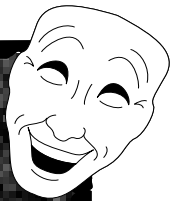# Chapter Five: Rules

"Rules! We've got some rules around this house…"
—Grandpa, "The Lost Boys"

There are times when a player will want to have her character do something that can't be accomplished through simple roleplaying, such as attacking another person, picking a lock or even searching for a file in a computer system. When this happens, you need rules.

Rules are an important part of any game: they define what can and cannot be done. Without them, there would be no winners or losers— in effect, there would be no limits. Your limitations and parameters help to define who you are and give you a sense of accomplishment when you manage to triumph over others.

Still, the primary focus of this game is to tell a good story, and it's always best to try to defeat your opponents through roleplaying and manipulation rather than by direct confrontation. When confrontation does occur, rules are necessary to govern those situations.

Time

Time in **Mind's Eye Theatre** works as it does in real life. It moves forward inexorably, relentlessly. For the most part, everything is played out in real time, and players are expected to stay in character unless they have a rules question.

During the course of a story, it is assumed that a player is always "in character." A player should never drop character when interacting with other players. Doing so ruins the atmosphere for everyone involved. Challenges may be talked through, but a player is always considered to be active in the game. If a player needs to take a break, he should inform a Narrator. That player should not interact with any of the other players while out of character.

The only other exception is when a Narrator calls for a "time out." This may be necessary to resolve a dispute or to change the scene if the story calls for it. When "Time Out!" is called, all players within hearing distance must stop whatever they are doing until the Narrator calls out the word "Resume." Time outs should be kept to a minimum, since they interrupt the flow of the story.

Challenges

"Mr. Lee, are you ready?"
—nameless toady, "Enter the Dragon"

During the course of most stories, there will come a time when two or more players will come into a conflict that cannot be resolved through roleplaying alone. This system allows for the resolving of conflicts simply and quickly, whether they're firefights or tests of will. This face-off is called a challenge. In most cases, a Narrator does not need to be present when a challenge is played.

Roleplaying does not necessarily have to end when a challenge begins. Experienced players can seamlessly integrate a challenge into their roleplaying so that outsiders don't know that anything unusual is going on. At the player's option, hand signals can be used to indicate when certain Traits and powers are being employed.

Lastly, in order for this system to work, players need to work together. Players need to educate each other on the rules and agree on what Traits can be used in a challenge. Compromise and cooperation are the bywords of the game.

The challenge system presented in this chapter is also part of the basic rules for the **Mind's Eye Theater** system. By combining **Apocalypse** with other games in the series, players can have werewolves interact with vampires, wraiths, mortals and other types of characters. This system of challenges is also included in **Masquerade Second Edition**.

Using Traits

Before you can begin to learn how challenges work, you must first understand what defines a character's abilities. A character is created by choosing a number of adjectives that describe and define that person as an individual. These adjectives are called Traits and are fully described in Chapter Three. These Traits are used to declare a challenge against another character or against a static force represented by a Narrator.

Initial Bid

A challenge begins by a player "bidding" one of her Traits against her opponent. At the same time, she must declare what the conditions of the challenge are, i.e. firing a gun, attacking with a stake, etc. The defender must then decide how she will respond. She can either relent immediately or bid one of her own Traits in response.

When players bid Traits against one another, they may only use Traits that could sensibly be used in that situation. Essentially, this means a player can usually only use Traits from the same category as her opponent's Traits. Most challenges are categorized as Physical, Social or Mental, and all Traits used in a challenge must be from the same category. Experienced players may offer each other more creative leeway, but that is strictly by mutual agreement.

If the defender relents, she automatically loses the challenge. For example, if she were being attacked, she would suffer a wound. If she matches the challenger's bid, the two immediately go to a test (described below). Those Traits bid are put at risk, as the loser of the test not only loses the challenge, but the Trait she bid as well.

Testing

Once both of the players involved in a challenge have bid their Traits, they immediately go to a test. The test itself is not what you may think— the outcome is ran-

dom, but no cards or dice are used. The two players face off against one another by playing Rock-Paper-Scissors. It may sound a little silly, but it works.

If you lose the test, you lose the Trait you used. The Trait is lost for the duration of the story (this usually means the rest of the evening). Essentially, you've lost some of your self-confidence in your own capabilities. You can no longer use that Trait effectively, at least until you regain confidence in your Traits.

The test works like the moment in poker when the cards are turned over and the winner is declared. From the test, there may be one of two outcomes: either one player is the victor or the result is a tie.

In the case of a tie, the players must then reveal the number of Traits that they possess in the category used (Physical, Social or Mental). The player with the least number of Traits loses the test and therefore loses the challenge. Note that the number of Traits you've lost in previous challenges, or lost for any other reason, *will* affect this total. The trick to the declaration is that you may lie about the number of Traits you possess, but only by declaring less Traits than you actually have— you may never lie and say that you have more Traits than you actually do. This allows you to keep the actual number of Traits you possess a secret, although doing so may be risky. The challenger is always the first to declare his number of Traits. If both players declare the same number of Traits, then the challenge is a draw and both players lose the Traits they bid.

Example of Play: *Helen, a Black Fury, is attacking Grady, a Bone Gnawer. Helen begins by bidding the Physical Trait: Ferocious ("I am Ferocious as I sink my teeth into your shoulder…"); Grady, who is only interested in surviving her attack and escaping, bids the Trait: Resilient ("But even as you bite through my three layers of dirty t-shirts, I know I'm Resilient enough to shrug it off!") Helen and Grady decide to test. They both play "rock"— a draw. Helen, who is the attacker, must decide how many of her seven Traits she wishes to declare. She has nothing to hide, so she declares all seven. Grady, who is a Ragabash, only has five Physical Traits. He loses the test. Grady will also lose his Physical Trait of Resilient and will take one wound level. Furthermore, Grady will not escape, and Helen can attack him again if she chooses to continue.*

Incidentally, certain advanced powers allow some characters to use gestures other than Rock, Paper and Scissors. Before they can use the gestures in a test, they must explain what they are and how they are used.
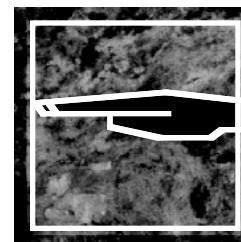
Rock-Paper-Scissors

If you don't happen to know (or remember) what we mean by Rock-Paper-Scissors, here's the concept: you and another person face off and, on the count of three, show one of three hand gestures. "Rock" is just a basic fist. "Paper" is just a flat hand. "Scissors" is represented by sticking out two fingers. You then compare the two
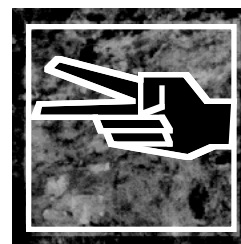
Rock
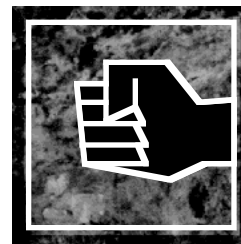
Paper

Scissors

gestures to determine the winner. Rock crushes Scissors. Scissors cuts Paper. Paper covers Rock. Identical signs indicate a tie.

Adjudication

If you have question or argument about the rules or the conditions of a challenge, you need to find a Narrator to make a judgment. Try to remain in character while looking for a Narrator. Any interruption in the progress of the story should be avoided, so work problems out with other players if at all possible. If you don't know the exact correct application of a certain rule, it would be best to wing it rather than interrupt the flow of the story. Cooperation is the key to telling a good story.

Complications

There are a number of ways in which a challenge can be complicated. The above rules are enough to resolve most disputes, but the following rules help to add a few bells and whistles.

Negative Traits

Many characters have Negative Traits: these are Traits that can be used against a character by his opponent. During the initial bid of any challenge, after you have each bid one Trait, you can call out a Negative Trait that you believe your opponent possesses. If he does indeed possess the Negative Trait, your opponent is forced to bid

an additional Trait, although you must still risk your one Trait as usual. If he does not possess that Negative Trait, *you* must risk an additional Trait. You may call out as many Negative Traits as you wish during the initial bid phase of a challenge, as long as you can pay the price if you're wrong.

If your opponent does not have additional Traits to bid, then your Trait is not at risk during the challenge. Additionally, if you guess more than one Negative Trait that your opponent cannot match, you gain that many additional Traits in the case of a tie or an overbid. The same works in reverse, favoring your opponent if you do not have additional Traits remaining to match incorrect Negative Trait guesses.

Example of Play: *Ray, a Shadow Lord Galliard, is using his Persuasion Gift and challenging Camille, a Toreador vampire, in a Social Challenge. He bids his Trait: Commanding ("My Commanding tone of voice overwhelms you as a sudden breeze blows through the room."), and she responds with Alluring ("I stand by the door, aloof and Alluring, while you act like an arrogant fool."). Ray then suggests that she is also Condescending ("You may be Condescending, but I can tell you're intrigued."). However, Camille does not posses this Negative Trait ("I'm not Condescending, I merely detest your arrogance."). Therefore Ray would have to risk an additional Social Trait, such as Persuasive ("Perhaps I can be Persuasive enough to convince you to stay?") if he wished to continue the challenge.*

It can be risky to bid Negative Traits, but if you're sure about what you're doing, you can raise the stakes for your opponent, possibly even to the point where she relents rather than risking additional Traits. Just make sure your sources of information are dependable.

Overbidding

Overbidding is the system by which elder Garou (who often have considerably more Traits than younger opponents) may prevail in a challenge, even if they lose the initial test. An elder Garou with 18 Social Traits should be able to crush a cub with five. This system is designed to make that possible.

Once the test has been made, the loser has the option of calling for an "overbid." In order to call an overbid, you must also risk a new Trait; the original one has already been lost. At this point, the two players must reveal the number of Traits they possess, starting with the player who called for an overbid. If you have double the number of Traits as your opponent in the appropriate category, you may attempt another test. As with a tie, you may state a number of Traits less than the actual number you have and keep your true power secret. This can be dangerous, though, unless you are completely confident in your estimation of your opponent's abilities.

Example of Play: *Sir Godfrey, a Silver Fang Ahroun, has decided to crush a whelp Fianna Ragabash like a bug. A test was called, and Sir Godfrey lost. At this point, Sir Godfrey,* confident of his abilities, calls for an overbid. Sir Godfrey is in Crinos form and has 15 Physical Traits, and the poor Fianna, Connor, is in Homid form and only has five Physical Traits. Sir Godfrey risks an additional Trait: Relentless. ("As I show my contempt for your insolence, I Relentlessly swing again!") They do a second test. This time they tie. Sir Godfrey clearly has more Traits and therefore wins. At the end of this challenge, Sir Godfrey has lost the initial Trait he bid from the first test. However, because he overbid, he has won the challenge and wounded Connor. ("You reel from the force of my blow!") Connor has also lost the initial Trait he bid because Sir Godfrey has won the second test. ("Show mercy on a poor Ragabash! I was only joking!")*

Static Challenges

Sometimes you may have to undergo a challenge against a Narrator rather than against another player, such as when you are trying to pick a lock or summon a spirit. In such circumstances, you merely bid the Trait that would be appropriate, then immediately perform a test against the Narrator. Before the test is made, the Narrator decides on the difficulty of the task you are attempting. The test proceeds exactly as it would if you were testing against another character. Of course, you may overbid in a static action, but beware, because the Narrator can overbid as well.

Example of Play: *Steps-in-Gum wants to convince a spirit to help him. This would be a Social Challenge. Steps-in-Gum has six Social Traits, while the spirit, a Gaffling, has only four Social Traits. Steps-in-Gum does a Static Social Challenge with a Narrator and wins. Steps-in-Gum has successfully convinced the Gaffling to help him.*

Sometimes Narrators may leave notes on objects, such as books, doors or even fetishes. These notes indicate the type of challenge that must be won for something to occur (such as understanding a book, opening a door or identifying a fetish). With experience, you may learn how difficult it is to open a locked door. However, difficulty ratings can be as different as lock types.

Simple Tests

Simple Tests are used to determine if you can do something successfully when there is no real opposition. Simple Tests are often used when using Gifts. Most Simple Tests do not require you to risk or bid Traits, though some may.

When a Simple Test is called, a test (rock-paper-scissors) is done against the Narrator. Unless otherwise specified, the player succeeds on a win or a tie.

Health

A character in The Apocalyp**se** has five Health Levels; these represent the amount of injury the character has suffered. These levels are: Healthy, Bruised, Wounded, Incapacitated and Mortally Wounded. If a healthy char-

acter loses a combat challenge, she becomes Bruised. If she loses two, she becomes Wounded, and so on.

• **Bruised** — When a character is Bruised, she is only slightly injured, having perhaps suffered a few scrapes and bruises, but little more until she is healed. In order to enter a new challenge, she must risk an additional Trait. Thus, to even have a chance in a challenge, a Bruised character must bid at least two Traits.

Example of Play: *Howls-at-Dawn has just been on the losing end of a challenge. Howls-at-Dawn is again assaulted by his foe, Logan. However, this time, Howls-at-Dawn must now risk two Traits in order to defend himself from Logan. Logan, however, only needs to risk one Trait.*

• **Wounded** — When a character is Wounded, she is badly hurt. She might be bleeding freely from open wounds, and may even have broken bones. She must bid two Traits to have a chance in a challenge. In addition, she will always lose on a tie, even if she has more Traits than her opponent. If she has less Traits, her opponent gets a free extra test.

Example: *Howls-at-Dawn has now been wounded by Logan. Logan continues to press the attack. Howls-at-Dawn is in pretty bad shape now. He must again risk two Physical Traits. However, Howls-at-Dawn has also lost the past two challenges to Logan. Because of this, Howls-at-Dawn has already lost three Physical Traits. He has considerably less Physical Traits than Logan, so he will not only lose on ties, but Logan will now get two tests to see if he can incapacitate Howls-at-Dawn. If Logan wins or ties either of these two tests, Howls- at-Dawn will be Incapacitated.*

• **Incapacitated** — When a character is Incapacitated, she is completely out of play for at least ten minutes. Once awake, the character is still immobile and may not enter into challenges until she has healed at least one Health Level. She is at the mercy of other characters. She may not change forms until she is conscious.

• **Mortally Wounded** — When a character is Mortally Wounded, she is near death. She also immediately reverts to her breed form (her "natural form"). One Physical Trait is lost for every ten minutes she remains without medical assistance. Ten minutes after her last Physical Trait is expended, she dies.

Battle Scars

Each time a character is mortally wounded, she gets a battle scar. These battle scars can add up; each one is nastier than the last. However, battle scars are also worthy of renown, for they show, indisputably, that the Garou has faced great peril and survived. The first three battle scars are light scars. Light battle scars rarely bothersome— they will occasionally itch during winter. The next two battle scars are deep scars. Deep scars offer a one Trait penalty if an opponent specifically targets them. However, if an opponent does that, she will probably lose Honor Renown. Finally, after a character has been mortally wounded five times, serious, permanent injuries will begin to result. The following list includes some possibilities. The players or Narrators can choose one injury they feel is appropriate for the circumstances, or they can choose randomly.

• **Improper Bone Setting**—One of the limbs has been set improperly. The character has the added Negative Physical Trait: Lame.

• **Skull Head**— The side of your head was bashed in, and even though the wound has healed, part of your skull can still be seen. The character gains the Negative Social Trait: Hideous.

• **Broken Jaw**— Your jaw was broken and did not reset properly. You have trouble speaking and cannot always make yourself understood verbally. This should be roleplayed.

• **Missing Eye**— One of your eyes is gone. You lack depth perception. You must risk twice as many Traits involving any perception-based challenges or range-based challenges, such as noticing something hidden or operating a firearm at anything other than close range.

• **Collapsed Lung**— Your lung was punctured in battle and you now have trouble breathing. Wheeze a lot. You also gain the Negative Physical Trait of either Decrepit or Lethargic.

• **Missing Fingers** — One of your hands has lost several fingers. Your claw attacks will only do aggravated damage if you risk an additional Physical Trait in a challenge. You also gain the Negative Physical Trait: Clumsy.

• **Severe Damage** — If a character already has several major Battle Scars, the Narrator may elect to give her more permanent damage. This could mean completely losing a limb, suffering from spinal cord damage or even sustaining brain damage. The exact nature of the battle scar and its impact on the character are at the discretion of the Narrator.

Healing

Werewolves heal wounds at a very rapid pace, recovering one Health Level every five minutes, unless the damage is aggravated (see below). However, Garou in Homid form do not heal any faster than any other human. Additionally, a Garou must remain still while healing. He may not engage in any other actions or participate in challenges.

Aggravated Wounds

Wounds that cannot be healed by the Garou's natural healing powers are called aggravated wounds. Such wounds are usually caused by injury from fire, silver or the claws or teeth of another Garou, vampire or other supernatural entity. A Storyteller can deem any injury to be aggravated, depending on the circumstances. A full night of rest is required to heal one level of aggravated damage.

Silver

Silver is the bane of all Garou. All Garou suffer one Health Level of aggravated damage for every ten seconds they remain in contact with silver. Likewise, any wounds caused by silver weapons cause aggravated damage.

The Mob Scene

During the course of many stories, you are inevitably going to be drawn into a challenge in which several people want to be involved. Mutiparty challenges can be confusing, but if you follow these simple guidelines, you shouldn't have much difficulty. These rules are most useful in combat challenges, but they can be used with nearly any sort of group challenge.

The first thing you need to do is decide who is challenging whom. This is usually obvious, but when it's not, you need a quick way to work things out. Simply have everyone involved count to three at the same time. On three, each player points at the individual he is challenging.

The first challenge that must be resolved involves the person who has the most people pointing at him. Determine what the appropriate category of Traits would be—Physical, Social or Mental. Each player pointing at the defender must bid one appropriate Trait. This group must also choose a leader. The defender must then bid as many Traits as there are people opposing him. If he does not have enough Traits to do so, he automatically loses the challenge. If he does have enough Traits, a test is performed between the defender and the chosen leader of the attackers. The rest of the challenge continues as normal, although any comparison of Traits or overbidding may only be done by the group leader.

If the defender wins the test, he is unharmed, but he can choose to affect one member of the attacking group. Usually, as in the case of a combat, this would mean inflicting one wound. Additionally, all Traits bid by the attackers are lost. If the attackers win, they may inflict one wound, and the defender loses all the Traits he had risked.

After the first challenge is concluded, go on to the next one. Continue the process until each character who has declared an action has been the target of a challenge or has donated Traits.

Order of Challenges

Some people question exactly what a player can respond with when he has been challenged. Typically, if someone initiates a Physical Challenge, the defender can only respond with Physical Traits, unless he possesses a Gift or some other ability which is considered to be always active. He cannot respond with the use of a Gift or another Ability until after the first challenge has been completed. Social and Mental Challenges work the same way.

The only exception to this is when a character chooses to spend Rage as a defensive action. A point of Rage will allow the defender to pre-empt the action and activate a Gift as a defensive action. However, keep in mind that a Garou cannot spend Rage and Gnosis in the same turn unless a Gift specifies otherwise.