky in a rural, backwater town surrounded by people who didn't understand her childhood desire to make it in the "big city." She comes from a line of women who believed in simple "charms" and herbal household remedies for everything from the flu to broken bones.

When she was 17, her parents had a rocky divorce, and her father moved away to Chicago. She was given the choice which parent she wanted to stay with, and though she loved her mother dearly, she was drawn to the idea of living in a city with more than 1,000 residents.

Her father made a comfortable living for them both selling medical supplies, but when Sandra was 19, he was re-assigned to Roanoke, New Jersey. Rather than give up her new life, Sandra was old enough to stay in Chicago with roommates and tried (unsuccessfully) to complete college on her own.

After dropping out of school, she ended up working for a grocery co-op in the bulk herb department while living in a small apartment with far too many other people on the South Side. This was enough to get by for several years, but had she not Awakened and met Airyaman, she might never have stayed in Chicago.

She's been with the Hip Flask for more than a decade, is now in her mid-40s and has learned how to best use her knowledge of herbalism to augment her magical abilities. She's one of the only current members of the cabal who was around during the Mage War of the '80s, and her devotion to avoiding trouble like that again is only rivaled by Airyaman's.

Description: Rose is a plump, middle-aged woman with well-groomed, copper-tinted hair. She wears stylish, flowing clothes and sports a large pair of pink-framed glasses. She almost always smells of gardenia.

Her Nimbus is a dry, smoky smell of rosemary and basil with a bitter hint of bourbon.

Storytelling Hints: Sandra Rainer is a kind woman with a gentle, motherly attitude most of the time. She's very protective of Shay and Felicia, and treats the rest of the cabal like extended family. They always have a warm, home-cooked meal when she's around, and she's usually found tidying up their common areas when she's not researching or brewing up concoctions for Airyaman.

She also has a no-nonsense side to her personality, and when she feels like someone has wronged her or one of her loved ones, she is quick with reminders of what she will and will not put up with. She's let many a mage know that finishing life as a lesser amphibian is far more difficult than just being polite in the first place.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Wand of cedar wood
Real Name: Sandra Rainer
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Cooking) 3, Medicine (Herbal Remedies) 3, *Occult 3
Physical Skills: Drive 1, *Survival 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Socialize (Carousing) 2
Merits: High Speech, Holistic Awareness, Natural Immunity, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Gluttony
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 4, Spirit 2, Space 2
Rotes: Life — Pulse of the Living World (•), Healer's Trance (•); Organic Resilience (••), Self-Healing (••), Healing Heart (•••), Shapechanging (••••); Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Place of Power (••); Space — Finder (•), Scrying (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 4 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)

Protagoras

Quote: *"It never hurts to ask oneself, 'what can I be sure of?' because when closely examined, there are very few things of which this is the case."*

Background: Michael Walsh was expected to be the prodigal son, having been the subject of his father's strange breeding experiment. Rather than one gifted child to carry on the family tradition, though, Theodore Wash was blessed with twins.

When, as a teenager, Michael confessed that he was gay, his father tried his best to overlook his feelings of betrayal. Michael's sister had already Awakened, and Michael was not even interested in carrying on the *mundane* family name, much less following magically in his father's footsteps.

When his family came from Great Britain to Chicago 15 years ago, Michael had just turned 18, and had only been Awake for a year. He was expected to take a role in his father's corporation, and simply wasn't interested. Michael set off on his own, and the strange relationship between his father and Airyaman made the Hip Flask a safe choice of cabals for Michael's lukewarm attempt at rebellion.

In truth, he still retains some ties with his father. As a member of the Guardians of the Veil, he feels compelled to watch over the other members of his cabal, and the fact that he can report that everything is fine from time to time means that Theodore Walsh stays out of their business.

Michael took the shadow name Protagoras because philosophy always interested him, and questions about reality seem far more important than answers. Certainty is a luxury few have, in Michael's opinion, and that is why his unique brand of looking at things is such an asset to the Hip Flask. They treat him with caution, knowing that his ties to the Guardians could lead to trouble, but keeping him out of their most secret undertakings has prevented any conflicts of interest, and Michael seems to understand.

He has a growing interest in Webber Wormwood, although he feels that Webber doesn't trust him. The truth is, though Michael would jump at any chance to make his father uncomfortable, his attraction to Webber and their stimulating conversations about life are genuine. Perhaps if Michael can show that his real loyalty does *not* lie with the Guardians or with his family, he'll be able to prove that he wants a relationship beyond a casual friendship.

Description: Michael is an attractive 33-year-old man with well-kept, short, brown hair and piercing, green eyes. He moved to the states when he was 18, so he was old enough to retain his English accent and sensibility. He tends to wear the latest couture fashions for young men, and prefers earth tones that accentuate his features.

His Nimbus is a deep bass rumbling, like the thumping from huge subwoofers.

Storytelling Hints: Protagoras would usually rather talk about something for a while before doing it. He fidgets a lot when the conversation turns personal, because he prefers to keep private matters strictly to himself.

He acts as if he is hell-bent on doing things that his father would not approve of, but Protagoras is actually afraid of the man. Protagoras still questions whether the story of what happened to his mother is true, and, therefore, doesn't put it past the Hierarch to do just about anything to get what he wants.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass ring on right ring finger
Real Name: Michael Walsh
Path: Mastigos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Philosophy) 3, Computer 2, *Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny (Security Systems) 2, Survival 1
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, *Subterfuge 3
Merits: Contacts (Big Business), High Speech, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 5
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Space 3, Mind 3, Forces 1
Rotes: Space — Correspondence (•), Spatial Awareness (•), Untouchable (••), Scrying (••), Portal (•••); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), First Impressions (••), Universal Language (•••); Forces — Tune In (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

Frigid

The city is incapacitated by a brutal winter storm. Ice and snow cover everything. Citizens are advised to stay indoors. Roads cannot be plowed. Power is out. The city has been frozen.

This is no mundane storm. It's the work of powerful magic or Numina, a sinister mage or potent spirit, and it's only the beginning of a potentially lethal winter. The characters are snowed in, but when hostile spirits come stalking out of the sleet they must defend their sanctum and, if possible, make their way across a frozen Chicago to warn their allies.

The Starry Night

Basing their operations from within the Adler Planetarium, this cabal of cosmic thinkers, practical astronomers and environmentalists seeks to preserve the natural world through magic. Though more old school than many cabals of younger mages, the members of the Starry Night count themselves as proponents of a timeless power for re-creation, rejuvenation and resurrection. They bring together a variety of interests and paths, maximizing their strengths and proving, at least for the time being, that the different Paths can work together for a common goal. Officially, they are united under the aegis of the Mysterium, since the leader of their cabal, Orion Aeternum, has pledged to that order and because the goals of the Mysterium echo the positions of the Starry Night.

The Starry Night has its sanctum beneath the actual museum. A service elevator to the basement leads to a concealed passage that tunnels underground to a chamber directly below Sundial Plaza. In this guarded and warded room, the cabal performs its group workings and meets to discuss matters better kept away from the public eye (or the spyings of other mages and groups like the Seers).

Otherwise, cabal members have various associations with the museum that make their frequent presence there believable. The many school groups and families who come to the Planetarium throughout the year provide mages of the Starry Night with the opportunity to identify potential mages, as well as target likely enemies.

Orion Aeternum

Quote: "*From here, the stars look cold and distant. Through the eyes of Hubble, however, they are anything but. They seethe and boil, they burst forth into the airless void declaring their existence with a power that makes the largest volcano seem puny by comparison.*"

Background: Theseus Allen Peabody was born in Boston to old money. Family connections ensured that he attended Harvard University whether or not he possessed the requisite intelligence and skills. Fortunately for Allen, he did. He majored in astronomy, then went on to receive his PhD in astrophysics. His Awakening came about the night before he was to start a job with a Boston think tank dealing in the privatization of space travel.

Allen dreamed of going to work, settling into his office and slowly wasting away as he grew further and further sucked into the world of wealth and power. Pale as a shadow, he stood up from his desk and walked through the outer wall of his office. Instead of falling to the street hundreds of feet below, he landed on a strange, twisting road in the dark of the night. Tall trees on either side drew his eyes upward to a sky that exploded with stars. Against the starlit sky, he saw a fortress limned in brilliant colors. He made his way toward the Watchtower of the Lunargent Thorn. When he woke from sleep, he knew he had changed fundamentally. A voice inside him told him to travel to Chicago and seek knowledge of a powerful item known as the Celestial Flange. That morning, instead of reporting to a job that would stifle his creativity and ultimately break his spirit, Allen packed his bags and set out for Chicago.

When he arrived in Chicago, an elderly mage known as Airyaman was waiting for him, having dreamed of Allen's arrival. Airyaman saw to his initiation and early training, then encouraged the brilliant astronomer to form his own cabal. Airyaman helped Allen, now known as Orion Aeternum, get a job with the Adler Planetarium, where he quickly found a sanctum within a Hallow on the Planetarium grounds.

Just as his Mentor, Orion avoids mage politics, preferring to focus the work of his cabal on realizing his dream of locating the Flange.

Description: Allen is a scholarly looking young man whose thinning blond hair and receding hairline, coupled with his wire-rimmed glasses and distinctly "old school" professorial clothing, combine to make him appear at least 10 to 15 years older than his true age of 28. He is thin, with long, delicate fingers. His body is in surprisingly good shape for its apparent fragility, though, since he swims daily as a form of strength training and cardiovascular exercise. He affects a pipe, though no one has ever seen him light it.

Allen's Nimbus takes the form of a band of stars encircling his body. The stars' quality varies from bright and distinct to muddy, like the Milky Way, depending on how strong a spell is being cast (the stronger, the brighter).

Storytelling Hints: Orion might easily be the reincarnation of Carl Sagan in the mage's cosmically enthusiastic attitude about the stars and the world beyond the Earth. He becomes almost lyrical when speaking of the stars or his work, and he attracts many people to him through his obvious love for his subject. He is a proponent of pure science and adamantly opposes science that is made subordinate to industrial and corporate needs.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver pointer/wand (used in both lectures and magical workings)
Real Name: Theseus Allen Peabody
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Perception 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (History of Astronomy) 5, Computer 3, Crafts (Planetary Mobiles) 2, *Investigation (Researching Data) 3, *Occult 3, Science (Astronomy, Astrophysics) 5
Physical Skills: Athletics (Swim) 2, Drive 3, Firearms (Target Shooting) 3, *Survival (Nocturnal) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Astronomy Presentations) 3, Persuasion (Fund Raising) 3, Socialize (Cocktail Hour) 2, Subterfuge (Planetarium Politics) 2
Merits: Contacts (NASA, University), Dream 2, Hallow 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Astrology, Astronomy, History of Magic, Physics) 4, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Fate 4, Matter 3, Prime 2, Space 3, Time 4
Rotes: Fate — Quantum Flux (•), Platonic Mechanism (••), Lucky Coin (•••), Probable Cause (••••); Matter — Dark Matter (•), Unseen Aegis (••), Repair Object (•••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Magic Shield (••); Space — Spatial Awareness (•), Follow Through (••), Ranged Blow (•••); Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Temporal Dodge (••), Shifting Sands (•••), Temporal Pocket (••••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Aegis," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Andromeda

Quote: "*Everything we are shows in what we do. If we would change ourselves, we must first change our actions.*"

Background: Josephine Hall grew up in Philadelphia as part of an extended family that included four generations, three races and five ethnic groups. Her eclectic upbringing gave her the advantage of a childhood grounding in tolerance and egalitarianism. On the other hand, less open-minded neighbors and classmates labeled her (and her family) kooks, freaks, Satanists, perverts, terrorists and other pejorative titles. When Josephine was 12, a group of "concerned citizens" threw a pipe bomb through an upper window in the family's house. Josephine was partly caught in the blast and suffered a broken spine and several other injuries. The rest of the family escaped unharmed but took the warning to heart and relocated to a farming community in rural Pennsylvania, far from prying neighbors and busybodies.

Josephine spent the next two years on her back. Her Uncle Redleaf often carried her outside under the stars and pointed out the constellations, telling her stories from many traditions and filling her head with something other than the almost constant pain.

During one of those evenings, Josephine fell asleep to her uncle's voice. In her sleep she traveled to the stars, joining in their cosmic dance and vibrating with their harmonies until she seemed to become nothing but movement and frequencies, intervals and light.

Gradually, the sound of a single voice chanting filled her consciousness and she opened her eyes to find Uncle Redleaf kneeling over her, shaking a rattle and singing a song in an unfamiliar language. "I felt your spirit crying out to be Awakened," he said. "It has begun."

From that moment, Josephine was a mage. Her uncle acted as her teacher at first, taking her on a vision quest to find her true calling. Thus it was that she finally stood at the foot of the Watchtower of the Golden Key and set her feet on the Path of Obrimos.

Soon after her Awakening, Josephine discovered that her spine had healed of its worst damage, and she could stand on her feet and take a few shaky steps. By the time a representative from the Guardians of the Veil found her and claimed that he had been led to her, Josephine — who had taken the shadow name "Andromeda" — was walking normally.

Josephine stayed in Pennsylvania with her family until she went to college at Penn State. There she majored in astronomy and minored in education, thinking to teach children the same love for the stars that her uncle had passed along to her.

When news of the Celestial Flange's possible existence reached her order in Pennsylvania, the Guardians decided to send an agent to Chicago to report on the activities of that city's mages and to make certain that the search did not spill over into the world of the Sleepers or alert other supernaturals who might want the artifact for themselves.

The Guardians found Josephine a position at Adler Planetarium as director of children's programming, a job that brought her into contact with Orion, who eventually invited her into his cabal, despite the fact that she belonged to a different Order. Although she has been completely open with Orion about her membership in the Guardians, she has not told him of her mission to report on mage activities regarding the Flange. She tells herself it is for the greater good and hopes that she can remain discreet about her undercover work.

Description: Andromeda's multi-racial, multi-ethnic background gives her an exotic, hard-to-label appearance. Her pale blue eyes are almond-shaped, her skin is the warm brown of her African American mother while her high cheekbones pay tribute to her American Indian blood. Her hair is brown with honey blonde highlights. She prefers to wear soft, peasant style clothing, but resigns herself to more professional dress when on the job. She walks with a slight catch in her step every now and then, as if her back sometimes pains her a little bit, but she rarely complains about her old injury.

Her Nimbus is a cascade of rainbow colors, mirroring the many nationalities that make up her heritage.

Storytelling Hints: Andromeda retains a child-like interest in the world, inherited from her Uncle Redleaf. She enjoys telling his stories to children at the Planetarium, knowing that she is passing on a dying heritage. She is aware of her striking appearance but tries not to take too much advantage of it. She gives the impression of an earth-mother to many people who see her clothes and hear her speak. She does not try to dissuade them of the notion since it prevents them from looking further into her life.

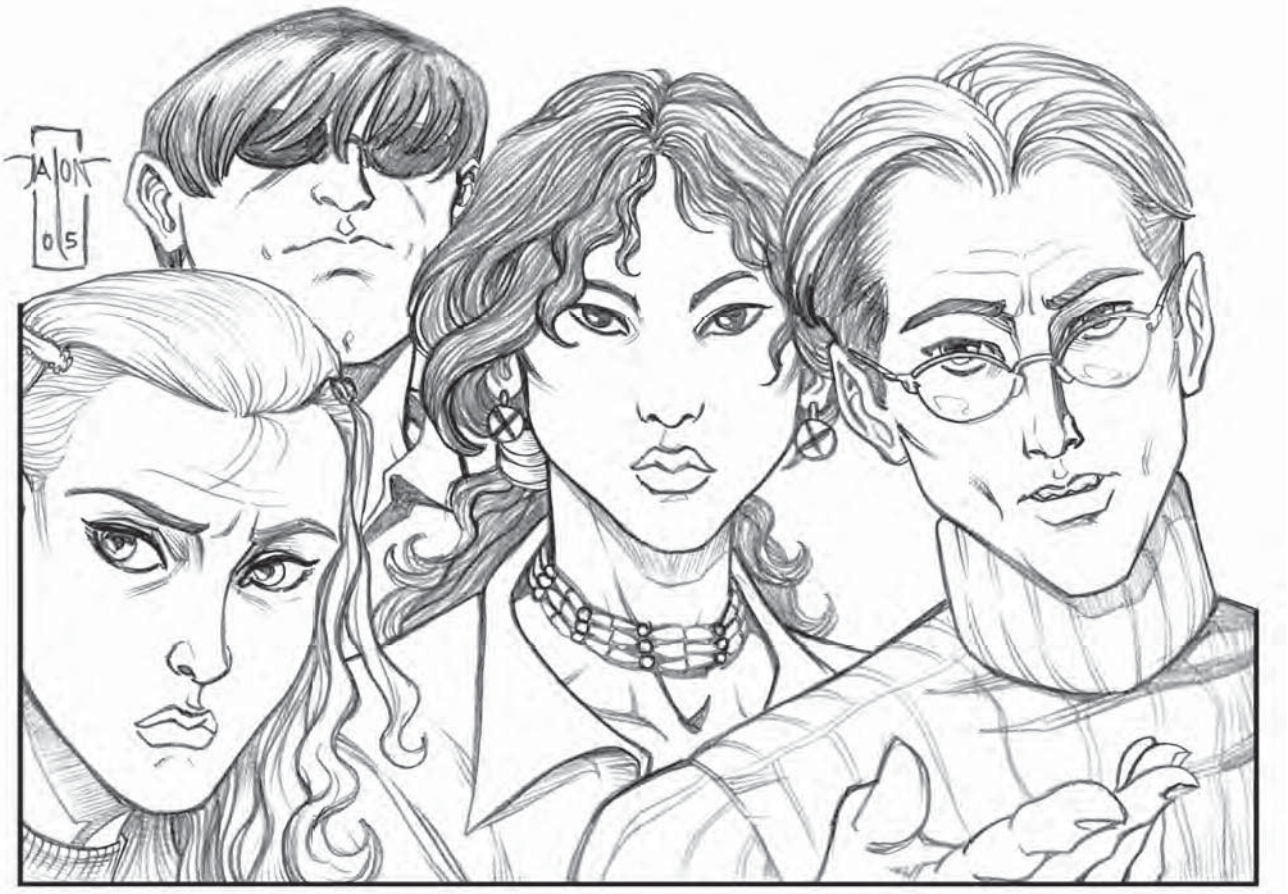
Dedicated Magical Tool: Hand-carved flute made of petrified wood
Real Name: Josephine Carter Hall
Path: Obrimos
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Classical Age Astronomy) 3, *Investigation 3, Medicine (Back Injuries) 1, Occult 3, Science (Astronomy) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Back Exercises) 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, *Stealth 3, Weaponry (Thrown Objects) 2
Social Skills: Empathy (Suffering) 2, Expression (Storytelling) 3, *Subterfuge 2
Merits: Hallow 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Astrology, Astronomy, History of Magic, Physics) 4, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8

Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Forces 3, Mind 2, Prime 3, Space 1
Rotes: Forces — Read Matrices (•), Kinetic Blow (••), Control Electricity (•••); Mind — Third Eye (•), Mental Shield (••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••), Channel Mana (•••); Space — Spatial Awareness (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: None
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Impact

Quote: "*How do you know it's not hurtling through the galaxy right this moment, aiming straight at this relic of a planet? What are you gonna do about it if you don't know it's there? Someone's got to find out the truth.*"

Background: Roderigo del Torres walked across the Mexican border with his family when he was eight years old. Unlike many other immigrants from south of the border, Rigo's father had some marketable skills — he spoke English fluently and he could drive big trucks. He landed a job with a national delivery service and spent the next several years driving back and forth across North America. Since he had nowhere else to leave his family, he took his wife and son with him on his trips. Finally, when Rigo was a teenager, his father took the truck to New Jersey, used his savings to lease a cheap apartment in one of the many "little Mexicos" and announced he was settling down.



Suddenly thrust into a world very different from the constantly mobile lifestyle he'd grown accustomed to, Rigo had a hard time adjusting to his neighborhood and school peers, who didn't appreciate his "been there, done that" attitude (even when he could back it up). The fourth or fifth time he came home from school with a bloody nose and torn clothing, he father took him to a friend of his, known simply as Leadhead, from the steel plate in his skull. Leadhead taught Rigo how to fight, brutally, viciously and victoriously. Leadhead also taught the boy something about wrestling, enough so that when Rigo went to high school, he tried out for and won a spot on the wrestling team.

Rigo Awakened after a head injury during the semifinals of the state high school wrestling championships his junior year in high school. He lay in the hospital, caught in a fever dream of delirium as his astral self wandered toward the Watchtower of the Lead Coin.

When he woke up, Rigo was convinced he had been abducted by aliens and given a mission to use his newfound power to save the Earth from an impending asteroid strike. Found by the Mysterium, who recognized him from his magical resonance as one of their own, Rigo advanced in the study of his magic and also kept up his grueling physical training, becoming a professional trainer at a local gym.

As news of the possible existence in Chicago of a great artifact reached the East Coast mages, the order sent Rigo to act as one of its agents. His physical skills recommended him to the Starry Night cabal, which was badly in need of some muscle and security. He works as a part-time security guard for the Adler Planetarium.

Though Rigo seems to understand now that aliens did not abduct him (he's more likely to consider his experience an angelic warning), he still believes that there is a conspiracy to hide the growing certainty that the planet will be hit by an extinction-level asteroid long before the world has any sort of defenses in order.

Rigo intends to circumvent that possibility if it's the last thing he does.

Description: Rigo is a short, stocky man in his mid-20s. His powerful upper body and neck muscles, typical of a wrestler, give him the look of someone much more massive than he in fact is. He carries himself with the "balls-of-the-feet" stance of a dancer or cat burglar. His dark, straight, black hair is worn just above his collar, with an unruly fall of bangs sometimes hiding his eyes, which are also hidden behind dark glasses. He dresses mostly in black, sometimes varying his appearance with cobalt-blue or crimson shirts.

Rigo's Nimbus resembles an asteroid belt. The more vulgar the magic, the more the asteroids collide with one another.

Storytelling Hints: Rigo is usually quiet, though his presence is unmistakable. He exudes a *machismo* totally unrelated to any sense of superiority over women; rather, it is born of an utter confidence in his body and his ability to get it to do what he wants. He holds himself very "tight," especially when on duty either as Planetarium security or as guardian for his cabal. His only truly extroverted moments occur when someone asks him about any of the following topics: UFOs, abductions and killer asteroids.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bone key with a small emerald inset
Real Name: Roderigo Ignacio Joaquin del Torres
Path: Moros
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: *Investigation 3, Medicine (Emergency First Aid) 2, *Occult (Conspiracy Theories, UFO-logy) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Weight Training) 3, Brawl (Wrestling) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Larceny (Security) 3, Stealth 2, *Survival 2, Weaponry (Improvised) 3
Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Hallow 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Astrology, Astronomy, History of Magic, Physics) 4, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 9
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Death 3, Fate 2, Matter 2
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•), Entropic Guard (••); Fate — Winds of Chance (•); Matter — Find the Hidden Horde (•), Steel Windows (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••), 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: None

Pleiades

Quote: *"I would love to meet you in person* — No, I don't trust her*! We'll go, no one minds if we leave for a few minutes* — Everyone, Hush! I can't even hear myself think*!"*

Background: Cecilia's mind first split in two when she was 11 and her mother committed suicide in front of her only child. Part of Cecilia screamed and screamed, and part of her looked the other way and pretended it didn't happen so she could still be the happy child she had always been. The second split occurred when Cecilia was 13 and her father, who had turned increasingly to alcohol after his wife's death, decided that he needed someone in his bed at

night. Ceci became a woman who did what she had to do to keep her drunken father from hurting her. Cissy, the little girl, still kept her happy, child-like behavior, and Cecilia, the shell-shocked witness of her mother's suicide, relived the pain in nightmares every night. When Cecilia was 17, Cecile emerged and took matters into her own hands. She laced her father's alcohol with enough pain pills to kill several horses and set fire to the house while he lay in a near-coma. Without looking back, Cecile grabbed a suitcase she had already prepared and took Cecilia, Ceci and Cissy away to start a new life. The Trailways bus ride to Chicago was long, and she slept most of the way. As she slept, she dreamed, but this time her nightmares took her to a different place, a Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet in the realm of Pandemonium. When Cecile got off the bus in Chicago, a new sister had joined her. This empowered and willful personality was named Pleiades, and she was Awake.

Triplex of the Game of Geometric Perfection heard her resonance, a cacophony of voices in the Supernal Realm, and located her. He undertook to train Pleiades in the rituals of the Free Council, but when she told him that she had already found a cabal, he did not stop her from joining the Starry Night.

Her colleagues in the Starry Night appreciate her for her strong mental capabilities, and they have learned to work around her various personalities. Usually, Pleiades maintains control and lends her confidence and magical talents to the cabal. When things go wrong, either Ceci the vamp or Cecile the ruthless protector takes over. Occasionally, the happy child that is "Cissy" shows herself. So far, the tormented Cecilia only shows herself in Pleiades' nightmares.

Description: Pleiades is a painfully thin woman in her early 20s with platinum blonde hair that falls in loose curls to her shoulders. Her eyes are a soft, dreamy blue-green most of the time, but they undergo subtle changes as her personalities emerge to the fore (clear blue for Cissy, muddy green for Cecilia, bright blue for Ceci and dark blue-brown for Cecile). She tends to dress in filmy clothes of muted blues and purples. When she works magic, she is all business and her slender, ethereal form seems to vibrate with pulsating energy, transforming her from a helpless victim to a woman of true power.

Her Nimbus is a nightmarish aura of blood-red flames that emanate both heat and light.

Storytelling Hints: Pleiades suffers from multiple personality disorder, but she manages to remain highly functional. She is aware of all her personalities, though she cannot always control who takes charge of her life. Pleiades the mage is by far the strongest of the five "sisters" and usually maintains her hold on Cecilia. Her memories of her past are blessedly vague. She knows what was done to her, but her conscious mind has blurred the details. Only when she sleeps does her past come crashing down around her. Pleiades fears that one day Cecile may destroy all of them to save Cecilia from any more nightmares, so she constantly strives toward impossible goals to keep Cecile focused on the present.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass-framed mirror, carefully fractured into five segments
Real Name: Cecilia Jean Collier
Path: Mastigos
Order: Free Council
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Medicine (Psychology) 3, Occult 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Stealth (Remaining Inconspicuous) 3, Weaponry (Small Pointed Objects) 3
Social Skills: Empathy 2, *Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Hallow 4, High Speech, Library (Shared) (Astrology, Astronomy, History of Magic, Physics) 4, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5 (Multiple Personality, severe: 6)
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Death 4, Forces 3, Mind 4, Space 2
Rotes: Death — Grim Sight (•), Entropic Guard (••), Destroy Object (•••), Enervation (••••); Forces — Receiver (•), Influence Fire (••), Personal Invisibility(•••); Mind —Aura Perception (•), Misperception (••), Psychic Assault (•••), Psychic Sword (••••); Space — Spatial Awareness (•), Untouchable (••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••), 4 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: None

The Rails

Union Station is under the watch of werewolves. That's common knowledge among many of the city's mages, even if the interests of the Forsaken aren't truly understood. Unfortunately, the turf of the Uratha isn't well known to every messenger that comes into the city.

An Awakened courier has come to Chicago with a precious package for an influential mage with some authority over the characters' cabal.

Unfortunately, this arcane parcel is contraband in the eyes of Union Station's protective pack. The werewolves are holding the courier for 24 hours before they send him packing back on the next train, without his cargo. Can the characters make a deal with the werewolves before the messenger makes an enemy of them? Can they recover the courier's cargo from the werewolves?

The Fringe

Not all those who Awaken come to find a cabal where they fit in. Not all those who Awaken are recognized as heirs to the power of the First City. Notall those who Awaken know they have Awakened at all.

No one knows how many willworkers are living, hiding or denying their power in Chicago. No one can be sure how many of the strange wizards and mad cult leaders on the fringes of society are truly calling on Supernal forces. No one can be sure where the next great threat against Chicago's mages will come from — or who will become the next great force for wisdom and change..

The Disciples of Nehjarra

The Disciples of Nehjarra were once dismissed as a crazy group of "New Age" cultists, written off as relatively harmless, and left to their own devices. The strange series of events leading to their present state, however, has started causing the Consiliar mages of Chicago to raise eyebrows. The Disciples of Nehjarra belong to no order, and are conspicuously absent from any political undertakings, so information about them is hard to come by.

What is known is that their cult started two-and-a-half years ago as an evangelical Christian revival group on the outskirts of the city, near Hammond, Indiana. A husband-and-wife team, Samuel and Katherine Miller-Roth, arrived in Chicago with the horns of faith blaring, and they drew a medium-sized following of believers in their "old school" faith healing and speaking in tongues.

About one year after they started, as the Miller-Roths say, "preaching and teaching," Samuel claims to have been visited by a spirit. He says he was tending his vegetable garden when a golden angelic form came to him. The spirit was Nehjarra, professing to be "the comfort of God," and it claimed to have whispered in Jesus' ear while he hung on the crucifix, easing his pain and reassuring him of the love of his heavenly Father.

Samuel spent three months in retreat, learning all that Nehjarra had to offer. Samuel and Katherine began to teach their followers about the guiding power of crystals and the vibratory levels of reality, leading to a profound and immediate change in their membership. Most of the mainstream Christians were disenchanted by what they heard, although some were swayed to a new way of thinking.

About seven months ago, Samuel began actually channeling Nehjarra. Samuel would sit on stage and slip into a meditative state, closing his eyes and breathing deeply. Eventually, he'd begin to spasm and his breathing would become faster. Members of the congregation would swear that when he opened his eyes again, they were different. His voice would change, becoming more resonant and assertive, and he'd begin speaking as Nehjarra, imparting thousands of years of lost knowledge upon his followers.

Samuel and Katherine are Awakened mages, and they have learned their share of Arcane knowledge. They are also, however, devout believers in some sort of Divine providence, though in the last several years that view has slowly moved away from their original Christian background due to the teachings of Nehjarra. Before the "channeling" sessions, Samuel and Katherine referred to most of their abilities in religious terms, believing that God had granted them the powers to spread His word. Now they are being taught a greater understanding, by a being they believe to be ageless and wise in the ways of the universe. They've adopted shadow names based on Eastern concepts of the elements of air and water, at the urging of Nehjarra, and their practices and personal symbology grow more "alternative" every day.

The truth is far more insidious. Nehjarra is a spirit of deception, a demon whose actual goal is to bridge the abyss to the Earthly realm more solidly and to eventually inhabit Samuel permanently. Ultimately, Nehjarra would like to have Samuel impregnate a woman while he's possessed, but Katherine is too old, and so far this is a goal the demon will have to patient with. In the meantime, everything the Disciples of Nehjarra learn is a lie. They are made to feel as though they're being taught the wisdom of the ages, but they are actually being spoon-fed ideas that amount to quick-fixes and mystical half truths that leave them feeling as though there's always more — some deeper initiate's secret they aren't "ready" for yet. In this way, the cult is kept spinning its mental wheels, wrapped up in a deception that continuously gives the spirit "Mentor" more strength by the day.

Approximately two months ago, Kore, a mystagogue sent to uncover more about this strange cult, joined the membership. She spent a couple of weeks discerning what was really going on and intended to report back to her order, but has actually begun to think the ideas presented during Vayu's channeling sessions make some sense. She's been reporting back to her order less frequently, but assures them she's on to something — big. Actually, she's confessed to the others that she too is a mage, a fact they were quick to discern in the first place, but the Miller-Roths (and Nehjarra) felt it was important that Kore come clean in her own time. They know her background is with the Mysterium, but they're more than willing to help her learn as much as she can. In fact, Vayu and Apas believe sincerely that Kore's loyalty is rapidly shifting, and they're happy to have the addition to their cabal.

Vayu

Quote: "*The teachings have shown us, relying on scripture written by man is not always the path to salvation. God speaks through his agent, and I am a vessel for that agent.*"

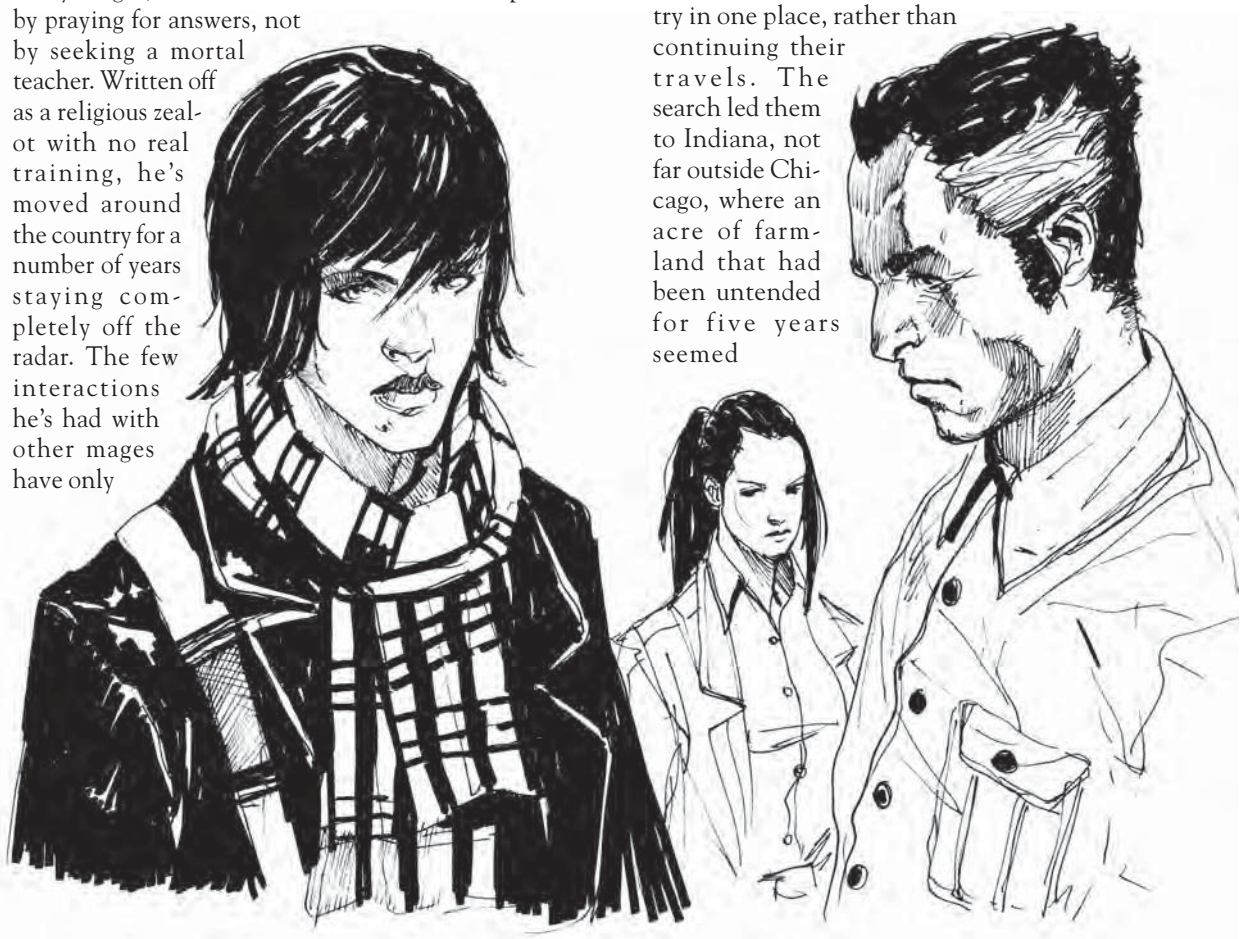
Background: Samuel Miller comes from a modest upbringing. His family wasn't poor, but they certainly didn't have it easy. He grew up on a farm, being homeschooled by parents who believed the Bible to be the absolute authority for all knowledge, and, as an adult, Samuel still attempts to reconcile everything he knows by the word of his God.

When he was old enough, he left home to go to a small, local college and learn the ways of the ministry. Everything he learned had taught him the highest ideal to live up to was to spread the word of his religion to others, hoping to save as many souls as possible during his life. He graduated with honors, and began searching for a place to practice the calling his faith demanded. After traveling for several months, he realized that the savings he'd put aside would be enough to start an evangelical ministry without a permanent home; instead, he'd preach the word in every city in every state, bringing a small group of followers with him, and attracting temporary congregations for his fiery sermons. Naturally, Awakening to Samuel was just further proof of God's will. The visions accompanying his new state of being *must* have been sent by the Lord, and unlike many mages, Samuel learned what he was capable of by praying for answers, not by seeking a mortal teacher. Written off as a religious zealot with no real training, he's moved around the country for a number of years staying completely off the radar. The few interactions he's had with other mages have only strengthened his image as a misguided and mostly harmless individual.

In 1997, at a conference for young Earth creationists in Arizona, Samuel met a woman who very well could have been made from his very rib. Katherine Roth was about his age, had a nearly identical background (though, as a woman, her agenda was a bit less ambitious) and had recently Awakened. She was there to support an alumni organization for her college, but was honestly hoping to meet someone with answers about her "condition." The only marked difference between Katherine and Samuel was that she viewed the visions and strange happenings in her life as something to be wary of. They may have *seemed* Divinely inspired, but Katherine had been taught that while the Lord acts in mysterious ways, the Devil will outright trick you into his arms. She was frightened and confused, and meeting Samuel was probably the best thing that could have happened to her.

Samuel helped her understand what was happening, and he assured her that in prayer, all the answers would come to them. They fell deeply in love within a matter of months, and were married. There was no doubt in their minds that God had brought them together for a purpose, and together, with their Divinely inspired abilities, they would spread the word far and wide.

Two-and-a-half years ago, the couple, now in their late 30s, decided that it would be a good idea to settle down somewhere and grow their ministry in one place, rather than continuing their travels. The search led them to Indiana, not far outside Chicago, where an acre of farmland that had been untended for five years seemed



to have been waiting for the Miller-Roths to arrive. Apparently, the family that originally owned the land fell victim to a horrible tragedy. The oldest son went mad, according to the story, quite suddenly, and murdered all four other members of his family with a pair of hedge clippers, finally taking his own life by hanging himself from the rafters of the barn.

Rather than being disheartened by this story, Samuel and Katherine felt it was the Lord's plan for them to move in, and bless the land. They poured what money they had saved into the endeavor, and created an evangelical ministry that all their parishioners testified to be simple, pure and powerful in faith.

A year passed, and Samuel was certain they'd healed many lives and saved many souls. He knew there were other "mages" in Chicago, but he wasn't sure their power didn't come from some other, less wholesome source, so he remained neutral and absent from any interactions with them. After the spirit of Nehjarra approached him in the garden one day, and promised him a greater understanding of God's will, everything changed. Samuel's sermons became less "traditional" and eventually degenerated into full-blown "trance-channeling" sessions, in which his new spirit guide would speak through him to their congregation. Of course, many fundamentalists left the flock after these changes, but many stayed, believing what they were seeing and hearing to be the truth.

Only a short time later, interactions with any other mages became even less desirable. Nehjarra showed Samuel how to protect his land from their prying Satanic eyes, and advised him never to talk to other willworkers unless it was during a channeling session. Of course, some mages have grown suspicious of this, but the newly dubbed "Disciples of Nehjarra" have done nothing to raise any eyebrows. As long as they're not harming anyone or threatening the secrecy of mage society, the consensus is that what they believe is their business, and leaving them to their own devices is probably the wisest course of action. This is, of course, exactly what Nehjarra wants them all to think.

Description: Samuel is in his mid-30s, but his black hair is prematurely graying at the temples. He has close-set, dark brown eyes and a clean-shaven face. He's in moderately good shape for his age, and usually dresses in casual slacks and collared, button-down shirts.

Samuel's Nimbus looks like an outline of golden fire around his body, representing the Divine nature of his inspiration.

Storytelling Hints: Samuel comes across as a kind and gentle individual, speaking with a self-assured tone of voice that promotes his image as a natural leader. Even now that he defers most of his decision making to Nehjarra, he leads his followers when he's not channeling.

It's difficult when dealing with Samuel not to get the impression that there's something beneath the surface, though. He regularly seems distracted, and will spout scripture in the middle of a conversation as though there's always something Biblical that will back up any given point. As the influence of his "spirit guide" grows, though, his sanity becomes more and more in question.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Golden cross necklace
Real Name: Samuel Miller-Roth
Path: Obrimos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 3, Occult 2, Politics 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Survival 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Livestock) 2, Empathy 3, Expression (Ministry) 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Meditative Mind, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Prime 2, Forces 2, Fate 1, Life 1
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)

Apas

Quote: "*The Lord has given us guidance — we may not understand the destination, but it is our duty, our calling, to follow this path without question.*"

Background: Katherine Roth lived her whole life with religion in mind. Her father was a preacher in the rural Midwest, and her mother's role was one of service. Her parents believed in a literal translation of their beliefs, and to them, a woman's role was one of support, not action. Katherine was taught in public school, and her education was supplemented by a strict regimen of home lessons and weekly Bible study to strengthen her spiritual knowledge.

Like her husband, Katherine went to a Christian college, but not to become a minister herself (that was against the teachings of her church). She hoped one day to lead a simple life of service with a man of God, and in Samuel Miller, she found precisely the qualities she'd hoped for. Bearing that in mind, it's no mystery that Katherine is a firm believer in predestination. Her loyalty to her husband is second only to her faith in God's plan, and she has devoted her life to strengthening both those relationships.

Just after college, she began to have dreams that were harbingers of her Awakening, and they terrified her. She believed the things she was feeling and seeing might not be Heaven-sent, but might actually be demonic forces trying

to trick her into straying from the righteous path (which, in light of her current situation, is terribly ironic).

Samuel Miller comforted the confused young woman, and more importantly, showed her that she was not the *only* one subject to such experiences. Their relationship was quick to grow, and together they learned about their budding abilities and vowed to spread God's word and do God's work wherever their prayers led them.

Katherine has always been supportive of the decisions that Samuel makes, and when he decided it was time to settle down in Chicago and possibly raise a family, she remained by his side. Even though things began to get strange after Nehjarra came to them, Katherine has remained steadfast in the belief that God is not leading them in the wrong direction.

Both Samuel and Katherine have decided to wait before having children. Strangely, they were both anxious to start a family right about the time that Samuel was first visited, but based on what Nehjarra has been teaching them, they've both changed their minds and want to wait for a while. In fact, Nehjarra has *also* been visiting Katherine, but only in private. The spirit has urged her to keep their meetings secret, and has begun to remind her that Biblically, a woman's role is not always a passive one. After all, a woman gives birth, and this gift is something Nehjarra has convinced Katherine to save until the time is right. There have been times when the spirit speaks through her husband and Katherine is overwhelmed by the feeling that she's able at that time to touch something Divine. She hold's Samuels hand and feels Nehjarra hold hers back, and that feeling just feels more *right* all the time.

Description: Katherine is an attractive woman in her early 30s. She has chestnut-colored hair that is usually knotted behind her head in a bun and wears very little make-up. Her face is round, and her skin is soft and clear; her eyes are a very light brown, and she almost always looks very serious. She dresses simply, but as of late she's taken to dressing slightly more provocatively. At the urging of Nehjarra, Katherine wants to impress upon her Samuel the power of her femininity.

Katherine's Nimbus is similar to her husband's; she has an outline of silver, glittering light around her body.

Storytelling Hints: Katherine has only recently begun to exhibit paranoia, partly due to the fact that she spent so much time avoiding the need to think for herself. Recently she's realized, mostly due to the whisperings of Nehjarra, that she can have her *own* agenda and desires. This conflicts directly with the image of life she grew up with. Katherine seems to be a nervous woman who's always thinking about something other than what's going on in front of her. She is startled easily, and questions the motives of everyone around her, usually only silently, though. If this behavior doesn't seem unstable enough, remember that she's reconciling these newer feelings with a traditional, housewife mentality and will try to be polite and accommodating to visitors even while she looks at them suspiciously.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Golden cross necklace
Real Name: Katherine Miller-Roth
Path: Obrimos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 3, Crafts (Sewing) 2, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Firearms (Pistol) 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Livestock) 2, Empathy 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Holistic Awareness, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 4
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Lust
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Prime 2, Forces 2, Life 2
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)

Kore

Quote: "*Just give me a minute to look around, okay? I'm sure your boss won't mind, and besides, you could use a few extra bucks, right?*"

Background: Kore is what some of her fellow mystagogues refer to as a "field agent," because she can find a clue where others would give up, and has pieced together puzzles to make sense of something others would see as mere chaos. Gina Dandridge was a cop before she Awakened, and was about to be promoted to detective. Years later, as a mage, Kore knows the right places to look and the right questions to ask in order to find out everything she can about an unusual situation. That is, she *was* an investigator. After going undercover a couple of months ago and relocating temporarily to Chicago, her order felt she'd be the one to blow the lid off the weird cult of Nehjarra. She joined up, and kept her cover for weeks before the teachings of this channeled entity started to make sense to her.

Other members of the Mysterium in Chicago have only just begun to learn about this agent; the rest of the order felt that it was best if she were sent deep undercover, not letting anyone know about her presence there unless it was absolutely necessary. Over the last two weeks, though, contact with her cabal in Arizona has become sporadic at best, and when she does communicate, it is painfully obvious that she's hiding something.

The truth is, though she may not have the Christian background of Apas and Vayu, she's come to interpret the teachings of Nehjarra in a way that fits her own beliefs

— it doesn't seem to her that these ideas should be limited to one dogmatic principle. She does respect the Miller-Roths, though, and after spending a few weeks at their compound has practically become one of the family.

The reason the Mysterium is worried is that her behavior is becoming increasingly uncharacteristic. Any mystagogue worth her salt would be sending back information about the cult, not a string of excuses to stay longer and keep her findings to herself. Historically, Kore is in and out of situations like this, having figured out the truth before most others would and having no desire to hang around in a potentially dangerous situation. In a few more weeks, the Mysterium will have no choice but to investigate further. The order is still trying to give her the benefit of the doubt, because she can certainly handle herself, but without any information about what exactly is going on at the cult's ranch, the Mysterium is afraid she's either unable or unwilling to communicate.

Description: Kore is a short brunette in her late 30s. She has dark brown eyes and mousy features that hide her aggressive side. Usually, she dresses in comfortable, natural fabrics with flowery designs, and is rarely seen without a large leather handbag.

Kore's Nimbus is the smell of sandalwood coupled with an aura of warmth.

Storytelling Hints: Gina Dandridge is called by many a "spitfire" because she seems to have unlimited reserves of energy and a stubborn capacity for debate. After infiltrating the Disciples of Nehjarra, she's become quite a bit more introspective. After a few weeks struggling over what to believe, she's finally come to the conclusion that these people are mostly harmless, and, in fact, their teachings convey a beautiful message (though if pressed to explain exactly what that message is, Gina will spout some quasi-spiritual nonsense about karma and grace and then change the subject).

Because she seems brainwashed, it may be easy for those who encounter her to forget that she's also a capable mage with a personality that won't back down under pressure. After nearly two months of repression, Kore is ripe for a conflict, and that might be just what she needs to snap out of her haze.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver-and-amethyst pentagram pendant
Real Name: Gina Dandridge
Path: Acanthus
Order: Mysterium
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2 Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, *Investigation (Crime Scenes) 4, *Occult (Cults) 2, Science (Forensics) 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 3, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Disguise) 3
Merits: Contacts (Law Enforcement), Direction Sense, High Speech, Quick Draw, Status: Mysterium 2, Resources 2
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 3, Time 2, Death 1, Mind 1
Rotes: Fate — The Sybil's Sight (•), Fortune's Protection (••), Grant Fortune's Protection (•••); Time — Momentary Flux (•), Augury (••); Death — Forensic Gaze (•); Mind — Aura Perception (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

Nehjarra

One truth about Nehjarra is that it has been around for a very long time. The spirit predates the colonizing of Chicago and is tied somehow to the land surrounding the Miller-Roths' compound. Originally Native Americans of several different tribes used the land as a trading post, and even the spiritual leaders of their communities mistook the powerful presence they felt for a benign one. Nehjarra is a demonic spirit of deception — subtle, intricate and deadly. The spirit *would* take credit for the fall of numerous societies that have chosen "its" land for their homes, but speaking the truth is not something Nehjarra prefers to do, because to this spirit, the truth quite literally hurts. For some reason, the spirit is trapped in an area of about two square miles, and nearly everything within that "zone" is eventually warped into a falsehood.

The spirit's goals are somewhat mystifying, if they make any rational sense at all. Historically, it would seem that Nehjarra simply desires to cause humans to destroy themselves in clouds of lies, but presently, the Miller-Roths and their little cabal have presented the spirit with a very different canvas to paint its own special versions of reality. Apparently, Nehjarra wants to take more permanent residence inside of Samuel, and, for some reason, intends to impregnate Katherine.

The spirit has come very close to seeing its desires grow to fruition, but it must weave ever-more deceptive webs and draw in more of these beings whose beliefs shape reality in order to manifest the strength it will take to inhabit the material realm permanently. It's possible that once Nehjarra creates an offspring the spirit will be able to take the body of its child and finally be free to leave the locality it has been tied to for so many ages.
Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 11, Resistance 10
Willpower: 20
Essence: 25 (25 max)
Initiative: 21
Defense: 11
Speed: 26
Size: 5

Corpus: 15
Influence: Deception 4
Numina: Harrow, Innocuous, Material Vision, Possession
Ban: If faced with evidence of the truth of what Nehjarra is, the spirit loses control of all Numina for the duration of the scene. All the spirit's carefully woven stories unravel, and it must retreat and start fresh.

Crone's Blood

A sage and insidious vampire Acolyte named Rowen has three mages in her employ, which she calls her "viziers." Rumors abound that these mages are addicted to the blood of their pagan queen, though the evidence uncovered by other mages suggests that an Awakened soul may not be subject to the mystic pull of Vitae. Does Rowen have some other means of keeping her viziers loyal, like blood magic or blackmail? Are the viziers in fact using the vampire for their own ends, manipulating her with their Arcana? Or is their allegiance wholly genuine, built on mutual faith and shared philosophies and years spent together praying with bloody hands in a World of Darkness?

The characters have a chance to find out when vampires approach them and request aid for the Circle of the Crone. The characters could be Rowen's new viziers.

The Outlaws

Not everyone who Awakens finds their way to a cabal that accepts them. Not everyone who touches the power of the Supernal Realm understands the magic they wield. Not everyone who touches the Watchtowers is an heir to the Awakened City.

Some willworkers go unrecognized by the Orders. Some actively avoid the perils, intrigue and internecine struggles that come with accepting their power. No one can know for certain if these fringe wizards may become the next great threat to the Second City, or if one of these willworkers is the next great force for enlightenment and change.

The Seers of the Throne

Chicago's population of mages has its counterbalance in the presence of the Seers of the Throne. These servants of the Exarch have made it their business to make certain that Chicago's Awakened do not take control of the city in any way, shape or form. Though the Seers are not as numerous as the mages of the Pentacle, the Seers make up for their minority presence by their sheer determination.

The Seers concentrate most of their efforts against Pentacle mages in two areas: finances and academia. These breeding grounds of power, amply represented in Chicago by the great financial institutions of the Loop and the prestigious universities within and just outside the city, offer the best hope for the Seers to locate and subvert their enemy mages.

The power and influence that comes with wealth make it profitable for the Seers to familiarize themselves with the movers-and-shakers of Chicago's (and the world's) economy. Likewise, by attempting to co-opt the halls of learning and, most importantly, the research laboratories of the Windy City, the Seers hope to prevent Pentacle mages from dominating the intellectual and investigative life of the city.

To this end, the Seers identify likely candidates for Awakening and strive to reach them before they fall to the enemy. If the Seers cannot prevent the actual Awakenings, they can at least recruit the new mages to their cause, turning the new mages' minds to the judicious use of their newborn "talents" to eradicate witches, charlatans and heretics.

The Seer pylons described here are not the only groups of Seers in Chicago, but they are representative of the goals and arenas of influence of the most powerful and dangerous members of this order.



The Executive Suite

Located within the heart of the Loop, this pylon has a twofold mission: to increase th cabal's wealth and influence in order to fund and support actions that will prevent Awakenings or neutralize, with extreme prejudice, if necessary, existing Awakened mages, and to provide financial guidance and funding for efforts to discover items of Arcane lore or power to assist the cabal in its goal of wiping out magic.

Members of the Executive Suite are successful both in the worldly pursuit of wealth and in their progress as Seers. They see nothing hypocritical about using magic to prevent magic; just as corporations use money and economic pressure to take over or destroy their competitors, Suite mages labors hard to outbid, outlast and outmaneuver their Pentacle peers.

Croesus

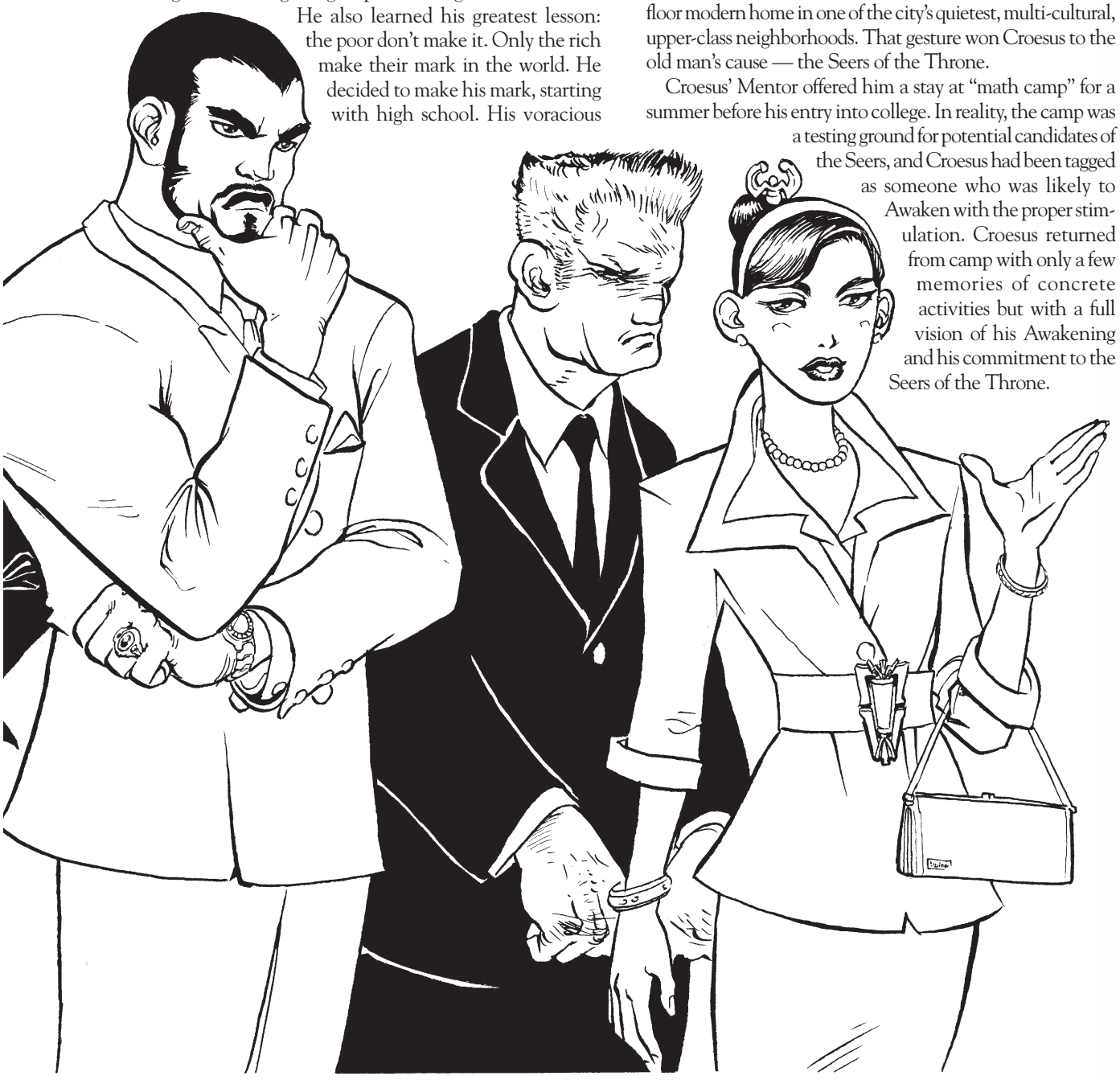
Quote: "*Let's get busy and stay busy, ladies and gentlemen. What it takes a lifetime to build can be destroyed in a moment of missed opportunities.*"

Background: Croesus, the CEO of Executive Suite, was born in an unlikely place for his current position. Born in the Cabrini Green housing development, Croesus had what was a typical upbringing in that blighted and overcrowded slum. The best he can say about his childhood was that he survived. When he was about to enter high school, his mother found a way to move them both out of the projects and into a small, single-family home in a part of Chicago that was almost respectable. For the first time, Croesus encountered children of different backgrounds and got a glimpse of a larger world.

He also learned his greatest lesson: the poor don't make it. Only the rich make their mark in the world. He decided to make his mark, starting with high school. His voracious intelligence soon surprised his teachers, who were expecting the young, black teenager from the "Green" to be a troublemaker. Croesus, instead, proved a prodigious student with a good head for mathematics and, in particular, finance. Numbers seemed to sing to him with all the vibrancy and relevancy of hip-hop and the depth and determination of the blues. His skills came to the attention of not only college recruiters but members of Chicago's mage community. Soon he found himself the unknowing center of a covert war between the Pentacle and the Seers, each of whom wanted his finance building potential on their side.

The most attractive offer came from an old man who gave Croesus the one thing that none of the other potential "recruiters" thought to give: he arranged for Croesus' mother to be moved yet again, this time to a three-bedroom, single-floor modern home in one of the city's quietest, multi-cultural, upper-class neighborhoods. That gesture won Croesus to the old man's cause — the Seers of the Throne.

Croesus' Mentor offered him a stay at "math camp" for a summer before his entry into college. In reality, the camp was a testing ground for potential candidates of the Seers, and Croesus had been tagged as someone who was likely to Awaken with the proper stimulation. Croesus returned from camp with only a few memories of concrete activities but with a full vision of his Awakening and his commitment to the Seers of the Throne.



After he received his PhD in economics, Croesus settled in Chicago, building his reputation as an investment counselor. Eventually, he struck out on his own, leased (and later purchased outright) a building in Chicago's busy Loop and started to realize the future foreseen for him, raising money for his order and bankrolling its activities. When his Mentor died and his old pylon disbanded, Croesus founded Executive Suite with a group of Seers he had come to know and trust. He assumed the leadership position and has maintained it ever since.

Description: Croesus is a tall, handsome black man in his mid-40s. He works out daily in his private gym so his body is well-muscled without being overly muscular. He has angular features that display his family's Masai origins. His hair is clipped short, though he is considering shaving his head because he thinks it would add to his aura of power. He wears a single diamond stud in his left ear, his college ring and an expensive, though not top of the line, wristwatch — his only jewelry, aside from occasional cuff links and tie tacks. He loves good suits and has several custom-sewn expensive ones. When dressing casually, he usually chooses comfortable but well-made clothing.

His Nimbus appears as a "dollar-green" whirling aura around his body. Vulgar magic brings out the shining gold dollar signs.

Storytelling Hints: Croesus has never really forgotten his poor beginnings. He has a staff of advisors on the lookout for promising youths currently living in the projects to recruit as potential candidates for Awakening, though his staff knows only that he is looking for certain indicators of "excellence." In dealing with adults and Consilium mages, however, he is ruthless when necessary and always competitive. He still takes care of his mother, quietly paying all her expenses and making certain she wants for nothing. He enjoys dining out at the best restaurants and bistros, visits local jazz clubs and has a season's pass to the Chicago Symphony.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Finely carved bone letter opener (wand)
Real Name: Nathan Victor Hamilton
Path: Moros
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Computer 3, *Investigation 3, *Occult 3, Politics (Chicago) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Streetfighting) 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Weaponry 3
Social Skills: Expression (Written Communications) 3, Intimidation 3, *Persuasion (Logical) 4, Socialize (High Society) 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (History of the Exarchy, Metaphysics, Necromancy, Pythagorean Harmonics) 4, Resources 5, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2, Status: Seers of the Throne 3
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 4, Fate 3, Forces 3, Matter 5, Prime 3, Spirit 2
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•), Entropic Guard (••), Entropic Shroud (•••), Enervation (••••); Fate — Quantum Flux (•), Exceptional Luck (••), Lucky Coin (•••); Forces — Read Matrices (•), Kinetic Blow (••), Turn Projectile (•••); Matter — Detect Substance (•), Steel Windows (••), Transmute Earth (•••), Reconfigure Object (••••), Self Repairing Machine (•••••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Counterspell (••), Channel Mana (•••); Spirit — Second Sight (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 4 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Lucretiana

Quote: "*I have zero tolerance for waste, whether it's time, money, resources or personnel. Everything we have is here to be used to the fullest — and I intend to make certain that it will be.*"

Background: Lucretiana's parents were refugees from South America who sought asylum in the United States after a failed political coup in their country. They settled in Chicago and Lucretiana's father worked nights while studying for recertification to practice law in his new country. Left alone with her mother most of the time, Lucretiana helped her mother "ensure" her father's success. Night after night, they burned candles and incense, said prayers to saints that Lucretiana had never heard mentioned in church and did other things that the young girl would rather forget. Later, when she was older, Lucretiana realized that her mother practiced a strange offshoot of vodoun blended with other mystical religions — and that these rituals had their intended effect. In half the time such things normally took, Lucretiana's father had received the necessary credentials to set up a law practice and was soon on his way to financial prosperity.

For most of her childhood, Lucretiana enjoyed playing Mama's mysterious "games," but one day, when she was 13, she realized that her mother was a "*bruja*," or witch, and that she wanted her daughter to follow in her profession. One night, when the child's father was at work, her mother took her to a rickety apartment building in a part of Chicago that was run-down and filled with the sounds of violence and poverty. In that tiny apartment, an old woman with blazing eyes, crinkled white hair caught up in a bright-colored headscarf and skin that was papery thin and wrinkled put the girl through a series of rituals in an effort to Awaken her magical talent. Despite their best efforts, the girl seemed unable to Awaken, though she teetered on the brink. Finally, the old woman shrugged and told Lucretiana's mother that her daughter would make a

competent helper but would never have true power of her own. The old woman was wrong.

Lucretiana fought her Awakening and, indeed, did not have the sort of mystical epiphany her mother wanted for her. Instead, she was drawn to a different sort of Awakening, one which she kept hidden.

In school, the girl was approached by one of her teachers, a Seer of the Throne who recognized a kindred spirit. Lucretiana finally had a Mentor and chose her shadow name.

Her intellectual leanings drew her toward finance and, later, into personnel management. She met Croesus when he interviewed her for a job in his new company. When Croesus formed his own cabal, he tapped Lucretiana as his first member, knowing that she was as dedicated to the goals of the Seers as he was and seeing in her the personal skills and organizational abilities that he lacked.

Description: Lucretiana is a strikingly attractive Hispanic woman in her late 30s. Although she dresses for business in power suits, typically a dark blue skirt and matching jacket with a light blue or cream silk blouse, she softens her look by the judicious addition of a decorative comb in her lustrous black hair or a gracefully draped scarf around her neck or over her shoulders. She moves with a stately grace and has a warm smile for everyone, until they give her reason to replace her warmth with a scalding reprimand.

Her crimson Nimbus pulses with all Lucretiana's suppressed passion, which grows deeper and more intense with vulgar magic.

Storytelling Hints: Lucretiana likes to stay in control of her passion, fearing that somewhere inside her, some of the potential *bruja* still exists and will escape her one day if she does not exert enough self-discipline. She is slow to form close relationships, preferring a distant relatability to strong emotions. She finds Croesus more attractive the longer she works with him and does not know if she can keep her feelings in abeyance for much longer.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small, carved, stone shallow cup
Real Name: Luz Concépción Maria Costas de Belaria
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 2, *Investigation (Background Checks) 3, Science (Psychology) 3
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth (Eavesdropping) 3
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, *Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (Shared) (History of the Exarchy, Metaphysics, Necromancy, Pythagorean Harmonics) 4, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 3, Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 1
Rotes: Life — Cleanse the Body (•), Body Control (••), Healing Heart (•••); Mind — Third Eye (•), Mental Shield (••), Psychic Assault (•••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Magic Shield (••); Spirit — Exorcist's Eye (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Argent

Quote: "*There's nothing to see here, folks. Move along — now!*"

Background: From the time he was a young boy, Argent wanted to be rich and famous. His stocky build and generally unimpressive looks, however, discouraged any thought of becoming either a movie star or a music idol. Besides, Argent enjoyed physical activity, especially the kind that channeled his aggression. In other words, he like to hit things.

His perceptive parents realized that if their son did not receive some training in an acceptable outlet for his violent nature, he might end up as a bully or, worse, land himself in serious trouble. They enrolled Argent in an after-school sports program that gave him the opportunity to study karate, tae kwon do, boxing and wrestling. Argent tried them all, but after a year or two of sampling the various martial disciplines, he settled on boxing as his best sport and the one he enjoyed the most. While he appreciated the skilled moves of karate and the complex test of sheer strength of wrestling, the ability to stand one-on-one with his opponent and just bludgeon him with his lightning fast fists was beyond compare. For Argent, it was ecstasy.

Argent was good. He landed a place on his high school boxing team and went on with them to win a statewide competition. He was offered a scholarship to the University of Chicago on the basis of his skill in boxing, and he accepted the challenge, majoring in business with a solid B average. After college, turning pro seemed the logical next step.

Argent entered the world of professional boxing with ease, winning his first few bouts and sparking the interest of the local bookmakers, whose darling he became. They found him a "manager," a wiry ex-boxer named Sharkey Malone, who made certain that Argent paid his "dues" to the organization. In the meantime, Argent used his own business knowledge to invest a portion of his winnings in stocks and securities that he somehow knew would increase in value.

His career seemed bound for championship fame. Already Argent was getting a taste of the good life, as the boxing groupies adored him and the financial "angels" predicted a long and productive run for him.

Then "it" happened. Argent was scheduled for a championship fight against a veteran out of Philly. The odds were heavily in the veteran's favor, but Argent was certain he could win despite the bookies' predictions. Just before he was ready to go into the ring, he received some visitors in his dressing room. A pair of large men with scarred faces and enormous hands "suggested" to the young boxer that he make certain he "lost" the race.

When Argent protested, they teamed up on him and softened him up. Argent lasted three rounds against the "Philadelphia Kid." He never even felt the blow that knocked him out and ended his boxing career. But while he was unconscious, something else occurred. Argent had strange dreams, as if he traveled in his stupor to a strange and unforgiving place where he received a mandate from beings so exalted in nature that he felt humbled before them.

He woke up in a hospital, his jaw broken and his neck seriously injured. While his doctor told him he would recover, he also pointed out that Argent had come close to being paralyzed and that he would never be able to withstand the rigor of the ring.

Before he could despair at the untimely end to his ambitions, Argent received a visitor, an impressive-looking businessman who gave his name as Croesus and who informed Argent that his strange dreams were the sign of his Awakening into the world of magic and that he was tapped as a member of the Seers of the Throne.

Croesus offered the young man a job in his organization and a place in his newly formed cabal. Croesus told Argent that he would make a perfect enforcer and security officer for the small group, and that he would find the business part of his new life quite profitable.

At the tender age of 24, Argent decided to settle for riches, and accepted Croesus' offer.

Description: At 5'8" and 186 pounds, Argent resembles a compact bull, with muscular arms and shoulders and powerful legs. His face is less than handsome, with the scars of numerous facial cuts, two broken noses, a cauliflower ear and a tear in his lower lip. His sandy blond hair is brush cut, allowing a few scars on his scalp to show through. He dresses in standard business attire when he is at work or "on the job" in the cabal. He spends as much time as he can working out in a local gym.

His Nimbus looks like ropes entwined around him, suggesting both the ropes of the boxing ring and the idea that Argent is "bound" by his former injuries to a life outside the competitive ring. Vulgar magic adds the sound of harsh bells (such as the ones used to end rounds in boxing matches) to the visible Nimbus.

Storytelling Hints: Argent is a happy man — at least for the most part. He misses the thrill of the competitive circuit, but his job as enforcer and muscle for the pylon gives him a satisfactory outlet for the more visceral pleasures of his former career. Thanks to Croesus, Argent's got money and comforts to spare, and being able to tweak the world a little doesn't hurt either. He doesn't try to understand the Arcane politics of using magic to stop magic-users. He does his job, enjoys it most of the time and lives the easy life when he's off duty.

Dedicated Magical Tool: "Lucky charm" dagger made of petrified wood and steel
Real Name: Carter Dean O'Shaughnessey
Path: Obrimos
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Finance 3, *Investigation 2, *Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4 (Boxing), Drive 3, Firearms 3, Stealth 2, Weaponry 3
Social Skills: Intimidation (Physical) 4, *Persuasion (Threatening) 3, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Fighting Style: Boxing 4, Hallow 3, High Speech, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 2
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 9
Defense: 3
Speed: 14
Health: 9
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 1, Forces 3, Prime 2
Rotes: Death — Grim Sight (•); Forces — Nightsight (•), Kinetic Blow (••), Personal Invisibility (•••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Lira

Quote: "*I just have a few questions to ask you. Don't worry, I won't take a lot of your time. Let's talk over drinks.*"

Background: Lira was raised in Chicago's Italian American community. From her earliest memories, she knew she was "special." Her father was an important "businessman" in Chicago, with his main office in the Loop and smaller branches in other parts of the city. Lira lived with her mother and brothers in a spacious townhouse on Lake Shore Drive, overlooking Lake Michigan. She had her own personal driver who took her to and from school, a private girl's school only a few blocks from her home, and a pair of her father's bodyguards accompanied her everywhere she went.

At first, Lira thought that her life was normal, that everyone who was at all affluent lived as she did. The bricks through the windows of her home, the threatening phone calls in the middle of the night and the drive-by shooting of three of her father's most trusted lieutenants brought home to her the fact that her life was *not* normal. Her father moved Lira and her mother to a fortified apartment building in the heart of the Loop. Lira had tutors to continue her schooling because her father didn't think it was safe to send her to school outside her home.

When Lira complained about her confinement to the apartment and her lack of friends, finally screaming, "Why can't I be like everyone else?" at her father through tears that expressed all her teenage anger, her father slapped her face for the first and only time in his life. "You can't be like everyone else," he thundered, "because you're better than everyone else. And don't you forget it!"

Lira retreated into a world of her own, focusing on her computer and the rich universe of knowledge concealed in the Internet, her doorway to cyberspace. She spent hours each day surfing the web, looking for sites to keep her occupied. She signed up for online courses, funded through a credit card her father thought her mother was using. Soon she had a string of "credentials" allowing her to be everything from a paralegal secretary to a veterinarian's assistant to a medical transcriber. She took courses in locksmithing, photography, graphic design and cryptography, and discovered she had a flair for puzzle-solving.

She also discovered strange websites devoted to "the ultimate puzzle," and her first introduction to magic came through contact with a group of online mages. From them, she acquired a difficult "brain teaser," a complex puzzle that took all her ingenuity and knowledge to solve.

In the process of solving the puzzle, her mind entered a state of consciousness she had never before experienced. She seemed to wander in a strange, eldritch landscape for days, learning more and more about the answer — and more and more about herself. When at last the puzzle's solution became obvious, Lira's mind returned to normal reality — as an Awakened being and a Seer of the Throne.

Lira was contacted by an elegant Hispanic businesswoman, an associate in one of her father's legitimate business partnerships. The woman who called herself Lucretiana brought Lira to meet some of her friends, the other members of Executive Suite. Eventually, the cabal initiated Lira as a full Seer and arranged for her to acquire a position as system administrator for one of her father's hotels along Chicago's Magnificent Mile. While her job allows her to monitor traffic along the information superhighway, it also belays her father's worries about his daughter's safety, since, after all, she is under the watchful eye of the hotel's security staff (whose orders Lira controls since she has access to the hotel's central computer and knows almost all of the passwords to access any of its files).

Description: Lira is an Italian American beauty, with a rich olive complexion, a sweetheart face and deep, soulful, dark gray eyes. Her hair, normally a lustrous brown, is professionally styled and colored with red and blonde highlights, giving her a "glamour-girl" appearance. She has carefully maintained her body to function at its most efficient, making full use of the hotel's spa and gym facilities to tone her muscles. While she is far from the anemic thinness that has become the national ideal, she cuts a striking figure in any group and has attracted the eye of more than one potential suitor.

Her Nimbus is a glowing band of pinkish-gold light that shines around her bathing her in an aura of health. Vulgar magic makes the Nimbus glow sickly green.

Storytelling Hints: Lira is good at spotting potential in others and often helps her pylon select candidates for Awakening as Seers. She also marks troublemakers, who are later targeted for "neutralization." Lira uses her knowledge of the Internet and the in's and out's of surfing the Net to keep an eye on the Sleeping world for the Suite, including trying to monitor any Awakened usage of the Internet. Otherwise, she is an attractive, eligible young woman who has had a sheltered existence and who wants nothing more than to play catch-up with everything she thinks she has missed.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Heavy, copper, decorative hairpin
Real Name: Angelina Teresa Zircotti
Path: Obrimos
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer (Programming) 5, *Investigation (Dirty Secrets) 3, Politics (Chicago) 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Aerobics) 2, Brawl (Self-Defense) 1, Drive 2, Firearm 1, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Putting People at Ease) 3, Expression (Memos) 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Hallow 3, High Speech, Library (History of the Exarchy, Metaphysics, Necromancy, Pythagorean Harmonics) 4, Resources 4, Sanctum: Sized (Shared) 2
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8

Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Death 1, Forces 2, Prime 2, Space 1
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•); Forces — Read Matrices (•); Unseen Shield (••); Prime — Discern Phantasm (•), Unseen Spy (••); Space — Correspondence (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Finger of Heaven

Werewolves call it the Finger of Heaven. To mortals, it's a minor comet that passes by Earth every 130 years. To the Uratha, it's a spiritual body that agitates earthly Shadow creatures and arouses slumbering spirits into action. The Finger of Heaven is coming — and it's 20 years early.

This is not an apocalyptic event. In the grand scheme, it's like knowing that a championship soccer match could result to rioting. The complexity for Chicago comes from the combination of secrecy and jurisdiction. When the spirits get wild on the night of the comet, it's the Uratha that'll be opposing them on the streets of Chicago. In the meantime, the comet's early arrival is a mystery that could have serious consequences, and Chicago's mages are the best-suited to the investigation of the comet itself. Is it even really a comet, or is it something else?

The Bibliotech

The accumulation of knowledge, both secret and general, is the purpose and mission of the Seer mages who form the Bibliotech. Though the members of the Suite (see above) wield more clout in the Sleeping world, using their money and power to protect and promote the interests of their order, the mages of the Bibliotech hold another kind of power. Theirs is the power of knowledge, of information about the magical history of Chicago and the mages who inhabit the city, of Arcane secrets as yet undiscovered by the Atlantean mages, and of the other dangers that lurk in the Shadow on the other side of the city's Gauntlet.

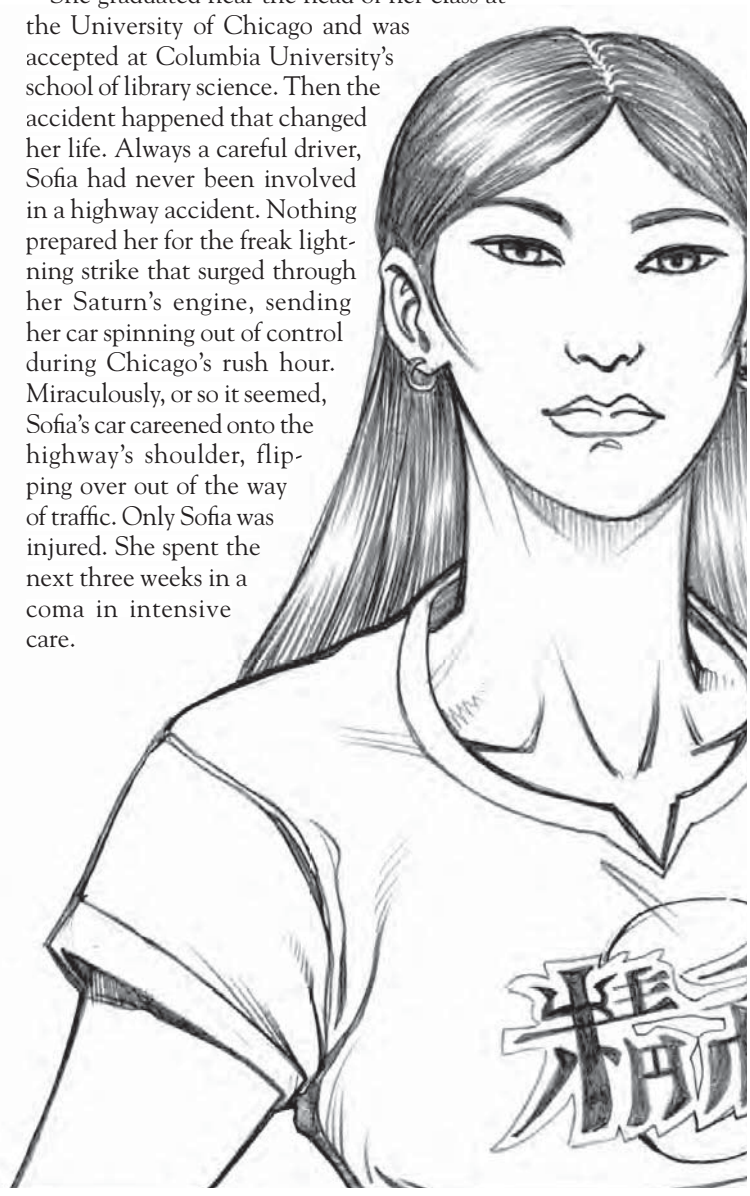
Bibliotech has set up its headquarters in the most logical place for the acquisition and preservation — and protection — of knowledge, the library. But not just any library. They have insinuated themselves into the Harold Washington Library Center, the central library of Chicago's vast public library system. Working within the existing hierarchy of the library's administration and staff, the members of the Bibliotech have found a secure sanctuary for their gatherings, strategy sessions and a protected repository of the knowledge they feel should be preserved, even if it should not be used.

Sofia Lex

Quote: "*There is nothing that is, ultimately, unknowable or untouchable. Knowledge must first be gathered, then assessed, then weighed in the balance of the will of the Exarchs.*"

Background: As a young girl growing up in Chicago's Lakeshore area, Sofia was considered brilliant by any standard, and her family hoped for a bright future for her. At first, it seemed everything was coming her way, a full scholarship to one of the state's top college-prep schools, a National Merit Scholarship to the college of her choice, Phi Beta Kappa — and an active social life as well. Bright and cheerful with her friends, reserved and polite to those who disliked her for her intellect or her family's wealth, Sofia basked in the warmth of family, friends and the security of her own prodigious accomplishments. Her parents hoped she would enter the legal or medical professions, but Sofia held out for library school, drawn to it because of its eclectic promise and its ability to categorize and catalogue knowledge, something that appealed greatly to her orderly mind.

She graduated near the head of her class at the University of Chicago and was accepted at Columbia University's school of library science. Then the accident happened that changed her life. Always a careful driver, Sofia had never been involved in a highway accident. Nothing prepared her for the freak lightning strike that surged through her Saturn's engine, sending her car spinning out of control during Chicago's rush hour. Miraculously, or so it seemed, Sofia's car careened onto the highway's shoulder, flipping over out of the way of traffic. Only Sofia was injured. She spent the next three weeks in a coma in intensive care.

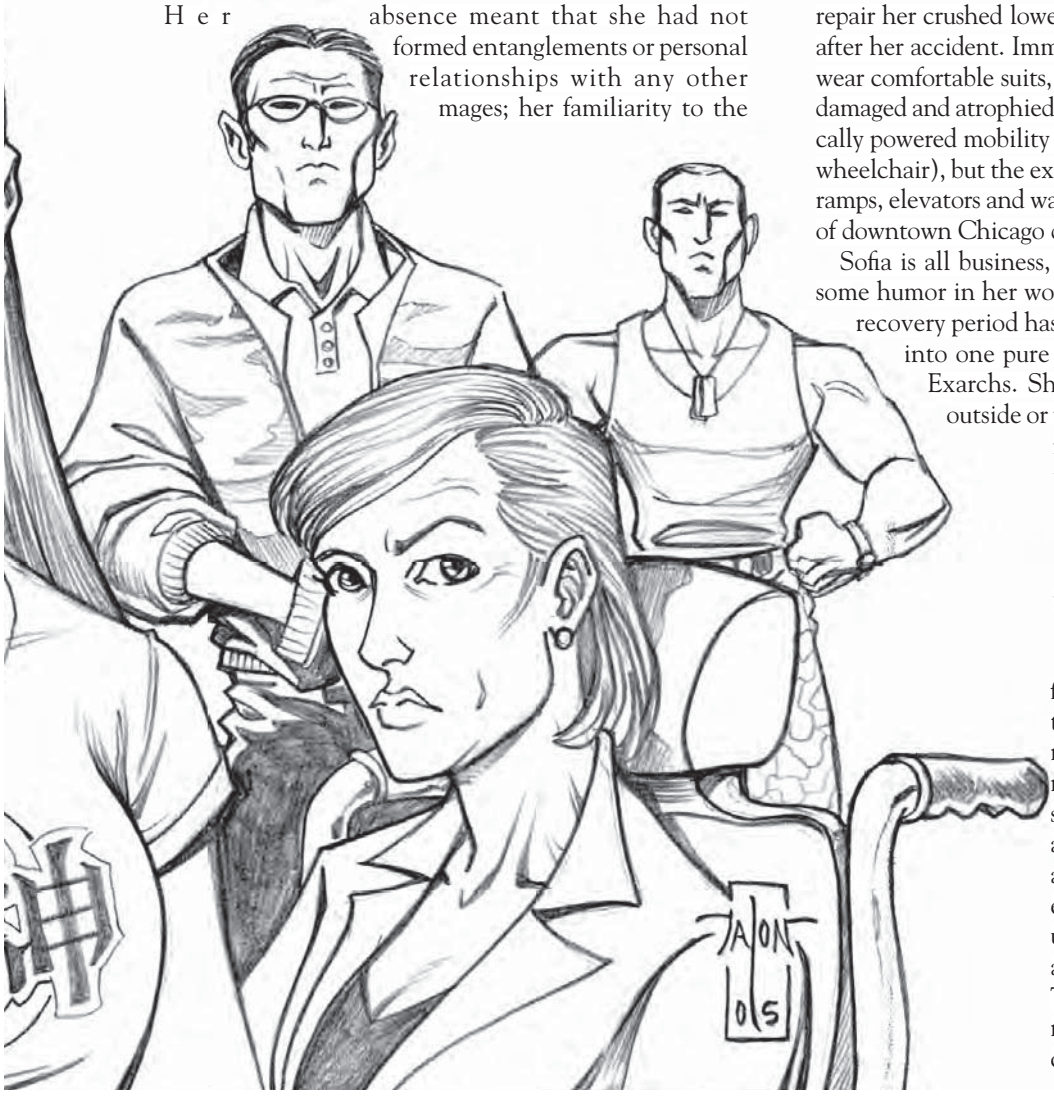


When she awoke, after 21 days of unconsciousness to the world around her, she found that her body was paralyzed from the waist down, but that her mind was suddenly and terribly opened to a new world. In her coma, her spirit had come before the Throne of the Exarchs and she Awoke a member of the Seers of the Throne.

Her life choices and social functions severely limited by her disability, Sofia saw that all fit into a grand design for her future. Five years after her acceptance, she entered library school. Three years later, she returned to Chicago, a librarian with a mission.

Thanks to the influence of the Seer network, doors were opened for her, and she landed a job as special collections librarian at the Harold Washington Library Center. Working under orders, so she claimed, from the Exarchs, she formed the Bibliotech pylon for the express purpose of collecting all the occult or Arcane information she could, and either harnessing it for the greater good of the Sleeping world or suppressing or destroying the information if it could not be used for that purpose.

Her long rehabilitation period and her stay in New York to attend library school had a twofold effect on her relationship with Chicago's Awakened population. Her absence meant that she had not formed entanglements or personal relationships with any other mages; her familiarity to the city, however, as her birthplace and primary home "turf" meant that she was not a newcomer as far as knowing the layout of the land. In addition, she was free from preconceived notions about her fellow Seers.



She was in the ideal position to form a group, so she formed Bibliotech pylon. Sofia, as founder and leader of this Seer pylon, has managed to handpick the members of the group from the various academic and intellectual organizations throughout the city. With the cooperation of the leader of Executive Suite, she has been able to take her choice of the most promising new Seers whose minds lead them toward the search for knowledge. To all appearances, the Suite and the Bibliotech are a matched pair of complementary pylons, supporting the Seer presence in Chicago.

Description: Sofia Lex is a non-descript, middle-aged woman who exudes an aura of power despite her physical debilitation. She wears her dark auburn hair, which shows no hint of gray, in a short, salon-styled power cut. Her gray-green eyes sparkle with alertness, though they also become steely and impenetrable when she is determined on a course of action or crossed in the performance of her duty. She wears just enough make-up to cover up the small tracery of scars along her jaw line, where surgery to repair her crushed lower jaw was performed immediately after her accident. Immaculately groomed, she prefers to wear comfortable suits, usually with pants to conceal her damaged and atrophied legs. She is confined to an electrically powered mobility device (so much more than just a wheelchair), but the excellent system of disabled-friendly ramps, elevators and walkways in the library and in much of downtown Chicago does little to impede her mobility.

Sofia is all business, though she does manage to find some humor in her work. The accident and subsequent recovery period has managed to distill all her desires into one pure draught — to do the will of the Exarchs. She has no social life, few friends outside or work or her Seer connections and no outside interests. The will of the Exarchs has streamlined her life for their service.

Sofia's Nimbus looks like reams of paper circling her body. Vulgar magic adds the sound of paper crackling.

Storytelling Hints: Sofia has found peace and contentment in the acceptance of her disability. She realizes that her real work does not require her legs or that she be able to stand. All she needs is in her mind and in the wealth of resources available to those with a thirst for knowledge. She does not tolerate others' use of their physical weaknesses as excuses for non-achievement. Though she is "all business," she is not unfriendly. She has, however, no concept of the term "small talk."

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small, gold compact mirror
Real Name: Roberta Denise Sangrale
Path: Obrimos
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength (Upper Arms) 2, Dexterity (Manual Only) 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Library Science) 5, Computer 2, *Investigation (Academic Research) 4, *Occult 3
Physical Skills: Drive 2 (Sofia's Drive Skill depends on use of a car specially equipped with hand pedals and other special customizations), Firearms 3, Weaponry (Knives) 3
Social Skills: Expression 3, Intimidation 4, *Persuasion (Motivational Speeches) 4
Merits: Encyclopedic Knowledge 3, Languages (German, French) 3, Hallow 4, Library (Shared) (Arcane Lore, Atlantean History, Combat Magic, Elemental Forces, Metaphysical Energy) 5, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 10 (7 if movement other than hands or arms is involved)
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Death 2, Forces 4, Mind 3, Prime 4, Space 3, Time 2
Rotes: Death — Grim Sight (•), Entropic Guard (••); Forces — Receiver (•), Invisible Object (••), Personal Invisibility (•••), Friction Knife (••••); Mind — Third Eye (•), Mental Shield (••), Multitasking (•••), Psychic Sword (••••); Prime — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Counterspell (••), Channel Mana (•••), Suppress Hallow (••••); Space — Omnivision (•), Scrying (••), Multispatial Perception (•••); Time — Temporal Wrinkles (•), Postcognition (••)
Mana/per turn: 14/5
Armor: 2 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)
Flaw: Lame

Professor Infinity

Quote: "*Of course, I can find the original map, but it will take me a minute to extricate it from the map case. In the meantime, would you mind filling out this brief form? And this one? And this?*"

Background: Professor Infinity, as his fellow Seers call him, teaches philosophy and ancient history at the University of Chicago. Though he is relatively young for a full professor, he comes with impeccable credentials.

A transplanted New Englander, the Professor did his undergraduate and graduate work at Yale University. The teaching position at U of C was the first job that "spoke" to him.

When he arrived in Chicago, the already Awakened Seer managed to locate others of his order by visiting various centers for knowledge and science. He encountered Sofia Lex almost immediately, and she indicated that he would be welcome as a member of her pylon. What Professor Infinity did not tell Sofia was that he did not Awaken as a Seer, but as a member of the Mysterium, and that his work in Chicago involved finding out if the Seers knew anything about an item known only as the Celestial Flange.

His life, up to now, has been a carefully constructed deception that he hopes to keep up indefinitely, for discovery can only mean great difficulties for him and hardship for any other true mages with whom he comes in contact. Part of his mind, however, has become attuned to the purposes of the Seers. He has, by association, learned to see the world as they see it, and sometimes, in the wee hours of the morning, he has a vague, uncomfortable feeling that they might be right.

Description: Professor Infinity, otherwise known as Professor Irving Bluefort, is in his late 30s, though he looks a bit older due to his thinning, sandy-colored hair and his wire-rimmed spectacles. He is shy in conversations outside the classroom, but in his own domain, he has a fiery personality that brings life to even the driest of concepts. He dressed in "professorial shabby," wearing clean pants or even jeans, sensible shoes, a button-down short in Oxford cloth and either a pullover sweater or a light jacket, depending on the weather. He stands nearly 6' and weighs a gaunt 165.

His Nimbus is a blend of browns, golds and yellows that surround him. Vulgar magic makes the Nimbus start humming.

Storytelling Hints: Professor Infinity never believed he would become a spy, yet he seems ably suited to the task. His agile mind manages to stay at least one step ahead of his peers and, in many ways, he is left alone by his pylon to do independent research for the pylon, which hopes to acquire the Flange before the Atlantean counterparts do. He cultivates the image of an eccentric professor because this allows him a lot of leeway for otherwise inexplicable actions (such as wandering about the city late at night in search of his contacts within the Mysterium). He does a lot of listening outside the classroom, learning far more from others than they think they are telling him. He seldom gives away any personal information about himself.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass pointer
Real Name: Ignatius Llywellyn
Path: Mastigos
Order: Seers of the Throne (Mysterium)
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Ancient History) 5, Computer 2, *Investigation (Primary Sources) 3, *Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Drive (Defensive) 3, Firearms 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Expression (Lectures) 3, *Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Mysterium), Eidetic Memory, Hallow 4, Library (Shared) (Arcane Lore, Atlantean History, Combat Magic, Elemental Forces, Metaphysical Energy) 5, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Temperance
Vice: Lust
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 3, Matter 2, Mind 3, Prime 2, Space 3
Rotes: Fate — Quantum Flux (•), The Perfect Moment (••), Occlude Destiny (•••); Matter — Craftsman's Eye (•), Unseen Aegis (••); Mind — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Alter Aura (••), Imposter (•••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Unseen Spy (••); Space — Finder (•), Apportation (••), Destroy the Threads (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Magistra

Quote: "*Don't worry. I've installed listening devices in every corner of their meeting room, and I have a spycam hidden in the overhead lighting. They won't be able to breathe without my getting it all down on tape.*"

Background: Born to a Chinese American family in Chicago's Chinatown, the girl who would become Magistra showed an early aptitude for learning. Her parents, owners of Chang's Imported Treasures, raised their only child to be both son and daughter to them. While she learned the duties of a proper Chinese woman, she was also expected to excel in school and master the nuances of the import/export business so that she could take over after her father. She was also expected to marry someone who could join her in the business and produce many children to carry the family livelihood to the next generation.

Needless to say, the pressure to meet her parents' high standards and impossible expectations proved almost more than Magistra could bear. In high school, after barely passing an important math exam she insisted on taking despite a high fever, Magistra contracted a rare brain infection and spent several months in the hospital. When she was finally released, with orders from the doctors to take it easy, she plunged back into her usual routine, trying to catch up with missed schoolwork and afternoon sessions learning the "business." The results were catastrophic. She suffered a total system breakdown, forcing her parents to place her in St. Marguerite's Treatment Institute, a "total care" facility on the edge of Chinatown near South Lake Shore Drive West.

The prognosis was less than good for Magistra, who had devolved into a state of near catatonia, with minimal responses to the outside world. After two months of testing and medication, she was diagnosed with "situational autism," and the doctors indicated that her condition could last indefinitely. "On the other hand," one of her doctors admitted, "she could come out of it tomorrow — or could find some in-between state that allows her to function at a reduced capacity."

For her parents, the diagnosis was a death sentence. Their plans did not include such a fate for their daughter and heir. When they spoke to St. Marguerite's chief administrator, an elderly nun named Sister Josepha, they indicated that they did not have the means or the knowledge to care for a profoundly ill child. Sister Josepha encouraged them to sign over guardianship of the girl to the institution, ensuring the parents that they would act as both parents and doctors to give the girl the best treatment available. The Changs did so with much regret but with the feeling that they could now move on with their lives and look for promising nephews to carry on the business. They put aside a generous sum of money for their daughter's care and left her with the staff of St. Marguerite's.

In reality, Sister Josepha recognized what was really going on with the fragile Chinese girl. She was in the throes of an especially long and possibly brutal Awakening. Long associated with the Seers of the Throne as a "spotter," Josepha contacted the Bibliotech pylon and assisted them in leading Magistra back to the world of the physical senses. They were mostly successful.

Magistra now lives in a semi-virtual reality. Classified as functionally autistic, she is able to converse with others, though she tends to "monologue" on relevant topics rather than have true dialogue with anyone. She has a permanent home at the Institute and does much of her security work with her pylon online. When she needs to join with them for workings or other group activities, she takes a carefully planned route from her home to wherever she needs to be. She is always accompanied by Lung Li ("earth dragon") a 180-pound Neapolitan mastiff who has received training as a companion dog for the autistic (see below). Lung Li is himself partially "Awakened," possessing reasoning and communicative abilities far beyond those of normal dogs.

From the safety of her room, Magistra monitors the group's sanctum as well as members' homes, cars and offices. She keeps track of all their online activity and keeps intruders out. Few people suspect that the frail-looking young woman with the enormous companion beast is one of the city's most powerful mages.

Description: Magistra is a delicately built Chinese woman now in her early 20s. Her long, black hair falls straight down her back to her waist, while her almond-shaped dark eyes bear a dreamy, inward-turned focus. Her slender figure seems almost too fragile to stay upright, and she walks with

a mechanical grace as if counting every step (which she frequently does). Her favorite attire is loose-fitting jeans and an oversized T-shirt, with an appropriate jacket for the weather. She wears large, clunky shoes regardless of the time of year. In the privacy of her room, she frequently removes all her clothing, since she has developed an extreme sensitivity to anything touching her skin.

Her Nimbus is made of Chinese characters looking like brush painting on a yellow ribbon. Vulgar magic makes the characters vibrate as crowd noises sound around Magistra.

Storytelling Hints: Magistra does not like to be touched, but other than this, she enjoys spending limited amounts of time with other people. When she talks, she tends to monologue about computers or virtual reality or Asian mythology. She is only affectionate toward her huge mastiff (familiar). Often she sits for long periods in perfect silence, hardly moving except to breathe. Expressions form on her face in response to her inner perceptions rather than her outer experiences, so she often laughs, cries and appears angry within the space of a few minutes, regardless of what is going on around her.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Pair of bone chopsticks
Real Name: Linda Chang
Path: Moros
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4/3 (manual/other), Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 5, Computer (Virtual Simulation) 5, *Investigation (Deductive) 3, Medicine 1, *Occult (Asian Beliefs) 2, Science 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Manual Dexterity) 1, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Companion) 4, *Persuasion 1
Merits: Eidetic Memory, Embodied Familiar (Neapolitan Mastiff) 4, Hallow 4, Library (Shared) (Arcane Lore, Atlantean History, Combat Magic, Elemental Forces, Metaphysical Energy) 5, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 8
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 9/8
Defense: 4
Speed: 12/11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Death 2, Matter 4, Mind 3, Prime 3, Spirit 4, Time 3
Rotes: Death — Shadow Sculpting (•), Animate Shadows (••); Matter — Dark Matter (•), Unseen Aegis (••), Repair Object (•••), Annihilate Matter (••••); Mind — Third Eye (•), Misperception (••), Psychic Assault (•••); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••), Celestial Fire (•••); Spirit — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Place of Power (••), Numinous Shield (•••), Road Master (••••); Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Shield of Chronos (••), Shifting Sands (•••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 3 ("Shield of Chronos," Time ••)
Magical Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Lung Li, Neapolitan Mastiff Embodied Familiar

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Investigation (Scent) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Knockdown) 4, Stealth (Sneak) 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Canine Behavior) 2, Expression (Barks and Growls) 1, Intimidation (Physically Imposing) 3
Willpower: 4
Essence: 10
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 14
Size: 5
Health: 9
Influence: Animals 2
Numina: Animal Control, Innocuous
Ban: Lung Li may not kill a human even in self-defense.

Flashback

Quote: "*We have them on infra-red now, we need someone to knock out their security. I'm ready to rumble. Let's take 'em!* Oh God! The noise! Lemme out lemme out lemme out lemme out!"

Background: A recent psychological casualty of the Iraq conflict, Flashback returned to Chicago with a psych discharge and a diagnosis of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). He also returned an Awakened mage and a confirmed member of the Seers of the Throne through his exposure to the violent and often demonic nature of Middle Eastern summoning magics. Determined to make sure that nothing like that ever came to his hometown, he sought others like himself. He found the Bibliotech and was quickly enlisted as the pylon's head of operations and physical protector.

Flashback remembers only sporadic things about his background. He was always militarily inclined, and dreamed of being a career Army officer. He stayed with the Boy Scouts through his Eagle Scout badge, joined the NRA for access to a practice range and instruction on weapons and weapons care, took ROTC in high school and riflery and target shooting in PE, scoring high marks in local competitions. Guns meant more than people did to him, and he both loved and respected the weapons for their beauty and latent power.

When he returned from the war, Flashback was a

man with a mission — to uproot the magic that had entrenched itself in the foundation of the world and was at the root of everything evil. In his journey of Awakening, he had met the real rulers of the world-prison — the Exarchs — and they made everything clear: the world was as it was because the mages have taken control.

Description: Flashback is a handsome young man with a white-blond brush cut, a fresh-from-the-farm boyish expression, pale blue eyes and a thin-lipped killer's mouth. He stands at 6'1" and weighs 195 pounds. His body is in near-perfect physical shape, except for a few scars here and there from the war. He favors khakis, military camo, army boots and white tanks or T-shirts. He's almost always armed with some sort of weapon or else is surrounded by weapon parts.

His Nimbus appears to be made up of bullets. Sounds of gunfire accompany vulgar magic.

Storytelling Hints: Flashback doesn't think about the past much, mostly because he can't remember much of it. He knows his "episodes" (what he calls his flashbacks) are keys to his early life, but they don't interest him as much as what he's doing now. He lives in the present and tries to forget his experiences in the desert.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Fine-steel throwing knife
Real Name: Franklin Dix Mason ("Frankie")
Path: Obrimos
Order: Seers of the Throne
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Crafts (Gunsmithing) 4, Crafts (Gun Repair) 4, *Investigation (Ballistics) 3, Medicine (Field) 3, *Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Army Fighting) 4, Drive 3, Firearms (Military Issue) 5, Stealth 4, Survival (Foraging) 3, Weaponry (Improvising) 4
Social Skills: Intimidation (In Your Face) 4, *Persuasion 2, Socialize 4, Streetwise 3
Merits: Contact (Military), Hallow 4, Library (Shared) (Arcane Lore, Atlantean History, Combat Magic, Elemental Forces, Metaphysical Energy) 5, Resources (Veterans Benefits) 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 6
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Speed: 13
Health: 9
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Death 1, Forces 2, Matter 2, Prime 2
Rotes: Death — Forensic Gaze (•); Forces — Influence Light (•), Unseen Shield (••); Matter — Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Steel Windows (••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Magic Shield (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Banishers

Banishers have made great headway in Chicago due to several factors. Chicago has a strong population of religiously minded people, not only Catholics who are members of the city's large Irish contingent, but also Protestants and Jews, all of whom eschew the practice of magic or traffick with the supernatural. In addition, the scientific community has its share of secularists, some of whom are themselves mages devoted to abolishing magic from the world — thus "proving" the materialistic worldview held by many scientists. The violence that lies below the surface in Chicago has made for some unpleasant Awakenings and some catastrophic experiences with magic.

The heartland of America wants to believe that all things can be accomplished through faith in God, hard work and right thinking. If someone fails, it's because that person has lost faith, wasted time and allowed radical thoughts to dominate his thinking. Magic is an instrument of the Devil or else a ridiculous con game intending to bilk money from the gullible people who think that they can learn to solve their problems by casting spells. The more benign Sleepers believe that magic is that cute witch in the movies who wiggles her nose or those three sisters on TV whose spells complicate their lives to no end — none of the magic is real, but it's fine entertainment when nothing else is going on.

Most of Chicago's Banishers work alone, but a few have banded together in a loose cabal-type organization for mutual defense against those they hunt down. In addition, their group serves as an information-sharing center and a clearinghouse for those in the business of hunting the supernatural, in any way it appears.

Though these anti-mage mages are not numerous in Chicago, their capacity for destruction and mayhem causes their presence to be felt in proportions far greater than their small population.

The Other Shore

These Banishers have a strong religious streak that runs through their group philosophy. Most of their members' beliefs about magic are intimately connected to their deistic worldview. Not all Banishers are Christian or even monotheistic, but all believe in an afterlife of reward or punishment and all are convinced that those who do not renounce magic as evil will be punished in both this life and the next.

Their activities during the 1987 Mage War lay chiefly in attacking individuals on all sides of the struggle, striking swiftly and then retreating to their sanctum in a secret sub-basement of the Greenstone Church in the Pullman District. During one of their raids on a cabal, they acquired some old documents purporting to disclose the location of a great artifact of power simply referred to as the Golgotha Crown. Whether or not they acquired the item in fact is anybody's guess, but they have deliberately spread the rumor that it exists in order to draw out the supernaturals and mages who are their victims of preference.

News about the Celestial Flange has disturbed them somewhat, since they are unsure as to whether or not it and the Crown are one and the same or if the Flange even exists. While they keep fostering the idea that they possess the Golgotha Crown, they are also on the lookout for any clues that might lead them to the Flange. Their intention is to destroy it. As for the Crown, if they do in fact have it in safekeeping, they may be reluctant to destroy something so connected with holiness and divinity.

Father Lumen

Quote: "*Each day we must examine our consciences; each day, we must scourge ourselves of the taint of the power with which we contaminate our souls in order to do the will of the Divine. Each day, we sin to bring others to salvation and eternal rest.*"

Background: Father Lumen was a Dominican priest for nearly 30 years before he Awakened during an Easter sunrise mass. Stricken suddenly by the impact of the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection celebrated at that time, Father Lumen found himself cast into the fires of Hell. As he screamed and begged forgiveness for his nameless, countless sins, he heard a voice telling him to return to the world, reborn with a mission to wipe out all vestiges of magicians, sorcerers, Warlocks, Necromancers and the like in the name of the Eternal Waters of Purification.

He opened his eyes to find that almost no time at all had passed. His parishioners were waiting for him to begin the Communion part of the service as if they had no idea of the horrors he had just experienced.

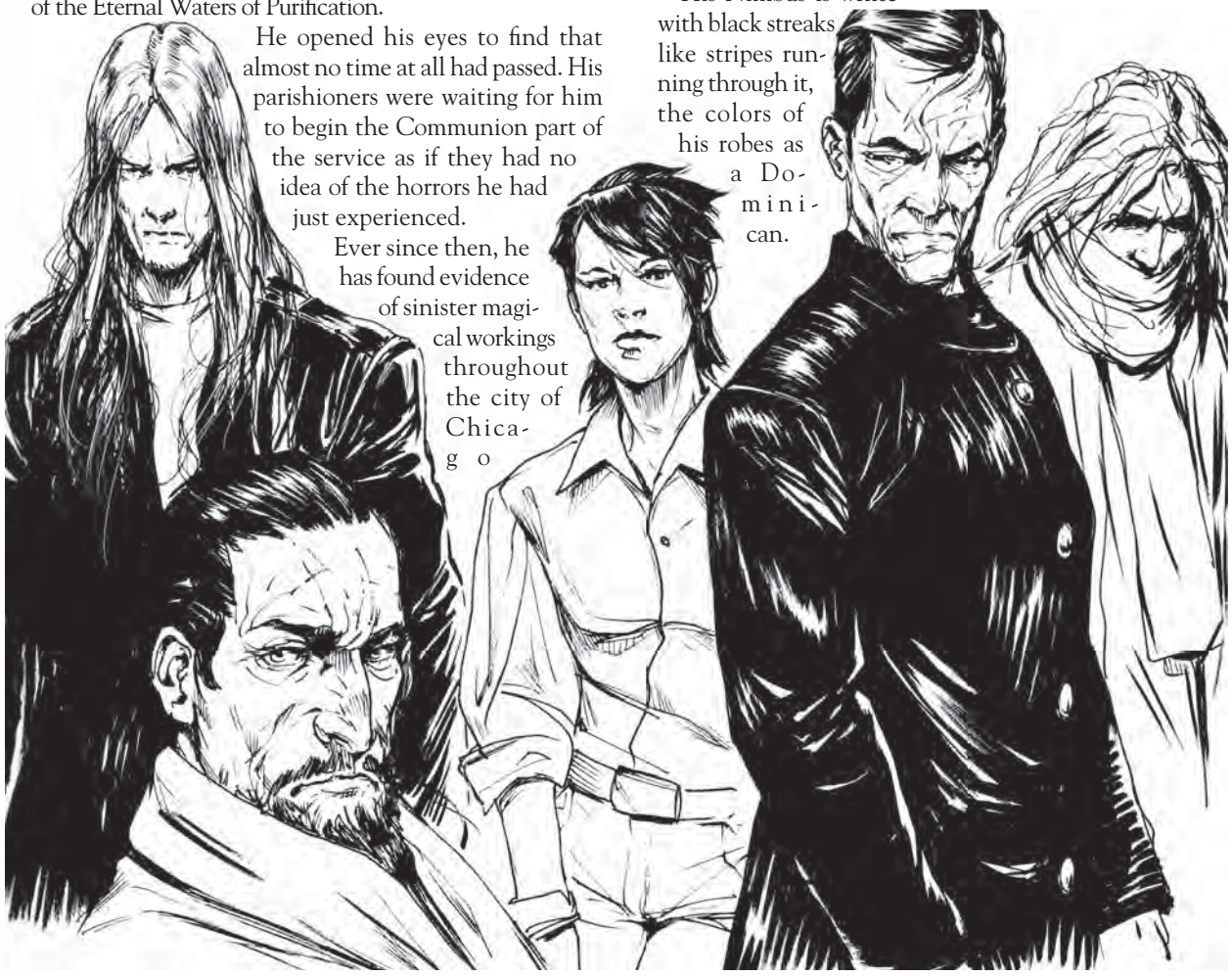
Ever since then, he has found evidence of sinister magical workings throughout the city of Chicago and has organized a group of sympathetic individuals to work with him to eradicate the threat to the soul of the city. He is convinced that if he doesn't destroy all of Chicago's mages (and other supernaturals) in the course of his lifetime, the fate that he experienced during his Awakening will be his for eternity.

He has had to "dirty his hands" by mastering the very magics he loathes in order to successfully combat his enemy and understand how better to lay traps for mages. His claim of the possession of the Golgotha Crown is one of those traps, though even his own group does not know whether or not the Crown is real and, if so, whether or not Father Lumen has it sequestered within their sanctum.

Because the Church conflicted with his new duties, Father Lumen has left the Church, where he was known as Father Peter Sonderson. He claims that he is doing God's business, not that of the Church.

Description: Father Lumen is man in his 50s, with a short, tonsured haircut. Though he is no longer a true priest, he still maintains the appearance of a Dominican, wearing a black suit and collar rather than robes. He is clean-shaven and ascetic in appearance, with pale, watery eyes and thin, colorless lips. When he grows animated as he speaks of his duty to wipe out magic, spittle sometimes forms at the corners of his mouth. At other times, his expression is calm and dispassionate.

His Nimbus is white with black streaks like stripes running through it, the colors of his robes as a Dominican.



Storytelling Hints: Father Lumen conducts his daily life in a spirit of calm acceptance of the necessity of everyday activities. He only really comes to life when he is either proselytizing or actively hunting down Consilium mages. He seems reasonable and has fooled many mages into trying to talk to him. At a certain point, however, he brings out the "heavy guns" and goes for his quarry.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass chalice
Real Name: Peter Paul Sonderson
Path: Mastigos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Religious Carvings) 2, Investigation (Inquisitor-Style) 4, Occult 4
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 3, Survival (Fasting) 3
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Homilies) 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3
Merits: Hallow 3, Quick Healer, Meditative Mind, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 9
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Health: 9
Gnosis: 4
Arcana: Matter 2, Mind 4, Space 3
Rotes: Matter — Dark Matter (•), Unseen Aegis (••); Mind — Aura Perception (•), Voice From Afar (••); Space — Spatial Map (•), Portal (•••)
Mana/per turn: 13/4
Armor: 4 ("Unseen Aegis," Mind ••)
Magic Shield: None

Serenitas

Quote: "*A great tunnel opened up before me, and I wandered in it forever, searching for a light to guide my path. I saw my life pass before me, and a bright being appeared and touched my head and said that I would be cursed with powers in order to destroy the powerful. Then I saw the light, and it pulled me back into the world a new person.*"

Background: Serenitas spent most of her young life searching for life's meaning. Her parents were ethnically Jewish but spiritually agnostic. Involved in politics at every level, her mother and father rarely had time for their daughter's spiritual turmoil. They were good parents otherwise, but simply assumed that their child would adopt their values.

Serenitas would have nothing to do with politics and lobbying and writing letters to the newspapers or picketing the local radio station for accepting advertising from companies that advocated logging in national forests. Her earliest memories had to do with watching television in the wee hours of Sunday morning, when she couldn't sleep. She watched "The Savior's Hour," "The Time of Conscience," "The Unitarian Hour," "Papa Joe's Old-Time Revival Sing-Along," and all the other religious and quasi-religious programs that graced late-night and early morning weekend television.

She begged her parents to send her to a Catholic school so that she could find out if there was a God. Her parents marveled at their daughter's obsession and sent her, instead, to an after-school program that taught Judaism. Serenitas studied faithfully, but felt no closer to solving her dilemma. She stopped sleeping at night, fearful that she would die in her sleep and go to Hell or enter a world of aching oblivion.

Finally, she discovered spiritualism and started attending séances whenever she could sneak away to do so. She studied the tarot and read palms, handwriting and bumps on the head. Finally, a cousin who knew a little about her dilemma brought her books on the Kaballah and she began to see a glimmer of light in the world of mystical correspondences and gematria.

An accident brought her carefully composed cosmology to a shattering collapse. The actual event was so simple. Serenitas was on her way to school and slipped on the ice, hitting her head and knocking herself out. She lay on the sidewalk, her head in a pool of blood as people gathered around her. While someone called 911 and another person threw a blanket over her to keep her warm, Serenitas ignored them. She was wandering through a dark passage, searching for a light.

When her near-death experience brought her back to consciousness (in the ambulance on the way to the hospital), she found herself tingling with newly Awakened powers and memories. And with the knowledge that she had been chosen to fight godlessness and selfish pride. She was a Banisher.

Father Lumen found her while she was in the hospital and told her about the Other Side. Serenitas willingly joined him and has been his right hand ever since.

Description: Serenitas is in her early 20s. She has dark brown hair that she wears tied back at the neck or else pinned up in a stylish "up-do." She has dark hazel eyes, high cheekbones and olive skin. Her expression is usually serious as she focuses on the job at hand almost all the time. When she smiles, her face opens up, and she looks radiant with surprising beauty. She doesn't smile very often. She dresses in long skirts or loose pants with embroidered blouses or loosely knit tops. Her lips move at times, as if she's calculating in her head.

Her Nimbus is a shining pearl-colored ring of light in which can be discerned gleaming objects that resemble the religious symbols of various religions: crucifixes, Stars of David, ankhs, etc.

Storytelling Hints: Serenitas needs to believe that there is something more than this world and so she has embraced the teachings of Father Lumen wholeheartedly. She almost constantly prays when she is not otherwise occupied (or sometimes, even when she is). Her words are always carefully considered, and she never uses language that might be considered "off-color."

Dedicated Magical Tool: Gold neck circlet
Real Name: Deborah Ruth Abrahams
Path: Obrimos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 3, Investigation 2, Occult (Kabbalah) 3
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth (Hiding) 3
Social Skills: Empathy (Group Dynamics) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1
Merits: Hallow 3, Holistic Awareness, Resources 1, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 8
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Death 2, Forces 3, Prime 3, Space 1
Rotes: Death — Soul Marks (•); Forces — Unseen Shield (••); Prime — Magic Shield (••); Space — Finder (•)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Zaharana

Quote: "*The honest man has nothing to fear. You are an honest man, aren't you? Then you should have no problems with answering a few questions. Or are you afraid?*"

Background: The young man known as Zaharana came with his family to Chicago from Saudi Arabia in 1995. Zaharana's father had accepted a position as an architectural engineer in the Windy City and wanted his son to have the benefits of an American education. Five years later, the entire family applied for and received citizenship. Zaharana was 15 and already a computer whiz with a strong aptitude for troubleshooting and repairing the machines themselves.

Growing up Muslim in Chicago meant becoming part of a small subculture. Zaharana and his father were devout followers of Islam, though Zaharana did not believe in the literal existence of such creatures as the demons bound by Solomon — that is, until he met one.

Zaharana's father had made an enemy in the process of acquiring a lucrative contract for the design of an experimental living complex north of the city. Competition was stiff for the job, but Mr. Jasmin's designs won out. Unfortunately, the runner-up in the competition was also a mage and a vindictive man. Determined to have the job at any cost, he sent a creature from outside the physical world to teach the architect a lesson. The lesson was learned all too well, and Mr. Jasmin died of a massive coronary. Zaharana saw his father die and also saw what killed him.

From that day forward, Zaharana swore an oath to avenge his father's death and to find any and all practitioners of magic and wipe them or their magic off the face of the earth.

The demon, for that was what it was, also sparked Zaharana's own Awakening. When the young man realized that he, too, was a mage, he decided to use his new powers to fulfill his oath.

Drawn by the magical emanations of his Awakening as well as by the nature of his experience, Father Lumen saw in the young Arab American a powerful force to add to his cabal.

Zaharana has used his computer skills to build and maintain a state-of-the-art security system for the cabal's sanctum as well as to monitor known areas of magical activity.

Since 9/11, he has had to suffer some prejudicial treatment due to his ethnic background, but he has not let that dissuade him from his mission. While he is not interested in politics, except as it pertains to demons and the interference of sorcerers, he feels strongly that his work is helping the efforts for world peace. He believes that behind every terrorist activity, there is either an infernal spirit or else a dark sorcerer.

Description: Zaharana is a small, wiry man with shoulder-length black hair, a trim beard and mustache, dark eyes and dark olive skin. He seldom smiles except to greet friends; he finds life too serious for humor, particularly when there are demons to be bound or slain and mages who need to be stopped from bringing such abominations into the world. Zaharana dresses in lightweight clothing in summer and in more conservative attire in the winter. He wears glasses for close-up work, but removes them when he is not staring at or into a computer.

His Nimbus has designs reminiscent of Persian carpet designs. Vulgar magic creates the sound of a whirlwind.

Storytelling Hints: Zaharana treats his task as a very serious mission, leaving him little time for socializing and other pleasantries. When forced into social situations, he is scrupulously polite and leaves as soon as possible. He does let down a little among friends. He feels best when he is doing something that directly advances his purpose.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Strip of tightly wound leather with an iron circle pendant hanging from it
Real Name: Gabril Jasmin
Path: Mastigos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer (Repair) 4, Investigation (Remote Spyware) 4, Occult (Demon Lore) 3, Science (Computer Theory) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Firearms 1, Stealth (Security) 4, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Intimidation (Insinuation) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Hallow 3, Resources 3, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3
Willpower: 9
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Envy
Initiative: 8
Defense: 4
Speed: 12
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Fate 2, Matter 2, Mind 3, Space 3
Rotes: Fate — Winds of Chance (•), Fortune's Protection (••); Matter — Craftsman's Eye (•); Mind — Third Eye (•), Psychic Assault (•••); Space — Scrying (••), Portal (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)
Magic Shield: None

Chernovkin

Quote: *"You have only your magic to save you. I fight with the strength of gods in my soul. Prepare yourself for the afterlife."*

Background: Chernovkin learned firsthand how deadly magic can be. As a teenager growing up in Chicago's Lithuanian neighborhood, Chernovkin became a fan of pagan metal music, listening to such dark, gothic metal bands as Old Gods' Legions, Light vs. Dark and Shredded Angel. Soon he and some friends formed their own band, Chernobyl Lullaby, to indulge in the ponderous rhythms and dark lyrics of their favorite music.

The band's lead singer, Estovan, fancied himself a pagan shaman (or *sami*, the Eastern European name for nature priest) and, in fact, was an Awakened mage who had refused to participate in the larger society of mages in Chicago. He insisted he preferred to learn from his own dark gods. He began inserting ritual chants into the lyrics of his band's songs. Chernovkin felt uncomfortable when Estovan started singing these magic-impregnated songs. One evening during practice, a mist started to rise up around the band. Estovan motioned for the band to keep playing, and his singing got more and more frenetic. When Chernovkin saw the hideous figure take form from the mist and burst into flame, he screamed and dropped his bass guitar. At the same time, Estovan stumbled and fell across the protective circle drawn in chalk and powdered blood around the band. Immediately, the singer was caught up by the fiery entity and he burst into flames. Screaming, he disappeared in a blinding flash of fire.

Chernovkin passed out from the shock of what he saw. His band-mates fled as soon as Estovan and the creature disappeared, leaving Chernovkin to lie unconscious in the broken circle. When he regained consciousness, Chernovkin had Awakened. Soon afterward, he was contacted by Father Lumen and told that he was the final piece that completed Father Lumen's cabal. He now had a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim and a pagan who had reasons to eradicate magic and sorcerers from the world.

Chernovkin found that his best contributions to the Other Side lay in his physical prowess. He could provide the necessary muscle for grabbing their targeted mages and for protecting his weaker cabal-mates in a fight. He uses his magic sparingly, afraid of what unexpected side effects he might bring forth and looks forward to the day that he can join the Sleepers once again.

Description: Chernovkin has the build of a football player. His sandy blond hair hangs nearly to his waist, while his wide face and long-lashed green eyes make him an eager-looking, pleasant-faced young man. He dresses in lots of black, lots of leather and studded wrist guards, and high leather boots, regardless of the season or weather. He carries himself with the swagger of a rocker and still listens to his favorite bands but has given up playing music for a more important task.

His Nimbus is gunmetal gray with spikes piercing it at regular intervals. When he uses vulgar magic, loud power chords sound in his vicinity.

Storytelling Hints: Chernovkin was literally "scared straight," in a manner of speaking. He has had a brush with the infernal, and he has no intention of succumbing to the minions of evil. He knows that his looks attract young women, and he uses his appearance to proselytize (and to get dates). He has not totally forsaken secular entertainment, but his first duty is to rid the world of creatures such as the one that took his friend, along with the mages who summon them.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Small, smooth, palm-sized stone
Real Name: Anton Dilsek
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Guitar Repair) 2, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Occult (Eastern European Paganism) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics (Team Sports) 4, Brawl (Streetfighting) 4, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Music) 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Hallow 3, Resources 2, Sanctum: Size (Shared) 3, Strong Back
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 7
Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Sloth
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Health: 9
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 4, Mind 2, Spirit 3
Rotes: Life — Cleanse the Body (•), Healing Heart (•••); Mind — Misperception (••); Spirit — Second Sight (•), Harm Spirit (•••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 2 ("Misperception," Mind ••)
Magic Shield: None

Solitary Banisher

Not all Banishers work together in groups. Most come to their state of being through extraordinary circumstances that dictate a solo path. These lone mage-hunters are looked upon as loose cannons by other Banishers. Some mage-hunters are also respected as "touched" by some great, elusive power, much as madmen were regarded in ancient civilizations. The Banisher presented here is the most noteworthy of the solitaries in the Chicago area.

The Crone

Quote: "*A maiden was I, all alone alone a lee oh*
Next a mother with child, all alone alone a lee oh
Now a crone am I to wail, all alone alone a lee oh
Till my babes I meet in hell, all alone alone a lee oh—
Have you seen them? They've gone away from me. I had children once, I had . . . ."

Background: The haggard-looking woman who calls herself the Crone can easily be mistaken for a bag lady, at least until she strikes terror into the hearts of those who taunt her simply by looking at them and pointing. Some say she has the evil eye, others that she's an Irish witch or even a death-foretelling *bansidhe* or banshee.

In reality, Vanessa Walsh is a grief-maddened mage, a former member of the Guardians of the Veil and now a dedicated Banisher who seeks to rid the city of all those who had anything to do with taking her children away from her and sending her to "the bad place" for more than a decade.

Though Michael Walsh, the Hierarch of the Chicago Consilium, insists that his wife went mad, a victim of Paradox, Vanessa knows the true story, though she does not like to dwell on it for long. To make certain she did not interfere with his plans for their children, Michael had Vanessa locked away in a prison outside the normal space/time continuum. He believed he had denied her access to her magic, but he was wrong. Over time, Vanessa struggled in her hellish confinement to regain enough sanity to harness her power. After what seemed like forever, she managed to do so and escaped her prison. But her experience had left her profoundly changed.

While Theodore is nearing 60, Vanessa has reached her 70s in relative time. And she is out for revenge, if she can remember why she wants it.

Vanessa has become a Banisher, and her targets are all the members of the Guardians of the Veil, her former order, beginning with her husband. She does not even remember that she was once married to Theodore, only that he did something terrible to her and her babies and that she must stop him before he hurts anyone else. She disdains and despises her former order and goes out of her way to rant at them whenever she sees them in the street.

Vanessa has no sanctum, staying wherever she can find shelter for the night and relying on the other Banishers to help her when necessary with some extra magical energy or with a meal and a hot bath. Occasionally, the Other Shore gives her a place out of pity, but she refuses to stay more than one night at a time.

Description: Vanessa's experience has taken its toll on her body. Her lustrous, auburn hair has turned a sickly, yellowish gray, and her piercing eyes have become a watery, cloudy brown, the color of a long-dead mouse. Her lips are bruised and torn from biting on them in her frustration, and her skin is lined with age and worry. She looks much more than a decade older than she was when she was locked away and, in fact, nearly two times that many years passed for her inside her dimensional prison. Her figure is lumpy and out of condition. She wears long, shapeless dresses and covers her face with a shawl or veil, so that it is hard to see what she looks like.

Her Nimbus is a swirling mass of muted colors except when she uses vulgar magic. Then the colors run riot and glow brightly.

Storytelling Hints: Vanessa Walsh is bent on revenge, but she is not always able to focus on her task. Her mind is a powerful one when it isn't wandering into the past when her children were babies and all seemed well with the world. Half the time she believes she is still in England. The rest of the time, she is all too aware of her surroundings and of the depth to which she has fallen.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Blown-glass wand
Real Name: Vanessa Walsh
Path: Acanthus
Order: Apostate (formerly Guardians of the Veil)
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 1
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 3, *Investigation 2, Medicine (Childbirth) 2, Occult (Celtic Tradition) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Larceny (Acquiring Food) 3, *Stealth 2, Survival (Scrounging) 4
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Birds) 4, Expression (Mad Ditties) 2, Intimidation 3, *Subterfuge 2
Merits: Dream 2, Natural Immunity, Quick Healer, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 3
Wisdom: 4
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Health: 9
Gnosis: 5
Arcana: Fate 5, Forces 4, Time 2
Rotes*: Fate — Interconnections (•), The Evil Eye (••), Fortune's Protection (••), Monkey's Paw (•••), Swarm of Locusts (•••••); Forces — Nightsight (•), Influence Electricity (••), Call Lightning (•••); Time — Momentary Flux (•), Augury (••)
* The Crone has forgotten more rotes than she currently remembers. The ones listed above are still firmly implanted in her memory.
Mana/per turn: 14/5
Armor: 5 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate •••••)
Magic Shield: None

Apostates

Most of Chicago's mages belong to an established order, including those mages who oppose magic, such as the members of the Seers of the Throne and the Banishers. A few Awakened individuals, however, decide to go it alone, for one reason or another. Either they rejected the vision of the Watchtower given to them in their Awakening or at some point they turn their backs on or fall away from the precepts of their orders.

Apostates have a difficult time in Chicago. The constant interplay among cabals, some of it of a violent or aggressive nature, makes it necessary to be on one side or another — or another. Independent mages often get caught in the crossfire, either magical or metallic, and run the risk of a quick end to their magical journey. Most apostates fall prey to some type of hunter within a few weeks of appearing on the scene. Other apostates leave town for a better venue.

The following individuals have managed to defy the odds, by being clever, cautious and, above all, determined.

Animalis

Quote: "*The city is like a forest. Its alleys and buildings, its gutters and sewers are homes to many creatures who cannot speak for themselves.*"

Background: Animalis has loved animals for as long as she can remember. As a child, she pretended her pets could talk to her and she would put words in their mouths so that she could have long conversations with them. She did the same thing for the animals she saw from time to time outside her apartment in Chicago's downtown — the pigeons that flew from building to building, the mice that always seemed to inhabit the basement and the squirrel that found a few nuts each fall in the trees that grew in the park near her building.

A field trip in high school to the Lincoln Park Zoo provided the occasion for Animalis' Awakening. As she walked with her classmates, the animals she saw gradually took on a deeper reality than the kids she saw at school every day. Suddenly, she was hearing conversations that weren't coming from the people around her but from the animals themselves. She saw a lion gesture with its head to her, telling her to follow it down a path within the lions' habitat. Without a second thought, she did so, and as she followed the lion, she heard more and more of the animal speech. She felt her body changing from one animal to another. Finally, she appeared at a tower deep in the heart of the zoo, but something about it scared her. It stank of humans and their rules and their ideals. The voices within the Watchtower wanted her to use her magic for human goals. She had other ideas, and rejected the invitation to become part of the Watchtower.

She came back to consciousness suddenly when a teacher tapped her on the shoulder and told her not to dawdle any longer at the lions' habitat or she'd be left behind. The "journey" of her Awakening had taken only a few minutes in "real" time.

From that time on, Animalis considered herself a practitioner of natural magic. She had no real teacher, but learned how to use her power through visits with spirit teachers in her dreams.

Eventually, one of the Free Council mages located her and tried to persuade her to join his order. She refused him as gently as she could, and he seemed to accept it, though he warned her that other mages might not take as kindly to rejection and might seek to force her into an order or else to burn her magic from her.

When the Free Council mage had finished his warning and turned to leave her, he found himself surrounded by half a dozen large dogs, numerous growling cats and a bevy of pigeons sputtering overhead. He nodded at the demonstration and offered to teach Animalis how to control her power so that she wouldn't draw down the wrath of the other mages.

Since then, Animalis has been regarded as a special case among the mages of Chicago. Since she deals primarily with her own world of animals and doesn't seem to have any political ambitions, she does not seem an overt threat to anyone.

What they fail to see is that Animalis has decided that it is time for animals to reclaim what humanity has taken from them. She is doing her best to communicate with all the pets in Chicago as well as the city fauna — pigeons, rats squirrels and other creatures. Lately, she has taken to visiting the zoos, and spending hours staring at the habitats of the big cats, the wolves and other predators. To most people, she seems just to stand and admire them. But Animalis is communing with them and as she continues her self-assigned task, the animals grow more and more restless, as if waiting for a signal.

Description: Animalis is young, barely out of her teens. She dresses in simple clothes and avoids leather

or other materials that come from dead animals. Her reddish-brown hair is worn in braids or else hangs loosely down her back. She has light green eyes that are usually half-hidden under heavy eyelids. She wears no make-up. She still lives with her family, who wonder at her frequent outings to the zoo but as yet don't think to question her about the trips' purpose.

Her Nimbus is made of fur and feathers. Animal noises accompany vulgar magic.

Storytelling Hints: Animalis loves animals more than people and prefers the company of animals to human companionship. She wants nothing more than to see the world return to its pristine, wilderness form; barring that, she wants to help as many animals as she can find a way to be free. She believes that someday soon, she will receive instructions that will allow her to lead the beasts in what she calls the Great Reclamation.

Dedicated Magical Tool: 12" length of copper chain
Real Name: Bridget Rose Murphy
Path: Thyrsus
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Medicine (Veterinary) 2, Occult 3
Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 2, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Communication) 5, Empathy 3, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 1
Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot, Holistic Awareness, Meditative Mind
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Initiative: 7
Defense: 4
Speed: 11
Health: 7
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Life 2, Mind 1, Spirit 2
Rotes: Life — Healer's Trance (•), Heal Flora and Fauna (••); Mind — Sense Consciousness (•); Spirit — Spirit Tongue (•)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: None
Magic Shield: None

Baeldamor

Quote: "*Don't fuck with me, and I won't fuck with you. I can give you a list of who's screwed me and what happened to 'em. Wanna see if your name's on it?*"

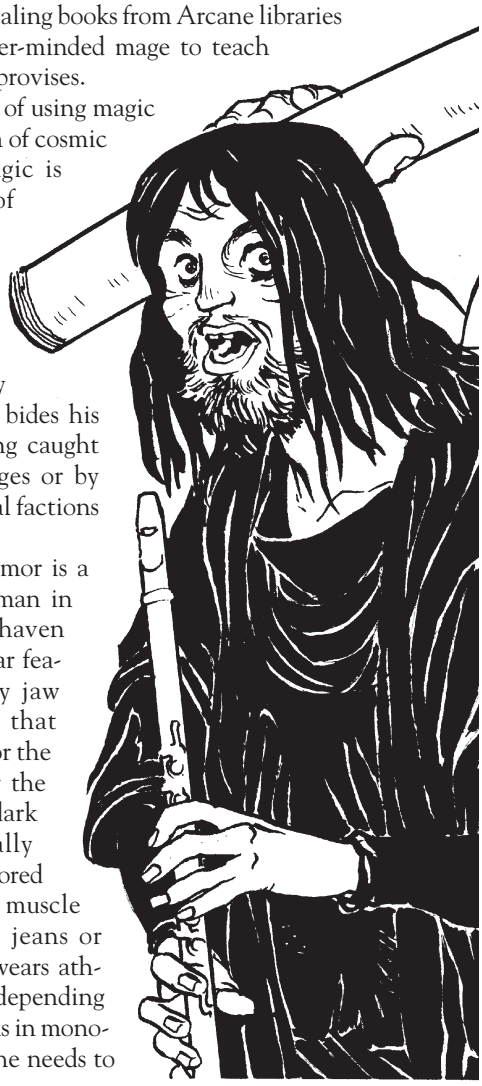
Background: Baeldamor always knew he was destined for big things. An only child, he was the recipient of all the affection of his doting mother and the attention of his demanding father. Baeldamor found out early on in his life that he could usually get what he wanted without really working for it by putting the screws on somebody else.

He managed, therefore, to make it through school on the efforts of classmates smaller and smarter than he. College was another matter. He learned different techniques to get ahead in college, some of which involved less-than-legal procedures.

Some of his forays after he graduated brought him into contact with the criminal element in Chicago, and finally his bullying behavior met its match. One night in a bar in the South Side, he picked a fight with the wrong "small" person. Two nights later, as he was leaving a neighboring bar, he was mugged by a group of friends of his earlier victim, beaten nearly to a pulp and left for dead.

As he lay unconscious, his mind went wandering on the journey of Awakening. When he arrived at the Watchtower, the structure loomed over him as a symbol of the authority he had always managed to elude. He turned his back on the Watchtower and determined to go it alone.

He has since learned to cast rotes in various ways, usually involving either stealing books from Arcane libraries or else forcing a weaker-minded mage to teach him. Otherwise, he improvises.



He has become fond of using magic to get his way, as a form of cosmic bullying. To him, magic is the perfect weapon of vengeance, and he intends to find the people who nearly killed him and turn his power on them. And that will be only the start. For now, he bides his time and avoids getting caught by the Consilium mages or by any of the other magical factions in the city.

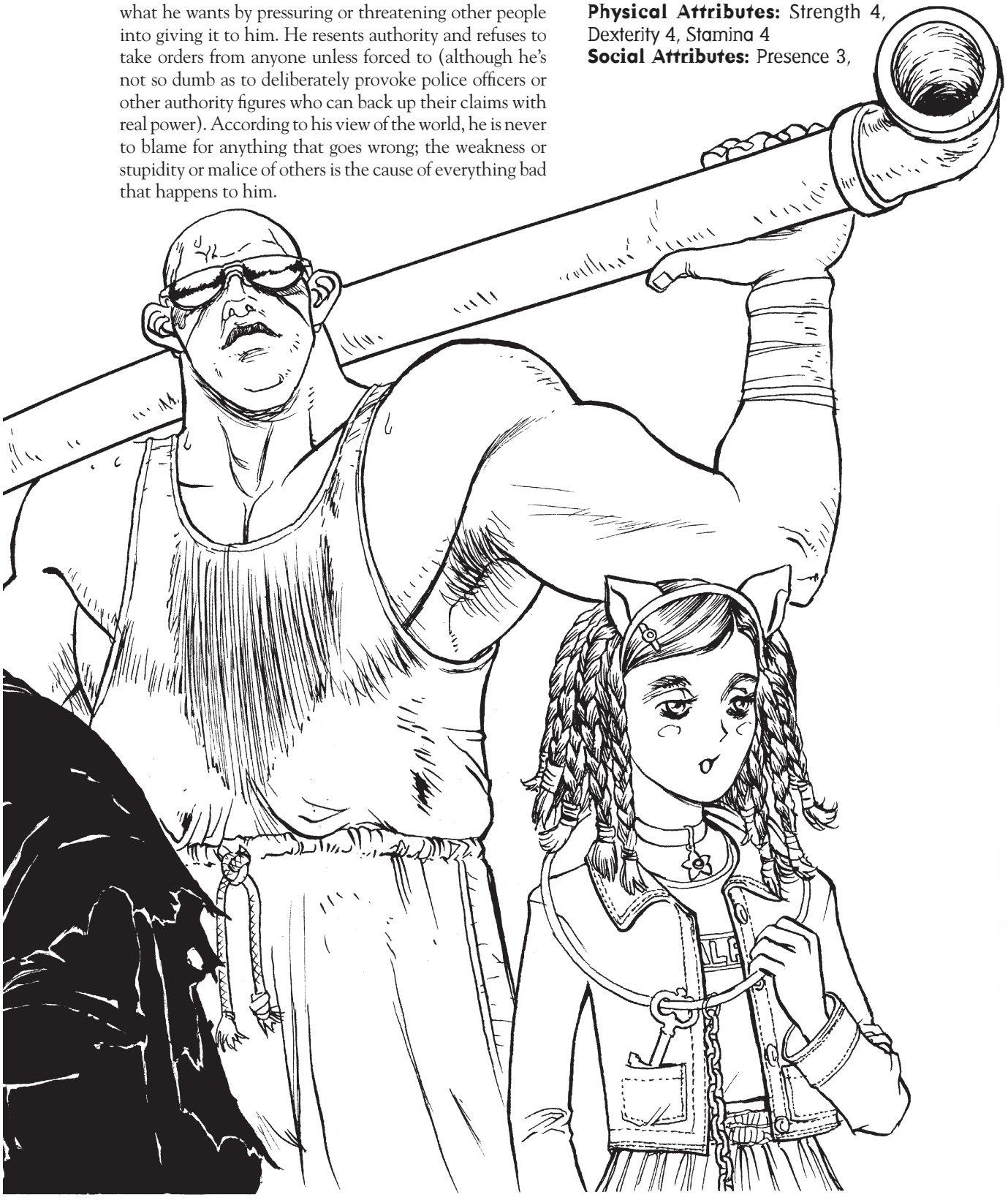
Description: Baeldamor is a tall, heavily muscled man in his early 30s with a shaven head and harsh, angular features. He has a heavy jaw line and a long nose that would be straight but for the small break just below the bridge. His eyes are dark blue, though he usually hides them behind mirrored shades. He dresses in muscle shirts or T-shirts and jeans or drawstring pants and wears athletic shoes or sandals, depending on the season. He speaks in monosyllables except when he needs to

work magic that requires more verbalization. He watches everyone he is around and is always ready for a fight.

His Nimbus is made up of prickly things like porcupine quills, needles, barbed wire and other similar items. Vulgar magic makes the Nimbus shriek with anger.

Storytelling Hints: Baeldamor is a bully, used to getting what he wants by pressuring or threatening other people into giving it to him. He resents authority and refuses to take orders from anyone unless forced to (although he's not so dumb as to deliberately provoke police officers or other authority figures who can back up their claims with real power). According to his view of the world, he is never to blame for anything that goes wrong; the weakness or stupidity or malice of others is the cause of everything bad that happens to him.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Steel pipe
Real Name: Henry James Farragut
Path: Obrimos
Order: Apostate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3,



Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Occult 2, Politics (Gangs of the South Side) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics (Scrambling) 4, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Firearms (Automatic Weapons) 3, Stealth 3
Social Skills: Intimidation (Bullying) 4, Socialize (Heavy Drinking) 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Danger Sense, Iron Stamina, Quick Healer, Toxin Resistance
Willpower: 7
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Greed
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 13
Health: 9
Gnosis: 2
Arcana: Forces 2, Life 2, Prime 2
Rotes: Forces — Influence Heat (•), Kinetic Blow (••); Life — Sense Life (•), Organic Resilience (••); Prime — Dispel Magic (•), Magic Shield (••)
Mana/per turn: 11/2
Armor: 2 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)
Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)

Desinarim

Quote: "*The Seven shall bring about the Marriage of the Stars and the Sea. They are here among us now! The Golden Key shall pronounce the day of our doom!*"

Background: Desinarim always knew things others didn't and saw things invisible to other people. He knew when his grandfather was going to die, but no one believed Desinarim when he announced it to his family. In fact, they punished him for telling wicked lies. When his grandfather died right on schedule, his family seemed to think it was somehow his fault and forbade him from ever saying anything like that again.

Because of their prohibition, which he dared not defy, they had no warning when his mother drove her car into a tree or when his father had a heart attack at work. He could have warned them, but they didn't want to hear the bad news. After his parents' deaths, Desinarim was raised by his grandmother and several aunts and uncles. By that time, he was well into his teens and listened to no one but himself — and the voice in his head that showed him the future.

After high school, Desinarim attended Smith-Constant Vocational Institute in Chicago's Old Town to study emergency medicine, but dropped out when his inner voice told him he wouldn't need to study healing.

One night, soon afterward, Desinarim awoke from a very vivid dream of the end of the world. His inner voice was screaming "Wake up! Wake up!" and he Awoke.

Soon after his Awakening, he was approached by a member of the Adamantine Arrow. Little more than a month after joining the order, however, he began spontaneously predicting the end of the world according to certain signs that only he had been given. He became so disruptive to his cabal's group workings that he was voted out of the cabal and, later, out of the order.

By that time, however, Desinarim didn't care. His voices told him everything he needed to know. Desinarim seems to have no trouble learning rotes and more advanced uses of magic even without the resources of an order behind him. He claims that his inner voice teaches him as he sleeps. And his magic works.

Description: Sometimes, Desinarim looks like a normal man in his middle 20s, with short dark hair, light brown skin that indicates a mixed-racial heritage and pale brown eyes that glow with an inner intensity. He wears whatever clothing he happens to grab when he wakes up, whether it is suitable for the weather or the occasion. At other times, Desinarim disappears for long periods of time from his home. He wanders the streets of Chicago, letting his hair grow out and not bothering to shave. The longer he wanders, the more like a prophet he looks and the more dire his predictions are. When he returns, he bathes, shaves and gets a haircut and becomes a normal-seeming young man once more.

His Nimbus changes according to whether or not he is in his wild phase. Under normal circumstances, his Nimbus is pale green outlined in gold and white. When he is in his "mad prophet" stage, his Nimbus gleams bright orange and howls.

Storytelling Hints: Desinarim is schizophrenic, besides being Awakened. Now his voices tell him many things, not all of which are true, but his batting average is nothing to be sneered at. When he is in his quieter mode, he speaks quietly, is reasonablely polite and only a little strange. When the "prophecy" strikes and he wanders the streets, he shouts his prophecies of doom for all to hear.

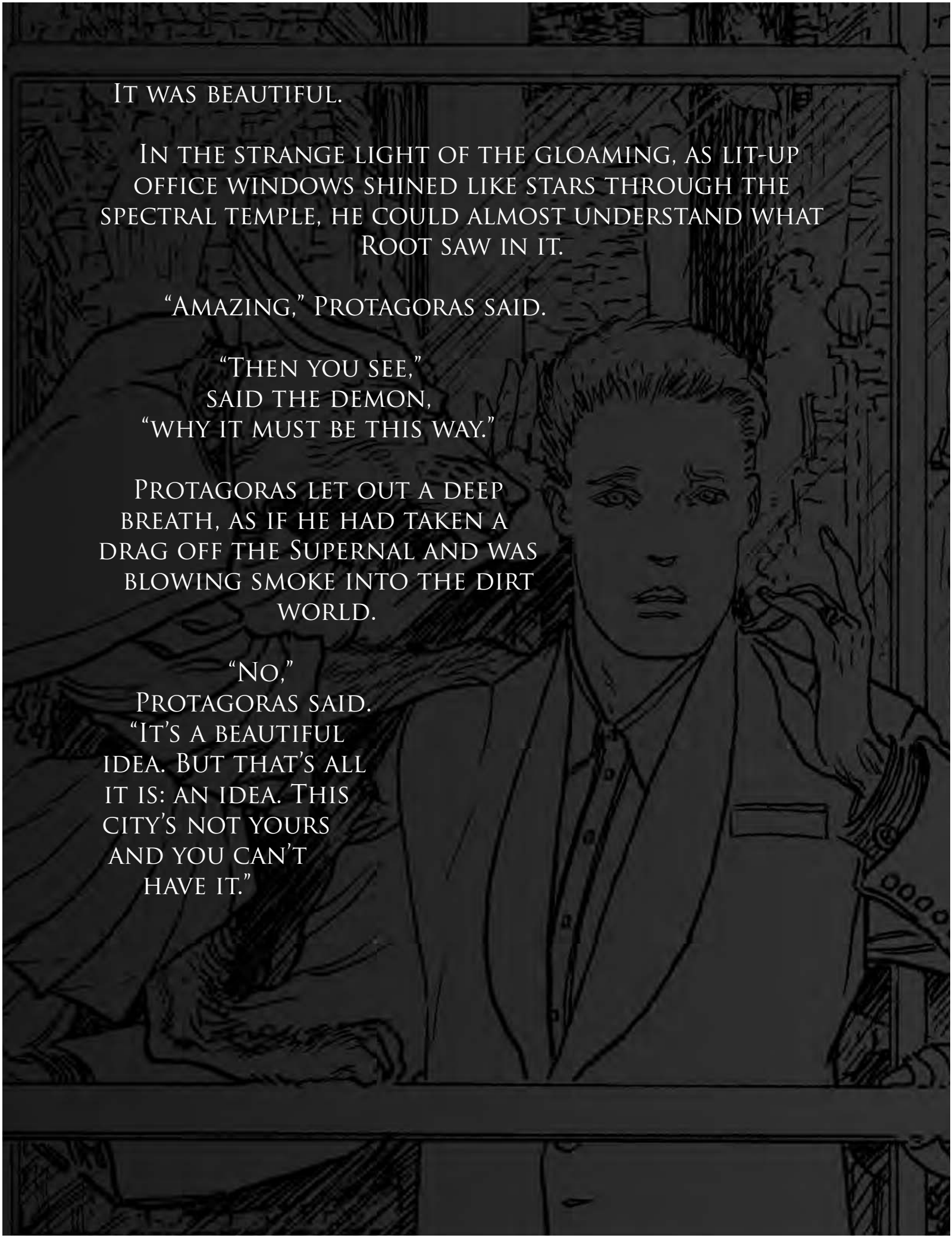
Dedicated Magical Tool: Brass flute
Real Name: Delroy Joliet
Path: Mastigos
Order: Apostate (former Adamantine Arrow)
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Medicine (Emergency Medicine) 2, Occult (Doomsday Omens) 4
Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny (Gaining Entry) 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression (Extemporaneous Predictions) 4, Streetwise (Finding Food and Shelter) 3
Merits: Danger Sense, Iron Stomach, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 6
Wisdom: 5
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Wrath
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 3
Arcana: Life 2, Mind 3, Space 3, Time 2
Rotes: Life — Pulse of the Living World (•), Purify Bodies (••); Mind — Misperception (••), Psychic Assault (•••); Space — Correspondence (•), Scrying (••); Time — Temporal Eddies (•), Glimpsing the Future (••)
Mana/per turn: 12/3
Armor: 3 ("Misperception," Mind ••)
Magic Shield: None

The Heart is Flesh

How does a mage deal with mundane catastrophes? The big city has a thousand ways to ruin a person's joy, whether they're Awakened or not. Starting with bad weather and worse traffic, leading to lost wallets and rude strangers, freak accidents and ending spectacularly with the discovery of a lover in the arms of another, one of the characters finds herself on the losing end of a hellish night. Faced with the miserable problems of the Fallen World and the grim drudgery of mortal existence, do the characters use their magical abilities out of spite, vengeance and distress, or can they rise above such earthly motives? They have incredible power, but are they only human?





It was beautiful.

In the strange light of the gloaming, as lit-up office windows shined like stars through the spectral temple, he could almost understand what Root saw in it.

"Amazing," Protagoras said.

"Then you see,"
said the demon,
"why it must be this way."

Protagoras let out a deep breath, as if he had taken a drag off the Supernal and was blowing smoke into the dirt world.

"No,"
Protagoras said.
"It's a beautiful idea. But that's all it is: an idea. This city's not yours and you can't have it."

UNREAL CITY



> **Mr. Root, however, refuses to give up the problem and vows that he is back on the right track with the sketch sent you some time ago. His head is now deep in Egyptian like effects, and he declares that if he fails . . . this time, he will never build another . . .**
>
> **— letter of Owen Aldis, July 31, 1884**

Summary

The ~~E~~Egyptian wolf-god Upuaut, drawn by the sorcerous architecture of a long-dead genius, has entered the Fallen Realm in Chicago. He seeks to open the Road to the West there, remaking Chicago as a glorious Egyptian necropolis.

His first appearance churns up ripples throughout Chicago's mystical ecology, most significantly four ghosts created by his implacable desires. Their agonies will eventually subside, but Upuaut will discover a perfect netherspace beneath the city, and an ideal tether for the Road to the Dead. His opening of that Road, and the Guardian he summons onto it, present a deadly threat to Chicago, both magical and mundane.

Even with the Guardian banished and the Road closed, Upuaut can call upon the enchantments woven into Chicago's skeleton, and upon the stones of the pyramids themselves, to Awaken a new reality and transform the Windy City into a magnificent inhuman dream.

Egyptian Dreams

The architect John Wellborn Root came to Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871 and shortly joined forces with his fellow visionary Daniel Burnham. Burnham and Root started slow, but by the 1880s was the pre-eminent architectural firm in the country. They constructed 27 buildings in downtown Chicago alone, creating a blend of Classical, Romanesque, and purely American architecture that remade Chicago as the "city of the century." Burnham and Root both had mystical sides. Burnham was a devout Swedenborgian, believing in angelic communication with humans and in continuing revelation. Root initially followed Burnham's lead but soon went off on his own tangents. A gifted musician, Root began to tease out the inherent harmonies in "all art expression" and pursued those connections back to ancient Egypt. He began adding Egyptian elements to Burnham and Root designs throughout the city.

Root went still deeper, finally touching the edge of madness — or of Awakening. Eventually he dreamed of building the new Chicago of his visions: the glorious She-Ka-Gau, a name he took from Egyptian words meaning "By the lake, the Ka is bound." To the Egyptians, the Ka was the divine portion of the soul; to Root, architecture was the divine portion of the city. In the proportions and angles of his buildings, he worked harmonics and enchantments designed to translate Chicago into its divine form. But his vision for the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, one based on "authentic Egyptian designs," conflicted with Burnham's more Classical vision. On January 15, 1891, Root died of a sudden, mysterious attack of pneumonia, less than a week after his 41st birthday. Burnham built the White City of the World's Fair in a mixture of Renaissance and Classical styles, and went on to reshape Chicago himself through the 1909 Plan of Chicago. Root's great work lay unfinished — but not powerless.

Structure, Mood and Timing

This story comprises three acts, each a story in itself. Although connections exist between the three parts, they stand on their own without immediately demanding follow-ups or sequels. You can run "Unreal City" straight through as a single story or split it into three stories dropped into an ongoing Chicago-

based chronicle. Each part has its own entry points, its own nature and its own mood.

Part One, "A Heap of Broken Images," is an investigative story that eventually seems to center on the plight of four ghosts. This story should turn the city into a haunted house, with strange happenings and unnatural effects everywhere the characters look. The mood is the uncanny: Chicago becomes a mystical jungle, with meaning lurking in every snap of a twig or muffled animal cry. By the time the ghosts come into focus, the players will likely heave a sigh of relief, eagerly exchanging the murky noise of Upuaut's arrival for the clear (if still creepy) signal of exorcism and justice.

Part Two, "That Corpse You Planted," is a classic "dungeon crawl." Mysterious happenings rapidly point the way underground, and the characters must delve deep and slay a monster. The mood is claustrophobic: all signs point down and deep, and the tunnels hold terror around every bend. The characters have few options, none of them pleasant. The story ends in death, quite literally — quite possibly including that of our heroes.

Part Three, "Burst in the Violet Air," is high magic at its larger-than-life highest. Although the story can begin underground, it inevitably bursts into the open and becomes a battle royal for the destiny of the city. The mood is awe: the energies, the stakes, the outcome are all cosmic. This ends the sequence on the highest of notes; this story is all about Awakening, its terrible glories and its wondrous dangers. Characters can flex their magical might and explore the very limits of their powers — in fact, they have to, or they will be swept aside like fallen leaves in a west wind.

Although "Unreal City" can be told at any time, it works to its best effect if set during the dog days of a brutally hot Chicago summer. With the sun blazing off white concrete and glaring down from glass towers, the approach of an ineffable, sorcerous Egypt to the shores of Lake Michigan becomes far more believable.

Author's Note: In That Gritty Place

The various locations, historical events, architectural controversies, mummies and even many of the hauntings in this story are all authentic Chicago with no invention necessary. John Wellborn Root was real, his architecture is magnificent and there are days when I would gladly traffick with Egyptian deities to get some of his buildings back, if I thought it would help. Root's fixations on musical harmony and Egyptian motifs are likewise historical. It should be said, however, that Root's delving into magic is pure speculation on my part. Also, as befits the World of Darkness, I have exaggerated the bleak situation of Egyptian illegal immigrants and of Uptown. Uptown is no Lincoln Park, but that's what a lot of people like about Uptown. The Field Museum's basements are a warren, but do not lead, as far as I know, to the coal tunnels.

A Heap of Broken Images

John Wellborn Root's dream of a perfected Egyptian Chicago did not die with him. Fragments of his sorcery lived on in the few Burnham and Root buildings to survive the century since his death. Root's architectural incantations drove harmonic waves in the Shadow Realm, where glory and beauty take longer to die than brick and concrete. Since 1891, Root's work has propagated, a broken dream calling out for completion, a door left perhaps an inch from opening. Upuaut, the wolf-god of ancient Egypt, the Opener of the Way, has felt the call. When the Opener responds, the result is a thunderclap felt throughout Chicago's mystical atmosphere.

Motives

Mages may have any number of reasons for hearing the thunder and taking notice.

- Independent Chicago-based mages feel the coming of Upuaut the same way the rest of Chicago's supernatural ecology does. Simple curiosity, self-defense or greed for power may drive the mages to investigate.
- Any organized Chicago cabal might assign member characters to discover the truth behind these events, as a test, as a way of off-loading what seems like a snipe hunt onto a rival (or the "new guys") or because they are obviously the best mages for the job.
- Mages outside the city may be directed to the events in Chicago by divinations, the orders of their own superiors, by gossip and rumor among other mages or spirits or by a word from an Oracle or other powerful Supernal entity. This can thus serve as the opening story of a Chicago-based chronicle.

The Hour of the Wolf

Why now? The exact trigger for Upuaut's coming is not a crucial story element. Therefore, you can pick something that fits your ongoing chronicle, your sense of the dramatic or your idea of the proper World of Darkness cosmology. Some possibilities include the following:

- A suitably apocalyptic or ominous event in your ongoing chronicle. Whatever your players did — or, better yet, failed to do — has awakened Upuaut and put him on the trail to Chicago.
- The demolition of a surviving Root building, such as the Sidney Kent House (2944 S. Michigan), St. Gabriel's Church (4501 S. Lowe), Lake View Presbyterian Church (716 W. Addison) or one of the townhouses on the 1300 block of Astor Street, might expose some element of Root's design to light and trigger Upuaut's arrival. Most of these buildings are landmarked, but that doesn't always stop Chicago developers, especially in the World of Darkness.
- Less radically, restoration work on a surviving Root building, such as the Monadnock Building (Dearborn and Jackson), the Reliance Building (State and Washington; now the Hotel Burnham), or the Rookery (LaSalle and Adams) might uncover a talisman or amulet (or human

sacrifice, for a creepier effect) buried in the foundation or walls.

• Perhaps "the stars are right." A supernova in the constellation Lupus, an astrological conjunction in Scorpio or Taurus (the two constellations associated with Upuaut by the Middle Kingdom Egyptian priests) or just the ineluctable working of cosmic energies, has reactivated Root's design.

Signs and Wonders

When Upuaut crosses the Abyss into Chicago's Twilight, he sets off a tsunami of magical effects and mystical phenomena in Chicago. You should throw up as many portents as your players can stand, and perhaps one or two more to boot. Feel free to add lots more, keeping to the established themes of Root's architecture, Egypt, opening and wolves. This is a major magical event, and such things do not occur in isolation. You can stagger the timing if you like, to build up a sense of a city toppled out of balance or drop all the signs on the same night to point up the full shock and awe of Upuaut's coming. Likewise, you can continue these manifestations as long as you like or stop them early — some may become permanent haunts, while others may "damp out" as Chicago's center of gravity re-asserts itself.

• The grave of Ludwig Wolff at Graceland Cemetery (4001 N. Clark) has long been haunted by a spectral green-eyed dog. With Upuaut's arrival, the ghost dog now howls at the grave of John Wellborn Root, across the cemetery. Baroque-minded Storytellers can also add peculiar luminescence around the pyramidal grave of Peter Schoenhofen, also at Graceland.

• The glass-and-steel Federal Plaza on the corner of Dearborn and Jackson echoes the sound of piano music at night. The song is identifiable as the overture to Verdi's *Aida* (commissioned for the opening of the Hotel Cairo); the location is the former site of Burnham and Root's Great Northern Hotel. In an especially dramatic chronicle, Alexander Calder's famous "Flamingo" sculpture (in the center of the plaza) moves to the music, dancing in unwilling sway to Root's harmonics.

• The mummy of Meresamun, a temple singer of the 22nd Dynasty, begins to sing. Since her mummy, at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, remains sealed inside her sarcophagus, her trilling is only faintly audible, and therefore not easy to locate. Her song (much harder to identify than *Aida*) is a hymn to Upuaut.

• A ghostly boat is seen at night on the Midway Plaisance in Hyde Park, floating to the east on a shimmering canal. This stretch of the park was a canal during the 1893 World's Fair; the boat appears on the old site of the "Street in Cairo" exhibit. (The boat sails eastward because that is the direction the Boat of a Million Years sails in the Egyptian underworld. One of Upuaut's roles is that of its pilot.)

• Ghostly images of demolished Burnham and Root buildings shimmer in the skies over their sites, especially at the northeast corner of State and Randolph, where the Masonic Temple floats over a squat, ugly chain pharmacy.

• Similarly, the heat-shimmer of great fires rises over Jackson Park, the site of Burnham's White City, destroyed by fire in 1894.



• A mysterious whirlpool appears beneath the Kinzie Street Bridge opposite Wolf Point, where the Chicago River forks just north of the Loop.

• The basement of the Nile Restaurant in Hyde Park mysteriously floods. (For extra grue, the water can turn to blood before vanishing the next day.)

The Word on the Street

Many mages, especially Chicago-based ones, already have contacts in Chicago's spirit world. The following spirits can serve as examples; their information differs with their perspectives, their priorities and their powers. In general, weak spirits are too terrified of Upuaut to spill any useful information, and powerful spirits need to be placated. Some powerful spirits may well send the characters in the right direction, of course, in the hopes of killing them off or weakening Upuaut. Others have their own agendas.

• Ceres: The faceless statue of Ceres atop the Chicago Board of Trade building has a special connection to the underworld, as Ceres' daughter Persephone spends each winter there. She can see the turmoil of Upuaut's passage, and can identify him as a god and as "the wolf of Egypt, the Opener of the Way." She was erected by Root's son, however, so she will not betray Root's design.

• Bust of Marshall Field: One of the statues of famous retailers outside the Merchandise Mart, Marshall Field is also the founder of the Field Museum, which has an immense Egyptian collection. If properly motivated, he can see the approach of Upuaut.

• Ramses II: Twin statues of this pharaoh stand guard at Reebie Fireproof Storage (2325–33 N. Clark), relics of America's 1920s fascination with all things Egyptian. They actually know the most about Upuaut himself, although they postdate Root's plan.

• Other Chicago Guardians: Chicago is stiff with *genii territoriali*. If you have a specific spirit assigned the role of Chicago's guardian, perhaps manifesting in the lions at the Art Institute or the Picasso in Daley Plaza, it can identify the coming of "a dread god, an opener of the way" who endangers Chicago's very existence.

Death on the Red Line

Upuaut's first priority is to clothe himself in flesh, so that he can cross the Gauntlet more easily and move about the city by day if need be. On the night after his arrival, he seeks out suitable sacrifices, and finds them in the Uptown neighborhood. Implacably, he stalks and kills four men bearing the blood of the Nile: four illegal Egyptian immigrants. Upuaut harvests a vital organ from each one, and builds his new form from the meat. From Hossam Armanious, Upuaut tears the lungs; from Boutrous Fathy, Upuaut rips a liver; from Saad Batrawi, Upuaut carves out the stomach; from Mohammed Nawal, Upuaut yanks the intestines, the last ingredient. He leaves the bodies, torn by his terrible claws, behind. They are found by a local heroin addict, who tells his dealer, who tells Shenouda Muharrab, the boss of Uptown.

The last thing the unscrupulous Muharrab needs is a police investigation guaranteed to bring the Department of Homeland Security down on his neck. He has a perfectly good pipeline into the Middle East, which guarantees him plenty of off-the-books labor for local construction projects and other less-savory activities. When the bodies are found the next day, Muharrab hides them until nightfall, when he has them buried in asphalt in a parking lot somewhere on Peterson Avenue. This, of course, preserves the bodies in bitumen — a crude mummification that closes the mystical circuit.

Ghosts of Uptown

The third night, the four slaughtered Egyptians return from the grave. Muharrab has unknowingly locked them into the resurgent Egyptian myth pattern, and Upuaut has taken the organs they need to move on to the afterlife. The ghosts begin wandering the streets of Uptown, trying in their turn to steal the organs of the living with their ghostly hands. At first, the ghosts are too weak to do much but frighten their more sensitive victims, but as Upuaut opens the Door to the Land of the Dead wider, the ghosts grow stronger.

Although they still can't remove the organs they need, their desperate scratching begins to sicken their victims. Armanious' fingers leave pneumonia behind, Fathy's victims contract hepatitis, Batrawi's begin to develop Ménétrier's disease, and Nawal's suffer dysentery. Ever more frantic, the four increase the tempo of their attacks. You can adjust this to match the tempo of your game.

Enter the Characters

The rash of ghostly attacks in Uptown probably begins as more background details for the harried characters, but as the attacks continue and escalate, the characters should notice the seriousness. Investigation in Uptown turns up little but shocked eyewitness accounts of ghosts — and long lines at community hospitals. Only if you want to run a deliberately pulpish, stereotyped story does anyone in the Egyptian community know any of what's going on; Upuaut is obscure even to many Egyptologists.

However, between the witness reports of "cold hands clutching" at specific locations, and the oddly parallel incidences of sickness, the characters should at the very least come up with the list of four organs taken. Any occultist worth her salt recognizes them as the four organs stored in Egyptian canopic jars, removed during mummification and preserved outside forever to ensure the existence of the mummy's spirit in the Land of the Dead.

Roads to the Truth

If the characters still haven't got off the dime, the following ways can help you to force the issue:

• Ménétrier's disease is a very rare stomach ailment. A cluster of cases in Uptown will eventually make its way to Chicago medical authorities and onto the evening news. This can help direct the characters' attention to the Uptown hauntings; perhaps the news anchor can even add a

real plot-hammer like: "In other Uptown news, reports of ghost sightings have been flooding police switchboards. A little early for Halloween, eh Linda?"

• The heroin addict who found the bodies, his perceptions cracked by the spoor of Upuaut, may wind up crossing the Gauntlet during a drug-induced doze. He might tell any number of spirits what he saw, at which point the story can get back to the characters if they keep up their spirit contacts. He might even approach the characters himself, either in the spirit world or on the street, impelled by drug-addled intuition: "Are you dudes here about the four vanished dead guys?"

• At some point, as the ghost attacks escalate, one of the illegal aliens forced to bury the four bodies talks, even if it means his deportation. An anonymous 911 call tips off the police to the bodies under the parking lot; when four mutilated Egyptian men turn up in ghost-plagued Uptown, this should do the trick for even the slowest players. However, now they have to dodge suspicious cops, and eventually the very suspicious Department of Homeland Security.

• Whether the characters wait for the police to go work or identify the ghosts earlier, the dead men have nothing in common except their nationality, immigration status and jobs with Muharrab's construction company. Three of Upuaut's four victims were Coptic Christians; Mohammed Nawal was a Sunni Muslim. Other than confirming their identities, Father Constantine at St. Mark's in Palatine and the mullahs in Mohammed Nawal's mosque on North Lincoln have no useful information or insights unless you want these holy men to feed clues to lost players.

In the final analysis, the issue comes down to the characters and four panicky, but increasingly dangerous, ghosts.

The Company of Wolves

With all the wolf imagery in the portents, and Upuaut's savage murders and mutilations, some players may decide the solution lies with Chicago's Uratha. It's up to you how much any of the characters know (or even care, at this point), but obviously werewolves are ideally placed to see into the spirit world and note Upuaut's passage. Treat werewolf Storyteller characters as you would in any other circumstance — as powerful, but unpredictable, forces. Clumsy characters may wind up offending the Forsaken, but the coming of Upuaut offers an opportunity for common action and the forging of a potentially useful connection.

This story could also support Uratha characters, either as part of a crossover chronicle or as a Werewolf: The Forsaken story in its own right. Werewolves will be at a relative advantage here, with their greater familiarity with the spirit world. Very powerful Uratha might even be able to track Upuaut into Chicago through the Shadow, forcing him to operate outside in the daylight almost exclusively — or to lay a spirit ambush for his pursuers.

Ghostly Victims

Quote: "*Oh, God, the pain . . . it never stops hurting . . . oh, God . . .*"

Background: These four apparitions were the first victims of Upuaut in Chicago, as described previously.

Description: Each ghost appears as a translucent version of its living self, bearing the horrible claw wounds that killed it. The absence of the organ stolen by Upuaut is horribly obvious. The ghosts moan in agony, babble prayers and curses in Arabic or Coptic and claw at passersby, trying to take new organs to stanch the crippling pain. As Upuaut opens the Door, the ghosts' attacks become more powerful, spreading disease to the organs that ever elude their spectral grasp.

A plus sign (+) after a statistic indicates that it increases over time; one point every time the ghosts are encountered, or every two or three days, seems about right. Storytellers should adjust this rate to control the lethality of the story.

Storytelling Hints: The ghosts are to be pitied, but their depredations also make them a threat to more innocent people. The ghosts can wander the streets of Uptown freely, since they did construction work all over the neighborhood in life. They appear at night.

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 2+, Finesse 2, Resistance 2
Willpower: 4
Essence: 4+
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2+
Speed: 15+ (species factor 10)
Size: 5
Corpus: 7
Numina: Ghost Speech, Terrify
Worsening Sickness: The victims of Upuaut spread sickness to those they "touch" during their manifestations. With a successful Power + Finesse — Defense roll made against a subject, the ghost can infect her with a supernatural affliction that mimics a mundane disease. The victim suffers lethal damage equal to the ghost's Power immediately upon contact, unless the victim makes a successful reflexive Stamina + Resolve action, penalized by the ghost's current Power. A victim continues to suffer damage from the disease every day thereafter unless she succeeds on another reflexive Stamina + Resolve action that day, again penalized by the ghost's current Power. Keep track of the successes accrued on these rolls to resist the ghostly affliction as if the character were attempting an extended action with one roll allowed each day. When the victim has scored a total of 10 successes on rolls to resist the disease, she has overcome it.
Once a victim has been afflicted with this ghostly ailment, she cannot be infected again until she overcomes the previous bout. A victim is either infected or she is not.
At the Storyteller's discretion, it may be possible to combat the illness with an extended Intelligence + Occult (instead of Medicine) action with a target number of 25 successes and one attempt possible each day.
Ban: Per ancient Egyptian funerary magic, the destruction of their bodies also destroys these ghosts.



That Corpse You Planted

Awakened and clothed, Upuaut has moved through the city studying it and mapping its sorcerous geography. As he becomes more familiar with Root's design, Upuaut's passage no longer stirs up the mystical mud. The Opener of the Way moves along Root's hidden geometries, strengthening them. Upuaut finds the perfect locus for his Stygian energies, and harnesses it to his purpose. And one night, Upuaut opens the Door to the Duat, the Land of the Dead. He brings Amemet, the horrific Eater of the Dead, out of Duat and into a hidden chamber beneath Wolf Point to begin the transformation of Chicago's afterlife.

And all hell breaks loose.

Motives

If you want to start this story immediately after "A Heap Of Broken Images," there are a few direct links between them:

• The characters may be in "hot pursuit" of Upuaut, having picked up his mystical spoor in the various portents or having gotten a hot tip from a local spirit.

• Likewise, the bodies of the four Egyptians provide links to Upuaut's fleshly home — if the characters somehow resolved the ghosts without destroying their corpses, no doubt divinations can put the characters on the right trail.

On the other hand, you can let the previous events lay fallow for awhile or even introduce this story on its own:

• The dramatic events at the Field Museum and Oriental Institute demand mystical investigation in their own right. As with the first story, mages in Chicago have ample motives.

• A vampire of the Ordo Dracul could notice Upuaut's manipulation of local ley lines before the opening of this story. She might well request that the "expendable" mages investigate the situation, for any number of twisty reasons. Her methods of persuasion may include threats, bribery, deal-making or a mix of them all.

• Once Upuaut begins filling the tunnels beneath the city with his "recruits," Chicago's subterranean vampires take notice.

They, likewise, may plead with the characters to "clean up the magical mess." Max Maurey himself may call in favors with the Consilium to get it done.

The Horror at the Museum

On the first morning that Amemet appears through the open way to Duat, another spate of magical effects ripples across Chicago. You can toss in anything that strikes your fancy, but the following events are obviously the most significant.

Wake Up, Little Susie

"Sue," the world's largest Tyrannosaurus skeleton (on display in the main gallery of the Field Museum) falls on her face in obeisance to Amemet. Her arms and jaw point northwest, toward Wolf Point. To mundane eyes, this is comical or embarrassing. To mage-sighted eyes familiar with the threads of Fate, this is much more telling.

Memory and Desire, Stirring

The Field Museum also has North America's largest mummy collection; all 33 mummies and six mummified heads awaken. The mummies on public display can't escape their cases but are discovered hammering weakly against the glass or scrabbling at the roofs of their coffins. The mummies in storage are another matter. It's up to you how many of them get out, but the possibilities range as follows:

- The mummified heads can do little but chatter their teeth and hiss with rage.
- Many mummies, especially in late dynastic Egypt, had their bones broken to fit into pre-fab sarcophagi. Those mummies flap spastically or crawl along the floor, pulled by limp limbs.
- Some mummies might have been so badly preserved, or so badly damaged by later excavation and study, that not even their *khaibit* — their metaphysical shadow — remains in the universe. These mummies lie inert.
- Mummies might attack night watchmen, janitors, curators working late or anyone else in the museum. If you have planted prophecies or rumors to bring the characters here on this particular morning, the mummies definitely swarm them, drawn by the rich smell of fresh magic. If you wish to be charitable, some of the Field Museum exhibits may include magical weapons or other useful items.
- At least one mummy escapes into the basement tunnels beneath the museum, which connect with the coal tunnels and Chicago's Undercity. The mummy is drawn to Amemet.
- Mobile mummies who survive any encounters with the protagonists likewise hear the call of Amemet and slowly head for the tunnels themselves. (See the movie *The Relic* for an inspiring vision of the Field Museum's basement tunnels.)

The other major collection of mummies in Chicago is at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. The six mummies here (and five heads) likewise awaken, but, unless you want still more mummy-fighting carnage, are unable to escape. (Either the OI has superior magical protections or weaker mummies.) However, the temple singer Meresamun sings another, louder, hymn. This one, drawn from the *Book of the Dead*, describes Amemet. Needless to say, both the Oriental Institute and the Field Museum close for some time, citing "vandalism" or "earth tremors."

Finally, if the bodies of the four murdered Egyptians are still crudely mummified in the asphalt parking lot, they claw their way to the surface, lope to the nearest sewer and disappear.

The Word on the Street

Again, characters may seek out oracular help from the local *genii territoriali* or other major spirits. The most helpful spirits can reveal some or all of the following:

- The Opener of the Way has Opened the Road to the West, to the Duat, and the Devourer of Souls has emerged. Even conventional Egyptologists would recognize this as a reference to Upuaut and the Eater of the Dead, and might even note that one of Upuaut's incarnations was the mummified god Khenti-amentiu.
- Upuaut is under neither earth nor water, neither in a room nor outside, neither in the Duat nor out of it. The hinge of the Door he has opened is neither alive nor dead, neither beast nor human, neither hungry nor sated, neither whole nor broken. Mages and occult-minded sorts generally recognize this as a classic "liminal space," a boundary area where all sorts of rules don't apply.
- More prosaically, the spirit world around Chicago is roiled by new activity beneath the city, in the old coal tunnel network. Any spirit not terrified into acquiescence by the coming of Upuaut can testify to the "new doorway" down there somewhere.
- Finally, that Wolf Point whirlpool continues to churn away at odd times, which may lead especially intuitive characters (or players) to look beneath it.

And Down We Went

Between fleeing mummy tracks, prophetic warnings and the pointing finger of a Tyrannosaurus, the direction for the characters should be obvious. Access through the Wolf Point whirlpool is impractical (especially in broad daylight), so that means a trip through the coal tunnels is in order.

Twisty Little Passages

In 1899, street congestion in Chicago was so bad that coal deliveries to downtown became simply impossible. The Chicago Tunnel Company bought and expanded a network of tunnels, originally used as telephone conduits, 40 feet underneath the city. By 1914, 62 miles of tunnels ran under the city street grid from 18th Street in the south all the way up to Superior Street and from the mouth of the river westward to Halsted. The tunnels are six or seven feet high, four feet wide and floored with railway tracks. The walls curve up to arched ceilings,

and lighting is completely arbitrary, where it exists at all. After 1960, most of the system was abandoned. It proved its worth again in the 1980s and 1990s, when businesses strung their computer and other cables through the empty tunnels.

In Rats' Alley

Now, of course, the tunnels are filled not just with fiberoptics but with malign energies. As Upuaut moved through Chicago, he gathered up a generous portion of monstrosities and, as is only proper, stashed them in the new Duat he was building. This, of course, lets you put anything horrible down in the tunnels with a completely clear conscience. Some particularly choice discoveries include the following:

- Mummies guarding the approach to Amemet, of course.
- Ghosts of any sort. If the Door to the Duat stays open for any length of time, soon all the ghosts in Chicago start feeling the compulsion to descend to the tunnels.
- Flooded stretches may be full of slimy things or with prehistoric fish such as the groetnich (from **Antagonists**).
- Beshilu, the swarming Rat Hosts (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**). Upuaut especially encourages the Beshilu to gnaw at the Gauntlet here, to allow Chicago's netherworld to become a netherworld in fact.
- Hence, the geography of the tunnels is already changing, twisting and flowing with the waxing of Root's design. Any tunnel might lead to a Verge or even right into Shadow.
- Moros mages may even find the tunnels taking them toward Stygia itself, leading them into confrontation with that black Path. A glimpse of the Watchtower of the Lead Coin, itself creaking under Upuaut's architectural assault, caps the experience nicely.

Fear Death by Water

Once you've judged the dungeon experience has gone on long enough, or if the characters come up with some clever method of navigating or traveling through the black, dripping tunnels, they reach the chamber beneath Wolf Point where Upuaut has opened the Door to the Duat. The Door is sealed with poured concrete, into which Upuaut has carved hieroglyphic spells maintaining the Door. Upuaut can dematerialize and pass through this wall; others may find it a challenge.

Once inside, the chamber proves half-full of stagnant river water, thick with algae and muddy weeds. The chamber is about 25 feet wide and 100 feet long, ending in a similar concrete plug on the other side. On the characters' side is the vast, crocodilian form of Amemet, the Eater of the Dead. Behind Amemet is a vampire, sunken in torpor and lying on a rudely dressed stone slab sticking up out of the water. (No clan, bloodline, order or other stats appear for this sleeping vampire; you should tailor him to your individual chronicle and to the level of challenge you feel appropriate.) The vampire is dressed in buckskins, with a scanty beard growing from the yellowish folds of his leathery face. He lies on his back, his head pointed west, with his arms crossed over his massive chest and his talons tangled in his long black hair. This posture is not only an Egyptian funerary pose indicating royalty; the pose also conceals the deep, unhealed axe wound in his back. Upuaut has used this wound as the Doorway for Amemet, and, by extension, the new Doorway to Duat.

Destroying the vampire lord (whose wound serves a function for Amemet similar to a spirit's fetter) severs Amemet's connection to the Duat. Given the magical circumstances, and Upuaut's mystical linkage of this vampire to all death in Chicago, destroying the vampire may have many other consequences as well. Not least, every other vampire in Chicago might instantly experience a hallucinatory death-scream, a clear vision of the characters destroying a sleeping vampire.

It will take transcendently powerful healing magic to close the wound in the vampire's side, and such a spell would carry the very real risk of awakening the vampire. The hungry, *hungry* vampire.

Down Among the Dead Men

Just as "A Heap Of Broken Images" invoked werewolf imagery, this story deals with vampires. The potential interests of the Ordo Dracul and the Kindred of the Undercity appear in the "Motives" section above. Other Chicago vampires hardly need an excuse to involve themselves, most likely at inconvenient junctures.

Vampire characters, either in a mixed chronicle or a Vampire: The Requiem game, could play this story almost as written, whether they were involved in the previous story or not. Mystical Kindred such as the Circle of the Crone or the Ordo Dracul will be at some advantage in the early going.

Mummified Zombies

Quote: "*To the Doorway . . . the Door to the West . . .*"

Background: These mummified zombies are corpses prepared with the intent of preserving them forever, ensuring the continuous survival of the soul. They are essentially zombies, created using the rules from the World of Darkness supplement, **Antagonists**, but usable with just the information included here. If an ability is not described below, it's effects have already been factored into the statistics elsewhere.

Description: Wrapped in blackened bandages, mummies are often difficult to distinguish from the corpses inside. Their spindly limbs are deceptively, supernaturally strong.

Storytelling Hints: With the exception of Meresamun (who is protected by her sacred status and her impen-

etrable sarcophagus), the mummies are drawn to Amemet to protect the Doorway. It's up to you whether they attack anyone on the way and, if so, how many and whom. With enough time — or an incredibly apocalyptic chronicle — zombies of other sorts might heed the call as well.

The statistics below are guidelines; feel free to alter them.

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 1, Resilience 5
Willpower: 0 (but they use Amemet's Willpower of 11 to resist attempts to distract them from her call)
Initiative: 1
Defense: 4
Speed: 4
Size: 4 or 5 (depending on decay and Size at death)
Health: 7 (Zombies do not suffer wound penalties or differentiate between types of damage.)
Physical Integrity: 10 (Treat these as additional Health.)
Aspects: Indestructible, Limited Intelligence, Magic Resistance (+4 Resilience when resisting magical effects), Preservation 3, Special Attack (Crushing Grip), Tough, Undead Strength (+1 to all dice pools involving physical strength)
Weaknesses: Residual Memories. These zombies can be stymied for 5 turns by presenting them with Egyptian religious symbols and iconography, but this trick only works once.
Crushing Grip: (dice pool 7) These zombies deal bashing damage with their supernaturally powerful limbs.

Aspect of Amemet, the Eater of the Dead

Quote: "*Give over your soul, that you may face your proper fate.*"

Background: Amemet (also Am-mit, Ammut, etc.) accompanies Anubis (and later Upuaut) in the Hall of Ma'at (Fate) in the Duat, the Egyptian underworld. Her function is to draw unworthy, sinful souls to herself and devour them. She has also been depicted as a protectress of Osiris, the dead king of the Duat.

This being is a spiritual manifestation of an aspect of Amemet — the devourer of sinners — not the god herself, though that's hardly obvious when she's first encountered.

Description: Amemet has the head of a crocodile, the body of a lion and the hindquarters of a hippopotamus — all man-eating creatures greatly feared by the Egyptians. She is small for a hippopotamus, but quite large for a lion or crocodile.

Storytelling Hints: Amemet exists as the embodiment of the ultimate threat — total discorporation. She is feared by the living and the dead alike. She knows this.
Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 9, Resistance 12
Willpower: 11
Essence: 20 (max 25)
Initiative: 21
Defense: 12
Speed: 30 (species factor 9)
Size: 8
Corpus: 20
Influences: Sinners 4
Numina: Devouring the Slain (as per the Death spell), Materialize, Quicken Corpse (as per the Death spell), Soul Snatch, Soul Jar (as per the Death spell),
Ban: For now, she is tied to the sleeping vampire, drawing her Essence through his wound, the gate to the Duat. If her gate is closed, either by destroying the vampire or (less likely) healing the wound, she can no longer draw Essence from the Duat. Until that happens, she gains 1 Essence from through the gate every turn.
Also, Amemet cannot harm the truly just. Any mage with a Wisdom of 8+ or a human (or ghost) with Morality 8+ is immune to any attack from Amemet — unless the character been busy exercising his Vice during this scene.

Burst in the Violet Air

With the Door to the Duat closed on him, Upuaut has no other option but to lean his will entirely against the broken and incomplete Root plan. He has located a lens suitable for his architectural magics, and attempts to conjure a lost Root masterpiece out of Shadow to use as a fulcrum for the instauration of She-Ka-Gau. With that accomplished, a final keystone locks Root's paradise into existence and completes the dream of Egypt on Lake Michigan.

Motives

If you are setting this story immediately following "That Corpse You Planted," the following are one or two potential direct links joining them:

- The characters stumble onto a hieroglyph-marked tunnel running roughly south from Wolf Point to the basement of the Reliance Building. This is obviously Upuaut's back door.
- With the banishing of Amemet, Meresamun, the temple singer at the Oriental Institute, can plainly sing the harmonies she has been hearing all this time. A modicum of sorcerous translations notes that these are characteristic ratios in Root's architecture, specifically those of the Reliance Building (doubled as a fugue in Meresamun's song) and of the now-demolished Masonic Temple just up State Street.

On the other hand, the appearance of an Egyptian wolf-god in downtown Chicago, even at 3:33 in the morning, is the sort of thing that draws inquisitive mages no matter how long it's been since the cleansing of the tunnels. Although you can introduce other Storyteller characters drawn by Upuaut's actions, they should be unable to meaningfully affect the situation unless you find yourself in dire need of a last-minute save. As a wolf-god, Upuaut is forced to respect the hunt — he must accept the characters' challenge, where he would otherwise alter space to prevent others' approach.

Towers Upside Down

John Wellborn Root designed the Reliance Building, on the southwest corner of State and Washington, in 1890, but died before more than the foundation and base could be built. (The Atwood Café now occupies Root's original ground floor.) Burnham completed the tower from his own plans in 1895; it is now fully restored as the Hotel Burnham.

In 2000, Booth/Hansen redesigned the Butler Building on the northwest corner of State and Randolph, a block north of the Reliance Building, as a close duplicate of Burnham and Root's masterpiece. The two 17-story towers face each other across "Block 37," an uncannily empty lot backed onto a building containing one of the main electrical transformers in the city. The lot variously holds ice rinks, artists' pavilions, Christmas trees, children's craft fairs or nothing much at all.

A Moment in the Glass

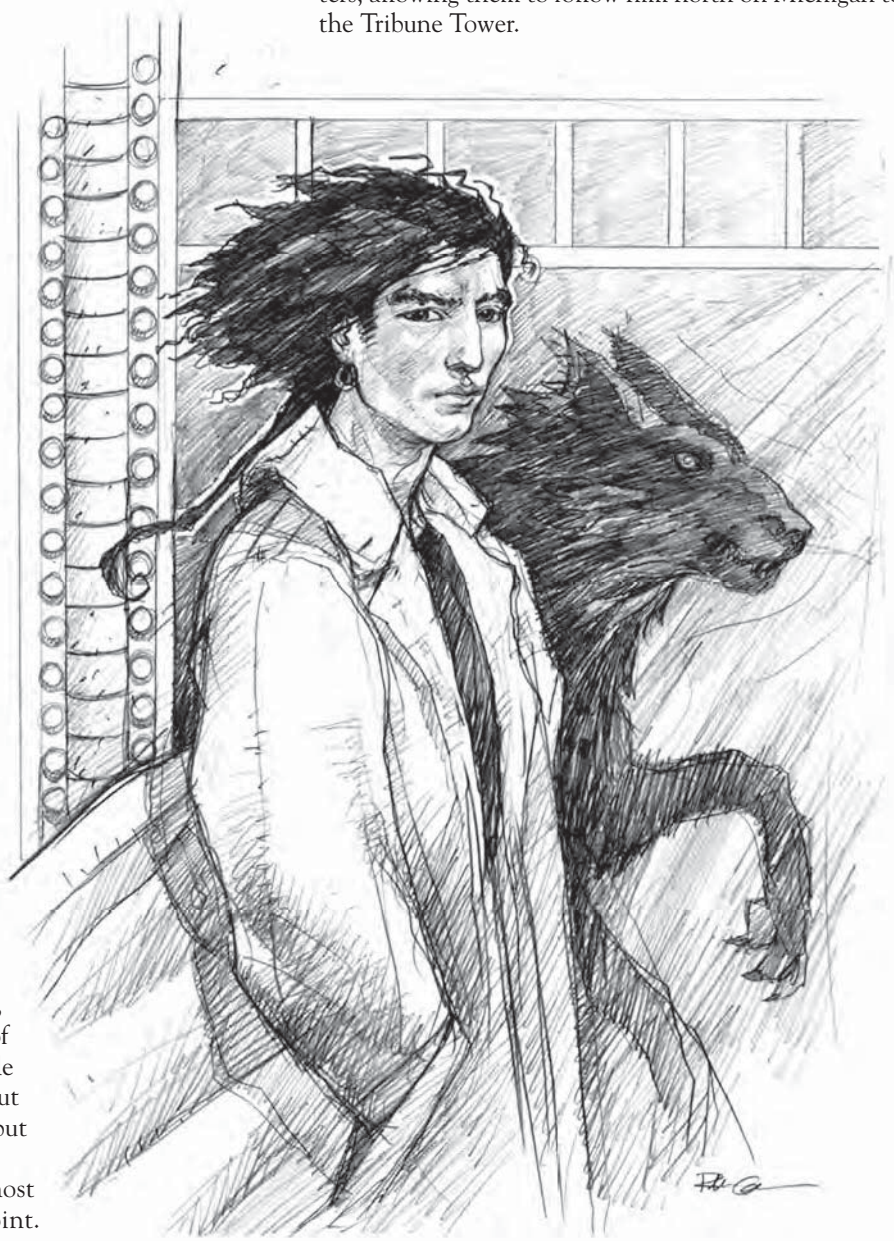
One morning at 3:33 A.M., Upuaut emerges in Block 37. The few passing Sleepers notice nothing, perceiving him as either a large dog or a gaunt man. The Awakened, of course, see the wolf-god in his full splendor — possibly for the first time since his arrival in Chicago. He begins drawing on the power buried beneath Root's Reliance Building, reflecting and folding the power back on itself between the "mirrored" Reliance and Butler Buildings.

When he has built up sufficient Mana inside the keystone (i.e., when the characters have arrived on the scene), he sends it arcing and swirling across State Street, to the dumpy chain pharmacy opposite the Butler Building. The power splashes and clings against hidden steel girders, flowing down to the ground and leaving stripes of bright terra-cotta in its wake. Root's magnificent Masonic Temple, the tallest building in the world when Burnham completed it in 1892, is appearing out of the stuff of dreams and Shadow. The Temple is also erasing the pharmacy out of existence, as it happens, but that's a small price to pay.

The characters should almost certainly interfere at this point. You can decide the effectiveness of any specific strategy, and the dice will fall as they may, but the end result will doubtless fall into one of the two following extremes:

Upuaut Victorious

The Masonic Temple hangs in the night air, buzzing and humming as it begins to shakily re-align Chicago's reality around itself. Magical power courses through Root's decrepit geomantic designs, occasionally detonating in arcs of bright sunlight that leave hot, dry wind in their wake. A low thrum passes between the Masonic Temple and the Reliance Building's foundation, as the Temple knits itself into the city. Upuaut does not even favor his foes with a dismissive look, but raises his muzzle to the Temple and howls at its glorious new reality. He calls out an invocation to Imhotep, lord of architects, master of the pyramids, and stalks off down Randolph Street toward the lake. Upuaut is contemptuous of the characters, allowing them to follow him north on Michigan to the Tribune Tower.



Upuaut Defeated

Once it becomes clear to Upuaut that he cannot win this battle with the forces currently at his command, he flees the scene. (It turns out to be very difficult indeed to keep the Opener of the Way in one place, should the characters attempt it.) He lopes down Randolph, then skids into a turn on Michigan, arrowing north for the Tribune Tower and the last hope of She-Ka-Gau.

Agony in Stony Places

Win or lose, Upuaut needs more power to complete Root's design, and without the Duat open, the olf-god has only one place to get it. There is a large chunk of the Great Pyramid of Giza embedded in the northwest corner of the Tribune Tower on Michigan Avenue — an unbreakable link to the ultimate expression of Egyptian sacred architecture and geometric magic. With Upuaut channeling Root's harmonics, and with the unique properties of the Great Pyramid fully in play, the plaza in front of the Tribune Tower is a sort of Demesne — vulgar magic is considered covert for purposes of Paradox and such there and then. Again, the few Sleepers out this early react with muzzy confusion, wandering through what seems like merely a vivid waking dream.

Here, in the violet light of an early Chicago morning, Upuaut makes one last attempt to bring She-Ka-Gau into existence by main force. He uses himself as the Doorway, pouring the energies of Egypt through his form, broadcast over Root's network across the city. To do this, he must continuously touch the pyramid stone until sunrise. The length of time remaining from Upuaut's arrival until sunrise is, of course, up to your sense of dramatic (and climactic!) timing.

Inexplicable Splendor

When his talons first scrape the stone, a shaft of golden light pours up the side of the Tribune Tower, refracting through the flying buttresses and Gothic crenelations atop it. Every time Upuaut touches the stone thereafter, pieces of She-Ka-Gau appear overlaid on still-sleeping Chicago, in a lightning flash of architectural excess. When his claws leave the stone, the images fade. This is where you should go overboard, surrendering to the moment and describing the wonder and the glory of Root's mad vision. A few sample elements include the following:

- Pyramids rise to the north and east, replacing the Hancock Building and Sears Tower.
- Root's designs, riotous with color and ornament, spread across building fronts and tower over dull office blocks.
- It's full daylight in Egypt — cracks of deep azure ripple across the sky and rich shafts of sunlight pour down into the street.
- The Chicago River seems wider, lined with palm trees and smooth, colonnaded temples.
- Street lights suddenly resemble giant, blossoming brass acanthus and papyrus plants, glowing with vermilion and lapis radiance.

In short, She-Ka-Gau should seem very tempting to the Awakened: a city of Awakened architecture, its design in pure and perfect harmony with the elements. At the same time, if they allow Upuaut to succeed, they'll be slaves to the forces that created the amazing city and all their mortal friends and family may be subjugated to the arrogant wills of mad wizards.

The Stones Cry Out

No kidding, there really is a piece of the Great Pyramid of Khufu embedded in the northeastern corner of the Tribune Tower. "Colonel" Robert R. McCormick, the Tribune's publisher, was one of the great American eccentrics. He had Tribune correspondents and stringers all over the world pick up pieces of famous buildings — not always with their owners' permission — and ship them back to Chicago. In some cases, he refused to send his reporter a paycheck until McCormick got the rock he coveted! The result was 134 stones from all 50 states and any number of foreign countries, cemented into the walls of his Gothic skyscraper.

In the World of Darkness, the Tribune Tower has become a kind of sorcerous anomaly. The different rocks serve as a kind of magical "mask" for the building, fuzzing out its sorcerous signature. Many of them provide magical linkages, similar to ley lines, to their original site. And, naturally, since the whole thing was assembled by unconscious mania rather than by magical design (as far as anybody knows, that is), the stones may have any other sort of effect the Storyteller desires, opening doors to any number of spirit realms or even to power flows from the reaches of the Supernal. Some of the more mythic or iconic rocks in the Tower walls include bricks or stones from:

- The Taj Mahal in Agra, India
- The Coliseum in Rome
- Notre Dame Cathedral and the Arc du Triomphe in Paris
- The Parthenon in Athens
- David's Tower in Jerusalem
- The Forbidden City in Beijing
- The Alamo
- The Berlin Wall
- The Kremlin in Moscow
- The Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome
- Omaha Beach, Normandy
- Mammoth Cave, Kentucky
- Angkor Wat in Cambodia
- Little Bighorn Battlefield, Montana
- The Moon. The moon rock is actually in a glass case in a window display, rather than jammed into the wall, but it's there.

Upuaut, the Opener of the Roads to the West

Quote: "*I am the one with the sharp arrow more powerful than the gods. I am the one who separates sky from earth.*"

Background: Upuaut (also spelled Wepwawet, or Ophios in Greek) is an obscure god originally worshiped at Lycopolis (Asyut) in Upper Egypt. The "Lord of the Necropolis" had many overlapping responsibilities with Anubis, whom Upuaut closely resembles. (Some killjoy Egyptologists believe that Upuaut is not meant to be a wolf at all, but a gray jackal.) Over the centuries, his cult became more and more important until he became Osiris' prime partner in governing the underworld and judging the dead. Upuaut helped pilot Ra's boat, and his standard rode before the pharaoh in battle and in city-building ceremonies.

This being is a manifestation of Upuaut's will to lead and dominate humanity — the aspect of himself he stretched into the mortal world to see his will be done.

Description: In tomb paintings and papyrus scrolls, Upuaut appears as a wolf-headed man clad in battle armor, wielding a bow and arrow and an adze. In Chicago, his spirit form is less distinct, a grayish cloud that gives the impression of hunger. Once clad in flesh, he can appear as a tall, Middle Eastern man, as a wolf (easily mistaken in poor light for a large dog) or in his full glory.

Storytelling Hints: Upuaut is a force of prophecy and destiny, like most Egyptian gods. He is utterly dedicated to establishing She-Ka-Gau and to "restoring" the glorious Egyptian realm of Root's dreams. It's possible Upuaut's even been spiritually altered by Root's dreams — possibly by devouring all the Essence stemming from Root's once-resonant buildings. Upuaut is implacable, inhuman and, like many gods, somewhat one-dimensional.

Rank: 5
Attributes: Power 15, Finesse 15, Resistance 13
Willpower: 12
Essence: 35 (max 50)
Initiative: 28
Defense: 15
Speed: 40 (species factor 10)
Size: 5
Corpus: 18
Influences: Gates 4, Cities 1
Numina: Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize (automatic with four different human organs), Material Vision, Space 2 (as per the Arcanum, dice pool 10)

Ban: Upuaut may not oppose Ra in anything. He suffers a –5 penalty on all actions in daylight. Images and dictums of Ra stymie Upuaut for one turn per success on actions (Presence + Expression, for example) to forcibly present them.

Fragments Shored Against Ruin

If Upuaut, even with one hand behind his back, succeeds in replacing Chicago with She-Ka-Gau, you have a few options.

- Leave it that way. Your chronicle will be forever altered, with a magical modern Egyptian city on the shore of Lake Michigan, but She-Ka-Gau becomes a major contest ground for the Exarchs — and for everyone else in the mystical world. Connections between She-Ka-Gau and various parts of the Shadow are up to you to make. Also, at your option, history may have been rewritten by Upuaut's sorcery — Chicago dived into full-blown Egyptomania led by Root and Burnham in the 1890s, and eventually became the global center for magic of all kinds.
- *Deus ex machina*. Some bigger, more amazing Storyteller character shows up and puts things right. This is less than ideal, but you can use this plot twist to drag the characters into their savior's schemes and plans for some time to come — after all, they (and Chicago) owe her.
- *Nihil ex machina*. Sadly, too many of Root's buildings have been demolished over the years. Too much of Chicago has fallen under the sway of steel boxes devoid of life or character. She-Ka-Gau shimmers, crackles and then collapses back into Chicago. Root's network is splintered for good. The shockwave can germinate any number of new stories, in Chicago, Egypt or anywhere else — the magical effect of an entire city imploding is fairly impressive, as all true heirs of Atlantis should appreciate. You are fully justified in causing all manner of terrible consequences for the characters as well, since they were caught directly in the path of the blast. Maybe only a handful of buildings have been altered, with mystical temples, Verges or new Hallows formed in Chicago's secret places out of the remains of Root's dreams.

But if, as we all devoutly hope, Upuaut is defeated, he has nowhere to run and no second chance. He is drawn through the pyramid stone with a last, echoing, mournful howl, and the city returns to its normal self.

Chart One: Vampire Political Relations

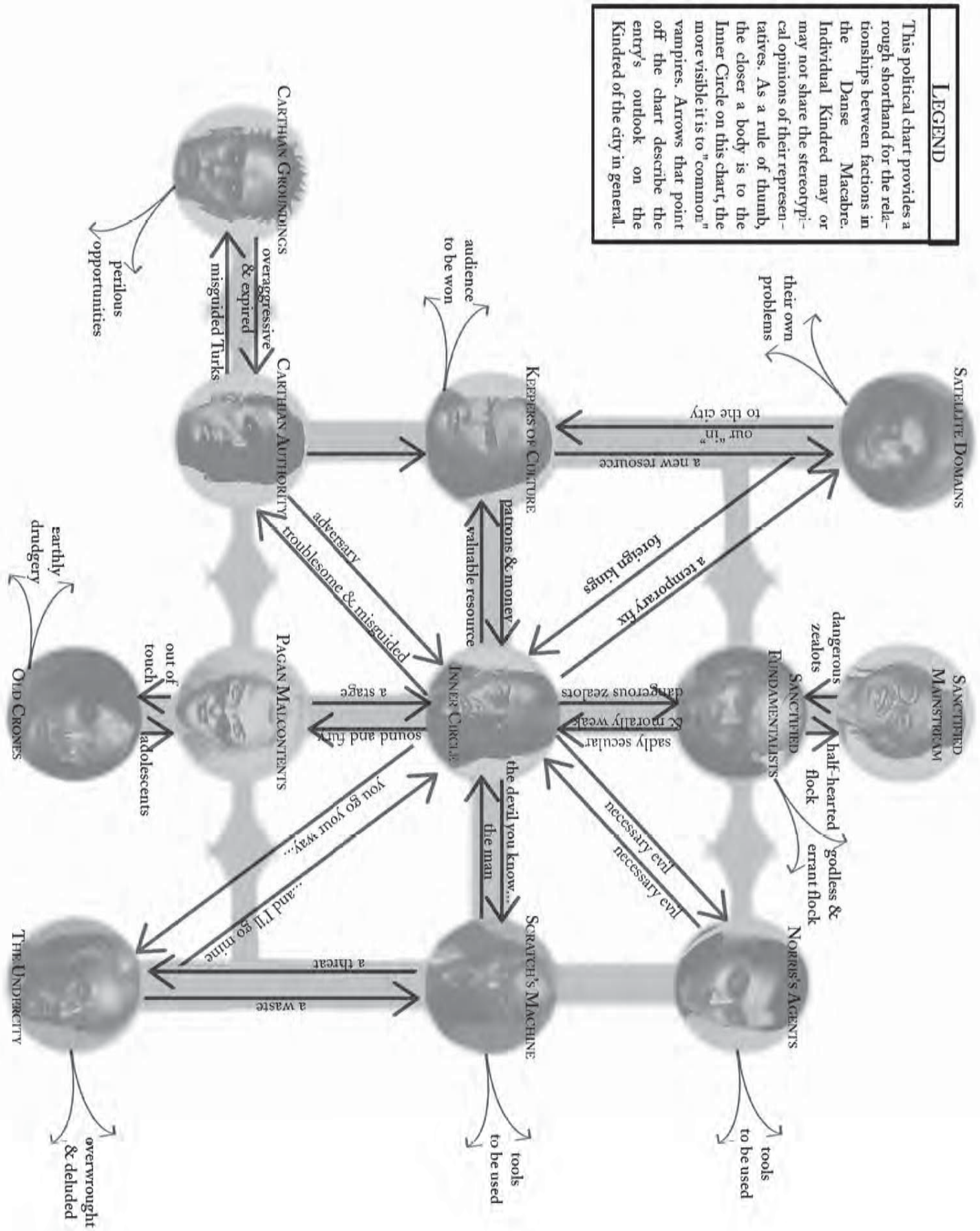


Chart Two: Vampire Hierarchy

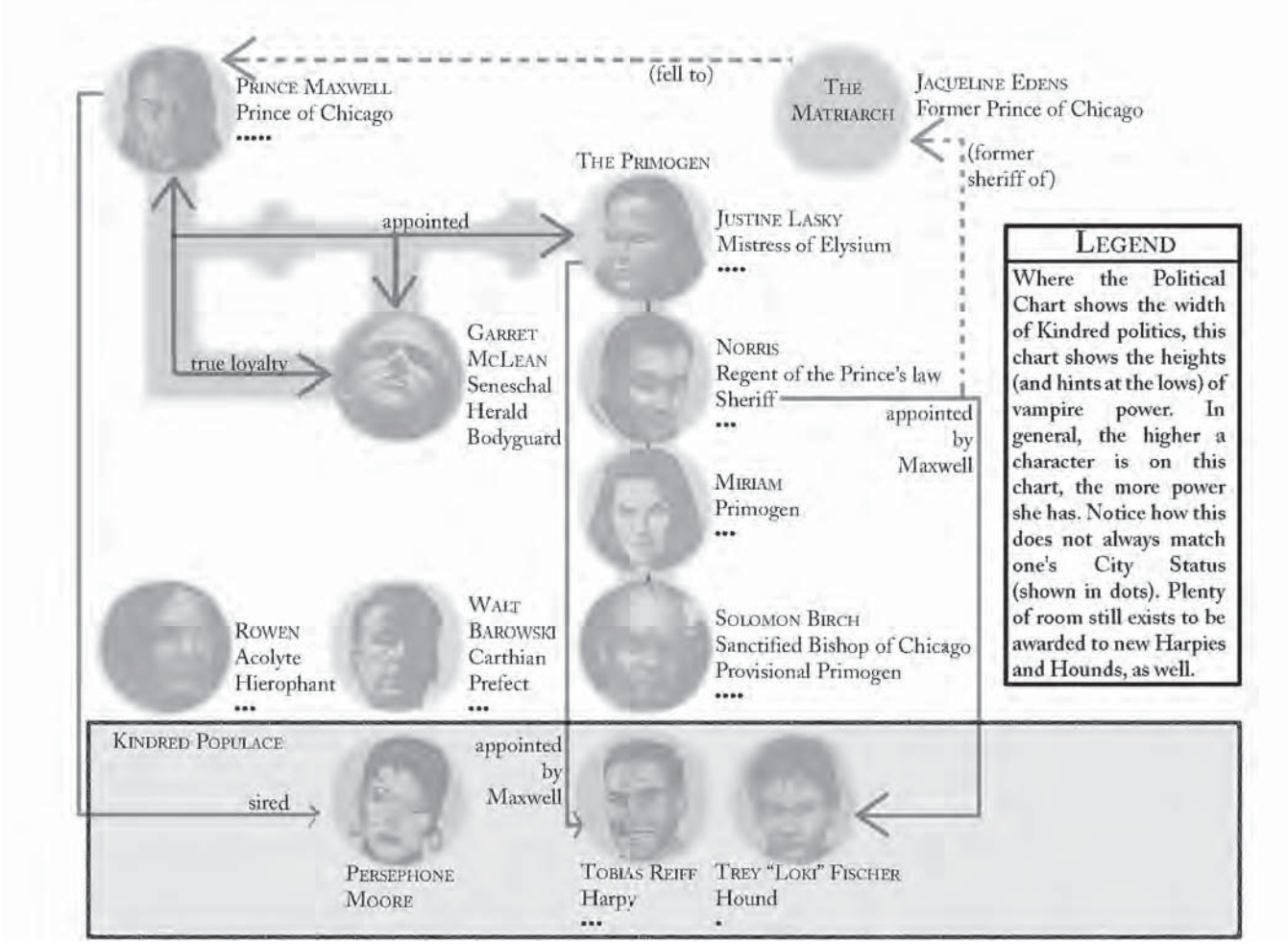


Chart Three: Vampire Personal Relations

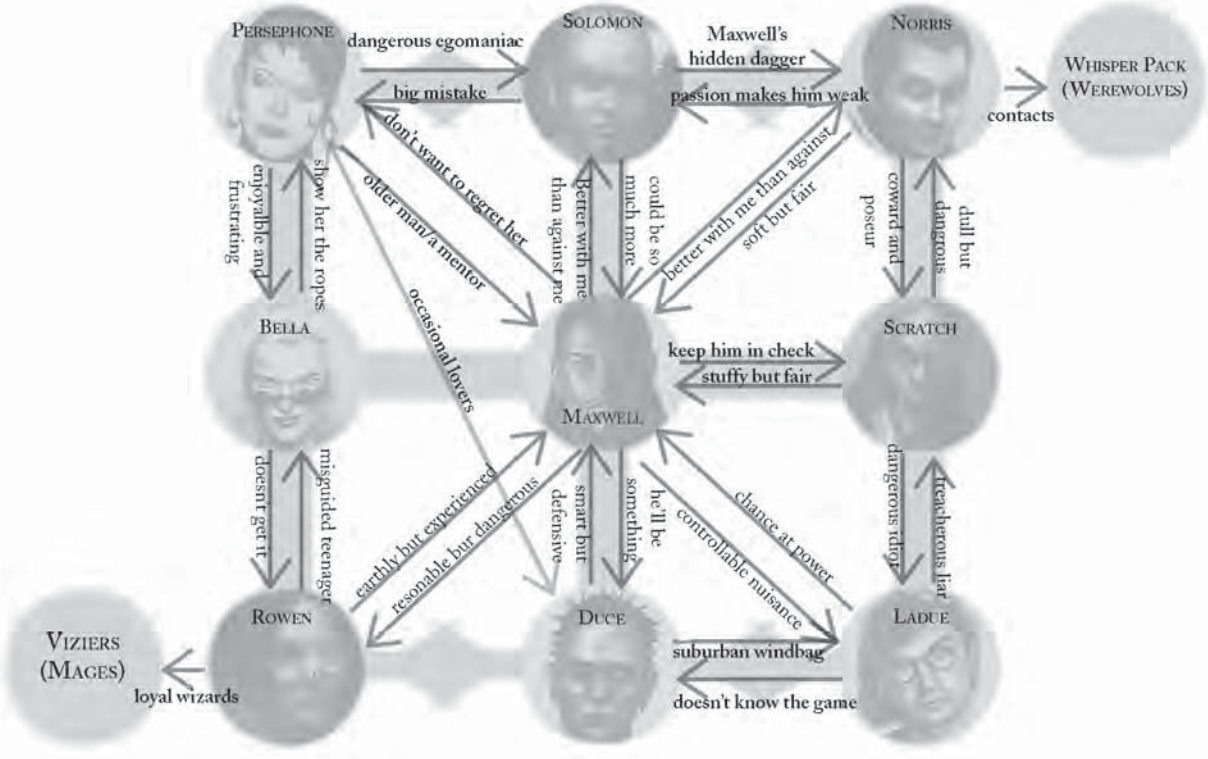
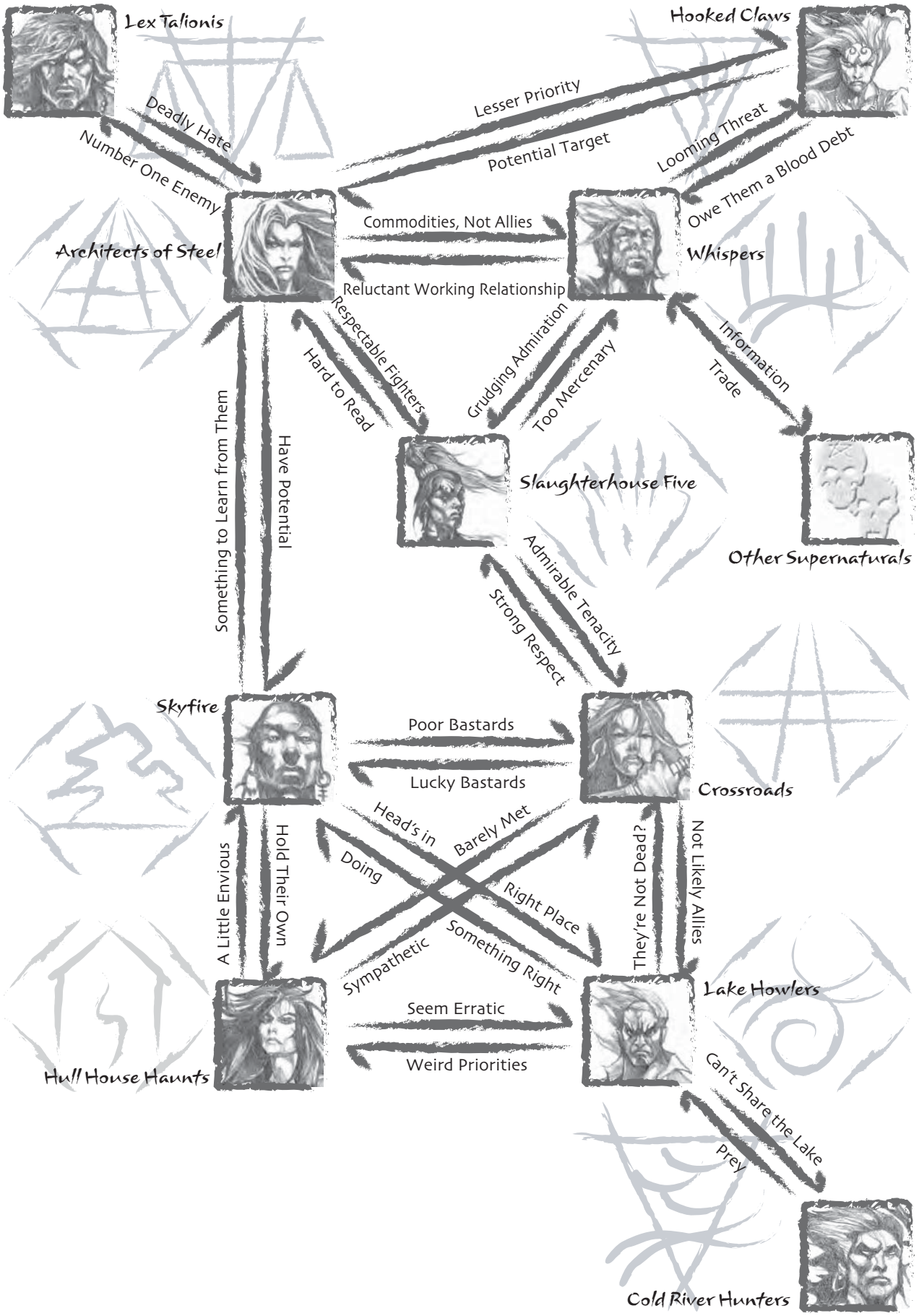


Chart Four: Werewolf Forsaken Packs



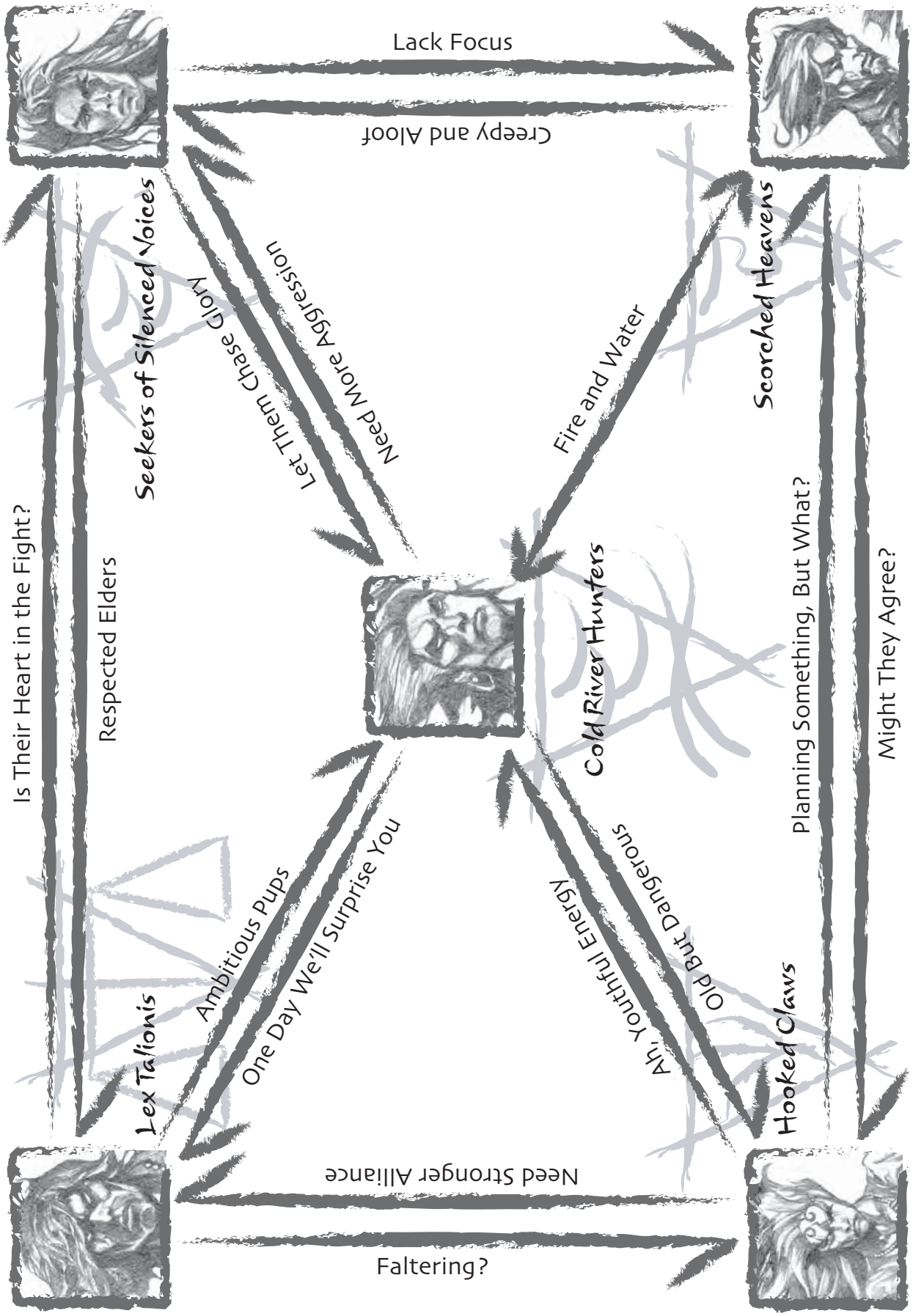

Lack Focus
Creepy and Aloof
Seekers of Silenced Voices
Let Them Chase Glory
Need More Aggression
Fire and Water
Scorched Heavens
Is Their Heart in the Fight?
Respected Elders
Cold River Hunters
Planning Something, But What?
Might They Agree?
Lex Talionis
Ambitious Pups
One Day We'll Surprise You
Ah, Youthful Energy
Old But Dangerous
Hooked Claws
Need Stronger Alliance
Faltering?

Chart Six: Mage Conflict

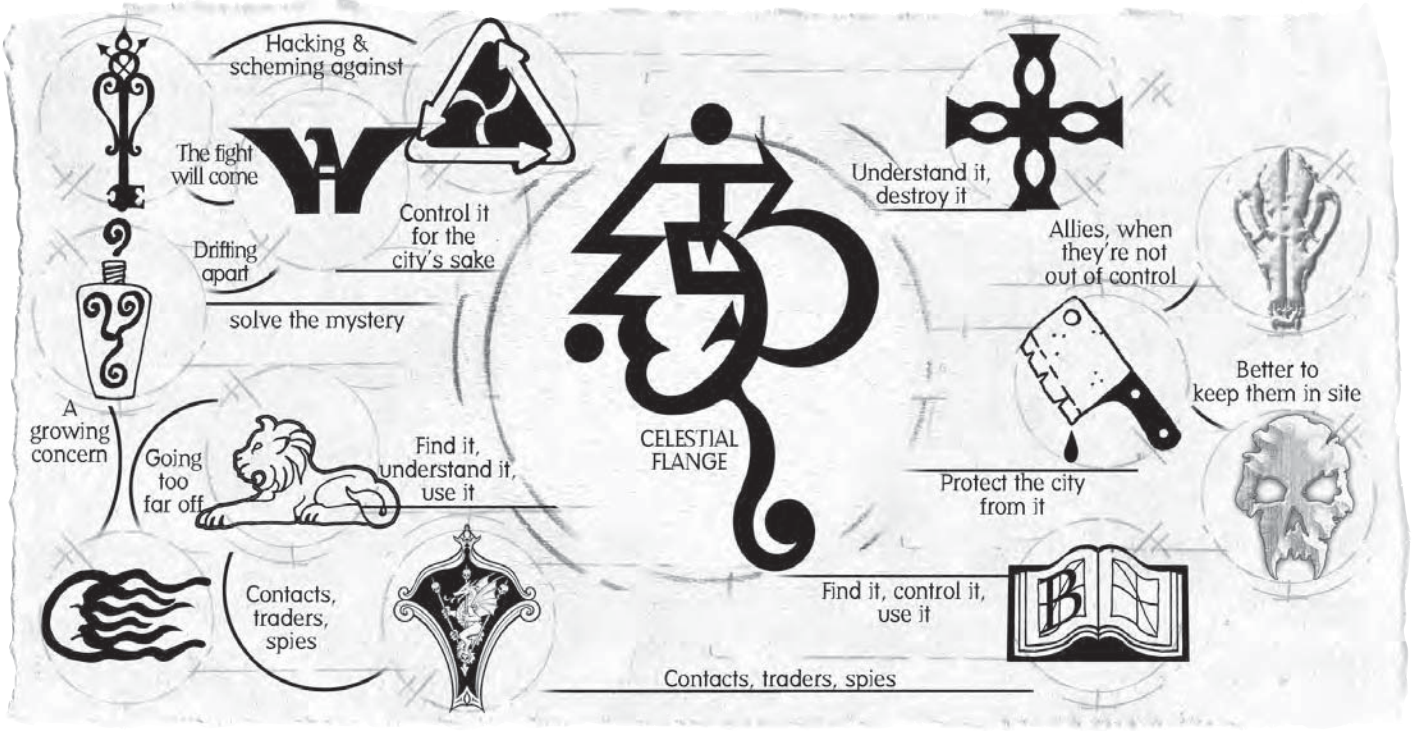
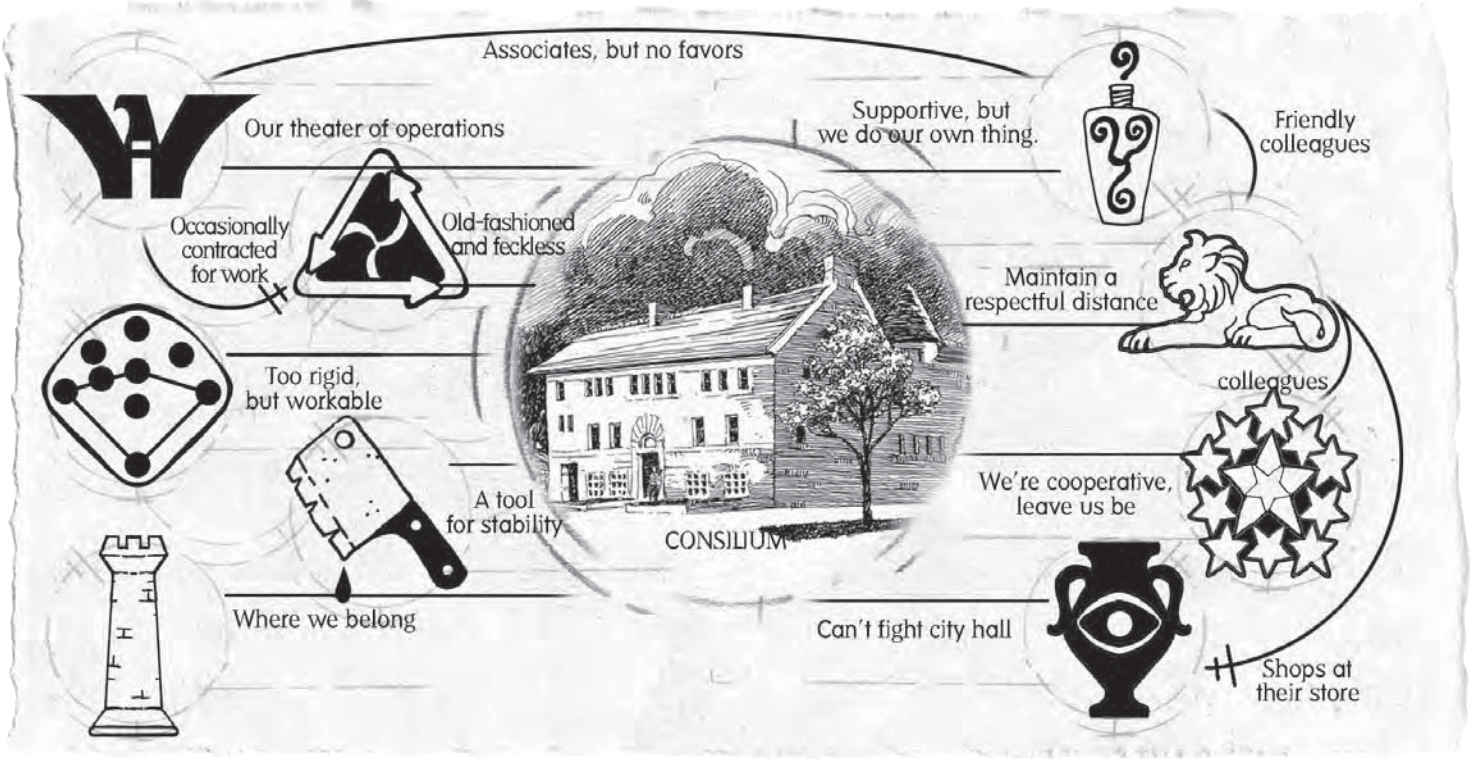


Chart Seven: Mage Political



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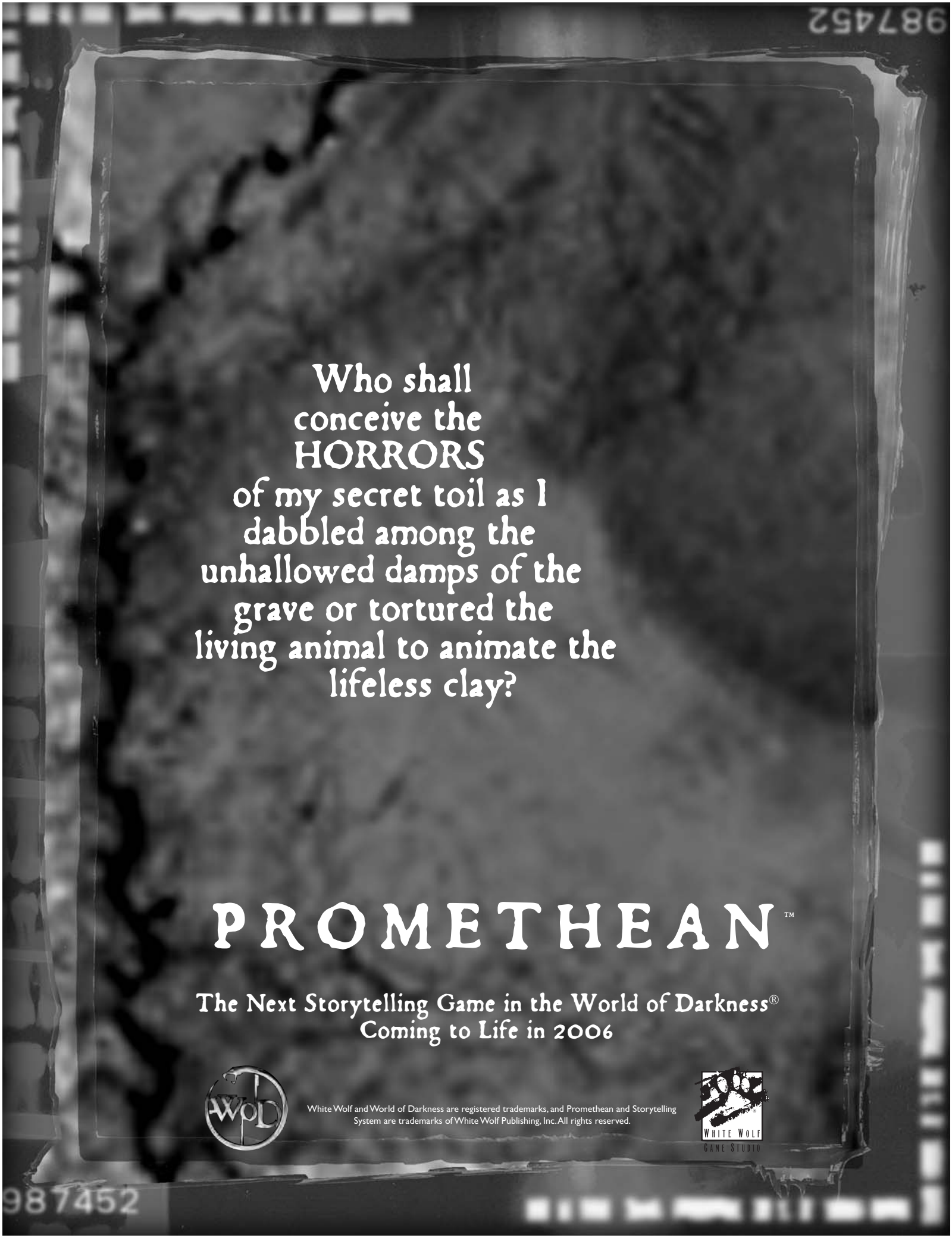
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