



OBLIVION™

Mind's Eye Theatre



OBLIVION

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Disclaimer: Weapons appear in certain of the illustrations in this book. These images are used for illustrative purposes only, and not as examples of actual game play. Under no circumstances should weapons be allowed in any game of *Oblivion*.

...and a quick note of thanks to J.L. Woodward for his assistance and thoughts on *Wraith: The Oblivion 2nd Edition*.



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Ghost Story: Little Girl Lost



o my question is, what does a dead six year old want with a single sock, anyway?

That's what Jeremiah was wondering as he trotted homeward, the pockmarked walls of the Citadel leering down at him as he paced its length. Up on the roof of what was an abandoned warehouse in the lands of the living, Legionnaires stood silent watch by the light of soulfire torches. The ruddy light flickered off of their armor and drawn blades, and cast monstrous shadows down the Citadel's side. Through the windows, masked and chained wraiths could be seen moving about, always backlit by the same soulfire glow. From somewhere inside came the dim ringing of a hammer and the occasional moan of a Thrall.

Jeremiah ignored it all. It was just business as usual in the Shadowlands, and he'd long since grown used to it. Part of him was appalled that he was able to ignore what was going on behind those warehouse walls, but there was no other way to survive here in the Underworld.

You could always go mad, hissed a voice in the back of his mind. *I'm told it's very therapeutic.*

"Get stuffed, Shadow," Jeremiah mumbled as he passed the last set of watchgates. The pair of guards stationed there stared after him, but made no move to follow. Everyone in the Underworld had a Shadow to deal with, a dark side with a voice that lived in the back of their head, and these two soldiers had obviously been around long enough to recognize Jeremiah's mutterings for what they were: a way of keeping

control. Occasionally a wraith's Shadow could get loose and take over his Corpus — his ghostly body — with terrifying consequences. Jeremiah had no doubt that had his Shadow come out in front of the guards, he'd have been instantly subdued and chained.

Or worse, his Shadow cackled. Or worse...

"I don't need this crap, Shadow. I've got an appointment with the weirdest ghost I've ever met in 10 minutes, and if you're going to get pissy on me now, I'm heading to a Pardoner right after the meeting ends. He'll Castigate your skanky butt so hard I won't hear from you for a month."

You're bluffing, the Shadow replied, but there was an edge of fear in its voice. You don't have the relics to pay for that.

"And I don't have the time to listen to you. There's a little dead girl whom I need to go see right now."

Then you'd better watch where you're going, Jerry. I think you might have just taken a wrong turn...

There was a sudden, vicious edge to the Shadow's voice. Jeremiah had heard that edge before, just before his Shadow had taken him over — or just before he'd gotten Harrowed. He stopped, looked up, and cursed.

He had taken a wrong turn, that much was obvious. Ramshackle brick buildings squatted on both sides of the litter-choked street he stood in, and empty windows like hungry mouths gaped from their sides. Cars on blocks, their windshields spiderwebbed with cracks, lined the road, and a dimly flickering neon sign dangled like a hanged man from a crumbling façade. Dimly visible, a living derelict shivered under a blanket of newspaper. Jeremiah could read the man's death in the desiccated lines of his face. It was coming soon.

There was a scraping sound behind him, and Jeremiah turned.

Surprise...

There were three of them, Renegades by their look. As a law-abiding Hierarchy wraith, Jeremiah had heard about Renegades. Some called themselves freedom fighters, some were self-proclaimed peace activists and some — well, some were what could politely be called "thugs."

At a hunch, Jeremiah guessed that this trio fit into the latter category. All were well over six feet tall, dwarfing him. Their faces were covered by gruesome masks, demonic caricatures of human features. Draped in ragged chainmail and leather, they were armed with a variety of blunt and bladed weapons, all prominently displayed. What drew Jeremiah's attention, though was the glistening set of manacles that the Renegade on the left wore at his belt.

Got your name on them, pal. Gonna be a hot time in the old soulforge for us tonight.

Gritting his teeth, Jeremiah did his best to ignore the cackling in his head. Taking a careful step backward, he raised his hands in the universal "no weapons" gesture. "Hey, guys, I'm lost. I was wondering if you knew where that little girl with all the relic socks has her haunt? I'm supposed to meet her in a few minutes, see, and..." He trailed off as muffled laughter echoed out from behind the three masks.

"Oh yes, the little girl," The Renegade in the middle spoke, phrasing his response in a brutal parody of a high-class English accent. "Well, let's see. You go up

two lights, make a left at the Nihil, and...damn, I know I'm forgetting something. Jasper, what am I forgetting here?"

"You forgot," the second wraith said even as he stepped forward, swinging a length of whistling chain, "the first step."

"And what might that be?" They were toying with him now, spreading out to cut off his escape routes even as he backpedaled.

"First we nab his ass and sell him, that's what. Tré, grab him!"

Jeremiah turned to run but even as he pivoted, his arms were seized in an alligator-jaw grip. A silhouette sprouting from behind him announced the arrival of the mysterious Tré, and the other two moved forward with manacles dangling.

"Damn, no trouble at all, man. No trouble at— aggh! The bastard's a Shaper!" He screamed and pulled back punctured hands that leaked plasm. Jeremiah ducked and spun away from his stumbling captor even as the spikes he'd sprouted from his arms flowed back into his Corpus. Jasper and the first Renegade grabbed for him, but he dodged them and threaded his way left, in between a pair of derelict cars and towards the front of a building. Behind him, Jasper was following while the other two fanned out to either side. There was only one way to go: into the building.

He took a deep breath and plunged through the wall. There was the momentary feeling of dissolution that he hated so much, and then Jeremiah was inside.

The building was burned out and blackened. Away to the left stairs led up to a ragged second floor, and he dove for them. Behind him, he could hear curses as his pursuers followed him through the solid surface. Eyes wide, he scrambled up the stairs and cut a hard right into what had obviously once been a nursery. Relic toys lay scattered on the ground, enough to bring him a small fortune at the local bazaar if he got out of here in one piece. The room's real status was plain enough to see: blackened and empty, with jagged teeth of glass in the maw of its window. But the memories of someone's childhood lingered here, in the form of ghostly furniture in faded pastels and a dangling, sad mobile. Phantom blocks scattered underfoot as Jeremiah stumbled in looking for escape, even as the pounding of feet on the stairs warned him that his pursuers were gaining on him.

A half-opened door on the far side of the room beckoned, and he dove in. Streaming light indicated that the back wall of the closet he found himself in had been burned away, so he ducked under a rotting two by four (probably real, he noted to himself) and into the next room. Behind him he could hear voices in the room he'd just vacated. From the sound of things, the Renegades had paused to confiscate the relic toys.

Silently praying, Jeremiah didn't dare move. Maybe the relics will be enough, he thought. Maybe they'll give up. Maybe they'll be satisfied with what they have. Ordinarily these three clowns wouldn't have worried him quite so much. He knew enough Moliate to be nasty in a fight, and Jasper and company didn't look like they knew much about tactics. If all things had been equal, he would have had no hesitation taking the Renegades on. But all things weren't equal. He'd burned up most of his Pathos getting the single sock his contact wanted, and his Shadow was also getting perilously strong. If he got in a fight, it might get out, and then there'd really be hell to pay. He was tired, hurting and lost, and just wanted to escape. *Maybe I'll get lucky this time, please God*, he thought.

He heard cautious footsteps in the closet. *And maybe you're just screwed*, his Shadow hissed.

With a silent curse, Jeremiah backed toward the window. He didn't want to have to jump and risk Discorporating himself into a Harrowing, but now he heard footsteps in the hall as well. He was boxed in.

He'd taken all of perhaps three steps when Tré phased in through the hallway door. At the same time, Jasper and his friend emerged from the closet, their pockets bulging with stolen relics. "Playtime's over, little wraith," said Tré softly. "Time for us to take you to school." A rag doll dangled half out of the pocket of his ragged biker jacket. Its head bobbed and lolled like the doll had been hanged, and its arms flapped with each step the Renegade took closer.

"Those are my toys. What are you doing with them?" It was a new voice, a little girl's voice.

The little girl. *Where the hell did she come from?*, Jeremiah's Shadow demanded, and he had no answer. Apparently the Renegades were just as stunned, as they stopped advancing and stared at the newcomer.

She appeared young, perhaps six or seven, and wore a blue frock. A headband pushed her long hair away from her face, and her features were pretty in a childish way. Mismatched striped socks were pulled up to her knees, and dirt-scarred Keds were on her feet. In her left hand was the ghost of a teddy bear.

Her eyes, though, were what scared Jeremiah. They seemed old, far too old for a little girl. They looked like they'd seen more than any little girl should have, alive or dead.

The Renegades didn't seem impressed. Laughing, they started forward again.

The little girl took a step back. "This is my house. I didn't invite you in here, and I want you to leave. Now." There was steel in her voice, but the intruders missed it. Jeremiah started stepping back, too. Too quickly, though, his shoulderblades hit wall. There was nowhere to go.

"Tell you what, little girl." Jasper was talking, using the want-some-candy-little-girl voice immortalized by a thousand TV perverts. "Why don't you and your toys both come with us, and you can come play over at our place." His left hand was behind his back, clutching a gently jingling pair of cuffs linked by black chain.

She appeared puzzled, even as the other two stifled titters of laughter. "Can my friend come, too?" she said, pointing at Jeremiah.

"Of course, and he'll play with you, too. We'll all play together."

"I don't know. I like to play here."

"Yes, but our place has other toys that you'll like. Doesn't it, Tré?"

Tré shook alert for a second. "Wh...yes, yes it does. Lots of toys."

The little girl sighed and let her teddy bear drop to the floor. Jeremiah felt the strength leave him, and started turning to the window. It would be too late, though. He knew it. As if through a howling windstorm, he could hear the little girl speaking. She was saying, "Really, how stupid do you think I am?"

Then everything was happening, all at once. In slow motion Jeremiah saw Jasper leap for the little girl, saw Tré and the other Renegade lurching for him, felt his footing slip as he tried to leap for the window.

And he heard the little girl open her mouth and howl.

It was all the shrieks of all the pain of all the abused children in history. It was every sworn vengeance against a hated parent, and every cry of pain ever ripped out of the loser of a schoolyard fight. It was all of these and more, and the little girl turned it loose on three Renegades who thought she was easy prey.

Jasper, too close to flee, simply had his Corpus shredded away by the force of the scream. Before he'd ended his leap, he'd been flayed to shreds, the tattered remains drifting into a Nihil and down to a Harrowing. The other two turned to flee but never made it, as the howl wound its way around them.

Tré had been begging for mercy when the Nihil claimed him. The other went silently.

As for Jeremiah, caught in the storm, he felt the plasm bursting out of his eyes and ears, felt the terrible pain inside his mind, and he and his Shadow screamed as one as they fainted.

It must have been hours later when he awoke, crammed into a chair made for a much smaller person. The little girl sat across from him at a relic table. A toy tea set had been set out in proper array between the two of them, and in a third chair to the side of the table, the teddy bear sat with an approving grin. Looking at him, the little girl smiled.

"Mommy always said to be polite to invited guests," she said. "Now, do you have my sock?"



Chapter One: Introduction



This game is probably different from anything you've ever played. In some ways, it's not really a game at all. There is no board, there are no dice, and there is no set way of winning. **Oblivion** is more concerned with stories than rules. In fact, this game has more in common with childhood games than with *Trivial Pursuit* or *Monopoly*. This game allows you to confront the darkness inside us all; it enables you to assume the role of a ghost caught between the need to cling to the living and the necessity of moving on.

If you have never played in a live-action roleplaying game, be prepared for a unique experience. Even if you've been playing table-top roleplaying games for years, you will find that live-action gaming feels different. The game doesn't exist solely in your mind any more; now it comes to life around you. The rush of adrenaline and the feeling of "being" your character is much more intense. We have a name for this style of game. We call it **Mind's Eye Theatre**.

The Art of Storytelling

Before you become engrossed in the rules sections, remember that **Oblivion** is first and foremost a storytelling game. A good story should take precedence over a rule. If everyone involved in a dispute can agree on the outcome that contradicts the rules of this book, then *ignore the rules*. Rules are a safety net for when players can't decide what should happen in a situation, and a way to get everyone to agree on what should happen. They should not be the be-all and end-all of your game, other-

wise the spontaneity and improvisation that makes live-action roleplaying so special can get lost.

Mankind has been telling stories for as long as we've had the power of speech. Since the earliest days of tales told by cavemen around their fires, we have created incredibly diverse types of media to tell our stories. Books, radio, drama, television and even computer networks have carried our tales to others, and enabled us to hear stories we might never have heard otherwise. One of the newest methods of storytelling is that of live-action roleplaying, which grew out of the first table-top roleplaying games of the '70s. Of the many directions which gaming has taken since then, one of the most important has been the emphasis on character and story, which has led to the creation of what we call "storyteller" games. The book you hold in your hands is an attempt to explore the boundaries of live action and storytelling in gaming.

In recent years many people have given up their desire to tell stories, content only to listen to the stories told by others. Those stories come flooding in from the TV, the Internet and a thousand other sources, and some people believe they don't need to make their own stories any more. By joining a game of **Oblivion**, by reading this book, you are agreeing to help create a new story, one in which you are both actor and co-author. It's a big step to take, but the end result can be incredibly rewarding. To be able to look back at a game where you were pivotal in determining what actually happened can give a feeling of accomplishment that no movie or television show can match.

The Live-Action Gaming Paradigm

Table-top roleplaying, while it joins people in creating a story, still leaves most of the story under the control of one person. In this sort of setting, the Storyteller has to describe the entire world and any additional characters that the rest of the gaming group encounters. The Storyteller has total control of nearly everything in the world and creates most of the story, with the players contributing only their individual characters' parts.

Roots

Oblivion is actually derived from a table-top roleplaying game, **Wraith: The Oblivion**. It is not necessary to own or know **Wraith** in order to play **Oblivion**, as this book is self-contained. On the other hand, the world of **Wraith** can make useful source material for games of **Oblivion**.

Live-action gaming, on the other hand, takes much of the control of the setting and places it in the hands of the players. When a hundred or more people are telling a story at once, the Storyteller does not have to describe the entire world. The Storyteller creates ideas and goals and describes the world in terms of rules and descriptions to players. The players then act out their characters and create the story with only minimal input from the Storyteller. With any luck, the story will unravel itself, from the tightly knotted puzzle the Storyteller initially presents to the full flowering of plot, exclusively through the actions and insights of the players.

Another major shift that live-action gaming brings to the art of storytelling involves escaping the limitations of the medium. The game is no longer limited to

words and imagination. Costuming, props and other visual cues can be an integral part of a live game. Instead of a Storyteller describing two people talking across the room, the players actually see them standing in the corner whispering. A long, dimly lit corridor covered in a threadbare carpet can be seen (and if necessary avoided) rather than just described. A moonlit courtyard scoured by a wind that whips cloaks and skirts around bodies — living things that can be experienced by the flesh, rather than just the imagination.

Roleplaying

When you play **Oblivion**, you take on the persona of a wraith. This is a character you invent and then roleplay over the course of a story and perhaps a chronicle (a series of connected stories). The life of your character is in your hands, for you decide what your character does and says. For the purposes of the game, you *are* your character. You decide what risks to accept or decline. Everything you say or do has an effect on the world.

During the game, you should always speak as your character. Unless you're talking to a Narrator or Storyteller, whatever you say is what your character says. Because most of what a **Mind's Eye Theatre** player perceives will depend on the characters around him, players must be vivid and expressive. The characters direct the plot, but at the same time, the events of the game guide and develop the characters, helping them to weave the seamless tapestry of a story.

To an extent, as a player in a storytelling game, you have a responsibility beyond simply portraying your character. Sometimes players need to consider the story as a whole rather than just their individual goals and satisfaction, and often players should make sure that other players enjoy the game. In the end, you should make sure that your actions do not completely ruin the story, for the story is as important as the characters.

Characters for **Oblivion** are easy to create. It takes about 10 minutes to work out a basic personality and characteristics. However, that's just the beginning. The process of creating your character will never really end, because she will always be learning and experiencing new things in every game you play, but even before your first game starts, it takes some effort to turn the collection of Traits and statistics into a living, breathing (so to speak) whole. Remember, the character you create is the person you're going to be for at least a night, and probably longer. The idea is to create for yourself a role that is different enough from your real persona to be enjoyable to play, but with enough of you in it for you to be comfortable. Both statistics (called Traits) and a believable combination of story and personality are necessary to create a character who is enjoyable to play. When Frankenstein created his monster, the task of sewing together the available parts was relatively easy, if not always thrilling. Providing the final spark of life was difficult, but much more exciting.

Cast

Most of the players involved in any given game of **Oblivion** will create and roleplay characters. Players are members of the cast, and their characters are central to the story. Being a cast member does not demand as much responsibility as being

one of the people who helps run the game, but it does demand as much creativity and concentration.

As a cast member, you try to do things that allow your character to “succeed,” achieving goals or helping others to do so within the context of the story. Making sure that your goals, strategies and schemes are carried out, and that events work to your advantage while all of the other players are doing the same thing creates the tension that drives the game’s story.

Narrators

Any story requires at least one person to serve as its narrator. In *Mind’s Eye Theatre*, Narrator is the name given to a person who runs the game as a whole rather than just her individual character. The impartial judges who run the game, Narrators describe scenes and events that cannot be staged, adjudicate rules, and occasionally play the roles of antagonists. Generally, enlisting one Narrator for every six players is a good ratio. That ratio can be adjusted, as the best number of Narrators for your game usually depends upon how much experience the people in your game have.

The Narrator’s Role

As a Narrator, you must ensure that the rules are not broken, interpret rules when they are not fully understood, and keep the peace when rules are in dispute. Sometimes, you must arbitrate what happens in an unusual situation that is not covered by the rules. You have to coordinate with the Storyteller to make sure that the story moves along and that everyone is having fun. A Narrator cannot “win” a story and has no real goals. Your impartial position, however, places you in a unique position to watch a story unfold.

Narrators also take care of what happens when a character decides to interact with something in the game other than another character. If a character needs to sneak past a watchful Centurion or access data from a computer in the lands of the living, the Narrator plays the Centurion and determines how difficult the data is to retrieve. Anything a player’s imagination can conjure, a Narrator may be called upon to recreate.

Storyteller

The Storyteller is the ultimate authority and final judge in *Oblivion*. The Storyteller creates the elements of the story that is being told, and is in charge of making sure that the story unfolds well. Being the Storyteller is a demanding job, but it can be the most rewarding of all, for the Storyteller is the weaver of the tapestry that all of the other players detail.

Rules

Although the main idea of this game is to roleplay and tell stories, *Oblivion* still contains rules. They are needed to resolve what happens when a character does something that the player cannot do (like walking through a wall or making portraits bleed) or does not want to do (like engaging in combat with another character).

The Storyteller's Role

As the Storyteller, it is your responsibility to set the wheels of the story in motion and make sure that they keep rolling. This does not mean that you dictate the course of the plot — that is the job of the cast. You must make sure that the basis for a plot exists. You do not tell a story. Rather, you create the “chemicals” and elements of the plot and turn the cast loose in order to see what happens when your ingredients mix. Most of your work happens before the game begins; after that, the players usually take over.

During the game, however, you must be forever watchful and ready to create new elements to add to the mix to make sure that the story works out well. You have to make sure that everyone is involved in the story and in the game. If you do your “pre-game” job well, however, you will often spend most of your time as a Narrator. There are always crises that come up during a game — characters squeezed out of plotlines, unforeseen plot developments, unanticipated destructions of major characters — and you must be ready to leap into the breach to correct these problems before they drag your entire plot down.

You are also the ultimate arbiter of rules and a court of last resort. Other Narrators will handle many judgments for you, but sometimes a decision may have a serious impact on the story. At that point, your Narrators or cast will appeal to you for judgment.

Rules are necessary to settle arguments — otherwise the game would bog down in the schoolyard dynamics of “Bang, bang, you’re dead!” “You missed!” — and they add a vital measure of consistency to events in your world. Furthermore, the rules of *Mind’s Eye Theatre* in general and *Oblivion* in particular are designed to fit smoothly into gameplay and facilitate it, rather than delay it. A simple contest (see the *Lexicon*) enables quick and easy resolution of disputes or conflicts, then it’s back to roleplaying.

While rules are important, they are part of the game, not the game itself. The rules should serve to make things as fair as possible for all players, making certain that the world of your game functions the same way for all of your players. They should not serve to limit roleplaying or mechanize character interactions, nor should they be consulted like a sacred text at every opportunity. After all, the characters don’t know the “rules” of their existence. They just exist. Every time a rule is quoted, every time a rulebook is opened, the illusion of the game is shattered.

Winners and Losers

There is no real way to “win” a game when you play *Oblivion*. Your character can do well or poorly, but there are no concrete conditions that grant the laurels of victory. Your character possesses motivations, ambitions and goals that help you decide what her aspirations are in a story, but there is no point at which your character will reach some sort of ultimate in-play pinnacle. Rather, there will always be new goals, challenges and antagonists to make your character’s afterlife interesting.

Ultimately, the goal of *Mind’s Eye Theatre* is to immerse yourself in the story and have fun doing it. If you have fun playing, then you certainly cannot consider yourself to

The Only Rules That Matter



These are the most important rules of MET, the only ones that absolutely must be obeyed. Obviously, there are a lot of people out there who either don't know or don't care that Oblivion is just a game, and on the other hand there are some people who take the game far too seriously. By following these rules, you provide yourself with ammunition against the former and protect yourself and your game against the latter. Both groups are equally dangerous to a solid

Mind's Eye Theatre troupe, and these rules are designed to make certain that they're given as little opportunity as possible to interfere with your games.

#1 — It's only a game.

This is by far the most important rule. It is only a game. If a character falls into the Void, if a plot falls apart, if a rival wins the day — it's still only a game. Don't take things too seriously, as that will spoil not only your enjoyment but also the enjoyment of everyone around you. If the line between you and your character starts to blur, step back a bit and take some time off. If you see that happening to another player, get in contact with a Storyteller. Someone who takes your play too seriously is never healthy for a game, or for the people around him.

Plus, remember to leave the game behind when it ends. Informal Oblivion is a lot of fun; spending time talking about the game is great. However, remember that not everyone you know is going to want to hear about your character; many will have no idea what you're talking about. Plus, other players may want some time off as well. Sharing your brilliant plan for nabbing the Anacreon's mask over cappuccino at a local coffeehouse is one thing. Waking your "Renegade leader" at 5:14 A.M. on Sunday to discuss a minor detail of the operation is entirely another.

#2 — No touching.

No touching means no touching. None. Ever. There's simply too much of a chance that someone will get excited in the heat of combat or some other stressful situation, and proceed to hurt himself or someone else, however accidentally.

This rule also applies to running, jumping, swinging on chandeliers through sheets of plate glass, and other overly energetic behaviors that can result in someone getting injured. The core of Oblivion is imagination. If you can imagine yourself as someone who's been a ghost for 20 years, you can sure as heck imagine yourself running when you're really walking.

#3 — No weapons as props.

Props are a wonderful way to make a game more real. However, real weapons or anything that even looks like a real weapon (and we're talking sword canes,

peace-bonded claymores, rabid trained attack gerbils, matte-black painted waterguns, and sword-shaped toothpicks from a martini) are a definite no-no. There are too many paranoid people in the world who will see a prop gun and mistake it for a real one, or who will see a costume dagger and start screaming for the police. Plus, there's the ever-present threat of someone getting hurt. No matter how much having a sword fits your character concept, leave the real thing home. If you bring it, it's inevitable that the one time you unsheathe it to show it off, some idiot will come pelting around the corner and nearly skewer himself on it. The illusion is not worth risking anyone's safety.

#4 – No drugs or drinking.

This one is a real no-brainer. Drugs and alcohol are a way of distancing you from yourself. Roleplaying gives you the chance to be someone else. Why go to all the trouble of creating another persona to inhabit if you're just going to wander out of that persona in a haze?

On a more serious note, players who are impaired by drugs or alcohol represent a danger to other players and a threat to the flow and mood of the game. There's nothing wrong with *playing* a character who's drunk or stoned, but actually bringing drugs or alcohol into a game is going too far, not to mention the fact that it's illegal. Don't do it.

#5 – Feel free to ignore or adjust any of the rules in this book if it will make your game better.

We at White Wolf call this "The Golden Rule." Obviously, it should be applied within limits, and rules changes should be consistent throughout a troupe. On the other hand, if your troupe finds a way to handle, say, Argos, that works better for you than the one in this book does, by all means go for it.

#6 – Remember, not everyone is playing.

While "freaking the mundanes" can be fun, remember that a game can be unnerving or even frightening to passersby. Be considerate of nonplayers in your vicinity, and make sure that if you're in a public area, your gameplay actions aren't going to alarm random civilians to the point where security or the police are called on you. Explaining to a policeman at 3 A.M. that you weren't really beating anyone up on the lawn, you were just dragging your friend's soul down to the Void is often an exercise in futility.

#7 – Have fun.

Not "win." Not "Go out and kill everyone else." Just "Have fun," because in *Oblivion* it's not about how the game ends, it's about everything that happens to you along the way.

have “lost” in a game, no matter what happens to your character. Sure, it’s more fun to succeed in whatever quest your character has, but that doesn’t mean that the destination is more important than the journey. The roleplaying you do to set up your goals and actions can be as rewarding as your ultimate “success” in any given endeavor.

Props

In order for others to visualize your character, you might choose to wear a costume and employ props. You must not use anything that can harm you or another cast member (see above). Guns, swords, garottes, motorcycle chains, assegais, nunchuks and other real or imitation weapons are strictly forbidden. The **Mind’s Eye Theatre** system uses a bidding system in place of any actual physical combat. A player with a weapon might be tempted to hit someone with it or wave it about in a threatening manner. Actual physical danger is never an element in the game.

Cool costumes, jewelry, makeup and the like are strongly encouraged. Some people get heavily into costuming when playing the game, and other players appreciate the effort involved in creating a ghostly appearance. Costuming, ranging from period clothing to dangling chains to masks, is also a good way to help create mood in both yourself and other players. A player should bring whatever she needs to the **Mind’s Eye Theatre** event to evoke the persona of her character.

Chronicle

Hopefully, you’ll want to play **Oblivion** more than once. Each time you play, you may choose to create a new character for a brand-new story, or you can play the same character for evening after evening. Your persona can develop like a character in a novel instead of disappearing after one brief moment in the spotlight. By playing in an extended chronicle — a whole series of stories — with the same character, you can help your character to develop and grow, gaining new allies, status, influence and power. There’s also the possibility that your character might spiral down to the Void itself, seeking ultimate annihilation of the self. Both possibilities offer the potential for spectacular journeys and superb roleplaying experiences.

The World of Darkness

The world of **Oblivion** is a dark reflection of our own. Here, beauty and corruption stand out in greater contrast; everything is monolithic, majestic and twisted. Though faith and human spirit remain strong, greed and despair seem stronger still. The Gothic-Punk world that **Oblivion** takes place in is a darker, more violent version of our own. “Punk” is reflected in the rejection of society by many young people, who demonstrate their rebellion with everything from unconventional dress to violence against “the System.” Trapped in a cold and bleak world, they reject a society that will not accept them and struggle in the hope of something better down the road.

But moreso than in **Oblivion**’s companion games **Masquerade** and **Apocalypse**, **Oblivion** concentrates on the Gothic part of the equation. Think back to the Gothic novels you’ve read and period films you’ve seen. Whether the setting is a darkly forbidding city of glass and steel or a crumbling castle, there is always the sense of an era that now exists only in memory, of a time and place unlike our own. This sense of what was

once new and shining covered in cobwebs and grime is present from the nightmarish Gotham City of the Batman films to Dracula's crumbling Carfax Abbey to even the vaguely art deco landscapes of the Giger-Gibson futures. What was once elegant or avant-garde is now faded, and the fading colors and crumbling façades inspire both terror and pity.

Another part of the Gothic ambience is the sense of isolation. Whether the characters are alone on the Yorkshire moors or in the midst of a Manhattan cocktail party, they will never again be a part of the world of the living. Consider the mystery novels you've read, in which somehow the telephone wires are cut, the cars disabled, and the characters trapped together, isolated from any source of help. This can be a terrifying situation for most modern people, who are used to having the entire world only a phone call away. But just as this isolation invokes an atmosphere of desperation and terror, it also forces the characters to realize that they can only rely upon each other, and that they alone will have to take responsibility for their fates. For many of the Restless, this is a difficult but absolutely essential lesson to learn upon crossing the Shroud.

Of course, there are many among the Restless who would try to forget all of this. They run with the living, losing themselves in the overwhelming onslaught of nightclubs, with their myriad flashing lights and booming basslines. The Restless come to these places to forget, just as the Quick do. Two hundred people are packed onto a dance floor, each trying to escape, to lose themselves in light, sound and movement. Yet even there, there is little or no contact between people. They are as alone on the dance floor as they would be were they adrift on a desolate ocean.

Both of these types of locations, the haunted mansion or the ultra-modern club, can be appropriate for a game of **Oblivion**. Your choice of location will effect the mood and atmosphere of the game greatly, so choose wisely and be prepared to stand by your choice. After all, your characters are going to be spending eternity there.

It Can't Rain All the Time

Beyond all of this, there must always be a sense of hope. Anyone who is overcome by the sense of decay and despair of the Shadowlands becomes easy prey for her Shadow, and will probably spiral down to the Void in no time at all. Wraiths survive in this bleak world because of their Passions, their overwhelming emotional needs that give them reason to go on existing. For many wraiths, it is only after their deaths that they find a reason to live.

While a wraith's existence is often grim and it is sometimes hard to find a reason to struggle on, that is just what each character must do. Each soul lost to Oblivion is a tragedy, but each soul that resists Oblivion's cold call can make it a little bit easier for everyone else to resist as well.

Geography



he realm of the dead, also known as the Underworld, is made up of three main parts. The first one a new wraith will encounter is known among the Restless as the Shadowlands. A grim reflection of the world of the Quick, the Shadowlands are stained with decay and the perfume of death infuses everything. This is where most **Oblivion** games will take place, for it is

only in the Shadowlands that wraiths can remain in a semblance of the real world. The Shadowlands are separated from the lands of the living (or Skinlands) by a metaphysical barrier called the Shroud.

Another area of the Underworld that wraiths may encounter is the Tempest. An eternal storm that rages just below the surface of the Shadowlands' reality, it is reachable through pits known as Nihilis, or by use of the Argos Arcanos. The Tempest is used to travel quickly from one point to another in the Shadowlands, without traversing the distance between. In most games of *Oblivion*, the Tempest will probably be used chiefly as a travel realm, rather than as an actual story setting.

Deep within the Tempest is the third sort of territory known in the Underworld. It is here that we find Stygia, home of the Hierarchy and capital of Charon's empire. Further into the Tempest are the islands known as the Far Shores, as well as the other Deadlands or Dark Kingdoms. Many wraiths see the Far Shores as places of peace and tranquility, but official Hierarchy policy is that they are more Purgatory than Paradise.

Distant from Stygia and the Far Shores are the various other Dark Kingdoms, to which the Dead from many lands pass on. Like Stygia, each of these lands has a system for classifying and dealing with the many souls that pass through its gates, but few from the West have journeyed to these lands and returned.

While tales of Stygia and her sister kingdoms across the Sea of Shadows abound, few wraiths in the Shadowlands have seen these places first-hand. Not only is the journey dangerous, even to the dead, but most wraiths are tied to the lands of the living by what are called Fetters. Items, places or people of great importance to the wraith in life, they anchor a Restless against Oblivion's relentless pull but can also hinder her from traveling far from them. Wraiths who lose all of their Fetters cannot return to the Shadowlands, but must dwell in Stygia and the Tempest; wraiths with Fetters often find their movement and actions impeded if they travel too far from them.

Another reason few travelers journey far in the Underworld is surely the fact that the Tempest is without a doubt the most dangerous and terrifying "place" any wraith will ever know. Navigation is difficult for even the most seasoned wraith, given the ever-shifting scenery and murky quality of the Tempest. The Tempest is also home to a great many Spectres, who search its cloudy depths for unsuspecting wraiths to capture and either destroy or convert to the worship of Oblivion.

The Dark Side

Every wraith's dark side has a voice and a personality, and it will put the two to the best use it can imagine. Known as the Shadow, this side of the wraith's persona seeks nothing more than to drag the wraith down to Oblivion. Of course, each Shadow is different and has unique motivations, drives and tastes. Shadows will even sometimes help their other halves, making their inevitable betrayals all the more shocking.

Harrowings

An important part of the process by which a wraith can be sucked down to the Void is the Harrowing. A psychological passion play directed by the Shadow and performed by Spectres, a Harrowing occurs whenever a wraith has used up all of a

certain kind of Trait (usually Corpus, sometimes Willpower) or loses a Passion or Fetter. When a Harrowing starts, the wraith falls into the Tempest and sometimes even further, to the Labyrinth the Spectres call home. There the Harrowing is performed, and any wraith trapped in one may well be destroyed. Wraiths who escape Harrowings return to one of their Fetters.

Lexicon

A new existence calls for new terms with which to describe it. Below are some of the phrases and names used to define Underworld existence.

Abilities: The measure of a wraith's expertise in specific fields. Measured in Traits.

Agency, The: Slang for the bureaucracy of the Hierarchy.

Aggravated wounds: Wounds inflicted by a special source (fire, Stygian steel, etc.) that are especially difficult to heal.

Angst: The negative mental energy that the Shadow (and Spectres) feed upon and use.

Arcanos: One of the supernatural abilities that wraiths possess, allowing them to affect the living and the dead. Plural is *Arcanoi*.

Arcanum, The: A collection of scholars and ghost-hunters among the Quick.

Archetypes: Basic personality types, from which Nature and Demeanor are chosen.

Arisen: Wraiths who have Transcended.

Artifact: An object in the Underworld that has unusual powers of some sort.

Attributes: The measure of a wraith's basic Physical, Social and Mental statistics. Measured in Traits.

Bidding: Part of the mechanism of challenges. The risking of Traits in order to win a challenge.

Body Snatcher: A wraith who possesses the living.

Boo Job: A premeditated attempt to scare the Quick.

Boojum: A nasty critter, usually one of the unidentified denizens of the Tempest.

Byway: A stable path through the Tempest.

Caul, The: The amniotic sac of a wraith's birth into the Shadowlands. The translucent covering made from ectoplasm with which all wraiths are reborn.

Challenges: The method by which disputes are settled in Oblivion.

Charon: Founder and ruler of the Hierarchy, missing since 1945.

Circle: A group of wraiths, usually engaged upon common business.

Citadel: The central building and stronghold of a Necropolis.

Cohort: A Circle composed of Hierarchy-affiliated wraiths. Cohorts are supposed to have 10 members.

Consort: A living person attuned to be used as a Host.

Corpus: The "body" of a wraith. Plural is *Corpora*.

Cult: An unflattering name for one of the countless Heretic sects.

Deathlord: One of the seven wraiths currently ruling the Hierarchy. Each has dominion over the victims of a certain sort of death (i.e., violence, pestilence, mystery, etc.).

Derangements: Mental instabilities acquired by wraiths during their unliving existence.

Dictum Mortuum: Charon's decree forbidding trafficking with mortals.

Domain: Territory held by a wraith or a Circle of wraiths.

Doomsday: The day when Oblivion swallows everything; conversely, the day when the Shadowlands and Skinlands merge. Doomsday features prominently in many Heretic cults' philosophies, even if no two Heretics can agree as to what exactly it is.

Doomshade: A Spectre.

Doomslayer: A wraith who specializes in hunting Spectres.

Drone: The shell of a wraith, doomed to endlessly repeat a single task until claimed by Oblivion. Drones have no mind or will.

Enfant: A wraith just reborn into the Underworld, usually encased in a Caul.

Experience: Points given to characters as they progress through multiple games. Used for increasing the character's statistics and powers.

Far Shores, The: The lands across the Tempest, supposedly corresponding to Heaven, Hell and more.

Fetters: Those things that remain in the lands of the living that tie a wraith to her old life.

Freewraith: A wraith who is not actively serving in the military.

Gang: A Circle of Renegades.

Garou: A werewolf; what werewolves call themselves.

Guild: One of the supposedly banned organizations of freewraiths dedicated to the study and use of one of the Arcanoi. There were 13 Greater and three Lesser Guilds.

Harrowing, The: A sleigh-ride through the worst side of a wraith's subconscious, courtesy of his Shadow and the Spectres of the Tempest. More than one wraith has been destroyed during a Harrowing.



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Harvesting: The act of cutting Enfants free from their Cauls and initiating them into the Shadowlands. Many Harvesters are actually slavers, and the initiation they offer consists of a pair of manacles linked by Stygian steel chains.

Haunt: A place where the Shroud is thin and the Restless feel at home.

Healing: The process of using Pathos Traits to restore Health.

Health: The measure of how much physical damage a wraith has taken.

Hell: Supposedly, a place of punishment for wicked souls. In the Underworld, a joke of the first order; there are so many false hells that they've become something of a tourist attraction for the more adventurous among the dead.

Heretics: Religious fanatics among the dead, though many bizarre religions have sprung up among the Restless. Most Heretics have some sort of central belief based around the notion of Transcendence.

Hierarchy, The: The monolithic bureaucracy of the Dark Kingdom of Iron, a.k.a. the Empire of Stygia. At this point, the Empire and the Hierarchy have become interchangeable in most wraiths' minds. The Hierarchy is the largest collection of Western wraiths in the Underworld.

Host: A living person possessed by use of the Arcanos Puppetry.

Influences: The measure of how much control a Restless has on mortal institutions. Measured in Traits.

Isle of Sorrows, The: The island in the Tempest which the city of Stygia is built upon.

Juice: Pathos.

Kindred: A vampire; what vampires call themselves.

Legacy: Archaic way of referring to a very potent Fetter.

Legions: The military and police of Stygia, though technically every Stygian citizen owes allegiance to one of the Legions. Each Legion is overseen by a Deathlord.

Lemure: A young wraith, recently deceased but no longer an *Enfant*.

Maelstrom: The terrifying storms that sweep from the mouth of the Void out over the Shadowlands, bearing Spectres and leaving destruction in their wake. Growing more frequent in recent years, they either herald or are the result of horrific events in the Skinlands.

Mage: A human who uses the forces of magick to affect the world around him.

Meat: Mortal flesh.

Mitty: A wraith whose deepest regret is not having lived while he had the chance. Mittys are surprisingly common.

Moleman: Wraiths who claim to have experienced the stereotypical "tunnel of light." The term is *not* considered a compliment.

Mummy: A member of a rare race of apparently immortal beings who coexist with vampires and wraiths.

Necropolis: A city of the dead. Also used to specify the regions of cities of the Quick most thickly inhabited by wraiths. Plural is *Necropoli* or *Necropoleis*.

Nihils: Rips in the fabric of the Shadowlands, tearing through the surface reality and exposing the surging Tempest beneath. Some Nihils lead down to the Labyrinth.

Numina: Rare, special powers possessed by humans.

Oblivion: The manifestation and hunger of entropy, also known to some as the *Great Unmaking*. Oblivion is the final fate of all things in the Underworld, save those who Transcend. The physical manifestation of Oblivion is called the *Void*, and it opens upon the heart of the Labyrinth.

Obolus: The Stygian base unit of currency, forged from one soul.

Onyx Tower: Charon's palace, now abandoned.

Pathos: Pure emotion, which wraiths feed upon and use in their daily existence. The usable essence of passion.

Plasm: The physical matter of the Underworld. Wraiths, relics and Artifacts are all made of plasm.

Projectors: Visitors to the Underworld from the Skinlands. Also known as *Skinboys*.

Quick, The: The living.

Reaper: A wraith who removes an *Enfant's Caul*.

Relic: The memory of an object, made from plasm.

Renegades: Wraiths who stand opposed to the Hierarchy. They have no structure, organization or unified goal other than rebellion. Renegades range from true freedom fighters to the ghosts of ruffians looking for an easy afterlife.

Restless, The: Wraiths in general. Also known as the *Restless Dead*.

Risen: A wraith who has found a way to reanimate her corpse. Most wraiths believe Risen to be legendary.

Shadow, The: The darker side of a wraith's personality. The Shadow is selfish, ego-centric and sadistic, and directs its efforts toward destroying all the wraith loves (including the wraith himself).

Shadowlands, The: The ghostly realm just across the Shroud from the lands of the living.

Chapter One: Introduction

Skinlands, The: The lands of the living.

Slumber: The healing sleep that wraiths can indulge in.

Soulfire: Crystals of concentrated Pathos, used in soulforging.

Spectre: A wraith whose Shadow has achieved permanent dominance. Spectres serve Oblivion. Also known as the *Shadow-Eaten*.

Stormrunning: Taking a shortcut across the Tempest, as opposed to using a Byway.

Stygia: The Dark Kingdom of Iron, the largest organization of wraiths in the Western world. Also the capital city of the empire of the Western Restless.

Tempest, The: The great storm of the Underworld that separates the Shadowlands from Stygia and the Far Shores.

Thrall: A wraith who is in service to another. In essence, a slave.

Tithe: The amount of Pathos a wraith draws from a Haunt or Fetter.

Trait: The unit by which statistics in **Oblivion** are measured.

Transcendence: The moment when a wraith reconciles Shadow and Psyche, moving on to a higher (?) existence. Transcendence is considered legend by most wraiths, and feared by many others.

Underworld, The: The realms of the dead, from the Far Shores to the Shadowlands and including Stygia, the Tempest, the Labyrinth and the Void.

Veinous Stair: The passage from the heart of Stygia into the Labyrinth.

Void, The: The abyss at the heart of the Labyrinth.

Willpower: The measure of how strong a wraith's will is. Measured in Traits.

Witch-hunter: A human who searches for ghosts in order to kill them.

Wraith: A ghost, a spirit who retains such strong attachments to the lands of the living that she cannot move past this level of existence. Also called the *Restless*.



Chapter Two: Setting



This chapter describes in detail the world of **Wraith**. Everything from the cosmology of the Underworld to the politics of the isle of Stygia is here, granting you a first look at the geography, culture and history of the lands of the dead. Some of it may take a little getting used to; some of it might not seem immediately applicable to a game of **Oblivion**, but all of it helps weave the tapestry within the folds of which your own adventures will take place.

The Underworld



The lands of the dead, consisting of the Far Shores, the Tempest (and all things within it), Stygia and the Shadowlands are collectively known as the *Underworld*. Technically the other so-called Dark Kingdoms, those afterlives populated by the dead of Asia, Africa, India and other places are also part of the Underworld, but as they have little to do with the night-to-night existence of most Stygian wraiths, they tend to fall under the heading of “out of sight, out of mind.” When a Western ghost refers to the Underworld, he generally doesn’t mean the Chinese or Polynesian Deadlands.

Oblivion

The passive, patient aspect of destruction, *Oblivion* is a part of the natural order of things. It waits for all things when they break down; everything must die eventu-

ally, in order to make way for new things to be born. When kept in check by the forces of creation, Oblivion is an essential part of the cycle of death and rebirth. Mindless and eternal, Oblivion has always waited to swallow those souls no longer Fettered to the Skinlands but not ready for Transcendence.

These days, however, it would seem that Oblivion rages unchecked. Its pull strengthens daily as its appetite for souls increases. Its presence mars the Underworld and the Skinlands to an unprecedented degree, and its tainted touch is everywhere. In the form of Spectres it has more and more servants among the dead, and they ride more and more frequent Maelstroms to make war upon the Restless. Simply put, Oblivion is growing and no one is sure why. Most wraiths resolve to fight the encroaching corruption; too many surrender to it.

Supposedly there will come a day when Oblivion swallows everything. Quaintly known as Doomsday, this day is dreaded by all wraiths and eagerly anticipated by all Spectres. With Doomsday comes the end, so they say, of everything, both for the living and the dead.

Souls: Building Blocks of the Underworld

The economy and society of the Underworld are both built on souls. Most objects in the Underworld are made of memories; the remainder are composed of smelted or reshaped souls. Currency consists of coins forged from souls; these *oboli* are said to moan in the hands of those who possess them.

As souls are the basis of the economy, they are regarded less as individuals than as resources. Slavery is a booming business in the Shadowlands, based not on color or creed, but on the simple proposition that the strong enslave the weak because they can. Reapers enthrall as many new, defenseless wraiths as they are able, while mindless Drones are regarded as a bonanza of riches by a Harvester lucky enough to come across them. Enslaved wraiths are then marched off to the Thrall markets or, if they are unlucky, to the soulforges.

It is an inhumane system, and a horrifying one. There are those wraiths who claim that even soulforged or Moliated wraiths are still aware and suffer endlessly; even the possibility of this is regarded as unthinkable by most wraiths. However, the system persists. It has been in place too long, and there are too many wraiths who have too much to lose if the soulforging trade ends. Besides, there are justifications: soulsteel is needed to stand against Oblivion; souls that are smelted or Moliated into workaday objects are no longer in danger of feeding and strengthening Oblivion; some believe that soulforging hammers the Shadow out of a wraith; and so on. Still, the strongest reason for the practice's continuation is a simple one: no alternative exists. And so the Harvesters still bring their prey home in chains, and the soulforges still echo with the screams of the condemned, and the borders of the Citadels are still lit with Thralls reshaped into blazing torches.

Trading in Souls

The vast majority of souls avoid the Underworld entirely. Swallowed immediately by Oblivion or lifted into Transcendence, they avoid the half-existence of wraiths. For those who do become wraiths, however, their fellow Restless pose a threat almost as great as Oblivion.

Objects in the Underworld are of two kinds: memories and souls. *Relics*, objects that cross over from the Skinlands, are in essence created by the emotional energy invested in them by the living; a much-loved teddy bear or a single sock endlessly cursed over will both reappear in relic form when thrown out or destroyed. However, even with the best efforts of certain wraiths to pick and choose what comes over the Shroud, the selection is still haphazard, and notably slanted toward non-essential items. For example, relic guns are common, but relic bullets are not. Relic dolls abound, but relic girders or bulldozers are lamentably scarce. In addition, most relics exist as solid-state objects, duplicating form but not function unless invested with Pathos. *Artifacts*, objects invested with special powers, sometimes arrive directly from the Skinlands, but infrequently. Thus, there is a need for another source of inanimate objects, one that provides more pliable and versatile materials. In other words, souls.

If a new *Enfant* is unlucky, he'll end up being Reaped by a slaver. These Harvesters roam the Shadowlands, collecting wraiths who are too weak, disoriented or foolish to defend themselves. Wraiths who are enslaved (the technical term is *enthralled*) will find themselves shackled with chains forged from Stygian steel, and herded toward the nearest Necropolis to be sold or smelted down. A fortunate few are simply sold into an eternity of servitude as Thralls; the rest become raw materials in the burgeoning Stygian economy.

Just about anything can be forged from souls: girders, chains, weapons, furniture, etc. Those objects that require a more delicate touch during creation are often created by wraiths skilled in the Arcanos Moliate, who can reshape *Corpus* with a thought and a touch. Even the coins of the Underworld are made from souls, with each *obolus* consisting of one soul, hammered into a press.

Of course, not every soul is consigned to the forges. A minimal amount of luck, combined with a modicum of brainpower, will enable a wraith to elude the Harvesters until such time as she is able to ward off their depredations. Many wraiths are Reaped by friendlier guides into the afterlife; some even manage to free themselves from their Cauls. Furthermore, Stygian law prevents the forging of any souls except Spectres, criminals and Thralls. On the other hand, the definitions of "criminal" and "Thrall" are conveniently loose for most Reapers to make themselves a tidy profit. Short of Oblivion, there is no more permanent doom for a wraith than soulforging, and most will take their chances in the Void rather than in the forge.

The Construction of the Underworld

Known by many names but never mapped, the Underworld does not exist as a "place" in the way that the living view geography. Instead, it is a non-Euclidean nightmare to any who think that a straight line is still the distance between two points. Even most wraiths don't quite understand the nature of the realm in which they dwell; they tend to resort to models of increasing simplicity and inaccuracy in order to explain their surroundings.

Also known as the Dark or Low Umbra to some, the Underworld is best understood as consisting of layers that, like C.S. Lewis' mythical kingdom of Narnia, grow larger the further in you go. The outermost one, called the Shadowlands, is identical in location to the lands of the living. Anywhere the living go the dead go as well, and only the metaphysical Shroud separates the two. Theoretically, a wraith could

walk from Canton, Ohio to Canton, China without ever leaving the Shadowlands. All that would be required would be patience and a good set of relic boots.

Existing just "below" the surface of the Shadowlands is the eternal turbulence called the *Tempest*, a roiling, nightmarish storm that has raged unceasingly for half a millennium. No matter where one goes in the Shadowlands, the *Tempest* is no more than a slight rip in the fabric of reality away. Indeed, the *Tempest* is best thought of as a sort of hyperspace underlying the "reality" of the Shadowlands.

Snaking through this nightmare of a storm are paths of relative safety called *Byways*, leading from point to point within the Shadowlands, or from the Shadowlands to the deeper realms. Travel from point to point through the *Tempest* without resorting to a *Byway* is also possible, and often is faster than taking one of the winding safe paths. On the other hand, travelers in the storm are exposed to its dangers, and the things that dwell within it.

In addition to safe routes through the *Tempest*, there are islands of stability within the storm as well. The city of *Stygia* rests on one such island; the innumerable *Far Shores* rest on others. In these places the *Tempest* is covered by a deceptively placid ocean called the *Sunless Sea*, across which soul-traffic once moved unceasingly. Other islands of safety exist within the storm as well: *Feng-tu*, *Swar*, the *Sea That Knows No Sun*, the *Bush of Ghosts*, and others, the death-realms of other cultures and societies. Some have dealings with *Stygia*, trading souls or waging war across the seas of the dead.

Deep within the storm is the fear-shadowed *Labyrinth*. No one knows what the walls of this horrifying place are made from, though the few explorers who have returned from wandering it report that the very substance of the passages changes as one walks through. Hospital corridors, mirrored mazes, sluggish flows of molten rock — all can be found within the *Labyrinth*. Here, too, can be found the slumbering *Malfeans*, the oldest and most potent *Spectres*.

At the very bottom of the Underworld rests the entrance to the *Void*. Those who place the *Void* at the base of the *Tempest* do so deliberately; entropy serves as gravity here, and *Oblivion's* manifestation exerts a pull on all things in the *Tempest* and its isles. The *Void* is ultimate blackness and destruction, a yawning chasm at the center of the *Labyrinth*. None who have entered the *Void* have ever returned, though the fearful belief of some is that reincarnation awaits on the other side of destruction. Unfortunately, evidence for this hypothesis is sadly lacking at the moment.

The Shadowlands

The stillborn twin of the lands of the living, the *Shadowlands* correspond exactly to the *Skinlands* in terms of geography. A wraith standing in Times Square in the *Shadowlands* is, in a sense, standing in Times Square in the *Skinlands*, and runs the risk of being trampled by mortals who don't see him and rush right over his position.

Everything that exists in the *Skinlands* exists in the *Shadowlands*, more or less. The more emotion an object or a place inspired in the living lands, the more concretely it appears in the *Deadlands*, and buildings long gone in the *Skinlands* still rise on the other side of the *Shroud*. At once beautiful and terrible, the landscape of

the Shadowlands is constructed of memories draped like cobwebs over those places which yet stand in living lands.

Objects in the Shadowlands are irreducibly solid to a wraith, but things in the Skinlands are less so. A wall may initially pen a wraith into a room, but by expending a minimum of Corpus she can walk right through it. A wraith may be able to reach out to a paperweight or a pencil, but without the use of her Arcanoi she cannot touch it. It is only the Shadowland echoes of these things, once they are destroyed, that a wraith can affect directly.

What goes on in the Skinlands is plainly visible to wraiths in the Shadowlands. They can watch TV or eavesdrop on board meetings with ease, invisible and intangible. However, these perceptions of the Skinlands are often marred by the touch of death, as wraiths see the creeping decay in all things. Still, even the most Oblivion-rainted among the living appear healthier and more vital than the lands beyond the Shroud, which are gray and somber with rotting majesty.

The Shroud

The barrier of disbelief and despair that separates the living lands from the Underworld, the *Shroud* is what divides death from life. Spontaneously raised during the mysterious catastrophe called the *Sundering*, the Shroud is what limits the ways in which wraiths can touch the Skinlands. The stronger the Shroud is in a given place, the more difficult it is for a wraith to reach through to the Skinlands there.

Strongest in places of disbelief and reason, the Shroud is nearly impenetrable in places such as laboratories and lecture halls. Conversely, in places where belief and fear of death are strong, the Shroud correspondingly weakens, and wraiths have more play in the lands of the living. Cemeteries and homes with troubled adolescents are often places where the Shroud is particularly thin. Also, there are certain nights when, worldwide, the Shroud weakens. These are the nights when the living would be well-advised to stay indoors, for all over the world, the ghosts are coming out to play.

Haunts

Home sweet home for the dead, *Haunts* are places where strong emotion has frayed the fabric of the Shroud thin. Here the Shadowlands and Skinlands almost overlap; here are the places that the living superstitiously call "haunted."

It is the darker emotions that wear through the Shroud most easily, though strong love, hope or courage will do so as well. Even so, Haunts tend to be found in places of despair, desperation or sorrow. Graveyards, slums, battlefields, abandoned houses, prisons, nightclubs, lonely crossroads and treacherous curves all frequently serve as Haunts.

Most Haunts are vigorously settled by a wraith or Circle of wraiths and defended to the utmost; as wellsprings of emotion and places of shelter, Haunts are hotly sought after. Visitors are usually not welcome. Other wraiths prefer to use their Arcanoi to wear on the Shroud, creating Haunts in places of their choosing. Recently, some enterprising ghosts have experimented with taking their Haunts online, though whether or not they've succeeded is a matter of conjecture.

To the living, Haunts are most often grim and depressing places. No one without severe mental disorders or a depressed poet's mentality would voluntarily live in a Haunt. Those few who try are generally driven out immediately, unless the wraiths who own the Haunt prefer to keep the living around as emotional fodder for their Passions.

Most Domains are centered around single Haunts. The more potent the Haunt is, generally the larger the Domain around it. If pressed, wraiths will give up every inch of the rest of their Domain before they give up their Haunt. After all, it is both strength and shelter.

Stygia

The Eternal Necropolis of *Stygia* is the collection of all of the dead dreams of empire mankind has ever wrought. As Carthage and Gomorrah fell, their ghostly ruins were gathered and brought to construct Stygia's courts and towers. When Rome and Byzantium were sacked, their wreckage was salvaged and brought to build Stygia ever higher. Jerusalem and Paris, London and New York, every Imperial City that ever was is echoed in the architecture of the capital of the dead. Built upon the seven hills of the Isle of Sorrows, Stygia the city and Stygia the empire have become synonymous.

Seen from the bottom, Stygia is a claustrophobic nightmare. The weight of ages has pressed down upon the oldest buildings, and Maelstrom and invasion have taken their toll. Here the streets are cramped and dirty, and the overhanging edifices are crushed beneath the weight of newer constructions. Only the poor and the desperate can be found here, amidst the wreckage of centuries.

The higher one goes in the city, however, the more astonishing the view becomes. Newer buildings and better-preserved treasures of antiquity are the norm. The Library of Alexandria can be found here, and the shining palaces of the Deathlords. This is where the wealthy and powerful among the dead dwell, in stunning contrast to the despair in the labyrinthine warrens below.

Bounded by a sea wall crafted from thousands of souls, the city is home to millions more. The walls cannot contain all who wish to dwell in Stygia, and so bridges have been cast across the waters of the Sunless Sea to the Iron Hills, islands that rise from the waters nearby. Secondary colonies and edifices occupy these smaller isles, but even in the face of such overcrowding, some buildings in Stygia stand empty. The Great Temple of the Fishers, for example, and Charon's Onyx Tower are abandoned; even among the dead they have unpleasant reputations.

The Tempest

To say only that the Tempest is the eternal storm of the Deadlands is to be guilty of gross understatement. Eternally raging with a fury unthinkable in the lands of the living, the Tempest is the raw fury that underlies all of the Shadowlands, separating them from Stygia and the Far Shores. Inhabited by shrieking Spectres and other, fouler things, it is a roiling sea of chaos within which time, space and distance cease to have meaning.

The landscape of the Tempest is constantly changing; rains of broken glass, noxious gases, eruptions of boiling pitch and worse are common sights to travelers.

Chapter Two: Setting

Fragments of realities and memories are constantly inflicted upon those who journey through the endless storm, as each wraith who passes through the Tempest leaves something of himself behind. Even those souls who plummet directly to Oblivion upon death leave a memory, a relic or a feeling floating in the storm, to be encountered by an unwary traveler at some later date.

Wraiths passing through the Tempest are often given revelations, many of them unwanted. Visions of Fetters or other lives, premonitions, glimpses of the Skinlands and other scenes will intrude on a wraith's consciousness as she navigates the darkness.

There are a few islands and strands of stability within the Tempest. The former include Stygia itself, as well as the myriad Far Shores and the other realms of the dead. Narrower paths of relative safety are called Byways, and they stretch between realms in the Underworld. Some connect disparate locations in the Shadowlands while others stretch to Stygia or even the Far Shores. Appearing as rivers or roads wending incongruously through the storm, Byways offer relatively safe and fast travel. The greatest Byway is known as the River of Death, which supposedly winds its way across all of the Shadowlands and even to the gates of the Labyrinth itself.

At the heart of the Tempest is the Spectre-haunted maze of the Labyrinth, which according to legend was gnawed from nothingness by Malfeans at the dawn of time. At the very core of the Labyrinth, far worse than any Minotaur could be, is the mouth of the Void, Oblivion's embodiment. Few wraiths have gazed upon it and returned to tell others of their impressions.

Nihils

Reality is not solid, particularly not in the Shadowlands. The Shadowlands are constantly splintering and breaking, and where the fabric of this part of the Underworld tears, the Tempest bubbles through.

By strict definition, a *Nihil* is a rip in the Shadowlands that allows access to the Tempest beneath. Most Nihils are one-time-only events, though many open and close on regular cycles. Some are permanently open; these are often heavily guarded by whichever wraiths dwell nearby. Just as a Nihil allows a wraith access to the Tempest from the Shadowlands, it can allow dwellers in the Tempest a way out. Indeed, doomslayers do some of their best hunting at the mouths of Nihils in the Tempest; Spectres tend to cluster around such openings in a sort of perverse fishing expedition for prey.

Nihils appear as pools of inky blackness in the Shadowlands. They can open anywhere: elevator shafts, beneath rocking chairs, in cobwebbed corners or in the middle of busy streets. Usually they are no more than a few inches across, but some can be feet or even yards in diameter. Rumors as to the strange powers of Nihils abound; some say that staring into them causes hallucinations or strengthens the Shadow. After all, the warning against gazing into the abyss was issued long ago, in the lands of the living....

Maelstroms

Seen by some as the fist of Oblivion, *Maelstroms* are monsoons that boil up from the Tempest and wreak havoc throughout the rest of the Underworld. These titanic

storms also carry within them hordes of Spectres who use the shrieking winds as a sort of monstrous steed, riding them in order to make war upon the Citadels and Necropoli. Maelstroms sweep away all that lies before them: unprotected wraiths, isolated Haunts, everything. Citadels and strong Haunts can withstand the assault, but pity any wraith caught outside the Citadel gates when the winds from the Tempest start to howl.

Being caught in a Maelstrom is akin to traveling through the worst sections of the Tempest. Soot fills the air, and a wraith's very Corpus is abraded away by the sandblasting force of the winds. All is dark, if not pitch-black, and there is a constant moaning cacophony from the beasts riding the storm. In many ways, the Spectres are the storm, for until they are defeated, the Maelstrom will not recede.

Skinlands disasters and Maelstroms have a peculiar cause-and-effect relationship. One will inevitably cause the other, though which comes first is open to debate. The detonation of the atomic device over Hiroshima triggered the Fifth Great Maelstrom, but a smaller Maelstrom can herald an incipient catastrophe in the Skinlands, such as a building's collapse, a hurricane or a bomb's detonation.

The Far Shores

It is said that far beyond the mists of the Sea of Sorrows lie thousands upon thousands of isolated island realms collectively known as the *Far Shores*. Stygian history records that, long ago, the Ferrymen known as the *Shining Ones* laid down Byways leading to each of these realms. Hope and faith drew wraiths to these isles and since have continued to entice them, for these lands promise refuge from Oblivion as they model themselves on the Hells and Heavens, Sukhavatis, Edens, Zions and Valhallas of countless cultures. The afterlives created for, and perhaps by, lost souls can be found in every shape and size throughout the Far Shores.

Ultimately banking on the hope of release from suffering, the beacons of Paradise, Nirvana, Purgatory and thousands of other faith-based spiritual conditions shine brightly in the stories of most of the few travelers who have sojourned there and back. These stories can be heard not only in Stygia, but in other deathlands as well, for the Byways to the Far Shores originate in the death realms of all peoples.

Not all the tales inspire confidence in the good intentions of the Far Shores' leadership, however. Stories abound of tyrannical leaders demanding unquestioning obedience of the faithful and tormenting the "ungodly"; of forsaken wraiths manacled to each other, locked up and long forgotten in tiny antechambers beneath the ground, or thrown into the maws of unnamable creatures as sacrifices to the "gods"; of sadistic fanatics who encase themselves and others in coffins of white-hot soulsteel to purge their iniquities; and of seas choked with Spectre-harried aspirants waiting to be admitted to their chosen islands. Demonic beings, probably but not certainly Moliated wraiths, torture victims by thrusting Stygian steel stakes up through their spines and planting them in pools of acid that bubble up from unknown places within the Tempest. For many Stygian wraiths, even the bright promise of Transcendence is not enough to entice them to these places.

Thousands upon thousands of wraiths inhabit the Far Shores realms, often giving rise to the horrific stories of cruel overcrowding and complete loss of individuality that travelers tell on the other side of the Sunless Sea. But the picture is not all

bleak. Breathtakingly beautiful island paradises host legions of pearly-limned Angelics and angel-like wraiths. Usually, these beings shelter the travel-worn from the Tempest, heal them and enjoin them to remain. More rarely, they adopt weary travelers and teach them the gentle ways of hope and Transcendence.

Ferryman, Spectres, soul-pirates, slavers and strange creatures from other realms also make their appearances throughout the Far Shores isles. It is said that many Ferrymen still usher the souls of the dead to their just destinations among the Far Shores, and that some of the isles are nothing more than the Ferrymen's way stations. Some hold that the Shining Ones who forged the original Byways to the realms now rule many of the isles.

Tales of Spectres taking over the fanatical leadership of certain realms modeled after the various hells — and even those modeled after the paradises — may indeed be true, as are the rumors of a brisk slave trade conducted by soul-pirates under the guise of religious recruitment and proselytizing. Soul-pirates often use Stygian Reapers as middlemen in obtaining Lemures for sale as “converts” to various Far Shores realms.

The Other Deadlands

Stygia, also known as the Dark Kingdom of Iron, is hardly the only final destination for the Restless Dead. Other cultures besides the Western have afterlives and Underworlds, each as potent and real as Stygia. Generically named “Dark Kingdoms,” these other realms are many and varied, and most are so widely separated from Stygia that few Western wraiths even know of their existence.

Of those that are known, the Jade Empire (known as the Yellow Springs to its inhabitants) and the Dark Kingdom of Ivory (a.k.a. the Bush of Ghosts) are the ones with which the Hierarchy has the most dealings. Each has made war on and treaties with Stygia in the past, usually over the disposition of souls taken from their ancestral lands.

Hidden within the Tempest are the other Deadlands: Karta, the Sea that Knows No Sun, Swar and more. Each reflects the nature of death for a different culture, and the laws that govern ghostly existence in Stygia may function differently there, if they function at all.

Necropoli

In all human cities there's one part of town that, when mentioned by the living, inevitably produces the reaction, “You don't want to go *there*.” Odds are, that's the local Necropolis.

A *Necropolis* is a city of the dead, a place where wraiths gather and Nihils open more frequently. In the Shadowlands, it is a teeming, bustling center of activity, as most of a city's wraiths can be found here at some point during the day — or night. To the living, however, the streets and crumbling buildings that correspond to the Necropolis are unwelcoming and desolate, spotted with abandoned lots and filled with the cries of scuttling rats and other vermin.

Most Necropoli can be considered colonies of Stygia, and are part and parcel of the Hierarchy. Centered on a Citadel and divvied up into Domains, Hierarchy

Necropoli are relatively stable places for the dead to dwell. Renegade Necropoli, on the other hand, tend to be more along rough-and-tumble lines, where any service can be purchased (for a price) and unwary wraiths always run the risk of being enslaved or annihilated.

Domains

A *Domain* is defined as the amount of territory a wraith or a Circle of wraiths can control. The Hierarchy does officially parcel out Domains in Necropoli, often marking the borders of the territories controlled by the local Citadel with immobilized Thralls Moliated into flaming torches.

Unofficially, most wraiths claim the areas around their Haunts as their Domains (or "turf"), and can back it up *de facto* if not *de jure*. While many of these Renegade Domains aren't recognized by the local Hierarchy authorities, most Legionnaires have the intelligence to go into them in force, or not at all.

Citadels

The largest and strongest Haunt in a Necropolis is called a *Citadel*, and it serves much the same function as a medieval castle. Strong points of defense against invasion and centers of commerce, Citadels are the hearts and minds of their Necropoli. While most Citadels don't actually appear as castles or fortresses, they still stand as barriers against assaults by Spectres, Renegades and Heretics.

Usually a Citadel will correspond in the Skinlands to an abandoned warehouse or series of buildings, a strip mine, a dump or some other expanse devoted to decay and destruction. In the Shadowlands, however, Citadels are often fortified with relic beams and timbers, or reinforced with soulforged buttresses and bricks. Every Citadel is constructed with Maelstroms in mind; a Citadel that can't survive the fury of the storm is no Citadel at all.

Most Citadels are held by the Hierarchy, and have a strong presence from one or more of the Legions' military side. Theoretically, Hierarchy Citadels are exclusive to Hierarchy citizens, but in the Shadowlands hard-and-fast rules can get conveniently blurry. After all, every hand that can hold a weapon is welcome when the Spectres come calling. Renegade and Heretic wraiths are often allowed in Citadel gates for purposes of commerce, if someone can be found to vouch for them.

There are Renegade and Heretic Citadels scattered throughout the Shadowlands. Most are captured Hierarchy Citadels refurbished by their new owners; others are raised in areas so desolate and barren that it's not worth the Hierarchy's effort to come knock them down.

The Restless



Passion stronger than death and perils that make death seem tame: these are the basics of life after death. In many ways it is an existence of extremes. Ultimate destruction is the price of failure, but eternal love and beatific Transcendence are real possibilities as well.

Life as a wraith, such as it is, can be a compendium of horrors. Visions of the living are marred by death's touch, and

even the freshest bloom appears mottled by corruption. The Underworld itself is dreary and deadening to the senses; bright color is rare here, save for the ravenous flame of soulfire crystals or the blazing green of a Solicitor's eye. Nor does all of this go unremarked upon, for the Shadow is omnipresent and always willing to make a bad situation worse. Oblivion threatens without and within, and many wraiths find it easiest simply to give up the struggle and let the Void claim them.

On the other hand, there are those who grasp the opportunity of a second existence. Seeing themselves as given a second chance to correct their mistakes in life, or perhaps just too stubborn to give in to Oblivion, these wraiths make the most of their unlives.

Eternal friendship and love are often promised in the Skinlands, but in the Shadowlands they can become real. Power and riches can be gathered by wraiths ruthless enough to make those ascents; spiritual transformation is sought by many as well. The lands of the dead beckon some to explore, as do the new realms of the Tempest and Far Shores that no mortals ever see. Gifted with the powers called Arcanoi, Restless can spend centuries honing their skills or using them to interact with the living. Many wraiths frequently cross the Shroud for a multitude of reasons. There are those who seek to finish business left unattended in life, or to protect those things and people that they love. Other wraiths simply meddle, playing poltergeist or invading mortals' dreams for the sheer thrill of it. Possession of the Quick, vicariously sampling their joys and pleasures, is a popular pastime, while vengeance from beyond the grave is also something that the Restless practice — if they can get away with it. And there is always the struggle against Oblivion and its minions, a fight that some believe is for the sake of all creation. For wraiths such as these, death is only the beginning.

Metaphysics

Wraiths are caught in a tightrope existence between life and Oblivion, and their perspective reflects this. Just a Shroud's thickness away from the lands of the living, they are nonetheless eternally separated from those they love. On the other hand, each action, thought and word is a reaction against Oblivion's steady pull, shouting defiance into the Void. It is this balance between life and worse than death that the Restless maintain, for as long as they are able.

Touching the Skinlands is something that most wraiths aspire to, no matter what the *Dictum Mortuam* commands. Doing so, though, is not always easy, as the nature of Restless existence makes reaching across the Shroud difficult. Objects in the Skinlands have an odd sort of solidity to them as far as wraiths are concerned; it is nearly impossible for a wraith to move a real-world object, but for a minimal investment of Corpus, she can simply disincorporate and walk right through it. For example, if a wraith attempts to push on the front of a parked car, her touch will have no effect, and she will find herself unable to affect the car in the slightest. On the other hand, if the car's parking brake suddenly slips and the car rolls forward, it will proceed to pass (nearly) harmlessly through her as she disincorporates.

Of course, wraiths have long since discovered ways to enforce their wills more concretely on the real world. Certain Arcanoi allow Restless to affect or even enter the Skinlands; hence legends of poltergeists, apparitions and ghosts in the machine. All of these phenomena can be traced to wraiths extending their abilities across the Shroud.

While very little in the real world can inflict lasting damage on a wraith's Corpus, in the Underworld it's a very different matter. Objects existing in the Skinlands can be passed through or bounced off of, while things existing in the Underworld (relics, Artifacts, other wraiths, etc.) are quite solid to any ghost. A steel blade can whirl through the Corpus of a wraith without causing lasting harm; a soulsteel sword in the hands of a Legionnaire, on the other hand, can cleft a ghost neatly in twain. Stygian steel (or other soulforged metals), Artifacts, relics, other wraiths, Spectres, the dwellers in the Tempest, even the spirit magick of the living — all of these can affect a wraith concretely.

Passions and Fetters

Passions and Fetters are the things that define and maintain a wraith's existence. On a basic level, Fetters are the things in the Skinlands that a wraith cares about most deeply, while Passions are the things that a wraith most wants to do.

Fetters are what tie a wraith to the Shadowlands, giving him anchors in the Skinlands that he can use to resist Oblivion's pull. It is in a Fetter that a wraith can Slumber and heal, and often it is easier for a wraith to use his Arcanoi near his Fetters. On the other hand, if a Fetter is damaged or destroyed, the effects can be catastrophic. Furthermore, wraiths without Fetters cannot stay long in the Shadowlands, and so every wraith will strive his utmost to guard his Fetters.

Passions are those dictates which a wraith follows in death, the emotional imperatives that drive and fuel his existence. At its core each Passion has an emotion; by following his Passion's dictates (or by being in the presence of the feeling at the Passion's heart), a wraith garners the energy called *Pathos*. Without *Pathos*, a wraith's Arcanoi will not function, nor will he be able to heal. Preventing a wraith from tending his Passions and Fetters, then, is perhaps the worst slow torment that can be inflicted on a wraith.

Status and Society

It is almost sadly predictable to note that the dead, having centuries to ponder the dilemmas and grand mysteries of existence, instead throw themselves into rigid social structures, and spend a huge portion of their unlives making sure that the social niceties are properly maintained. Status in the Restless community is based upon power, of course, but also age, expertise in the Arcanoi, and freedom of movement. An aged and potent wraith who maintains his Fetters and can therefore return to the Shadowlands from Stygia is accorded more respect than a wraith of similar power and vintage whose Fetters are long since dust.

As the decades pass, a wraith can gradually acquire more status among the dead, and social mobility between "ranks" is reasonably common. On the other hand, the intense cliqueishness of some wraiths (particularly the hidebound Gaunts of Stygia) bears a stunning resemblance to the social dynamics of a middle-school recess, with wraiths refusing to deal with other wraiths who aren't of the right age, power or Arcanos specialty. It is the Stygian Gaunts in particular who maintain the rigid social distinctions between Domem and Gaunt, Enfant and Lemure, and Thralls and everyone else.

Social Status

Enfants — Enfants are the recently deceased who have not yet acclimated to the Shadowlands. They are usually between a few days and a few weeks old, and are covered by a Caul of plasm which keeps them in a semi-dreamlike state, unable to see or hear fully what is going on. This Caul also obscures the Infant's thoughts and perceptions, so that her first days of afterlife are a somnolent, confused haze of blurred images and half-remembered voices. Until her Caul is removed by another wraith, the Infant will be unable to see, hear or think clearly. A lucky few wraiths manage somehow to remove their own Cauls, generally those Enfants who possessed extraordinary willpower in their mortal days.

Drones — These are the wraiths most Skinlanders see at the sites of hauntings. Without sentience or willpower, their mortal identities lost to them, Drones are trapped at the sites of their deaths. They are unable to do more than endlessly reenact their demises, robotically repeating their last moments among the living. A Haunt populated by Drones is considered a gold mine by Reapers.

Thralls — These are among the most miserable wraiths in existence, held in servitude to other wraiths. Some have been captured and forced into slavery, while others have been sentenced to Thralldom for crimes real or imagined. A few wraiths have voluntarily sold themselves into Thralldom as a means of paying their debts. Although such indenture should have only a limited duration, many Thralls discover to their dismay that this clause in their contracts is frequently ignored....

Thralls are usually manacled and may not travel freely without their masters. Though some variants on the Code of Charon forbid the mistreatment of Thralls, such abuses are rarely reported or punished. A Thrall's Shadow often takes sadistic pleasure in the torment the Psyche endures, and far more Thralls are lost to Harrowings and the machinations of the Shadow than are smelted down or freed.

Lemures — These are wraiths whose Cauls have been removed and who still retain most of their Fetters. They are generally quite young in terms of their afterlives, and are considered to be immature and undisciplined by older, established wraiths. Lemures make up the majority of wraiths encountered in the Shadowlands, as most wish to stay close to their Fetters.

Domems — Domems are wraiths who can no longer travel freely to the Shadowlands, and thus are restricted to Stygia and other such places of safety within the Tempest. Although most Domems are older wraiths, a number of them might just as well be Lemures, save for the fact that their Fetters no longer exist. A wraith deceased only five years whose Fetters are all destroyed in a fire will instantly acquire Domem status, as she will no longer be able to maintain a presence in the Shadowlands. On the other hand, these "whippersnapper" Domems are hardly accorded the respect granted their elders.

The usual recourse of many Domems is to travel to Stygia to work in the ever-expanding Hierarchy bureaucracy. Renegades and Heretics don't have this option, and their transition to Domemhood can lead them anywhere from a full-time search for Transcendence to the forges. "Domemizing" is a popular tactic among certain Renegade gangs, whereby they rid local Necropoli of their most competent or vicious officers by targeting and destroying their Fetters.

Gaunts — Old and powerful wraiths, Gaunts have managed to maintain their Fetters, allowing them to travel into the Shadowlands. The vast majority of Gaunts have also journeyed deeply into the Tempest, possibly to the Far Shores or even the Labyrinth. Feared and respected for their knowledge and power, Gaunts wield influence in the society of the dead disproportionate to their numbers.

Deathlords — This powerful body of wraiths was originally created to become Charon's Senate, following the custom of the Roman Republic. With the re-creation of Stygia as an empire, each Deathlord was given a Legion as his charge and a throne from which to govern his subjects. Without Charon's iron guidance, however, the Deathlords have fallen into disorder, using their Legions to contest with each other as each strives to declare himself the new Emperor of Stygia. As the Deathlord with the most souls is naturally the most powerful, the co-rulers of Stygia frequently meddle in mortal affairs to encourage greater numbers of deaths in whatever manners will swell the ranks of their own Legions.

Reapers

A *Reaper* can be an *Enfant's* best friend or worst nightmare, depending upon circumstance. Technically, a *Reaper* is a wraith who cuts another wraith free from his *Caul*, facilitating his "birth" into the Shadowlands. Many are kind souls looking to ease the transition that new *Enfants* are making; others are recruiters for Heretic cults, Hierarchy Legions or Renegade gangs. These sorts of professional (and amateur) *Reapers* tend to treat their charges well, indoctrinating them in the laws of the Underworld and helping them adjust to existence beyond the Shroud.

Other *Reapers* are less kind. Slavemasters of the dead, they *Reap* new souls in order to sell them off to the highest bidder in the markets of the *Necropoli*. Souls are the currency and raw materials of the Underworld, and for many slavetaking *Reapers*, harvesting *Enfants* and throwing them into chains is strictly a business proposition.

Reapers are often found jockeying for position in places like hospitals, prisons or retirement homes. More enterprising ones like to ride ambulances, while those gifted with the *Arcanos Fatalism* show an uncanny knack for being in the right place at the right time. *Reapers* will constantly seek to establish claims in places that yield rich troves of souls, and when such wealth is at stake, violence is hardly uncommon.

Grave Goods

Death can't remove the innate human hunger for material possessions. Just because wraiths can't touch the objects they once owned doesn't mean that they no longer want to, nor does it prevent them from attempting to acquire wealth on the other side of the Shroud. Even the dead have a thriving economy, though mutual funds and stock options play no part in it. Rather, it is an economy of souls and relics, the two things that can be held in the Underworld.

The vast majority of objects in the Underworld are made from souls by one of two processes. Unlucky wraiths — *Thralls*, criminals, *Spectres* and those who are simply unfortunate — are sent to the soulforgers to be hammered into the coins, blades and other implements of night-to-night existence. Sometimes these smelted

souls are mixed with what has been termed "death ore," material mined from the Veinous Stair, creating specialized materials for construction or warfare.

Other victims are given to those skilled in the Arcanos Moliate, to be crafted into torches, furniture or other necessities of afterlife existence. The breakdown between the two forms of transformation is simple; anything that would have been metal or stone in the Skinlands is replaced by soulforged objects, while things whose Skinlands equivalents are wood or softer materials are made through Moliate.

There is another classification of objects in the Underworld: relics. These are memories of things, brought across the Shroud once their Skinlands originals have been destroyed. The stronger the emotion a relic generated before its destruction (a much-loved stuffed unicorn, a despised leather belt used for disciplinary purposes), the more perfectly it translates to the Shadowlands after it finally crumbles to dust. Most buildings in the Shadowlands are in fact relics; the remainder are those constructed from soulforged materials.

Some wraiths of recent vintage are horrified by the nature of the Underworld economy, but in the long run most of their moral objections are replaced by a sort of pragmatism. There are multiple moral justifications for this sort of ultimate objectification of souls: every soul forged is another one that can't spiral down to Oblivion; many soulforgers believe they hammer the Shadows right out of their materials; and so on, but in the end it becomes a matter of convenience and desire.

Souls

Souls are where it begins and ends in the Underworld. Souls are wealth, souls are resources, and souls are what feeds Oblivion. In order to prevent the last, the Deathlords (like Charon before them) have decreed that weak, Passionless and counterproductive souls be smelted down. A wraith who has become a Byway's paving stone is in no danger of strengthening Oblivion; a Renegade who is transformed into a cushion won't ambush Legionnaires and help send them to Harrowings. Pointing out the fact that the soul-trade also makes certain wraiths very wealthy indeed is considered *déclassé*.

Relics

A relic is a memory given shape in the Underworld. The only objects across the Shroud not formed from souls, relics are those things that inspired great passion in life, and which linger on in death. No longer in existence in the Skinlands, relics can survive for centuries in the Shadowlands.

Just because something is destroyed in the Skinlands doesn't mean that it automatically becomes a relic. In order to cross the Shroud, an object must have inspired strong emotion before its destruction. Love, hate, fear; the specifics are immaterial. Stuffed animals and battered baseball gloves are among the most common relics, but so are knives, handcuffs and buildings like schoolhouses and prisons. It is the strength of emotion that an object invoked that dictates whether or not it will return as a relic even after its Skinlands form has been destroyed or buried.

The creation of a relic is a simple process: An item that provoked strong feeling is destroyed or buried. Things that didn't inspire one way or the other don't become relics; for example, there are very few relic tuna fish cans beyond the Shroud. An

object that does become a relic reappears in the Shadowlands after its destruction or burial, usually on the precise spot where it met its maker. Often relics will materialize in the Underworld at the same time their owner does, almost as if they have been waiting for him to come along and take possession of them. It is customary to make a gift of a relic to one's Reaper upon Harvesting, particularly if said Reaper is kind enough to refrain from selling the *Enfant* into slavery.

Even relics fade away, eventually. The stronger the wellspring of care that created them, the longer they last and the more solid they are. In the end, though, all but the most potent lose their solidity and slowly dissolve, unlamented.

Most relics aren't "useful" in the sense of serving as Shadowlands survival equipment. Little things that meant a great deal to someone — a signed copy of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, a favorite locket, a teddy bear treasured in youth and saved for one's own children — make up the vast majority of relics found in the Shadowlands. Relics of this sort tend not to last more than a few decades before fading.

More potent relics, such as working computers or firearms, functioning automobiles and the like, are much rarer and often have Underworld existences measured in under 10 years. Dismissively labeled "toys" by Gaunts and Domems, relics like this need investments of Pathos before they can function as they did in the Skinlands. A relic computer that hasn't been fueled with Pathos is a rectangular box; a relic computer that's been loaded with juice can work wonders.

There are also relics of legendary status which have lasted centuries or even millennia. Brutus' dagger and da Vinci's doodle pad are examples of things that have inspired the necessary passion to maintain their existences through the centuries.

Soulforged Goods

The forges of the Artificers are always hungry for more souls. There are a great many items desperately needed by Stygian society that don't appear in quantity as relics — swords, cinderblocks and the like — and which must be manufactured somehow. The only resource that fits the bill, unfortunately, is the plasm that makes up the *Corpora* of the dead.

Soulforging itself consists of draining a wraith of as much sentience and will as possible without tempting Oblivion, then holding her over crystals of soulfire until her *Corpus* becomes soft and malleable. At this point, an Artificer will set to work with his hammer, pounding the unfortunate wraith into an entirely new form. Skilled soulforgers (usually those associated with the Artificers' Guild) can create works of amazing delicacy and beauty, as well as the girders and breastplates necessary to fend off Oblivion's assaults.

Occasionally soulforgers will alloy raw soul-stuff with the death ore mined from the *Veinous Stair* or salvaged from the *Tempest*. *Stygian steel*, consisting of plasm, death ore and supposedly scrapings from the *Labyrinth's* walls, is by far the strongest substance known in the Underworld. Other mixtures have different properties, depending upon their ingredients. *Soulsteel* is the slang term for smelted wraiths uncut with any other substance, and this is by far the most common product of the forges.

Soul-forged items tend to break down much more slowly than relics, having a permanency and solidity to them that is much valued in the Underworld. On the other hand, many wraiths claim to hear their smelted goods moaning or weeping

softly, and a few have gone so far as to swear that they've heard their precious Artifacts speak.

The soulforging process is irreversible, and it is fervently prayed by most wraiths that a smelted soul's consciousness is destroyed forever by the process.

Artifacts

Artifact is a catch-all term for items in the Underworld that possess special powers. Certain relics are also Artifacts, but many Artifacts are created across the Shroud. Exceedingly rare and highly sought after, powerful Artifacts are treasures beyond price in the lands of the dead.

Relic Artifacts are difficult to create and more difficult to hang onto. The passion of multitudes of Quick is needed to empower a relic thus; also needed is the belief on the part of those mortals that the object is in some way special. Then the relic-to-be must be destroyed, freeing it to cross the Shroud and manifest in the Underworld. Excalibur, the Grail, the Ark of the Covenant and the original Mme. Guillotine are all examples of relic Artifacts. Unlike most relics, relic Artifacts never fade away.

The other variety of Artifact is the soulforged sort. Items crafted in the Artificers' forges and invested with Arcanoi, these Artifacts are more common but only relatively so. Masks of office and Anacreons' swords are often Artifacts of this kind. Because of the great personal cost of making them, soulforgers are very particular as to whom they craft Artifacts for.

Technically, any soulforged item is an Artifact, but no one ever refers to a soulforged brick as an Artifact. Only unique and powerful items are actually labeled "Artifacts."

Standard Operating Equipment

There are certain items with which every Stygian wraith is familiar. These are the basic tools of existence across the Shroud, and any *Enfant* who evades the Reapers will learn about them in short order.

- **Weapons** — For reasons of economy, it is the classic weapons that work best in the Underworld. Relic guns require an investment of Pathos, and relic ammunition is in short supply, so most wraiths fall back on swords, knives and the like. It is simple to craft blades and armor from souls, and many wraiths frankly prefer the panache that comes from having a sword at their hip or a dagger in their boot.

Ornate weapons are seen as status symbols, and relic or Artifact blades are highly prized. Small wars between Necropoli have been known to start over the disposition of legendary Artifact weapons.

- **Oboli** — The base unit of Stygian currency is the obolus. Forged from a single soul, an obolus is the only legal tender in Stygian territory. Most Renegade and Heretic bands use them as well, out of a lack of an acceptable alternative.

Oboli theoretically can be chopped up for change, but bits of a single obolus that are separated tend to re-form as soon as they can. Scattered bits of random change, on the other hand, never coalesce. Certain more sensitive wraiths have given

up on the notion of half-oboli entirely as they ponder the effect that being quartered has on smelted souls.

- **Manacles and Chains** — The well-dressed Reaper's tools of the trade, chains and manacles are used in a variety of ways throughout the Underworld. Their primary function, of course, is to bind and imprison wraiths. Many chains are empowered to prevent bound wraiths from using their Arcanoi to escape; others are used as fashion accessories by debonair Domems. Few objects in the Underworld are as thoroughly loathed as Stygian chains; all Renegades, almost every Heretic and even a great many Stygian Lemures see them as reminders of the ever-hungry forges.

- **Masks** — Extremely fashionable among many wraiths, soulforged masks serve to depersonalize offices. Useful as a way to command allegiance to an office as opposed to an office-holder, the masks of Hierarchy officials are passed along to successive holders of posts. Even the Deathlords are known only by the masks and other badges of their offices; it matters little which wraiths wear them.

Deathmarks

Centuries ago, the Ferrymen noticed that certain wraiths arrived in the Shadowlands with strange markings on their Corpora, visible through the use of the Arcanos Fatalism. These marks were classified according to the patterns they made, and there seemed to be several varieties. Those who could see them suggested that they were like birthmarks on the living, although the resemblance ended there. Some marks seemed to be carved into the very Corpus of the affected wraiths, some were raised slightly like scars, and others were merely changes in surface coloration, like tattoos.

Originally there seemed to be a distinct correlation between the patterning and the type of person the wraith had been in life, and the Ferrymen saw this as being the best indicator of how each wraith should seek Transcendence. Time and circumstance, though, have conspired to change this dramatically. With the banishment of the Heretics and the denouncement of Transcendence as a falsehood, the original purpose of the marks was ignored in favor of classifying wraiths according to the manner of their deaths. Now wraiths are branded with deathmarks as a means of marking them the property of a particular Deathlord. Some Restless have taken this to extremes, Moliating themselves in elaborate patterns to proclaim their loyalty to their masters and mistresses.

The Society of the Dead



uman beings are social animals, and a little thing like death doesn't change this fact. There is a complex and ancient society among the Restless, complete with wars, politicking, religious fanaticism, commerce and all of the other things that can be found on the streets of the cities of the living. Wraiths who understand and take advantage of its rules can prosper immeasurably, while those who fail to grasp its basic lessons feed the forges or the Void.

Ghostly society is an odd collection of that which has gone before in the lands of the living. Stygia is based on a classical Athenian ideal, overlaid with a Roman



Republic structure with trappings of empire and coated with modern notions layered over standard European feudalism. Astute political observers have labeled the entire thing “a mess,” and few disagree. Complicating matters is the fact that many Stygian wraiths date back centuries and have not seen fit to modernize their viewpoints. A discussion of Restless politics can be a lesson in living — or unliving — history.

Circles

Circles are tightly knit groups of wraiths, bound together socially for mutual protection from slavers and Spectres. The Circle in many ways replaces the family as the fundamental unit of society in the Underworld, standing by its members through triumphs and turmoil. Wraiths independent of Circles tend to be either the last survivors of Circles that have disintegrated, or suicidal in the extreme. A wraith without a Circle has no one to watch his ghostly back, and will probably not long escape the perils of wraithly existence.

Most Circles range in size from three wraiths to 30, but seldom more. Members of a Circle are usually bound by the *Haunt* (or *Haunts*) they share, not unlike several mortals clustered together in a group house. It is not uncommon for members of a Circle to run the gamut of Underworld factions, often leading to internal dissension strong enough to tear the Circle asunder.

Politicking

With hundreds of years stretching out before them, wraiths excel at political games. As open warfare among the dead practically embraces Oblivion, wraiths try to move against their enemies more subtly, tempting neither fate nor their *Shadows*. However, just because the maneuvers of the aged dead aren't overt, it doesn't mean that they can't be deadly. The forges and the Void both receive their fair share of those who underestimated their opponents' power, or the consequences of defeat.

Factions



roughly speaking, the Deadlands of the Western world are split into three mutually antagonistic factions, though this hardly means that every wraith is up in arms against her neighbor. Most Restless are content to deal with their compatriots on a one-on-one basis, regardless of political affiliation. However, each faction has its fanatics and rabble-rousers, and expressing sympathy for a Renegade in front of the wrong Legionnaire can be a one-way ticket to an eternity as an ashtray.

The *Renegades* are rebels, pitting themselves against any who would fence them in, be that Hierarchy, Heretics or other Renegades. Some are Hierarchs who grew disillusioned by the system, others fugitives seeking refuge, while their brothers in arms may be thugs, political radicals or simply free thinkers. Whatever nobler ideals some may hold about a slavery-free Stygia, an increasing number of Renegades are simply malcontents well-acquainted with violence and its many applications. For every Renegade who will infiltrate a Citadel in hopes of putting its soulforge out of commission, there's another who will gladly sell the returning hero to slavers.

The *Heretics* are those who seek a higher state, perhaps in Transcendence, perhaps in the Far Shores, perhaps somewhere not yet known. The name is a collective term for the many disparate cults that espouse religious beliefs before political ones, and was first given to them by Charon after the Shining Ones debacle. Occasionally these groups band together against violent Renegades or the domineering Hierarchy agents, but these occasions are rare. Heretic cults usually spend more time battling each other over doctrine and potential followers. They run the gamut from fanatical holy warriors and zealots to gentle caregivers and teachers, and everything in between. Their common bond is their unshakable faith in their beliefs, whether they be in the Mother Goddess, a pantheon, Chaos Incarnate, the Judeo-Christian Yahweh or deities unknown to the mortal world. Above all, the Heretics seek converts, as each group is convinced that it and it alone knows the secrets of afterlife. Sadly, many of these are dupes of Spectres or worse yet, the "gods" of the Far Shores.

The *Hierarchy* is the oldest and most powerful side of the triangle, claiming its authority from the departed Charon. Its lords demand respect from all, and use the Legions to back up such requests. While the Hierarchy may be the most stable, it is also the most stifling and conservative faction. The walls of its Necropoli hold out the Spectres, but at a terrible cost. The average wraith on the street is likely to be a Hierarch, not much different from the average law-abiding mortal citizen. Hierarchy wraiths accept the Stygian laws, along with the offenses and the mistakes of the administration, as the best means of protection from fanatics and the Shadow-Eaten.

On Renegades

My whole life I played by the rules. Paid my taxes, obeyed the speed limit — you name it. Now I'm dead, and they're telling me I have to do the same thing all over again, forever? No way, man. No goddamned way.

— Amos Coulter, Renegade, Doyle's Irregulars

“Renegade” is most frequently used as a broad-brush term to describe those who stand outside the Hierarchy, yet do not belong to an organized Heretic cult. Most so-called “Renegades” find the term insulting, and prefer a variety of names ranging from “Outsiders” to “Out of my way.” Generally Renegades run in quote-unquote gangs, though these gangs can take the form of rampaging *freikorps*, street gangs or pacifistic communes.

There is no such thing as the “average” Renegade. There are as many reasons for standing on the outside as there are Renegades. Some are reacting to the Hierarchy’s repugnant soul-slavery, while to others it matters little who’s in charge... as long as it’s not the Hierarchy. Many were rebels in life and simply don’t want to change. Some are fugitives from Hierarchy justice, preferring the precarious life of a refugee to the security of eternity as a soulsteel lawn ornament. Among the Renegades is also where one finds the thugs who simply prefer cutting their own paychecks from By-way robbery as opposed to receiving them from a Legionnaire captain.

No small portion of the gangs are mercenary bands, selling their swords and services to any who can afford to pay their fee, including Hierarchs temporarily strapped for Legionnaires. On the other hand, many Renegade communities are peaceful collectives, trying to burrow as far into hiding as possible. It is this very disorganization of purpose which hamstring certain Renegades’ periodic efforts to present a unified front, and which unwittingly serves the Hierarchy.

A prime source of tension between the Hierarchy and the Renegades is simple class warfare. A certain amount of snobbery is part and parcel with living in Stygia as a member of the obvious “ruling” class, and many Hierarchs believe it to be their right and privilege to give the Renegades hell as they are socially inferior. For some Renegades, the thought of being able to take down a Hierarch just to wipe that superior smile off his face warms the plasm even on the chilliest nights. On the other hand, there is a great deal of barter and soul-traffic between individual members of the factions, and even Legionnaires will often cut deals with local Renegades if they don’t think their superiors are looking.

On Heretics

Look around you and tell me that you do not truly believe yourself in Hell, my friend. Our leader knows the way to a better place, and it would grieve me greatly to sojourn there knowing that you remained here among the damned.

— Daniel Avrams, Shepherd, The Sons of the New Masada

The term “Heretic” was first used by Charon after the discovery of the Far Shores’ true state. However, as each cult sees itself on the true path to salvation, it simply assigns the name “Heretic” to all of the other, misguided cults with whom it shares the Deadlands. To the Hierarchy and Renegades, of course, it makes little difference what the Heretics call themselves, and the term is used only slightly more frequently than “those loonies.”

If the Heretics could ever iron out their differences and present an ecumenical front, they could prove a formidable foe to the Hierarchy. For many Heretics, the power of their beliefs sustains them as surely as the Pathos paycheck sustains certain of their Legionnaire counterparts. However, the conflict of belief systems between cults prevents this from ever being a possibility.

To outsiders, the reasons the Heretics bicker seem like a simple matter of pig-headedness, a refusal to admit that any other sect's beliefs could be as viable as their own. However, this is too simplistic an explanation given the variety and complexity of the belief systems at work. No matter how friendly or open-minded a particular cult member might be, she will defend her sect to Oblivion's doorstep as being the right and *only* way to take the next spiritual step. In a war in which the stakes are so high, there is no room for tolerance toward the enemy. It has often been quoted that the one who controls the religion controls the region. The Heretics carry this creed as a corollary to their own espoused beliefs, and wish to lead their fellow Restless to Heaven — but on their terms.

For now, the various cults squabble as much with each other as with the Hierarchy. The question of Transcendence is the main bone of contention most Heretics have with Stygia, as Charon had all but declared it to be a lie at the unmasking of the Shining Ones. Since then, many Hierarchs have abandoned the notion of Transcendence as a fairy tale and see the Heretics as spreading propaganda that is detrimental to the health of Stygian society. Heretics hotly refute this argument as evidence that the Hierarchy is just afraid of losing power as souls Transcend.

The most famous "heresy" is that of the Fishers, whose involvement with Stygia is well-known and recorded. Since then, a number of other such cults have sprung up, most of them defined according to their proselytizing habits.

On The Hierarchy

We are in a war for the sake of all that exists, and we don't have the luxury of dissent. If you're not with us, you're against us, and if you're against us, you're working for Oblivion.

— Genevieve Buck, Anacreon of Violence, Manchester Necropolis

This monolithic organization is the oldest and longest-lived of any in the Deadlands. Founded by Charon as means of unifying and ordering the chaotic afterlife, it has grown into a stratified, calcified bureaucracy "led" by the battling Deathlords and based upon the enslavement of thousands of souls for use as Thralls or raw materials. Criminalizing any opposition and crushing those who stand in their way, the armored Legions of the Hierarchy have rolled across the oceans to make sure that Stygian law is maintained throughout the Deadlands. The fact that many wraiths find Stygian law objectionable is not open to debate, as most Hierarchs see themselves as personally holding the line against Oblivion. Renegades are seen as wanting to open the Citadel gates to Spectres; Heretics would have everyone contemplate their navels while the Maelstroms howl. No, no matter how unpleasant some of its aspects might be, according to loyal Stygian citizens the Hierarchy is the best bet the world has not to be swallowed by the Void.

In spite of the many flaws, the Hierarchy is perhaps the best chance an average wraith has to survive threats of Spectres, Maelstroms and other monsters, and one of the few sources of law and order to be found in the chaotic Underworld. Wraiths who had been average, law-abiding citizens in life found that the Hierarchy provided a lifestyle similar to what they were used to, giving them a comforting refuge when all else in their new existence was strange. These common citizens are an unseen face of the Hierarchy, which may be known to other wraiths only through the Legionnaire pointing his relic sword or the sadistic bureaucratic servant.

While the highest levels of the Hierarchy are indubitably corrupt (as any Renegade or Heretic will gladly inform you), the lower levels have managed to escape a great deal of the infection. Here can be found the idealists, the earnest and hard-working wraiths pushing papers or keeping the peace on a Necropolis block. The few altruists who have managed to make it to positions of power view Stygia as a once-mighty empire fallen on hard times. While the Hierarchy has its flaws, Charon still had good intentions and ideas, and they should continue to uphold those ideals, even if the Deathlords have forgotten them.

Most wraiths are part of the Hierarchy, and it controls most of the Necropoli and Citadels in the Shadowlands. Many Byways are Hierarchy-built and maintained, and Stygia constantly sends patrols out to keep these safe routes clear of Spectres and Renegades. Of course, the definition of "safe" depends upon whom is asked, particularly if that person is a Renegade.

The Legions

In theory, every Stygian citizen belongs to a Legion. Delineated along the lines of each wraith's demise, the *Legions* serve as a way of classifying the dead. Each Legion is ruled by a Deathlord, who commands obedience from all within his troop. Authority descends from the Deathlord or lady in a quasi-military chain of command, with civilian Legionnaires given military ranks in an effort to place them within the Legion's structure.

The bureaucratic side of the Legions is just as important as the military, and most members of a Legion aren't out in armor smiting Spectres and Renegades. Instead, they are processing souls, enforcing laws, taking census, repairing Necropoli, educating Enfants and otherwise keeping Stygian society running smoothly.

Then again, there are the martial aspects to each Legion. Byway patrols, Spectre-hunting expeditions, Renegade-busting and other, similar activities necessitate a standing military presence among the dead, and each Deathlord does his best to oblige. This is the face of the Legions that Renegades and Heretics are most familiar with, and these outsiders often mistake the military side of the Legion for the Legion as a whole.

As the Deathlords jockey for power, clashes between Legions are becoming more frequent. While things are a long way from open warfare on the streets of Stygia, out in the hinterlands bushwhackings and other inter-Legion unfriendliness has been known to happen. A lone Centurion of the Legion of Paupers who wanders into a haunt frequented by soldiers of the Grim Legion can be asking for trouble, depending upon how relations between the Smiling Lord and the Beggar Lord are that week.

There are other, lesser organizations also known as Legions, though these are generally orders of merit. For example, the Fifth Legion, a.k.a. the Legion of the Black Hawk, is an elite military corps created by Charon from the finest soldiers in each of the Deathlords' Legions, while the Online Legion contains Hierarchy wraiths skilled at the Arcanos Inhabit. Some of the Deathlords also have Legions-within-Legions, such as the Beggar Lord who honors his bodyguards with the title of the Legion of the Onyx Tear. It is generally assumed that when the term "Legion" is used, it is one of the eight Legions of the Deathlords that is being referred to. If a wraith wishes to mention one of the smaller organizations, she will usually call it by its full name just to avoid confusion.

The Legions consist of:

- **The Silent Legion**, ruled by the Quiet Lord from the Seat of Silence, and consisting of the victims of Despair.
- **The Legion of Paupers**, ruled by the Beggar Lord from the Seat of Golden Tears, and consisting of the victims of Mystery.
- **The Emerald Legion**, ruled by the Emerald Lord from the Seat of Thorns, and consisting of the victims of Happenstance.
- **The Grim Legion**, ruled by the Smiling Lord from the Seat of Burning Waters, and consisting of the victims of Violence.
- **The Iron Legion**, ruled by the Ashen Lady from the Seat of Shadows, and consisting of the victims of Old Age.
- **The Penitent Legion**, ruled by the Laughing Lady from the Seat of Succor, and consisting of the victims of Madness.
- **The Skeletal Legion** (also called the Gaunt Legion), ruled by the Skeletal Lord from the Seat of Dust, and consisting of the victims of Pestilence.
- **The Legions of Fate**, ruled by the Ladies of Fate from the Seat of Fate and consisting of those whom Fate has marked for its own.

Legion Ranks

• **Legionnaire** — Legionnaires are the grunts of the Underworld, holding the lowest rank in the Legions. Most have no fixed duties, but instead are reassigned from Necropolis to Necropolis as the need arises. Patrols generally consist of Legionnaires as well.

• **Centurion** — A Centurion is a wraith who oversees a patrol and the Legionnaires who serve in it. Centurions are empowered representatives of Stygia, and have considerable leeway in the field. Very few Centurions, once they've begun the long climb up from Legionnaire status, are content to remain at this post for long.

• **Marshal** — Appointed by the local Anacreon, a Marshal is responsible for a small Domain outside of a Citadel. Marshals usually have multiple patrols assigned to them, and each reports directly to her Overlord.

• **Regent** — Essentially a well-trusted Marshal, a Regent is granted responsibility farther from the local Citadel and hence more independence. Hierarchy Domains that aren't centered on a Necropolis are usually under the jurisdiction of a Regent.

• **Overlord** — The second tier of authority in a Citadel, an Overlord is usually an Anacreon's assistant who is trusted to make policy decisions. Overlords can be assumed to speak for their Anacreons, and often coordinate all of the patrols and lesser Hierarchy officials in a Necropolis.

• **Anacreon** — The Anacreon of a given Legion is the highest-ranking member of that Legion within a Citadel. Each Necropolis is ruled by a council of seven Anacreons (the Legion of Fate disdains involvement in local politics), and an Anacreon has supreme power over members of her Legion within her jurisdiction.

Barghests

These bloodhounds of the dead were once wraiths themselves before they were selected for the K-9 units of the Legions. Each new barghest is Molated into an

houndlike creature and then lobotomized by having a specially prepared muzzle of Stygian steel grafted to its Corpus. The result is an obedient “dog” that answers only to the person holding its leash and whistle. Many are used to track the Shadow-Eaten, while others are simply used as shock troops, much to the dismay of their targets. When they catch the scent of a Spectre or other quarry, barghests (they always hunt in pairs or packs) will set up a howling so fierce that it can be heard by the living. Renegades with a scientific bent hypothesize that these hounds are actually using a modification of the Arcanos Keening, but very few wraiths who go out to do field research on the matter ever return to publish their findings.

Charon's Law

The Hierarchy has its own law system, with Charon's ancient code of the *Dictum Mortuum* at its center. This code (literally translated, “The Word of the Dead”) was created during the Middle Ages to regulate the traffic between mortals and wraiths. Many wraiths inflicted themselves on the living through skinriding, nightmares, materializing and any number of other horrors. Others masqueraded as demons to delude would-be sorcerers. With little organized resistance or threat of punishment, these wraiths continued their games until the Church responded with exorcisms and wardings.

Charon determined to put a stop to this, and instituted the Code of Charon. It sought to protect the living from the abuses of the dead by putting a heavy interdiction on all interaction with mortals. It also made very clear that only Charon and his empowered designates were permitted to gather and dispatch souls.

The Code is continually updated, and the Stygian Hierarchy continues to maintain it. Most Shadowland agents don't have time or energy to read it, let alone enforce it, and simply concentrate on keeping the peace. Many suspect that as long as they keep up the supply of souls to the home office, it won't matter how many infractions they let go.

The Judiciary

Hierarchy law was created as much to punish as to protect. Most Restless follow the dictates quietly, much as they followed Skinlands law in their breathing days. However, there is an element of fear that comes with obedience, a fear which the Hierarchy does not hesitate to capitalize on in the name of law and order. Stygian officials are quick and frequent to crack down on law-breakers, while many of the overworked Legions and other Hierarchy agents in the Shadowlands tend to ignore minor lawbreakers in the interests of keeping the peace and going after bigger fish.

Those who do break the law come before a Hierarchy magistrate to stand trial. A wraith may appeal to appear before a “higher” magistrate, but appeals are rarely heard unless the accused has some standing in the local Hierarchy. In some cases a judgment may be appealed to the Hand of Fate, and should the Ladies of Fate overturn the decision, the Hierarchy will in most cases abide by the new ruling. Few know what happens to the defendants in cases that are not dealt with so politely.

Sentencing and Punishment

If a wraith breaks a law and is found guilty of a crime, at least in Stygian territory, she is punished for it. Obviously certain punishments, like the death penalty,

mean little to those already dead, and exiling offenders to the Tempest only risks strengthening Oblivion further. As a result, the Hierarchy has become a little more creative in its punishments.

- **Enthrallment** — The offender is chained with Stygian manacles, making her the Thrall of another wraith, usually a Hierarchy official. This is the most common punishment in Stygian territory, though by no means the harshest.

- **Torture** — Wraiths can heal most ordinary wounds, but Stygian torture is designed to scar the offender for all eternity. Devices of Stygian steel inflict undreamed-of pain, and these wounds are extremely difficult to heal. Some wraiths emerge from their punishment with their Corpora permanently marred by the experience, but the worst wounds are often the unseen ones. To a creature of Passions, scars left on the Psyche are far more devastating than physical wounds.

- **Imprisonment** — Sometimes criminals are jailed in Shadowland reflections of mortal prisons, with reinforced walls and bars of Stygian metal to prevent escape. This devastating punishment works in several ways. First of all, it keeps the wraith from visiting her Fetters or renewing her Passions, weakening her ability to resist her darker half. In addition, when a wraith is left alone in the dark to brood, her Shadow will inevitably redouble its assaults on her Psyche.

- **Branding** — Branding is a way to mark criminals, effectively ostracizing them from society and warning other would-be miscreants from attempting the same. The size and shape of the brands varies according to the severity of the crime. Serious crimes (assuming the offender escapes the forges or the Masquers) result in the offender wearing her brand on her forehead, exposing her to relentless scorn.

- **Discorporation** — This is the most severe punishment within the Hierarchy's power. The offender is transported to the nearest forges and smelted down for soulgoods. Alternately, some criminals are turned over to wraiths skilled in Moliate and reshaped into other "useful" implements.

Outsiders

The Guilds



The *Guilds* began as loose "colleges" among the dead to teach the wraithly arts of Arcanoi to those who used or wished to pursue mastery in them. Later, the *Guilds* evolved into political organizations of Freewraiths, existing outside of the Legions and acquiring enough power in Stygian society to make even the Deathlords nervous. Like their medieval mortal counterparts, the *Guilds* guarded their secrets jealously, cloaking themselves in layers of mystery that not even many of their company could see past.

While most Stygian wraiths believe the *Guilds* are long since broken, there are actually 16 *Guilds* currently in existence, each specializing in a particular Arcanos. Each has a lingering reputation from days of old, whether it chooses to acknowledge it or not. Members of certain *Guilds* are still respected from their favored days under Charon, while others are hated for their affiliations with the echoes of the past.

A Note on Titles

Anyone who practices an Arcanos, particularly if that Arcanos is her primary skill, will be tagged with the "appropriate" name whether she's a Guild member or not. A wraith skilled in Phantasm will be called a Sandman, even if she is not a member of the Dream Union, a.k.a. the Sandmen's Guild. Wraiths who are members of the Guilds tend to go by more specialized epithets, such as Hammerboys or Helldivers, when talking among themselves.

The War of the Guilds

The *Dictum Mortuum* did much to sour the Guilds' relations with Charon. For Guildwraiths, Charon's decree barring interference with the Skinlands was a terrible blow to their livelihoods and amusements. Sandmen, Proctors, Spooks, Haunters, Puppeteers and smaller factions within the other Guilds who depended on contact with the mortal world suffered the most, and resolved not to take the matter lying down. Their response was to continue their work as if nothing had happened, a move that did not endear them to the Hierarchy. Contention over contact with the living would become one of the stickiest points in relationships between the two groups for centuries to come, and nearly led to open revolt on several occasions.

During the Middle Ages, the Guilds came into prominence. Those wraiths proficient in their chosen Arcanoi organized themselves as mortal craftsmen did, officially codifying themselves as Guilds. Older groups, such as the millennia-old collective of soulforgers, quickly adapted to the new paradigm, and soon the Guilds were a permanent fixture on the political landscape. Tight symbiotic relationships developed between many of the Guilds and Stygia, with Freewraiths providing services in exchange for wealth, power and status. However, since the wealth of Stygia flowed from the Artificers' forges, they claimed primacy among the Guilds and often subverted other Guilds' agendas to their own. Resentment bred among other Guilds, boiling over into an unofficial war that stretched from the Shadowlands to the streets of Stygia. This conflict, called the War of the Guilds, lasted from 1096 to 1354. While there were never battalions of Guild members on the streets, what happened behind closed doors was another matter entirely. The Mnemoi lured the Sandmen into the war by claiming that Charon planned to raze a number of theatres in favor of soulforges, while the Monitors directed all and sundry to even the best-protected Fetters of their adversaries. A Chanteur who enjoyed the favor of a certain Anacreon would "persuade" him (with assistance from her Solicitor accomplice) to investigate the matter of Artificers forging weapons that were not ending up in the armory, in hopes of sentencing the embezzlers to their own forges. Other Guilds with Skinland contacts (Proctors, Puppeteers, Spooks and Haunters) set them against the main enemy, meanwhile taking advantage of the chaos to tweak their Guilds' secondary enemies. Artificers fought back by creating a number of lovely new *objets d'art* from the Corpora of their enemies, delivering them as their answer to the apocryphal fish wrapped in newspaper.

The war was begun to remove the Artificers from power, but ended up making them stronger than ever. A number of "accidents" needed to be disposed of, and the forges were the obvious choice. Eventually, things ground to a stalemate and with

increased interference from the Deathlords looming, a cessation of hostilities made the best sense. In the latter months of 1354, the Compact of the Guilds was ratified by the 13 Greater Guilds. Of those excluded, the Solicitors and Alchemists were considered to be unimportant, and were therefore not invited to sign, while the Mnemoi were so thoroughly disliked by this point that they were purposely snubbed.

The Compact called for an end to all conflicts between the Guilds. A Council of Guilds would be formed to adjudicate disputes between Guilds or opposing Guild members. The Artificers, as the Eldest Guild, would sit as the leadership of both Compact and Council. This originally caused more hard feelings and anti-Artificer sentiments, but these sentiments were silenced when the Artificers spread a few Artifacts around to "encourage" cooperation.

The Breaking

Despite the problems in its inception, the Council unified the Guilds as a political force. While they bickered behind closed doors, they presented a united front to the rest of Stygia. They towered over the rest of the Stygian population in power, surpassed only by the Deathlords (no doubt to those august wraiths' collective relief). However, the winds of change were blowing, particularly in the form of unrest among the Heretics and Renegades. Certain Guildmasters saw the instability wrought by these groups as a chance to seize power from Charon's obviously weakened grasp. On April 6, 1598, the Guilds, led by the Artificers, attempted to stage a *coup d'etat*. The Usurers had helped to begin the revolt, but abandoned the project suspiciously quickly. When they left, their closest allies, the Masquers, followed, and the *coup* began to founder. It ended a miserable failure, and many of the offenders were obliterated by the next tide.

In the wake of the rebellion, Charon had concerns that too much power was being concentrated in the Guilds' grasp. Another, more organized *coup* might well have succeeded where the Artificers' clumsy power grab had failed. He decided to remove the threat of usurpation by dissolving that threatening concentration of power, and did so by banishing the Freewraiths' Guilds from Stygia.

The Decree of the Breaking, as it was called, outlined Charon's policy against the Guilds, to wit: The existing Guilds were dissolved as official organizations; any groups calling themselves Guilds were outlawed in Stygian lands; Guild membership was a crime; and specially trained Legionnaires would be taking the place of Guild members in Stygian society. Like the *coup*, the Decree was misguided in intention and doomed to failure. After 20 years of sabotage and work stoppages, Charon discovered the Legions could not replace the Guilds. For that matter, the Breaking had done nothing to slow down Guild members themselves. They still had the tools and the talents for which wraiths would pay handsomely.

Still, it would have made for a bad precedent for Charon to reverse his decision. Such an about-face would have suggested that he could neither create firm policy mandates nor enforce his will, and in the post-*coup* instability, appearing weak in front of the predatory Deathlords would have incited more rebellions. In the end, he chose to reinstate "former" Guild members individually on the condition that they understood the Guilds were no more. However, the fiction that the Guilds were destroyed was still circulated among the populace, and eventually the populace grew to believe it.

Playing With Others

The Guilds do still exist, regardless of policy. No matter what fictions or party lines are disseminated, the Guilds are still a vital force in the Underworld. Many provide organized access to services that no wraith would want to live without, while others have powers that have become political necessities. In the end, the Guilds maintain that any talent wanted badly enough will persuade a wraith to abandon his higher principles to seek it out, wherever it lies.

Only about one-tenth of the wraiths in Stygia are Guild members, and most wraiths believe the Guilds don't exist. Mere knowledge of a Guild's specialty is not enough to convict a wraith of membership, and it is expected that Stygian citizens know something of at least one or two Arcanoi. However, the Guilds were banished by Charon's decree, and therefore belonging to one technically makes a wraith a Renegade. As criminals are eligible to be smelted in the forges, Guild membership can be a dangerous thing to hold.

Many ex-Guild members or rogues seek out Renegade groups in which to hide, which is a matter of great concern to those who wish to maintain the Guilds' lock on certain Arcanoi specialties. Some of these Guild dropouts are allowed to run, but those who teach Guild secrets to outsiders are playing dice with their afterlives, as the Guild in question will almost certainly seek retribution for this betrayal. The Artificers and Puppeteers in particular take pleasure in hunting down rogues who teach Guild secrets.

Heretics tend to either view the Guilds as vanished secular groups or they are unaware of them entirely. According to some Heretic cults, the Breaking was divine retribution against the blasphemers of the Haunters, Artificers or whatever other Guild incurred the cult's ire. On the other hand, many cults may also shelter ex-Guild members, but emphasis is placed firmly on the "ex" aspect. Shelter among the believers comes with a price, and not all wraiths are willing to pay that price to avoid chancing Hierarchy wrath.

Despite the Decree, the Council of Guilds continues to meet and squabble, just as it always has. The Artificers, as the Eldest Guild, claim certain rights and privileges due them, demanding respect and obedience. This air of superiority grates on the nerves of Spooks, Haunters and Usurers, among others, making for uneasy relations between the groups. Younger Guilds are frequently at cross purposes in what to do and who has precedence, often turning Council meetings into sheer chaos. On those rare occasions when the Guilds are unified toward a goal, however, they can still exert a frightening amount of influence. With so many Guild members infiltrated into Stygian society, free from suspicion, the Guilds have their fingers on more levers of power than the Deathlords dream.

The Guilds Today

Most wraiths, be they Hierarchy, Heretic or Renegade, don't actively believe in the existence of the Guilds. Charon broke them centuries ago, after all, and they haven't been heard from since. The soulforger down the street? He's just a soulforger, not a Master-class Artificer. The Sandman across town who puts on dreamshows every Thursday? She's just a street performer, not a member of the so-called Dream Union. Even in the byzantine bureaucracy of the Hierarchy, there are few who know the truth, and they seem content to let the lie stand uncontested.

And Three More

These so-called "Lesser Guilds" are not considered the social equals of the original 13, a dislike that members of these Guilds return in equal measure. Whether actively hunted, merely disliked or simply condescended to, these Guilds are eternally tagged with lesser status.

Already banned from Stygia when the Breaking went into effect, the Solicitors had enjoyed a reputation of being more of a hermetic cabal than a Guild. Their Arcanos, Intimation, with its powers over desires and hatreds, was one of the most sought-after by clients, but its purchase came with terrible risks. Those who sought out the Solicitors to become their customers could easily become their victims as well. Well before the Breaking, the Guild was driven out of Stygia, and even from the company of the other Guilds. Today, Solicitors are still unwelcome in social situations, but not so unwelcome that individual wraiths will not seek their expensive services.

The Alchemists, an offshoot of the Artificers, sought to understand the energy within objects and how to use that energy to inspire life in non-living objects. They worked in tandem with the Artificers until the Breaking. They might have continued in their researches despite the circumstances, but pressure from enforcement of the *Dictum Mortuum* clamped down tightly on their activities. Like their other Guild brethren, Alchemists supply a service that wraiths can and will pay for. A wraith wanting to strengthen a Fetter or rot another's can often persuade himself to contact an Alchemist, drop a few oboli at the designated point and rendezvous at such-and-such a time to see the dirty deed done. Unlike their fellow outcasts, the Alchemists still enjoy a friendly relationship with other Guilds, particularly their parent organization.

The Mnemoi once served as detectives for the judiciary of Stygia, their memory-twisting Arcanos allowing them to dig into a criminal's mind to discover the whats and whereof of a crime. Unfortunately, greed corrupted the Guild, and the elders took to selling their talents to the highest bidders. When they were unmasked by Charon, the traitors were melted down and their followers crushed. The Mnemoi, despised and hunted, were driven far from Stygia. Now they dwell in the darkest corners of the Necropoli, offering their wares to carefully screened clients. So far beyond the pale of polite social contact that any wraith worth his Corpus would rather be smelted than deal with them, the Mnemoi are one of the unpleasant facts of existence in the Shadowlands. Everyone knows they're there, but no one will admit it until they're needed.

For wraiths with centuries to plot, elaborate politics are the rule of the day. The Guilds are no exception. Many Guild members are worried about the disintegrating fabric of Stygian society under the Deathlords, and see themselves as a viable alternative to the petty squabbling that is the rule of the day. In spite of the Guilds' efforts to maintain a low profile, they are as much a part of the political strata as the Legions or Heretics. This runs terrible risks for all involved; if the Guilds' existence were ever unmasked, the depths of their involvement in Stygian politics could send literally thousands of wraiths to the forges (provided there was someone there to work them).

Officially, wraiths are urged to devote their talents with Arcanoi to the Hierarchy, whether they provide entertainment or more vital services. Unofficially, each Guild does have a definite political slant to it, with the talents of the members often providing clues

as to its affiliation. Because of the *Dictum Mortuum*, Haunters, Proctors and Puppeteers remain the Guilds on the outside. Never officially sanctioned by the Hierarchy, they tend toward a hard-line Renegade stance. Chanteurs and Sandmen walk a thin line, as their services are valued but their artistic temperaments drive them toward a more Renegade political posture. Their fellow fence-straddlers are Spooks, Oracles, Usurers and Masquers, all of whom tend to shift according to the way the political breeze is blowing. Artificers, Harbingers, Monitors and Pardoners are still on the inside, relatively regimented and organized in their stand against Oblivion. On the other hand, both the Artificers and Pardoners have displayed some marked Heretic tendencies of late, and their extremism on certain issues unsettles the other Guilds to a remarkable extent.

Ferryman



tanding alone in the Underworld, the *Ferryman* are equal parts enigma and legend. All wraiths have met one (or know someone who has, or know someone who knows someone...), but no one knows much about them. It is common knowledge that no wraith will interrupt a Ferryman on his journey, and even the Legions give them free passage. They sweep the Byways clean of Spectral incursions and keep the paths to the Far Shores and Stygia safe, but claim allegiance with neither Hierarchy, Heretics nor Renegades. Nobody knows where they come from, where they are going, or why they wander endlessly.

The Ferryman were originally created and empowered by Charon in the heady days before the Stygian Republic. Charging them to see souls safely to the Far Shores and Transcendence, Charon did his job too well; when the surviving Ferryman felt that Charon had departed from their original, shared mission, the vast majority turned their back on the Emperor of Stygia and became independent agents. Now they travel the Byways and Shadowlands, bound on unknowable missions.

Often, Ferryman will pause in their journeys to take on passengers. While they may not convey their guests to their destinations as quickly as some might like, Ferryman will protect them to the point of self-destruction; the safety of another's soul is something they take very seriously. Moreover, Ferryman have an unstained reputation for fearlessness and honesty, and the word of one of these cowed wanderers is as good as truth anywhere in the Shadowlands.

Ferryman always demand a price for their aid, whether it be an oath, an Artifact or a task. Breaking a promise made to a Ferryman marks the oathbreaker for eternity, and will subject a wraith to his justice.

In addition to their legendary reputation for guiding questing souls toward Transcendence, Ferryman are powerful wraiths well-schooled in combat and the Arcanoi. Beseet by Spectres and beasts of the Tempest every time they set forth, they are forced to conquer as much as sojourn, and a weak Ferryman does not journey far.

All Ferryman can be known by their cowl and scythes, which they use to pole their relic rafts down Byways and across the Sunless Sea. Each Ferryman is dressed in an identical black robe, and clutches the weather-beaten wood of her scythe's handle with skeletally thin fingers. It is said that Ferryman's eyes glow in the presence of Spectres, but most wraiths dismiss this as melodramatic legend.



Spectres



Every war has its casualties, and the war against Oblivion is no exception. Wraiths whose Shadows become dominant leave the Shadowlands to dwell within the Tempest and Labyrinth; these unclean spirits are collectively known as *Spectres*. Servants of Oblivion, most Spectres seek to make others join in their torment. They work unceasingly toward the day when the Void conquers all, but until that time comes, they're not above having a little sadistic fun with any wraiths they come across.

Chapter Two: Setting

Most wraiths know little about Spectres, other than that they should be feared and hated. The Shadow-Eaten assault Byways and Citadels, riding Maelstroms on missions of destruction. Few wraiths are interested in knowing more about them, except perhaps more and better ways to combat them.

Most terrifying of the bits of common knowledge about Spectres is the fact that they seem to be able to speak directly to a wraith's Shadow, working with it in unholy tandem. Spectres often seem to know all of a wraith's weaknesses and fears, and can sometimes empower the Shadow to a frightening extent.

There are rumors and hints of a vague society of Spectres within the Labyrinth, but sociologically minded explorers have been few and far between. What is known is that some Spectres do still retain their Fetters and therefore can infiltrate the Shadowlands.

Among the many castes of Spectres, the best-known include:

- **Doppelgangers** — Spectres who retain Fetters and a relatively fair appearance, Doppelgangers turn their attentions to subverting Citadels from within.
- **Nephwracks** — Still possessing Fetters but wrought into monstrous forms by the Tempest, Nephwracks dwell in the eternal storm and assault travelers. They rarely appear in the Shadowlands, much to the relief of most wraiths.
- **Shades** — Nearly mindless yet astonishingly powerful, Shades are among the most potent Spectres found outside of the Labyrinth. Shades tend to be twisted into forms that can only be described as inhuman.
- **Malfeans** — The Priest-Kings of the Labyrinth, the Malfeans are so powerful and evil as to be beyond the comprehension of an average wraith. Often called the Never-Born, Malfeans supposedly crawled forth from the Void at the beginning of time and have plotted, slumbered and warred amongst themselves ever since.



Chapter Three: Character

Here lies one whose name was writ on water
— John Keats, from his tombstone



Before you can begin to play **Oblivion**, you must create a character. This character will be the role you assume in the stories you and your friends tell. Unlike make-believe, you don't just make up a character as you go along. Instead, you create the character *before* you start playing. There's a certain amount of work involved — characters are made, not born. Character creation is a creative struggle, and even the most experienced roleplayers find it a challenge to build a compelling yet honest character.

This chapter describes how to create a unique character, starting with a general concept and translating that concept into values that can be used in the game. The process itself is very simple, but you should not hesitate to ask a Narrator any questions you might have.

Character creation is like cooking. You gather the ingredients, stir them together, and let the result bake for a while. You start by deciding what kind of character you want. Are you going to be a street-hardened punk, or a rich and spoiled ex-debutante? Are you a college graduate, or were you tutored in life somewhere in the Appalachian Mountains? The background and personality of your character are the essential ingredients of his or her persona. From your basic concepts, you can work out the details.

Getting Started

You need to decide what type of character you want to play. Were you an honest police officer who made a mistake in dealing with a criminal, and who was shot and killed

in the line of duty? Maybe you were a solid citizen who died senselessly in an auto accident? Were you a famous celebrity who died of a twin OD of heroin and fame? Maybe you were a fan of a celebrity who killed himself, causing you to hang yourself in grief? The way you lived and died helps to make up your character, as does your wraith's major regret from life. That in turn makes up your character's background and personality, and, when added to your character's statistics, they can create a well-developed and well-rounded wraith.

You can create a character at any age. Her culture and background is entirely up to you (with the approval of the Storyteller, of course). However, you start the game as a fairly young and inexperienced Lemure, a newly created wraith. You have only recently crossed the Shroud and joined the ranks of the Restless Dead. You know little of ghostly society or unlife, except what you've been told by those few ghosts you've already met in your travels, and perhaps by your Reaper. In any case, you have been a wraith for 50 years or less. Your apparent age is the age when you "died."

The Storyteller may restrict your character creation choices or offer you other choices besides those listed here. Many stories have special considerations that must be taken into account. There will often be certain roles that need to be filled in a story, and you may have to create a character to fill that need.

Oblivion's character creation process is designed as much to help you define your character as it is to provide you with a means to interact with the rules. The processes of creating the character and picking your strong and weak points are meant to help you tighten the concept of your character.

This game's character creation system is a selection system. By choosing Traits (qualities describing your character) from a series of lists, you build the persona you're going to play. It is best to list all the Traits and qualities you would like your character to have and then eliminate the ones that aren't essential to your concept. Unfortunately, you can't always have everything you want. After all, neither life nor death is fair.

It is your responsibility to create a character who suits the story. In this, you are guided by the Storyteller. A hard-edged street chronicle probably has no place for the wraith of a nice little old lady whose Passions involve helping children across the street. If your character doesn't have a place in the story, you have to create a new character or carve out your own place in the existing tale. The latter can be much harder, and runs the risk of making the game less enjoyable for other players if in the end your character just doesn't fit.

Character Creation



The following is a breakdown of the character creation process.

Step One: Inspiration

Before you write anything down on your character sheet, you need to find inspiration for the character you want to play. Once you've gotten the inspiration that you have been looking for, you can start to develop the basic groundwork.

Character development involves choosing a concept (how you lived and died, and what is your greatest regret from your living days) and a personality (by choosing a Na-

Character Creation Process:

- Step One: Character Concept — Who and what are you?
 - Choose your Life, Death and Regret
- Step Two: Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?
 - Prioritize Attributes (seven primary, five secondary and three tertiary)
- Step Three: Advantages — What do you know and what can you do?
 - Choose five Abilities
 - Choose five Arcanoi
 - Choose four Passions
 - Choose four Fetters
- Step Four: Shadow Creation — What is your Shadow like?
 - Choose your Shadow's Archetype
 - Take one Angst Trait
 - Choose two Dark Passions
 - Choose two levels worth of Thorns
- Step Five: Last Touches — Fill in the details.
 - Start with five Pathos Traits
 - Start with one Status Trait
 - Take three Willpower Traits
 - Choose Negative Traits (if any) and what you're trading them for.
- Step Six: Spark of Unlife — Narrative descriptions and other details.

ture and Demeanor). The better you relate these different elements, the more solid your character's concept will be. Sometimes the face a character presents to the world (her Demeanor) is completely different from her true self (or Nature), and by using this contrast, you can put realistic quirks into your wraith's personality.

Although short lists of Archetypes are given in this chapter, you can find complete listings and/or descriptions for Life, Death, Regret, Natures and Demeanors in Chapter Four.

Concept (Life, Death and Regret)

In order to create a background that makes sense for your character, you need to figure out specifically how he or she lived and died. You also need to come up with the one thing that she regrets most from her breathing days. These choices will have an effect on your later decisions about your character, such as what Passions drive her to keep hanging on to her unlife and what Fetters she might have. Some choices will have a greater affect than others on what Attributes and Abilities you choose, and your choices will also have an indirect influence on what Archetype is appropriate for your character's Shadow.

Nature and Demeanor

At this point, you should choose personality Archetypes that suit your concept of the disposition and image of your character.

Nature and Demeanor

Complete Nature and Demeanor descriptions can be found in Chapter Four. (Note: Spectres choose their Natures and Demeanors from the Shadow Archetypes).

- **Architect** — You wish to create and order the uncoordinated elements that surround you and to construct things of lasting value.
- **Avant-Garde** — You want to discover or create new things, and to be on the cutting edge.
- **Bon Vivant** — Death doesn't have to end the party.
- **Bravo** — Fear equals respect in your mind. Make others respect you by intimidating the hell out of them.
- **Bureaucrat** — Order out of chaos is your motto, and you've got the paperwork in triplicate to prove it.
- **Caregiver** — You want to protect and help others.
- **Child** — Innocence and naiveté make certain that you get your way.
- **Conniver** — Why do your own dirty work when it's so much easier to get someone else to do it for you.
- **Critic** — The world is severely flawed and so is everyone in it; good thing you're around to point this out.
- **Explorer** — Discovering and pioneering is your bread and butter, because nothing else is exciting enough for you.
- **Follower** — Leaders are called leaders because they know best. It only makes sense to listen to them.
- **Gambler** — Now that you're dead, it's all about taking chances. After all, what have you got left to lose?
- **Jester** — Who says the afterlife has to be depressing? Dead is one thing, dead and bored stiff is another.
- **Leader** — You're the only one around who knows what you're doing, and everyone else is lucky that you're here.
- **Martyr** — You can always give of yourself to make the Underworld a better place.
- **Mediator** — Your words of wisdom calm the most troubled of waters.
- **Rebel** — Down with the system!
- **Scientist** — Rationality and understanding keeps Oblivion at bay.
- **Survivor** — Surrender is not in your vocabulary. No matter what happens, you will survive.
- **Traditionalist** — If it worked for Grandpa after he died, and Daddy after he died, it will work for you now that you've died.
- **Visionary** — There's so much more than just clinging to existence; perhaps you can get others to share the dream.

Your character's Nature is essentially her true personality. The Nature describes who your character really is on the inside, but your chosen Nature is not necessarily the only Archetype that applies to her personality; everybody has more than one fact that they show to the world.

In addition, you should also choose a Demeanor to describe the personality your character uses in day-to-day existence. This is the role you play in the world, the façade you present. It should probably be different from the Archetype you have chosen as your character's Nature, but whatever Demeanor you decide on is really only a typical pose and nothing more. People can change their outward behaviors as quickly as they change their socks. You may decide to change your character's Demeanor at any time to suit different people and different situations. Demeanor has no practical effect on the rules; it is only intended to serve as a roleplaying tool and to help you get a grasp on your wraith as you determine what her capabilities should be.

Step Two: Attributes

Attributes are everything a character naturally, intrinsically is. Are you strong? Are you brave? Are you persuasive? Questions such as these are answered by the way you distribute your Attributes, the Traits that describe the basic, innate potential of your character.

The first step is to prioritize the three different categories of Attributes, placing them in order of importance to your character. Are you more adept at physical matters than you are in social situations? Does your intellect surpass your physical prowess, or vice versa?

- **Physical Attributes** describe the abilities of the body, such as strength, dexterity and endurance.
- **Social Attributes** describe your character's appearance and charisma — her ability to influence others.
- **Mental Attributes** represent your character's mental capacity and include such things as memory, perception, self-control and the ability to learn and think.

The concept and affiliations of your character may suggest what your Attribute priorities should be, but feel free to pick any way you please. For now, think in the broadest of perspectives — you can get more specific after you understand the big picture.

After you've chosen the order of your wraith's three Attribute categories, you need to choose specific Traits from each category. Traits are adjectives that describe your character's strengths and weaknesses, defining your character just as a character in a novel is defined. In your primary (strongest) Attribute category, you can choose seven Traits. In your secondary category, you can choose five. In your tertiary (weakest) category, you can take only three. Thus, you receive a total of 15 Attribute Traits. You can take the same Trait more than once, if you wish, reflecting greater aptitude at a particular specialty.

Attribute Traits

Complete Attribute Trait descriptions can be found in Chapter Four.

- **Physical** — Athletic, Brawny, Dexterous, Enduring, Energetic, Ferocious, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Stalwart, Steady, Tenacious, Tough, Vigorous, Wiry
- **Social** — Alluring, Beguiling, Charismatic, Charming, Commanding, Compassionate, Dignified, Diplomatic, Elegant, Eloquent, Empathic, Expressive, Friendly, Genial, Gorgeous, Ingratiating, Intimidating, Magnetic, Persuasive, Seductive, Witty
- **Mental** — Alert, Attentive, Calm, Clever, Creative, Cunning, Dedicated, Determined, Discerning, Disciplined, Insightful, Intuitive, Knowledgeable, Observant, Patient, Rational, Reflective, Shrewd, Vigilant, Wily, Wise

Chapter Five describes how Traits function in the game. For now, you simply need to understand that these Traits reflect how competent your character is at different kinds of actions. The more Traits you have in one Attribute category, the more skillfully your character can perform actions involving that category.

Listed below are examples of Attribute Traits from which you can choose, separated into appropriate categories.

Step Three: Advantages

Advantages are the Traits that separate one character from another. They allow a character to take actions that would be impossible to a normal human being. There are four categories of advantages: Abilities, Arcanoi, Passions and Fetters.

Choosing Abilities

Abilities represent your training and knowledge beyond the outline provided by your Attributes. They are what you have learned and what you can do rather than what you are. Abilities let you perform specialized tasks that are only possible with training: hacking computers, soulforging or reading the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Choose five different Abilities from the list that follows.

Abilities

Complete Ability descriptions can be found in Chapter Four.

- **Athletics** — You excel at feats of physical prowess and competition.
- **Brawl** — You are skilled in unarmed combat.
- **Bureaucracy** — You understand the rules of government and organization.
- **Computer** — You can operate a computer.
- **Drive** — You can drive a car with skill.
- **Enigmas** — Puzzles and paradoxes are your game.
- **Etiquette** — You are at home in any social situation.
- **Firearms** — You can handle guns.
- **Investigation** — You are a skilled detective.
- **Law** — You understand the legal system of the dead, if not the living.
- **Leadership** — You understand the principles of command.
- **Linguistics** — You are fluent in at least one language besides that of the Dead.
- **Medicine** — You can heal the living and understand how bodies work — and break.
- **Melee** — You are skilled in the use of many different hand-to-hand weapons.
- **Occult** — You know many of the ancient mysteries.
- **Performance** — You can act, dance, sing or play an instrument (maybe all of the above).
- **Repair** — You can fix nearly anything.
- **Science** — You understand the fundamentals of technology.
- **Soulforging** — You know the arts of turning souls into objects.
- **Stealth** — You can move and act in the shadows without others noticing.
- **Streetwise** — You understand street culture.
- **Subterfuge** — You know how to manipulate people.

Choosing Arcanoi

Arcanoi are ghostly powers, the supernatural abilities available to a wraith. Each wraith begins the game with three Arcanoi, and you may choose any Arcanoi to start the game. Each Arcanos has two powers at the basic level. If the character has an Arcanos, the first power listed must be chosen first. The character cannot advance to intermediate-level powers in a given Arcanos until all of the beginning powers of that Arcanos have been learned. A player may choose to work his way up to the intermediate level of an Arcanos rather than choose the basic levels of three different Arcanos. However, you must have your Storyteller's permission before selecting the advanced levels of any Arcanos.

Arcanoi

Complete Arcanoi descriptions can be found in Chapter Four. The Guild specializing in each Arcanos is listed after the power's description.

- **Argos** — You are adept at traveling, especially in the Tempest (the Harbingers).
- **Castigate** — You know how to deal with and understand the Shadow (the Pardoners).
- **Embody** — You know how to physically manifest in the Skinlands (the Proctors).
- **Fatalism** — You are able to read someone's past or future (the Oracles).
- **Flux** — You are able to manipulate and animate objects created by the living, and you understand the energy within those objects. (the Alchemists)
- **Inhabit** — You are a master of inanimate objects (the Artificers).
- **Intimation** — You are able to understand and manipulate the wants and desires of others, both the Quick and the dead. (the Solicitors)
- **Keening** — You can sing emotions into your listeners, living or dead (the Chanteurs).
- **Lifeweb** — You understand the ties between wraiths and the Skinlands (the Monitors).
- **Mnemosynis** — You can trace memories and manipulate them. (the Mnemoi)
- **Moliate** — You can sculpt and manipulate your own plasm or someone else's. (the Masquers).
- **Outrage** — You are able to manifest your strength of will into a kinetic force (the Spooks).
- **Pandemonium** — You are able to tap into chaos and unleash strange things upon the Skinlands (the Haunters).
- **Phantasm** — You can manipulate mortals' dreams (the Sandmen).
- **Puppetry** — You have the ability to "ride" mortals and thereby affect them directly (the Puppeteers).
- **Usury** — You have the ability to shift Pathos and Corpus from one source to another (the Usurers).

Choosing Passions

Passions are what fuel a wraith's Underworld existence. By harvesting Pathos from your Passions, you can heal yourself or even use your Arcanoi. You may choose four Passions, focused emotions which drive your existence and give you strength.

When selecting Passions, you must phrase the Passion itself as an imperative and then decide what emotion lies at its core of it. If your character was murdered, you might

have the **Passion Avenge my murder (Hate)**. Remember that the obvious emotion for a Passion is not always the appropriate one; if your character's murder might lead to the deaths of others you love, you might have the **Passion Avenge my murder (Fear)**. Then again, you might simply want to get back at the person who bumped you off, in which case the **Passion Avenge my murder (Vengeance)** might be more appropriate.

If you or someone near you (at a Narrator's discretion) strongly feels the particular emotion that rests at the heart of one of your Passions, you might be able to feed from it. With a Simple Test you are able to see if you can gain strength from the present emotion. This may be overseen by a Narrator, or may simply be a test between the wraith and a bystander if no Narrator can be found.

Choosing Fetters

Fetters are people, places or other material objects that simultaneously keep a wraith attached to the Skinlands and anchor him against Oblivion's relentless pull. In fact, Fetters are part of what makes a lost soul a wraith. Each represents something that held a special meaning or certain importance to your character while he was alive. In practical terms, your Arcanoi are often easier to use around your Fetters; plus, you can rest and heal more easily near a Fetter.

You get to choose four Fetters, describing each one exactly. Bear in mind that things happen during gameplay which cannot be foreseen; you might lose a Fetter or gain one, depending upon how things work out.

Step Four: Shadow Creation

There are two main aspects to a wraith's personality: the Psyche and the Shadow. The Psyche is the main part of a wraith's personality, the one that represents his force of will and identity. The Shadow is the dark side of his personality, the voice in the back of his head that cajoles, connives and corrupts him to do its bidding until it drags him down into Oblivion.

As it is impossible to have players take the part of each others' Shadows in **Oblivion** (what to do if your Shadow is on the other side of the building? Take advantage, of course....), the role falls to Narrators. With that in mind, you should write down the details of your Shadow on a Shadow sheet (provided at the back of the book) and carry that sheet with you at all times when you play **Oblivion**. When a Shadowguiding Narrator arrives on the scene and decides to take the part of your Shadow, you'll hand over your Shadow sheet to that Narrator. Shadows can connive, strike deals and otherwise interfere with your character's everyday existence.

Complete descriptions of Shadow creation and systems for Shadowguiding are in Chapter Six.

Archetypes

Just as the Psyche has Archetypes, the Shadow does as well. Shadow Archetypes, however, are warped and distorted. These Archetypes, just like your Psyche's Nature and Demeanor, define your wraith's Shadow and help make that part easier to roleplay. Your Shadow's Archetype also suggests the sort of tactics and entreaties it will make of your Psyche, not to mention what it might do if it ever gets to take over.

Shadow Archetypes

Complete Shadow Archetype descriptions can be found in Chapter Six.

- **The Abuser** — To cover its own flaws, the Shadow will lash out at the rest of the world.
- **The Director** — The flip side of the Architect, the Director is remorselessly efficient at planning damnation.
- **The Freak** — Your Shadow knows all your dark secrets and gets a perverse kick out of them.
- **The Leech** — Your Shadow needs endlessly and threatens to consume everything around you.
- **The Martyr** — Your Shadow wants you to sacrifice yourself for the greater good of everyone.
- **The Monster** — Your Shadow is mindlessly destructive toward everything and everyone for its own foul reasons.
- **The Parent** — Your Shadow wants to keep you nice and clean, and to love no one else but it.
- **The Perfectionist** — Your Shadow sets goals and limits far beyond your capabilities and expects you to live up to them.
- **The Pusher** — Your Shadow is amazingly helpful to you... for a price.
- **The Rationalist** — Your Shadow knows how to reason logically with you, especially in giving advice that leads you down toward Oblivion.

Angst

Angst is the Shadow's equivalent to a wraith's Pathos. Angst reflects the strength of the corrupting voice inside your head in terms of how loud it is and how much control it has over you. Angst comes in two types: Temporary and Permanent. The Shadow acquires Angst in several ways, including feeding its Dark Passions and accumulating 10 points of Temporary Angst to gain one Permanent Angst Trait. Angst is the fuel that your Shadow uses to work its way with you as it tries to steer you ever closer to Oblivion's embrace.

More on Angst, its uses and costs can be found in Chapter Six.

Dark Passions

The Shadow's goals and drives are embodied in Dark Passions, which are usually the opposite or corrupted, self-destructive versions of the Psyche's normal Passions. For example, if you had a Passion such as **Avenge my murder (Anger)**, your Shadow's Dark Passion might be **Get revenge on anyone who disagrees with me (Hate)**. There is a fine line between anger and hate, but if your character ever seeks excessive vengeance on another wraith, that might be enough for a test to see if your Shadow gains Temporary Angst. More information concerning Dark Passions and their use in roleplaying can be found in Chapters Four and Six.

Thorns

Thorns are the tools that your Shadow uses to gain control of you or cause you to slip up and hasten your downward spiral toward Oblivion. When a Shadow has gained strength

through Temporary Angst points, it can then unleash its Thorns (either through a Narrator's, your Shadowguide's or your own choice). You choose two "levels" worth of Thorns, either one Level Two Thorn or two Level One Thorns. Complete descriptions and listings of Thorns can be found in Chapter Four, and the use of Thorns is described in Chapter Six.

Step Five: Last Touches

The most important stage of character creation, in terms of character definition, is the application of last touches. These are the little details and flourishes that complete your character. During this stage you may take Negative Traits, flaws in your physique or personality. Negative Traits allow you to take additional (positive) Traits on a one-for-one basis. You can also use them to gain Artifacts, Status in a particular group or even a new Arcanoi. You will also need to record your Pathos and choose your Willpower Traits at this time. Finally, you need to be aware of your character's state of health, i.e., his Corpus Level.

Pathos

Pathos Traits represent the energy that powers a wraith's unliving existence. Pure emotion crystallized into usable form, Pathos is what enables a Restless to keep going in the face of Oblivion. Drawn from fulfilling your Passions, Pathos enables you to use your Arcanoi. You can also use Pathos to heal your Corpus when injured in combat or by other means.

You start off every session with five Pathos Traits, which you can use in whatever way you need to. Even though you start with five Traits, you can raise your Pathos to a maximum of 10 by following your Passions and siphoning Pathos from locations rich in emotion (Haunts) and from the memories of the living (if you can). Your Pathos Traits can never rise above 10, and it is extremely likely that the number of Pathos Traits you have will rise and fall throughout the course of gameplay.

Background Traits

There are several types of Background Traits, but the most important kind is Status. Every wraith begins play with one Status Trait for one of the three major factions of the Underworld: Hierarchy, Renegades or Heretics. The single Status Trait means that you are "officially" recognized as a member of that group (by others if not by yourself). Status Traits for Oblivion are usually held in one of those three varieties.

The more Status you have within a particular group, the more respected you are within that group and the more authority you are likely to wield. Conversely, the more Status you hold, the more likely it is that members of the other two groups will look askance at you.

There is a fourth type of Status that can be purchased during character creation: Status in the shadowy organizations known as the Guilds. Guild Status can be purchased for two Negative Traits per level. This kind of Status can be dangerous to hold. The outlawed Guilds depend on silence for survival, and take it quite seriously.

Wraiths can hold Status in more than one group, but this can be tricky. If you're found out, one or more of the groups you belong to may decide that you're a security risk and deal with you accordingly.

Willpower

Willpower reflects your basic drive, self-confidence and tenacity. It is essential for controlling the actions and behavior of your character, especially in times of stress when your Shadow might attempt to take over the Psyche. You start with three Willpower Traits to use, although you can regain your Willpower through roleplaying (at a Narrator's or a Storyteller's discretion).

Negative Traits

At this point, you may increase your character's power by selecting counterbalancing flaws. By taking a Negative Trait, you can, for example, add a new Trait to your Attributes or take another Ability. Negative Traits are Attributes that identify shortcomings in your character's physique or personality. They can be used against you in a challenge (a contest staged between you and other characters). Each Negative Trait is equal to one positive Trait; for each Negative Trait you take, you receive

Negative Traits

Complete Negative Trait descriptions can be found under Attribute descriptions in Chapter Four.

- **Physical** — Clumsy, Cowardly, Decrepit, Delicate, Docile, Flabby, Lamé, Lethargic, Puny, Sickly
- **Social** — Bestial, Callous, Condescending, Dull, Naive, Obnoxious, Paranoid, Repugnant, Shy, Tactless, Untrustworthy
- **Mental** — Forgetful, Gullible, Ignorant, Impatient, Oblivious, Predictable, Shortsighted, Submissive, Violent, Witless

a positive Trait of your choice. You can take no more than five Negative Traits without Storyteller permission. You can take whatever Negative Traits seem to fit your character; you need not take the full five, or any at all. However, it's fun to have at least one; ironically, Negative Traits make your wraith more alive and realistic.

Each Negative Trait you take allows you to choose one of the following options:

- Take one additional positive Trait in any category of Attribute: Physical, Social, Mental. (The maximum number of Traits you can possess in a given category is decided by the Storyteller. She has the final word on how limited or unlimited your character can be.)

- Take one extra Ability.

Optional: Your Storyteller may allow you other options for modifying your character. Possible options are:

- Take one more Passion or gain another Fetter. It costs two Negative Traits to gain one Passion or Fetter.

- Take one Negative Trait in order to purchase one level of Artifact or one level of Status in either the Hierarchy, Renegades or Heretics. Artifacts are described more fully in Chapter Four.

- Two Negative Traits allow the purchase of one Innate Ability in an Arcanos (An Innate Ability is the most basic ability of an Arcanos, and any wraith may learn

it. You don't need to take more Negative Traits to gain other Innate Abilities in the Arcanos you purchase). A single level of Guild Status may also be purchased.

- Three Negative Traits allow the purchase of a Basic Arcanos (which does include all of the Innate Abilities of that particular Arcanos).

- You can take another Angst Trait (see Shadow Creation, below) in lieu of two Negative Traits, but you can never initially take as many or more Angst Traits than you have Willpower Traits.

Health

Characters are considered to be at full health at the beginning of each story unless the Storyteller states otherwise. Of course, characters can be hurt or even destroyed during a story. All wraiths start each game with a Permanent Corpus rating of 10, but this can be reduced through Harrowings.

Step Six: Spark of Death

There are other aspects of a character that should be detailed. These flourishes are not necessarily important in terms of the game, but are vital with regard to roleplaying. In many cases, these “sparks” are provided for you, or at least suggested to you, by the Storyteller. Your character needs to be woven into the story, and these “sparks” allow the Storyteller to do just that.

Other Aspects

- **Background** — You need to create a background for your character, describing his life before dying and becoming a wraith: what he did, how he lived and what was unique about him. This background may describe what your character did for a living, how he saw himself and what others thought of him. Indeed, many wraiths find it difficult to abandon their concepts of themselves as living beings, and cling to trappings of their former lives in their perceptions of themselves and their dress. Their past remains with them forever.

Regardless of when you died, whether it was centuries ago during the Age of Reason or last Thursday, you have spent 30 years or less as a “free” wraith. If you are over 30 years dead as a wraith, you need a reason, such as being finally released from sheltered servitude, Thralldom to one of the three major factions (which might give you a good reason for having ties to that particular faction), or some other reason of which a Storyteller approves.

- **Secrets** — Each character has secrets of some sort, things that she doesn't want others to discover. One secret that almost all wraiths possess is the location of their personal haunts; who needs Reapers poking around while you're Slumbering? The Storyteller is likely to give you a number of secrets that you need to protect over the course of the chronicle.

- **Motivations** — What is your purpose? What motivates you on a day-to-day, night-to-night basis? Describe your motivations in as much detail as possible; ask the Storyteller for help if you can't think of anything. Unless you are an experienced player, it's likely that the Storyteller will provide you with a motivation or two at the start of the chronicle.

- **Appearance** — Props and costumes will help others understand, or at least recognize, your character at a glance. You need not only to act like your character,

but look like him as well. Your character's appearance makes his Physical (and many Social) Traits visible to other players.

A wraith's appearance is constructed from his perception of himself. This means that many Restless look similar, but not identical, to the ways they did when they were among the living. Wraiths often appear in clothing more appropriate to the year in which they died than the current one. Some wraiths' appearances have changed dramatically from their living visages, whether through the effects of Moliate or merely their own self-perceptions. If your character is a wraith of this sort, you will need to find a way to let others know that your character's appearance is different than yours.

Many wraiths wear masks, either as badges of office or as fashion statements. You may wish to create a personalized mask for your character that indicates things like her affiliation, rank, etc.

- **Equipment** — Your character is likely to begin the game with equipment of one sort or another. Ask a Narrator for more details on your personal possessions, known in the Underworld as relics. Relics are the memories of items that have been either destroyed or damaged to the point that they can never be fixed. Through synchronicity or wraithly manipulation, some of these have crossed the Shroud to become relics. The assortment of relics available is somewhat haphazard. There are many relic guns, but relic bullets are scarce. Relic cars abound, but few work.

You can choose relics appropriate to your character's background, checking with the Storyteller to see if what you choose is appropriate to the chronicle. Relic teddy bears, lockets and the like should be all right regardless of circumstance; relic anti-tank weapons are usually not.

Items created in the Underworld and relics imbued with special abilities are called Artifacts. Artifacts are not considered normal equipment for characters no matter what, as they must be purchased during character creation.

- **Quirks** — By giving your character quirks (interesting personality characteristics), you add a great deal of depth and interest to her. Write a few sentences on the back of your character sheet about the strange and interesting things that define your character. Examples of quirks include a morbid sense of humor, an obsession for collecting lost relic single socks, or a habit of grunting when answering yes to a question. These little touches are a great way to personalize your wraith, and to make her come "alive" to you (so to speak).

Advanced Character Creation

Sometimes the Storyteller may want players to create characters who are not your average just-starting-out wraith. In such cases, additional Traits may be provided in many categories, and limits on Negative Traits may be raised. Rules for such "advanced" character creation are provided in Chapter Four. Ask your Storyteller for more details.



Sample Character Creation

acqueline sits down and opens up *Oblivion*, wanting to create a character. Her Storyteller, Roland, helps her out and guides her through the process of character creation.



Step One: Inspiration

Jacqueline thinks for a few minutes, and, after tossing around a few ideas with Roland, decides to play a workaholic doctor who spent too much time away from her loved ones and drove herself into a stress-related heart attack. However, she doesn't want the character to be purely intellectual, so she decides that her character was an athlete in college before she became too wrapped up in her work.

Pondering her wraith's background, Jacqueline decides that her character pulled herself out of being the middle child in a lower-middle-class family to shine on her own. She decided at a young age to surpass her two brothers and to escape from a world where many of her peers were pregnant or doing drugs. She used her studies and school athletics to avoid the harsh realities of her neighborhood, and graduated at the top of her class with letters in two varsity sports. She went to one of the top schools in the country on a sports scholarship for her undergraduate degree, and worked odd hours in the nearby hospital in between studying while at medical school. All of this helps to flesh out Jacqueline's wraith, even if it doesn't have any direct bearing on how she "builds" her character's Traits. Besides, these details can always serve as plot hooks for stories.

Moving on to the actual character-building process, Jacqueline decides to choose Survivor as her character's Nature and Caregiver as her Demeanor, providing an interesting contrast. The former reflects what she's really like, while the latter is something she picked up professionally and has yet to shed even in death.

Next, Jacqueline thinks about what her character's early death would cause her to regret. She thinks that not taking time out to spend with her husband and their

pets would be an excellent Regret for her character. She has figured out her Life (workaholic doctor), her Death (dying of a stress-related heart attack at a young age) and her major Regret (working too hard and losing her loved ones). These things, combined with the character history she's created, give her a good idea of who her wraith is, what sort of Abilities and other Traits she might have, and what direction to take the rest of the character-building process in.

Finally, Jacqueline has a firm grasp on who her character is. She names her character "Challen" because the name seems to fit, and moves on to assigning Traits.

Step Two: Attributes

Jacqueline is ready to figure out Challen's Traits. The first thing she needs to do is to prioritize the categories. What Traits will best reflect the previous life of a doctor obsessed with her work? Also, Jacqueline remembers that Challen was an athlete back when she was in college, but hadn't been active for years before her death.

She decides to have Challen be more of an intellectual character, but one who was reasonably fit and who carries that over into the Underworld. She chooses to make Challen's Mental Traits primary (with seven Traits), her Physical Traits secondary (with five Traits), and, because Challen wasn't overly concerned with her social life when she was alive, Jacqueline makes Social Traits tertiary (with only three Traits).

Trying to put herself into an author's shoes, Jacqueline imagines how she would describe Challen by using adjectives and the priorities she's set for her character's Attribute Traits. Since Challen was highly educated, Jacqueline chooses her Mental Traits reflect this: *Calm*, *Determined* (she decides to take it twice to show her force of personality), *Disciplined*, *Insightful*, *Knowledgeable* and *Rational*. Since Physical Traits are Challen's secondary priority, Jacqueline chooses five that would reflect her former athletic training: *Enduring*, *Resilient*, *Robust*, *Tenacious* and *Tireless*. Finally, Jacqueline chooses Social Traits: *Genial* and *Commanding* (which she chooses twice, as Challen's professional status forced her to learn how to make people move in crisis situations).

Step Three: Advantages

Jacqueline now picks five Abilities that Challen would have had as a doctor. Obviously Challen's position as a doctor in a major urban hospital would mandate her having Medicine at least three times. Jacqueline also decides that she'll take Enigmas, since Challen spent time puzzling out appropriate diagnoses for ailments and injuries. She has one more Ability to take and after looking over the list, decides that Computer would have been a good Ability for Challen to have had while she was still alive. After all, most medical equipment is computerized these days.

She now debates what Arcanoi she feels would be appropriate for Challen — ones that she might have grasped quickly upon her entry into the Underworld. Jacqueline likes the fact that Moliate and Usury can be used to heal others so she takes Sculpt (Moliate) and also Transfer and Charitable Trust (Usury).

Jacqueline now needs to decide what inspires Challen and what ties she has to the Skinlands. In other words, she needs to choose Passions and Fetters. She decides to take for her Passions: **Protect and watch over my husband (Love)**; **Help and heal others in need (Hope)**; **Live my life again through my husband (Jealousy)**; and **Advance in the Hierarchy (Ambition)**.

Based on the choices of her Passions, Jacqueline decides that Challen's husband David would make a perfect Fetter, as would the office at the hospital where she worked herself to death (so to speak). She has two more choices to make concerning her Fetters and, for lack of anything better, decides to make them Challen's Saab 900 Turbo (now being driven by her husband) and her favorite cat, Guano.

Step Four: Shadow Creation

Jacqueline now has to design her Shadow and make sure that Roland, her Storyteller, approves of her choices. For Challen's Shadow's Archetype, she decides on the Abuser, a direct contradiction to Challen's wish to heal. After that, she marks down a single Angst Trait (Permanent and Temporary), and moves on.

Looking back at what she chose for her Passions, Jacqueline decides to base Challen's Dark Passions on the opposite of **Protect and watch over my husband (Love)** to **Hurt my husband (Hate)**. Instead of **Help and heal others (Hope)**, she makes her other Dark Passion, **Lash out at everyone (Anger)**.

The only thing left before Challen's Shadow is complete is to choose two points worth of Thorns. Jacqueline chooses a two-point Thorn, Shadow Call, in order to keep herself on her toes when her Shadowguide decides to call for a few of its friends.

She shows her character's Shadow to Roland, and he approves of her choices, saying that it would fit in nicely with his campaign. Now she has enough material for the person Shadowguiding her character to develop a tangible dark side for Challen to have to deal with while she is roleplaying.

Step Five: Last Touches

Jacqueline is ready to play Challen, but she needs to put a few more touches on her before she's ready to roleplay.

She writes down on her character sheet that she has five Pathos Traits to start the game. She also marks down her three Willpower Traits (since this will be Jacqueline's first time playing Challen).

Next comes Status, and Jacqueline figures that Challen is a little too by-the-book to be a Renegade or Heretic. She would have naturally gravitated to the structure and organization of the Hierarchy. With that in mind, Jacqueline marks off her one Status Trait as Hierarchy.

However, the idea of Challen as a faceless Hierarchy citizen doesn't appeal to her very much, so Jacqueline wants to get some Status beyond the basic level. In order to do that, she takes two Negative Traits and grabs an additional Hierarchy Status Trait in exchange. These Negative Traits will also help her flesh Challen out some, making her more human. She decides that Shy and Tactless might best represent the good doctor, since she hasn't spent too much time interacting with people except for healing them.

Meanwhile, she now has one additional level of Status in the eyes of the Hierarchy, which means the higher-ups might not know who she is, but she probably has some pull in the local Necropolis. She might even be given watch over a small Domain, or have a token from her Anacreon which shows her loyalty — it's up to the Storyteller to decide how to incorporate her Status into the storyline.

Rounding out the details, Jacqueline also makes a note that Challen has 10 Permanent Corpus, which means that as a new character she also has 10 Temporary Corpus. As a wraith, she hasn't been scratched — yet.

Step Six: Spark of Death

Jacqueline now has all the statistics that she needs to roleplay Challen the way she wants, but she needs to get used to the way Challen thinks, acts and reacts — her mannerisms. These little quirks and nuances will take some getting used to, so she decides at first to create a few physical mannerisms that will help her roleplay Challen. She figures that Challen always rushes since she always had to think on her feet while on duty in the hospital. As an outgrowth of this, she also talks rapidly and doesn't necessarily stop to see if anyone understands what she is saying. Likewise, she walks and gestures briskly. All these little things will make Challen stand out in other players' minds, making her appear to be a realistic person whom they might actually meet on a street or in a hospital.

At this point, Challen's ready for Jacqueline to slip on her skin and begin playing. With a game about to start, Jacqueline ponders what sort of costuming she wants to use, whether or not to wear a mask, what relics Challen might realistically have, and so on. It's showtime....



Chapter Four: Characteristics



In **Oblivion**, you choose your character's Traits in order to make him more realistic and believable, and to simulate within the context of the rules what he is capable of. By allowing you to personalize what your character knows and can do, the Trait system gives him the breath of life (or in this case, the kiss of death). You need to decide which Traits are applicable to the character concept you have come up with, and discard the ones that aren't essential. You won't be able to give your wraith all the Traits that you'll want him to have,

so setting your priorities before you actually start picking is vital.

The Traits in **Oblivion** are given relatively broad definitions so that you can interpret them to fit what you imagine your character might be. You might not be able to adjust all the Traits during gameplay (especially those with direct rules applications) but those Traits that help you define and roleplay your character are open to your interpretation.

Life, Death and Regret

Life



What did you do when you were alive? How did you live your life from day to day? It's usually best to play characters who were relatively normal — rock stars or actors can create problems — but in the end it comes down to what you want and what your Storyteller will permit. Among the possibilities are:

- **Artist** — There was one truly great work of art in you that would have amazed the world (if you'd lived long enough to complete it).
- **Blank Slate** — A real tabula rasa, your life is a mystery to you.
- **Cop** — Perhaps you were a beat cop who watched his beloved neighborhood hit the skids. Or you could have been with the narcotics squad, a SWAT team or even trapped behind a desk in a precinct house.
- **Crook** — Crime certainly did pay for you, at least for a while. Then again, maybe you got caught.
- **Dabbler** — There wasn't enough time when you were alive for you to follow all of your interests. So you did a little of this and a little of that, and never found a true calling.
- **Disestablishmentarian** — You lived to subvert the system however you could. Maybe you were a hacker, or perhaps you thought you were the new Robin Hood.
- **Drifter** — Nothing held you down for long. Maybe a hobo, maybe an artist looking for inspiration, maybe just a free spirit, you didn't stay still long enough to put down roots.
- **Politician** — You went to Washington with a mandate for change, and got changed instead. Perhaps you never even got elected, or were drummed out of office.
- **Punk** — Anarchy! If it stood up, you knocked it down; you saw the way it was looking at you!
- **Slacker** — You never did much of anything in your breathing days.
- **True Believer** — Your faith sustained you in life, but this isn't the heaven you were promised.
- **Victim** — You just let life happen to you, always reacting instead of acting.
- **Workaholic** — 80-hour work weeks and 2 A.M. planning meetings swallowed your life; now you're wondering what you missed.

How Did You Die?

The way in which you died determines a lot about your perspective across the Shroud. After all, a wraith who slipped away peacefully and one who has his own murder to avenge are likely to have very different viewpoints on dealings with the living. Here are a few possibilities:

- **Accident** — Maybe the driver's side air bag on your new car didn't inflate, or the power wasn't shut off before you tried to rewire your apartment. At the funeral everyone said that it was just one of those things, and wasn't it a shame....
- **Illness** — Maybe it was sudden, or it could have been a slow spiral down to death. Perhaps you were given cancer by that chemical plant on the outskirts of town, or you're convinced the government tested a new biological warfare agent on you.
- **Mystery** — You don't know what happened to you, and you have a sneaking suspicion you're better off that way.
- **Old Age** — You lived a long, full life and went gently. Then again, maybe you kicked and screamed for just one more minute.
- **Overdose** — You went looking for oblivion in the form of drugs or alcohol. They took you a lot closer to Oblivion than you thought possible.

- **Something Strange...** — You were a one-in-a-million victim. Perhaps you were struck by lightning, or had a rare allergic reaction to your cold medication. Either way, you never saw it coming.
- **Suicide** — Everyone said that you were just trying to get attention, but what you were really trying to find was help. It's too late now, though....
- **Violence** — From the battlefield to the home, violence claims victims everywhere. Perhaps you were a soldier, or were killed during a mugging. Someone might even have had you killed.

Why Are You Still Here?

Your Regret sums up why you became a wraith, instead of quietly moving on to the next level of existence. What is it that you never said or did that means so much to you now that you've moved on? Here are a few ideas:

- **Failure** — You died knowing that you'd failed at something you'd set your hand to. Maybe it was a lack of confidence, or perhaps just a lack of talent, but you weren't good enough then. Now, though, it's a different story.
- **Guilt** — Your sins were too great, and they won't let you rest
- **Legacy** — You wanted to leave something behind you, and now you feel obligated to protect it from the other side. Perhaps it's your children, perhaps it's the company you founded, but you will see your legacy live on.
- **Love** — Maybe you never told the one you loved how you felt, and you need to rectify this from beyond the grave. Or, perhaps there are those left alive whom you loved more than life — or death.
- **Missed Chances** — All the trips you postponed, the lovers you never took, the opportunities you passed up; you want a second chance at them.
- **Mission Possible** — You had a mission in life — maybe an environmental crusade, or a mandate to take back your government — and you're not going to let a little thing like death stop you now.
- **Revenge** — Someone made your life a living hell, or even ended it. Now it's payback time, and you've got all eternity.
- **Unfinished Business** — You never got a chance to take back those last harsh words you spoke before your death, and now it's too late to heal the wounds. Or is it?
- **Unfulfilled Destiny** — You were meant for great things which you never quite achieved while you were alive.

Nature and Demeanor



humans instinctively roleplay. Each moment of our lives is spent playing a role of some type or another. We are made up of many layers of personalities, some of which we create for the benefit of our peers.

Archetypes are a way of defining personalities. They describe the roles that are a collective characteristic of our identities, the personality types all people somehow share. The psychologist Carl Jung invented the idea of archetypes as a way of describing any concept that resides in the collective unconscious of humanity. He believed that such

complex symbols couldn't be rigidly categorized, but he did give names to some of the archetypes. Nonetheless, in order to incorporate the concept of archetypes into our system, a modified version of this idea is used to describe personalities (instead of concepts). Remember to take the following guidelines with a grain of salt.

Characters do not, in fact, fit into neat and tidy categories. Archetypes are the molds for an infinite number of different personalities, and should not be seen as absolute standards. An archetype is a basic pattern, a template, and each individual varies from that original in many ways. These archetypes are examples of the variety of human personalities, and are intended to guide, not to restrict.

The key to the use of archetypes is the interaction between the character's Nature and Demeanor. Nature is the inner personality, what the character doesn't usually reveal to others. Most dare not reveal their true, inner selves, and therefore create a Demeanor — a false front — behind which the true self can be hidden. Demeanor may be as consistent as the character's eye color, or may change from minute to minute. Extraordinarily open, honest or simple-minded individuals have the same Demeanor and Nature, but there is no rule saying that Nature and Demeanor should — or can't — be the same.

Archetypes have a practical impact on the game, for characters can be manipulated according to their personalities. The personality of a character can both protect the player and make him vulnerable. Archetypes must be chosen with care.

The following is an in-depth account of the Natures and Demeanors available for *Oblivion*. Choose one from the list that best describes your character's Nature, or inner self, and one from the list that best describes the front that you wish to present to the world. This will help you in creating a believable and sincere character from the statistical skeleton of your character sheet, the spark that will breathe life into your creation and make her a real and active part of the story.

Nature also works like a Negative Trait. If you know someone's Nature, you may use it as a Negative Trait in any type of challenge. The Nature should have something to do with the challenge, so you could bid a Martyr Nature when trying to talk someone into going into a building covered with barrow-flame to rescue a trapped wraith. However, you could not use a Child Nature against someone when trying to look at his aura.

Architect

You believe in creating something of lasting value. You seek to leave a legacy of some kind for those who will come after you. You are the type of person who would have built a town, created a company, or founded an institution.

Avant-Garde

You are only interested in what is new or on the cutting edge. You must be the first to discover or create something that people have never seen before. The thrill of experimentation is a major lure to the Avant-Garde, and you aren't afraid to take a few risks if they're necessary.

Bon Vivant

You escape the dread of the Void by deadening your senses with pleasure. Your hedonism might or might not be immoral in the eyes of some, but either way, your pursuit of new pleasures is your main concern.

Bravo

You reinforce your own self-worth by pumping yourself up and denigrating others. Fear equals respect in your mind, and you will take every opportunity to make others "respect" you.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

Bureaucrat

You enjoy the solace and comfort that the System provides for you. You understand that chaos might come at any moment. However, if the proper procedures are in place and are followed, chaos can be averted, and everyone will be much happier (especially you).

Caregiver

You are highly concerned about other wraiths, helping them fight the constant pull of Oblivion. Those who deserve help shall receive whatever aid you can render.

Child

You are at times naive and have an air of innocence about you, but at the same time, you know that you can get what you want if you pout and grump enough.

Conniver

You try to get ahead of in the world by taking advantage of others. As far as you're concerned, the rest of the population consists of suckers for you to exploit, authorities to circumvent and rivals to be avoided.

Critic

You find purpose in death by revealing weakness and faults in others, whether in artwork, an organization or in a person's habits. You strive to perfect others by pointing out their flaws so that those flaws might be corrected. Of course, some wraiths see you as merely self-aggrandizing, but what you do is done for their good.

Explorer

The excitement of finding new people, places and things fills your existence with the greatest excitement imaginable. It's not what you find that's important, it's the discovery itself that matters and consequences be damned.

Follower

Leaders are called leaders for a reason. They know what's best, and the best way to survive is to obey their orders. You don't believe in stepping out of line by being original.

Gambler

You do things, not for the outcome, but for the thrill that the action provides. Whether you win or lose isn't necessarily important; you thrive on the high that comes from risking yourself time and time again.

Jester

Someone's got to look on the bright side of death, and that someone's you. Just because you're dead doesn't mean that you can't lighten the mood a bit — you always were fond of gallows humor.

Leader

You know what's best for everyone, and anyone who disagrees with you is misguided at best. Getting others to follow you isn't a matter of if, it's a matter of when.

Martyr

You are always willing to sacrifice yourself for the betterment of everyone else. Knowing that someone else is happy makes any misery you put yourself through worthwhile. You don't want any rewards other than recognition for your sacrifices, though a monument to keep you from being forgotten once you've sacrificed yourself for the last time might be nice....

Mediator

There's always a middle ground that can be reached, and you specialize in helping people find it. You abhor conflict, and will do whatever it takes to ensure compromise and a peaceful solution.

Rebel

The System needs to come down, and you're just the one to start it tumbling. There's always something you're reacting against, though you don't necessarily have a better solution in mind. You just know that things can't stay the way they are.

Scientist

So many of the Underworld's problems are caused by people not thinking things through. You'll analyze every bit of data that comes your way before acting, formulate a logical plan, weigh the consequences, and go. Of course, sometimes this results in your getting sidetracked, but accuracy is more important than speed.

Survivor

You will never say never, even during the final descent to the Void. No matter what Fate throws at you, you'll fight to the bitter end for just one more minute of existence. Sometimes this means sacrificing things — or people — but hey, a wraith's got to do what a wraith's got to do.

Traditionalist

What worked for your Reaper and your Reaper's Reaper works for you. There are tried and true ways of dealing with things, and you follow them because they work. Why take a chance on something new when the old standbys are still standing by?

Visionary

You have a goal that drives your very existence, something more and unimaginably greater than just existence. This is the thing that drives you, and you won't rest until it's achieved. Let others worry about the day-to-days; you've got much bigger fish to fry.

Traits



When a writer doesn't have the time or need to demonstrate what a character is like, descriptive words are used. These words must be carefully selected so that they reveal all the important features of the character's persona. These words are the adjectives: "Violetta was a *graceful*, *attractive* woman — *beguiling* to look upon, but *calous* and *tactless* when engaged in conversation." In *Oblivion* we use these adjectives in much the same way. Indeed, they are the basis of the game system. We call them Traits.

Traits have two primary purposes. The first purpose is to enable you to describe your character concretely and thereby empower your roleplaying. The second is to enable you to interact with other characters by means of the mechanics of the game system. The mechanics of *Oblivion* revolve around the Trait system. Challenges between characters are resolved using them.

The premise of this system is that a character who is described by a specific Trait tends to be pretty good at things that involve that Trait, and is certainly better at those things

than someone who doesn't have that Trait. For example, someone who is *Brauny* is a better arm-wrestler than someone who isn't. Likewise, a marathon runner needs to be *Tireless* in order to finish a race without being winded, and a child who is *Persuasive* has a good chance of convincing his mom that he didn't break the vase that's been shattered on the floor.

In theory, a player can choose any adjective and take it as a Trait. However, for a number of reasons, this is not suggested for any but the most expert players. Many adjectives are unimportant, extraneous and/or impractical; there is no need for an *Obstreperous* Trait, as all it does is duplicate the effect of several others already in place.

Allowing any adjective would play havoc with the mechanics of the game. Players would have to carry around pocket dictionaries and flip pages every time some English major bid the Trait *Vigesimal*. If there are a set number of standard adjectives used as the Trait pool, everyone can be expected to know the meaning of every adjective and can know when each is applicable. For these reasons, *Oblivion* has a list of standard Traits from which to choose.

If you decide to add more Traits to the list, here are some guidelines: keep the number of new Traits low, make sure all players understand them, and make sure they don't duplicate existing Traits.

Attributes and Bidding Traits

Creative players can think of ways to use nearly any Trait in nearly any challenge. Though this is praiseworthy, people can sometime go too far. To avoid this, the general rule on bidding Traits is very strict: You can only bid Traits from the category that best suits the nature of the challenge (i.e., bidding is done using one of the three basic categories — Physical, Mental or Social). Even then, however, not all Physical (or Mental, or Social) Traits are appropriate to all Physical (or Mental, or Social) Challenges.

Beginning players might think they can use all their Physical Traits in combat. This is incorrect. If your character is trying to kick someone, *Resilient* is not an appropriate Trait to bid as part of the attack. Likewise, if your character is trying to figure out if someone is a Spectre, *Creative* might not be an appropriate Trait.

For such an "inappropriate" Trait to be allowed, both parties must agree. When an opponent bids a Trait that you feel is extremely inappropriate, politely tell him that you're not going to allow its use. If he is insistent, reevaluate your grievance. If you still can't agree, appeal to any witness of the contest. Then, if there is still deadlock and no one is willing to compromise, seek out a Narrator to make a ruling. Appeals to a Narrator, however, should occur very, very rarely. Learn to handle confrontations on your own, quickly and without interplayer conflict. *Oblivion* is a social game, and quick resolutions of out-of-game matters makes the game more entertaining for everyone.

k.i.s.s.

Keep It Simple, Stupid

To keep things simple, your group may choose to ignore the subtleties of Traits and use any Physical Trait in any Physical Challenge. This approach is particularly useful when you have a number of novice players. Eventually, you will go beyond this boring convention and only allow players to use Traits that are appropriate to the situation at hand. This method is more complicated, but it can be a lot more fun. Try it out.

Physical Traits

Athletic: You have conditioned your body to respond well in full-body movements, especially in competitive events.

Uses: Sports, duels, running, acrobatics, and grappling.

Brawny: Bulky muscular strength.

Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling in combat when your goal is to inflict damage. Power lifting. All feats of strength.

Brutal: You are capable of taking nearly any action in order to survive.

Uses: Fighting an obviously superior enemy.

Dexterous: General adroitness and skill involving the use of one's hands.

Uses: Weapon-oriented combat (Melee or Firearms). Pickpocketing. Punching.

Enduring: A persistent sturdiness against physical opposition.

Uses: When your survival is at stake, this is a good Trait to risk as a second, or successive, bid.

Energetic: A powerful force of spirit. A strong internal drive propels you, and, in physical situations, you can draw on a deep reservoir of enthusiasm and zeal.

Uses: Combat.

Ferocious: Possession of brutal intensity and extreme physical determination.

Uses: Any time that you intend to do serious harm. When in Catharsis.

Graceful: Control and balance in the motion and use of the entire body.

Uses: Combat defense. Whenever you might lose your balance (stepping on a plasm puddle, fighting on four-inch-thick rafters).

Lithe: Characterized by flexibility and suppleness.

Uses: Acrobatics, gymnastics, dodging, dancing and Moliate.

Nimble: Light and skillful; able to make agile movements.

Uses: Dodging, jumping, rolling, acrobatics. Hand-to-hand combat.

Quick: Speedy, with fast reaction time.

Uses: Defending against a surprise attack. Running, dodging, attacking.

Resilient: Characterized by strength of health; able to recover quickly from bodily harm.

Uses: Resisting adverse environments. Defending against damage in an attack.

Robust: Resistant to physical harm and damage.

Uses: Defending against damage in an attack. Endurance-related actions that could take place over a period of time.

Rugged: Hardy, rough and brutally healthy. Able to shrug off wounds and pain to continue struggling.

Uses: When resisting damage, any challenge that you enter while injured.

Stalwart: Physically strong and uncompromising against opposition.

Uses: Resisting damage, or when standing your ground against overwhelming odds or a superior foe.

Steady: More than simply physically dependable: controlled, unfaltering and balanced. You have firm mastery over your efforts.

Uses: Weapon attacks. Fighting in exotic locations. Piloting oil tankers.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

Tenacious: Physically determined through force of will. You often prolong physical confrontations, even when it might not be wise to do so.

Uses: Second or subsequent Physical Challenge.

Tireless: You have a runner's stamina — you are less taxed by physical efforts than ordinary people.

Uses: Any endurance-related challenge, second or subsequent Physical Challenge with the same foe or foes.

Tough: A harsh, aggressive attitude and a reluctance ever to submit.

Uses: Whenever you're wounded or winded.

Vigorous: A combination of energy, power, intensity and resistance to harm.

Uses: Combat and athletic challenges when you're on the defensive.

Wiry: Tight, streamlined, muscular strength.

Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling in combat. Acrobatic movements. Endurance lifting.

Negative Physical Traits

Clumsy: Lacking physical coordination, balance and grace. You are prone to stumbling and dropping objects.

Cowardly: In threatening situations, saving your own neck is all that is important. You might even flee when you have the upper hand, just out of habit.

Decrepit: You move and act as if you are old and infirm. You recover from physical damage slowly, are unable to apply full muscular strength, and tire easily.

Delicate: Frail and weak in structure, you are easily damaged by physical harm.

Docile: The opposite of the Ferocious and Tenacious Traits; you lack physical persistence and tend to submit rather than fight long battles.

Flabby: Your muscles are underdeveloped. You cannot apply your strength well against resistance.

Lame: You are disabled in one or more limbs. The handicap can be as obvious as a missing leg or as subtle as a dysfunctional arm.

Lethargic: Slow and drowsy. You suffer from a serious lack of energy or motivation.

Puny: You are weak and inferior in strength. This could mean diminutive size.

Sickly: Weak and feeble. Your body responds to physical stress as if it were in the throes of a debilitating illness.

Social Traits

Alluring: An attractive and appealing presence that inspires desire in others.

Uses: Seduction. Convincing others.

Beguiling: The skill of deception and illusion. You can twist the perceptions of others and lead them to believe what suits you.

Uses: Tricking others. Lying under duress.

Charismatic: The talent of inspiration and motivation, the sign of a strong leader.

Uses: In a situation involving leadership or the achievement of leadership.

Charming: Your speech and actions make you appear attractive and appealing to others.

Uses: Convincing. Persuading. Keening and Intimation.

Commanding: Impressive delivery of orders and suggestions. This implies skill in the control and direction of others.

Uses: When you are seen as a leader. Direct confrontations.

Compassionate: Deep feelings of care or pity for others.

Uses: Defending the weak or downtrodden. Defeating major obstacles while pursuing an altruistic end.

Dignified: Something about your posture and body carriage appears honorable and aesthetically pleasing. You carry yourself well.

Uses: Leadership situations. Might be important in the Hierarchy for advancement.

Diplomatic: Tactful, careful and thoughtful in speech and deed. Few are displeased with what you say or do.

Uses: Very important in intrigue. Leadership situations.

Elegant: Refined tastefulness. Even though you don't need money to be elegant, you exude an air of richness and high society.

Uses: High society. Might be important in the Hierarchy and certain Guilds for advancement.

Eloquent: The ability to speak in an interesting and convincing manner.

Uses: Convincing others. Swaying emotions. Public speaking. Keening.

Empathetic: Able to identify and understand the emotions and moods of people with whom you come in contact.

Uses: Gauging the feelings of others. Castigate.

Expressive: Able to articulate thoughts in interesting, significant, meaningful ways.

Uses: Producing art, acting, performing. Any social situation in which you want someone to understand your meaning.

Friendly: Able to fit in with everyone you meet. Even after a short conversation, most find it difficult to dislike you.

Uses: Convincing others.

Genial: Cordial, kindly, warm and pleasant. You are pleasing to be around.

Uses: Mingling at parties. Generally used in a second or later Social Challenge with someone.

Gorgeous: Beautiful or handsome. You were born with a face and body that is good-looking to most people you meet.

Uses: Modeling, posing. Moliate.

Ingratiating: Able to gain the favor of people who know you.

Uses: Dealing with elders in a social situation.

Intimidating: A frightening or awesome presence that causes others to feel timid. This Trait is particularly useful when attempting to cow opponents.

Uses: Keening. Inspiring common fear. Ordering others.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

Magnetic: People feel drawn to you; those around you are interested in your speech and actions.

Uses: Seduction. Intimation and Mnemosynis.

Persuasive: Able to propose believable, convincing and correct arguments and requests. Very useful when someone else is undecided on an issue.

Uses: Persuading or convincing others.

Seductive: Able to entice and tempt. You can use your good looks and your body to get what you want from others.

Uses: Subterfuge and seduction.

Witty: Cleverly humorous. Jokes and jests come easily to you, and you are perceived as a funny person when you want to be.

Uses: At parties. Entertaining someone. Goading or insulting someone.

Negative Social Traits

Bestial: Your Corpus looks decidedly inhuman (or subhuman). Perhaps you're skeletal, or have glowing orange eyes, or maybe your teeth are just a little too long....

Callous: You are unfeeling, uncaring and insensitive to the suffering of others. Your heart is a frozen stone.

Condescending: You just can't help it; your contempt for others is impossible to hide.

Dull: Those with whom you speak usually find you boring and uninteresting. Conversing with you is a chore. You do not present yourself well to others.

Naive: You lack the air of worldliness, sophistication or maturity that most carry.

Obnoxious: You are annoying or unappealing in speech, action or appearance.

Repugnant: Your appearance disgusts everyone around you. Needless to say, you make a terrible first impression with strangers.

Shy: You are timid, bashful, reserved and socially hesitant.

Tactless: You are unable to do or say things that others find appropriate to the social situation.

Untrustworthy: You are rumored or perceived to be untrustworthy and unreliable (whether you are or not).

Mental Traits

Alert: Mentally prepared for danger and able to react quickly when it occurs.

Uses: Preventing surprise attacks. Defending against Arcanoi like Keening.

Attentive: You pay attention to everyday occurrences around you. When something extraordinary happens, you are usually ready for it.

Uses: Preventing surprise attacks. Seeing through Tempest Shroud when you don't expect it.

Calm: Able to withstand an extraordinary level of disturbance without becoming agitated or upset. A wellspring of self-control.

Uses: Resisting Catharsis or Shadow commands that provoke violence. Whenever a mental attack might upset you. Primarily for defense.

Clever: Quick-witted resourcefulness. You think well on your feet.

Uses: Using a Mental Arcanos against another.

Creative: Your ideas are original and imaginative. This implies an ability to produce unusual solutions to your difficulties. You can create artistic pieces. A requirement for any true artist.

Uses: Defending against aura readings. Creating anything.

Cunning: Crafty and sly, possessing a great deal of ingenuity.

Uses: Tricking others.

Dedicated: You give yourself over totally to your beliefs. When one of your causes is at stake, you stop at nothing to succeed.

Uses: Useful in any Mental Challenge when your beliefs are at stake.

Determined: When it comes to mental endeavors, you are fully committed. Nothing can divert your intentions to succeed once you have made up your mind.

Uses: Facedowns. Useful in a normal Mental Challenge.

Discerning: Discriminating, able to pick out details, subtleties and idiosyncrasies. You have clarity of vision.

Uses: Lifeweb and Fatalism-related challenges.

Disciplined: Your mind is structured and controlled. This rigidity gives you an edge in battles of will.

Uses: Facedowns. Useful in a Mental Arcanos contest.

Insightful: The power of looking at a situation and gaining an understanding of it.

Uses: Investigation (but not defense against it). Reading auras. Using Heightened Senses. Seeing through Enshroud when you expect it.

Intuitive: Knowledge and understanding somehow come to you without conscious reasoning, as if by instinct.

Uses: Reading auras. Seeing through Enshroud.

Knowledgeable: You know copious and detailed information about a wide variety of topics. This represents "book learning."

Uses: Remembering information your character might know.

Observant: Depth of vision, the power to look at something and notice the important aspects of it.

Uses: Heightened Senses. Picking up on subtleties that others might overlook.

Patient: Tolerant, persevering and steadfast. You can wait out extended delays with composure.

Uses: Facedowns or other mental battles after another Trait has been bid.

Rational: You believe in logic, reason, sanity and sobriety. Your ability to reduce concepts to a mathematical level helps you analyze the world.

Uses: Defending against emotion-oriented mental attacks. Not used as an initial bid.

Reflective: Meditative self-recollection and deep thought. The Trait of the serious thinker, Reflective enables you to consider all aspects of a conundrum.

Uses: Meditation. Remembering information. Defending against most Mental attacks.

Shrewd: Astute and artful, able to keep your wits about you and accomplish mental feats with efficiency and finesse.

Uses: Defending against Mental Arcanoi. Plotting tactics or playing politics.

Vigilant: Alertly watchful. You have the disposition of a guard dog; your eye misses little.

Uses: Defending against investigation. Seeing through Enshroud. More appropriate for mental defense than for attack.

Wily: Sly and full of guile. You can trick and deceive others easily.

Uses: Tricking others. Lying under duress. Confusing mental situations.

Wise: An overall understanding of the workings of the world.

Uses: Giving advice. Dispensing snippets of Zen.

Negative Mental Traits

Forgetful: You have trouble remembering even important things.

Gullible: Easily deceived, duped or fooled.

Ignorant: Uneducated or misinformed, never seeming to know anything.

Impatient: Restless, anxious and generally intolerant of delays. You want everything to go your way... immediately.

Oblivious: Unaware and unmindful. You'd be lucky if you noticed an airplane flying through your living room.

Predictable: Because you lack originality or intelligence, even strangers can easily figure out what you intend to do next. Not a very good Trait for chess players.

Shortsighted: Lacking foresight. You rarely look beyond the superficial; details of perception are usually lost on you.

Submissive: No backbone; you relent and surrender at any cost rather than stand up for yourself.

Violent: An extreme lack of self-control. You fly into rages at the slightest provocation, and your temper is always close to the surface. This is a Mental Trait because it represents mental instability.

Witless: Lacking the ability to process information quickly. Foolish and slow to act when threatened.

Abilities

Abilities are the skills, talents and knowledges of the characters in a live-action roleplaying environment. Obviously, some do not translate well or do not apply to **Oblivion**. Others have been incorporated into the Attributes of a character and can be performed by executing challenges.

Abilities allow the character to engage in, if not excel in, a type of challenge in which she could not otherwise participate. Additionally, if a character is defeated in such a challenge, she may choose to sacrifice a level in the appropriate Ability to call for a retest. While any Traits risked are still lost, it is possible to still win the challenge. An Ability lost in this manner is recovered at the beginning of the next session. If a character loses all her levels in an Ability in this manner, she may not use that Ability until the levels are recovered.

Abilities can be chosen multiple times to represent a high degree of expertise in that skill or familiarity with a wide variety of specialties. This comes into play with skills like Performance, Science and Linguistics.

The use of Abilities is often accompanied by a challenge of one sort or another. Some of these will be performed with a Storyteller who will not only assign the relative difficulty of the challenge (measured by a number of Traits), but will actually perform the test with you. As a rule, no Traits or one Trait are risked for trivial uses (such as hammering out an obolus); two to four are at stake in novel, unusual or challenging projects (soulforging an ornate and potent mask for an Anacreon); and five or more are risked by attempting taxing, groundbreaking or unlikely attempts (such as attempting to recreate Charon's sickle). Pertinent details concerning difficulty and the factors that influence it are included with each Ability.

Other Abilities, such as Subterfuge or Melee, can be used directly against another player and rarely need the assistance of a Storyteller to use.

Awareness

With Awareness, you can notice when things are not as they should be. This is useful in detecting evidence of Arcanoi or Spectres, seeing if other supernatural beings have been about, and sensing when something contrary to the laws of nature is about to happen. Awareness requires a Mental Challenge to see if you are able to detect the strange and out-of-the-ordinary.

Brawl

Brawl is the gentle art of hitting something and watching it fall down. It serves as a catchall term for any form of unarmed combat, from martial arts to two drunks blindly wrestling on a pool table. This Ability covers everything from haymakers to eye-gouging to spinning side-kicks, pretty much any combat maneuver that doesn't require a weapon. Brawls are generally less lethal than armed combat, but this Ability can be quite dangerous.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy, a.k.a. the System, is theoretically an organization for getting things done more efficiently. With the proper knowledge of how that System functions and how to utilize it to achieve your ends, you can get permission to do what you want and prevent others from getting theirs. Bureaucracy is also a measure of your organizational skills and knack for getting things done, and of your efficiency at manipulating the System in both the Underworld and the Skinlands. Bureaucracy often requires a Mental or Social Challenge, depending upon the type of roleplaying the character performs or what a Narrator deems fit. The challenge's difficulty depends on such factors as security, accessibility of the information, and the cooperativeness of the target.

Computer

This is a general measurement of a wraith's aptitude with computers and all things related to them. It takes into account the skills necessary both to program new software (or create new hardware) and the mental dexterity required to use existing equipment and programs. There's more to this Ability than just hacking into mainframes. In a world where the operation of basic word processing software is still a mystery to many adults, even a modicum of knowledge of how to use a computer can be a very powerful thing.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

Wraiths with Computer Ability find the electronic superhighway an easy way to access the Skinlands. Maneuvering through systems, gathering (or deleting) data, printing out messages to the living and manipulating computers for their own purposes through the higher levels of Inhabit are ways in which this Ability is useful to the Restless. A Mental Challenge is required to accomplish these and other similar acts. The difficulty is a function of system security and accessibility, equipment, time and rarity of information as assigned by a Storyteller. Failure can lead to investigation by possibly hunters and supernatural agencies that also operate in the computer sphere.

Drive

It is assumed that all modern characters have a base familiarity with Drive, allowing them to handle an automobile with reasonable ease in normal situations. Instead, Drive allows you to perform tricky maneuvers, drive at high speeds and engage in car chases. On the other hand, just because you are familiar with one type of land vehicle doesn't mean that you can handle another; there's a world of difference between a sub-compact and a troop carrier.

Older wraiths can be considered to have base familiarity with wagons or horseback riding in the same way modern characters are familiar with cars. These actions often require a Physical or Mental Challenge. Factors influencing difficulty could include vehicle type, road (or Tempest) conditions and the sort of stunt desired. Furthermore, the Drive Ability can allow a character to move from one game scene to another quickly. A Storyteller can reduce any "out-of-game" travel time usually assigned for moving from scene to scene if the character has this Ability and access to a relic vehicle.

Enigmas

The Enigmas Ability concerns your ability at solving mysteries and puzzles. In essence, it is a measurement of your problem-solving skills and how well you combine the vital details into a coherent solution. Enigmas comes in handy when solving mazes, answering riddles and the like. This Ability is used with Mental Challenges in order to see if you figure out the problem before you.

Firearms

This Ability covers both how well you can shoot and your skill at maintaining and repairing firearms. Artillery pieces, mortars and so on are not covered by this Ability, nor are archaic weapons such as bows or slings. The most common use of this Ability is in combat, but a Storyteller can also allow you to attempt a Mental Challenge to perform other functions. You not only understand how to operate firearms, but you can also care for them, repair them and possibly make minor alterations. A character without this Ability may still use a firearm, but cannot benefit from any other Ability-based advantages like retests. Those with the Firearm Ability may also choose to use Mental Traits instead of Physical Traits during a challenge in which a firearm is involved.

At Narrator discretion, Firearms can also be used when scarfing for relic ammunition and similar gun-related phenomena that have no Skinlands comparison.

Investigation

Investigation allows you to call upon basic knowledge of criminology to locate evidence and perform forensic analysis. With sufficient expertise, you can conduct a

proper criminal investigation, deduce *modus operandi* and reconstruct a crime scene. Particularly in conjunction with a few Arcanoi, this Ability can be invaluable to wraiths seeking to protect or rescue their Fetters. With a Mental Challenge, you can tell if a person is carrying a concealed weapon or the like. When dealing with plots, you may also request a Mental Challenge with a Storyteller to see if any clues have been overlooked, piece together clues, or uncover information through formal investigation. Hunters often employ this Ability to track down wraithly disturbances.

Law

Law is the measure of how well you understand the legal system in which you are entangled. A knowledge of Law will allow you to manipulate the legal system to your ends, confounding your enemies and helping your friends. The difficulty of the Mental Challenge necessary to accomplish these tasks depends on factors like precedents, the severity of the crime, the interference of outside factors and the punishment called for.

Leadership

Leadership is more than barking orders. It measures how well you can get others to obey your decisions, whether they be issued as memos, orders or polite requests. It also covers how willingly people accede to your wishes, as reluctant followers are worth far less than willing ones. You may use this Ability to cause others to perform reasonable tasks for you. These requests may not endanger the subject or violate the subject's Nature or Demeanor. Leadership works with a Social Challenge.

Linguistics

More a record of how many languages you speak than how well you understand the theory of languages, Linguistics measures how many languages you are fluent in besides your native tongue. Linguistics also allows for identifying accents, reading lips, picking up slang and a certain amount of linguistic mimicry. This Ability allows you and anyone who also knows the language to speak privately. Furthermore, you can translate written text in one of the languages you know. This may or may not require a Mental Challenge, depending upon the clarity of the text.

Medicine

This Ability details how well you know the workings of the mortal body and how to repair it in case of injury. Of course, that also implies a knowledge of what is harmful to the human form as well.

While Medicine might seem to be a useless Ability to the Restless Dead, there are multiple uses for it, both benign and malicious. Understanding of this field, combined with Death'sight, can help determine what steps need to be taken to protect a living Fetter, while an appreciation of physiology could combine with Outrage to produce some devastating results. Also, you can help (say, by giving knowledge to someone) a living creature to recover a single Health Level per night with rest and a Mental Challenge.

Meditation

In an existence in which the voice of your Shadow is a constant threat, Meditation, the ability to focus and center one's thoughts, can be an essential skill. To meditate, one does not necessarily need to be in the lotus position. This is a very personal Ability, and one for which you develop your own technique.

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Meditation can be used to catch up on lost Slumber. A wraith makes a series of Simple Tests against a Narrator, with each win counting as one hour of effective Slumber. If you tie or lose, you are not able to gain any more hours of Slumber this way. If you do win, you may test again to see if you are able to gain more Slumber through Meditation. Each level of Meditation allows one "tie" to count as a win (i.e., two levels of Meditation means that you can tie twice and it will still count as a win).

Melee

Melee is the broad term for all sorts of combat that involve hand-to-hand weapons. The definition of a hand-to-hand weapon is a loose one, as it includes knives, swords, broken bottles, chains, saps and just about anything else that can be used to inflict damage on another wraith. With the Melee Ability comes knowledge of proper care for your chosen weapon as well. A character without this Ability may not use any of the advantages of Abilities in armed combat, including retests.

Occult

There are many supernatural secrets in the World of Darkness, and with the Occult Ability, some of them are yours. Occult implies a general knowledge of things such as *voudoun*, curses and fortune-telling, as well as information more specific to the supernatural beings that inhabit the world. Most uses of the Occult Ability involve a Mental Challenge. The difficulty of this challenge can be subject to many factors, such as obscurity, amount of existing data and the character's individual scope of understanding (wraiths know more about their own Arcanoi, etc.).

Performance

Performance covers the entire gamut of live artistic expression. Singing, acting, dancing, playing musical instruments and similar skills are all covered under this rubric. In addition to actual performing ability, this Ability also measures how well you know the society surrounding your particular art form and how you fit in. Advanced levels of Performance usually mean some form of specialization. The genius of your creativity or the power with which you convey it is determined by a Social Challenge. A particularly sensitive type can even become entranced by the use of this skill. If using Keening, the wraith or other supernatural must be first be defeated in a Social Challenge. Your specialty should be declared when the Ability is taken.

Politics

This Ability covers the theory and practice of politics. With points in the Trait, you can figure out who's on top on the local system and how they got there. Politics covers both human and Restless political structures, and can be essential in dealing with both living and dead authorities. Most uses of the Politics Ability require entering into a Social Challenge, although if the Narrator deems it appropriate, a Mental Challenge might also be correct depending upon the situation.

Repair

Restoring anything mechanical, electronic or solid state that is broken comes under the rubric of the Repair Ability. This Ability covers everything from advanced electronics to shoring up a sagging beam — assuming, of course, that you have the proper tools to do so. Among the Restless, this Ability allows you to find your way around systems that you Gremlinize, or understand where the best place might be to whack a device with Outrage. Using this Ability usually calls for a Mental Chal-

lenge, the difficulty of which depends on such factors as the item's complexity, tools and parts available, extent of damage and the time that must be spent on the repairs.

Science

This Ability measures not only theoretical knowledge but also how well you can put it to practical use. It puts equal weight on knowing the difference between a boson and a quark and being able to whip up a Molotov cocktail from chemicals used for scrubbing bathrooms. Lower levels of Science indicate a general familiarity with modern science; higher ones usually involve some sort of field specialization.

While the science of the living doesn't always apply to the Underworld, knowing how things work in the Skinlands can help a wraith to manipulate them from across the Shroud. A Mental Challenge is necessary for all but the most trivial uses of this skill. The difficulty depends upon resources (equipment, data, etc.) available, complexity of the task and time.

Scrounge

Scrounge allows the character to produce items through connections, wits and ingenuity. Many individuals who lack the wealth to purchase the things they desire or need develop this Ability. Materials acquired with Scrounge aren't always brand new, are rarely exactly right, and often require some time to acquire, but this Ability can sometimes work where high finance and outright theft fail. A Mental or Social Challenge is necessary to use Scrounge. Some factors that influence the difficulty of the challenge include rarity and value of the item, and local supply and demand of the relics being sought after.

Security

You have a degree of experience and knowledge of the variety of ways people defend and protect things. Not only can you counter existing security, such as locks, alarms and guards, but you can also determine the best way to secure items and areas. Other uses include breaking and entering, infiltration, safecracking and hot-wiring. Almost all applications of the Security Ability require a Mental Challenge with the difficulty determined by the complexity of the task, the thoroughness of the defenses, your equipment and the length of time required to crack whatever you're going after.

Soulforging

You know the secrets of forging souls into inanimate objects. This Ability is very powerful, and requires a great deal of preparation and equipment before it can be brought into play. Soulforging requires the following: a chained Thrall, a forge, at least 10 points worth of soulfire, an hour and a Narrator. Soulforging also requires Extended Physical and Mental Challenges to turn another wraith into the desired inanimate object.

Streetwise

With this Ability, you have a feel for the street. You know how to uncover its secrets, how to survive out there and how to utilize the network of personalities it houses. You can get information on events on the street, deal with Renegade gangs and the homeless and survive (if somewhat squalidly). Some uses of Streetwise require a Social Challenge that is influenced by such things as composition of the local street community and the current environment of the street.

Subterfuge

Subterfuge is an art of deception and intrigue that relies on a social backdrop to work. When participating in a social setting or conversation with a subject, you can attempt to draw information out of him through trickery and careful probing.

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Information, such as one's name, nationality, Negative Traits, friends and enemies can be revealed by a successful use of Subterfuge. The first requirement for using this Ability properly is that you get the target to engage in a conversation on a topic related to the information you're seeking. If you can accomplish this, then you may state your true question and initiate a Social Challenge. If you win, your target must forfeit the information. Repeated uses of Subterfuge require repeatedly drawing your target into appropriate discussions. Furthermore, Subterfuge may not reveal more than one Negative Trait per session, and it may be used to defend from others with Subterfuge.

Conversely, the Subterfuge Ability may also be used to conceal information or lie without detection. This may not be used to counter the effects of Arcanoi such as Mnemosynis.

Arcanoi

*Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind....*
— William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Death opens a door to things unknowable by the living. There are arcane powers only available to the Restless, known as Arcanoi (singular, Arcanos). Arcanoi are secrets that can be either learned at the foot of another or acquired through experience. They are ways of using a wraith's spiritual being to alter other aspects of the Underworld, or in some cases the Skinlands. In many ways, an Arcanos is as much a philosophy as a craft, made of equal parts viewpoint and skill. Most wraiths demonstrate aptitude for one or two Arcanoi immediately upon their rebirth, and quickly learn the first few powers, or arts, of those Arcanoi.

Submerging oneself in the practice of an Arcanos can mark a wraith with traces of that power. These marks make her recognizable as one who is well-versed in a specific arcane skill, and cannot be removed by cosmetic alteration. The details vary from Arcanos to Arcanos.

Excessive use of an Arcanos will mark a wraith permanently, whether or not she is a member of the Guild associated with that particular Arcanos. A wraith diving into the Tempest with Argos on a regular basis will acquire jet-black eyes, even if she has never met an "official" Harbinger. It is the Arcanos itself (or the environment associated with its use) that creates the markings, not any sort of Guild association.

However, there are many wraiths who have learned more than one Arcanos to such an extent that they start developing more than one set of distinctive marks. This is no longer uncommon in a Stygia where average citizens are encouraged to learn multiple Arcanoi. Usually, the multi-talented wraith will manifest the distinctive patterns of all the Arcanoi she uses, unless there is some conflict between the developing marks (i.e., Argos and Intimation modify the appearance of the user's eyes in mutually exclusive ways). In this case, the markings of the Arcanos that is used more frequently will predominate, though some evidence of the less commonly used arts will manifest as well. For example, a Harbinger with some knowledge of Intimation (which stains its user's left eye bright green) will have the traditional set of jet-black eyes, but with a distinctly green sheen to his left one.

Arcanos Markings

Obviously it is impossible to make someone's eyes glow green or their skin acquire a chiaroscuro effect for the duration of the game. With that in mind, other ways are needed to demonstrate a character's Arcanos markings. Distinctive marks can be described to other players upon encountering them, they can be covered up by clothing (or in some cases sunglasses — relic ones of course), or through a different set of means by the Storyteller's choice. What markings a character has might influence the way you deal with them. If your character has something against the Harbingers' Guild or is searching for Harbingers, then you might act differently around someone whose eyes are constantly covered with sunglasses, and try to get a peek underneath the shades to look for the tell-tale signs of Argos.

An alternative system is for each player to wear an Appearance card in a prominent place. The tag should detail their Arcanos markings (if any), as well as any Moliations and garb that cannot be adequately reproduced in game (i.e., inch-thick manacles on both ankles, full plate armor, etc.). A successful Mental Challenge will allow a wraith to look at the Appearance card of another; conversely wraiths can choose to show their cards to others.

When purchasing Arcanoi, a character must first master the lower levels (or "arts") before moving on to the more advanced ones. For example, before learning Life-in-Death, a character must possess first the Innate Abilities that form a basis of that Arcanos (Embody in this case), as well as Phantom Whispers and Statue.

Regardless of the nature of the Arcanos, it is suggested that a character actually learns the Arcanos *between* game sessions, as opposed to during gameplay. This prevents the character from suddenly powering up during the course of an evening and throwing game balance off-kilter. Also, this helps to reflect realistically the time it takes a wraith to master her newly developed powers.

Attunement

"Attunement" is a process of gradually practicing an Arcanos on a certain subject, investing Willpower so that the Arcanos becomes easier when dealing with that person or object. This process is mainly used with Embody, Puppetry and Inhabit, although the Storyteller is free to allow her players to attune other Arcanoi (such as Usury or Pandemonium). People or objects that a wraith has attuned to are called Consorts.

Each time the wraith successfully manifests to, Skinrides or hides in the Consort, she may spend one Willpower Trait, carefully identifying with it. The closer the wraith was in life to the object, the easier attunement is. Attuning to a stranger costs a total of five Willpower Traits over an extended period of time; attuning to a close friend or lover may require only two or three. The results vary by Arcanos; for instance, certain Puppetry arts can only be used on Consorts. If no attunement results are given under the Arcanos, the Storyteller or Narrator should pick whatever effect seems most reasonable — if she decides to allow it to be attuned at all.

Retests for Extended Periods of Time and Arcanoi

Many Arcanoi allow a wraith to retest in order to extend the duration of an art's effect. These retests are called Extended Challenges. Generally, they are used in conjunction with effects that have limited time spans, and are most commonly linked with Arcanoi that involve crossing the Shroud.

If the wraith wins the retest, from that point on he can retest again and again to extend the length of his art's effect without spending an additional point of Pathos. If the wraith ties during his retest, the art can be extended by one to three minutes (Storyteller discretion), but the effect then ends and no new retest can be made. If the wraith loses the Extended Challenge, then the effect ends instantly, and no new retests can be made.

If the wraith loses on his first attempt to use an Arcanos that involves Extended Challenges, he must wait three to five minutes before retrying. Some Arcanoi that involve Extended Challenges restrict the wraith to a longer period of time before allowing a retest; these Arcanoi will describe the wait times required in their respective explanations.

Arcanos Cards

Many of the Arcanoi create effects that cannot be duplicated within a live-action setting. Flight, iridescent glows, travel through the Tempest, materialization in the Skinlands — all of these require some way to let other players know that your wraith is flying, or glowing, or materialized, or whatever.

With that in mind, certain Arcanos effects (or "arts," as they are known) require that players pick up cards emblazoned with the art's name at the beginning of gameplay. This card should be displayed prominently when the art in question is being used; the display allows other players to know that you're in fact glowing (or whatever else you're doing). If the card is not displayed properly, the Arcanos effect simply does not happen. It is every player's responsibility to pick up all of the appropriate cards at the beginning of the game, and to use them correctly. "But I just forgot to hold the card up," doesn't cut it as an excuse.

Don't Forget...

Most Arcanoi are time-based in terms of their effects. You should always have a watch with you when playing **Oblivion**; otherwise you run the risk of shortchanging or overextending your Arcanoi. As most arts have variable Pathos, Angst and Willpower costs, you might also want to have a pencil for keeping track of how you're doing in those three categories.

Argos

Argos is an Arcanos of travel, specifically of travel through the Tempest. It enables wraiths to "swim" through the Tempest's mutable substance, find secret pathways from place to place, and journey reasonably safely between the realms of the Underworld. Masters of Argos can go virtually anywhere in the Tempest and arrive without being molested by Spectres. Without Argos, though, travel in the Tempest is very hazardous. Wraiths with no Argos knowledge drift about in the storm, and

can only change direction by spending a Pathos point. A character with Argos can usually "carry" a small group of companions with her, so long as they don't resist. As long as all link hands, one can guide the rest.

The Guild

The Harbingers' Guild came together as a collection of messengers, heralds and explorers. They occupied a niche on the periphery of Stygian government, working for the Hierarchy without actually becoming a true part of it. Their sense of honor led them to serve as a sort of Coast Guard for the Tempest, rescuing the lost and besieged.

Following the breaking of the Guilds, it was simply business as usual for most Harbingers, albeit on an individual rather than a Guild-centered basis. It is worth noting that the Harbingers still command respect, and wraiths consider it bad luck to interfere with a Harbinger's duty. Perhaps to earn this respect, Harbingers will always stop to rescue souls they see lost in the Tempest.

Harbingers are exceptionally calm, swift, quiet and collected. The time they spend in the Tempest gradually but invariably stains their eyes jet-black.

Innate Abilities

- **Orienteering:** Distance and time have little meaning in the alien storm of the Tempest. Orienteering allows a wraith to determine his location in the Tempest and find the route to his destination. Those with Orienteering can travel to their destinations via the quickest and easiest path (usually a Byway), dodging most obstacles along the way.

The use of this power requires a Mental Challenge in order to determine the wraith's whereabouts and determine how long it will take the wraith to get to her desired destination.

- **Tempestpeek:** This art allows a wraith to look into the Tempest, observing any beings or things drifting nearby. He can be seen by any beings in the near Tempest, and can even communicate with them if need be.

The use of this power requires a Static Mental Challenge in order to be able to look into the Tempest. A tie might give a slightly distorted view of what is nearby in the Tempest, while losing the challenge might give false information or blind the wraith doing the peeking.

- **Tempest Threshold:** Most wraiths can only enter the Tempest through Nihils. Those with Argos can open their own portals, however. The portals are usually small, and each is closed immediately after the wraith passes through. If another wraith is very close behind or attached in some way (either by holding hands or some other means), the other wraith can pass through the portal with the wraith who opened it.

To open a Nihil, the wraith must make a Static Physical Challenge. A tie means she can try again at the same place, while losing a challenge means that the wraith must wait one minute before trying again.

Basic

- **Enshroud:** To avoid the hazards of the Tempest, those with Argos learn first how to hide themselves from unfriendly eyes. This art allows the wraith to pull shad-

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ows around herself, making herself unseen in both Tempest and Shadowlands. When first activated, Enshroud causes the wraith to suddenly vanish. She is thereafter cloaked in shadows.

After spending a point of Pathos, the wraith makes an Extended Static Physical Challenge to see how long she remains Enshrouded; each successful Extended Challenge allows the wraith to remain Enshrouded for two more minutes. Enshrouded wraiths can act on others, even violently, without being revealed, though they must win a Static Mental Challenge before the action to do so.

Wraiths who are Enshrouded must cross their arms across their chests to indicate that they are invisible.

- **Phantom Wings:** A wraith using this art may fly in both the Tempest and the Shadowlands. Flight is not terribly fast (resembling gliding more than anything else), but can be a convenient way of getting around. Wraiths may hover using this art, but can never accelerate to more than walking speed.

The wraith makes an Extended Static Physical Challenge to see how long (two minutes per success) he is able to remain in flight. A Narrator may call for another Extended Challenge to maneuver through or stay aloft in particularly difficult situations, such as a cramped room or windy conditions.

Wraiths who are flying can be engaged in ranged combat and spoken to. Unless close to the ground, however, they cannot be engaged in hand-to-hand combat. If a wraith is using Phantom Wings to escape combat, she must win a Physical Challenge against her opponent to avoid being attacked as she flies away.

Wraiths who have Phantom Wings should receive a card indicating this ability at the start of the game from the Storyteller. While flying, they should display the card prominently, so as to make others aware of their airborne status. If the card isn't displayed, the wraith isn't flying.

Intermediate

- **Flicker:** A wraith with Flicker can harness the natural distortions of the Tempest to quickly travel from one place to another in either the Tempest or the Shadowlands. These mini-jumps are only good for short distances, generally line of sight. Flicker is also a good way to blindside opponents in combat.

Optional: Flicker can also be used to rapidly travel to any of the wraith's Fetters, riding secret pathways to the familiar destination. She may Flicker any distance to a Fetter, but only to a Fetter. Her familiarity with her Fetters allows her to instantly recall their location in the spatial relationship between the wraith and her Fetter in either the Shadowlands or the Tempest. This rule is optional, as Fetters may be moved during gameplay, and it is simply impossible to expect the Storytellers to know the exact location of all Fetters at all time. If, however, the player and Storyteller have made suitable prearrangement ("One of my Fetters is my house, and I intend to use Flicker to get to it."), then this art can be used. However, if, say, a wraith's Fetter is a vampire character, it is unreasonable to expect gameplay to halt temporarily while the wraith searches the area and disrupts the action in order to find her Fetter.

With the expenditure of a Pathos point, the wraith may make an Extended Static Physical Challenge to reduce travel time by a couple of minutes upon each successful challenge for the normal use of Flicker. In order to Flicker to a Fetter, a

wraith must spend one Pathos point and make an Extended Static Physical Challenge to shorten the time needed to travel to her Fetter. Flicker does not require the use of Tempest Threshold.

Advanced

- **Oublette:** This art is the terrifying ability to cast other wraiths directly into the Tempest. By focusing his will, the wraith may either hurl others into the Tempest, or hold them in one spot, preventing them from escaping into the Tempest or Shadowlands.

A wraith first spends two Pathos points and gains one Temporary Angst point, which should be marked on his Shadow Sheet (see Chapter Six). He then needs to make a Physical Challenge against his opponent to see if he can throw her into the Tempest, where normal Tempest travel rules apply. The target may use any Argos abilities she has in order to get around once in the Tempest, but she is in serious trouble if ignorant of such secrets. The sheer force of the banishment tears a Corpus Level from the target, in addition to the other effects.

A wraith attempting to hold his target in place needs to make an Extended Physical Challenge against his opponent to see how long he can prevent her from moving. The imprisoning wraith must maintain some minimal concentration to keep his victim in place, and cannot use any other Arcanoi while maintaining the Oublette. Any use of another Arcanos ends the imprisonment.

Castigate

If not for Castigate, the Shadow's power would be unchecked. Those who master this Arcanos learn what drives and feeds the Shadow, as a prelude to learning what weakens its grip.

Castigate is a highly personalized Arcanos. A Pardoner may use physical force, psychology, meditation, sermons, ritual purification or any of a thousand other methods to fight the Shadow. The exact details depend upon the Pardoner's tastes and beliefs. Most favor a kind of dialogue based on the target's Shadow's Nature (Archetype), a process called the Devil's Dialectic. Keep in mind that dealing with a wraith's dark side is a dangerous business — those who dabble in Castigate often meet dire fates.

The Guild

The Pardoner's Guild was almost a Heretic cult; indeed, the Pardoners themselves looked on their work with a quasi-religious zeal. In the Guild's heyday, the iron lanterns marking a Pardoner's available services were everywhere. Even today, no Hierarchy soldier arrests a Pardoner for hanging out her iron lantern. The Pardoners are indispensable — without them, Oblivion would have swallowed Stygia long ago.

The older Pardoners tend to describe Castigate in almost religious or spiritual terms; newer wraiths prefer a more psychological approach to the Shadow. Pardoners are recognizable by their inky fingers, stained from the contact with wraiths' dark sides.

Innate Abilities

- **Bulwark:** The wraith can briefly guard herself and her companions from a Maelstrom. Her Castigate acts as a shield wall, deflecting the Maelstrom's storm winds and protecting her from the attention of any passing Spectres.

The wraith must spend one Pathos point depending upon how intense the Maelstrom is. For example, a small Maelstrom that only affects a small section of a Necropolis would only need one Pathos point spent, while a Great Maelstrom like that which was spawned by the dropping of the atomic bomb would require 8. When attempting to erect a Bulwark, the wraith makes a Static Physical Challenge and bids a Physical Trait. If the wraith succeeds, she may extend the Bulwark over herself and anyone she touches.

- **Soulsight:** Those with Castigate can examine another wraith and see the Shadow on her soul. With careful study, the wraith may measure a Shadow's rough power level and how close it lies to the surface. The user cannot examine her own Shadow. Soulsight can also detect Spectres (such as Doppelgangers) by gauging the terrible strength of their Shadows.

The wraith enters a Mental Challenge against the target. Upon a successful test, the target must hold up her Shadow sheet for a minute, as well as announce whether the Psyche or Shadow is dominant. If the Pardoner loses the challenge, the wraith whom Soulsight is being used upon can lie, withhold the Shadow sheet, and otherwise torment the Pardoner.

Basic

- **Dark Secrets:** This devious art allows the user to learn another wraith's dark secrets by studying her Shadow. Of course, the Shadow may feed the Pardoner false information; spreading lies can be in the Shadow's interest. Generally, the weaker the Shadow, the more honesty the Pardoner can force or manipulate out of it.

The wraith expends one Pathos point and receives a point of Temporary Angst. The Pardoner then examines the target's Shadow and enters an Extended Mental Challenge. Each success allows the Pardoner to ask one question of the target's player (or Shadow Narrator when appropriate). The target's player must answer fairly truthfully, but may indulge in cryptic responses or half-truths (a Shadow's favorite tricks). The target character may let his Shadow enter a retest by spending a Temporary Angst point; nobody likes having his darkest secrets ferreted out. Shadows may retest to resist only once per night. Characters should not use this art as a method to reduce Temporary Angst easily.

- **Purify:** By focusing her will, the wraith may directly attack the power of another wraith's Shadow. The actual methods vary from Pardoner to Pardoner, and can entail sermons, song, esoteric chants or even flagellation (roleplayed, not performed; remember the No Touch rule.). This is an extended, careful process, and cannot be rushed without grave risk.

The wraith enters a Social Challenge against the target, which may become an Extended Social Challenge if the Pardoner chooses. The target resists by bidding Temporary Angst points. If the Pardoner wins, then the Shadow loses the Temporary Angst point bid. If the Shadow wins, then the Pardoner gains a Temporary Angst

point as well as losing the Mental Trait that she bid. However, for every Temporary Angst point lost, the Castigated wraith also loses a level of Temporary Corpus.

Intermediate

- **Housecleaning:** By cloaking himself in his purity, the wraith may drive away Spectres and keep them from entering his immediate area. This art can shield an entire structure from Spectres (within reason — only the greatest Pardoners could guard an entire skyscraper). Any Spectres in the area, hidden or no, are driven away. Peculiarly, this art cannot keep Doppelgangers at bay.

Each success in an Extended Static Social Challenge against a Narrator and any Spectres who are present (excluding Doppelgangers) will keep the ward up for 1 to 5 minutes. Any Spectres already present must also be defeated in Social Challenges, even if the Pardoner defeats the Narrator. Any Spectres who win this challenge are not affected by the Housecleaning; any who lose are driven away. (The test against the Spectres drives current ones away; the test against the Narrator prevents re-infestation.) In the case of a tie with the Narrator, any defeated Spectres still must flee the area. So long as the Housecleaning is in effect, no new Spectres can enter the area.

Advanced

- **Defiance:** Those who know this art can fight against their Shadows' bid for control. If the Shadow tries to take over a wraith with Defiance, the Pardoner may try to beat her dark side back into place. This art can be used to help other wraiths in their struggles as well at an additional cost of one Temporary Angst point.

To resist her Shadow's attempts to gain control, the wraith must spend one Pathos point and enter an Extended Social Challenge. Each success reduces her Temporary Angst by one; the Shadow is powerless to prevent this. Each success beyond the initial one costs the Pardoner one additional Pathos point. If the Pardoner loses a challenge, she gains a Temporary Angst Trait. If she uses Defiance against herself, she must end her Extended Challenge with the first loss, but if she uses it against another wraith's Shadow, she can continue with each loss adding another Temporary Angst point.

Embody

Embody is the art of physically manifesting in the mortal world. Like many Arcanoi, it defies Charon's Code by its very existence; only the Deathlords have authority to reach across the Shroud with impunity. Still, the lure of the flesh is strong. The change in a wraith's very senses when she manifests is powerful, and heady enough to tempt the most stoic Centurion.

The best way to learn Embody is to open one's senses, focusing on the most intense sensory input available. Loud music, the heat from a radiator, the shimmering reflection in a lake — all can be the anchor with which a wraith can pull herself across the Shroud.

If a wraith Embodies physically, she opens herself up to mortal injury. Immaterial wraiths lose only one Corpus Level from a blow or gunshot, but those physically

materialized take as many Corpus Levels of damage as they would have lost in Health Levels in life. If "slain," an Embodied wraith is thrust into a Targeted Harrowing at the Quarry.

Attuning oneself to a Consort is particularly useful with Embody. Once attuned, all difficulties for Embodying to that person (and that person alone) require no Pathos points to manifest to the subject. However only the Consort can see or hear the wraith. This can be a double-edged sword. Other mortals might consider the Consort crazy. Conversely, the subject may convince other of the wraith's existence, thereby making it easier for the wraith to attune herself to them as well.

The Guild

The Proctors' Guild had extremely tenuous relations with Stygian authorities for centuries. Although they did find Stygian employment, Charon's Code prohibited Proctors from practicing their arts on their own. Most chafed at the restrictions, interacting with mortals whenever they could anyway. For centuries, Legionnaires were encouraged to hunt down Proctors and force them into Thralldom — or worse. Since Charon's disappearance, this has eased somewhat, but demonstrating a talent for Embody in Hierarchy territory is still a poor tactical decision.

A Proctor's voyages through the Shroud gradually mark her body with peculiar patches of light and dark. Experienced Proctors often wear patterns on their skin akin to light dappling through trees.

Innate Abilities

- **Ghostly Touch:** The wraith can exert a tiny whisper of a touch to the material world, weaker than the Innate Ability of Outrage, Ping. The wraith may not even move anything larger than dust — about the most she can do is gently write on a fogged window, and this takes all her concentration.

This requires the wraith to make a Static Physical Challenge against a Narrator.

- **Maintain the Material Form:** This is not so much an ability in itself as the capacity to maintain an Embodied form for a longer duration.

This ability costs one Pathos to use, and the wraith must enter an Extended Static Physical Challenge. Each success adds to the number of successes already gained for the Embody power being used.

Basic

- **Phantom Whispers:** The wraith may whisper across the Shroud, letting his voice be heard faintly in the Skinlands. Alternately, he may manifest as a hazy, translucent figure, only vaguely reminiscent of his mortal body. This art is not necessary to speak with supernatural beings. On the other hand, mortals who notice a wraith who has manifested using this ability may well react with intense fear.

To use Phantom Whispers to speak, a wraith must enter an Extended Static Social Challenge in order to relay a short sentence for each success. To use Phantom Whispers to manifest, a wraith must spend one Pathos point and enters an Extended Static Social Challenge to remain materialized for two minutes per success. If the wraith attempting to manifest wishes, he may also attempt to frighten onlookers by

making a Social Challenge against the onlookers. Horrific Molation or other creative use of Arcanoi can modify any challenge. Phantom Whispers can be used to whisper and materialize at the same time, but each requires a separate challenge.

- **Statue:** This art permits the wraith to take a solid, if immobile, form. The Embodied wraith seems to be an idealized version of himself, but with cold, hard flesh. While using Statue, the wraith cannot move, speak or even breathe. Still, this art can be useful when avoiding Spectres or wraith pursuers. In a crowded subway, for example, hunters may overlook the “sleeping mortal vagrant” in their haste to find their wraithly prey.

By spending two Pathos points and entering an Extended Static Physical Challenge to see how many times the character may be touched or how long (usually five minutes per success) the wraith may remain solid (whichever comes first). The player may be harmed as if he were mortal.

Wraiths using this art should hold up a Statue card, available from the Storyteller at the start of the game.

Intermediate

- **Life-in-Death:** This art allows the wraith to manifest as her mortal body, more or less. Her Embodied appearance reflects her mildly spotty memory of her living self. As a result, most wraiths tend to idealize their appearance, becoming more beautiful when Embodied than they were when alive. The form this art creates usually has darker hair and paler skin than the wraith did as a mortal, but otherwise doesn't appear as odd. The wraith using Life-in-Death has flesh colder than it should be, and will seem constantly distracted (a side effect of the concentration necessary to maintain this form). Although most onlookers won't notice anything wrong with a wraith using this art, those close to her in life may pick up on the differences.

To use Life-in-Death, the wraith spends two Pathos points and enters an Extended Static Social Challenge in order to remain solid for five minutes per success. This form can only be used if the wraith currently holds a humanlike form (those Molated into anything non-humanlike cannot use Life-in-Death). The wraith takes damage as a mortal would (i.e., she won't go Incorporeal if damaged) while in this form.

Advanced

- **Materialize:** The wraith can assume an almost fully human form, briefly duplicating his mortal life. While materialized, he breathes, bleeds, sweats and enjoys his former warmth. The wraith can do anything he could while he was alive. The only restriction is time — this form's cost in Pathos and concentration is staggering. The sensation of this brief existence is almost overpowering, especially to wraiths who have been dead a long time.

The player must spend three Pathos points and one Willpower Trait, and enter an Extended Static Social Challenge. Each success allows the wraith to be completely solid for as long as it takes to draw one breath. If the wraith is Attuned to the person viewing him, he may manifest for one hour per success. While Materialized, the wraith suffers any damage as if he were still mortal.

Fatalism

Some claim that Fate's mark is on everything, even (and especially) the souls of the dead. Fatalism is the Arcanos that allows wraiths to read Fate's tapestry, to the extent of interpreting someone's past or future. Fatalism is a dangerous Arcanos; those who tamper with Fate's weaving can find themselves horribly ensnared in its webs. There should be stiff penalties for abuses of this power; Fate does not take kindly to meddlers in her works.

The Guild

The Oracle's Guild enjoyed steady business in its heyday. Some say they directly served the Lady of Fate herself, others that even higher powers commanded

A Note on Fatalism

Fatalism is perhaps the most difficult Arcanos to simulate for Mind's Eye Theatre, and obviously there is no way to incorporate prophecy with one hundred percent accuracy. There is no way that Fatalism can work at all well in gameplay without both player cooperation and Storyteller planning. With that in mind, it is recommended that the number of wraiths with Fatalism be limited in any given game.

their allegiance. Rumors aside, Oracles were prized as advisors on most matters, and were sought after as counselors by many Stygian lords.

These days Oracles tend to associate with Chanteurs, Sandmen and even Spooks. Many find it best to not advertise their calling, advising only those clever enough to seek them out. There is a fierce unspoken loyalty between Oracles, but they avoid long associations with one another.

Oracles prefer gaudy attire, and most have arcane marking or symbols of Fate inscribed on their foreheads and arms. These sigils appear on their own and cannot be removed, and many appear to dance or move on their own.

Innate Abilities

- **Kismet:** This is the ability to read and gauge a person, situation or thing's importance in the grand weave or how to read how Fate influenced them, particularly in their demise. A practiced Oracle can easily interpret a wraith's deathmarks or perceive the forces at play around those with great destinies that intermingle with their own.

By entering a Mental Challenge with the target, the wraith can interpret either how much importance the target has in regards to the wraith or how the target died. If the target loses the Challenge, she must tell the Oracle how the two are related (if at all) — i.e., "We are enemies," "I am working toward the same goals as you," etc. The target must answer truthfully, and to the best of her ability. This power is very difficult to simulate properly, and requires cooperation on the part of players in order to work at all.

In the case of the other use of Kismet, if the target loses, assuming he's already dead he must tell the Oracle how he achieved that state. Again, no dissembling or omission is permitted if the Oracle wins the test.

Basic

- **Foreshadow:** The wraith's attunement to Fate's interweaving strands allows her to sense when danger approaches, much as a spider perceives vibrations along its web. If a wraith has this ability activated, which is demonstrated by holding a Foreshadow card in plain view, she can enter a Static Mental Challenge in order to not be surprised in any situation. In other words, if the wraith had Foreshadow activated and normally would have been surprised, Foreshadow allows her to act normally instead.

If the wraith wins because she had her Foreshadowing ability activated beforehand, the uneasiness it inspires grants the character one Temporary Angst point for each successful use.

- **Interpretation:** The wraith can interpret a person's fate or read into her past by means of this art. Interpretation is typically used with some form of divination paraphernalia (the Tarot or I Ching, runecasting, astrology or the like); attempting this art without such props is far more difficult and likely to backfire.

Interpretation can only be used in the presence of a Narrator. The wraith enters an Extended Social Challenge against the target. Upon each success, the wraith may ask a Narrator one short question about the subject (if necessary the Narrator may query the target if it concerns her past and interprets for the wraith using Interpretation). In the case of questions concerning the future, the answers will always be more hazy and harder to read for which the Narrators may describe what sort of chances the target has in accomplishing his goals (if someone is attempting to thwart his goals, if there might be something getting in the way, etc.) Generally, this can be used to find out information concerning the upcoming plots that the Storyteller has planned and especially how the target might be involved in them.

Intermediate

- **Guesswork:** As a wraith masters Fatalism, she can learn to read the interplay of Fate's forces more quickly, even in stressful situations. Guesswork allows a wraith to "read into" someone else's actions, and intuitively respond even before the target acts.

By spending two Pathos, a wraith may enter a Mental Challenge with any wraith she is in conversation with. If the Oracle wins the initial challenge (and either ties or wins if a retest is called for), her opponent must declare what his next action would have been. No lying is permitted, obviously.

Advanced

- **Luck:** The secrets of the final level of Fatalism permits a wraith to make minor adjustments to Fate itself. By invoking Fate's blessing, a wraith can enjoy greater success in her efforts.

At the beginning of each game session, a wraith may spend two Pathos points and one Willpower Trait, and enter into an Extended Static Mental Challenge with a Narrator. The number of successes equals the number of losses in challenges the player may change to ties when the wraith decides to make use of the "luck" granted from using this ability. The

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Narrator marks down on a Luck card for the wraith how many times she may make use of the art. With each use the wraith must visibly mark off one of her previous successes.

Flux

This art allows a wraith to manipulate and animate objects created by the living, regardless of whether the objects have any true value. Many Alchemists claim that the act of creation has imbued the items with a life of their own, and that this pseudo-vitality is what permits them to give false life to the objects in the first place.

The Guild

For centuries, the Alchemists studied the energy within objects. Just as the Users understood the flow of energy from one being to another, the Alchemists' experiments centered on the relative strength and weakness of objects. Like their mortal counterparts, the Alchemists tried to understand the components of matter, and thereby learn how best to manipulate it. Of course, this Guild was always in demand by those who wished to obtain relics, as well as those who sought to protect their Fetters in the Skinlands. Alchemists worked in tandem with their parent Guild, the Artificers, until Charon's decree disbanded them. At that time, the force of the *Dictum Mortuum* began to discourage congress with the Skinlands even further, and the Alchemists were driven from Stygia.

Alchemists have no identifying Guild marking, but most are compulsive tinkers or gadgeteers, and will talk incessantly about their work and Arcanos.

Innate Abilities

- **Grave Mold:** The wraith may cause spontaneous growth of lichen and mildew in small areas. By repeated use of this ability, the wraith can spread decay throughout a house. The mold does not have any affect upon living matter.

A wraith must enter a Static Physical Challenge to be able to use this art. A note should be left in the affected area to indicate the art's usage.

Basic

- **Altered States:** By means of this art and the expenditure of one point of Pathos, the wraith may either age or strengthen a non-living item. In the case of trying cause an item to rot or age, the target item must be smaller than a computer and weigh less than a hundred pounds. In the case of trying to strengthen an object, the Alchemist alters the structure of the object so that any attempt to damage or break the object will be significantly more difficult, in effect giving the object Physical Traits which can be bid against any attempt to destroy it.

Either use of Altered States requires entering into a Extended Static Physical Challenge to determine by how much the wraith can strengthen or weaken the target item.

- **Decay:** This art allows a wraith to promote significant decay in man-made objects. With a sufficient number of successes in an Extended Static Physical Challenge, wood crumbles at the lightest touch and iron rusts to the point where it loses all structural integrity. The Alchemists' Guild found this ability very useful in con-

vincing the Quick to avoid areas where they were not wanted. Later modifications — such as using this art on moving vehicles — assured the Alchemists that they had found a certain method of keeping the living at bay. The effects caused by Decay can be impressive, despite the fact that the actual area covered is often only that of a single link of chain or a similarly small component.

Like the Altered States ability to rot things, this art is often used in place of Inhabit to bring small objects across the Shroud as Relics.

By spending two points of Pathos and entering into an Extended Static Physical Challenge, the wraith can speed up the forces of Entropy on a specific object. The object cannot be larger than a clenched fist, however. Each success on the challenge removes a Trait from the object in question (Narrator discretion for objects that don't have a pre-listed number of Traits), and the effects must be either noted or announced to make sure that all other players are aware of them. An Alchemist can, however, make a Social Challenge if attempting to use Decay with some degree of stealth.

Intermediate

- **Puppet Theatre:** This art allows the wraith to animate several small objects at one time, typically several objects of like nature. A wraith might animate a set of dolls from a dollhouse (and the dollhouse as well), or a bowl full of marbles. The collection as a whole is considered to have the same number of Physical Traits as the wraith, but each individual "puppet" has only a fraction of those Traits individually, and all objects are limited by their nature. A collection of stuffed animals could move about on all fours and even grapple a target, but a collection of pencils could only be used to stab, write or erase.

Using Puppet Theatre requires an Extended Static Mental Challenge. The wraith cannot animate more objects than he has Mental Traits; each success on the Extended Challenge will allow him to add one more item to the dance. This art can be used on both sides of the Shroud, and costs two Pathos.

Advanced

- **Automaton:** This art allows a wraith literally to build a body from objects in her vicinity. The body can be made from debris in a junk yard, from sheaves of paper, or virtually any other object created by humans. The body has the same Physical Traits as the wraith, but is still limited by the laws of physics. A body comprised entirely of tissue paper does not stand up against torrential rainfalls very well, and is likely to be thrown about by strong breezes. The automaton created by use of this art is capable of sight, touch and even speech.

The wraith must enter into a Static Physical Challenge and spend three points of Pathos, plus one Willpower Trait. She will also receive two Temporary Angst points in order to create her Automaton. Only one test is needed to create the Automaton. The assembled body lasts for a scene, or until the Alchemist decides to release her grip. Furthermore, any Physical Traits lost while the wraith is controlling her Automaton are not lost by the wraith herself.

A wraith controlling an Automaton should hold up a card with the name of the art to indicate what she is doing. The composition of the Automaton should be determined by a Narrator, or, failing that, consensus of players.

Inhabit

Wraiths skilled in Inhabit are masters of the inanimate. They can infuse their very essence into an inanimate object, in time even learning how to animate their "home." If an object is destroyed while a wraith occupies it, the item immediately becomes a relic. Masters of Inhabit can even imbue an object with their own Arcanoi, gradually pouring Corpus and Willpower Traits into the item to create a form of inexpensive yet powerful Artifact.

There are some advantages to attuning Inhabit to a specific object. By preparing an inanimate Consort, a wraith can exert more control over its functions when Inhabiting it. Wraiths must spend Willpower Traits while Shellriding an object to attune it.

The Guild

The proud Artificers claimed to be not only the richest of the Guilds, but also the eldest. Nhudri himself, the Artificers say, created their Guild in order to train helpers for his forge. The practitioners of other Arcanoi quickly recognized the assets of such organization, and followed the Artificers in forming their own Guilds.

Although many ex-Artificers are still employed as soulforgers, it is illegal to use or teach Inhabit in many places. While soulforging is a vital part of the Stygian economy, those Artificers who know only Inhabit's secrets dwell in squalor a far cry from the glory of the first Guild.

Most Artificers are charred or marked with reddish patches from their work at the soulforges. Younger Artificers specializing in computer-based arts have charred tracteries of circuit-board patterns instead.

Innate Abilities

- **Sense Gremlin:** "Gremlin" is a slang term for wraiths who possess machines. A wraith may carefully examine an object with this ability, determining if any wraiths are currently in residence.

The player only needs to get one success in a Static Mental Challenge in order to determine whether or not a machine is Inhabited. More successes through an Extended Static Mental Challenge are useful for determining the Shellriding entity's nature (or numbers). With three or more successful challenges, the wraith can even tell if a machine has been recently Inhabited (assuming a Narrator is present to verify this).

- **Shellride:** The wraith may slide his Corpus without harm into a machine or object, hiding there from other wraiths. He has no control over the object, only remaining within until he chooses to leave.

The wraith makes a Static Physical Challenge to slip safely into an object. While there, he can be only be detected by Sense Gremlin. However, if the host object is destroyed, the wraith immediately takes a Corpus Level of damage and is forced out. Multiple wraiths can Shellride the same device, assuming it is large enough.

If Sense Gremlin is not used, a wraith Shellriding is considered to be invisible to both Skinlands and Shadowlands observers. While using this basic ability, a Shellriding wraith must hold up a Shellride card.

- **Surge:** By passing his hand through an electronic device, the wraith may cause a temporary short, briefly cutting its power. This disruption of the electron flow can actually damage computers and other delicate instruments, especially those without surge protectors.

The wraith makes a Static Mental Challenge in order to short the device in question. In the case the wraith wants to short more than one device, an Extended Mental Challenge is needed. Every success allows the wraith to send a surge through to another machine. Skinlands residents won't notice the wraith, just machines shutting down.

Basic

- **Lightning's Bite:** This art allows an Artificer to imbue a Skinlands object or a relic with a static electrical charge. The jolt does no damage to anyone touching the charged object, but unless he succeeds at a Static Physical Challenge, the person will drop the item immediately and make an appropriate amount of noise.

To use Lightning's Bite, an Artificer makes an Extended Static Mental Challenge and specifies the item he wants to charge. Each success gives another shock in the system, as it were. The item so charged should be marked as such. Wraiths succeeding on a Mental Static Challenge will be able to detect a haze of blue lines around an object ready to Bite, though they may not know what the lines symbolize.

- **Gremlinize:** The wraith may possess and control machines. True control comes only with attunement. Spur-of-the-moment Gremlinization allows only minor, clumsy effects, such as turning a machine on or off.

The wraith must spend two Pathos to Inhabit a machine, plus one Pathos per effect evoked. Again, the Shellride card must be held up, and any effect desired must be narrated to the room at large.

Intermediate

- **Claim:** The wraith may Shellride an object and possess it as her own body for a scene. Her senses are unaffected, save that they are spread out over the entire object she is Claiming. For example, a wraith Claiming a car can see, hear and feel everything happening to it, within it and around it. She may even exert some control over the host object while Claiming it.

The wraith spends three Pathos points and enters into an Extended Static Physical Challenge, with the number of successes determining the maximum size of the object that may be Claimed. She needs only one success to possess a book but five to Claim a house. A wraith may exert some control over her host object while Shellriding (turning pages, locking windows, etc.). The exact extent of her control depends on whether or not she is attuned to the object and how many extra successes she scored on the roll above and beyond those needed to take control of the object.

If the object is destroyed while Claimed, the wraith may spend one Willpower Trait to bring it across the Shroud as a relic. Each individual item must be successfully Claimed.

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A wraith who is using Claim must hold up her Shellride card while engaged in Claiming. In addition, if she is forcing the object to act in any way, she must narrate the effects she is causing. Others, even other wraiths, will not see the wraith, only the effects she creates.

Advanced

- **Empower:** Wraiths with this art can create a form of inexpensive Artifact by placing one of their Arcanos arts into a relic. Other wraiths thereby are able to use the art by activating the relic. The relic usually must be appropriate to the Arcanos involved; a calculator makes a far superior vessel for Usury than an umbrella, for instance.

First the wraith spends two Willpower Traits and makes an Extended Static Mental Challenge. Like other Inhabit arts, the difficulty equals the local Shroud rating; most Artificers Empower relics in the safety of their Haunts.

Next the wraith activates the appropriate Arcanos art while focusing on the relic. The wraith makes the roll and pays the appropriate cost, although no obvious effect results. If successful in this roll, the wraith imbues the relic with the Arcanos. Next, he fuels the relic with the necessary Pathos points to fuel the Empower art (up to as many points as the number of successes on the Empower roll). He then chooses whatever command activates the relic (a phrase, gesture, whistled note, etc.), and seals it with a Willpower Trait.

The result is a minor Artifact. Anyone who uses the activation command and spends the appropriate cost for the art (Pathos, Willpower or Angst gain) may use the Arcanos sealed within, expending one of the stored Pathos points. When the invested Pathos (excluding the three used to seal the relic) are expended, the relic becomes "normal" once again. Empowered items cannot be "recharged," only Empowered a second time. There is no known way to create a permanent Artifact with this art.

It is suggested that this art only be performed in front of a Narrator, and that each Artifact created in this manner be identified as such.

Intimation

The art of Intimation is a subtle one, relating as it does to desires and obsessions. It allows a wraith to discover the wants and desires of another, either Quick or dead, and to squelch, modify, or replace those wants. Eventually, the Solicitor can so completely overwhelm the will of his target that only the implanted desire remains, grown to a monstrous obsession.

The Guild

Even in shadowed Stygia, the Solicitors enjoyed a reputation that was dark. Always more of a cabal than a Guild, the Solicitors were sought out by the great for the ways in which their special talents might tip the balance of intrigues. At the same time, common citizens avoided them, unwilling to become pawns in the games of manipulation that the wielders of Intimation played. By the turn of the 17th century, the lords and ladies of the capital of the dead became unwilling to tolerate the

Solicitors' presence any longer and declared them banned from Stygia. Though all the Guilds had been officially disbanded by this time, any who practiced or even held knowledge of this now-forbidden Arcanos were made very unwelcome in Stygia. This did little to alter the status quo, other than to raise the Solicitors' rates for services rendered. Even today, if the art of manipulating desire is needed, a Solicitor can be found in almost any locale...assuming, of course, that one is willing to risk dealing with them.

The symbol of the Solicitors is a stylized Catherine wheel, denoting their power to bend others to their will. Solicitors will often conduct psychological warfare on targets by causing toy wheels to be rolled past them at appropriate moments. The effect is generally similar to that of the legendary fish wrapped in newspaper. In person, Solicitors can sometimes be identified by their gaze; unless pains are taken to disguise it, a Solicitor's left eye is always a blazing, poisonous green.

Innate Abilities

- **Twinge:** By gazing at another wraith, a Solicitor may discover what desire is topmost in that wraith's mind at the moment. Often this yields inconclusive results ("Gee, I could really go for a pizza..."), but in situations of tense negotiation or imminent combat, it can occasionally be a useful guide to what the viewed wraith may do.

To activate Twinge, the wraith must win a Mental Challenge against her target. Twinge is useful only for garnering surface wants. It cannot be used to detect deep-seated longings, nor is it a shortcut to psychoanalysis of the targeted character. On a successful Twinge, the target tells the Solicitor his current want. If the Solicitor loses the Challenge, false information may be given.

- **Self-Intimation:** Exercise of Self-Intimation enables a Solicitor to resist another's attempt to control her using this Arcanos. A successful contest renders the target immune to whatever effects were intended. Failure has no effect on the wraith's defense, although a tie also counts as a successful resistance.

When an attempt to use Intimation is made, any character with Self-Intimation has the option of making a Social Challenge against whoever is attempting to Intimate them.

Basic

- **The Gleaming:** Worked on a solid object, the Gleaming makes the item more desirable than it would otherwise be. It can make a pile of rock seem to contain precious gems, or a rust-pitted sword seem to glisten as brightly as Excalibur. This is an unobtrusive use of the Arcanos, and as such is the first taught to aspiring Solicitors.

A successful Static Mental Challenge and spending one Pathos point infuses the target object with a luster that it does not in truth possess. Any wraith or living being near the ensorcelled object must make a successful Static Mental Challenge or they feel a desire to possess it. If the Gleaming is being used against someone in the Skinlands, the wraith needs to use it on something physically in the Skinlands, not against a relic. (Solicitors usually recommend enhancing such items as grenades with the pins pulled, stolen goods which the Hierarchy is searching for, etc.). If the wraith wants to imbue the object with the Gleaming for more than five minutes, then he

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can enter an Extended Static Mental Challenge instead of the normal challenge in order to extend the Gleaming's duration.

Objects marked with the Gleaming must be identified as such.

- **Deep Desiring:** By using Deep Desiring, a wraith is able to map the wants and needs of the target wraith in detail and, if so desired, remove a want from the target's mind. A wraith who decides to use Deep Desiring to quash a want or desire from her target can use it to remove the desire for a certain relic CD or even something as complex as the lust for power. This use of Deep Desiring can be either extraordinarily therapeutic or incredibly destructive. If used to quash a desire from the target, its use is unobtrusive; it excises the targeted need completely and does not bother to heal the gap in the victim's psyche this act creates.

For either use of Deep Desiring, the wraith must spend two points of Pathos and enter into a pair of Challenges against her target — an Extended Mental Challenge in order to read the target, and an Extended Social Challenge to crush his wants. The more successes, the more accurate the reading. With enough successes, even the deepest, most primal wants of the target are revealed. If the wraith wants to use Deep Desiring to squelch a desire, the number of successes reflects how deep-seated a want or desire is removed. If the wraith gets one success in her challenge, she could remove the desire for a ghostly lollipop, but it would take many more in order to eliminate a lifelong desire to kill a wraith's father's murderer.

Note: The target of Deep Desiring may be called upon to explain what his character actually wants during the course of the art's use.

Intermediate

- **The Craving:** The Craving implants a complex desire for anything, ranging from really good Chinese food to seeing the Great Wall in person. All of the victim's actions and wants are warped around this, which becomes the central thread of the target's existence. A successfully done Craving can cause the victim to actually obsess on the created desire to the exclusion of all other wants and needs. Like Deep Desiring's use to quash wants, the Craving is unobtrusive. The new desire is plastered onto the target's psychological landscape, with no effort made to smooth the rough edges. As such, the effects of this use of Intimation can be easily detected, and a victim can often be identified quickly.

To implant a Craving, the wraith must first elucidate precisely what that want is. The Narrator assesses the amount of successes needed based upon the complexity of the desire to be implanted, and the Solicitor then enters into an Extended Social Challenge against the target. The number of successes indicates how successfully the Craving is implanted. A Craving is not a natural Passion, and the subject cannot gain Pathos by following the Craving's call. This art costs either four Pathos points or two Pathos points and two Willpower Traits. In addition, one Temporary Angst point is gained for every two successful tests.

Advanced

- **Cupitatis:** Cupitatis is the culmination of all of the other aspects of Intimation. It enables the user to duplicate the effects of the Craving or Deep Desiring's use of removing wants from the target, but to do so subtly, so that the effects of the Arcanos are not obvious. While Deep Desiring's use to quash a desire for power will leave nothing in its place, Cupitatis excises the desire and heals the psychic wound,

so that to observers the victim of the Solicitor would appear to merely have found other interests. In the same way, a desire implanted with Cupitatis appears to be a natural outgrowth of other interests or an eminently sensible, if new, enthusiasm. Detecting the effects of Cupitatis is extraordinarily difficult, and is rarely done. It is for this reason, and because of this power, that the Solicitors are truly feared.

Depending upon whether a desire is to be removed or implanted, an Extended Challenge is made according to the guidelines of the Craving or Deep Desiring. The number of successes against the target indicates how seamlessly the modification of the victim's consciousness is made. The use of this art gives the wraith four Pathos and two Willpower Traits to exercise, and gives the wielder three Temporary Angst points.

Keening

Keening is an Arcanos of emotion transmitted by sound. The ancient legends of banshees and ghostly mourners have at least some basis in Keening's arts. Those emotions who have mastered this Arcanos can sing emotion into their listeners, living or dead.

It is not absolutely necessary for a wraith to sing to use this Arcanos. If a wraith wishes to touch others' emotions through dance, oration or even laughter, she may, but it may require an extra test, since this Arcanos is taught through song (where a tie in a retest is considered a win).

Ultimately, the emotions Keening instills are artificial, and cannot compare to the heady rush of true feeling. Gaining Pathos from a Keening-fed emotion is possible, but it requires an additional retest which must be won to have any effect. Furthermore, the Pathos harvested in this manner is far blander than usual. Masters of Keening often prefer to infect one person with an emotion, then feed on the truer feelings he engenders in his companions.

The Guild

Haughty and arrogant, the Chanteurs prided themselves on being the ones who brought music to the Underworld. With an artistic hubris exceeding even the Masquers', they hired themselves out as troubadours to the Restless' elite. Even after the Guilds' revolt, individual Chanteurs retained influence and access to the high and mighty of Stygia. The Stygian nobles would do anything for such potent diversion, and for centuries the Chanteurs were deemed to be one of the few "acceptable" entertainments in certain social circles. Even today, many wraiths search out Chanteurs to feel the depth of mortal emotion once more.

All Chanteurs play a musical instrument of some kind; even those who perform a *capella* use noisemakers or rhythm-keepers such as finger cymbals, castanets or drumsticks.

Innate Abilities

- **Perfect Pitch:** This is the ability to notice when another wraith is actively using Keening. The wraith must enter a challenge against the wraith in question, bidding Mental Traits instead of Social ones (as dictated by *Sotto Voce*, see below)

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- **Sotto Voce:** With *Sotto Voce*, a wraith may hide her Keening arts in normal singing or casual conversation. To use *Sotto Voce*, the Chanteur enters a challenge, but bids *Social Traits* against her opponent's *Mental*.

Basic

- **Ballad:** This art allows a wraith to inspire either the "higher" emotions like serenity, joy, mirth, loyalty, love, inspiration, vigor, faith and so on, or the "darker" ones like despair, anger, fear, loneliness, grief or lust. This art has proven excellent in everything from removing unwanted mortals from a particular locale to protecting fetters and swaying other wraiths into alliances.

To use *Ballad*, the wraith enters an *Extend Social Challenge* against his target(s) and spends one point of *Pathos*. The more successes against his target, the longer and deeper the emotion inspired by the *Ballad* lasts. If the wraith uses this art against mortals, the emotion lasts much longer than against a wraith; five successful tests can easily alter a mortal's mood for an entire week. If used against a wraith, each success lasts for two to three minutes. Each use of *Ballad* costs the user one *Pathos* point, but when using the "darker" aspects of *Ballad*, the Chanteur gains one *Temporary Angst* point as well.

The emotion the *Ballad* should be instilling must be announced at the time of the first test of the challenge.

- **Muse:** This art allows the wraith to make a suggestion into the subject's subconscious, inspiring him with an idea he will believe to be his own. This is useful for those who continue to compose music, art or literature after death, but require a middleman to bring their works to the living. More commonly, the art is used subtly to manipulate other wraiths.

By spending two *Pathos* and gaining one *Temporary Angst* point, a Chanteur can attempt to use *Muse*. The more successes gained on an *Extended Social Challenge*, the better the target interprets the suggestion, which must be phrased clearly and in a single sentence. Three or fewer successes indicates that the target gets the general idea, but puts his own spin on it. Four successes mean that he will follow the suggestion as long as it isn't directly harmful; five or more compels him to do as the Chanteur pleases. This art works equally well on wraiths, mortals and other supernatural beings.

Intermediate

- **Crescendo:** The wraith can scream a musical blast capable of damaging plasm at close range. By spending three *Pathos* and gaining one point of *Temporary Angst*, the wraith enters an *Extended Static Social Challenge*. The singer inflicts one *Corpus Level* of damage per success on every wraith in normal hearing distance. The damage is not aggravated, and can be soaked. *Crescendo* cannot be concealed by *Sotto Voce*.

Singing a *Crescendo* while *Embodied* inflicts all listeners with a terrible heartstopping fear. The art also inflicts one *Health Level* of damage per two successes. This damage may also be soaked, but will affect vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural creatures as well as mortals.

Advanced

- **Requiem:** This art floods the subject with raw, undiluted emotion. Any feeling the wraith wishes will pour over the target, burying her soul in its tide.

The wraith states the emotion he wants to project and enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge. Each success scored by the Chanteur paralyzes the subject for one minute, unless she is prepared for the onslaught. In that case, she can initiate a Social Challenge against the Chanteur to see if the art effects her. If the Chanteur wins the challenge, however, or if his victim is unsuspecting, the object of the art is overwhelmed with emotion and cannot move, act, speak or defend herself. Particularly dark emotions can scar a target's soul. If five or more successes are scored with a negative emotion at the core of the Requiem, the subject may lose Mental Traits or go insane at Narrator discretion. This art costs two Pathos plus one Pathos per success achieved. If the emotion projected is negative, the wraith gains one point of Temporary Angst.

Lifeweb

Lifeweb is the study of the ties between wraiths and the living world. A master of this Arcanos' secrets can sense and manipulate the bonds of the Fetters, handling their energies as a weaver manipulates her shuttle and loom.

Lifeweb allows a wraith to monitor her Fetters' energies, keeping track of them even at a distance. Some sit at the heart of this web, extending their senses to any "trouble spot" as it is disturbed. Others actively walk among people, places and things, marking some as temporary Fetters in order to watch over them more efficiently.

Unfortunately, Lifeweb is simply too difficult to simulate properly for it to work well within the confines of Oblivion. The various powers of Lifeweb are listed below for Storyteller purposes, but characters should not be permitted to take Lifeweb at the risk of running Narrators absolutely ragged. Effects are listed below but systems are not; it is assumed that for Narrator characters, systems will not be necessary.

The Guild

The Monitors were not as vital to Stygian society as the Pardoners, Masquers or Artificers. They often trained their Guild members as Reapers, and as such had considerable influence on the Lemure population. However, their focus on the mortal world kept them from achieving as much influence in Stygia as some of the other Guilds.

Since the fall of their Guild, the Monitors have become even more defensive than before. They refuse to teach other wraiths any but the most remedial arts of Lifeweb, unless absolutely convinced of their pupils' trustworthiness. Current rumors accuse certain ex-Monitors of running protection rackets, threatening other wraiths' Fetters unless bribed, and linking wraiths to objects that are about to be destroyed.

Monitors never close their eyes, not even in Slumber, and by this they may be detected.

Innate Abilities

- **Locate Fetter:** The wraith may “check up” on any of his Fetters, scanning its surrounding. This ability also permits the wraith to sense a Fetter’s distance and direction.

Basic

- **Sense Strand:** The wraith can scrutinize the patterns of energy surrounding wraiths and their Fetters. He may perceive the links between a wraith and her Fetters, sense whether something is in fact a Fetter or not, and if so, identify the wraith attached to it.

- **Splice Strand:** The wraith may create an attachment with a person, place or thing, making it a temporary Fetter. Both the wraith involved and the object must be touched in some manner by the Monitor doing the splicing, at which point the connection is made. The Fetter may be maintained from day to day, but only one temporary Fetter at a time can be maintained with this art.

Intermediate

- **Sever Strand:** The wraith exercising this dread art can tear another wraith from his Fetters. She can only accomplish this in the presence of the target Fetter, but can rip it away through raw force of will.

Advanced

- **Soul Pact:** A wraith who has mastered this art can claim a willing mortal’s soul as his own. This is usually done as part of a contract where the mortal promises her soul in exchange for help from “the other side.” Thereafter, while the mortal lives, she becomes a Fetter of the wraith. When the mortal dies, the wraith becomes instantly aware: if the mortal becomes a wraith, she and the Monitor continue their link.

Mnemosynis (ne-MO-sin-iss)

Mnemosynis can be either a powerful cathartic tool or the most inhumanly potent source of pain imaginable for a wraith. Students of this Arcanos learn the arts of tracing memories, and, should the individual worker reach more difficult levels of achievement, of bringing those memories into the present. Obviously Mnemosynis is a powerful tool for obtaining information or ascertaining guilt, and it was a widely held belief that the Mnemoi were incapable of pulling anything save the absolute truth from the psyches of those they work with. This, unfortunately, was not the case.

An early synthesis of the arts of Puppetry and Castigate, Mnemosynis also focused on the control of others. Mnemoi are workers with the stuff of remembrance and the patterns of thought, and only the most skilled have the ability to shape it, rather than merely read or recall it. However, those with the talents to perceive memory as physical stuff may shape it to their satisfaction, thus in essence modifying or creating memories. Those watching the Mnemoi do not see this reshaping of the

material of memory as anything beyond the usual visual effects associated with the Arcanos.

The Guild

Once closely affiliated with the Pardoners, the Mnemoi served the judiciary of Stygia as questioners and sleuths. Questions of truth and falsehood, responsibility and fault were easily answered as the Mnemoi could call up memories of incidents in question and simply know not only the whats, but also the wherefores. The honesty of their Guild was unquestioned, in part because of the rigorousness of Mnemoi training was widely noised about and in part because were the Mnemoi corruptible, it would be too disturbing to contemplate. Needless to say, the Mnemoi were in fact corrupt.

Not all betrayed their trust, certainly, but the elders of the Guild sold their talents to the highest bidder. When their schemes were unmasked by Charon, the Guild was broken and its followers either crushed or scattered. Its members, despised and occasionally hunted, were exiled to the hinterlands, and it is there, in a thousand places far from the capital of the dead, that the ways of reading and shaping memories are still taught.

The Guild's symbol before the exile was an evenly balanced scale weighing one eye in each pan, but since the breaking of the Mnemoi, those who most keenly feel the Guild's disgrace have recast it so that the scales are no longer balanced. Mnemoi are notable for never, ever blinking (save by conscious effort), and it is by this and only this that they may be detected.

Innate Abilities

- **Rewind:** With a minimum of effort, a Mnemos is capable of seeing the last minute of another being's existence through that being's eyes. Humans, Spectres, even animals are affected by this power. The clock is constantly ticking on this ability and the time limit is precise, but nothing can be omitted or glossed over when Rewind is employed. The Mnemos using Rewind sees, instead of the world around her, the last minute of her target's experience in the first-person format. The Rewind starts from the moment precisely one minute before the Arcanos is employed. At the end of that minute, reality reasserts itself.

By entering a Mental Challenge against her target, the Mnemos activates Rewind and is able to see the world through her subject's eyes. The subject must relate the last minute of her existence to the Mnemos character, omitting nothing. If the Mnemos loses the challenge, the target can either refuse to speak or give false information.

- **In Memoriam:** In Memoriam brings back a specific memory so that the Mnemos can experience it herself. The memory in question must be specified precisely (i.e., "Let me see your memory of the last time you spoke with to your friend Aristophanes," or "Show me what happened just after sundown last Thursday"), and must refer to an event that the questioner knows occurred. "Show me what happened when you dumped Chretien into the Nihil," is not a valid question, unless the Mnemos knows that her target did in fact dump someone named Chretien into a Nihil. The memory is presented in the same manner as one recalled through Rewind.

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To recall a particular memory, the Mnemos phrases her request for the specific memory and then enters an Extended Mental Challenge against the target. Every success determines the clarity of the image. This power is only good for the last year; each additional five years of range requires the expenditure of a Willpower Trait.

Basic

- **Mnemotechnics:** Mnemotechnics brings a moment of the past back for the wraith upon whom it is exercised. When this art is used, the target is instantaneously transported (in her mind) back to a time specified by the Mnemos responsible. The character will perceive herself to be in that past time and will act accordingly. This power can either be a magnificent release or the cruelest of inflicted delusions, and it is used sparingly by those who are aware of its consequences.

A Extended Social Challenge against the subject determines whether this power functions. In addition, if the intent of the Mnemos utilizing Mnemotechnics is to heal painful memories, the number of successes indicates the number of Angst points drained from the target's Shadow (half of this number is added to the Mnemos as Pathos). Conversely, a malevolent use of this power adds a number of Angst points equal to half the number of successes. In either case, the duration of the delusion is determined by the number of successes won as well; one minute for each one. Using Mnemotechnics requires the expenditure of a Pathos and a Willpower Trait. In addition, the Mnemos automatically gains an Angst point if the power is used malevolently.

- **Mindspeak:** This art allows the wraith to communicate short phrases to an individual, and to receive his responses. Like a kind of limited telepathy, this art may only be used to communicate with someone within the user's line of sight. Because the thoughts are being conveyed by a means that is beyond language, it is difficult to express fine shades of meaning through this art. On the other hand, it is possible to communicate with someone who speaks an unfamiliar language, due to the nonverbal nature of Mindspeak.

The wraith must enter a Static Mental Challenge. Each success allows her to communicate one simple phrase, and receive a response. For each additional person the Mnemos wishes to communicate with beyond the first, one point of Pathos must be expended.

Intermediate

- **Casting the Scene:** Casting the Scene recalls a moment of the target's past for everyone within a 10' radius. An expense of additional Pathos expands the range of those included in the effect. The request for a memory must be carefully phrased; queries in the "If you didn't bury him in the basement, where did you bury him?" mold will produce precisely zero in the way of effect. Everyone in the range experiences the memory through the eyes of the target of the Arcanos.

For a cost of two Pathos and one Willpower Trait, Casting the Scene can be invoked. The wraith acquires one Temporary Angst point for every minute of memory replayed by this power. To use Cast the Scene, the Mnemos makes a Static Social Challenge. The power is only good for events that occurred during the past year; each additional five years of range requires the expenditure of an additional Willpower Trait.

Advanced

- **Onslaught:** This is the ultimate power of the Mnemoi, the ability to amplify and transfer a memory wholly from one person to another. While this may not seem a fearsome power, a compressed and intensified emotional experience can in some cases cause actual damage to the recipient. The person the memory is being transferred from will still recall what the memory concerned, but will become more detached from the experience.

While this art was initially developed to heal painful memories, it has been adapted to inflict such intense emotional pain that the body actually begins to become physically weakened by the Onslaught. It is the abuse of this power that forced Charon to break the Mnemoi, and Onslaught is feared even to this day.

The wraith attempting to use this art must first make eye contact with the subject, and must Embody if the intended target is in the Skinlands and has no means of seeing beyond the Shroud. The Narrator assigns a number from one to 10, indicating the intensity of the memory being transferred. The Mnemos may increase the intensity by spending Willpower Traits on a one-for-one basis, but may not bring the intensity level above a maximum of 10. The subject and the Mnemos then enter into an Extended Static Mental Challenge, counting their successes until both have lost, with a tie counting as a loss for the subject and a tie counting as a win for the Mnemos. The one with more successes inflicts their number of successes in Corpus (or Health, in the case of beings in the Skinlands) Levels as damage to the loser. Using this art will cause the Mnemos to gain four Angst.

Moliate

The soulstuff of wraiths, called plasm, is a far more malleable substance than flesh. Moliate, sometimes called soulshaping, is the power of sculpting and rearranging that plasm.

Wraiths who know the secrets of Moliate can make plasm beautiful, cause it to shimmer or glow, and even make it look vibrantly alive. They can also sculpt it into any horrific disfigurement imaginable. With the expenditure of Pathos, Moliate turns plasm ever-so-briefly fluid, just long enough for a talented shaper to create a vision of beauty or a thing out of a nightmare.

The more complicated the effect sought with Moliate, the longer it takes. Simply ripping off a chunk of an opponent's plasm or drawing a clenched fist into a club is nearly instantaneous, while reshaping a wraith into a finely worked seat cushion or reworking the appearance of one's entire Corpus can take minutes, even hours.

The Guild

The Masquers' Guild, back in the bygone days, was a sprawling house of fashion and beautification. The Masquers devoted much of their time fulfilling the heavy demand for custom Moliation, and enjoyed a lofty position among the Guilds. Whether it was shaping a wraith into her ideal self-image or drawing terrible weapons from her very Corpus, the Masquers claimed they would meet every request and create true art while they were at it.

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Of course, the masters of Moliate were also warriors, spies and assassins of the highest caliber. When the Masquers decided to withdraw from the Guilds' attempted coup, the other wraiths' distrust of them grew stronger. While practically every Citadel has a former Masquer on the payroll, any wraith talented at Moliate is watched very carefully these days.

Masquers are exceptionally attuned to their art, and have a near-obsession with perfection. In addition, their Corpora are extremely malleable, and Masquers often appear to be just a bit too perfect. Occasionally, two or more Masquers who work well together adopt precisely the same visage.

Innate Abilities

- **Glow:** The wraith can use this art to cause herself or another to glow with an inner light of whatever color and intensity she chooses.

The wraith enters an Extended Static Social Challenge and expends one Pathos. The number of successes indicates how many scenes the glow lasts. The glow can be used to light darkened areas or help someone to serve as a beacon in the Tempest. Wraiths with Moliate should pick up a Glow card from the Storyteller at the beginning of the game, and hold it up while using this art.

- **Return to Death's Visage:** This ability brings the wraith's form back to her original visage, making her appear as she did when her Caul was first removed.

The wraith makes an Extended Static Social Challenge and spends a Pathos point. The number of successes determines how accurately the wraith assumes her original shape.

- **Shapesense:** Those with Moliate can detect whether or not another wraith has been Moliated, and if so, in what manner.

If a wraith suspects another of being Moliated, he enters an Extended Mental Challenge with the target. The number of successes determines the amount of information he gleans, either from a look at the character's Appearance card or from the player simply telling him.

Basic

- **Sculpt:** The wraith may use this art to change a wraith's face to mimic another's, or in order to alter the Corpus however she chooses. In terms of copying another's face, it is easier when the wraith is looking at the face to be copied than to work from memory. If the wraith decides to alter her Corpus, she may devise new appendages, shape jagged teeth, grow new sensory organs, adorn herself with markings or patterns, or cause parts of her body to glow or shift color. The only weaponry that the wraith can create are enhanced teeth for biting; otherwise the wraith retains her original physical capabilities regardless of her number of appendages. Actively using new appendages requires Martialry. Any change in a wraith's appearance should be noted on her Appearance card.

The Masquer may Sculpt herself or another wraith. The wraith makes an Extended Static Social Challenge against a number of successes the Narrator deems appropriate. Any Sculpting effects are permanent (until negated by another Sculpting). This art cannot cause damage, only alter shape. This art costs one Pathos to

use, and the subject loses a Corpus Level if the process involves anything more complicated than simply cosmetic alterations.

Sculpt can also be used to heal aggravated damage; a wraith using Sculpt can replace lost Corpus Levels by reworking the wounds. The healer must obtain one success for each level of aggravated damage to be healed; this use of Sculpt costs a Willpower Trait and a Pathos, plus one extra Pathos per success.

- **Martialry:** This art permits the wraith to shape her limbs into weapons or form her skin into armor. Any weapons created are automatically usable by one who knows how (i.e., has at least one Melee Trait), but armor tends to be stiff and inflexible. The wraith simply molds the chosen limb into the desired weapon, hardening it as she goes. By the same token, the wraith trying to make armor works her Corpus into a formidable carapace with a mirrorlike sheen. Many Masquers deliberately make their bodily arsenal as ornate and personalized as possible.

To create weaponry, the wraith must make an Extended Static Physical Challenge and expend three Pathos. Each success allows the weapon to inflict an additional level of damage in hand-to-hand combat. The shape of the weapon matters little, although many wraiths prefer swords for ease of use.

To sculpt armor, the wraith must make an Extended Static Physical Challenge and expend three Pathos. Each success adds the equivalent of a Temporary Corpus Trait for purposes of damage only; the false Corpus created by this art must be destroyed before the wraith takes any real damage to her form.

Weapons and armor cannot be created at the same time; Martialry must be used twice to create both effects. Girding others for war is one of the lost arts of the now-banished Guild.

Intermediate

- **Rend:** Masters of this art can tear apart the Corpora of other wraiths. The wraith using Rend must first contact her target, generally by making a successful attack-related challenge. The aggressor then makes an Extended Physical Challenge against her target. Each success inflicts one point of aggravated damage, plus one point per extra point of Pathos spent. Five or more successes permits the wraith to tear off a portion of her opponent (e.g., face, hand, knee or just a random handful of plasm). Using Rend costs one point of Pathos to activate, plus whatever the player spends to get extra points of damage inflicted upon her victim. Each use of Rend also gains the character one point of Temporary Angst.

Advanced

- **Bodyshape:** The character with this art may transform his or another's Corpus into practically anything imaginable, from a supermodel to a bookcase or a chunk of modern sculpture. It is dangerous to stretch one's plasm too thin; the relative volume of the final form should be roughly equal to the wraith's normal volume.

The wraith enters an Extended Static Mental Challenge with the number of successes needed depending upon the final form (at the Narrator's decision). Taking on the form of an oily puddle would only require one success, while mimicking a Hierarchy Anacreon in full regalia is much harder, requiring four successes. The wraith can only maintain a full-body change for a limited time (five minutes per success) before his Cor-

pus reverts to normal. This art costs four Pathos. If it is used against an unwilling wraith, the wraith using Bodyshape gains two Temporary Angst points.

The secrets of permanently Moliating a wraith into an inanimate form are only known to a few, and player characters will not have access to them.

Outrage

There are several ways to affect the living world from the Shadowlands. Outrage is the Arcanos that manifests a wraith's strength of will as a kinetic force. Its arts are all physical or violent in some form or another, as are its practitioners.

The Guild

The Spooks Guild was almost not a Guild at all; its members were such fractious troublemakers that they had difficulty relating even to each other. Their lack of internal structure hampered their ability to deal with other Guilds, and they enjoyed only moderate demand for their arts. Only the Artificers found constant employment for the Spooks, enlisting them in the creation of relics.

Consequently, the Spooks weren't hit that hard by the disbanding of the Guilds. They drifted back into their usual activities with little difficulty, and ex-Guild members can still be found starting fights and fires in the roughest parts of cities. They enjoy brandishing blunt weapons such as maces, and often spend time in the company of their fellow miscreants, the Haunters. The typical Spook has oddly knotted, powerful muscle groups and a somewhat misshapen look.

Innate Abilities

- **Leap of Rage:** By focusing his emotion and will in the Shadowlands, the wraith becomes capable of extraordinary leaps and jumps.

The wraith enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge which he may add to any successes he would normally score when making a leap or jump. This art can also be used to change direction in the Tempest.

- **Ping:** This Innate Ability allows the wraith to manipulate the smallest objects in the material world. The wraith may only move objects about the size of a bottle cap, and these just a small distance in any direction. This tends to be useful for attracting the living's attention or pressing small buttons.

The wraith makes a Static Physical Challenge and spends one point of Pathos to use this art.

Basic

- **Wraithgrasp:** This art permits the wraith to affect the Skinlands more fully. Wraithgrasp may only be used to lift small things, although a powerful wraith may lift sizable objects (and then drop them at his leisure). The object can be lifted to a fair height before the wraith releases it.

The wraith enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge. The number of successes indicates what can be lifted. Objects may only be lifted, not pushed around, manipulated or moved in any other way. The use of this art costs one point of Pathos.

The wraith using this art must physically lift the item (or card for the item) being affected by this power, demonstrating what precisely is being done with it.

- **Stonehand Punch:** The wraith summons his anger and lashes out across the Shroud, striking his target with raw force. This art can also be used on objects in the Underworld, including other wraiths.

Each success on an Extended Physical Challenge inflicts one Health Level (or Corpus Level, if the target is a wraith) on the subject. This art costs two Pathos per strike.

Intermediate

- **Death's Touch:** The wraith may now manipulate objects in the physical world. This art permits typing, opening windows and so on, just as if the wraith was solid. The wraith may alternately choose to create some friction, starting fires without any sort of material source of flame.

The wraith enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge and expends three Pathos. The wraith's delicacy and control depends upon the number of successes rolled. The power lasts up to one minute per success.

To start a fire, the wraith also expends three Pathos points and enters into an Extended Static Physical Challenge. The number of successes indicates the heat and extent of the fire.

The wraith using Death's Touch must narrate the events that she causes to happen by using this power, acting them out wherever possible. Obviously, mortals will not see the wraith, only the effects of her powers.

Advanced

- **Obliviate:** This hideous art allows a wraith to damage someone or something so severely that it can be sent to Oblivion. Material objects thus destroyed vanish into Oblivion, unless Inhabited by a wraith (in which case they become relics). Using this art on objects or relics in the Shadowlands sends them directly into Oblivion. This can also destroy wraiths and mortals, forcing their souls into Oblivion.

The Spook enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge. If trying to affect another wraith, the target may make the challenge an Extended Physical Challenge instead. Each success inflicts one level of aggravated, nonsoakable damage. Living creatures suffer Health Levels of damage, but their souls fall into a Destruction Harrowing if they are slain. Wraiths reduced to zero Corpus through this art also immediately fall into Destruction Harrowings. This art costs three Pathos, and also the wraith gains three Temporary Angst points.

As staving off Oblivion is the Hierarchy's reason for existence, sending a soul to the Void is frowned upon by the authorities. Any wraith known to have used Obliviate on another soul will be wanted for questioning at the very least. In addition, other wraiths are likely to skittish around someone who can send them to the Void with a (relative) minimum of effort.

Pandemonium

Pandemonium is the ability to tap into chaos itself, releasing the strange and eldritch upon the living world. Other wraiths tend to avoid masters of Pandemonium, as their distorting effects of the Wylding (as the Arcanos is also known) can be detrimental to one's sanity.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

Mortals generally won't believe most of the flagrant effects of this Arcanos. Sudden mists, blood seeping under doors, swarms of spiders, and clocks running out of control tend to send most people into a state of panic or disbelief. Even video recordings of some of these effects will be questioned; videotapes are becoming easier to modify....

The Guild

Back in the times of the Guilds, only the Spooks would regularly associate with the HaunTERS. The two Guilds cooperated to clear mortal intruders away from buildings they were hired to "clean." However, no other Guild would gladly mingle with the misanthropic, half-crazed HaunTERS. Their harness of the Wylding seemed to bend their minds as much as it distorted reality, and nobody could be sure that the HaunTERS were fully in control of themselves or their powers. These days, Spooks and HaunTERS are nearly inseparable, and other wraiths are quite happy to leave them to each other.

HaunTERS are recognizably quirky, adopting all manner of peculiar mannerisms (inappropriate giggling, affected speech, staring just a bit too intently at your left ear, and so on). Many have adopted billowing black cloaks as a sort of badge of honor or theatrical device.

Innate Abilities

- **Sense Chaos:** The wraith's attunement to chaos and the Shadow allows her to detect if something has been manipulated by Pandemonium or a Shadow. This is also helpful for detecting if a mortal has been tampered with by Spectres.

The wraith makes a Static Mental Challenge to see if she notices anything out of the ordinary.

Basic

- **Weirdness:** The wraith may invoke some small strange effect on a single target. The object of this art may feel suddenly cold, or his hackles rise, or he might suffer a momentary hallucination. If the wraith really concentrates upon his target, the object may become disoriented and temporarily forget who he is and what he's doing.

In order to cause a small physical effect upon a target, the wraith makes a Social Challenge and spends one Pathos. In order to cause a mental effect upon a target, the wraith must make an Extended Mental Challenge against the victim with every success causing the effects to last up to five minutes per success. This art works as well on wraiths as it does on mortals.

As with Outrage, the Haunter must detail and, if possible, roleplay the effects she is attempting to create. Those in the Skinlands react only to the effects; other wraiths can react to the wraith as well if they notice her (by winning a Static Mental Challenge) in the confusion.

- **Dark Ether:** The wraith may tamper with the weather or light conditions in a small area. She may radically change the temperature, summon mist and darkness, modify the humidity, or even evoke a glow akin to St. Elmo's Fire.

The player declares the effect she wants, and enters an Extended Static Mental Challenge. The number of successes defines the degree and duration of the change in environment. Five success calls up enough turbulence (if desired) to inflict one Health or Corpus Level of damage on beings in the vicinity. This is rare; most Haunters prefer to use this art to terrify rather than injure. This art costs two Pathos to invoke. In addition, if Dark Ether is used as an attack, it gives the user a point of Temporary Angst.

Intermediate

- **Foul Humour:** The wraith may channel his Corpus through the Shroud, manifesting noxious substances or swarms of small vermin. He can create plagues of frogs or locusts, clouds of wasps, or nests of snakes, rats or spiders. He can alternately produce clotted gore, raw flesh, blood, muck, reasonably strong acid or other foul matter.

The player must state what he is trying for and enter an Extended Static Physical Challenge. He spends one point of Pathos and one Willpower Trait, while gaining one point of Temporary Angst. The number of successes determines the extent and detail of the manifestation. The substances or vermin usually vanish after a scene or less; traces infrequently remain, particularly if the wraith scored five more successes. Any caustic or damaging effects inflict one level of damage for every two successes from the Extended Challenge.

Advanced

- **Tempus Fugit:** The wraith can distort distance and time itself. By using Tempest Fugit, he could slow or hasten the passage of time, or make the length of a corridor seem like a footstep or a league. He may not, however, reverse or repeat time.

The player declares his intentions and makes an Extended Static Mental Challenge. The number of successes determines the amount of change permitted in his immediate area.

Each success alters the flow of time by about two minutes. For example, if the wraith scored three successes, he could draw out an action requiring two minutes into seven or eight minutes of effort. Conversely, he could speed up an action requiring six turns, letting it be finished in three. This art can be attempted once every 10 minutes or so. (Note: This does not add to the number of actions a target gets from Celerity or Rage; it can only subtract them.) Tempus Fugit also works in the Shadowlands. This art costs three Pathos and one Willpower Trait. It is recommended that a Narrator be present when this art is used.

Phantasm

Phantasm is the Arcanos of dreams. Those with mastery of its arts can slide a sleeping mortal's soul out of its flesh and bring it along on a Shadowlands journey. The sleeper will remember the events he engages in as a vague dream, if at all, but on a dreaming level they are real indeed.

This Arcanos is a good way to involve mortals directly in a wraith's doings. A vivid dream can inspire or frighten a person into changing his behavior. The wraith can even alter elements of the dream to his tastes, instructing or horrifying his audience.

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Dreamers brought into the Shadowlands are treated as wraiths with particularly solid forms. They may only be damaged by special Artifacts or attacks that inflict aggravated damage on wraiths. Attacked dreamers slip instantly back into their bodies, almost always waking up unharmed. Only the mightiest wraiths can permanently damage or kill mortals in their dreams.

Note: The arts of Phantasm can be used to beneficial or malefic effect, and this has a direct effect on the price of using the Arcanos. With the exception of Agon, any Phantasm art that is used to harm another's soul also grants the user a point of Temporary Angst. The same art can be used for healing and entertainment without giving the Sandman in question Temporary Angst; what determines the cost is the Sandman's intent. Any discrepancies should be resolved by a Narrator.

The Guild

The Sandmen's Guild was once a glorious place to work. Charged with artistic fervor and a love for the dramatic, the Sandmen sculpted stages of dreamstuff and performed great works in the theatres of sleep. Deathlords and Anacreons bartered for their services, and the arts of Phantasm granted considerable prestige.

When the Guilds were broken, the Sandmen did their level best to carry on the show. Phantasm was more than a job to them, it was a labor of love. Even today, wandering troupes of Sandmen bring their shows to Necropoli across the world, recounting tales and rumors because they love nothing better. Sandmen clothe themselves in gossamer, a faintly incandescent material borrowed from dreams. They are also distinguishable by their often over-dramatic mannerisms and bearing.

Innate Abilities

- **Sleepsense:** The wraith may watch a mortal's dreams, or tell where he is along his sleep cycle (of REM sleep, deep sleep and transition). This ability works equally well with supernatural creatures as well.

The player makes a Static Mental Challenge in order to be able to watch the target's dreams for about five minutes at a time. If the dream is anything pertinent, the details of the dream should be relayed to the Sandman. If the target is feigning sleep, the Sandman will know instantly.

Basic

- **Elysia:** The wraith may either take hold of a sleeper's soul, pulling it free without harming it, or may alter the details of a sleeper's dream. If the wraith pulls the soul free, the wraith may carry it with her as she likes. If the wraith alters his target's dreams, he can change any number of factors in the dream. If he changes enough details, he can twist a pleasant dream into a nightmare or vice versa.

To take a dreamer's soul from his body, the wraith enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge and spends one point of Pathos. Every success allows the subject to remain in the dreamscape for five minutes. During that time the dreamer can see, speak and otherwise interact with all of the denizens of the Underworld.

To manipulate the sleeper's dreams, the wraith enters an Extended Static Social Challenge and expends two points of Pathos in order to manipulate his target's dreams. Each success makes every change more vivid and lasting.

• **Dreams of Sleep:** The wraith may make mortals, supernatural beings or other wraiths fall asleep and dream. For wraiths, the dreams are as vivid as those of life.

The Sandman need not enter a challenge if the subject is willing. If he is unwilling, the player enters a Social Challenge against her target. This art costs one point of Pathos when used on other wraiths, two points for mortals, and three points of Pathos when used on supernatural beings. If the art is used on supernatural beings, they will instantly be aware of what is going on (they will know that it is a supernatural attack; they may or may not recognize the source) and may react accordingly.

Intermediate

• **Phantasmagoria:** The wraith may weave Pathos into illusions. Phantasmagoria affects all five senses, but the duration is limited. These illusions are only solid to other wraiths if she invests Corpus into them. If she is Embodied, she can craft these illusions in the material world.

The player enters an Extended Static Social Challenge and spends two points of Pathos. The number of successes equals how difficult it is to see through the illusion, as well as its duration. The wraith must invest one Corpus Level to make the illusion quasi-material (and dangerous). The illusion can take as many Corpus Levels of damage before being destroyed as the wraith is willing to invest. A wraith may not "heal" a damaged illusion; he must craft another one. If the illusion is potentially damaging, the player may make a Physical Challenge to attack a victim. Each success inflicts one Level of damage. Phantasmagoria costs three Pathos to activate, plus one Pathos for every 10 minutes for which the illusion is maintained.

Advanced

• **Agon:** The wraith may directly rip a dreamer's soul from her sleeping body. This is excruciatingly painful and often debilitating to the dreamer.

The player enters an Extended Physical Challenge against the victim. The number of successes indicates how long the wraith may hold the dreamer's soul, each success equaling five minutes. The dreamer also loses an equal number of Health Levels upon awakening. She may resist the wraith through the Extended Physical Challenge, which can turn this art's use into a true struggle. Agon costs three Pathos points to use, and grants the wraith's Shadow two Temporary Angst points. Souls ripped from bodies by use of Agon also enter the Shadowlands as dreamers (unless the art's effects are fatal), but are usually in the position of Thralls.

Puppetry

Of all the 13 Greater Arcanoi, Puppetry is the one that Charon forbade most sternly. Only the Deathlords and their Hierarchy were sanctioned to ride the mortals, to possess them and thus affect them directly. But like all forbidden fruits, Puppetry has its devotees, those willing to risk Hierarchy sanction for another taste of the Skinlands.

Wraiths riding a subject are not truly part of the Shadowlands, and as such are immune to the normal dangers of that place. However, they take the damage as their hosts do. Also, the host's Physical Traits and non-Mental Abilities take precedence

over the wraith's unless the wraith is in direct control. The Puppeteer is a backseat driver, and usually nothing more.

Most aspects of Puppetry requires the wraith to attune himself to a Consort by spending Willpower Traits while Skinriding. The wraith may try these arts (at the Narrator's discretion).

The Guild

The Puppeteer's Guild was never an official part of Stygian society. Though even Charon used their services on occasion, he tolerated their presence in Stygia because of their affiliation with the other Guilds and not for any intrinsic merit they might possess. Their participation in the attempted coup was the excuse Stygia had been waiting for, and the Puppeteers were among those wraiths most fiercely persecuted after the coup's failure. Today, those Puppeteers who practice their art must do so well away from any Hierarchy representative.

Most Puppeteers feel a great fondness for mortals, acting protectively toward their wards. Many try to avert wars among the living and guard their favorite Quick. Of course, the occasional bad seed feels quite the opposite; mortal bodies, they argue, are the perfect entertainment, ripe to use and abuse.

Puppeteers unconsciously exhibit strange mannerisms and often accents picked up from assorted mortal hosts during Skinrides.

Innate Abilities

- **Detect Possession:** The wraith may tell if another wraith is currently Skinriding the target, or even if the target has been attuned for Puppetry.

The player makes a Static Mental Challenge to detect a current possession or to perceive the indications of Puppeteer manipulation on the Consort.

Basic

- **Skinride:** Skinriding is the most basic art of possession. It is the capability to slip into a mortal's body, thereby joining with him for a brief ride. The wraith can exert no control with this art, and the host acts of his own free will. However, any more sophisticated Puppetry art requires the wraith first to Skinride the host.

In order to slip into a host's body, a wraith must enter an Extended Static Physical Challenge. Any success will allow the wraith to Skinride the host; the number of successes determines how many the next Puppeteer to come along will need to supplant the first in that body (assuming she's still there).

Wraiths who are Skinriding merely stand a pace behind the mortal (or other being) that they are Skinriding. A Skinriding wraith is not visible on either side of the Shroud (being literally "inside" her host), but by the same token may not speak or otherwise communicate her presence except by using Arcanoi.

- **Master's Control:** A wraith using this art may briefly override his host body's arm, leg or speech center. Subtle use of this art can make a host manipulate an object in some way without realizing it. Using this art to cause speech results in a strange blend of the wraith's and host's voices.

To use this art in order to physically manipulate the host, the wraith must enter an Extended Physical Challenge against the host and spend one Pathos point, with

the more successes giving the wraith more control of her host. If the host actively resists, the wraith gains one point of Temporary Angst.

Note: Most hosts will be taken by surprise by Master's Control, and will not be able to resist actively. Those mortals with some knowledge of ghosts (at least one Occult Trait) or supernatural beings will be sufficiently aware of what's going on to attempt to resist if they wish.

To use this art in order to take control of the host's speech centers, the wraith spends one point of Pathos and enters into an Extended Mental Challenge. Each success allows the wraith to speak as the host for one breath. The wraith also gains one point of Temporary Angst.

Intermediate

- **Rein in the Mind:** This art allows a wraith to possess someone without the host's knowledge. In most cases, this can only be done to a Consort. The host remains semiconscious, though passive, through the art's effect, and will regain control when the Puppeteer releases her. She will immediately try to rationalize her actions; failing, she may seek out therapy or mental health resting. Any pain the host feels feeds back to the Puppeteer as Corpus damage, however.

The player enters an Extended Mental Challenge against the target. The effects of the art last for five minutes per success. The host may spend a Willpower Trait to try to resist the possession, enabling for a retest. Each success on the retest subtracts one from the wraith's initial number of successes. If this number is reduced to zero, the Arcanos fails. This art costs three Pathos and bestows a point of Temporary Angst.

Advanced

- **Obliterate the Soul:** After conditioning a Consort through extensive use of Rein in the Mind, the Puppeteer may begin to live full-time within the host's body. The host's personality is devoured by the Puppeteer's Shadow. Whenever the wraith leaves a body thus possessed, it becomes catatonic, responding to nothing and taking no actions on its own.

Once a wraith has conditioned a Consort (by using Rein in the Mind on that Consort at least 10 times), the player may make an Extended Physical Challenge against her target. When the wraith totals enough successes to equal to the number of Mental Traits the host possesses, she succeeds.

Two weeks after its original's soul removal, the host body will begin a slow process of decay. Before too long, it will become useless. Therefore, most wraiths use Obliterate the Soul only in the direst circumstances. This art is ineffective against other supernatural beings, and can only be initiated once per game session. If the first attempt to Obliterate the Soul gains no successes, the wraith must wait until the next game to try again. On the other hand, even one success on the initial challenge will allow for follow-up attempts whenever the Puppeteer feels up to it.

This art costs four Pathos and the expenditure of two Willpower Traits. In addition, the wraith gains a number of Temporary Angst points equal to the host's original Willpower Traits.

Usury

In death as in life, nothing's free. Pathos is the currency of the afterworld, and Usury is the Arcanos of barter. It is the delicate dance of the deal, of shifting Pathos and Corpus from one source to another. Those with Usury can act as healers, mendicants, merchants or extortionists, and sometimes all at once. It all depends on how reputable they choose to be.

Usury involves power of death energy, and is accordingly mistrusted in some circles. Many point to the Shadow as the source of this Arcanos, citing innumerable "deal with the Devil" stories as proof. They are not so mistaken; repeated use of Usury can raise a wraith's Temporary Angst to unhealthy levels rapidly. When used upon the Quick, Usury is nothing less than the theft of life itself.

A wraith must touch his subject to use Usury. To affect mortals, this requires another Arcanos, such as Puppetry, Embody, Inhabit or Phantasm. The life energy thus stolen is visible to other wraiths as a vivid light, which dims as it is absorbed.

The Guild

In their heyday, the Usurers were a Guild of considerable repute and political power. Ever alert for the next opportunity, they cast in their lot with the other Guilds when the Artificers led the coup against Charon. However, as it became clear that the attempt was doomed to failure, the Usurers quickly reversed their position, stranding the forces of the other Guilds without desperately needed resources of Pathos and Corpus. This betrayal, more than any of the others, doomed the revolt.

The Usurers have since had to resort to secrecy to protect themselves, both from zealous Stygian patrols and from vengeful Guild members who resented their "treachery." Even now, those in need of quick Corpus or Pathos must follow a series of clues on a wild and unorthodox hunt to find a Usurer. If nobody follows the client, and if she seems reliable, the Usurers will see her. Although this tends to restrict business somewhat, the Usurers console themselves by charging higher prices to clients for whom they don't particularly care.

Usurers tend to speak in precise, numerical terms. All carry some form of scales, allowing them to keep track of the balance of energy transferred.

Innate Abilities

- **Assessment:** The wraith can gauge the relative levels of life and death within an individual. Careful scrutiny can reveal some idea of the person's relevant Physical Traits, as well as their current Health or Corpus. Wounds appear as vivid black slashes in the person's makeup, and the observer can estimate their severity. The wraith may also perceive life energy in general within a specific area.

The wraith makes a Static Mental Challenge, a success at which allows the wraith to make an accurate Assessment.

Basic

- **Transfer:** The wraith may transfer Pathos between herself and another wraith. She may lend her Pathos to the subject, or steal her victim's Pathos away. This trans-

fer is always visible to onlookers as a vivid halo around the wraith receiving the Pathos. This effect is indicated by having the wraith receiving the Pathos hold up a Transfer card (which the Usurer should get at the beginning of the game, and hand off temporarily as necessary).

If the player is lending her Pathos to the target, then only one Static Social Challenge is required to allow the Transfer. If the wraith is using Transfer to steal Pathos, they must enter an Extended Physical Challenge; the use of the art this way gives the Usurer one Temporary Angst point.

- **Charitable Trust:** By infusing a mortal or wraith with his own Corpus, a wraith may heal wounds. This art can even be used on mortals without forcing the wraith first to Embody.

The player makes a Static Physical Challenge to see if he can transfer his Corpus Levels to his target. This art costs one point of Pathos to use, and the Usurer takes Corpus damage equal to the number of Health/Corpus Levels he gives away.

Intermediate

- **Exchange Rate:** This art allows a wraith to steal another person's life energy with but a touch. Other uses include allowing a Usurer to transform her Corpus Levels into Pathos, or to transfer someone else's Corpus or Health Levels into Pathos for themselves.

If the wraith uses Exchange Rate in order to convert her own Corpus Levels into Pathos, she must expend a point of Pathos and enter an Extended Static Mental Challenge with each success allowing her to transmogrify her Corpus into Pathos.

If the wraith uses Exchange Rate in order to steal Health or Corpus Levels from someone else, she enters an Extended Social Challenge. Each success for the Usurer equals one point of Corpus stolen. This use of the art gives the Usurer one point of Temporary Angst.

Advanced

- **Investment:** This art allows a wraith to pour Corpus and/or Pathos into a relic, storing it for future use. The wraith must focus on the relic in question, channeling and carefully sealing his energy into it. The energy may then be accessed by anyone who knows the seal's gesture or command phrase.

The player spends two Pathos points, then marks off the number of Pathos or Corpus points that he wishes to invest. Each success on an Extended Static Mental Challenge invests one point (up to the set limit) into the relic. All excess points "gambled" are lost. To seal the points in place, the wraith must spend a Willpower Trait and assign a command phrase or gesture to "unlock" the stored reserve. A given relic may only store one type of energy. This art is the means by which soulfire crystals are created and maintained.

Relics and Artifacts charged this way should have the number of Traits invested in them listed somewhere on the item card.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are extra Traits that lie beyond the direct physical and supernatural capabilities of a wraith. There are four Backgrounds that you can buy using Nega-



tive Traits during character generation: Artifact, Eidolon, Memoriam and Status. It is vital to pick your Backgrounds wisely so that they work well with your character concept. In most cases, your Storyteller should have input into your choice of Backgrounds to make sure that they'll fit with the gist of the chronicle. A beginning wraith should not have an Artifact amphibious assault vehicle; a primarily Hierarchy game might not be the best place for a wraith with excessive Heretic Status, and there's no reason for a wraith with an aimless drifter concept to have Memoriam. Pick your Backgrounds sensibly.

Artifact

Commonly fueled by Pathos, Artifacts have certain functions or powers that aid the wraiths who carry them. Artifacts are highly valuable, and greedily sought after by the vast majority of wraiths. Any Restless who chooses the Artifact Background must create (in conjunction with the Storyteller) a story explaining reasonably where and how she obtained the Artifact, and how she has managed to hang onto it.

Characters who take this Background can purchase it more than once with each purchase representing one Artifact of the appropriate level. Conversely, multiple points spent on Artifacts can instead grant a character a more valuable and potent item.

The Artifact Background is obtained by taking Negative Traits at a one Trait for one level of Artifact ratio.

- **None:** Like most wraiths, the character has acquired no Artifacts. Is he opposed to material goods, unlucky or merely poor?
- **Level One:** A seemingly insignificant Artifact, such as soulforged jewelry or some oboli.

- **Level Two:** A minor Artifact, such as a Molated Torch or a soulsteel mask.
- **Level Three:** An Artifact of some purpose, like a sword of Stygian steel. Others include armor, homing beacons for travel in the Tempest, and Nihils in a bottle.
- **Level Four:** A major and useful Artifact, which the Hierarchy would dearly love to possess. Examples include a gun that doesn't need relic bullets, nets for fishing relics out of the Tempest and the like.
- **Level Five:** The most useful and powerful of objects, the envy of all other wraiths. Charon's sickle and mask, the raft of a Ferryman and other such objects of power qualify as Level Five Artifacts.

Artifacts of Level Four and above should be heavily restricted in-game, as only the oldest and most powerful Gaunts have the strength and cunning to hang onto them for long.

Eidolon

Just a wraith's Shadow is her baser self, her Eidolon is her higher self. However, while all Shadows have voices, most wraiths' Eidolons are mute. They exist as a simple urge toward goodness, if at all.

Some wraiths, however, have stronger moral senses than the average. The Eidolon of such a wraith, while never achieving the terrible strength of the Shadow, can directly impact matters and foil the Shadow's machinations.

Each Trait in Eidolon can be spent once per game to foil the stratagem of a wraith's Shadow. This does not mean retest; it means that the Shadow has been decisively defeated for the moment, and cannot act again for another hour. On the other hand, once an Eidolon Trait is used, it is gone for the duration of the game.

Memoriam

The power of the memories of the living can be intense indeed, strong enough to feed the appetites of the dead. Memoriam is a measure of how well the living world remembers a particular wraith, and how much strength he can draw from that.

During gameplay Memoriam is useless, but at the start of each evening's gameplay, wraiths with Memoriam make a Static Test for each Memoriam Trait they possess. Each success grants the wraith a point of Pathos.

Memoriam Traits cannot be bid.

Status

Status is more of a recognition of authority than anything else. It does not, however, measure actual worth or achievement. Many in the bureaucracies of the Underworld, just as in the Skinlands, have done little to deserve the power they have. However, whether Status is earned or not is irrelevant; wraiths who have it can use it in a variety of ways.

Each wraith begins the game with one Status Trait in one of the three major factions of Underworld society: Hierarchy, Heretics or Renegades. This indicates the wraith's initial affiliation. It is possible for a wraith to have Status in multiple factions — perhaps the wraith is a spy, or has been serving as an emissary — but not common. The more Status a wraith has within a group, the more respect she wields

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No. of Traits	Benefit
1	Get a restraining order against a character from a higher-up Call for and receive basic help from fellow faction members
2	Order around recent inductees into the faction (within reason) Acquire basic equipment from other faction members
3	Obtain financial resources or useful relics from the faction Lead faction members into conflict or in negotiations Have authority to cut deals with other factions and make them stick.
4	Lead large numbers of co-factionists Obtain Artifacts, weapons and powerful relics from the faction Temporarily reduce others' Status within the faction.
5	Temporarily bar others from the faction Obtain potent Artifacts from the faction (on loan) Plan and implement strategy for the faction Call on faction members with lesser Status and have them respond

in that organization, and the more favors she can call in. With Status also comes duty and responsibility, and wraiths with high Status find themselves responsible for decisions which affect the existences of many lesser Restless.

The Status Background is obtained by taking Negative Traits at a ratio of one Trait per one level of Status. Storytellers will sometimes hand out extra Status or increase a type of Status Trait's cost, depending upon the needs of the chronicle.

Status Traits are not usually bid, though they can be used in Intimidation or similar Challenges. Losing a challenge where a Status Trait has been bid causes a temporary loss of face, and the Status Trait bid is lost until the next game (at which time it returns).

In **Oblivion**, Status is primarily a roleplaying tool. Saying, "I've got three Hierarchy Status Traits," when arguing with someone over where to send the Legionnaires is another way of saying, "I have authority in this situation; do you?" At Storyteller discretion, Status Traits can also be used to obtain concrete effects (listed below). Status Traits used in this matter are considered to be gone temporarily and are regained at the rate of one per night of play. By using Status in this manner, the wraith is considered to have called in her favors, bullied her underlings, pulled her strings, and temporarily exhausted some or all of her resources.

Guild Status

There is yet another kind of Status that wraiths can obtain: Status within the shadowy organizations called the Guilds. Guild Status can be purchased during character creation for two Negative Traits per level. To belong to a Guild is to belong to an illegal organization, and the Guilds take their secrecy very seriously.

Guild Status is harder to obtain than regular Status, and the benefits of being in a Guild are not necessarily as tangible as those that come with belonging to, say, the Hierarchy. Guild Status Traits can be used to, among other things:

- Learn Guild signs with which members of the Guild identify themselves to others. (1 Trait)

- Receive help with or tutoring in an Arcanos (a.k.a. apprenticeship) (2 Traits)
- Receive financial assistance or relics from fellow Guild members (3 Traits)
- Be granted sanctuary at a Guild-owned Haunt (4 Traits)
- Acquire the physical assistance of other Guild members, or get an apprentice (5 Traits)

Guild Status can also be used for a variety of other things at Storyteller discretion. Membership in the Guilds stretches across factional lines, and being able to identify oneself as a Guild member can be helpful in staving off many conflicts.

Guild Status is Guild-specific. Status in the Artificers' Guild does not carry over to the Pardoners' Guild, and so on. It is extremely uncommon for a wraith to have Status in more than one Guild.

Passions



Passions are at the core of every wraith's existence. In a very real sense, a wraith's Passions are what keeps her going. She must strive to fulfill them, otherwise they will wither. However, if she attends to them, she can reap a harvest of Pathos, enabling her to continue her ghastly journey.

As stated in Chapter Three, a player must choose four Passions that fit her character's personality, background and history. To regain Pathos by means of a Passion, the character must either evoke the emotion at the center of the Passion in another or feel that emotion strongly herself. Sometimes a wraith will change the environment to evoke the desired emotion in spectators; other times she will simply strive to follow the Passion itself. Either path, with Narrator approval, can lead to the wraith gaining additional Pathos Traits, up to a maximum of 10.

In any scene where a character evokes an emotion in someone else, the player makes an Extended Simple Test to see if she can sympathize with the emotions of those around her. Only with a win in the Simple Test can she receive a wraith's spiritual energy called Pathos, where each win allows her to gain another point of Pathos. If a Narrator is present, she must approve the Pathos gain by verifying the sincerity of the emotion felt or invoked. If no Narrator is present, the consent of all players present is necessary for a test against a Passion. No Passion can be tested against more than once every two hours; to do so more frequently would be to cheapen the Passion in question. If a wraith fails a test to gain Pathos from a Passion, that Passion is considered to be Numbed for the duration of the evening. Numbed Passions cannot be tested against; however they are recovered at the beginning of the next evening.

Drawing Pathos from unfocused emotion can be difficult. Feelings are sometimes impure, tinged by conflicting drives, and a wraith's sympathy with these mongrel emotions is not always complete. However, when a wraith is directly involved in following the dictates of her Passion, she can draw upon extraordinary reserves of strength. In cases where the wraith is literally pursuing one of her Passions (in the judgment of the Narrator), an Extended Simple Test allows the wraith to continue to retest and gain Pathos if she ties at any point.

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Some sample emotions that can serve as the base of Passions include love, anger, faith, hope, envy, lust, pride, sorrow, pain and greed.

Some examples of Passions are:

- **Anger:** Fight injustice
Avenge your death
Punish all spousal abusers
Overthrow a corrupt politician
Fight the criminal syndicate that destroyed your neighborhood
- **Love:** Find a new owner for a cherished item
Protect your daughter
Declare a love that you couldn't before
Help your true love find someone else
- **Greed:** Possess a particular valuable item
Serve the Hierarchy for payment
Protect the family fortune
- **Lust:** Experience gratification that you never knew in life
Live vicariously through those you knew before dying
- **Faith:** Become a martyr for a cause you know is right
Foster belief in a higher power
Help your family to keep their faith
- **Hope:** Protect the oppressed
Protect a homeless shelter
Prevent a loved one from committing suicide
- **Sorrow:** Make your Haunt a place of remorse
Give grief to your enemy

The wraith will not always be able to work specifically toward her purposes as stated in her Passions. After all, although she can fight to maintain her ties to her former life, she has other concerns: the stability of her Circle, politics in her Necropolis, her Shadow's encroachments and so on. If a wraith neglects a Passion for too long, however, at Storyteller discretion it can become Numbed, and require a Willpower Trait and a Pathos point to be reactivated. Passions that remain Numbed for three consecutive game sessions are considered to have faded. The Passion is stricken from the character sheet, and the character herself falls into a Harrowing.

In addition, purposes are sometimes completed. If a wraith seeks to protect her mortal lover and he dies, she will no longer be able to fulfill that Passion. At this point, she would also fall into a Harrowing.

Faded Passions can only be replaced at Storyteller discretion. A wraith who loses her last Passion, however, falls into the Void, and the character is removed from play.

Pathos

Pathos is pure emotional energy, harvested by wraiths from their Passions and used to fuel their existences. Pathos powers Arcanoi, heals Corpus damage, and serves as sustenance to wraiths.

A wraith's Pathos Pool often fluctuates, depending on how often he makes use of his Arcanoi or needs to heal. It is entirely possible for a wraith to find himself completely out of Pathos; this does not induce a Harrowing, but will leave him more or less defenseless until he is able to exercise one or more of his Passions.

All wraiths regain one point of Pathos at the beginning of each night of gameplay.

Fetters

Fetters are material objects binding a wraith to the Skinlands. They are, in fact, part of what makes a lost soul a wraith. Each Fetter represents something, someone or someplace that was important to the wraith in life. The shot glass with your name on it, kept behind the counter at your favorite bar, may be a Fetter, but it represents more than might be immediately apparent; perhaps you spent much of your time drinking from that very glass, ignoring your family. Take great care in choosing your Fetters, for they can provide a wealth of information about your character as well as a myriad of ideas for potential plots.

A wraith starts off with four Fetters. During character creation he should describe exactly what each is and what it means to him. This list should then be turned over to the Storyteller. The list of character Fetters in a game should always be accessible to all Narrators and Storytellers; you never know when a Monitor might be on the loose.

Fetter are what anchor a wraith to the Skinlands. If any of his Fetters is destroyed, the wraith is Harrowed. Objects that are Fetters should be marked as such, characters who are Fetters should be notified of such, and should either be killed/destroyed, a Narrator must be notified immediately. It is then that Narrator's responsibility to find the character connected to the Fetter and lead him to a Harrowing.

A wraith can use his Fetters to heal and to aid in his crossing over the Shroud. The contest necessary to cross the Shroud has its difficulty reduced by three in the vicinity of a wraith's Fetter.

Chapter Four: Characteristics

In addition, wraiths can use their Fetters to heal. A wraith seeking to heal aggravated damage can slip inside a Fetter and Slumber — essentially hibernate — for two hours of gameplay by going to a Narrator and announcing his intention. During this time the wraith is unconscious and cannot act, and it is recommended that the player spend those two hours Shadowguiding or helping to create Harrowings. At the end of the Slumber, the wraith makes an Extended Static Challenge to see if he recovers his Corpus. A wraith can regain no more than three levels of Corpus through a single Slumber.

If all a wraith's Fetters are destroyed, he can no longer visit the Shadowlands for extended periods of time. He may remain in the Shadowlands for a number of minutes equal to his Physical Trait rating at a time.

Willpower

Willpower gives a character the extra strength to overcome obstacles and to succeed where others would surrender and fail. Each character begins the game with a number of Willpower Traits. These Willpower Traits can be used for almost anything that the player deems important (and that a Narrator deems acceptable). For example:

- Willpower can be used to power certain Arcanoi.
- Willpower Traits can be expended to block or resist the actions of the Shadow.
- A Willpower Trait can be spent to modify a single aspect of a Harrowing.
- Willpower allows a character to replenish all lost Traits in any one category: Physical, Social or Mental.
- A Willpower Trait can be expended to negate the effects of any one Mental or Social Challenge.

Once a Willpower Trait has been used, it is gone until the end of the story. At this time, the character regains all Willpower used during the course of the story.



Chapter Five: Rules

And who can resist such enchantment, even with the knowledge that it is really a secret evil which gilds our world with wonders, while this same evil may ultimately ruin both those wonders and our world.

— Thomas Ligotti, "The Music of the Moon"



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 imperative part of any game; they define what can and cannot be done. Without them, there would be chaos — in effect, there would be no limits. Your limitations and parameters help define who you are and give you a sense of accomplishment when you manage to triumph over them, and 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's Theatre* works as it does in real life. It moves forward inexorably and relentlessly. For the most part, everything in *Oblivion* 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 only rarely drop character when interacting with other players. Do-

ing so ruins the atmosphere for everyone involved. Challenges may be talked through, but if a player needs to take a break, he should inform a Narrator. Furthermore, that player should not interact with any of the other players while out of character. Not knowing if you're dealing with Desmond the Deathlord or your buddy Frank weakens the shared illusion of the game.

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, "Resume." Time-outs should be kept to a minimum, since they interrupt the flow of a story.

Challenges

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 simply and quickly. It doesn't matter whether this sort of conflict is a firefight or a test of will. This face-off is called a challenge. The system for resolving challenges in **Oblivion** is simple, and 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.

Finally, 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 Theatre** system. By combining **The Oblivion** with other games in the series, players can have wraiths interact with vampires, werewolves, mortals and other types of characters. This system of challenges is also included in **Masquerade Second Edition** and **Apocalypse**.

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 described in Chapters Three and Four. 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 with 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 or attacking with a sword, 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 unless it is stated otherwise in the rules concerning specific situations. 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.

Example of Play

Alexander, a Legionnaire on patrol, is attacking Tanith, a well-known Renegade leader. Alexander begins his attack by bidding *Brutal*. ("I Brutally grab you by your neck and dig my fingers into the Corpus of your face!") This is an appropriate Trait, since he is trying to cause serious damage to her.) Tanith bids the Trait *Quick*. ("I Quickly try to evade your grasp and make a run for the nearest exit." She wishes to dodge his attack in order to make a break so she will have a chance to escape capture.) The conditions for victory have been established: if Alexander wins, he grabs hold of Tanith's neck and begins to perform impromptu reconstructive surgery; if Tanith wins, she gets a head start on running away. The two now go to the test.

Testing

Once both parties involved in a challenge have bid a Trait, they immediately go to a test. The test itself is not what you may think — the outcome is random, 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 bid. 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. There are two possible results: Somebody wins, or there's 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 fewer 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, counts toward this total. The trick to the declaration is that you may lie about the number of Traits you possess, but only by declaring fewer Traits than you actually possess — 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 Trait(s) they bid.

Example of Play

Alexander and Tanith now go to a test. They both do Rock-Paper-Scissors. They both choose Paper, so they tie. They now compare Traits. Alexander, who is the attacker, must decide how many of his seven Traits he wants to declare. He is rather confident in himself and his abilities, so he declares all seven. Tanith, who is a leader and not a fighter, has only five Physical Traits. She loses the test. Tanith loses her Trait she bid, *Quick*, and will subtract one Temporary Corpus Level. Furthermore, Tanith will not escape, and Alexander now has a firm grip on her face. Things are starting to look grim for Tanith.

Incidentally, certain advanced powers allow some characters to use gestures other than Rock, Paper or Scissors. Before players 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 the three hand gestures. "Rock" is just a basic fist. "Paper" is just a flat hand. "Scissors" is represented by sticking out two fingers spread apart from each other. You then compare the two gestures to determine the winner. Rock crushes Scissors. Scissors cuts Paper. Paper covers Rock. Identical signs indicate a tie.

Adjudication

If you have any questions or arguments 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 it is at all possible. If you don't know the exact correct application of a certain rule, it's usually better to wing it rather than interrupt the flow of the story by hunting down a Narrator. Remember, while you're out of character looking for help, other characters can't contact you and do things that they need to do, and the entire effect can snowball. 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 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 your opponent does indeed possess the Negative Trait, he is then forced to bid an additional Trait, although you must still only risk your one Trait as usual. If

he does not possess that Negative Trait, you must risk an additional Trait. (Pathos points cannot be used to substitute for Physical Traits in this instance.) You may integrate as many Negative Traits as you wish, one by one, 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 effect works in reverse, however, and will favor your opponent if you do not have additional Traits remaining to match incorrect Negative Trait guesses.

Example of Play

Raellyn is using her Keening Arcanos, specifically *Ballad*, and challenging Max, an enforcer for a local Heretic cult, in a Social Challenge. She bids her Trait *Eloquent* ("My Eloquent singing brings tears of guilt to your eyes as you think of all the so-called blasphemers you've sentenced to Oblivion."), and he responds with *Intimidating* ("I am too Intimidating for you to look at without running away, let alone singing without stammering."). Raellyn then suggests that he is *Naive* ("You are possibly Naive, and are easily swayed with my beautiful and moving song."). However, Max does not possess this Negative Trait ("I'm not Naive, I'm just amazed and angered that you would make such a feeble attempt to sway my emotions."). Therefore Raellyn would have to have to risk an additional Social Trait, like *Commanding* ("My voice is also incredibly Commanding, and makes you think about all that you have done in your unlife.") if she wished to press the challenge further.

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 older wraiths and Gaunts (who often have considerably more Traits than younger opponents) may prevail in a challenge, even if they lose the initial test. An ancient Gaunt with 18 Physical Traits should be able to crush an *Enfant* 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 at least double the number of Traits your opponent does in the appropriate category, you may then attempt another test. As with a tie, you can 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

Bilestoad, a twisted and ancient Nephwrack (a non-player character usually played by a Narrator), has decided to crush Lucas, an *Enfant* with little experience, thereby forcing him into a Harrowing. A test was called, and Bilestoad lost. At this point, Bilestoad, confident of his abilities, calls for an overbid. The Nephwrack has been Oblivion's servant for quite a while and has 13 Physical Traits, and he guesses that this new wraith probably doesn't have quite so many. (He's right; the unfortunate Lucas has only 5.)

Having made this assessment, Bilestoad risks an additional Trait *Relentless*. ("I will never give up as I Relentlessly try to rend your Corpus into bite-sized chunks.") They do a second test, and this time they tie. Bilestoad clearly has more Traits and therefore wins. At the end of this challenge, Bilestoad loses the initial Trait he bid from the first test. However, because he overbid, he has won the challenge, and is able to tear into Lucas' Corpus. Lucas also loses the initial Trait he bid because Bilestoad won the second test.

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 cross the Shroud. 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

Jonah wants to escape from the Tempest because a ravening pack of Spectres is hot on his trail. As Jonah is using his Argos Arcanos (specifically Tempest Threshold), this entails a Physical Challenge. Jonah has six Physical Traits to bid, but since he is under a bit of pressure and may not be thinking quite clearly, the Narrator decides to make him have to win two challenges against the barrier between the Tempest and the Shadowlands. Jonah does his first Static Challenge with the Narrator and wins, finding as good a place as any to try to open a Nihil. Then, with the pack closing in, he makes his second and hopefully final test against the Narrator, and luckily wins this one as well. He opens a Nihil from the inside and throws himself quickly through it, hearing it close behind him as the discordant baying of the Spectres fades away.

Sometimes Narrators may leave notes on objects, such as books and doors. These notes indicate the type of challenge that must be won for something to occur (such as understanding the contents of a book, opening a door, or identifying an artifact). With experience, you may learn how difficult it is to open a locked door. However, difficulty ratings can be as variable as your character's Demeanor.

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 Arcanoi. 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.

Abilities

While you can easily and quickly execute many complex actions in *Oblivion* with simple challenges, this is not always the case. Sometimes Abilities — the skills, talents and knowledges that characters use — are necessary.

An Ability allows your character to engage in, if not excel at, a particular type of activity that she would not normally be able to attempt. Performing such a task often involves risking Traits. If the character is defeated in the challenge, she may choose to temporarily sacrifice a level in the appropriate Ability to call for a retest. While any Traits risked are lost regardless, it is still possible to win the challenge. An Ability lost in this manner is recovered at the beginning of the next session. If your character loses all her levels in a particular Ability in this manner, she may not use that Ability again until she recovers at least one level (i.e., at the next game session).

Often a challenge of one sort or another accompanies the use of Abilities. The Narrator choreographs some of these challenges, not only assigning the relative difficulty of the challenge in Traits but also actually performing the test with you. The Narrator also sets a difficulty against which the Static Challenge is performed; interprets the amount of time required to attempt the skill; and possibly even asks that you pretend to perform the action in question, or that you drop out of play for the duration of the task.

Also, you can use other Abilities, such as Subterfuge or Melee, directly against another player. This sort of usage rarely requires the assistance of a Narrator. Note that you may choose Abilities multiple times to represent a high degree of expertise in that skill or in a broad number of related fields, such as with Performance, Occult and Linguistics.

Health

A character in *Oblivion* has 10 Health Levels, which can be taken away depending upon what sort of damage she takes and what state of being she was in when injured.

Wraiths and Health

Unlike other dwellers in the World of Darkness, wraiths have two measures of their health, or Corpus. These are called Permanent and Temporary Corpus. Temporary Corpus is how healthy the wraith is currently, while Permanent Corpus indicates the wraith's maximum number of Corpus Levels. A wraith's Temporary Corpus can never exceed her Permanent; if she has seven levels of Permanent Corpus, she

can never have more than seven levels of Temporary, no matter how much Pathos she has available to heal with.

When a wraith takes damage from combat or interference from the Skinlands, it is Temporary Corpus that is marked off. If a wraith loses all of her Temporary Corpus, she falls into a Harrowing (See Chapter Six for more details on Harrowings). During the Harrowing, it is possible for a wraith to lose Permanent Corpus instead. However, at no other time can a wraith lose Permanent Corpus.

Each **Oblivion** character begins with 10 Permanent and 10 Temporary Corpus. Over the course of play Temporary Corpus will go up and down, while Permanent Corpus will probably slowly decrease. There is no way known to replace Permanent Corpus once it is lost, though there are rumors that certain less scrupulous Usurers and Masquers have a few leads....

Wraiths and Destruction

It is nearly impossible to "kill" wraiths. The most horrific damage from the Skinlands barely affects them. The most devastating blows can, at worst, send them into Harrowings, which, while dangerous, are not usually fatal. The more telling dangers to wraiths come from less traditional sources: the Shadow, Spectres' corrupting powers, loss of Fetters or avoidance of Passions, soulforging or soulshaping, but even a thorough thrashing in hand-to-hand combat will rarely damage your wraith significantly or permanently.

With that in mind, you should feel free to take a few more chances and do a few more daring things with your wraith. That is not to say that there are no perils in the Shadowlands — screw up once, and you just might find yourself as a lawn chair — but that physical prowess is far less important in the Underworld than it might be somewhere else. The strongest Legionnaire might not be able to stand up to the mildest blandishments of his Shadow, while a 98-lb. weakling of a Heretic might find the strength of character to become a legendary Pardoner.

States of Being

Wraiths have different states of Corpus, reflecting how solid they are in the Skinlands or the Shadowlands. These states are:

- **Material** — When the wraith is solid in the Skinlands through the use of the Embody Arcanos. This allows the wraith to take damage as if she were a physical being.
- **Corporeal** — The normal status of any wraith, intangible to the living but solid to the Restless.
- **Incorporeal** — When a wraith is damaged by an object in the Skinlands, and her form becomes misty and indistinct with regards to the lands of the living. Incorporeal wraiths can still be touched and damaged by other Shadowlands objects and denizens.
- **Destruction** — When a wraith loses all of her Corpus, she is immediately drawn into the Tempest and pulled into a Harrowing.

Substantiality and Going Incorporeal

Wraiths are normally Corporeal as regards both the Skinlands and Shadowlands. When an object in the Skinlands impacts a wraith with enough energy to hurt (i.e.,

what is called "The Rule of Ouch"), then the wraith loses one level of Corpus and becomes Incorporeal. A wraith touching a wall or having a leaf blown through where he's standing is not enough to cause Corpus loss and Incorporeality; a bullet or a slammed door is. In addition, a wraith can voluntarily surrender a level of Corpus to go Incorporeal (by running through a wall, for example).

No matter how severe the impact from the Skinlands, however, the wraith never takes more than a single level of Temporary Corpus damage before going Incorporeal. An Incorporeal wraith cannot be affected or touched by anything physical in the Skinlands. He can, however, be touched and damaged normally by wraiths or objects in the rest of the Underworld; a Stygian steel sword will cut a wraith regardless of if he is Corporeal or Incorporeal.

Wraiths are considered default to Corporeal status. When a wraith goes Incorporeal, he must indicate his altered status by making the gesture indicating his new status. Specifically, this consists of clenching the left fist and placing it at the right shoulder. The Narrator determines exactly how long a wraith remains Incorporeal. Usually the state lasts anywhere from 30 seconds up to three minutes.

Incorporeality and Stuff

When a wraith goes Incorporeal, everything that he is carrying or holding becomes Incorporeal along with him. If, for example, he is holding a relic handgun, the gun goes Incorporeal with him as he runs through a wall, but if he then turns around and shoots at his pursuers, each bullet will become Corporeal as soon as it leaves the barrel of the Incorporeal gun. If the pursuers have also passed through the wall at this point, then the bullets stand a normal chance of hitting them. However, if the Skinlands wall still stands between pursuers and pursued, then the bullets will impact with the wall, instantly go Incorporeal, lose their single level of Corpus (each bullet has one Corpus Level), and dissolve harmlessly into the Tempest.

Aggravated Damage in the Underworld

Certain creatures or objects damage wraiths so severely that the wounds they inflict cannot be healed either normally or easily. These injuries, called aggravated wounds, come from specific sources:

- Weapons made from Stygian steel.
- The claws, teeth and other appendages of Spectres.
- The claws, teeth of vampires, werewolves and other supernatural creatures (assuming they enter the Deadlands, or the target wraith is Embodied).
- The rare substance known as barrow-flame.
- Soulfire crystals (crystalized Pathos).
- The effects of certain Arcanoi's arts (specifically Outrage and Usury).

The Narrator may also choose to declare a particular nasty injury to be aggravated damage.

Healing

Wraiths can regain one lost point of Temporary Corpus points by expending a point of Pathos. The healing process takes three minutes, though at Narrator discretion this time can be increased or decreased. Certain Arcanoi can also aid in the

healing process. Usury in particular can be used to help restore a wraith's Corpus by allowing wraiths to use Pathos from others in order to heal.

Healing aggravated damage costs three Pathos points and one day per level. The Moliate Arcanos (specifically the art called Sculpt) also allows a wraith to heal himself of aggravated damage; for more information on this, see Chapter Four.

Wraiths with Fetters also have the option of Slumber when it comes to healing. A Slumbering wraith, if she spends eight uninterrupted hours in her Fetter, may regain as many Corpus Levels of non-aggravated damage as the Narrator thinks appropriate. This usually amounts to two or three levels, but more or less can be handed out as a Narrator deems appropriate. Unless the rest of the characters involved in the game are also Slumbering, the player whose wraith is Slumbering must sit out of game to represent her time in her Fetter. However, this does not mean that she must leave the game. Instead, she can, if she and the Narrator choose, still be active in the game by playing a nonplayer character or helping out the Narrator with Storytelling.

A Note on Slumbering

When a wraith Slumbers, she actually sinks into her Fetter and is no longer physically "present," even in the Underworld. To a passing wraith, the Fetter will betray no trace of housing a Slumbering wraith. This works for Fetters that are objects, places or people, and a wraith can only be forced out of a Fetter by the application of certain specialized Arcanos arts. Otherwise, the only way a wraith can be forced to leave a Fetter involuntarily is through damage of some sort to the Fetter itself.

Willpower

Willpower gives a character the extra strength to overcome obstacles and to succeed where others would surrender and fail. Each character begins the game with a number of Willpower Traits. These Willpower Traits can be used for almost anything that the player deems important (and that a Narrator deems acceptable). For example:

- Willpower can be used to power certain Arcanoi.
- Willpower Traits can be expended to block or resist the actions of the Shadow.
- A Willpower Trait can be spent to modify a single aspect of a Harrowing.
- Willpower allows a character to replenish all lost Traits in any one category:

Physical, Social or Mental.

- A Willpower Trait can be expended to negate the effects of any one Mental or Social Challenge.

Once a Willpower Trait has been used, it is gone until the end of the story. At this time, the character regains all Willpower used during the course of the story.

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. Multi-party challenges can be confusing, but if you follow these simple guidelines, you shouldn't have much

difficulty. These rules are most useful in combat situations, 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 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 the 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 an Arcanoi or some other ability which is considered to be always active. He cannot respond with the use of Arcanoi that are not active or another Ability until after the first challenge has been completed. Social and Mental Challenges work the same way.

Fair Escape



Fair Escape is a simple rule that allows players to escape from potentially deadly situations without actually vaulting over tables or charging headlong out of a room, possibly causing harm to themselves or others. This rule also allows players to avoid combat without going through cumbersome challenges to see if they can "get away."

When you use this rule, you can call "Fair Escape" anytime you see another player approaching with whom you do not wish to interact. Once you call "Fair Escape," you may leave

the area without being pursued. There are several guidelines which must be followed when using this rule, however:

- You may not use the Fair Escape rule if the person approaching is nearby (within conversational distance). In such cases, you must initiate a challenge. Use

common sense in places where there is a great deal of noise and conversational distance is reduced to a minimum (e.g., a nightclub).

- Situations which involve an ambush (all exits are blocked, or the target is surrounded) may negate the use of Fair Escape. Again, use common sense.
- A character with Argos (Enshroud) may employ Fair Escape at any time before a challenge has been initiated. Characters with sufficient knowledge of Argos may also use Fair Escape to make a getaway into the Tempest.

These guidelines are intended to quicken play, not to obstruct it. Always try to use common sense when employing Fair Escape.

Additional Systems



This section discusses some of the additional rules and complications that sometimes come into play in *Oblivion*. It also describes some different systems for resolving character interactions. However, this is more of a set of options than of rules. There is nothing contained in the next several pages that you *need* to know, only things that you might *want* to know. These additional systems can add more depth and detail to your game, or you can just ignore them and run with the basics.

Combat



The basic challenge system used in *Oblivion* has already been presented earlier in the chapter. This section contains a few basic modifications to the combat system and elaboration on it.

Combat is the usual intent behind Physical Challenges. Essentially, combat involves two characters in physical conflict. The players agree what the outcome of the challenge will be, each player bids an appropriate Trait, and a test is resolved to determine the victor. The following rules allow for variations on those basic rules, such as situations using surprise or weapons.

The agreed outcome of a Physical Challenge usually involves the loser being injured. This is not, however, the only possible result. Wraiths can attempt to disarm, immobilize, pin, trip, or arm wrestle each other without causing actual Corpus damage. The only necessity is that both participants agree what the outcome of the challenge will be, depending upon who wins it. Bear in mind that the desired results of a combat challenge can be different for both participants, particularly if only one party is actually interested in fighting. For example, a hungry Spectre may wish to attack a lost wraith who has no clue as to his whereabouts and who simply wishes to escape. The two do a Physical Challenge, and in doing so set the stakes: The Spectre wishes to claw at the wraith, while the wraith wants to flee as quickly as possible. If the Spectre wins, the wraith's flight has been checked by the Shadow-Eaten's assault. If the wraith wins, the Spectre's strike misses and the wraith escapes.

It falls to players to police themselves so that the outcomes of challenges are in keeping with the rest of the game. Initiating a challenge with "I Brutally attempt to

rip the head off your Corpus, sending the rest of you down into a Harrowing while I keep your wraithly skull as a souvenir," is excessive, and any player who does so should be called on his overenthusiasm immediately.

Excessive Sneakiness

Just because what's going on is devious doesn't mean that you should be. It is considered highly improper to sneak around whispering challenges under your breath, just to try to get an element of surprise. Deliberately skulking around until your target is at a water fountain or doing something else that will hamper the player's ability to respond to your challenge is also against the spirit of the rules. Remember, if you use these dirty tricks on someone, someone else is probably going to turn around and use them on you.

Surprise

If a player does not respond within three seconds of the declaration of a Physical Challenge, the player is considered surprised. By not responding, he is demonstrating that he is not fully prepared for what's coming. Sometimes a player is busy with another activity, doesn't hear a challenge, or is just playing a character who isn't prepared for the attack (a victim of a sneak attack, or perhaps just an exceedingly clueless wraith). Responding to an attack is defined by answering the attacker's Challenge in kind; saying, "Wait a minute, I'll be with you as soon as I'm done over here," doesn't qualify, unfortunately. On the other hand, any challenge issued must be both coherent and audible, and cannot be made from excessive distance or in such a way that the environment of the game itself prevents the challenge from being heard clearly.

Surprise simply means that the only a surprised defender can be harmed by the outcome of the first challenge in a fight. The challenger, fully aware of what's going on, cannot be harmed during a challenge when she has surprise. In other words, even if the defender wins a challenge when she is surprised, all she does is prevent herself from taking damage. The attacker merely has her assault stymied and does not take any Corpus damage. Furthermore, if the challenger loses the test, by risking another Trait she can call for a second challenge. With this second challenge, however, play reverts to the usual mode, and winners and losers are determined as normal.

Surprise is only in effect for the first challenge of a conflict; all further challenges are resolved normally.

Weapons

No real weapons are ever allowed in *Mind's Eye Theatre* games, for obvious reasons. Even nonfunctional props are forbidden with no ifs, ands or buts. The *Mind's Eye Theatre* system does not use props of any kind, nor are players required (or allowed) even to touch one another. Weapons are purely an abstraction in this game. Weapon cards, which display the facts and statistics of a particular weapon, should be used instead of any props that even vaguely resemble the real thing. All of the weapon's in-game statistics should be written on the card. As for the rest, imagination will have to suffice. If you can imagine yourself to be an avenging wraith, you certainly should have no trouble imagining a soulsteel dagger or a relic pistol in your hand.

A weapon gives its wielder extra Traits. Sometimes this advantage is offset by a disadvantage in terms of a Negative Trait. Each weapon has one to three extra Traits; these may be used in any challenge in which the weapon is employed. These Traits *cannot* be used in place of your Traits when placing your initial bid. Instead, they add to your total when comparing Traits, such as in case of a tie during a test or an overbid. In addition, some weapons have special abilities that can be employed. The damage a weapon inflicts is limited only by mutual agreement, although it is generally assumed that an injury incurred from a blow reduces the target's Temporary Corpus by a single level.

Disadvantages are weaknesses inherent to the weapon. These can be used by the wielder's opponent in precisely the same way as Negative Traits are used against an individual. The weapon's Negative Traits can only be used against the wielder of that weapon, even in the middle of a mob scene. Furthermore, Negative Traits for a weapon must be appropriate to the situation. Trying to use a relic pistol's Negative Trait of *Loud* won't work if your assailant has acquired a relic silencer.

If a Negative Trait of your weapon is named by your opponent, and that Trait applies to the situation, you suffer a one Trait penalty (i.e., you are required to risk an additional Trait). If your opponent calls out a Negative Trait of your weapon that doesn't apply to the situation, he takes a one Trait penalty instead.

Statistics for weapons are written on cards and carried along with your character sheet. Weapon cards specify the capacities of each weapon. Weapon cards allow other players to see that you actually possess a weapon — when you have a weapon card in your hand, you are considered to be holding the weapon. Each weapon has a concealability rating. If the weapon is not concealable, you must display that card at all times. Plus, weapons cards must be carried in a manner consistent with the weapon they represent. Soulforged claymores can't be pulled out of pockets, and relic submachine guns don't fit up a sleeve. Instead, cards for non-concealable weapons must be kept in hand at all times or, optionally, pinned to your shirt (which indicates that the weapon is slung over your shoulder).

Some weapons have special abilities, such as causing extra levels of damage or affecting more than one target. If a weapon has this sort of ability, the exact details of how it functions will be written on the weapon card.

Bidding Traits with Weapons

During a normal hand-to-hand fight, you bid your Physical Traits against your opponent's. However, if you are using the Firearms Ability, you use Mental Traits instead. If your opponent is also using a firearm, he will bid Mental Traits as well. If your opponent is not using a firearm and is merely trying to dodge, then you use Mental Traits to attack, while she uses her Physical Traits to dodge. This is one of the few instances when Traits from different Attributes will be used against one another.

Ranged Combat

Many weapons allow you to stand at a distance from a target and engage him in combat. In such situations, you still go over to the target player (after shouting "Bang!") and engage in a challenge.

If you have surprised your opponent, even if you lose the first test, you have the option of calling for a second test. Once the second challenge is called, play resumes

Weapon Examples

- **Knife** — This easily concealed weapon is very common in both relic and Artifact form.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: Short

Concealability: Pocket

- **Club** — This can be anything from a chair leg to a length of pipe.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: Clumsy

Concealability: Jacket

- **Broken Bottle** — A good example of a weapon made from scratch. Often relics of this type are found near bars, restaurants and college campuses.

Concealability: Jacket

Bonus Traits: 1

Negative Traits: Fragile

- **Sword** — This long, edged blade is nearly impossible to conceal. Most are soulforged, as opposed to found.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Heavy

Concealability: Trenchcoat

- **Scythe** — Wickedly curved and mounted on a long wooden shaft, a scythe is the weapon of choice of Ferrymen. In the right hands it can be deadly.

Bonus Traits: 4

Negative Traits: Clumsy

Concealability: Not applicable

- **Crossbow** — Ranged weapons with a great deal of shocking power, crossbows have no shortage of ammunition in the Underworld

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: Slow

Concealability: Trenchcoat

Special Ability: A crossbow may not be used in consecutive challenges during a combat. Instead, the crossbow must be alternately fired and reloaded.

- **Pistol** — This covers any sort of handgun. Relic guns are relatively common, but in the Shadowlands ammunition is relatively rare.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: Loud

Concealability: Pocket

- **Rifle** — This type of weapon is impossible to conceal, and its usability also suffers from the ammo shortage in the Underworld.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Loud

Concealability: None

Weapon Examples Continued

- **Shotgun** — This powerful weapon fires a spray of pellets, making targets easy to hit. On the other hand, shotgun cartridges are extraordinarily rare on the other side of the Shroud.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Loud

Concealability: Trenchcoat

Special Ability: A shotgun may affect up to three targets if they are standing next to each other and are further than 10 feet from the person firing the shotgun. This is resolved with a single challenge against a group. The attacker's Traits are risked against the entire group. Up to three separate tests are performed (one test for each target). In this fashion, it is possible to wound up to three opponents simultaneously in a single challenge. The Trait risked by the attacker is used against all three opponents. If any of the three opponents win, the attacker loses that Trait. However, that Trait still applies to all three tests within that group challenge. Thus, a character can challenge up to three opponents while only risking one Trait with this weapon. Also, a shotgun can cause two Health Levels of damage to a single target standing within five feet.

- **Submachine Gun** — Though difficult to conceal, this weapon is very powerful.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Loud

Concealability: Jacket

Special Ability: A submachine gun may affect up to five targets if they're standing immediately next to each other and are further than 10 feet from the person firing the submachine gun. This is resolved with a single challenge against a group (as described under the section on shotguns).

as normal. Your target is considered surprised for the first attack, and if he has no ranged weapon with which to return fire, he is considered "surprised" for as long as you can attack him without facing resistance. In other words, until you can close the distance to your assailant and attack hand-to-hand, if you win a challenge, your attacker will take no damage. If he's blazing away with a semi-automatic from a rooftop across the way, odds are your sword isn't going to help you much.

If your target is aware of you before you make your initial ranged attack and has a ranged weapon of his own, he is not considered surprised for your first attack. He may shoot back right away, and your challenges are resolved as stated below.

After your first shot is fired (the first challenge is resolved), your target may attempt to return fire (assuming he is armed). The loser of a firefight challenge loses a Health Level.

If the defender is unarmed, he may declare his victory condition as escape (providing he is not cornered). If the defender wins the challenge, the attacker is still unharmed, but his target has hidden from view and must be searched out before the attack can be pressed. In instances such as this, a new challenge cannot be made for at least five minutes.

Cover

Fighting with hand-to-hand weapons — clubs, knives or swords — requires that combatants be within reach of each other. Fighting with ranged weapons allows combatants to stand apart; participants can therefore “dive for cover.” When you resolve each ranged combat challenge, if it is applicable you can present one Trait of cover to add to your total number of Traits. These cover Traits may not be used for bidding, but they do add to your total if Traits are compared. This cover can take the form of whatever obstacles are around and within reach of you (you shouldn't actually dive for them — remember the No Running rule). A Narrator might be required to decide what cover can be found in the vicinity, but if the combatants know the area, they can agree upon what cover is available. In some instances, there may be no cover around, leaving a combatant in the open with only his own defensive Traits.

If cover is extensive, such as the brick wall of a relic warehouse, perhaps it may be worth more than one Trait's worth of cover. The number of Traits available for cover is left for challengers to agree, or for a Narrator to decree. Hiding behind a car, for example, might be worth two cover Traits, while hiding behind a thin wall might only count as one. If one combatant goes completely to ground — he cannot be seen at all and is thoroughly protected — he is considered impossible to hit. The attacker must change his position in order to get another clear shot.

Wraiths also have the ability to go Incorporeal, which can greatly change the way a firefight is played out. If there is Skinlands cover around for a wraith to hide behind, she can use that to her advantage. If she is willing to lose a Corpus Level and go Incorporeal, she can poke her head and weapon hand through the wall while keeping most of her Corpus in relative safety. This sort of cover adds another Trait for comparison purposes, though that Trait cannot be used for bidding.



Basic Wraith Abilities



Being one of the Restless Dead does have its advantages. Though life may have fled, certain abilities denied mortals are granted to those who walk on the other side of the Shroud. These abilities that all wraiths possess are:

- **Deathsight** — Wraiths see the taint of death and Oblivion everywhere they look. Oblivion's influence colors everything in the Shadowlands; a new building shows signs of filth and mild disrepair, statues appear chipped and crumbling, and people who are close to death have a corpse-like pallor. Wraiths can use this ability to gain insight into an object's weak points or a living person's general health. A Static Mental Challenge will indicate how healthy or sturdy a person or object is to a wraith using this power.

- **Lifesight** — Wraiths are also able to see the auras of living (and certain unliving) things. This ability, when exercised properly, allows a wraith to gauge the mood, identity and level of hostility of the owner of the aura being observed. By winning a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty equal to the target's number of Mental Traits, you may demand that the target answer one of the following sorts of questions honestly: "What is your Demeanor?", "What is your current emotional state (brief summary)?", "Was the last thing you said a lie?", or "What sort of creature are you?" (human, Kindred, Garou, mage, spirit, faerie, mummy, etc.). This ability cannot be used consecutively on the same target.

- **Sharpened Senses** — All wraiths are hypersensitive to sensory input. A wraith can hear a whisper a block away or read a license plate off a speeding car with ease. At Narrator discretion, a wraith can make a Static Mental Challenge to pick up a visual, aural or olfactory detail that might otherwise have been missed. However, the drawback to this ability is that loud noises or bright lights can startle or daze wraiths temporarily, so that if the Static Challenge is failed, the wraith is considered to be stunned by the overload. A stunned wraith will be unable to move or act for the next minute, though she will remain Corporeal unless damaged.

Skinlands and Shroud



Most of the time, wraiths will interact with each other. As long as the wraiths who are dealing with each other are on the same plane of existence (i.e., both in Stygia, both in the Tempest, both in the Shadowlands, etc.), interactions take place as normal. Even if a wraith is dealing with a visitor to the Underworld, such as a very lost Garou or mage, things proceed more or less smoothly as long as everyone involved is on the same side of the Shroud.

However, wraiths sometimes need to deal with things in the Skinlands. As the lands of the living are separated from the Deadlands by a membrane of fear and hate called the Shroud, this can be problematic. Reaching through levels of reality is far more difficult than reaching across a table, after all.

Walking Through Walls

In the world of wraiths, walking through walls is a childishly simple proposition. Unfortunately, for players of **Oblivion** things can get a bit more difficult. No matter how talented the roleplayer, odds are she'll have a bit of trouble sliding into the interstices between atoms of solid sheetrock.

With that in mind, it is recommended that Storytellers declare all actual, solid walls in their **Oblivion** game locations to be Underworld construction — relic or Artifact manufacture — which is impermeable to wraiths. Skinlands walls, less solid to the Restless, can be postulated anywhere in the gameplay area, but as for honest-to-goodness real walls, they should remain as impenetrable to characters as they are to players.

Depending upon surroundings and circumstance, the Shroud in a given area can have a rating from 4 to 10. The creepier and more eerie the setting, the lower the Shroud. A deserted mansion at midnight will have a much lower Shroud rating than a used car lot on a sunny afternoon. The local Shroud rating is the difficulty of the Static Mental Challenge that a wraith must succeed at before directly affecting someone or something in the Skinlands with an Arcanos. This affects certain Arcanoi, such as Outrage and Pandemonium, far more than others like Argos and Castigate.

The difficulty of the Static Challenge can be affected by a variety of factors. If the wraith is attempting to affect one of her Fetters directly, she gains an automatic retest, and the Trait risked in the first test is not lost. If the second test is failed, then the Trait is lost.

If the desired effect is in the vicinity of a wraith's Fetters, if she loses the first test, she loses the Mental Trait but can immediately retest. Wraiths who are attempting to operate across the Shroud somewhere other than near their Fetters do not have the option of retesting for five minutes.

Additionally, if a wraith is in a Haunt, she automatically gains a Mental Trait (which can be bid for purposes of crossing the Shroud). Haunts and the local Shroud rating of in-game common areas should be posted prominently. Otherwise, the local Shroud rating always defaults to an 8.

Once the initial success in the challenge has been made, repeated tests need not be made for the duration of the scene. The wraith is considered to have penetrated the Shroud sufficiently not to need to be continually poking and prodding at it.

Embodied wraiths need not make this additional challenge to use Arcanoi or otherwise affect the Skinlands, as they are already across the Shroud.

The Tempest



The Tempest is primarily a travel realm in most games of **Oblivion**. Traveling through the Tempest takes less time than moving through the Shadowlands, though it can be far more dangerous. There are safe routes and shortcuts through the endless storm, but there is also the possibility of Spectre attack, not to mention simply getting lost.

Nihil

Nihils (pronounced NEE-hils) are rips in the fabric of reality between the Shadowlands and the Tempest. Some reach all the way down into the Labyrinth, but most just empty into the storm. Nihils never cross over into the Skinlands, no matter what.

Most Nihils are temporary, opening and closing within a limited period of time. Others are permanent, but these are usually guarded heavily, and with good reason. Nihils allow wraiths without Argos entrance to the Tempest. They also allow wraiths — and Spectres — access to the Shadowlands. From the Shadowlands, Nihils appear as pools of inky blackness on floors, walls or ceilings (and as such should be clearly marked by Narrators). To those in the Tempest, Nihils shine like stars and as such, they are impossible to miss.

Travel Over Short Distances

Assuming that the wraith leading a Circle through the Tempest has sufficient Argos, travel over short distances is simple. (For rules on crossing into and out of the Tempest, see Argos in Chapter Four.) Wraiths who are traveling through the Tempest simply make the hand signal for such travel — hands clasped behind the head — and move to their destination. When they decide to pop out of the Tempest in accordance with the rules of Argos, they simply drop the sign.

Wraiths in the Tempest can't see out into the Shadowlands, and players moving through the storm should bear this in mind. Likewise, wraiths in the Shadowlands cannot see into the Tempest without the Argos ability Tempestpeek.

Wraiths can obtain surprise by popping out of the Tempest at opportune moments. However, where they end up can be something of a crapshoot....

Long Distance Voyages

Traversing long distances in the Tempest is an entirely different matter than simply hopping a few hundred feet. While most **Oblivion** games will take place in a relatively limited geographic area (i.e., the field of play will be a single city's Necropolis) and thus have no need for long distance travel, there will be the occasional wraith wishing to journey to Stygia or beyond.

Wraiths wishing to sojourn an extensive distance in the Tempest must make a Static Mental Challenge once in the storm to locate a Byway. If they succeed, they are on a relatively safe path to their destination, and should be taken out of play by the Narrator for a length of time corresponding to the duration of the trip. During this time, the traveling character is considered to be safe on a Ferryman-patrolled Byway, *unless the Storyteller specifically wishes to create an in-game Byway setting for incidences like Spectre attacks, Byway robberies, etc.*

If a wraith cannot locate a Byway, then she is considered to be lost in the Tempest. By expending a point of Pathos, she can retest and attempt to find a Byway, but once the Pathos is gone, she will simply find herself floating in the Tempest until either a Harbinger or a Spectre comes along.

Wraiths with Argos can navigate the Tempest without the aid of a Byway. By succeeding on a Simple Test, Harbingers can find wraiths who are lost in the Tem-

pest. Harbingers can also travel from point to point within the Tempest in half the time that normal wraiths can.

Time and Distance

Origin	Destination	Time
Shadowlands	Tempest Meetpoint*	15 minutes
Shadowlands	Stygia	30 minutes
Shadowlands	Far Shores	2 hours
Shadowlands	Labyrinth	1 hour
Tempest Meetpoint	Stygia	15 minutes
Tempest Meetpoint	Far Shores	105 minutes
Tempest Meetpoint	Labyrinth	15 minutes
Stygia	Far Shores	90 minutes
Stygia	Labyrinth	30 minutes
Far Shores	Labyrinth	1 hour
Labyrinth**	Shadowlands	90 minutes
Labyrinth	Stygia	45 minutes
Labyrinth	Far Shores	90 minutes
Labyrinth	Tempest Meetpoint	30 minutes

* A Tempest Meetpoint is not a specific place. Rather, it's just an agreed-upon meeting point in the storm known to all participants.

** It's always quicker to head toward the Labyrinth (i.e., with the Entropy gradient in the Tempest) than away from it.

Maelstroms

Most of the time, wraiths dive into the Tempest. Sometimes, however, the Tempest comes crawling out after wraiths. These storms are called Maelstroms, and any wraith caught out in one is in trouble indeed. For every minute a wraith is caught outside in a Maelstrom, he must make a Static Physical Challenge or lose a Corpus Level. Furthermore, Spectres ride the winds of Maelstroms, and may attack wraiths stranded outside.

Things to Do in the Tempest When You're Dead

Being taken out of play while your character cruises a Byway doesn't sound like fun. On the other hand, it does present an opportunity to partake in a whole other aspect of the game: Shadowguiding.

It is recommended that while a wraith is incommunicado in the Tempest, her player take a turn at playing a wandering Shadowguide. This eases the load on Narrators, keeps things interesting for players, and precludes the possibility of having lots of bored Tempest-travelers hanging around out-of-game.

For more information on Shadowguiding, see Chapter Six.

10 minutes before a Maelstrom breaks, any wraith outside can make a Static Mental Challenge to see if she notices the coming storm. Many Necropoli also have early warning systems set up, but knowing that a Maelstrom is coming and being able to reach shelter in time are two very different things.

Experience

I've seen too much

I've heard enough...

A little innocence always seems to go 'long the way

— Cock Robin, "A Little Innocence"



As time passes, people (living or dead) grow and learn. They acquire new skills, talents and knowledge. To reflect that, characters in **Oblivion** receive Experience Traits as they sojourn through the afterlife. The more they see and do, the more they know and know how to do, and Experience Traits reflect this.

While Experience Traits themselves do nothing, they can be traded in for other, more useful characteristics. A sufficient number of Experience Traits can be swapped for new Passions, Fetters, Pathos, Willpower, Traits, Abilities and even Arcanoi. When you want to swap Experience Traits for something else, simply inform your Storyteller what you're buying and how much Experience you're cashing in.

Different characteristics cost different amounts of Experience.

- **New Attribute Trait** — One experience point per Trait.
- **New Ability** — One experience point per Ability Trait.
- **New Arcanos** — Two experience points for Innate Abilities, four for Basic Arcanoi, six for Intermediate Arcanoi and nine for Advanced Arcanoi. Being apprenticed within a Guild (see Guild Status, p. 137) reduces the cost by one for all Arcanos levels except Innate Abilities.
- **New Willpower** — Three experience points per Trait.
- **Buy off Negative Trait** — Two experience points per Trait.
- **New Background** — One experience point per Influence Trait, with Storyteller approval.
- **Pathos** — Two Traits per experience point.

Getting Experience

Characters gain one Experience Trait at the end of each game. In addition, Storytellers have the option of handing out additional Experience to players as well for exceptional roleplaying. Players should always gain at least one Experience Trait unless they really, truly, vehemently prove that they do not deserve it (say, by spending the entire game playing a Spectre who says nothing but, "Børk! Børk! Børk!"). Otherwise, participation is enough to grant some Experience.



Chapter Six: The Shadow

Shadowguiding

Present yet elusive

Passive yet abusive

Tearing out the heart in utter silence

— Peter Himmelman, “Impermanent Things”



Shadowguiding is an essential part of any game of *Oblivion*, for the Shadowguide serves to express the dark urges of a wraith's lower self — the voice inside his head trying to lead the wraith into the Void. The Shadow is violent and selfish, cunning and cowardly — the ultimate combination of the office snitch and the schoolyard bully. It can be quieted but never stilled, and occasionally it can even take over. In that instance, called *Catharsis*, the wraith's true personality is suddenly shunted to the

back of his own mind, imprisoned as the Shadow controls their shared body.

Mechanics and Logistics

Each player, during character creation, will generate a Shadow sheet detailing all of her Shadow's characteristics and Traits, as well as anything pertinent she wishes to add about her Shadow's habits and history. This card should be kept handy at all times during gameplay, as the player will need the card to keep track of her Temporary Angst Traits. Furthermore, there is the possibility of a Shadowguide appearing on the scene and requesting the Shadow sheet; such requests cannot be refused.

In *Oblivion*, Shadowguiding is the responsibility of Narrators. Each player has a sheet detailing her Shadow's Archetype, Thorns, Dark Passions and Angst (Permanent and Temporary). Narrators on Shadow duty simply wander the game, finding wraiths whom they think are due for some attention from their dark side. When a suitable wraith is found, the Narrator taps her on the shoulder and asks her to hand over her Shadow sheet temporarily. Narrators can concentrate on one wraith, or can take the part of the Shadows of an entire group.

While Shadowguiding, a Narrator should generally whisper in the ear of the wraith she is tormenting. No one can hear the Shadow's words except the wraith, so none of the other players should hear them as well. A Shadowguide should never touch the wraith she's dealing with, nor should she address any other players directly, but she can interrupt gameplay to announce the effect of a Thorn.

Shadowguiding Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid annoying the player whose Shadow you control. Shadow the character, not the player.
- Choose your opportunities for temptation carefully. Rather than broadsiding players with general enticements, find out what makes them tick and exploit those weaknesses at appropriate times.
- Don't focus your Shadowguiding too much on one character. There are a lot of wraiths itching for temptation out there; if you spend too much time on one, his player is going to feel persecuted.
- Embarrassing another player is not fun for anyone. Try to avoid abusing your power as Shadowguide to cause discomfort to the player.
- Find out if the player whose Shadow you control has a problem dealing with certain topics or phobias, and avoid those when you are acting as Shadowguide. Do not spoil the game for another player.
- Keep in mind that the Shadow you are playing is a small part of a larger game, and try to keep your actions directed to increasing the drama and enjoyment of the game.
- Remember that the player of a wraith's Psyche controls her character regardless of whether or not the Psyche or the Shadow is dominant. Do not attempt to play someone else's character just because you are playing her Shadow.
- Try to make your Shadow's words and actions entertaining as well as effective. Others are watching what you do.

A Sticky Situation

One of the things that players whose characters are temporarily sidelined can do is Shadowguide. This is a position of great responsibility, and there is always the temptation that players will target characters in direct opposition to their own. Storytellers should not entrust Shadowguiding duties to any player whom they do not trust completely, and any player who abuses the privileges of Shadowguiding should have their character penalized. On the other hand, most, if not all players will be able to handle a stint as Shadowguide with objectivity. Just because a player is Shadowguiding a character in opposition to his doesn't mean that he necessarily has an ulterior motive.



Psychic Torment

The Shadow has only one long-term goal — to be united with Oblivion — but there's the little matter of the wraith's dominant personality and how to deal with that. While the Shadow may seem helpful on occasion, its ultimate goal never wavers. However, there are a variety of stratagems that Shadows will employ (from offering help and then withdrawing it at crucial moments, to promising quiet in exchange for certain actions, to all-out 24/7 war), and not every Shadow wants to get the battle over with quickly. After all, it can be so much more fun to take years to achieve corruption artistically, to send all of the wraiths' friends screaming to the Void first.... With that in mind, Shadow behavior can realistically be seen to run the gamut. However, with the Shadow, there's always a knife behind the smile.

Angst

Stand back, get back

She'll paint your blue skies black

— Simple Minds, "She's A River"

Angst represents the degree of pain and isolation a wraith feels, and it also represents the strength of a wraith's Shadow. Angst comes in two varieties: Temporary and Permanent. Permanent Angst is the hold that the Shadow has gained on the wraith's soul, while Temporary is merely a measure of how much negative energy and emotion the wraith has at the moment. Permanent Angst changes slowly and always increases; Temporary Angst goes up and down during the course of gameplay.

If a Shadow gains 10 Temporary Angst Traits in an evening, it has the option of trading them in for either one permanent Angst Trait or a scene of Catharsis (see below). If a wraith's Permanent Angst Traits ever reach 10, she has given in permanently to her Shadow and succumbed to Oblivion. Such wraiths may become Spectres, but they must vanish into the Tempest for the period of transformation.

Gaining Angst

There are several ways the Shadow can gain Angst:

- **Dark Passions** — If a Shadow is able to manipulate the Psyche or other wraiths into expressing one of its Dark Passions, it can call for a Simple Test. If the Shadow wins, a point of Temporary Angst is acquired. A tie indicates a retest until one side or the other actually wins. This method is only pertinent if the Shadow is actually being guided. Otherwise, Angst can only be gained from Dark Passions during Catharsis. This is done in the same manner in which a wraith gains Pathos from her regular Passions.

- **Arcanoi** — Some Arcanoi give the Shadow Temporary Angst points even if the Psyche is dominant.

Note: If the Shadow is dominant and uses an Arcanos that normally gives the Psyche Temporary Angst, that Angst is lost instead.

- **Roleplaying** — If a player does an excellent job at Catharsis, a Storyteller can (with player permission) give the Shadow a point of Temporary Angst. Such superior roleplaying should also be rewarded with extra Experience.

Losing Angst

There are several ways the Shadow can lose Angst:

- **Castigation** — This Arcanos is designed to weaken the power a Shadow holds over a wraith by reducing the wraith's Angst. Unless a wraith is using the advanced level of Castigate, Defiance, he cannot Castigate himself.

- **Arcanoi** — When the Psyche is dominant, some Arcanoi give a wraith Angst. If the Shadow is dominant, these Arcanoi reduce the Shadow's Angst instead. This does not, however, mean that Pathos or Willpower is gained when the Shadow uses those Arcanoi. Only Angst is affected in this manner.

- **Failing any test** — The Shadow cannot stand to see its own failure. For every two tests lost during Catharsis, the Shadow loses one point of Temporary Angst.

There is no way known to reduce Permanent Angst. Both Temporary and Permanent Angst should be tracked on the Shadow sheet, and it is vital that this be kept current.

Dark Passions

Shadows cannot understand the "higher" emotions like love, hope and joy. Instead, the Shadow only understands the "baser" emotions like hate and anger. Anger and hate can also be a Psyche's Passions, but the Shadow's flavors of rage and loathing tend to be more vicious and less honest.

With this in mind, Shadows have Dark Passions which, when they are in control, they can fulfill to gain Angst. When a Shadowguide is present, the Shadow can also manipulate his Psyche into invoking base emotions that feed his Dark Passions in others, as well. Dark Passions for the Shadow are chosen in the same way that Passions are picked for the wraith, and they are phrased in the same way. Sample Dark Passions include:

- **Hate:** Destroy other wraiths
Betray a friend to the Hierarchy
Burn down the city

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- **Fear:** Hide from all Shadowlands involvement

Declare a love that you couldn't before

Help your true love find someone else

- **Greed:** Steal all of your friends' relics

Turn wraiths over to the forges for coin

Destroy treasures of the living to make them relics

- **Lust:** Get cheap, violent thrills from the living

Manipulate the Quick to satisfy your voyeurism

- **Jealousy:** Prevent your successor from surpassing your achievements

Kill your lover's new flame

Bring down all wraiths of higher Status

- **Despair:** Get others to fall to Oblivion

Convince other wraiths to give up their struggle against the other factions

Talk the Quick into committing suicide

- **Self-Loathing:** Drive yourself into a Harrowing

Self-flagellate in public

Drive away your friends and loved ones

In any scene where a Shadow or Shadowguided wraith evokes a negative emotion in someone else, the player makes an Extended Simple Test to see if her baser side can sympathize with the emotions of those around her. Only a win in a Simple Test will feed the Shadow Angst, though each win gives the Shadow another Trait. If a Narrator is present, she must approve the Angst gain by verifying the sincerity of the emotion felt or invoked. If no Narrator is present, the consent of all players present is necessary for a test against a Dark Passion.

Drawing Angst from inchoate negativity doesn't always work, and it helps if something is focusing the less pleasant emotions. When a wraith (usually in Catharsis, but also when being Shadowguided) is directly involved in following the dictates of his Dark Passion, his dark side can gain strength rapidly. In cases where the wraith is literally pursuing one of her Dark Passions (in the judgment of a Narrator), an Extended Simple Test allows the wraith to continue to retest and gain Angst if she ties at any point. Note that continuing to test for Angst is not optional.

Dark Passions, unlike Passions, do not fade if ignored. Dark Passions can never be Numbed, and cannot be removed by any means.

Catharsis



Whenever a Shadow's Temporary Angst reaches 10 points, the Shadow can attempt to take over the wraith. This is called Catharsis. By expending five of its Temporary Angst points, the wraith's Shadow takes control of their shared Corpus and imprisons the Psyche in a tiny corner of its mind. For all intents and purposes, the Shadow is the wraith at that point, and it peers out at the world through Oblivion-tinted glasses. However, the wraith's player still plays her character, even when

Shadow-ridden. To the wraith's friends, she will probably appear no different than she did before, and they will probably not know that she is in Catharsis. This allows the Shadow to do all sorts of vicious things: start rumors, incite feuds between Circlemates, plan and carry out acts of treachery, let Spectres in the back door, drop favorite relics down Nihilis, and generally cut loose with pure malice.

When the Shadow is dominant, it interacts with the world the only way it knows how. It makes use of the Psyche's Arcanoi, gains more Temporary Angst through its Dark Passions, and uses any of the Thorns it possesses. It cannot cause the Psyche to regain Pathos, nor can it reduce a character's Pathos or Willpower Traits below 1. Usually Catharsis is a threat that the Shadow uses to get its way from time to time. When a Shadow takes control, it can choose to "cut off" a Psyche from his senses, thereby allowing the Shadow perform acts in secret that can later come back to haunt the character.

Catharsis lasts for a single scene or half an hour, whichever comes first. Players are not permitted to end scenes artificially (say, by scurrying out of the room into the hallway for 30 seconds, then returning) just to end Catharsis.

Decisions, Decisions...

The choice of Catharsis or Permanent Angst can be a difficult one. Each point of Permanent Angst brings the Shadow a step closer to his ultimate goal, but that can seem like it's a long way away. Catharsis, on the other hand, offers more immediate gratification, plus the benefits of interfering with other wraiths, but it can delay the Shadow's real purpose. It is recommended, though, that players not lean too heavily to one side or the other when choosing. Taking too much Permanent Angst can force a character's premature retirement, while other wraiths may put you down for the good of the community after too many Catharsis episodes. After all, a wraith whose Shadow is constantly getting loose is a real danger....

Shadow Bids



The Shadow can sometimes help the Psyche out, for its own inimitable reasons. Sometimes it's to lull the wraith into a false sense of security, sometimes it's to get the wraith hooked on help that will be pulled away at the last minute, sometimes it's just plain perversity. In any case, there will be times when the Shadow will offer its assistance. These moments are marked by Shadow Bids.

To make a Shadow Bid, a player substitutes a Temporary Angst Trait for the Trait that ought to be bid at the beginning of any challenge or test. If the wraith loses, the Temporary Angst Trait is lost and the wraith cannot Shadow Bid for another two hours. If the wraith wins or ties, he gains an additional Temporary Angst Trait.

Shadow Characteristics



Shadows are built just as characters are, with characteristics and Traits. Here are explanations of what those characteristics are, as well as expanded definitions of what some of them are. The Shadow, unlike the Psyche, is only a partial personality; hence it has fewer characteristics. Some have already been detailed: Angst and Dark Passions. Others, including the Shadow Archetype and Thorns, are below.

Archetypes

Just as each wraith has a face she shows to the world, each Shadow does as well. The Shadow's Archetype combines Nature and Demeanor, as the Shadow has so little chance to demonstrate a false face to the rest of the Underworld. A Shadow's Archetype is at the same time its personality and its plan of attack, its way of dealing with and destroying the Psyche.

There is no rules application for a Shadow Archetype outside of a Harrowing. It merely exists as a roleplaying aid and a way to draw a more complete picture of who your wraith is.

Shadow Archetypes include:

- **The Abuser** — Hurt terribly once, this impatient and jealous Shadow exists to inflict his pain on others. He scrutinizes the failures of everyone around him, heaping scorn upon them whenever he can. This is done partially in order to bolster his self-image, but primarily to make everyone else hurt just as much as he does. The Abuser will often goad you to attempt the impossible, just to watch you fail so that he can dine upon the self-loathing failure engenders. Chaotic and crazed, the Abuser will lash out at any target other than his favorite one: himself.

When dominant, the Abuser will spew his vitriol in all directions. Any excuse will set him off, and if no excuse is provided, he will create one. Demands for obedience, absurd requests and systematic verbal or physical abuse are this Shadow's hallmarks.

- **The Director** — Quiet and organized, the Director will take you apart with clockwork precision. Icy in her hatred, she will strip your defenses away layer by layer, taking pleasure in the surgical nature of the torment she inflicts. There's nothing personal in what the Director does; she's just setting the record straight by removing any delusions you might have about goodness, sanity or any other worthwhile qualities you thought you had. When your grasp on reality starts to falter, the Director knows just how much pressure to apply in order to push you over.

When in control, the Director likes to lay long-range plans for the next time she is dominant, and to prepare nasty little revelations for you to discover at carefully timed intervals. She also enjoys picking apart your companions, making cutting observations that will poison any friendships you had made on the other side. The fact that the Director is usually quite accurate doesn't help matters, either.

- **The Freak** — Everything that you ever were ashamed of wanting to do is what the Freak lives for. Gleefully perverse, the Freak is an expression of pure self-

hatred. It revels in taking each of your imperfections and holding it up to the light, so that it can be ridiculed by the rest of the world. Anything you're ashamed of doing, the Freak will encourage you to do, and the more you resist the more insistent he'll become. Once you give in, though, he'll turn around and point out how perverted you are. Shame and abandon are the Freak's favorite weapons, and he uses them as often as he can.

A Freak in control is a frightening thing. He'll take your darkest desires and play them out for the rest of the world, leaving you to explain your actions when his control fades. Of course, excavating others' dirty little secrets is almost as much fun, as far as the Freak is concerned.

- **The Leech** — Wearing on the will and nerves like sandpaper, the Leech gets its way through whining and cajoling, begging and throwing tantrums. It's a black hole for attention and affection, and no matter how often you give in to its demands, it's never enough. Childish and selfish, the Leech can never be satisfied, and every time you give it what it wants, it's that much harder to say no the next time.

When the Leech takes control, it attempts to work its wiles on others in order to extract whatever sustenance they offer. If permitted, it will drain everyone around it dry, then discard the husks and set out to look for new victims. As far as the Leech is concerned, everything others have and more is just its rightful due.

- **The Martyr** — Noble self-sacrifice has its place, but what the Martyr offers is a shallow mockery instead. By constantly demanding that you give of yourself because you can take the pain better than anyone else can, the Martyr cheapens your faith and indulges your arrogance. Claiming your sacrifice will bring about a greater good, the Martyr will then take pleasure in demonstrating that your pain didn't do anything at all, and that all of your suffering was pointless. Still, that won't keep it from urging you to give up yourself for others every chance it gets.

When the Martyr takes control, it will attempt to maneuver you into situations where, no matter what, in order to escape you'll have to give up something important. The Martyr also tries to arrange for witnesses whenever possible, so that its very public sacrifices can be used to shame others into similarly self-destructive acts.

- **The Monster** — Brutally direct, the Monster is all about pain and greed. Whatever it wants, it will command you to take. Whatever it hates, it will demand that you destroy. If you refuse, it will try to destroy you as well, for it cannot stand to be balked in any way. There's no compromise or subtlety in the Monster, and often it's the most dignified and delicate wraiths who have a Monster lurking behind their eyes.

To see the Monster dominant is to see a foreshadowing of Spectrehood. It will lay waste to anything in its path, taking what it wants and destroying everything else out of sheer spite. Guttural and vulgar, the Monster rarely has anything to say that isn't an obscenity.

- **The Parent** — No one else can love you as much, or as well, as the Parent. No one else can take care of you as well, or make you as happy. The Parent even accepts all of your little imperfections, which she'll harp on endlessly in order to prove to you that she loves you despite your nearly infinite flaws. She'll protect you from people who don't have your best interests at heart, and only she can decide who those are (usually, it's everyone else you know).

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When in command, the Parent will seek to insulate you from any corrupting or dangerous influences (i.e., anyone and anything else). To accomplish this, it will do and say anything to alienate those who care about you, using the fact that they could be driven off as proof that they weren't really your friends, anyway.

- **The Perfectionist** — Nothing you do will ever be good enough for the Perfectionist. Any imperfection can serve as a launching point for a tirade; any flaw will be a magnet for withering sarcasm. By playing up your inevitable errors, the Perfectionist inspires your self-hatred and saps your confidence in your own abilities. Then, once your confidence is shot, he'll be more than happy to step in and show you how to do things *right*. If you had any sense at all, you'd turn things over to him permanently and make sure that everything got done properly the first time.

When in control, the Perfectionist will take every example to criticize whatever or whoever catches his eye. He'll also take the opportunity to embroil you in impossible scenarios, anxiously awaiting your inevitable failure. Still, at least he doesn't play favorites. When everyone around him is equally flawed, one target's as good as the next.

- **The Pusher** — The Pusher will always be glad to help you achieve the impossible. He wants you to think of him as a friend, a friend you can always ask for help. Of course, the price for the Pusher's help is always too high, and if you don't pay, he'll extract it with interest. Every so often when you're counting on him, he'll decide that you need to appreciate him more, and he'll withhold that support you were counting on so desperately.

When the Pusher is in charge, he'll do everything he can to put you in situations where you'll need his help to escape. The quicker he can make you rack up a debt to him, the happier he is. Then again, an unhappy Pusher can be unpleasant indeed....

- **The Rationalist** — The Rationalist will give you all of the right reasons for all of the wrong decisions. Calmly leading you down the path to Oblivion, it offers rationales and explanations for why you should do what it says. It offers proofs for the wisdom of everything it tells you, making all of its suggestions seem so *sensible*. When dominant, the Rationalist takes precise, well-ordered steps toward the Void. It will sabotage your long-range plans and set in motion ones that superficially look better; it will systematically make you enemies and alienate or eliminate your friends. There's no sense in taking one's time giving in to Oblivion, is there, when it's assured of winning in the end? The Rationalist is just making the surrender more efficient.

Thorns

Thorns are special abilities that the Shadow possesses and can use either for free or by spending one of its Temporary Angst points. A player can use her Shadow's own Experience Traits to purchase Thorns, if she so chooses.

One-Point Thorns

Spectre Prestige — The Shadow is respected by Spectres and they will come to the aid of the wraith during Catharsis.

Tainted Relic (variable) — The Shadow has an important relic that manifests when it is in control: a weapon or some other useful item. Others in the wraith's party might realize that the Shadow is in control if this relic manifests. If the relic is destroyed or used up, it will still be able to manifest next time the Shadow is dominant. Tainted relics should be handed out by Storytellers at character creation.

Two-Point Thorns

Shadow Traits — You can buy one Trait, either an Attribute or an Ability, that the Shadow possesses. If the wraith wants to use the Trait in a test, he can choose to do so, but it gives the Shadow one point of Temporary Angst. This Trait is never used up and always gives the Shadow one Temporary Angst Trait.

Aura of Corruption — There is a subtle taint to the wraith, caused by the Shadow's influence. If a wraith has this Thorn, all Social Challenges are bid at -1 Traits.

Three-Point Thorns

Trick of the Light — This is a very, very subtle Thorn as it can alter the perceptions of the wraith in accordance with the Shadow's wishes. If the Shadow spends a Temporary Angst point and activates this Thorn, the Shadowguide can describe to the player what subtle alterations in the setting the wraith senses. Dark areas can seem to hold figures, faces can seem more menacing, red glows can appear, and suspicious movements can be hidden by the effects of this Thorn. The change in perception lasts five minutes.

Bad Luck — The Shadow can spend a Temporary Angst point to cause the Psyche to enter a retest, making the previous results of the test to be discarded.

Five-Point Thorns

Freudian Slip — By spending a Temporary Angst point, the Shadow can cause the character to take a sudden involuntary action or blurt out a single sentence of the Shadow's choosing. However, the Freudian Slip cannot cause the wraith to use any Arcanoi. This Thorn can only be resisted by the expenditure of a Willpower Trait.

Shadow Life — The Shadow lives a parallel life. Whenever the character Slumbers, the Shadow takes over and acts without the player's knowledge. This can lead to some interesting situations for the Psyche if the Shadow wrongs or attacks people. The wraith still gets the benefit of the Slumber, however. A wraith currently living his Shadow Life should be considered to be in an extended Catharsis, and all Angst gains and losses should be treated as such.

Devil's Dare — At the beginning of the game, the Shadow can write down a dare and hand it to the Psyche. This costs the Shadow five Temporary Angst Traits, but the result can be worth it. If the wraith fails to complete the dare by the end of the game, the Shadow gains a point of Permanent Angst. Dares must be reasonable; there is a world of difference between "Jump in a Nihil" and "Go moon the Anacreon and sit down until his guards skewer you." An unreasonable dare costs the Angst but has no compulsory effect; a Narrator is the final arbiter of which dares are acceptable.

Harrowings

Come feel the magic of the Shadowplay

— Fish, "Shadowplay"



here comes a time when even wraiths can't take any more. A Passion has faded, a Fetter has died or been destroyed, or the wraith herself has been stripped of all of her Corpus Levels. At this point, a Nihil forms directly underneath her, and she drops into the Labyrinth for the nightmarish experience of a Harrowing. In terms of gameplay, the wraith immediately signals that she's out of play and heads for the room that the Storyteller has set aside as the Labyrinth.

Harrowings are a combination of improvisational theater, a psychotherapist's office and a medieval torture chamber with the wraith as the main attraction in all three. Her Shadow directs a cast and crew of Spectres in creating a scene that will hopefully permanently damage the wraith and drag her closer to Oblivion. Nothing is sacred in a Harrowing; old memories, loves, hatreds, embarrassing moments, hidden fantasies and more are dragged out as tools. The more hammer blows that can be dealt against the Psyche in a Harrowing, the more damaged she will emerge from it (if emerge she does) and the more easily she'll drop into another Harrowing.

Mechanics

Every Oblivion game should have a space (preferably a room) set aside to serve as the Labyrinth. This area should be inaccessible to wraiths who are not undergoing Harrowings; the Tempest around the great maze is just too heavily infested with Spectres for anyone to sneak through intact. Inside this room is where all Harrowings will take place. The stuff of the Labyrinth is infinitely plastic and malleable, and can serve as any setting that the directing Shadow can imagine.

When the Harrowing begins, the Narrator takes the wraith's Shadow sheet and confers for a minute with the other actors on the scene. During this time, the Harrowing should be mapped out as to setting, characters and most importantly, escape condition. The escape condition is the roleplaying goal that the wraith must achieve in order to unify her personality and get out of the Harrowing. It must be something related to the wraith and her Shadow, and should be more complicated than just "make the hard moral decision, and you get out of here." Generally the wraith should have no more than 10 minutes in order to figure out the escape condition.

If the wraith makes a serious and creative effort to roleplay her way out of the Harrowing, and comes across an alternate escape condition that the Narrator feels is acceptable, then she can be considered to have succeeded at the Harrowing. It is up to the Narrator what constitutes success and failure in a Harrowing, and there is no appeal or other arbiter of this decision. If the wraith fails to roleplay her way out of the Harrowing, she still has a chance to escape.

At this time she and the Narrator engage in a Challenge — Willpower Traits against five Traits. The Trait bid cannot be lost. If the wraith wins, she leaves the Harrowing in triumph. If she loses, she is considered to have failed the Harrowing with all of the attendant consequences.

Win or Lose

If a wraith triumphs in a Harrowing, she instantly snaps back to one of her Fetters (Narrator discretion which one — this may require consulting with the Storyteller) with three Temporary Corpus Traits and an added point of Pathos as a reward. If she fails, she loses a Permanent Corpus Trait and returns to a Fetter with three Temporary Corpus. If the wraith has no Fetters, then win or lose she returns to a random point in the Tempest (again, Narrator discretion as to exactly where). If she wins, she gets a single Pathos and three Temporary Corpus Traits; if she loses, she also loses a Permanent Corpus Trait but gains three Temporary ones.

Destruction Harrowings

A Destruction Harrowing is the term for a Harrowing where the target is down to her last point of Permanent Corpus. If she loses, she will dissipate into the Void. There is no difference between a Destruction Harrowing and a regular Harrowing in Oblivion.

As the Narrator in charge of the Harrowing sees only the Shadow sheet and not the wraith's regular character sheet, she should have no way of knowing whether a Harrowing is Destruction or ordinary. Letting slip that a Harrowing is Destruction in hopes that the Narrator will "go easy" is extraordinarily bad form, and should result in the instantaneous failure of the Harrowing. The character is destroyed, and the player should create a new one, preferably with more common sense.

Failing a Destruction Harrowing results in the obvious: the character's destruction.

Just Doing It

When the Harrowing actually starts, the Narrator describes the scene and the other characters present. These other characters are Spectres, but can be played by additional Narrators or players whose characters are currently out of play. Excessive detail is not required; just enough to set the scene is all that is needed.

At this point, the Harrowing begins as regular gameplay. All regular rules apply, though the "reality" of the shared nightmare can sometimes warp in odd ways. However, wraiths can make challenges, use Arcanoi, and otherwise interact normally with this little pocket of unreality. Any Traits bid or used during a Harrowing, with the exception of Eidolon, are recovered at the Harrowing's end. For purposes of combat within the Harrowing, the wraith is considered to be at full Temporary Corpus. This is, of course, an illusion, and will fade at the Harrowing's end.

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the reality of the Harrowing is complete. The *wraith* must believe in what is going on and act accordingly, even if the wraith's player is aware it is a Harrowing. It is during a Harrowing that many experience bonuses for roleplaying are earned.

Eidolon Traits can be used to force retests in Harrowing final challenges, but no other Traits can. Furthermore, Eidolon Traits can be used to modify a single aspect of the Harrowing to make it more to the wraith's liking. This includes changing setting, weakening an opponent, or receiving some sort of guidance from the higher self during the trial.

If the wraith is "killed" during the Harrowing, unless willing sacrifice is part of the escape condition, she has failed.

Samples

Examples of Harrowings and escape conditions include:

- **Rescue Me** — One of the old standbys, the rescue Harrowing involves forcing the Harrowed wraith to rescue a loved one, usually from her living days, from the grip of unimaginable peril (tied to train tracks, menaced by Spectres, etc.). In its most straightforward adaptation, the wraith moves from rescue attempt to rescue attempt, with each effort ending in failure and landing the "kidnap victim" (usually

a Moliated Spectre, but on rare occasions the actual wraith of the target's loved one) in even greater danger. The best escape from this sort of Harrowing is for the wraith to accept that she cannot win and, as difficult as it may be, she has to accept fate. Other variations call for the wraith to sacrifice herself for the sake of the hostage, but this sort of Harrowing is not about triumph. It's about acceptance.

- **Dead Day Afternoon** — This sort of Harrowing takes the wraith back to his living days, and into the teeth of undeserved peril. The police wish to talk to the wraith, who finds himself fleeing in order to prove his innocence. Every action to facilitate that flight results in more and more illegal acts, injuring innocent bystanders and destroying property. This of course will convince the police of the wraith's guilt. They will then step up the chase, and the wraith is forced to choose between escalation himself or surrender and potential annihilation.

The lesson here is that the wraith can't do everything himself, and that by doing so he sometimes does more harm than good. Potential escape conditions include either surrendering at the risk of destruction, or accepting fully the life of the outlaw and all it stands for.

- **I Have No Mouth and I Must Flee** — The wraith finds herself in the middle of a crowd of people, none of whom will speak to or otherwise interact with her. They will walk past, talk among themselves, laugh, cry and generally carry on with their lives without the slightest indication that they are aware of the wraith, rationalize weird or physical effects she creates, and in essence, completely isolate her. Everywhere she goes it is the same; she is completely alone.

The lesson here is that the wraith should learn that in the end, her own self is enough and she should not rely on others. If she accepts her own company and chooses not to attempt fruitless interaction any longer, instead of giving up in frustration, she can be considered to have triumphed over this sort of Harrowing.

- **Wilderness of Mirrors** — The mirror is a favorite psychological image. A funhouse maze, where every pane shows either a distorted image of the Harrowed wraith or one of his enemies, can make for a powerful Harrowing. Voices coming from everywhere and nowhere, a seemingly infinite supply of mocking faces, reflections that move when the wraith does not — all of these offer tremendous horrific potential.

Mirror-maze Harrowings can be resolved in a variety of different ways. Not recommended is the solution when the wraith simply smashes every mirror in sight. Instead, he might choose to walk into the mirror and join with his distorted image, gaining a measure of self-acceptance. Another option might be for the wraith to find the center of the maze and rest there, dwelling at the heart of all of the images of his self and encompassing all of them. A third idea could have the wraith following the trail of the most horribly distorted reflections, descending into the heart of his own darkness and escaping out the other side.

- **The Missing Hammer** — Try as they might, most **Oblivion** players will find it impossible not to realize that they are in a Harrowing and alter their play style accordingly. With that in mind, the "missing hammer" technique often works well as a method of keeping players' attention thoroughly in-game.

With the knowledge that she is in a Harrowing, a wraith instantly starts assuming the worst. What's more, she instantly starts looking for it. If disaster is not imme-

diately forthcoming (the setting is pleasant, the disguised Spectres are friendly, there's no immediate evidence of torture or other unpleasantness), the wraith will seek it in every innocent phrase and action, looking for what she feels to be the inevitable hidden trap. Within a few short minutes, the wraith can make her own Hell, as the Spectres simply act politely and watch the wraith drive herself into a frenzy of paranoia.

This sort of Harrowing can be difficult to pull off, and should only be used as a contrast to more standard psychodramas. The lesson to be learned here is that it is all right to accept good things when they come to you, and that if you look too hard for Hell you just might find it. Wraiths who can actually accept what's going on with a minimum of fuss (there's a difference between acceptance and blind naiveté, after all) should be considered to have roleplayed their way from the Harrowing.

- **Darkness Rising** — Through the use of the Dark Arcanos Contaminate, a Spectre can easily take the part of a wraith's Shadow. Bringing a character face to face with his own dark half, someone who can match his every move and unveil his every secret, can be extremely unsettling. If the other Spectres in the Harrowing are portraying twisted versions of the rest of the wraith's Circle, mocking and mutating familiar mannerisms, the situation can get terrifying. How much of what the Shadow is revealing is being told to the characters and not to other Spectres? How can a wraith defeat his own dark side? This sort of Harrowing can also be done for suspense value, with the wraith and his Shadow trapped in a maze or on a desert island, engaged in some sort of contest. A variation on "The Most Dangerous Game" can work well, as can gruesome variations on tag.

Again, self-acceptance is a good key to this kind of Harrowing. A wraith who can embrace his alter ego, no matter how loathsome it might be, and who can integrate it into his own personality, should be able to escape this Harrowing. Other methods of escape could come from either defeating or escaping the Shadow. On the other hand, acceptance is not the same thing as surrender, and any wraith who simply gives in to his Shadow's blandishments should be considered to have failed the Harrowing (a test should still be allowed, but the difficulty should be adjusted upward at Storyteller discretion).

- **Misplaced Childhood's End** — Among the most terrifying things imaginable is innocence gone wrong. When the icons of childhood — stuffed animals, friendly parental faces, familiar homesteads — suddenly reveal menace, the impact can be devastating. Returning a wraith to a childhood setting, such as her room in her parents' house *circa* her seventh birthday, and then having evil crawl out of the woodwork is an effective Harrowing technique. Finding horror in places of safety, and having the images the character most associates with safety taken away from her can really unsettle the underpinnings of a wraith's world. The Freudian parent-monster images can also come into play in this flavor of Harrowing; the father-monster is a particularly effective tool.

Conversely, the idea of the Harrowing (from the Spectral perspective) could be to get the wraith to sink back into her childhood, giving up the fight against Oblivion and surrendering. For a superb example of this sort of Harrowing, see the film *Labyrinth*, in particular the sequence when Sarah runs across the junkwoman.

Putting aside the things of childhood and accepting adult responsibilities is the way out of this type of Harrowing. A demonic teddy bear who'll rend his owner's

flesh rather than let her go is in a way serving for the demands that childish things make of adult minds, and how they must be put aside for any growth to occur.

- **After the War** — Harrowings can have elaborate settings, including faux Maelstroms. This sort of Harrowing gives the impression that, rather than being pulled into a Harrowing, the wraith has instead been caught in the Sixth Great Maelstrom. Helpless, he'll watch as the Spectral hordes descend on Stygia (or his home Necropolis), laying waste to all. Desolation and ruin will be the rule of the day, with Doppelgangers frolicking in the stacks of the Great Library and Shades tearing down the bridges to the Iron Hills. The war with Oblivion will be over, and Stygia will have lost.

Then the Harrowing will begin.

The trick here is to see what the wraith will do after all hope would appear to be lost. Will he surrender and join the occupying forces, fight a hopeless battle for vengeance's sake, or attempt to build something from the ruins? Spectres portraying looters, survivors and Enthralled wraiths will give the Harrowing victim something to work against, but the choices to be made here are more difficult than most. It is important for the Harrowed wraith to maintain hope and not succumb to despair or rage. Suicidal attacks on Spectres are as inappropriate as joining the Shadow-eaten at their play.

- **Burned Bridges** — All of us make choices we regret in life, leaving behind friends or loved ones. Whether or not we miss the friendships, romances and other forms of human contact we pass by is irrelevant, as no matter what some relationships simply fall by the wayside. The regrets and unfinished business of such frayed attachments are good raw Harrowing material. Confronting a wraith with everyone he's left behind or climbed over to achieve anything can tie him in knots, never allowing him to see past the immediate confrontation to the greater scheme of the Harrowing. A Greek chorus of Spectres masquerading as old lovers, bosses, friends and so on, each bringing up a perceived betrayal or loose end, ("I gave you your first break, and how did you repay me?" "That was our idea you sold as your own, you bastard!" and so on) can drown a wraith in echoing recriminations from long ago. It doesn't even matter if the accusations are true to the character history; the senses of hurt, betrayal and vengeance are what matters.

Nor does the setting for this sort of Harrowing need to be consistent. It can flash from home to office to dorm to board room to beach to wherever is appropriate for the character speaking at the time. The more backdrops that flash in and out, the more unsettling the effect. This particularly holds true if the backgrounds are subtly twisted versions of settings associated with the roster of personae the Spectres are adopting.

Quick and Dirty

There are times when there just aren't enough Spectres (or people to play them) to go around. In that case, it's time for a quick and dirty Harrowing. In an instance like this, the character being Harrowed engages the Narrator present in the Labyrinth in three challenges: Physical, Social and Mental. The challenges come in no particular order.

Helpful Harrowing Hints

- Don't take things too far. If someone's uncomfortable, *STOP!*
- You don't need to create a completely new Harrowing for each character. You can use the same one over and over for different wraiths, or vary a base setting slightly. This saves endless time and trouble.
 - Make up your cast of characters beforehand. Odds are that the stats of the cast of most Harrowings won't be vital, so make up a bunch of character types and statistics ("Cop," "Kidnapper," "Legionnaire," "Doppelganger," etc.) that your cast can simply pick up and play.
 - It's generally a good idea to have one Head Narrator for Harrowings, who is in charge of the Labyrinth area of the game. This person is the final arbiter on all Harrowings, as well as serving as the director of the action.
 - Use what resources you've got. Other Narrators, people looking for a taste of the game, players in downtime, wraiths waiting their turn to be Harrowed — all of these people can be pressed into service as the cast of your Harrowing. Don't be afraid to draw on their creativity, either.
 - Don't be afraid to have characters lose Harrowings, even Destruction ones. There's no real reward in playing a character if there's no real risk attached.
 - Remember that the basic rules still apply. There is still no touching, no running, no guns or swords, etc. As freaky as it can be, the Harrowing zone is still a part of the game.
 - Harrowings should never be mundane, boring or blasé. If you feel like you're getting burned out, leave and go do something else for a while. A dull Harrowing makes the game less fun for everyone.

Chapter Six: The Shadow



The Narrator has 30 Traits to spread among the three categories for purposes of overbidding and resistance; how she divvies them up is up to her. She should, however, write the division down before the Harrowing begins. If the Narrator wins two out of three or better, then the wraith has lost the Harrowing and loses a Permanent Corpus Trait. She then snaps back to a Fetter or, if she has none, the Tempest. If she wins two of three or better, she triumphs in the Harrowing, and snaps back to reality at one of her Fetters (Narrator discretion) or in the Tempest if she has none. In any event, when the wraith leaves the Harrowing, she regains three Temporary Corpus Traits (if she can take that many).

Eidolon Traits, but no others, can be used to force retests here.



Chapter Seven: Storytelling



This chapter is for Storytellers and, to a lesser extent, Narrators. Storytelling **Oblivion** is very different from Storytelling **Wraith**, or even any other **Mind's Eye Theatre** game. **Oblivion** involves running what is essentially a game with a split personality. Both humans and wraiths need to be taken care of, and bridging the gap between the two can be labor-intensive in the extreme. Furthermore, there are the responsibilities of Shadowguiding and running Harrowings, each of which can demand serious investments of time and effort. Storytelling **Oblivion** is not for the lazy or faint of heart, and trying to run a game of **Oblivion** without proper preparation is a recipe for disaster.

On the other hand, there is a bright side to all of this. Running **Oblivion** provides you with a stage to tell your stories, and the very complexity of the game allows you to create stories that can be equally complex. There are few limits on the imagination; anyone or anything from history can show up in the Shadowlands, and practically anything imagined might lurk in the Tempest. Harrowings let you turn loose things that might be a little too intense or permanent for regular plotlines, while Shadows add a whole new way to interact with players. In the end, the effort is more than worth it.

Chronicles



If characters are the lifeblood of *Mind's Eye Theatre*, then the chronicle is the body they sustain. Although *Oblivion* can be used and enjoyed as a series of loosely connected stories, such games often lack a sense of continuity and offer little opportunity for character development. Furthermore, wraiths often have long-term goals related to their Passions and Fetters; one story is rarely enough to resolve anything satisfactorily. In a chronicle — an ongoing series of stories — not only do characters reside in a familiar environment, but one that evolves as they interact with it. Developing and maintaining a chronicle is a satisfying task, but it requires continuous effort and dedication on the behalf of you and your Narrators.

Setting the Stage

The first element to consider in chronicle construction is the atmosphere you desire. The two aspects of atmosphere are mood and theme. Each is a fundamental ingredient in the alchemy of a chronicle. Although mood and theme have already been discussed in terms of story, and some ideas previously presented apply here, mood and theme for a chronicle involves other aspects.

Mood

Mood is the underlying emotional sentiment of a chronicle. It sustains and flows through everything you do, unobtrusive yet omnipresent. While the mood of a chronicle is intangible, your choice of mood can be one of the most important ones you make as regards plot, character, and theme. After all, if you're going for a mood of terror, a gunbunny plot (and characters to match) won't make much sense.

Theme

Themes are central ideas of a chronicle, ones that help define the shape of the action. They can be as visceral as the struggle for freedom or as intellectual as the age-old questions of good and evil. Themes can emerge as seemingly inconsequential encounters or as the major focus of a chronicle. Avoid overemphasizing theme, however. Overemphasis makes related events expected and predictable rather than haunting and prophetic.

Setting

The setting is the stage upon which the drama of a chronicle is played. Setting is composed of environment and locale. Environment describes the overall scheme of the world. The environment of *Oblivion* involves the three levels of ghostly existence, Guilds, Legions, Ferrymen, mortals, Passions, Fetters, Maelstroms and much more. A myriad of potential alternatives are available. It's your reality — do with it what you will.



Locale, or the physical point where you choose to place your chronicle, is the next step toward chronicle creation. The easiest choice for chronicle setting is the very city in which you and your players live. During your games, you can visit and utilize parts of the city in which your stories take place. It's also a good bet that your players are familiar enough with their setting to incorporate all sorts of firsthand knowledge into their play.

If you don't think your home town would do as your chronicle's locale, or simply don't want to use your actual location, there's a whole world out there. Bookstores, libraries and tourist bureaus can provide you with enough detailed information to set a chronicle in almost any city. This sort of research is also helpful if your players move around a great deal in the chronicle. Using foreign locales takes a bit more imagination, but if you're playing this game, you're probably not running low in that department anyway.

When it comes down to it, who says your chronicle must be set in the modern day? Although we suggest other times only for experienced players and Storytellers, a number of historical eras provide excellent settings for chronicles.

Creating the City

The city is the locus of your chronicle. You need to present your city in a realistic and consistent manner so that players believe in it. The setting must live and breathe for players, and, until it does, characters cannot come to be. The city is where your stories take place — the more interesting and exotic it seems, the more your stories come to life. With each story you run, define the city a little more, but don't give away everything at once.

As the chronicle progresses, add details of geography, custom and plot. Build the city bit by bit at whatever pace you choose. The mortal half of the city is fairly

easy to establish. Though the setting of *Oblivion* is the World of Darkness, much of it is identical to the world we know. However, the city isn't quite the one you live in. It's fictional. You may want to change a few details here and there to suit the mood of your game.

Then you want to consider the Restless half of the equation. The history of your city should help, determining what relic buildings are present in the Shadowlands. Still, you need to decide what sites are haunted, where the Citadel might be, which Legions and Guilds are present, where the local Nihils are and so on.

Last but not least, you should make sure the design of the city meshes well with the motif of your overall chronicle. If the chronicle is going to be about corruption, the city ought to be corrupt as well, both in its mortal and ghostly aspects.

Casting the Parts

Once you know what is in your city, it's time to think about who. Both mortals and wraiths should be your concern here; neither side is terribly effective without the other. It's generally best to start at the top — who are the Anacreons, the local Guildmasters, the leaders of Gangs and Cults in the area. Deathlords and Ferryman should be used sparingly, if at all; they're simply too powerful. You should also think about whether any Spectres have infiltrated your Necropolis. On the mortal side, political leaders and ghost-hunters are equally important. If there is another supernatural presence in your city, you will want to detail that as well. The local vampire and werewolf populations, and their relations to the Restless, are all important things to have mapped out in advance.

Intrigue

Intrigue is a vital ingredient of your chronicle. For people to play out intrigue, they need to be drawn into it. Power is often a lure. This power needs to be immediate and real. It needs to be visible and obtainable. It needs to be given out only occasionally to inspire characters to pursue it, but not so often that opportunities are passed on.

Ambition

Many characters eventually want to assume positions of power in the city. In some games, this is just another aspect of the self-generating plots players contrive on their own. In other games, you may plan the characters' search for power from the beginning. In either case, you need to learn what long-term goals your players want to accomplish in the chronicle. You can then tailor an occasional session to these goals, but don't give the players everything they want. Some may covet powerful positions in the Hierarchy, or to advance the political agendas of outsider groups they belong to. Others may seek Transcendence or knowledge of the missing Charon. Both goals are power in one form or another, both over others and over one's self.

More than a few players don't know or admit what they want in the long-term, or may not desire power. Don't worry, they'll set their sights on something in time, especially if tempted by their Shadows or other players. Practice stringing players along. Keep a carrot dangling before them. After all, you've got the whole world to

play with as a Storyteller; you can certainly offer something to keep them coming back for more.

The Price of Power

In most chronicles, it's likely that one or more characters are in a position of power. If this is the case, the players need to know exactly what their responsibilities and advantages are. In general, any players in the role of Anacreon, high-ranking Guild member, Heretic or Renegade leader or Ferryman should be experienced enough to assist you as a Narrator. As powerful characters can have tremendous impact on lesser characters and the story as a whole, players should know what the ramifications of their actions are and must take them into consideration. Only experience in play develops this insight, but it is vital that players with characters in positions of power understand both their responsibilities and their limits. Powerful characters, if abused, can serve to discourage players with weaker characters. This drives off new players, and eventually the power-gamers may find themselves with no one to lord it over except one another.

Chronicle Dynamics

The key to a successful chronicle is a constant and uninterrupted flow of action. In the real world, events never stop occurring, and everyone, in one way or another, gets dragged into life's chaos. Your chronicle should have the same power. All characters should be drawn into the events around them. Every character should be doing something. Those in conflict may bide their time and pause to marshal their forces, but the tension never recedes. After all, if you give your players time to rest, relax and think, they may think about the fact that they're just playing a game. Too much time for reflection can shatter the most carefully crafted illusionary worlds.

Trouble in all Shapes and Sizes

There are dozens of things in a story that can go wrong. This is particularly true of a chronicle. With the added level of complexity that comes with a chronicle, problems with continuity, advancement, numerous players, constant change and background plots are inevitable. A few of the more common chronicle problems, and how to deal with them, are detailed below:

- **Problem Players** — This problem is probably one of the most delicate and potentially disastrous you can face. For one reason or another, one or more players are disrupting the story and ruining everyone's good time. This can be the result of many things: cheating, rule quotation ("rules lawyering"), personal vendettas or improper behavior.

Once you detect a problem, your first action should be to approach the players privately and explain what they are doing and why you don't like it. At that point, most people attempt to change their ways... and that's that. Unfortunately, some are prone to backsliding or just don't take the problem seriously, disregarding your warning. The next step to consider is some sort of penalty. Temporary suspension from the

chronicle is usually effective. If players continue to make trouble, you may have to perform the distasteful task of barring them entirely from your chronicle.

Do not be afraid to destroy characters that unbalance your game. If the character's player is worthwhile, he'll understand the need for the sake of all of the other players.

- **Favoritism** — There is often a tendency to give friends special treatment. Be vigilant to this habit in all those who run and play the game, including yourself. If the problem does arise, try to remember that this is just a form of entertainment; no one can reasonably hold you responsible for a character's loss. If the problem continues, try to isolate problem individuals from encounters where favoritism might occur. As a final option, remove the offender from any position in which she can dispense favors.

- **Grudge** — In this situation, an individual is treated unfairly for some reason that is not related to her character's nature or actions. Such is often the case with players who are not fond of each other in the real world. Handle it in a manner similar to favoritism problems.

- **Stagnation** — Even the most imaginative Storyteller occasionally runs out of ideas. Perhaps you're running the game too often to give yourself time to create new and original stories. If this is the case, consider spacing sessions further apart to provide yourself more planning time. Another solution is to take on more Storytellers or Narrators to give the chronicle a greater creative base on which to draw. A plot coordination council of some sort is almost essential to running large-scale chronicles.

- **Logistics** — Problems with supplies and locations are bound to arise. If this is the case, be sure to communicate with everybody involved in the game. Players are often able to help procure a setting, props, incidental supplies and all manner of other needs.

- **Getting the News Out** — Sometimes you just don't have enough people to play the type of chronicle you've planned. This is more often a case of poor advertising than genuine lack of bodies. Consider posting notices on electronic bulletin boards or your local university network, in game and hobby stores, at conventions, at gaming organizations, with theatre or drama groups, on college campuses and anywhere else you think imaginative people with a taste for the original might frequent.

- **Staying Focused** — At times your story may drift away from its original plot, or players may become lost. They may become too wrapped up in their own subplots or may be unable to unravel a puzzle. When this happens, you need something to bring the story back on course.

Having a few extra props available can be helpful when the story goes off on a tangent. Many of the prop ideas already suggested can be used to reorient players. For example, an answering machine audio tape with an important message can renew characters' interest in their original goal. Documents containing important information are another option, allowing characters a new avenue in pursuit of their original goal.

Maintenance and Record Keeping

It's a simple fact that the longer a chronicle runs, the more complex it becomes. The increased size of some chronicles only amplifies this fact. Developing a method and the habit of keeping records is essential.

Drones, Thralls and Ashtrays

Due to its very nature, **Oblivion** contains the possibility that characters will spend entire games as slaves or, even worse, inanimate objects. Obviously, this sort of thing can be no fun for the player whose carefully thought-out wraith gets shackled to a wall for the whole night, or, even worse, gets turned into a Stygian steel spork.

While there is nothing that a Storyteller can do to eliminate this sort of thing entirely from gameplay (and indeed, the threat of such fates should be an integral part of the atmosphere of the Underworld), there are a few steps that can be taken to minimize abuses:

- Make soulforging equipment extremely difficult to come by for player characters.
- Limit the availability of chains for Thralls. Regular Strygian steel chains don't stop wraiths from using their Arcanoi when imprisoned; only special ones called Nhudri's Embrace (deliberately not detailed in this book so players won't start demanding them) do. If there's no way to hold wraiths, keeping them as slaves throughout an evening's play gets a lot harder.
- Make it very plain that wraiths cannot be turned into Drones in **Oblivion**.
- Without certain special arts known only to the Masquers' Guild, Moliating someone into a set of barbecue tongs is an impermanent feat at best. Characters Moliated into inanimate objects may be temporarily out of play, but will eventually return to their original form. (Note: Cosmetic and other willing Moliations do not revert.) Narrator characters should have the ability to make this sort of change permanent, but player characters should not.
- Enslaving, soulforging and Moliating unwilling victims are Shadow-friendly activities. If you hear that a player is indulging, send out a Narrator immediately to serve as the consequences of these amoral actions.

The easiest part of the chronicle to keep records on is characters' statistics. Having a master copy of each character and Shadow sheet has several advantages. Someone is bound to lose his character sheet and may need a replacement. Without a good memory or a master copy, this can pose a problem, especially with advanced characters. Storyteller records of characters also discourage unscrupulous players from altering their characters in the field. Furthermore, you can make use of character information when designing new stories. And it's a good idea to update your master copies after each story, given changes arising from experience, rewards and penalties.

A journal of events from each session proves equally invaluable, helping you understand changes the chronicle undergoes. You can then apply these changes to new stories. Ideally, you, the Narrators and players should all file some sort of informal report after each story. Records from everyone can keep you apprised of all events and let you in on players' individual intentions. To encourage players to provide this information accurately, consider making reports mandatory or award experience only after you receive them. Make it clear that these reports are confidential and will not be used to "screw players over."

Advancement and Balance

The greatest reward for some players is the sheer joy of playing. However, many players prefer to see their characters improve in status and power. Both needs must be satisfied.

Players who enjoy the story for its own sake are easy to please. In fact, they often please themselves by pursuing the goals their characters desire, which are often interpreted by the players themselves.

Pleasing accomplishment-seekers is a little more difficult. Allow characters chances to improve their station in the chronicle, if it's within the scope of things. When characters make achievements, their players are happy. However, to keep players happy without their characters achieving massive power, be prepared to take characters down a peg or two, or allow other characters to do so for you. Besides creating revenge motives, such attacks fire players' desire to achieve more.

Experience points, which players spend to improve their characters, are one form of reward, but there are others that are just as satisfying. Gaining the favor and support of other wraiths can be more rewarding than any Arcanos. Furthermore, there are numerous positions of power that Experience Points can't buy, but ambition and tenacity can.

Even in well-planned chronicles, players may reach a point where they are bored and discontented with their place in the story. A player in this position actually has a couple of options. Starting a new character, only playing the old one from time to time, helps players see if they still have what it takes to see a character survive. As a Storyteller, make sure the player doesn't use this option to accumulate power for both his characters. Bringing in an old character's "relative" and allowing interaction between the siblings can mean trouble as they "work together." The easiest way to discourage this is to deny any direct ties between old and new characters. Another option is to take the "advanced" character as a Narrator or Storyteller character. The character's experience with your chronicle and game as a whole can be used as a resource by lesser characters (i.e., other characters seek help from the experienced character), and the older character can be the means for future stories.

Setting



Storytelling is more than simply voice and action. The effects that create your playing environment also make your story come to life. When you're running a story, you don't want your players to merely *imagine* they're playing in a world where ghosts walk and bodies rise from the grave. You want them to *feel* they're there.

Setting the stage is, thankfully, relatively simple. It requires some effort and imagination, but with a minimum of experience you'll have Necropoli looming in no time. To help you get started, we've provided some hints and ideas. Ultimately, though, creating an environment is limited only by your imagination. Take the advice we provide and run with it.

Setting and Environment

More than anything else, the setting of a story has impact on a story's feel. Setting should therefore be taken into careful consideration when deciding on your

story's mood (which is discussed later). The location you choose must fit the needs of your game as well as the atmosphere you have in mind.

Finding Locations

The first practical step in planning a game is finding a good place to play. Where you play the game is influenced by the specific needs of your story. Factors like the number of players involved, theme, mood and nature of the plot all have an influence on the type of location you choose.

The scale of the game is your first consideration. Make certain you have enough room for all the players to move about. Multiple rooms or areas are helpful. The best layout usually involves a central meeting room that all the players can congregate in and multiple smaller sites for secret meetings. Possibilities include college campuses, dorm lounges, museums, night clubs, coffeehouses, conventions, parks, shopping malls, office buildings or warehouses.

Obviously, extreme care must be taken when using these sites. You must ensure that all of the players are courteous and unobtrusive when playing in a public place. No "mundanes" should ever realize a game is being played, and players need to understand that the session is over if anyone finds out about the game and is disturbed by what you're doing.

Some sites are more conducive to certain types of stories. You may find a particular location is your favorite, but even then, you should keep your mind open to change. A change of locale, even if for only one scene, can help revive a dying chronicle.

Most locations (or "sets") can be decorated to convey a specific mood. You must seek out sites that cater to the style of your game and nature of its plot. For best results, the setting should have a basis in reality. In other words, if it's a high energy social atmosphere you seek, stage your story in a nightclub. If you're looking for a calm and intellectual setting, perhaps a museum or art gallery is appropriate. When choosing a location, look for an area that establishes the mood and atmosphere you're after.

Changing Scenes

Sometimes it's necessary to use one area for different settings within the same story. Actual set changes should be performed quickly and efficiently. Lengthy set changes leave players bored. When your scene is changed, give it a last once-over, making sure everything is in place. A scene change should be just that. When the players enter the room again, they should have the distinct feeling that they're entering a new place. Your new decorations don't even need to be overly complicated. A quick shift of the couch or table, switching or removing a throw rug, draping a love seat, and moving or removing chairs all help to change the feel of a room without necessitating major alterations. Changing the lighting and music can also make a big difference in a set's feel.

Ambiance and Mood

Establishing the right feel for a scene is governed by setting and environment. However, ambiance and mood are established and maintained by elements that are imposed upon the environment. Effects like music and lighting are often the finishing touches for completing a scene.

- **Music:** Music can be an integral part of establishing the mood of a story. It lends a hand in creating drama and, when appropriate, tension. When planning your story be certain to select music that complements your intended mood. Also make sure you have a variety of music on hand in case the mood changes. However, take care not to let the music get obtrusive or too familiar. If your players have to shout over thundering lyrics, or if your ghosts find themselves singing along to your soundtrack, your game will rapidly dissolve into chaos.

- **Audio Effects:** Above and beyond music, certain sounds and effects can enhance an evening. Horror and sound effect CDs, found in any music store, are a good place to start. A good CD can provide a variety of sound effects to simulate many different events, like tires screeching, gunshots or barking dogs. Proper timing of these sounds is critical. If you're able to pre-mix a tape of effects, you can play them at appropriate moments in the story. Preparation is the key. Have your effects cued up ahead of time so that, with the mere touch of a button, hideous screams can be heard by all. Preparation makes for more drama than having to delay the game while you set up the right sound.

- **Lighting Effects:** The Underworld is, not surprisingly, a place of dim lights and many shadows. With a minimum of effort, you can reproduce this sort of effect for your game of **Oblivion**. Remember, a few well-placed shadows can hide a great many anomalies that might otherwise distract your players from the game.

Avoid high wattages and white light. Multicolored light bulbs have the broadest effect. By arranging multicolored light bulbs in different parts of the room, you can create shadowy areas and still have well-lit "white light" areas where the colors intersect. If you have track lighting, recessed multicolored bulbs work very well. If you can't get multicolored bulbs, cloth draped over lights works just as well (but avoid putting cloth in direct contact with hot bulbs). The key is contrast from low wattage bulbs. Keeping enough low lights to contrast with one another results in plenty of light to see by and plenty of shadows to hide in. Play around with different combinations to determine what works best for your mood and scene.

While candles may be very atmospheric, they should be used extremely sparingly. Recreating the desolation of the Shadowlands in theory is a good thing, but doing so by burning down your site generally has a detrimental effect on a chronicle. Even without candles, though, if you keep your wattage low, avoid direct white light, and experiment with your color schemes, you should be able to find the right combination to create the proper atmosphere for your story.

Props

After you've got a story, players, a place to play and even selected a cool soundtrack to accompany the game, something else is still needed to bring the story to life. This is the point at which props come in. Props for a story don't need to be grandiose or expensive. Most props can be found in your own home or your grandparents' attic.

In most forms of theatre, props play an extensive role. In fact, in modern movies, props can at times overwhelm the viewer, sometimes detracting from the film. In this game, props should be kept relatively simple and should not attract more attention than the story itself. Only a few touches are needed to help a player's imagination fill in the

blanks. Since this is a storytelling game, imagination is of the utmost importance. This is not to say that you should be sparing with props. If you have the available materials, go wild. Just make sure that the props are not the focus of the story. The spotlight should always remain on the characters, not on what surrounds them.

General Props

General props are items that can help you further a story by giving players something that they can physically examine. The Storyteller should be wary of how often physical props are used and what impact they have on the story. If they are allowed to dominate a story, players may begin to rely on them rather than interacting with one another. Be sure to inform players when props will be used in a story. Otherwise, they are likely to disregard an important clue, considering it just another feature of the place you're playing in.

Many items can be used as general props to help enhance your story. Books, jewelry, documents and pieces of artwork are a few examples. These props can be used to actually give information, or they can merely give insight into the character of the person possessing the prop. Sometimes an item has to be represented by an item card, as in the case of weapons. Also, a card may be discreetly attached to an item, giving more information to a player who inspects the item.

Creative and effective usage of general props can make a story more interesting for everyone, particularly if props are used to represent Fetters with plot (as well as character) significance. The important thing is to stay focused and avoid overloading yourself with them. If you come up with an idea for a prop, but are unable to implement it, don't panic — your story can stand on its own. After all, people, not things, make a story.

Personal Props

Personal props, like costumes, are used by players to help distinguish them as their characters. These props can be particularly useful for Narrator characters, especially when Narrators must often change from character to character.

Many different items can be used to help portray a character. Cloaks, jackets, scarves, hats, canes and jewelry are only a few of the accessories that can give a character a distinctive look. You may want to provide certain items to players to aid them in this manner, especially if players are uncertain of the characters they are playing. For example, if you plan a story involving a Renegade gang, you may supply players with matching bandannas to identify them as gang members.

Many personal props can be found right in your own home. Searching through the attics of relatives can reveal old clothing and jewelry. Costume jewelry works best; real jewels can be far too valuable to lend out for a game. Should all else fail, second-hand stores can be great places to pick up a few last-minute props at an affordable price. All manner of clothing, including hats, canes and costume jewelry, can be acquired at such emporiums.

In many stories, not much is needed by way of personal props. Sometimes, only a cane or piece of jewelry can make a character. The most important thing to remember is to have fun with props, avoiding dangerous ones.

No-Nos

Weapons should never be used as props. In addition, props must be understood to be someone's property, not some character's property. If your players start taking home the props that belong to their characters, perhaps it's time to reconsider using props at all. If you chose to go this route, cards (like those used to represent weapons) are best.

Creating Stories

Story creation can be as simple or as detailed as you want. The more effort you put into preparing a story, the smoother it runs when it's executed. There is no small amount of satisfaction to be gained from writing a successful and appreciated story.

Finding the right combination of stimuli to ignite creative thought can be difficult. For some of us, creativity comes naturally. For others, it's more difficult to bring creative aspects of personality to the fore. However, this is exactly what you must do in order to create a good story. Creativity is not generally taught in school. In fact, it's often discouraged. Rediscovering your childhood enthusiasm is one way to find a wellspring of imagination.

Inspiration can come from any source. Magazines, movies, books, theatre, television, friends, family... you get the picture. The challenge is to take what you see and change it into something all your own. Inspiration can be, quite literally, any stimulus that ignites the process of creative thought. Hence, inspiration is very often as dependent on what's without as on what's within. What sends one person's mind racing may bore someone else. You must find the things that inspire you (if you don't already know) and associate with them in order to stoke your creative fires.

Plot

A story's plot is its progression of events. Plot not only involves the machinations of the powers that be, but the machinations of the characters as they pursue their own goals in the story. Plots are essential to the successful progression of the story. They serve as a beginning to, and a guide during, the story.

A story can have any number of plots (see "Story Style," below, for more details on this). These plots should all be wound together with skill and care before the actual game begins. The trick is to have all the pieces of a plot already written in the characters' briefings so they can read about their own respective parts of the overall plot at the game's beginning. Together, the characters' backgrounds compose the main story, and by pursuing their own parts of the story, characters progress the plot as a whole.

During a story, it's often helpful to keep a schedule of events. This is a pre-planned sequence of events (usually initiated by outside forces) that's going to occur regardless of the characters' actions. Typically, characters played by Narrators keep the schedule on track. It is also helpful to integrate occasional Narrator characters into the story to assist the progression of the plot (or plots). These tactics should be used sparingly; otherwise players may grow dependent upon interaction with Narrators instead of with each other. However, occasional Narrator intervention can add a new level of unpredictability and excitement to a story.

Elements of a Story

The elements of a story are best defined by its components or stages. It is often helpful to think of plot elements in terms of tense (past, present and future). In terms of story structure, these elements are the addressed in the opening, climax and resolution. At the beginning of the story, characters reflect on events of their past that have brought them to the story. The story's climax is where the story's plot (or plots) are exposed and dealt with by some or all of the characters. Finally, there's the resolution, where the story comes to a close and hooks for future stories can be laid.

Opening

The opening can be any point from which you choose to begin your story. It can be a gradual, gentle start or a shocking plunge into the world of the Restless. The latter works best if the characters start out as living humans; the former is better for extended chronicles with older wraiths.

At the beginning of a story, each character should have a written synopsis of recent events that "everyone" would be aware of. This provides a basis for your plots, as well as laying down some common ground for characters to discuss. ("Did you hear about that Legionnaire who got cashiered for taking bribes?" "Yeah, real shame about that. He cut me loose a couple of times...." and so on). Furthermore, by establishing common knowledge, you're also helping to set the tone and theme of your game.

The synopses of common knowledge and recent personal events should be brief explanations of the situation at hand. They should be precise and intriguing. These synopses should be the first media through which players get a feel for the story's mood. The synopses should also hint at the story's main theme. You may even wish to foreshadow the plot, but that depends on your personal style.

Climax

When the main plot is on the verge of conclusion, the story is considered at its climax. This usually happens when characters have discovered all they need to know to solve whatever problem faces them and are on the verge of resolving the story. The tension is usually at its highest point at this time. If the opening was staged carefully, and the players are cooperative and imaginative, the climax can be reached with little additional effort on the part of Narrators. However, even the best of plans can be mislaid, or perhaps the Storyteller and Narrators prefer to take a more active role in the progression of your story's plot. Either way, there are times when a Narrator's intervention is warranted. The climax should be the high point of the story, something the players should always anticipate and work toward. However, this element should never be rushed. It's a matter of timing.

Extended chronicles shouldn't have everything wrapped up in a single climax. After all, you need to have something for the Restless to do next week.

Resolution

The story's resolution is where all (or most) of the pieces come together. The resolution should be used as a means of winding the excitement down while cultivating an interest in future stories. Players should always end a story feeling as though

they have accomplished something. They do not have to uncover the big picture; merely knowing they've found another piece of the puzzle is often enough. In *Mind's Eye Theatre*, players often enjoy gathering for a group wrap-up session after a game. Unlike roleplaying games, players of *Oblivion* rarely see all of the action that takes place — they get wrapped up in their own ends, not the group's. During wrap-up sessions, many players look forward to learning more about "the big picture." At the wrap-up, players share their version of the story and, in so doing, give other players an opportunity to see more of the game they just took part in.

Off-Line Gaming

The game doesn't have to end when everyone puts down their character sheets. In-character e-mails, informal discussions at coffeehouses and the like can all serve both as roleplaying exercises and as ways to advance plots. As long as players keep some perspective on this sort of thing (phone calls at 3 A.M. to discuss minor plot points generally signal a need for help), off-line gaming can be a great way to shade the gray areas of your game.

Story Considerations

There are several factors that must be taken into consideration before you can begin scripting a story. The scale, number of players and general character types are all important elements that must be kept in mind. Rampaging Renegades and vicious Risen don't fit well into Stygian political chronicles; pacifist Heretics don't last long in shoot-'em-ups. Tailor your plots to what you have to work with in terms of group, character and setting.

Scale

Scale is the number of people you have playing. Games can range in size from handfuls to hundreds, and you need to ensure that no matter how many wraiths are out there, there's something for everyone potentially to do. Oftentimes, players will set their own plots in motion based on roleplaying and character interaction, but there needs to be a metaplot, a grand scheme that gives everyone a starting point.

Scope

The scope of your story is a very important consideration. Whether the story involves a massive plot to bring back Charon or kidnap an abusive Legionnaire is a matter of scope. Scope boils down to what's won or lost. Scope can be limited by the number of players in the game. You shouldn't always have stories with huge scope; players grow bored with always "saving the world." On the other hand, you should not keep the cast from getting involved in potentially earth-shattering stories. Balance is the key.

Metaplots should have bigger scopes than local plots. Obviously, the more characters involved in a plot, the higher the stakes should be. Don't forget your mortals when creating plots, either. The actions of the living have a huge effect on the dead, in terms of Fetters, Passions and the like. On a more pragmatic note, it's no fun to sit around as a Pathos battery. Make sure your humans have something worthwhile to do, too.

Cast

Another factor to take into consideration is the type of characters cast members portray. The best way to determine this is to ask them. A story usually works best if players are enacting characters they are comfortable with, although it can occasionally be interesting to cast players in roles different from what they're used to playing. This variation in casting should only be done if you think it would be enjoyable for all the players.

An important consideration is whether you are giving players pre-made characters, with complete backgrounds, Attributes and Arcanoi, or if players are allowed to make their own characters. Sometimes the guidelines lie somewhere in-between. Obviously, the easiest of these options is to use pre-made characters. This allows you to customize your story to the characters, tying them to one another to make for a more intriguing plot. The problem with this is that cast members are sometimes disappointed with the characters they get. This can detract from everyone's enjoyment.

Story Style

Style is the method you use in constructing your story. It describes how the subplots tie in with the main plot and how characters interact with the environment you have chosen. Style is the thread from which your story is woven. Without style, a story has no cohesive form and might become boring for players. You need to develop and hone your style so as to be able to craft a finely tuned story, with many layers and intricacies for players to explore.

Main Plot

The main plot, or metaplot, is the root of a story, and any other lesser plots will grow from the main plot. The main plot is what brings characters together, unifying their attention. The main plot of a story should be all-encompassing, in that all characters should be affected by it in at least a minor fashion. The main plot should illuminate every other aspect of the story. Not all of them need be touched by it directly, but each character should be aware of the main plot at least on some peripheral level.

Subplots

In most novels and movies, subplots are just filler material. They are essential to *Mind's Eye Theatre*. Subplots keep characters busy and carry them from moment to moment. They are the stories that are woven around the characters. A story gives players ample opportunities to explore subplots, and due to the unique nature of this sort of game, subplots can be taken as far as the players want to take them.

Each character should be involved in as many subplots as possible. A subplot can be any personal goal a character is trying to accomplish. Subplots should be crafted so as to intermingle with one another, so that characters become embroiled in a web of intrigue.

The more layers of intrigue in a story, the more players enjoy untangling them. Indeed, if your setting is intricate enough, you may find players developing subplots of their own, adding to the confusion. This should be encouraged, because it helps the story grow and gives it a life of its own.

A subplot can sometimes be almost as large in scope as the main plot, the difference being that it is not necessary for everyone to be involved. However, you should take care that the subplot does not override the main plot.

Character Relations

Character interaction is a part of every story and every chronicle. Intricate character interaction is essential to a story. That is not to say that all characters will get along harmoniously — character strife is usually much more interesting. However, making sure that characters relate to one another requires a bit of planning on your part. Making sure that players create backgrounds for their characters helps, as it gives you more material to work with to create common ground for wraiths. Spreading rumors that provide incentive for discussion, trade, and cooperation is another good way to go, as is the inclusion of a nasty villain who will force characters at least to discuss working together.

Multiple Goals

Each of us possesses a multitude of goals and ambitions. Many of them conflict, and we have to choose between them. For instance, you might want to go to the movies on the same day you want to visit a friend. Multiple goals complicate matters, and while in real life that can be bothersome, in this game it only adds to the excitement. The more complicated you can make things, the better.

Complications such as multiple goals give characters depth and keep players busy. A player with several goals is usually occupied throughout the course of a story and is rarely bored. Indeed, if players with multiple goals achieve even one of those goals, they probably leave the story with a sense of accomplishment.

Narration and Storytelling



Now that you have written a story, you need to make it work in a live game. Narrating a story is an art akin to juggling; you have to keep up with all story threads, play judge and make sure that none of the players get bored — you'll be juggling quite a few of them. Narration requires a lot of work and planning, and usually leaves you exhausted. You, however, have a ringside seat to the story and can watch it unfold in its entirety. Because your control of the story is loose (tight control denies player freedom), you may be surprised by how the story twists and changes in the hands of your players. If you do your job well, you will be rewarded with the players' thanks.

Of course, with the great rewards of storytelling comes a great deal of responsibility. You have to initiate and guide the story and present it in an entertaining manner. You, above all people involved, can destroy the story. Even a very good story can be ruined if it's not presented well. If a few required player handouts are missing,

or if players have no idea where the game is taking place, you have failed. It is very important that you prepare every aspect of that story as far ahead of time as possible. If you try to prepare an entire game at the last minute, you'll be stressed out by the time the game begins. The game will suffer heavily from your exhaustion.

Veteran roleplaying Storytellers should take note that running a live game is very different from running old-style roleplaying games. You can no longer sit down an hour before play commences and dream up a quick plot. If you try to do this, your story will have lots of holes. If you change your setting in mid-story, you need to represent the change in some way so players realize where they are without having to ask. Prepare everything in advance, or suffer the folly of sloth.

The main rule to remember when preparing your story is "show, don't tell." You have to present your story so players can make their own impressions of the environment without your impressions being forced on them. Live games work because players can take the lead based on information they discover themselves. If you have not fleshed out your story enough — if you have to tell players what's going on — you might as well be playing a tabletop roleplaying game.

To be a Storyteller, you need to work magic. You have to create the illusion that your players are ghosts, dwelling so close to the "real" world but unable to be a part of it. Fortunately for you, your players will probably cooperate in every way to help you maintain the illusion, but it's up to you to direct their attention from the gamelike aspects of roleplaying.

How to Host a Game

Running an entire chronicle can be exhausting unless you pace yourself. Expect to spend a minimum of an hour per player writing the story and setting everything up. Expect to actually play a story bi-monthly or even monthly. Trying to run a weekly game is very taxing and may result in the eventual death of your chronicle. Don't make your games frequent and tedious, but rare and spectacular.

Storyteller Focus

As a Storyteller, your focus should always be on keeping the game running as smoothly as possible. To ensure that the game doesn't get out of hand, make sure you have enough Narrators. They'll serve to answer players' questions and resolve the majority of inter-player disputes, as your arbitration should only be required in the most extreme circumstances.

More importantly, though, your Narrators will be an integral part of game action. Serving as Shadowguides and Harrowing Masters, Narrators will be in constant interaction with players in all levels of your game. This requires a great deal of commitment from your Narrators, as they'll constantly be on the go, interacting with only a few characters at a time. On the up side, by having your Narrators serving as Shadows, you have an instant conduit for getting information and rumors to characters, as well as a constant source of player feedback on what's going on. Rather than having to cook up a convoluted plot to let characters know that an Anacreon's gone corrupt, you can just have a Shadow whisper it in a wraith's ear. At the same time, if the action slows or people are getting frustrated, having your Narrators constantly on the floor will enable you to pinpoint trouble spots quickly.

Concentrate on where players stand in terms of resolving the plot or solving the mystery you have given them. If they are struggling, drop a few hints and spread a few rumors, then watch your Restless scramble to discover new information. If they are too close to solving the mystery, throw in a red herring or create a new scene on the fly. Improvisation is a potent art, and Storytellers who learn to use it are well-rewarded.

If you are playing in public, you must serve as a buffer between the authorities of the real world and the potential mayhem players can create. Discretion is the better part of valor. Educate players on responsible playing, and do not hesitate to hand out rewards or punishments as the need arises.

Preparation is essential to running a successful story. The greater the preparation, the less you have to worry about maintaining focus. A well-prepared game frees you to enjoy your creation and interact with players, while a poorly prepared game leaves you scrambling to maintain control. When you maintain focus on story elements, the surroundings and your players, you need not fear the results of any game session.

Pre-Game Tasks



here are several things you need to do to set up and run a game of **Oblivion**.

- 1 — Make sure you know the size and scope of your game before anything else; it's the only way to make sure there's enough staff and plot for everyone.
- 2 — Get all of your props and costumes lined up well in advance. These usually require the most legwork and take the most time to round up, so you don't want to be chasing after them last minute.
- 3 — Choose a good core staff and delegate. You can't do everything yourself; don't even try. Find people you trust, and turn them loose.
- 4 — Make sure everyone is working on the same page. A lot of work can be wasted by duplication or misunderstandings. Have everyone aware of what everyone else is doing.
- 5 — Keep a paper trail. Note when tasks are accomplished and where everything is. Keep track of who did well and who didn't. It'll make next time easier.
- 6 — Define everyone's role. Power squabbles and unfinished tasks are both unproductive.
- 7 — Set deadlines and keep to them for all tasks related to the game.
- 8 — Get your essential paperwork done. This includes arranging sites, briefing sheets and plot creation. Don't save this sort of work-intensive thing for the last minute; if there's a screw-up, your whole game may be left high and dry.
- 9 — Pace yourself. If you burn out creating the game, you'll have no fun running it.

Character Creation

It is your role as Storyteller (aided by Narrators) to guide players through the character generation process. It is generally best to have character creation go on off-line, well before your actual game action starts. This enables you to gauge accu-

rately the power level and mood of your game. In addition, character histories will enable you to create plotlines that will force characters to interact. Backgrounds will also allow you to bring in faces, places and items from a wraith's past; always useful if the action starts to flag.

After your players arrive for the game session, you need to introduce them to the basic premise of the game. Your main goal should be to make story contribution as easy as possible for players. If players are beginners, show them the basics, but let them discover the intricacies of the game on their own. Hopefully everyone playing will have at least a basic idea of the rules, but be prepared to field questions and help out beginners.

Start by laying out any briefing sheets you want to use on a table and invite players to look them over. You can pass out character sheets at the same time. Give the players time to look everything over and ask questions. If players can refer to the briefings and their character sheets while they listen to your explanations, they'll understand how things work a lot better.

It's likely that you have certain roles in the story that you need filled. Your story probably has requirements, in terms of characters and setting, that must be understood by all concerned. Even if you don't have specific requirements, you probably have a general idea of the types of characters you need. The best way to deal with this is to request certain players to fill those roles beforehand; usually the extra "oomph" that a precreated character is likely to have (not to mention its obviously central role in upcoming plots) will be enough to make up for the disappointment a player might feel over not being able to create her own character.

If you're running an extended chronicle, odds are that most of your players will simply show up and start playing once you declare things "on line." This makes your job a lot easier — who wants to do briefings at the beginning of every session? — but be careful to catch new players who might get lost in the shuffle. Bringing them into line with what the rest of the game is already doing will make everyone happier than if new players accidentally find themselves swimming upstream against established plots and characters.

Introducing Your Story

When players begin to arrive, you need to give them information. You need to tell them what's happened since the last story (if anything) and should provide goals and motivations for the upcoming evening. Prepare as much information as you can in written form for players to read as they arrive. Here are some handouts that we provide (or you can create) to facilitate your story's introduction.

- **Character Sheets** — You need to have enough of these for all your players. It's wise to have spare sheets on hand, since players, who have their own characters, may forget theirs. In addition, you'll need Shadow sheets, pencils for everyone who's forgotten their own, and cards for special Arcanos powers (such as Glow).

- **Timetable** — (For Narrators only) This sheet contains a chronological list of all events that take place. Timetable sheets are useful for planning complex stories, and help your Narrators coordinate where they have to be when. Events listed might be, "10:00 P.M. — Herald of Smiling Lord arrives and announces war with Jade Empire." Make sure each Narrator has her own copy and go through the events on the handout during your Narrator briefing.

• **Background Briefing** — This is a one-pager that you can create to provide a short background for the important characters of your chronicle. You should include any important events that have occurred, rumors that are circulating throughout the city and important things that have happened in previous games. A new player should be able to pick up this handout and immediately have an idea of what is going on. (Lost players tend to be bored players, and bored players don't come back.) The handout can mention things like what city the chronicle takes place in and the names of the local movers and shakers. Make several copies of this document and give one to each player, or leave several out in the open for players to take.

• **Character Briefing** — Depending upon how thorough your character creation process is, you may need to let individual players know special tidbits that their characters know. It's best to have these written down; even the most talented roleplayers have to resort to their notes every now and then.

Guiding Players

As your players begin to play out the story, it's possible that they may be unsure of themselves. New players in particular need some sort of guidance to help them learn the rules and get used to acting out their characters' actions. Step into a minor character of your story and engage a new player in a challenge to get her used to the rules. The challenge system works well in play, but most people do not immediately understand it until they actually defend themselves in a challenge. Try to let new players win your challenge, as it builds their confidence, and confidence is sorely needed when newcomers play in the same game as more experienced players.

Sometimes cast members also need help with their goals. A story that leans heavily toward investigation may frustrate players who miss one or two vital clues. Eventually, some players may come over to you asking for help. Unless it is a rules question, or you have to clarify some point that a character should know, you might not want to give information away too easily at first. If a player receives immediate assistance from a Storyteller or Narrator, you introduce an omnipresent being into the game. Players may become dependent on you.

Instead of giving direct answers to player questions, encourage players to figure things out for themselves. Later, if a player really does need help, have another Narrator, in the guise of a minor character, assist the player. If another Narrator is not available, you can approach the player and offer aid through your own character (although having another Narrator do it involves a touch of finesse). Pull your assistance off cleanly, and the player will never know you have responded to his plea.

You also need to invent things to do for players who seem bored with the game. These players have usually accomplished or hopelessly failed their goals, or can't find the motivation to pursue a difficult goal. Your best option is to get a bored player involved in another plot, or to make up a customized plot on the spot. If your character mentions a lead to a powerful Artifact that others are looking for, the player may spend time following that lead. Alternatively, giving the bored player a clue that someone else has missed allows you to kill two birds with one stone. It's a good idea to have a library of new plots on hand that you can drop into your chronicle as needed.

Remember to be vigilant for bored players during your first few games; first-time players might not come back if they're bored all evening long. If you don't keep the

players busy with plots, their characters may start soulforging each other into trivets just for something to do. At this point, the game quickly degenerates into a free-for-all. You'll probably find that players stay busy as your chronicle progresses because they spend more time involved in the plots of other players.

Interacting with Cast Members

Your key to interacting with cast members is the minor character known as an extra. An extra can be a pre-generated character already woven into the story, or a character created on the spur of the moment to fix a problem. You rarely need to create a character sheet for your extra; a basic concept is usually enough.

Each character you introduce needs to have an easily identifiable mark so players can recognize which minor character you are playing. A wearable prop, such as a hat, coat, scarf, bandanna or amulet is usually enough. A distinct speech pattern, like an accent, is at least as useful. Remember that the mark needs to be something that you can put on and take off quickly, since you may end up having to switch between several minor characters in an evening's story.

Your extra(s) should be enjoyable to play. During the middle of a story, you may find that you and the Narrators have little to do. You then have a chance to play your bit parts just for fun. Go a little wild. Try to provide some comic relief.

Player Questions

Aside from having a way to deal with players within the context of the story, you need to handle players' questions outside the story. During the first half-hour of a game, it's a good idea to keep a Narrator "out of game" to answer any questions players might have. When players step out of character to ask questions, you don't want them in the main playing area. Set the "outside" Narrator up in another room. The most important thing to remember when interacting with players is to never remind them they are playing a game; addressing a Narrator as a Narrator does just that.

You may occasionally need to impart information that a character cannot offer. You have to provide such information as discreetly as possible without distracting players from their characters. Shadows are the best way to go about doing this; remember that they may have access to the Spectres' hive mind if you need to explain where the info came from.

If you want to be stylish about offering game information to players, you can prepare notes for Narrators to hand to players who discover things. You can also put notes in closed envelopes where clues might be found. You can write requirements on the outside an envelope, requirements that must be met before the player may look at the clue within.

One thing you want to avoid when dealing with players is letting them overuse Narrators. Players may try to use Narrators as messengers, to summon other characters, or to try new and interesting abuses of Arcanoi. If a player asks for such favors too often, Narrators can simply refuse their help. Especially in *Oblivion*, with the added tasks of Shadowguiding and running Harrowings, Narrators are simply in too short a supply to allow them to become hostages to characters or roles.

Working with Narrators

As a Storyteller, you can't do everything yourself. It's not possible. No matter how good a Storyteller you are, you're going to need the help of Narrators (unless, perhaps, you have only five or six players). If you try to run the whole story, you will quickly become overwhelmed. It's best to delegate tasks and let your Narrators make judgment calls.

Ideally, you, as Storyteller, should not have to deal with players very much (unless you establish yourself as a Narrator as well as Storyteller). You should wander around and observe to make sure the story is proceeding well. Players should learn to go to Narrators with their questions. A player should refer to you only if a Narrator has no idea how to handle a question.

To ensure that Narrators understand what's going to happen in the story, you should meet with them early in the evening. If no one but you knows what's going on, Narrators aren't much use. You should assign tasks to Narrators at this time. For example, you can ask a Narrator to provide a clue to a character, but let the Narrator work out how and when it's delivered.

Narrators need to keep you informed of their rulings and of story events. Avoid reversing a decision that a Narrator has made. Doing so makes Narrators seem indecisive and leads players to doubt them. If you want to run a large game, you are going to need assistants, and you have to learn to communicate with them effectively.

The Teeming Hordes

For **Oblivion**, the one thing that you will need is a large cast of willing Narrators. There is simply more for Narrators to do in **Oblivion** than in any other **Mind's Eye Theatre** game, and if you underpopulate your Narrative staff, you shortchange your players by creating long lines for Harrowings and few opportunities for Shadow interaction. Do whatever it takes to make sure that you have enough Narrators, or your story will fall apart. While players can do Static Tests on their own for things like Pathos gain, there's only so much that they can do to make up for Narrators' absence.

Pacing the Story

More often than not, a story does not run according to schedule. It either drags late into the night, or cast members work too quickly and become bored with their accomplishments. It's during times like these that you need to reach into your bag of tricks and adjust the pace of the story.

Dealing with stories that are running too long is, thankfully, relatively simple. It's easy to push on the accelerator. You can start by doling out clues and information through character contacts and new props. One of the simplest tools you can have in your repertoire is a number of characters to throw into the adventure. Simply introduce a character who has the tools to help solve the problem, but for a price.

Prolonging play time is a little more tricky than reducing it. Prolonging play time means prolonging the story, but if the story is complete, you have to make up new events in the spot. However, instead of creating an entirely new plot, you might be able to extend the "finished" story by going on past its logical conclusion. Extend-

ing stories works very well if you have a group of Narrators who are flexible, creative and who like to work "on the run."

If you foresee the story ending early, there are ways of prolonging it by distracting players. Essentially, you introduce subplots in order to pull characters off the beaten path. If you have a chance, work out one or two subplots for every story.

Try not to overuse any particular devices for prolonging a story. The best way to slow players down is to present them with something new. Invent a bizarre new Artifact, or have a Doppelganger infestation. One of the more unusual tricks to use while improvising is to create a set of events with no obvious explanation. Then listen to the explanations your players propose and choose one to be the case, or base your explanation on the theory you like best. While this tactic may seem cheesy, some absolutely amazing stories can be developed this way.

Rescue 911

In *Mind's Eye Theatre*, the Storyteller and Narrators have only limited control over what occurs in the story. While you can often predict human behavior to know where a story might lead, things never work out as planned. Players have a tendency to ignore old goals, creating new ones without a second thought. While such situations can be disconcerting, it's not always a bad thing.

Unforeseen plot turns are, in fact, what *Mind's Eye Theatre* is all about. No other game is so open or free. No other game is so full of possibilities and surprises. No other game lets players be as creative or have as much control. The trick is to use what the players give you, instead of fighting with them.

If players generate new plots, you can continue them in the next story, providing you with new material upon which to build. If you let players run with what they come up with, your story may go on for some time. While the story may go off on a tangent, headed toward no foreseeable conclusion, you can usually apply finesse to work things out. The hardest part is knowing when to say "no" and when to stop destructive subplots in their tracks. The rule of thumb is, if a new direction adds depth to the story, entertains people and doesn't get in the way, let it run its course. As with all things, though, people can go too far. The following are some signs indicating that events might be getting out of control:

- Characters begin attacking everything that moves for no obvious reason.
- There is excessive character "death" during a game.
- A key antagonist is killed, disabled, captured or otherwise prevented from becoming a key figure in the story.
- Important items or clues are destroyed, discarded or stolen.
- Gangs of Renegades numbering a dozen or more start hanging out in the Citadel and dictating Hierarchy policy.
- The moral center of the game (i.e., the struggle against Oblivion) is discarded.

Try to avoid halting the story altogether. Work within the story to put things right. Once a player puts a plan into motion, you can add elements to his plan which cause it to fail. Only when things look bleak, and you have tried in vain to fix story problems, should you introduce the *deus ex machina* ending. Essentially a plot hammer, the D.E.M. should be reserved for those moments when the chronicle needs to

be manhandled back into some semblance of playability. Use a plot hammer too often, and players will feel that they're being controlled too tightly. Use it too seldom, and characters can run amuck.

Good uses of the plot hammer include killing off problem characters, introducing a powerful outsider who'll force characters to cease pointless internal squabbling, bringing in an overwhelming threat that dictates that everyone work together to stop it, or, in a last resort, stopping the game until you've had time to regroup and your players have had a chance to calm down. Also, the downtime will allow you to introduce plot elements via e-mail or conversations with players that will serve to prevent recurrences of trouble situations.

Laying Down the Law

It's your responsibility to ensure that players are not a hazard to others, including people who are not involved in the game. It is mandatory that the normal rules of social interaction be adhered to strictly. Most players will probably work with you in this regard. However, from time to time, there are those who prove disruptive to other players and the environment where the game is being played.

Many times this disruption occurs by accident. However, there may be instances when players get out of hand on purpose. If such a situation presents itself, it's not considered bad taste to remove the offender from your game. It is, after all, your game and your creation. The integrity of your game should be preserved for the enjoyment of other players. The integrity of the game should also be upheld in the minds of those who do not play or understand *Mind's Eye Theatre*.

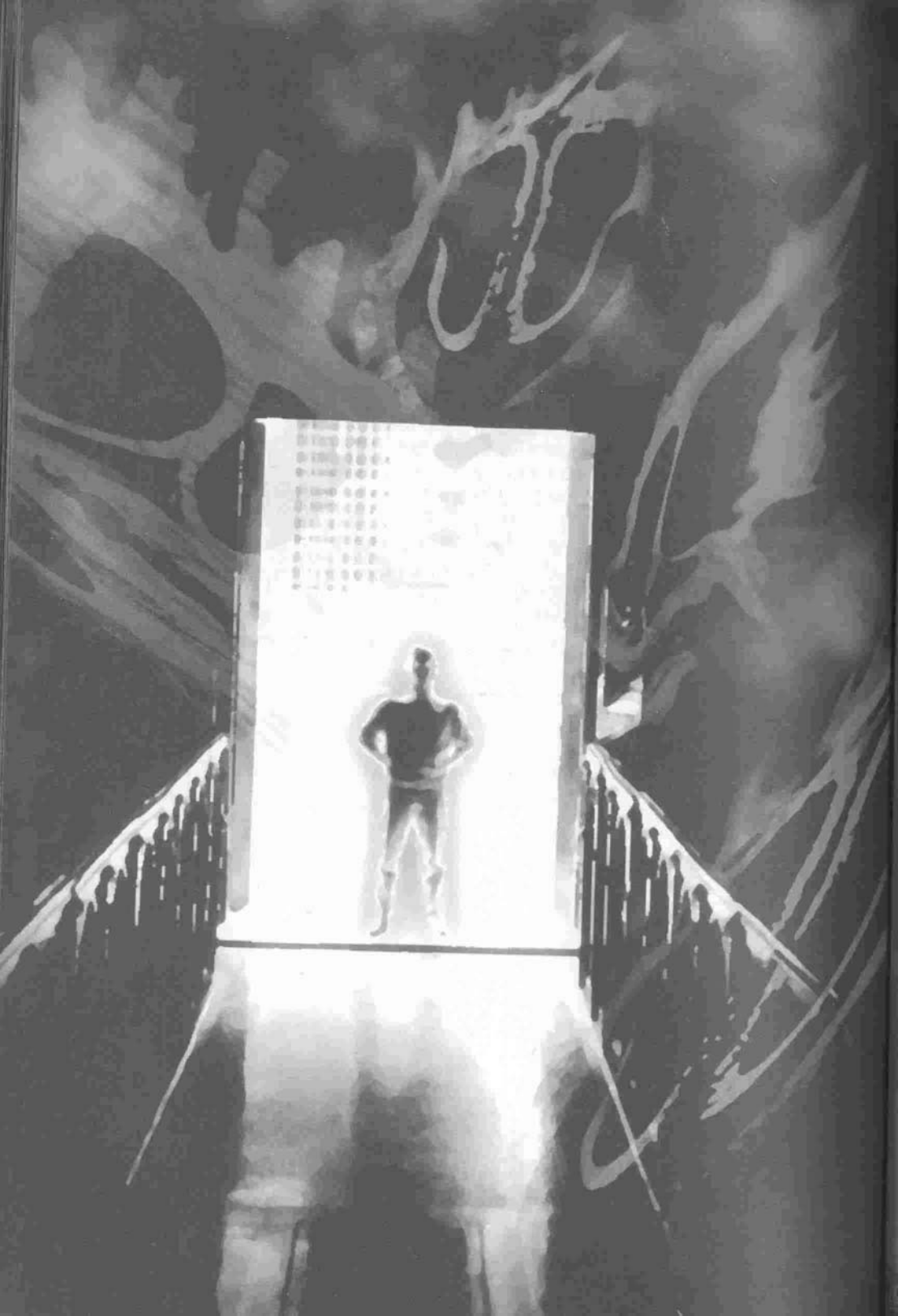
Resolving Arguments

As Storyteller (and to a lesser degree as a Narrator), you have final word in any dispute that may arise between players. It is your responsibility to maintain peace between players to insure the smooth flow of the story and its enjoyment by all.

Players should be given the opportunity to speak their minds on a situation in which they disagree. While it is suggested that you listen to a player's grievances, remember that your decision is final and must be adhered to by all concerned. It's best to combine an understanding ear and a firm hand. Keep your wits about you, and your players will respect you for it. If a player's problems prove a disruption to the story, they may have to be put on hold and dealt with after the night's session.

Breaking the Rules

The rules are yours to use and abuse as you see fit. The novelist Richard Bach once said, "*Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they're yours.*" Do not limit yourself to this set of rules. Your concept of the way **Oblivion** should be played may change constantly. Bend or break the rules to your liking. The rules serve the story; the story does not serve the rules. If you come upon a situation that isn't covered by the rules, don't panic — improvise. Improvising rules involves applying common sense to a situation. Don't be afraid of going against the grain in such cases. By playing this game, you are exploring a new frontier in roleplaying. It is your duty to test the limits of **Mind's Eye Theatre**.



Chapter Eight: The Risen

Character Creation



Risen is a wraith whose Passions have provided enough impetus to allow her to cross the Shroud and reanimate her corpse. Obviously, there are some differences between a Risen and a normal wraith, the chief being which side of the Shroud they dwell on. There are others, though, and it is a good thing that Risen are so rare. Too many fall prey to their Shadows and wreak Skinlands havoc, which is why the Hierarchy has made attempting to Rise illegal. Fortunately, few wraiths have the

combination of incentive, talent and training that goes into making a Risen from an average Restless.

Risen still have the innate abilities of Deathstight, Lifesight and Heightened Senses. These abilities can sometimes be a detriment to a Risen wraith, as they make it impossible for him to ignore the pain and suffering of the waking world. A Risen's Shadow will eagerly take advantage of the ability to point out such misery up close, not to mention the differences between the vibrantly alive denizens of the Skinlands and the Risen himself. For this reason, Risen gain Angst much more quickly than regular wraiths; all Temporary Angst gains from either Dark Passions or Arcanoi are doubled for Risen.

A Risen's Shadow does not dwell within the body to which the wraith has returned. Rather, it exists outside of the host body in an object (or an animal) called a Conduit.

Generally one of the wraith's most important Fetters, the Conduit normally holds the Risen's Shadow (though it can still communicate telepathically with the Psyche). However, when Catharsis occurs, it is the Psyche that is imprisoned in the Conduit; the switch is instantaneous. A Conduit has 10 Health Levels, just like a Risen, but if a Conduit is damaged, the Risen's ability to heal is seriously compromised.

The Risen also have one additional Arcanos to learn — Fascinate — which only they can possess. Artifacts and Status have no meaning for the Risen, as Artifacts don't travel to or function in the Skinlands, and a wraith's Status at the local Necropolis doesn't mean anything to vampires, werewolves or mortals in the society of the Skinlands.

To make up for the fact that they lose certain basics of wraithly existence by crossing the Shroud, the Risen are able learn vampiric Disciplines (See **Laws of the Night**). However, only Celerity, Fortitude, Obfuscate and Potence can be learned or purchased through the use of Negative Traits (Higher levels can be purchased with experience). On the other hand, certain Arcanoi are denied to the Risen.

Arcanoi and Disciplines

Starting and Prohibited Arcanoi



Any Risen must have Puppetry as one of his initial Arcanoi, and must also take at least basic levels of Inhabit or Embody. These Arcanoi aren't necessarily helpful to a Risen in his trans-Shroudal existence. Instead, they represent the knowledge needed to become Risen in the first place. This leaves a new Risen with an additional Arcanos slot to fill; Disciplines, however, can only be purchased with Negative Traits.

Some of the Arcanoi don't function as well or are distorted upon entering the Skinlands, while others just plain don't work. Risen can use Castigate, Fatalism, Flux, Intimation, Keening, Mnemosynis and Usury, all of which function normally in the Skinlands. Argos, Embody, Phantasm, Moliate, Outrage and Puppetry cannot be used at all by a Risen. This holds true even if the wraith knew those Arcanoi before Rising. They simply don't function in the Skinlands. Pandemonium and Inhabit can be used by Risen, but at a cost of one additional Pathos per use. Arts which are free to wraiths in the Shadowlands cost one Pathos for a Risen, and so on.

A wraith who is Shellriding does not actually dissolve into the machine being "ridden" or controlled. Rather, the effect occurs from a distance, though another wraith with Inhabit can detect the Risen's influence. While certain Inhabit Arts may seem useless to a Risen, they must all be learned in order nonetheless. (**Developer's note:** Before the howling starts, it's a question of theory vs. practice. Besides, the Risen will probably be returning to the Shadowlands at some point, and the knowledge acquired as a Risen will be useful then.)

There is no Guild for the Risen-exclusive Arcanos Fascinate, but many Risen simply seem to acquire the knack as they wander the Skinlands. As becoming Risen is strictly against Hierarchy law, even wraiths who Rise and then return to the Shadowlands don't pass on their knowledge. However, that doesn't keep new Risen from learning Fascinate on their own.

Serendipity

There is another Risen-only Arcanos, known as Serendipity. Serendipity is the art of being in the right place at the right time, of making fortuitous discoveries, of knowing what to do with happy accidents. Risen with this art are able to make sense of the thousand little coincidences that happen every day, and divine which connections are important and which are not. More importantly, they seem to find a way to always take advantage of those coincidental opportunities that others let slip by.

However, like Lifeweb, Serendipity is impossible to model accurately in *Mind's Eye Theatre*. With that in mind, it has been excised from *Oblivion*. Storytellers who want to use Serendipity as a Narrator-only Arcanos are welcome to, but it presents too many difficulties in its original form to be made a part of regular gameplay.

Fascinate

Fascinate is the ability of some Risen to affect the minds of the Quick by inserting some thought or compulsion that the person cannot banish. It is similar to Keening, although it works with simple thoughts instead of pure emotion. This ability is frequently used when a Risen's Passions can be fulfilled by coercing a mortal into performing some action he might be already inclined to take.

The use of Fascinate is a very intimate interaction with a mortal. To use Fascinate, the Risen must make eye contact with the target, and the ability is easier to use if the two are not alone. Also, Fascinate will not cause the mortal to do anything contrary to his Nature. Instead it is a tool of persuasion and manipulation, wearing on the target's nerves and will until he complies.

Innate Abilities

- **Deja Vu:** Most of us are surrounded by the faces of strangers, many of which never worm their way into our recollection. By using this ability, the Risen can make a person remember having seen her before, regardless of whether this is true or not.

To use *Deja Vu*, the player makes a Social Challenge against the target. If the target had seen the Risen before, and the Risen was successful in her challenge, the target will remember the Risen. If the target has never seen the Risen before, and she was successful in her challenge, the target will feel that he knows her from somewhere, though he can't quite remember where. In the latter instance, the target is at down one Trait on all Social Challenges with the Risen.

- **Tuning In:** By whistling or humming a sequence of notes, a Risen can implant the tune in the target's mind so that she can't get it out of her head. The victim will have trouble concentrating on tasks, and may well be driven to act odd acts in order to get the song out of her head.

The player must enter an Extended Social Challenge with the target. Each success represents an hour during which the target will hear the tune in the back of his mind when not actively concentrating on something else. The effect of this constant background noise is to make the target down two Traits on all Social Challenges during the Arcanos' duration.

- **Distraction:** The wraith can make the target suddenly remember something else that she has to attend to, breaking her concentration, if only briefly.

Distraction essentially works as a method of interrupting another's social interactions or challenges. At an appropriate (or inappropriate) moment, the Risen enters a Social Challenge against the target. This challenge supersedes any challenge the target may already be involved in, as it is an attempt to break the target's concentration.

If the Risen wins the challenge, the target becomes distracted and automatically fails at whatever task she was attempting to accomplish. If the target was involved in some sort of challenge, she loses the challenge unless she spends a Will-power Trait to counteract the Arcanos' effects.

Basic

- **Remembrance:** This art insures that the target will remember a simple thought, phrase, object or errand. A Risen who has mastered this art need never fear that those he uses it on will forget those simple things like telephone numbers, umbrellas or addresses. However, Remembrance is limited to simple concepts, and will not serve to make a target remember any concept that cannot be described in a simple sentence.

This art is not always obviously useful, but with a little bit of creativity it can be quite effective. Using Remembrance to insert a particular address of which the target has no previous knowledge or memory can be an excellent way to lure the target to that site. Conversely, a Risen with a Fetter in danger may use Remembrance to cause the individual to remember something about the Fetter that makes it worth saving.

The player enters an Extended Social Challenge with the target. The number of successes gained determines the amount of time that the target will focus on this matter. With one success, the target will remember for around five minutes or so. With two successes, the target will remember for a day. With three successes, the target will remember for a week, while with four successes, the target will remember for a month or more.

This art costs one Pathos Trait.

- **Charge of Duty:** The Risen can give her target a simple, one-concept statement that he must take to heart, so long as it is both relevant and in tune with her Nature. For example, this art could be used on a woman who feels guilty over the fact that she has been neglecting her child. The idea that she should be spending time with her daughter instead of drinking at bars and clubs could be successfully implanted in this case, as the notion is already in her mind. In actuality, this art is a method of taking subconscious urges and making them conscious (as well as borderline compulsive)

The player enters an Extended Social Challenge with the target. The number of successes reflects how embedded and the strength of the idea in the target's mind. There is no Pathos cost for this art.

Intermediate

- **Driving Urge:** With this art the Risen can implant an obsession on a mortal, related to undertaking a simple, repetitive duty. The duty cannot be anything that directly puts the mortal into harm's way, or that would cause harm to anyone close to the target. Otherwise, though, the sky's the limit. A Risen with the art of Driving Urge could drive a mortal to an obsessive behavior, similar to Lady Macbeth's washing the imaginary blood on her hands, or condition her target so that he stopped by a particular building to check on it every day.

Using Driving Urge requires the investment of one Willpower Trait and one point of Pathos, and gives the Risen a point of Temporary Angst. To implant an obsession, the Risen enters an Extended Social Challenge with the target. Every success implanting the idea into the target's mind more and more thoroughly.

Obsessions implanted by Driving Urge do not ever wear off, but they can be removed through creative uses of Dominate or Mnemosynis.

Advanced

- **Target Lock:** Target Lock fixates its subject on one item or person to the point of mania. It can create stalkers out of mild-mannered accountants or focus normally level-headed citizens on the tiniest minutiae. It creates in its target an obsession that mirrors the Risen's own.

Target Lock costs one Pathos point and one Willpower Trait. Furthermore, the Risen also acquires two Temporary Angst points. To use this art, the Risen must enter an Extended Social Challenge with the target and vocalize the obsession she is attempting to insinuate into her victim's mind. Each success further implants and entrenches the obsession while also determining how complex the implanted obsession can be.

A mortal or vampire acting under Target Lock will seem single-minded and obsessive, paying no heed to much besides the implanted impulse driving him. Such behaviors will be obvious to anyone who knows the target, but little short of Mnemosynis or Dominate will serve to "cure" the victim.

Most denizens in the World of Darkness have no idea as to Fascinate's existence, and will put down its effects to either other sorts of supernatural meddling or mundane mental disorders.

Learning Vampiric Disciplines

The Risen have the ability to learn certain vampiric Disciplines. Some even have an innate talent for one Discipline or another. Not all Disciplines can be learned; those that can are Celerity, Fortitude, Obfuscate and Potence. It should be noted that, due to the nature of Lifesight, Risen cannot use Obfuscate to hide from other wraiths. Instead, Lifesight will show wraiths the aura of an Obfuscated Risen (or, for that matter, vampire).

Instead of using blood to fuel these abilities, Risen use Pathos. When a Risen's Shadow is in control, it may use any Discipline that the wraith knows, fueling them with Angst instead of Pathos.

Risen characters only rarely start with Disciplines instead of Arcanoi, but they can learn Disciplines as they go along.

The Risen and the Conduit



he most essential thing to a Risen is his Conduit, the item or thing that houses his Shadow. Each Conduit is unique to each Risen. Most often the Conduit is one of the Risen's Fetters, something that exerted a particularly powerful hold over the wraith in life. The Conduit is usually a small, portable item, as the Risen must always have the Conduit nearby. As this is rather

difficult if the Fetter in question is something as large and immobile as an office building, things like pocketwatches, coins, photographs, pieces of jewelry and the like are most common. Some Risen decide to use animals as their Conduits. These cases are rare indeed, as it takes a talented and willing Puppeteer to replace the animal's spirit with the wraith's Shadow.

An item becomes a Conduit when the wraith passes out of the Shadowlands and becomes a Risen. At this time, the wraith's Psyche *should* find itself in its old body, while its Shadow should take up residence in the Conduit. It doesn't always happen this way; sometimes things get reversed. Plus, there's nothing to keep the two from flip-flopping places during Catharsis.

If a person other than the Risen holds the Conduit, the Risen can use Arcanoi on that person that normally require physical touch or eye contact. The Arcanos in question must be one that the Risen can normally use in the Skinlands, such as Usury or Fascination.

It's almost ironic, given the battle of wills wraiths must constantly fight with their Shadows, that the first thing a Risen must do is find her Conduit, which holds the consciousness of her Shadow. Without it her Corpus will slowly disintegrate, generally over a period of a few days. Stranger still is the fact that the same holds true for the Shadow, for when the Shadow is in control, it possesses the body and the Psyche is trapped in the Conduit. However, the Shadow is unable to destroy the Conduit, and will suffer unbearable pain if separated from it.

A Risen must protect his Conduit at all times. If the Conduit is damaged, the Risen's link to the Shadowlands is compromised, and her ability to function and heal in the Skinlands is jeopardized. As such, most Risen are exceedingly protective of their Conduits. It is one of the ironies of the Risen's experience that they usually spend most of their energies protecting that which houses their Shadows. Each Conduit has 10 Health Levels, corresponding to a Risen's own 10 Corpus Levels, regardless of the Conduit's physical form. A Conduit in the form of a glass pendant is no less difficult to destroy than one in the form of a steel pencil case or a black cat. If the Conduit is damaged, the Risen is also wounded; a Risen can have no more Corpus Levels than its Conduit has Health Levels. A Risen whose Conduit has taken seven levels of damage can have no more than three Corpus Levels until he repairs his Conduit. If aggravated damage is done to the Conduit, the Risen will also take aggravated damage equal to that done to the Conduit. When all 10 Health Levels are gone, the Conduit is destroyed, and the Risen falls into a Destruction Harrowing.

A Conduit cannot be healed or repaired normally. In order to repair the Conduit, the Risen must spend a Willpower Trait and a Pathos point and gain a Temporary Angst point. No more than one Health point may be restored to a Conduit per day, and the Risen must Slumber before attempting any further repairs.

It is very important for a Risen to keep his Conduit nearby. Not only is damage to the Conduit a grave risk for any Risen, but mere separation from the Conduit is damaging. If a Risen is separated from his Conduit, he will obsess on recovering it to the exclusion of all else, and with good reason. For each hour the Risen has no physical contact with his Conduit, he loses one level of Pathos. That loss cannot be recovered until he is able to get in contact with his Conduit once more. Indeed, without his Conduit, it is impossible for a Risen to harvest Pathos at all.

If a Risen is separated from his Conduit for more than 24 hours, his body will start to decompose at the rate of one Corpus Level per day. This damage cannot be healed, and does affect his ability in challenges. If the Conduit is not recovered before his Corpus reaches zero, his Psyche immediately plunges into Oblivion without even the last chance of a Destruction Harrowing.

A Note on Conduits

Naturally, some players up against Risen characters will see the Conduit as a golden opportunity for taking opponents out with a minimum of fuss. Snatch the Conduit, smash the Risen — easy as pie. For a variety of reasons, though, Narrators should not allow this to happen.

The first reason, and perhaps the most important, is that very few people know anything about Risen; most people don't even know that they exist. Of those who do know that wraiths can pull themselves out of the ground, a vast majority have no idea of how the process works, and wouldn't know what a Conduit was if it leaped up and bit them in a sensitive area. Simply put, knowledge about Risen is extremely esoteric and extraordinarily difficult to come by. Nor will any Risen be eager to add to that body of knowledge. Most Risen pass themselves off successfully as vampires, with the auras surrounding their Conduits blending into the auras of their corpses.

Second of all, even if there is an attempted Conduit-napping (to coin a phrase), neither the Risen or the Shadow will let it go without a fight. The separation of Risen and Conduit is extremely painful to both Shadow and Psyche, and the two will cooperate to avoid that separation.

Finally, Risen have the innate ability to sense where their Conduits are at all times, and even to obtain vague images of the Conduit's surroundings. A Risen in search of her Conduit has the right to ask a Narrator what impressions she's receiving from her Conduit and what direction it lies in as frequently as the Narrator deems appropriate, and players who hide Conduits from or lie to Narrators about the disposition of Conduits they've taken should be disciplined severely. After all, this is what's quaintly known as cheating.

Health, Combat and the Risen



The bodies of the Risen are dead. They do not tire normally, though Risen may seek Slumber for other reasons. Immune to the necessities of mortal existence, Risen do not need to eat or drink, nor do they breathe. In addition, Risen are immune to extremes of temperature, feeling neither heat nor cold. Unlike vampires, they do not have to worry about their blood freezing (most Risen are filled with embalming fluid, a.k.a. antifreeze, anyway).

Risen also do not feel pain the way living creatures do. They register the sensation of pain, but it doesn't occur to their brains that they should mind. Pain is a distant sensation to a Risen, and this enables them to continue functioning long after suffering damage that would leave even a vampire whimpering on the floor in



agony. Only aggravated damage done to a Risen or her Conduit will produce actual, immediate pain. (Note: Risen will also feel very uncomfortable if they ingest anything, though the sensation is more akin to incapacitating nausea than pain.)

Risen can be deadly in combat. Physical pain does not slow them much until the point where they suffer actual structural damage. While Risen do feel pain in an abstract way, it is merely sensory input to them as opposed to crippling agony. A broken arm does not mean intense pain to a Risen; it simply means that the arm in question may no longer bend well enough to be useful at the moment. Furthermore, since Risen are capable of such rapid healing, even shattered limbs and the like rarely slow them down for long, so long as they have Pathos upon which to draw.

Only a few things cause a Risen aggravated damage: fire, werewolf claws and teeth, and vampire fangs and claws from the use of Protean. Silver, holy water, garlic and other traditional means of defending oneself against a supernatural being do not cause aggravated damage to Risen, nor do regular rounds of ammunition.

Risen and Damage

Since pain will not incapacitate her, a Risen will *not* suffer a penalty to any of her Physical Challenges or actions when she has taken damage unless that damage is aggravated. After all, a bullet to the gut is only a high-velocity impact when internal bleeding and ruptured organs are no longer concerns. On the other hand, a Risen who's had her leg muscles carbonized by a bath from a flame-thrower will not be able to move effectively until healed. In most cases, though, a Risen is capable of continuing to fight full tilt until her body literally falls apart.

The health of a Risen is measured by her Corpus rating, effectively giving her up to 10 Health Levels. A Risen's Corpus rating corresponds to the health of her body. Damage to a Risen's Corpus can be healed by spending Pathos, and a Risen is

The Effects of Aggravated Damage

# of Aggravated Wound Levels	State	Effect
2	Bruised	Must spend an additional Trait for all Physical Challenges
4	Wounded	The Risen loses all ties
6	Crippled	Loses all ties, plus must spend an additional Trait for all Physical Challenges
8	Incapacitated	Loses all ties, plus must spend an additional Trait for all challenges.

capable of restoring one Corpus point per turn. If a Risen is wounded while her Shadow is in control, the Shadow can effect healing by spending Angst instead of Pathos.

If a Risen loses all her Corpus Levels but still has Pathos, she is considered to be unconscious, and will lie unmoving until such a time as she is able to heal her Corpus. During this apparently quiet time, the Risen must make a Static Challenge, as a bitter struggle for control is going on between the Psyche and the Shadow. The winner of the challenge will take control of the body when the struggle is over; the loser is banished to the Conduit. If the player wins, the Psyche maintains its hold on the body; if she loses, the Shadow takes over. Sometimes the Psyche will even voluntarily relinquish control to the Shadow if the Shadow appears to have a better chance of extricating their shared Corpus from whatever predicament it is now in.

The length of time a Risen is unconscious varies. When determining how long his character will be out, the player must enter an Extended Static Physical Challenge. The number of successes gained in the Extended Challenge determines how quickly the Risen awakens. With five or more successes, the Risen is only unconscious for a minute; with four successes, the Risen is out for three minutes; with three successes, the Risen is unconscious for five minutes; with two successes, it takes 10 minutes for the Risen to become conscious again; with one success, a Risen can come to in an hour; with no successes, the Risen needs six hours of game time to recover.

An unconscious Risen is indistinguishable from a corpse, and may well be carted off to a morgue before anyone realizes the mistake.

A Risen who has burned all of her Pathos but retains at least one level of Corpus undergoes Catharsis. When in command, the Shadow draws upon the untouched reserves of Temporary Angst to fuel her actions. Many hunters who thought that they'd worn down a Risen to a "safe" level have experienced unpleasant — and fatal — surprises. It is one thing for a hunter to deal with a weary, dispassionate Risen, entirely another to face a Risen controlled by a bloodthirsty and potent Shadow.

If a Risen loses all her Corpus Levels and Pathos, her tenure as a Risen has ended, and her body will revert to the state it was in before the wraith became a Risen. Complete destruction of a Risen's heart or brain will also destroy her, though this task is easier said than done. Once a Risen is destroyed, her Psyche plunges

straight into a Destruction Harrowing. If she survives this, she returns to the Shadowlands and can no longer become Risen. If she fails, she is utterly annihilated.

Slumber and Healing

Since Risen have physical bodies and cannot fade into their Fetters, they have difficulty Slumbering. In order to achieve Slumber, a Risen must be in physical contact with one of his Fetters for the full eight hours of Slumber. If contact is broken before the eight hours Slumbering normally takes, the Risen will wake prematurely and will not gain the full benefit of his rest.

The benefits of Slumbering are reduced for Risen. To heal normal damage through Slumber, a Risen must enter an Extended Static Physical Challenge with a tie treated as a loss and thereby stopping further benefits. One Corpus Level is regained for each successful challenge.

Otherwise, normal damage can be healed at a rate of one Pathos Trait per level. Aggravated damage can be healed in the same manner that normal wraiths use.

If a Risen's Conduit is destroyed, whichever of the wraith's personalities was inhabiting it at the time is destroyed as well. The remaining personality in the animated body is now free of the other half, though only for the relatively few hours it will take to decompose.

Travel Between the Worlds



Some Risen are strong enough to travel back and forth between the Skinlands and the Shadowlands. Such travel is risky, and comes at a high price, but there are those who are willing to pay when it suits their purposes. If a Risen wishes to return for whatever reason to the Shadowlands, she would be well advised to find a safe place to store her body for the duration of her journey. Returning to the Shadowlands, she will leave her body in the Skinlands where it begins decomposing naturally.

The physical representation of the Risen's Conduit remains in the Skinlands, but the Shadow reintegrates with the Psyche. To travel to the Shadowlands, a Risen must spend two points of Pathos and then make a Static Physical Challenge. If she is successful, she returns to the Shadowlands and gains a point of Temporary Angst. To return to the Skinlands, a Risen visiting the Shadowlands must once again attempt

to meld with her body using Skinriding. In addition, she must again spend two Pathos points to break through the Shroud and make another Static Physical Challenge. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the return to the Skinlands is successful, but the Psyche will find itself in the Conduit and the Shadow will assume control of the shared body. Also, the Shadow will gain one point of Temporary Angst from the Psyche losing the challenge.

Spark of Death for the Risen



While the character creation process for a Risen is mostly identical to that for a wraith, there are a few differences tacked onto the end. Risen do not get Backgrounds, nor do they get Influences.

On a slightly different level, there is the question of appearance. The Risen are physical beings, and their appearance is tied to their body. The wounds that killed a Risen will appear as scars on her body. A player who is taking a Risen character needs to decide if others will be able to see the scars of her death or whether they are hidden from view. She also needs to decide what her Risen character looks like: Is she still wearing the half-decomposed clothes that she was buried in? Is her skin a light-blue/whitish tint from having embalming fluid in her veins and being buried for a while? All these appearances are important to allow roleplaying to flourish between other players and yourself.

Becoming Risen

Existing wraith characters may choose, with Storyteller permission, to become Risen. Assuming the wraith meets all of the Arcanos requirements, she can petition a Storyteller to become Risen. If her character's body is still more or less intact, and she can convince her Shadow (played by a Narrator) that crossing the Shroud would be a good idea, the only thing standing in the way of Rising is a Static Physical Challenge, along with the investment of two Pathos and one Willpower Trait.

Mind you, the Shadow will drive a hard bargain for its cooperation, anything from being guaranteed "frolic" time to the destruction of a single Fetter. While most Shadows would love the opportunity to do damage in the Skinlands, they will play hard to get and attempt to wring as many concessions as possible from the Psyche before relenting.



Chapter Nine: Others

Humans

*What we wanted was: consolation
the hand of strangers, help for pain*

What we wanted was: to be sure no friends were lost in vain

— Oysterband, “All That Way For This”



Mortal humans are an essential element of **Oblivion**. If nothing else, they're all potential ghosts. More importantly, they help define wraiths' Passions and Fetters. Without loved ones to protect, murderers to deal with, contractors seeking to tear down Haunts, friends to assist and enemies to bedevil, wraiths lose much of their purpose and definition.

With that in mind, it's vital to have plenty of humans in any game of **Oblivion**. Characters can later “graduate” to become wraiths if they wish (though the focus should be on staying alive, after all), but in the meantime there should be plenty of normal human beings running around to interact with the wraiths. Both players and Narrators should be involved in the human side of things as well.

Human Character Creation

Creating a human character operates in more or less the same fashion as wraith character creation. You should have a concept for your human character, as well as a Nature and Demeanor. Humans also get Attribute and Ability Traits, along with

Willpower. They do not get (obviously) Arcanoi, nor do they have Pathos, Angst, Backgrounds, Passions, Fetters or a Shadow. Humans do get, however, Influence Traits, which demonstrate how much sway they have over the mortal world. In addition, mortals can purchase Numina, special powers which allow them to exert a bit of supernatural influence of their own.

Note: If you are intending to cross **Oblivion** over with **Masquerade** or other **Mind's Eye Theatre** games, you may wish to use the Hunter creation rules in **Antagonists**, p. 34 instead of the mortal creation rules given here.

Mortal Character Creation Chart

Step One: Character Concept – Who are you?

- Figure out who your character is, and why he'd be of interest to the Restless.
- Decide the basic facts about your life: age, profession, hobbies, familial status, geographic location, possession of Numina, etc.
- Choose your Nature and Demeanor. A list of Natures and Demeanors and their explanations can be found on pages 64, or you can make up your own.

Step Two: Select Attributes – What are your basic capabilities?

- Determine the order of your Attributes (Physical, Social and Mental), primary (6), secondary (4) and tertiary (3).
- Choose Attribute descriptors for each category. A complete Attributes list can be found on page 65.

Step Three: Select Abilities – What do you know?

- Choose five Abilities from the Abilities list on page 66, or work with your Storyteller to create Abilities of your own.

Step Four: Select Advantages – What makes you human?

- You may now choose up to four Negative Traits at the price of one-for-one to boost your Attribute Trait pools. No more than two Negative Traits may be acquired for any category. No mortal may possess more than eight Traits per Attribute category except by special arrangement with the Storyteller. Note: Negative Traits may also be used to purchase other advantages (see below).

Step Five: Last Touches – What makes you unique?

- You may now return to the list of Negative Traits and use them to purchase your Numina at the cost of two per level of Numina. You may only purchase Numina in one category without Storyteller permission.
- Choose one Influence. Additional Influences may be purchased one-for-one with Negative Traits, or by special arrangement with the Storyteller.

Chapter Nine: Others

Characters may expend Influence Traits to accomplish goals relating to a specific aspect of mortal society. Many Influences, such as Street and Underworld, perform similar functions, but generally one will be more efficient at performing the task in question. Set by the Storyteller, the difficulty of a task equals the number of Traits that must be expended to accomplish the task, and can be subject to sudden change depending upon circumstance. The suggested guideline listed along with each area of Influence can change dramatically between chronicles or even between sessions.

Sometimes a Narrator will require a challenge of some sort to represent the uncertainty or added difficulty involved when exercising Influence. Some uses of Influence may not actually cost Influence to use, but rather require that the player simply possess a certain level of the Influence in question.

To use Influence actively, you should explain to the Narrator what sort effect you wish to create. The Narrator then decides the Trait cost, the time involved (both real and in-game) and any tests required to achieve the Influence effect. Influence Traits used this way are temporarily considered to have been expended, and are not recovered until the next session. The effects of using Influence can be instantaneous and brief, or slow to manifest and permanent, depending on the nature of the manipulation and the degree of power the character wields.

Sometimes players will want to perform actions that do not seem to fall under any single Influence group, or which may require the use of multiple Influences. Say a character wants to open a nightclub in her city. Obviously, she will need Finance, but High Society and Media might be useful to stimulate interest and promote the club as something really spectacular. Furthermore, what if the area targeted for her venture is not zoned for clubs? Bureaucracy could be useful in changing zoning, not to mention in acquiring the proper licenses and permits. Therefore, in certain cases, a Storyteller may decide that two or more types of Influence are necessary to accomplish a goal. Not only is this more realistic, but it also encourages characters to interact more widely than they might have otherwise in order to obtain the Influences they need.

Humans can trade Influences with each other much like children trade baseball (or Arcadia) cards. These trades may be permanent or temporary. In the case of permanent trades, the old owner erases the Trait from his sheet and turns over the appropriate Influence card (if your chronicle uses these) to the new owner. The new owner then records her newly acquired Influence Trait on her character sheet. Temporary trades of Influence occur when a human is merely doing a favor or loaning her Influence to someone else. In this case, the owner does not erase the Trait, but instead makes a note that it is no longer in her possession. The holder of the Influence Trait may use it immediately or hold onto it until she feels she needs it. However, the original owner of the Influence Trait may not regain the Trait until the current holder expends or voluntarily returns it.

Sometimes characters may wish to try to counteract the Influence of other characters. In such cases, it generally costs one Trait per Trait being countered. The character willing to expend the most Influence Traits (assuming she has them to spend) achieves her goal; all Traits used in this sort of conflict are considered expended.

In practice, the use of Influence is never instantaneous and rarely expedient. While a character may be able to, say, condemn any building in the city, it will not be torn down that night. For sake of game flow, a Storyteller may allow trivial uses of

Time Limits

Obviously, an unwise character can find his Influences tied up in the hands of others for a long time if he is not careful. For this reason, some chronicles dictate that the Trait reverts to its original owner after a certain time. A good rule of thumb for this is that one month is the maximum duration of any loan of Influence. If your chronicle's sessions are scheduled less frequently than once a month, the Storyteller(s) should probably expand this window of opportunity. Any exchange of Influence Traits requires the presence and assistance of a Narrator.

Influence to only take half an hour. Major manipulations, on the other hand, can become the center of ongoing plots requiring several sessions to bring to fruition.

The guidelines below by no means limit the number of Influence Traits that can be spent at one time or the degree of change a character may bring about. They are merely an advisory measure to help Storytellers adjudicate the costs of certain actions.

Actions followed by an asterisk (*) below indicate that their effects can generally be accomplished without expending an Influence Trait.

Bureaucracy

The organizational aspects of local, state or even federal government fall within the character's sphere of control. She can bend and twist the tangle of rules and regulations that seem necessary to run our society as she sees fit. The character may have contacts or allies among government clerks, supervisors, utility workers, road crews, surveyors and numerous other civil servants.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Trace utility bills*
2	Fake a birth certificate or driver's license Disconnect a small residence's utilities Close a small road or park Get public aid (\$250)
3	Fake a death certificate, passport or green card Close a public school for a single day Turn a single utility on a block on or off Shut down a minor business on a violation
4	Initiate a phone tap Initiate a department-wide investigation Fake land deeds
5	Start, stop or alter a city-wide program or policy Shut down a big business on a violation Rezone areas Obliterate records of a person on a city and county level
6	Arrange a fixed audit of a person or business

Church

Even churches are not without politics and intrigue upon which an opportunistic person may capitalize. Church Influence usually only applies to mainstream faiths, such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and the Islamic faith. Sometimes other practices fall under the Occult Influence. Contacts and allies affected by Church Influence include: ministers, bishops, priests, activists, evangelists, witch-hunters, nuns and various church attendees and assistants.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Identify most secular members of a given faith in the local area Pass as a member of the clergy * Peruse general church records (baptism, marriage, burial, etc.)
2	Identify higher church members Track regular congregation members Suspend lay members
3	Open or close a single church Dip into the collection plate (\$250) Find the average church-associated hunter Access to private information and archives of church
4	Discredit or suspend higher-level members Manipulate regional branches
5	Organize major protests Access ancient church lore and knowledge
6	Borrow or access church relics or sacred items
7	Use the resources of a diocese

Finance

The world teems with the trappings of affluence and stories of the rich and famous. Humans with the Finance Influence speak this language of money and know where to find capital. They have a degree of access to banks, megacorporations and the truly wealthy citizens of the world. Such characters also have a wide variety of servants to draw upon, such as CEOs, bankers, corporate yes-men, financiers, bank tellers, stock brokers and loan agents.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Earn money; learn about major transactions and financial events Raise capital (\$1,000) Learn about general economic trends* Learn real motivations for many financial actions of others
2	Trace an unsecured small account Raise capital to purchase a small business (single, small store)
3	Purchase a large business (a few small branches or a single large store or service)
4	Manipulate local banking (delay deposits, some credit rating alterations)

- 5 Ruin a small business
 Control an aspect of citywide banking (shut off ATMs, arrange a bank "holiday")
 Ruin a large business
 Purchase a major company
- 6 Spark an economic trend
 Instigate widespread layoffs

Health

In our modern world, a myriad of organizations and resources exists to deal with every mortal ache and ill, at least in theory. The network of health agencies, hospitals, asylums and medical groups is subject to exploitation by a human with Health Influence. Nurses, doctors, specialists, lab workers, therapists, counselors and pharmacists are just a few of the workers within the health field.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Access a person's health records Use public functions of health centers at your leisure Fake vaccination records and the like
2	Access to some medical research records Have minor lab work done Get a copy of coroner's report
3	Instigate minor quarantines Corrupt results of tests or inspections Alter medical records
4	Acquire a body Completely rewrite medical records Abuse grants for personal use (\$250) Have minor medical research performed on a subject Institute large-scale quarantines Shut down businesses for "health code violations"
5	Have special research projects performed Have people institutionalized or released

High Society

An elite clique of people exists, who, by virtue of birth, possessions, talent or quirks of fate, hold themselves above the great unwashed masses. High Society allows the character to direct and use the energies and actions of this exceptional mass of talents. Among their ranks, one can find dilettantes, the old rich, movie and rock stars, artists of all sorts, wannabes, fashion models and trendsetters.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Learn what is trendy Learn about concerts, shows or plays well before they are made public

Chapter Nine: Others

- 2 Obtain "hard to get" tickets for shows
Track most celebrities and luminaries
Be a local voice in the entertainment field
"Borrow" \$1,000 as idle cash from rich friends
- 3 Crush promising careers
Hobnob well above your station
- 4 Minor celebrity status
- 5 Get a brief appearance on a talk show that's not about to be canceled
Ruin a new club, gallery, festival or other high society gathering

Industry

The dark world of the Gothic-Punk milieu is built by pumping and grinding machinery and the toil of endless laborers. A character with the Industry Influence has her fingers in this pie. Industry is composed of union workers, foremen, engineers, contractors, construction workers and manual laborers.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Learn about industrial projects and movements
2	Have minor projects performed Arrange small accidents or sabotage Dip into union funds or embezzle petty cash (\$500)
3	Organize minor strikes Appropriate machinery for a short time
4	Close down a small plant Revitalize a small plant
5	Manipulate large local industry
6	Cut off production of a single resource in a small region

Legal

There are those who quietly tip the scales, even in the hallowed halls of justice, and the courts, law schools, law firms and justice bureaus within them. Inhabiting these halls are lawyers, judges, bailiffs, clerks, DAs and attorneys.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Get free representation for small cases
2	Avoid bail for some charges Have minor charges dropped
3	Manipulate legal procedures (small wills, minor contracts, court dates) Access public or court funds (\$250) Get representation in most court cases
4	Issue subpoenas Tie up court cases Have most legal charges dropped Cancel or arrange parole

- 5 Close down all but the most serious investigations
Have deportation proceedings held against someone

Media

The media serves as the eyes and ears of the world. While few in this day and age doubt that the news is not corrupted, many would be surprised at who closes these eyes and covers these ears from time to time. The media entity is composed of station directors, editors, reporters, anchors, camerapeople, photographers and radio personalities.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Learn about breaking stories early Submit small articles (within reason)
2	Suppress (but not stop) small articles or reports Get hold of investigative reporting information
3	Initiate news investigations and reports Get project funding and waste it (\$250) Access media production resources
4	Ground stories and projects Broadcast fake stories (local only)

Occult

Most people are curious about the supernatural world and the various groups and beliefs that make up the occult world, but few consider it anything but a hoax, a diversion or a curiosity. They could not be farther from the truth. This Influence more than any other hits the Restless close to home and could very well bring humanity to its senses about just who and what shares this world with them. Among the occult community are cult leaders, alternative religious groups, charlatans, would-be occultists and New Agers.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Contact and use common occult groups, practices Know some of the more visible occult figures
2	Know and contact some of the more obscure occult figures Access resources for most rituals and rites
3	Know the general vicinity of certain supernatural entities and possibly contact them (Kindred, Garou, mages, mummies, wraiths, etc.) Can access vital or very rare material components Milk impressionable wannabes for bucks (\$250) Access occult tomes and writings
4	Research a Basic Ritual
5	Research an Intermediate Ritual Access minor magic items
6	Unearth an Advanced Ritual Research a new or unheard-of ritual or rite from tomes or mentors

Police

"To protect and serve" is a popular motto among the chosen enforcers of the law. But these days, everyone can have reason to doubt the law's ability to enact justice. Perhaps they should wonder whom the law defends, whom it serves and why. The Police Influence encompasses the likes of beat cops, desk jockeys, prison guards, special divisions (such as SWAT and homicide), detectives and various clerical positions.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Learn police procedures Hear police information and rumors Avoid traffic tickets
2	Have license plates checked Avoid minor violations (first conviction) Get "inside information"
3	Find bureau secrets Get copies of an investigation report Have police hassle, detain or harass someone
4	Access confiscated weapons or contraband Start an investigation Get money, either from evidence room or as an appropriation (\$1,000) Have some serious charges dropped
5	Institute major investigations Arrange setups Instigate bureau investigations Have officers fired
6	Paralyze departments for a time Close down a major investigation

Politics

Nothing ever gets done for straightforward reasons any more. It's all who knows who and what favors can get paid off in the process. In other words, it's politics as usual, and there's a whole class of people who thrive in this world of favors and policy flacks. Some of these individuals include statesmen, pollsters, activists, party members, lobbyists, candidates and the politicians themselves.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Minor lobbying Identify real platforms of politicians and parties Be in the know
2	Meet small-time politicians Have a forewarning of processes, laws and the like Use a slush fund or fund raiser (\$1,000)
3	Sway or alter political projects (local parks, renovations, small construction)
4	Enact minor legislation

- 5 Dash careers of minor politicians
Get your candidate in a minor office
Enact more encompassing legislature
- 6 Block the passage of major bills
Suspend major laws temporarily
Use state bureaus or subcommittees
- 7 Usurp countywide politics
Subvert, to a moderate degree, statewide powers
- 8 Call out a local division of the National Guard
Declare a state of emergency in a region

Street

Disenchanted, disenfranchised and ignored by their "betters," an undercurrent of humanity has made its own culture and lifestyle to deal with the harsh lot life has dealt them. In the dark alleys and slums reside gang members, the homeless, street performers, petty criminals, prostitutes and the forgotten.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Has an ear open for the word on the street Identify most gangs and know their turfs and habits
2	Live mostly without fear on the underside of society Keep a contact or two in most aspects of street life Access small-time contraband
3	Often get insight on other areas of influence Arrange some services from street people or gangs Get pistols or uncommon melee weapons
4	Mobilize groups of homeless Panhandle or hold a "collection" (\$250) Respected among gangs, can have a word in almost all aspects of their operations Get hold of a shotgun, rifle or SMG
5	Control a single medium-sized gang Arrange impressive protests by street people

Transportation

The world is in constant motion, its prosperity relying heavily on the fact that people and productions fly, float or roll to and from every corner of the planet. Without the means to perform this monumental task, our "small" world quickly returns to a daunting orb with large, isolated stretches. The forces that keep this circulation in motion include cab and bus drivers, pilots, air traffic controllers, travel firms, sea captains, conductors, border guards and untold others.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	A wizard at what goes where, when and why Can travel locally quickly and freely *

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Can track an unwary target if they use public transportation
Arrange passage safe (or at least concealed) from mundane threats (sunlight, robbery, etc.) |
| 3 | Seriously hamper an individual's ability to travel
Avoid most supernatural dangers when traveling (such as hunters and Garou) |
| 4 | Temporarily shut down one form of transportation (bus lines, ship, plane, train, etc.)
Route money your way (\$500) |
| 5 | Reroute major modes of travel
Smuggle with impunity |
| 6 | Extend control to nearby areas |
| 7 | Isolate small or remote regions for a short period |

Underworld

Even in the most cosmopolitan of ages, society has found certain needs and services too questionable to accept, and in every age, some organized effort has stepped in to provide for this demand regardless of the risks. Among this often ruthless and dangerous crowd are the likes of hitmen, Mafia, Yakuza, bookies, fencers and launderers.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Locate minor contraband (knives, small-time drugs, petty gambling, scalped tickets, etc.)
2	Obtain pistols, serious drugs, stolen cars, etc. Hire muscle to rough someone up Fence minor loot Prove that crime pays (and score \$1,000)
3	Obtain rifle, shotgun or SMG Arrange a minor "hit" Know someone in "the Family"
4	White-collar crime connections
5	Arrange gangland assassinations Hire a demolition man or firebug Supply local drug needs

University

In an age where the quest for learning and knowledge begins in schools, colleges and universities, information becomes currency. University Influence represents a certain degree of control and perhaps involvement in these institutions. Within this sphere of Influence, one will find the teachers, professors, deans, students of all ages and levels, Greek orders and many young and impressionable minds.

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Desired Effect</u>
1	Know layout and policy of local schools * Access to low-level university resources

- 2 Get records up to the high school level
- 2 Know a contact or two with useful knowledge or skills
- Minor access to facilities
- Fake high school records
- Obtain college records
- 3 Faculty favors
- Cancel a class
- Fix grades
- Discredit a student
- 4 Organize student protests and rallies
- Discredit faculty members
- Acquire money through a grant (\$1,000)
- 5 Falsify an undergraduate degree
- 6 Arrange major projects
- Alter curriculum institution-wide
- Free run of facilities

Wraiths are incapable of possessing Influences. The one exception to this rule is wraiths who have become Risen (see Chapter Eight).

The Fog

The Shroud isn't all that separates humans and the Restless. In addition, there is something called the Fog, which settles on the minds of humans who are not prepared to accept the existence of wraiths. Those mortals succumb to the effects of the Fog, which results in their rationalizing away anything supernatural they might have seen. After all, it makes so much more sense to decide that it was the wind swinging that door open at midnight instead of a ghostly hand....

The effects of the Fog are as follows: Unless the human affected by wraiths succeeds at a Static Mental Challenge against 20 Traits (overbidding on the part of the Fog is allowed), she will attempt to rationalize any wraithly activity she may have witnessed. Photographic evidence will be dismissed as doctored, eyewitness accounts will be ignored, and so forth if the human does not succeed on her Fog test.

Once a human has pierced the Fog, she no longer needs to test against it. As far as she is concerned, the existence of wraiths has been proven. Nor do those who have been Attuned with an Arcanos need to test against the Fog; they know too well what is really going on.

Numina



Some humans have powers that can't readily be explained. These are called Numina, and they can allow humans to affect wraiths as surely as wraiths can affect humans. Most mortals with Numina have only one area in which they have power. Humans can purchase Numina by spending Negative Traits at character creation, and afterward they can be bought up with Experience at the same rate as Arcanos.

A human character should not have Numina without a good reason, and she should never have more than one Numina without explicit Storyteller permission.

Complete Numina descriptions and systems can be found in **Antagonists**. If you want to use a straight **Oblivion** system, substitute Willpower Traits for Humanity.

Troubleshooting Numina

Players often have to undergo situations like the following:

“You can’t go in there.”

“I’m not really here. I’m using Clairvoyance to see inside the room.”

“Wait. We have magical wards up on the doors; you couldn’t see in unless we knew about it, and we wouldn’t let you.”

“But my Numina is undetectable, and it’s not affected by the wards.”

“We’d better get a Storyteller. I’ll stop the scene inside and wait for this to get resolved.”

These are the sorts of situations everyone hates and everyone encounters. A few definitions can help resolve the confusion so that things like this can be avoided.

- Psychic Numina are not magical in any way. They are products of extra-sensory perception, and will not be detected as magic in anyone’s aura. They are effectively warded away by most magical shields set up to cover, hide or protect an area, object or individual from observation or intrusion.

- A Mental Challenge must occur to psychically locate or envision a wraith in general. A clairvoyant would not be able to locate or detect a Restless using Enshroud.

In the above scenario, the Storyteller who arrives on the scene should explain to the characters inside the room that they have detected nothing, and explain to the mortal that Numina can be repelled by magical wards.

The mortal might be allowed to engage in a Simple Test to break through the ward, if that is her objective. Wards can often overbid characters if they are established by some character of great power, and these details should be clarified before the game begins.

Spectres



The dark reflections of wraiths, Spectres are Restless whose Shadows have assumed permanent dominance. Generally short-lived, these shrieking servants of Oblivion exist to drag others down to destruction. Like Shadows, they can be subtle or indirect about their goals, and many can seem helpful — at first.

Spectres tend to come in two varieties: those who want companions in torment, who will seek to convert wraiths to their cause, and those who simply wish to destroy. Often it’s hard to tell the difference between the two until it’s too late.

Spectres come in castes, which generally define their powers as well as their states of mind. Members of only four castes — the Doppelgangers, Nephwracks, Mortwights and

Striplings — can stay long in the Shadowlands, and Nephwracks who can do so are rare. Malfeans and Shades, the more powerful castes, can almost never enter into the Shadowlands, and are only encountered in the Tempest or Labyrinth.

Spectres should generally be restricted to Narrator characters. As dedicated servitors of Oblivion, the Shadow-Eaten rarely last long and often find themselves getting ganged up on in live-action situations. If a player can provide a good reason for playing a Spectre (such as continuing a favorite wraith character who has been Shadow-Eaten), only the Doppelganger, Mortwright or Stripling castes make sense for a player character. The others are simply too powerful.

Spectre Character Creation

The process for creating a Spectre for *Oblivion* is very similar to that for creating a wraith, with the following exceptions:

- Shadow Archetypes should be used for Nature and Demeanor.
- Instead of Pathos and Willpower, Spectres get Angst (5 Traits) and Being.
- Spectres can take both Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi (see below).
- Malfeans, Shades and most Nephwracks have no Fetters.
- Instead of Shadows, Spectres have Psyches.
- Spectres do not start with a Status Trait, nor can they purchase the Memoriam or Eidolon backgrounds.

Doppelgangers

The Spectres closest to wraiths, Doppelgangers still appear as wraiths. They have most or all of their Fetters, and can pass for wraiths quite easily. Many enjoy infiltrating Necropoli, selling their services as purveyors of rare Arcanoi like Mnemosynis. Doppelgangers gain the normal number of Attribute and Ability Traits for a starting character, as well as six starting Arcanos/Dark Arcanos points. Player character wraiths who become Doppelgangers keep their old statistics and gain two additional Arcanos Traits to spend on Dark Arcanoi. Doppelgangers can buy Status with Negative Traits, but can never have more than two Fetters.

Doppelgangers are the lowest of the low (save one) in Spectre society, and are treated as such. If a Doppelganger receives an order from a Shade or Nephwrack, he is expected to obey it.

Striplings

A social caste more than anything else, the Striplings are the Spectres of children. There are no defining Stripling characteristics other than youth and rebellion. There are Stripling Doppelgangers, Nephwracks, Shades and Mortwrights, all gathered together by a shared hatred of their “elders.”

The sorts of Striplings that *Oblivion* characters are likely to come across are relatively weak, as their more powerful castemates prefer to hang back in the Tempest.

Striplings only have 6/4/2 Attribute Traits to distribute, with their Primary Trait not being Physical. Striplings have access to standard wraith Arcanoi as well as Dark Arcanoi, and have five points to distribute among them. All Striplings must have at least the Basic Level of Shroud-Rending, and can only buy Fetters by taking Negative Traits. Striplings cannot take Status.

Nephwracks

Nephwracks are Doppelgangers so thoroughly twisted by Oblivion that they can no longer pass for wraiths. Even Moliate cannot mask the depths of the deformity of their souls, but Nephwracks consider these transformations to be a sign of Oblivion's blessing. They are the caste above Doppelgangers, and are the artists, priests and public servants of the Labyrinth. Other than their appearance, Nephwracks scarcely differ from Doppelgangers. Nephwracks have eight levels of Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi. However, they usually have no Fetters. If a Nephwrack wishes to purchase a Fetter, Negative Traits must be used.

Mortwights

Mortwights are mortals who died with such violence that they were claimed by Oblivion at the instant of their death. They are largely confined to the Labyrinth and the Tempest. Though excelling as troops in direct assaults against Stygia, Mortwights are the lowest caste of Spectral society. However, as their numbers swell, the Mortwights have begun to rebel against their bonds. Like Shades, Mortwights are limited to Dark Arcanoi; however, they have four levels to distribute among them as they choose. At least one level must be invested in the Dark Arcanos Tempest-Weaving, at which Mortwights are especially skilled. Mortwights can purchase Fetters with Negative Traits.

Shades

Shades personify Dark Passion, and are the shock troops of spectral society. Even Nephwracks bow before Shades, at least publicly. The highest caste among spectres save the Malfeans, Shades were originally Devoured by Oblivion during a Harrowing, a Maelstrom or in the Tempest. Shades have access only to the Dark Arcanoi, and have four levels to distribute among them. Shades gain six different Dark Passions, and have access to unique Shade powers. Shades can never have Fetters. Shades are not limited to 10 Corpus Levels; most have at least 20.

Malfeans

Malfeans are the elder, ur-Spectres. Beings of enormous capabilities, they cycle through periods of long sleep, guiding Spectres to frenzies of destruction through their dreams. Most slumber uneasily the Labyrinth, waking only rarely. However, even as they sleep, they plot and scheme against each other and reality as a whole, and on occasion Spectres will find themselves acting against others of their kind, as one Malfean seeks to thwart another's aims.

Malfeans are so incredibly potent that there is no need to create statistics for them. Simply assume that whatever needs to be done, they can do — should they awaken.

Spectre Traits

Spectres also have innate abilities, but ones that are clearly tainted by Oblivion.

- **Deathsense** — Oblivion is the only sun that Spectres know, its black light illuminating everything they see. Spectres' attunement to Oblivion's light allows them to gauge the strength of a wraith's Shadow. Also, living people close to death or people who have strong Dark Passions glow with Oblivion's sickened light. Vampires burn brightly with it, making them visible to spectres with their Deathsense. To sense the Oblivion in another character, a Spectre makes a Static Mental Test. If he succeeds, he can identify the type of being before him.

- **Deathsight** — Spectres' Deathsight is much more intense than wraiths' since their entire being revolves around Oblivion. The Shadowlands to them are vast places of desolation, an apocalyptic landscape ravaged under Oblivion's dark oppression. Colors are faded, sounds muffled, the weather is always overcast, and buildings appear decaying to the point of being partially collapsed. Wraiths and other Spectres appear skeletal, diseased or decayed.

- **Dimmed Senses** — Spectres lack a wraith's heightened senses. If they were hypersensitive, the Tempest's violence would overwhelm them to the point of making them helpless. This reduces any perception-based tests, giving the Spectre's opponent the win in case of a tie if the Spectre is in the Shadowlands. In the Tempest, a wraith would be overwhelmed by its violence and tumult, and this situation would be reversed.

- **Distance** — Spectres are so far removed from life, they have an increased difficulty in crossing the Shroud (they lose in the case of a tie in a Static Challenge). They are unable to see any mortals when they are in the Shadowlands. They can only see wraiths and other Spectres unless they possess the Dark Arcanos Shroud-Rending.

- **Hive-Mind** — All spectres are connected to the Spectral Hive Mind. This means that they have access (at varying levels of efficiency) to everything every Spectre has ever known. In game terms, this means that Spectres can go to a Storyteller and receive information that their characters might not have known directly. Obviously, this power should be limited for player character Spectres.

- **Rapacity** — Spectres are souls whose emotions are so raw that any Dark Passion grabs their attention. If the negativity being emoted is similar to their core Being, they must do a Static Mental Challenge to see if they give into their dark needs with wild abandon. If they lose, they immediately attack the wraith who set them off.

Angst and Being

Angst and Being Traits are, for a Spectre, equivalent to Pathos and Willpower in terms of their use and acquisition. Spectres start off with five Angst points, similar to a wraith's starting Pathos. Also, Spectres regain Angst through their Dark Passions the same way wraiths gain Pathos from their Passions.

Being Traits determine a Spectre's emotional essence and spiritual strength, as well as their self-control. Being Traits can be used to power certain Dark Arcanoi.

They can also be used to stave off Rapacity; a Rapacious Spectre can spend a Being Trait and avert losing control.

Each Spectre must pick a core negative emotion for her Being. This core emotion defines her personality and also serves as the basis for attacks of Rapacity. Examples of core Beings include wrath, greed, pride, lust, envy, gluttony or hate.

Spectres start off with three Being Traits. They can re-earn their Being Traits by roleplaying their Natures, just as a wraith regains her Willpower Traits by being true to hers.

Dark Passions

Spectres are primarily motivated by their Dark Passions. Like wraiths, Spectres receive four different Dark Passions to choose, unless modified by their caste. Dark Passions are generally expressed as a sentence detailing the meaning of the Passion, followed by a one-word summation of the particular emotion involved; for example, **Destroy the Hierarchy (Wrath)**, or **Advance the decay of the Shadowlands (Malice)**. Dark Passions are also often directed at former Fetters the Spectre may have held as a wraith.

Corpus

Spectres have 10 levels of Permanent Corpus, just as wraiths do, and potentially up to 10 levels of Temporary as well. With one exception, Shadow-Eaten gain and lose Corpus in the same ways that wraiths do. However, those Spectres not possessed of the Dark Arcanos Larceny cannot heal aggravated damage.

Dark Arcanoi



While some Spectres can use the basic wraithly Arcanoi, there is a whole set of powers reserved for Spectres alone. These are referred to as Dark Arcanoi, and are used by the Shadow-Eaten in their never-ending campaign to bring about Doomsday. Below are some of the more common Dark Arcanoi.

Shroud-Rending

With this Arcanos, a Spectre can learn to see the Skinlands on the distant side of the Shroud. Unless a Spectre knows Shroud-Rending, the Shadowlands will always be empty to her save for wraiths and other Spectres. Once this Arcanos is hers, the Spectre can witness mortals going about their daily lives and see what effect she has upon them. Shroud-Rending allows the Spectre to see through the Shroud; the reverse does not hold true. Nihils form in areas where this Arcanos is used frequently.

Innate Abilities

- **Hold Back the Curtain:** This art allows the Spectre to extend her activity in the Skinlands past the standard duration of an Arcanos. It grants no other ability.

The player must make a Static Physical Challenge in order to extend her contact with the Skinlands for an additional two minutes.

• **Threshold:** This art cannot quite cross the threshold of perception between the lands of the Quick and the Dead. The character can see the Skinlands and its inhabitants as if through a thick fog, but cannot hear events, nor interfere with them.

The player must make an Extended Static Physical Challenge. The number of successful challenges indicates the number of minutes the Spectre can peer through the Shroud at the Skinlands around him.

Basic

• **Echoes:** With this art, the Spectre can hear faint snatches of sound from the Skinlands. Sound quality is always poor, with distorted, echoing voices and fluctuating volume the norm.

The player must make a Static Mental Challenge, preferably in the vicinity of a Nihil. Generally only snippets of conversation can be heard as through a bad, hollow-sounding phone connection filled with static. If no one is speaking when the Spectre chooses to eavesdrop through the Shroud, she instead hears whatever ambient sound is predominant in the corresponding location in the Skinlands. Without this art, a Spectre cannot hear anything going on in the Skinlands.

• **Fleeting Glimpses:** This art allows a character to see a small area of the Skinlands for a brief time.

A Static Mental Challenge must be made by the Spectre. A successful challenge indicates that the Spectre can see clearly the area of the Skinlands around him. It costs one point of Angst to use this power.

Intermediate

• **Virtuality:** With this art, the Spectre can clearly see and hear events in the Skinlands through the Shroud, as if combining the skills contained within the two preceding abilities of this Arcanos. By making a successful Static Mental Challenge and spending an Angst point, the Spectre can combine both the Basic arts of Shroud-Rending.

Advanced

• **Transparent Memories:** The culmination of Shroud-Rending is the ability to perceive the Skinlands with razor-edge clarity. All senses can register the Skinlands and its inhabitants, although the Spectre is still beyond the Shroud and cannot physically interact with mortals without using additional Arcanoi.

To use Transparent Memories, the Spectre must make a Static Physical Challenge if trying to perceive going-ons through the Shroud. This serves best as a method for eavesdropping or targeting other Arcanoi.

The other use for this power is a limited form of Telepathy. To do this, the Spectre makes a Mental Challenge against his target. This art costs two points of Angst and a Being Trait. If successful, the Spectre can ask the target three yes/no questions.

Contaminate

The Dark Arcanos Contaminate is similar to the wraith Arcanos Castigate, in that it allows the user to commune with the Shadow. Similarities end there. Contaminate is used by Spectres to commune with Shadows of wraiths, and to water and

harvest the seeds of Oblivion contained within all souls. This is one of the most feared and admired Dark Arcanoi, as it allows Spectres to damn others by infecting them with Oblivion.

Innate Abilities

- **Perceive Contamination:** This ability allows the Spectre to see the black light which is the evidence of Oblivion in living — and thus dying — creatures. By using this ability, the Spectre will be able to perceive mortals in whom Oblivion is strong by the black light escaping from them, even if she cannot actually see the mortal in question through the Shroud.

The Spectre makes a Static Mental Challenge to see if she notices any black light auras which may exist in her locale. If she succeeds, she can ask one other character how many Health/Corpus levels he currently has.

- **Sense the Shadow:** With little effort, a Spectre can look at a wraith and see the Shadow lurking within. To activate Sense the Shadow, the Spectre must enter a Mental Challenge. If successful, the Spectre gets the opportunity to look at the wraith's Shadow sheet for one minute.

Basic

- **Shadowspeech:** This art allows a character to speak directly to a wraith's Shadow, even when it is not dominating the wraith. If the Spectre so desires, he can even judge the wraith's Nature by examining the dark reflection in the Shadow as the Shadow speaks. The Shadow speaks with the wraith's voice, who can attempt to resist the process.

To successfully speak with the target's Shadow, the Spectre must succeed in an Extended Social Challenge. The difficulty is that of the opponent's Willpower. Each success allows the character to ask the Shadow one question or tell it one sentence. Obviously, it is the player who responds, not the Shadow sheet. Suggestions or comments made by the Spectre should be written down on the Shadow sheet, however. This art costs one Angst.

- **Transfer Angst:** By exerting his will, the character can transfer his own Angst to a visible wraith's Shadow. The wraith must be within line of sight for this transfer to take place.

If an Extended Physical Challenge against the target succeeds, then the Spectre may transfer as many points of her own Angst to the wraith's Shadow as successes gained. This art costs one Angst on top of the Angst drained for the transfer.

Intermediate

- **Awaken Latent Thorns:** By psychically watering the ashen soil of a Shadow's mind, the Spectre can encourage new Thorns to grow with which to bedevil the wraith's Psyche.

The player must succeed in an Extended Social Challenge with each success allowing the target Shadow to manifest a previously latent Thorn. A Shadow may be considered to have a number of latent Thorn levels equal to its number of permanent Angst Traits. It costs the Spectre two Angst to use this art.

Advanced

- **Call the Shadow:** By means of this much-respected art, the Spectre can drag a wraith's Shadow to the surface, allowing it to attempt a premature Catharsis and take control. When this art is used successfully, the Shadow immediately takes control, spending five Angst Traits to do so. If the Shadow has fewer than five Angst Traits, then it spends whatever it has before taking command.

With a Physical Challenge against her target and the expenditure of three Angst points, a Spectre can successfully call forth an opponent's Shadow.

Larceny

With this Dark Arcanos, Spectres can stave off their rapid demise. Larceny allows a Spectre to restore his Corpus, and thus slow his descent into the Void. It is a dangerous Arcanos, strengthening every Spectre's own worst enemy — the Psyche — when used. Larceny also conveys a greater understanding of the nature of Oblivion. In essence, it allows Spectres to manipulate raw entropy, using its effects to steal strength from others and infect them with Oblivion in the process.

Innate Abilities

- **Weigh Oblivion:** With this art a Spectre can determine how strong Oblivion is in a wraith or another Spectre. To use this art, the Spectre must make a Mental Challenge against his target. A successful challenge indicates that the Spectre now knows one of the target's Passions or Dark Passions, which the target must relay truthfully.

Basic

- **Infection:** By touching another Spectre or wraith, the character may steal the target's Corpus. This art functions in the same way as the Usury art Transfer, and requires a Dark Arcanos card.

- **Savor Agony:** This art allows the character to draw Angst from the pain she inflicts on others, mortal or supernatural.

Whenever the character successfully inflicts aggravated damage upon another character, she may attempt to make a Physical Challenge against her target. Success allows the character to gain one point of Angst per level of aggravated damage she causes. This art costs no Angst unless the Spectre loses the challenge. In that case, the Spectre loses one point of Angst.

Intermediate

- **Withstand Oblivion:** This Dark Arcanos allows Spectres to heal aggravated damage, which can be healed in no other way. This art is dangerous in that it strengthens the character's Psyche every time it is used, and so is employed only in dire need by all but the most insane of Spectres.

To use Withstand Oblivion, the Spectre enters an Extended Static Physical Challenge. Each successful challenge allows the Spectre to heal a level of aggravated damage. This art costs two Angst and additionally gives the character's Psyche a point of Temporary Composure.

Advanced

• **Defy Oblivion:** When employed successfully, this art allows a character to transfer the effects of Oblivion onto another character or creature. By Defying Oblivion, Spectres deny their own natures, and thus strengthen their Psyche. Like the previous level of this Arcanos, Defy Oblivion is only used in times of dire need by the majority of Spectres.

Immediately upon taking any aggravated damage, a Spectre with Defy Oblivion can make a Simple Test. If the test is successful, the Spectre may attempt to transfer the destructive effects from himself to another character or creature in line of sight. If the Spectre succeeds in a Physical Challenge against the target, the target loses Corpus (or Health Levels if not a wraith or Spectre) equal to the number of levels of aggravated damage originally taken. This art costs two points of Angst and one Being Trait to activate, and earns the Spectre's Psyche two points of Temporary Composure.

Shade Powers



Shades have certain abilities, called Shade Powers, which they and no other caste possess.

- **Talons:** The Shade can do aggravated damage with its claws.
- **Tempest Wrack:** At the cost of three points of Angst, the Shade can infect the Tempest around her with her own inner turmoil. This results in the Tempest becoming wracked by storms, creates whirlpools where there were once placid Byways, etc. Wraiths caught nearby must succeed in a Static Mental Challenge or find themselves to be completely lost.

- **Siphon Emotion:** The Shade can directly attack the Passions of an opponent, and convert drained Pathos points into Angst. The Shade must successfully win a Physical Challenge against its opponent in combat, and then overcome the target in a Social Challenge. One point is drained per attack.

- **Bind:** In order to use this Shade power, the Shade must first successfully win in a Physical Challenge with her target. In the next turn, the Shade's own form twists to envelop her victim completely, and unless the Shade is destroyed, any wraith imprisoned thus cannot be freed. The encapsulated wraith is usually carried off into the Tempest to an uncertain doom. Use of this power costs three Angst points. Some Shades use this power to conceal other Shades within themselves, bursting open to release their fellows at an appropriate moment. Wraiths thus imprisoned cannot act.

- **Ectoplasmic Tentacles:** Endowed with extra limbs of a sort, the Shade can attack twice a turn. Spectres with Ectoplasmic Tentacles rarely use weapons.

- **Spectral Scream:** The Shade can scream into the Tempest, thereby summoning one to five more Shades. Use of this power costs three Angst points, regardless of the number of Shades summoned.

The Psyche

Just as a wraith has his Shadow, a Spectre has her Psyche. Psyches are built in an identical fashion to Shadows, substituting Passions for Dark Passions, Fronds for Thorns, and Composure for Angst. Otherwise, they are identical.

As most Spectres will be Narrator characters, there will be very little call for Psycheguiding in games of *Oblivion*. Below are the basic guidelines for Psyche Traits.

Psyche Archetypes

A Spectre's Psyche is a somewhat idealized self. With that in mind, it takes on an idealized Archetype. Below are some samples.

- **Agent:** Always looking out for your best interests, seeking to find something constructive and positive for you to do, this Psyche wants to manage you, guide you and generally help you better yourself.
- **Comrade:** This Psyche is the shoulder to cry on, the friendly smile on a bad day, always ready to lend a hand or help you through a bad patch. Like any old friend, the Comrade knows you intimately, and accepts the bad along with the good.
- **Confessor:** Stern but kindly, this Psyche's gruff exterior hides a fount of love and compassion. Although affronted by the sins it is witness to, the Confessor would never think of revealing them to others.
- **Counselor:** The Counselor is the person you can tell anything, that part of you prepared to sit and listen to another person's problems without judging them or berating them. The role of the Counselor is to help the character realize where her own problems are, and assist with setting strategies to deal with them.
- **Nurturer:** This Psyche is maternal, supportive and caring. It is concerned about the kind of people the host hangs around with, and considers them a bad influence. Although the Nurturer may scold, it never loses its temper.
- **Saint:** Few Spectres are strong enough to stand up to this Psyche. Proud, commanding and authoritative, the Saint stands out as an incorruptible beacon of purity in the host's mind. The Saint knows evil exists, but has no time for it.
- **Savior:** This Psyche is the way and the light, the road to salvation. Constantly preaching to the host, the Savior wants the character to listen only to it. No other can lead the host to redemption except the Savior. The Savior is self-sacrificing, prepared to suffer any harm should that in some way advance the redemption of the Spectre.

Composure

The Psyche is powered by a Trait called Composure. Composure represents the degree of serenity and peace the Psyche possesses. There are two kinds of Composure, Composure Traits and Temporary Composure points. It is from the latter that Composure points are spent, powering Fronds. Composure Traits represent the degree of control the Psyche has over a character. The Psyche always begins with one Permanent Composure Trait.

Temporary Composure points begin at a rating equal to the Psyche's number of Permanent Composure Traits, but fluctuate thereafter. Temporary Composure points can and often do exceed the number of Composure Traits. Composure can be increased by the use of certain Fronds. The Dark Arcanos Larceny is another source of Composure, and it can also be increased by fulfilling Passions.

If Temporary Composure ever reaches 10, the Psyche can trade all 10 points for one point of Permanent Composure, bringing the character that much closer to redemption.

Catharsis

Just as Shadows can take over wraith characters, so too can the Psyche attempt to take control of the Spectre character. If the Psyche ever reaches 10 Temporary Composure Traits, it can either trade them in for a Permanent Composure Trait or spend five and undergo Catharsis. In Spectre Catharsis, the Psyche takes over for one scene or half an hour, whichever ends sooner.

Fronds

A Psyche's Fronds are the equivalent of the Shadow's Thorns. These unique gifts are employed by the Psycheguide to harry the character.

Level One

- **Wraith Prestige (variable):** The Psyche is known and respected among certain wraiths, and might be aided by them in times of need. Consider each level invested in Wraith Prestige to represent how famous the Spectre's Psyche is among wraiths.
- **Memories of Life:** What the Spectre has forgotten about his former existence (as wraith or mortal) the Psyche remembers. The Psyche can offer the Spectre any information, Trait or knowledge from that life free of charge. A Spectre who accepts such aid, however is exposed to images of that former, more worthy existence, and must make a Simple Test. If the character loses the test, the Spectre loses one point of Angst.
- **Mirror:** Usually possessed by the Psyches of Nephwracks or Shades, this Frond reveals to the Spectre, in every flat surface they can see, an image of what they have become or what they might have been. Such a revelation is horrible for many Spectres, and those who are affected by Mirror must make a Static Mental Challenge. This art costs one point of Composure.
- **Pure Relic (variable):** When the Psyche is dominant, it manifests a relic which appears at no other time. Such a relic can be a weapon.

Level Two

- **Psyche Traits:** The Psyche may add one Trait or Ability to the character's Attributes or Abilities for one action provided that the host agrees every time. Every time the host draws upon this extra Ability or Trait, the Psyche gains a Temporary Composure point.

Level Three

- **Guilt:** The Psyche has the power to make the Spectre feel great guilt about a recent action. It costs one point of Temporary Composure to use this Frond. The affected Spectre must make an Extended Static Mental Challenge, with each loss and/or tie (a tie ending the challenge immediately) costing the Spectre one Angst point.
- **Indulgence:** This Frond allows the Psyche and the Spectre to enter into a pact. A Spectre can purchase the right to be unhindered by its Psyche in some imminent action by spending a number of Angst points. For every point so spent, a Static Mental Challenge is made by the host, and each success grants the Psyche one Temporary Composure

point. Once the Psyche has agreed to such a bargain, however, it may not renege, and cannot interfere or berate the Spectre for the agreed-upon duration.

Level Four

- **Freudian Slip:** By spending a temporary Composure point, the Psyche may cause the host to make an involuntary action or blurt out an embarrassing phrase or secret. The character can only resist this through making a Static Social Challenge.

Crossover Rules



Even more so than other *Mind's Eye Theatre* games, *Oblivion* is a game that can be played in tandem with *Masquerade* and *Apocalypse*. The following crossover rules have been adapted from the crossover rules included in *Wraith: The Oblivion 2nd Edition*, with some modifications for greater playability in a live-action setting. As with any *Mind's Eye Theatre* supplement, this crossover section should be used as a guideline, not holy scripture. Storytellers should always feel free to modify rules to make them work better for their particular group.

Prior experience shows that any time you have a significant number of wraiths in with other supernatural or mortal characters, it is a good idea to bend the rules a little in the interest of player interaction. Having a particularly powerful Haunt in which wraith characters with Embodiment may fully manifest for little or no Pathos cost is a good way to increase interaction, though you may find that the focus of the game shifts to that one location, due to the fact that it's the only place most of the other characters can interact with wraiths. An even better idea is to make sure that every wraith has a few of the other types of characters as Fetters they are attuned to. This encourages wraiths to become involved with affairs in the Skinlands without restricting them to a given place, or completely removing the sense of isolation.

Crossovers with Masquerade

Giovanni

These necromancers of Italian descent are among the greatest enemies the Restless have in the world of the Quick. While some among their number are scholars who wish only to study and comprehend death, the Giovanni are for the most part a collection of utterly ruthless and power-hungry individuals, who seek nothing more than dominance over the worlds of both the living and the dead. To that end, they have gained power over many of the financial centers of the Quick, and control much of the commerce in the living world. But mere temporal power is seen as only a means to an end by these vampires. Their study of Necromancy has taught them a great deal about how to summon and control wraiths.

Summon Spirit: As written in *Laws of the Night*, but if the "person or object in a room that had some connection to the spirit in its life" is a Fetter, the Necromancer begins the Social Challenge one bid up, due to the particularly strong connection.

Tremere

The other magic-using vampires, the Tremere concentrate primarily on blood magics. If this were all, they would be of little concern to wraiths. However, one of their more obscure paths of knowledge is known as Spirit Thaumaturgy, and through this they seek to control the souls of the Restless in much the same way that the Giovanni do.

Disciplines

Auspex: Vampires' Heightened Senses cannot penetrate the Shroud, and thus cannot see wraiths who are not Embodied. However, if a vampire has reason to believe that a wraith is in a particular area (if the wraith has just used an Arcanos to affect the physical world), she may use Aura Perception to discern shifting shadows that indicate the wraith's presence. Telepathy may be used to communicate with the Restless.

Dominate and Presence: A vampire's Dominate or Presence Discipline cannot be used to effect a wraith who is in the Shadowlands. If the wraith is Embodied or using Puppetry, he is affected normally by Dominate and Presence Disciplines. Any vampire attempting to use Possession on someone that a wraith is using Puppetry on will have to make a Mental Challenge against the wraith currently possessing the body.

Obfuscate: While Lifesight allows wraiths to perceive the auras of living beings, vampires are not alive, and therefore wraiths may not perceive their auras. However, if a wraith has good reason to believe that a vampire is in a given area (such as movement), he may make a Mental Test to detect the vampire using Sharpened Senses.

Protean: Any vampire using Protean to produce Wolf's Claws can inflict aggravated damage on Embodied wraiths.

Storytelling Masquerade Crossovers

Vampires can be excellent Fetters for wraiths, as they are nearly as passionate as the Restless Dead themselves at times. On the other hand, becoming involved in Kindred politics and intrigues can distract wraiths from their own priorities, such as their other Fetters and Passions.

Giovanni and Tremere, with their Necromancy and Spirit Thaumaturgy, can make excellent points of crossover for *Masquerade* and *Oblivion* games, though they will as often be foes as friends. When Storytelling a situation such as this, be sure not to give either side the upper hand too easily.

Crossovers with Apocalypse

First of all, an important distinction must be made. In most cases, the "spirits" referred to in *Garou Gifts* are nature spirits and other spirits of Gaia, not the souls of the Restless Dead. As a result, wraiths may not be bound into *Garou fetishes*, etc.

The following Gifts will aid *Garou* in their interactions with wraiths. Use as described in *Apocalypse* unless otherwise indicated.

Spirit Ward: This Gift works on wraiths as well as spirits.

Sense Wyrm: The *Garou* may make a Static Mental Test if there is a wraith in the room to detect his presence. Note that this Gift cannot indicate location, only that there is a wraith present.

Sense the Unnatural: Sense the Unnatural works on wraiths as well as spirits.

Name the Spirit: This Gift will indicate relatively how powerful a wraith or spirit is (weak, moderate, mighty), as well as indicating if it is a wraith or a spirit.

Spirit Speech: Allows a Garou to communicate with wraiths.

Exorcism: This allows a Garou to force a wraith to give up control if they are using Puppetry or Inhabit on someone or something.

Pulse of the Invisible: A similar Gift, called Drumbeat of the Shadow, is utilized by the werewolves of the Uktena and Silent Strider tribes in dealing with the Underworld (known to them as the Dark Umbra). Substitute the rating of the Shroud in a given area for the Gauntlet in the Gift's description.

Spirit Drain: An Uktena variation of this Gift allows a Garou to drain a wraith's Pathos and convert it into Willpower.

Scent of the True Form: A successful Mental Test using this Gift will indicate if a target is a wraith.

Attunement: This Gift may be used to identify the location of the most powerful Haunt(s) in a city.

Howl of the Banshee: Wraiths with Intermediate level Keening may teach this Gift to Fianna werewolves.

Cybersenses: A successful Mental Test using this Gift can indicate the presence of a wraith using the Inhabit art Ride the Electron Highway.

Mindblock: Use of this Gift blocks a wraith from using Puppetry, Keening or any other Arcanos affecting the Garou's mind.

Sense Magic: This Gift will indicate if Arcanoi are being used in the Skinlands.

Summon the Restless Shade: If the werewolf using this Gift possesses one of the wraith's Fetters, the wraith is summoned to that Fetter. This may not be resisted.

Rite of Cleansing: This rite may be used to drive a wraith using Inhabit out of an object or away from an area of the Skinlands, but it may not be used as a Ward.

Spirit Friend, Command Spirit and Rite of Binding all have no effect on wraiths.

Storytelling Apocalypse Crossovers

While it's not the most common combination in the World of Darkness, some Storytellers may wish to include Garou in their **Oblivion** chronicle or vice versa. The Silent Striders are an obvious starting point for crossovers, with their affinity for the spirit world, though it would not be that unusual for Artificers to run afoul of or even conceivably befriend Glass Walkers while tooling along the Electron Highway.

Don't forget the natural distrust between Garou and wraiths when contemplating crossover adventures. Wraiths are not of Gaia, and most Garou will surmise from this that they're serving the Wyrms.

Mental Traits

Social Traits

Physical Traits

Fetters

Corpus

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Willpower

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Pathos

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Passions

Status

Backgrounds

Arcanoi

Abilities



Player _____

Character _____

Chronicle _____

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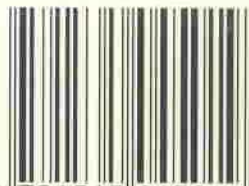
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