WRAITH
THE
GREAT
WAR

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Waiting Out the Storm

A smart man on a fast motorcycle can outrun the very winds of Hell. So I keep on telling myself, and thus far the theory has held. Were I a gambling man, I'd have to put my money on Hell, but as things stand I'm reasonably happy with my circumstances.

Correction: I shall be quite content so long as the two rather heavily armed and armored gentlemen blocking my path don't see fit to interrupt my journey. They're motioning me to stop so they can check my papers, presumably with the intent of finding some fault with them, arresting me and confiscating my motorcycle. Both are armed with pikes, and one has a rifle slung across his back. Each wears a hodgepodge of metal, with scrounged bits of relic armor from head to toe. The effect is comical. I've followed the roads of the afterlife for ten thousand miles since the last time I slept, and these two pole-toting ragamuffins think they can slow me down? It's a pity that the Smiling Lord, must work his schemes with such poor, poor soldiers.

I bare my teeth in a wide grin and gun the engine. The cycle leaps to respond, making a sound halfway between a growl and a demonic scream. The guards hold their ground for a long second, pikes crossed, then dive to the side of the road amidst a hail of curses. I roar past and wave as jauntily as I am able, then hunker down to make some more time before the storm closes in. Behind me, I hear one of the guards trying to work his rifle. A single shot rings out with a sound like ice cracking, then the guards and the moment are lost around a bend in the Byway. Ahead of me lie the gates of the Brussels Necropolis, my current destination. Beyond the city, the storm clouds of the Maelstrom rise up like malevolent

gods. I hear thunder and mentally estimate my arrival time at the gates. It's time to ride as if all the hounds of Hell were on my tail.

Because that might soon be the case, after all.

Half a mile outside of town, I'm forced to stop. There's an impossibility lying on the road in front of me, and even in the middle of the storm, I have to stop and look at it.

It's a man, a dead man. I've seen plenty of those, both as a man and as a ghost, so another one hardly comes as a shock. This one, however, is freshly dead; dropped here like a Christmas present in my lap. The curious thing is that he's so new here that he hasn't even torn his way out of the soul-stuff that surrounds him like a baby's blanket. I can see him dimly, thrashing around inside his Caul like a man in a net.

I have a dilemma. If I leave him out here, the Spectres will get him. I can hear them now, calling to one another in the clouds far above me. They'll swoop down and carry him off, and that will be the last anyone sees of this poor soul. No one will mourn for him — there are too many other struggles for existence going on for anyone to even notice he was ever here. I've got a schedule to meet, and an urgent message to deliver. Stopping to cut this unfortunate soul loose from his Caul, to help him acclimate, to teach him what he needs to know to survive over here — all of that will take time, and time is what I don't have.

But if I leave him here, he's dead. Worse than dead, really — dead sometimes nets you a second chance here, but there's no coming back from where he'll go if I abandon him.

Really, it's no choice at all.

I stop the cycle and scurry off, hunched low against the gale that rakes even the surface of the Byway road. I can see now how this fellow got here. The storm winds are blowing him along like a tumbleweed. They've surely blown him clear across the Shadowlands, far from the place where he breathed his last. I take a half-dozen steps and I catch up to my new friend. With one hand I steady him, and with the other I reach into my jacket for the hunk of shell that killed me — or at least its ghost. The thing is awkward as sin, but it has an edge to it, and that's what I use to cut the Caul open. There's a flood like afterbirth all over my jodhpurs, and then the Caul shrivels away, leaving one sopping-wet ghost. He flops around for a bit, looking like a big, pale, ugly fish, and then I decide I've got no more time to watch this, and less to be gentle. I pick him up and toss him over my shoulder (praying that plasm stains come out of uniforms), then dump him in the sidecar of my motorcycle. He lolls there and mumbles something that sounds like "Mummphadumph," then any sound is lost in the roar of the cycle as I try to make up for lost time. The Legion that now controls Brussels opens the gates only during lulls in the storm, and the one I've been traveling in is nearly gone. Up ahead, I can see the last stragglers being shooed inside the massive soulsteel doors that are closing even now.

You're not going to make it.

So sayeth my Shadow, but I ignore him and try to squeeze a bit more speed out of the old A-H. She doesn't feel like cooperating, it seems, and suddenly my other half's prediction seems a lot more plausible. Behind me, the winds pick up, skirling like those idiotic bagpipes some of the Brit units used to play before an assault. Perfect way to disguise your intentions, yes sir.

Ahead of me, the gates clang shut and soldiers scramble to take their posts. I skid to a stop a dozen feet from the city walls and mutter a curse under my breath. "Halloo the gate!" I call.

"Halloo the poor bastard stuck outside. How's the weather?"

Clearly, some soldier thinks he's a wit. Around him, his comrades laugh, readying weapons for the assault that's sure to come on the wings of the storm.

"I'm a courier with a message from the Isle for the Anacreon," I reply. "How about letting me inside before the rain gets here?"

"Sorry, chum. Can't open the gates now. Orders, you know." This time, the speaker's an officer, a Marshal by all appearances. Like the rest, he's got the insignia of the Grim Legion on his shield.

I try to put on my best, most reasonable voice, and find an unconcerned smile somewhere. "This message is vital. I've got to get it through."

The officer shrugs. "Impossible, I'm afraid. However, if this matter is so vital, you can always toss the message up to one of my men, and we'll be glad to deliver it for you."

"I'm afraid my orders were to deliver it personally to the Anacreon, and to no one else."

"Well then, it seems we're at an impasse, except for one thing."

"And what," I say, "is that?"

"Simply put, if I keep you out there and report your destruction at the hands of the storm, chances are good that eventually another messenger will be sent, and your message will get through in any case. If I open the gates to let you in, however, I also let *them* in." He gestures to the swarms of Spectres swooping in on the storm's gusts, a bare quarter-mile behind me now. "A messenger can be replaced. A Necropolis cannot. You have my apologies."

And with that, the son of a bitch turns away and leaves me to my fate.

A motorcycle, even one that has been properly cared for, cannot outrun a bullet. It can, however, outrun a great many things, and at the moment I hope that a Maelstrom is one of them. Out of the corner of my eye I see two pairs of Spectres come barreling in, carrying the soldiers who'd tried to stop me a few short minutes ago. Straight up to the gates they fly, and then, with a terrific crash, they slam into the

façade. In spite of myself, I laugh — the Spectres are using those fools as battering rams. As hard as their heads seemed to be, those two might last a good long while.

From the top of the wall, the crack-crack-crack sound of concentrated rifle fire comes clearly over the noise of the storm. From within the city, deeper thumps punctuate the firing — artillery getting on line, and breaking up the massed formations of Spectres in the clouds. In return, Spectres hurl taunts and more dangerous things, and they send wave after wave at the walls and gates.

For my part, I gun the engine again and do my level best to get out of there before the Spectres notice me. In that, I am mostly successful. I do not manage, however, to keep myself on the Byway as successfully as I might like. Swerving to avoid a wounded Spectre who plummets down from the heights, I pull too hard to the left and go through a Skinlands house. The resultant shock and disorientation make me lose control of the cycle completely. The machine (and by extension, both my passenger and myself) tumble ass over teakettle. The storm winds closes around us, and then all is darkness

When I awake, it's to the sound of my Shadow laughing his damn-fool head off at the mess I've made of things. I'm sitting in what looks to be a ghost of a building, my cycle pulled in behind me and stashed neatly in a corner. A small barrow-flame spits out sparks in front of me. It doesn't give any warmth, but the mere sight of it is comforting. Across the fire is a wraith I don't recognize, an old man wearing a simple robe and sitting cross-legged. He's got a plain staff made of what looks like Stygian river wood across his lap, and gray hair cropped close to his skull. Looking at him, I can tell he's probably a head shorter than I am, but he somehow seems taller. Behind him, I can see my unlucky passenger rummaging through the dark corners of the building for scraps of relic timber and whatnot, and piling them in front of the door. The old man follows my gaze and shrugs. "He was disoriented. It seemed best to give him a task that might distract him until you awakened. Now, perhaps, you and I might discuss his ultimate disposition."

I try to hoist myself upright, and get as far as a squatting position. "You want him as a Thrall? Terribly sorry, but I can't allow that. He got me locked out of the Necropolis, and I'll be damned if it's for nothing."

The old man laughed. "Him? A Thrall? Hardly. I've got no use for such, and I'm not a soul-taker. No, I simply meant that we should probably pool our resources in order to teach him about his new—"

"Life?"

"—not the word I would have chosen. *Existence*. You and I should teach him what he needs to know. Then, he can make a well-informed decision as to what he's going to do with himself in the Underworld once there's a break in the storm and we can get out of this hovel."

The old man's words remind me of a nagging question. "Speaking of which, how exactly did I get *into* this place? The last thing I remember was going clear through what was left of a wall, and then..." My voice trails off. I remember what had come next, and I do *not* want to talk about it — not with a stranger, anyway.

The stranger turns, ostensibly to check on the new soul's progress with the cordwood, in reality to buy me time to cover my embarrassment. He says quietly, "Oh, I brought you in here. The storm laid you low, and Adam there wasn't in any condition to bear you to safety — assuming he'd be able to recognize shelter if he found it. Lucky for you, I was passing along and saw you, and was able to get you inside. It wasn't much trouble." I raise an eyebrow at that, and he adds, "Your other half, your Shadow — it isn't near as strong as it has you thinking it is. You're a tough soul. Don't listen to your weak half's lies."

"You're a Pardoner, aren't you?" I say. The old man turns back to me with a grin.

"Among other things, yes. Also a traveler and occasionally a mercenary, and once in a great long while a poet. Mostly, though, I'm just a lost soul, like yourself, looking for some meaning in this grand and glorious mess."

"The emperor's missing, you know," I say, and I feel like a fool for saying it. If the stranger's been wandering farther afield than his own doorstep, he would be aware of that particular tidbit.

"Oh he is, is he?" The old man grins, not unkindly, and takes his staff in his hands. "I can't say I blame him for just wandering off, though, not with things as bad as they are."

"And how bad are they, really?" I ask. "I'm just a courier. I only get bits and pieces, not enough to puzzle together the whole picture."

"Bad enough, but not as bad as some think, I suspect," he says. "There's hope. There's always hope. I think Adam's finished with his chores. Shall we invite him to join us? The storm sounds like it's a long way from blowing itself out, and there's much to tell him."

"Suit yourself," I say, and let my voice trail off. He gets the hint.

"I'm called Jason these days. Well, I'm called many things, but Jason's the most suitable for company."

It's as good an answer as I'm likely to get. "Corporal Solomon Cole, formerly of the United States Army Messenger Corps, now liaison to various and sundry Legions which may or may not still be in existence."

Jason nods knowingly. "Oh, they're still out there, Mr. Cole. Have no fear. You're still needed." And before I can respond, he waves Adam over to our pathetic excuse for a fire.

dam, it turns out, had been a soldier with the Boche, back when the living were still shooting at each other. He'd sucked down a chestful of chlorine gas during one of the tangles at Ypres and been taken into a convent hospital nearby. He'd spent the rest of his life there, hacking up bits of his lungs in bloody chunks until he gave up the ghost, so to speak, not so long ago. Thankfully, he seemed disinclined to continue the fight — too many soldiers and ex-soldiers come across ready to finish what they started. They don't understand that there's no point to it any more, that whatever allegiances you had on the other side don't mean two-bit's worth once you cross the Shroud.

"I cannot understand," he says, trying in vain to warm his hands before the cold, cold fire, "why we can understand one another. Solomon, you say you are American. I am... was... Silesian. Jason, you are—"

"Old." He laughs. "Very old."

Adam shakes his head in momentary confusion, then shrugs. "It matters not. We should not be able to understand each other, yet we do. What is happening here?"

Jason looks at me, as if to say "Do you want to handle this one?" I give him the look right back. If he's so old, he's probably got this routine down nicely. He can tell it better than I can.

Jason rubs his eyes and pokes needlessly at the fire with his staff. "Well, Adam, I'm not sure where to begin, except at the end. You're dead. You were aware of that, yes?" Adam nods, not trusting himself to speak. Smart lad; it's always a shock to hear it when you can't deny it. Tends to make you say stupid things.

Jason continues. "Good. You've accepted that, more or less. That's where it all comes from. You're dead, and you're a ghost. Let me guess... you had some unfinished business back in the real world — the Skinlands, they call it over here. Maybe there was a girl? School you didn't finish?" Adam moves his head to indicate the negative. "No? Well, the details don't much matter. You have unfinished business, things to do and places or people that are important to you. You don't just get to go and wander on to whatever awaits souls who've tidied up their affairs."

"Heaven?" I say, feeding Jason the line. He grins in quick appreciation.

"Perhaps. Perhaps Nirvana. Perhaps Hell, though I've been told more than once by younger souls that this is Hell, right here and right now. Young pups haven't seen Hell — that's what this place *used* to be. This is downright quiet by comparison. But no," he says, dragging himself bodily back to the topic at hand. "There's a myth called Transcendence that some wraiths believe in with all their might, but I've not placed stock in it for quite a while. I'm one of those poor souls who believe in taking what is at hand — in this case, the Underworld — and making the best of it that you can."

I find myself nodding agreement. Adam looks interested, instead of lost; that's a good sign. "But what is this place? All I've seen of it is the inside of this building. Surely there's more than this."

Jason laughs, and I join him. "Oh, Lord yes, there's more," I say. "A whole world more. There's an Empire of the Dead that's falling to pieces, and a hole at the heart of the world that wants to swallow everything. There's a storm going on that's been blowing for years and doesn't look like it's ever going to stop, and armies of the Dead marching on each other, and — there's so much more that I don't even know where to start."

Adam looks anxiously from me to Jason and back again. "If you will excuse me," he says, and backs away from the fire. In the darkness I can hear him coughing, rasping up lungs that are no longer there as he tries to come to grips with what I've just unloaded on him.

"Too much?" I mouth to Jason. Jason just rolls his eyes to the stormy heavens.

"He'd have to learn sooner or later," he says. "Now let's give the boy a moment to have the shakes, then we should haul him right back here and not let him up until we're done. If we stop halfway, it'll be worse than having told him nothing at all."

I stand up and stretch. *Jason's probably right*, I think to myself. *A damn shame, that.*

t's an hour, give or take a few lifetimes, later. Jason's been talking non-stop ever since Adam came back to the fire. Every so often, the new ghost starts hacking again, that terrible, tearing cough of his, and I silently rack it up to the influence of his Shadow. Jason covers all of the basics — what the Shadow is, what relics are, why you have to be true to your driving Passions and all of that. He even manages to skip lightly through all of the metaphysics that I had never quite worked out for myself, like why we can pelt through a dozen buildings in the Skinlands unharmed, but get turned into flapjacks if we bounce up against a ghost of a place over here. Apparently it has something to do with alternate states of being and the difference between items and their memories, but a working knowledge is all I need. It's all any of us needs, really.

Finally, Jason winds down. "That's not all there is, but that's all that comes to mind," he says. Just the same, I can't think of anything he's missed.

He turns those old, old eyes on me then, and gives me the same sort of grin I gave to those poor excuses for guards

on the Byway. "It's your turn, Solomon," he says. "I've been out of touch for a while, and I'm not really sure what's going on, politically speaking. Why don't you fill Adam in on what's happening in Stygia, and you can add the latest on the weather while you're at it."

I glare back at him. The bastard had as much as admitted he knew exactly what was going on when we first spoke, and yet here he was leaving me with the entire load. Perhaps he simply didn't want me to feel left out — but why the deception, then?

He's up to something, my Shadow whispers, unnecessarily. Interestingly enough, since the time I'd awakened, the bastard's commentary has ceased to be seductive and has instead become merely annoying. He insists on restating the obvious and rehashing the ridiculous, so I ignore him. It seems to work well.

"Well," I say, and glance at Adam. He seems ready to listen, not at all bored. It's a good start, at least. "The basics are this: There's an empire of the dead, alternately called Stygia or the Hierarchy, though the last term tends to be in vogue only among younger souls such as ourselves. Decrepit fossils of centuries past," and I smirk at Jason, "prefer the classical names. The capital of the Empire is also called Stygia, and the city sits on an island that doesn't correspond exactly to any place in the real world. There are roads you can take to reach it from here. They're called Byways, and they wind from city to city and into the heart of this storm. They offer the closest thing to safe travel you'll find. You can also try to take a shorter route through the storm itself, though that way's dangerous in the extreme. There are Spectres along that route — ghosts gone bad — and worse things, and there's always the chance of getting lost and missing your destination entirely. Miss by too much and you'll end up in a place called the Labyrinth, which the Spectres call home. And once you're in there, you're never coming out again."

I describe a few of the horrors of the Labyrinth, and Adam shivers. He's scared clear of it now, and that's a good thing, even though I'm making up every word of my stories. No one's ever gone into the Labyrinth and come out to report on what he saw, though I hear that there are some crazy fools now organizing in hopes of doing exactly that.

I correct myself. One wraith has gone into the Labyrinth and returned: Charon. But he isn't here to share his experiences with me, so I have to fake it as best as I can.

"So this Empire, it is universal, yes? It controls all the lands of the dead?" Adam clearly wants this to be so, just to have an anchor to cling to in his confusion. It's a pity that I have to take that away from him as well.

"Not exactly. The Empire's had... opposition at the best of times. Gangs of outlaws and freedom fighters and God knows what else called Renegades, more or less collectively. Then there are the religious fanatics, most of whom I sincerely hope have been blown away by the storm. There used to be other groups called Guilds, but no one's seen hide or hair of them for centuries. Myself, I think they're just bogeymen, used by the Legions to scare the new souls like yourself into line. 'Behave yourself, march in step or the Masquers are going to get you!' It's all pretty hokey, if you ask me."

Out of the corner of my eye, I see that Jason's watching me intently. I wonder why. Perhaps he's going to grade my performance. I plunge onward.

"On the other hand, the Empire is pretty damned big. It does have some competition from other Empires of the Dead — the Chinese have one, I hear, and the Indian ghosts I've met keep on talking about some place called Swar, and there's for damned certain an African Empire called the Bush of Ghosts on the other side of the Mediterranean. Perhaps I'll visit there when the storm stops. The place might suit me better than here, but now's not the time to find out."

"I understand," Adam says, smiling, and mentally I sigh. There's no way he understands from the little I've said, and I've got to puncture his delusions before he steps out into the Underworld. Otherwise, he'll end up deader than dead, and fast.

"No, no you don't," I say, and hate myself for saying it. "Let me explain to you what's going on. That storm out there, it's a Great Maelstrom. If we're lucky, it's just going to last another decade. If not, it'll last forever. Let me tell you what's really going on.

"From what I've been told by various peers here in the Underworld, everything went to Hell more or less around the same time your people made their big push at the Somme. By some freak of nature, the Great Maelstrom — the Fourth, according to sundry old souls who had enough sense to get in out of the rain three times previously. Just when the bullets were at their thickest, the devil decided it was time for him to join the party. At a hundred points around the battlefield, Nihils tore themselves wide open and spat raw Tempest-stuff into the air. Reports from eyewitnesses say it was like watching a volcanic eruption, or a ring of geysers going up all at once, or standing in the mouth of a field piece during an artillery bombardment. Personally, I've never been inclined to argue the matter because I was still alive at that point, but when a hundred souls tell you the same thing, you tend to believe. The battlefield went 'boom,' all in a moment, and then that ring of storm-stuff started spreading outward like wildfire. Fires tend to close in on circles — a friend of mine learned that the hard way. This storm, on the other hand, went out and about, all the way across the Underworld and, to my knowledge, clear around the world of the dead.

"The storm had a great many consequences. One was the almost total loss of communications between Headquarters

— the City of Stygia — and the cities and troops posted here in the Shadowlands. Byways were overwhelmed by the storm, torn down by Spectres — nasty, nasty beasts that they are — or blocked with the debris of the Maelstrom. The storm winds, not to mention the things and monsters that rode them, also took a toll on travel. Before long, every Necropolis had slammed its doors shut against the storm. Every outlying Haunt was barricaded against the storm. Every lone wraith had either found someone to join up with or had been swept away by the storm. Isolation was total.

"That, incidentally, is where souls like myself come in. With the normal routes of communication down, some poor brave fools have to take their place. That's why I can move with relative impunity from faction to faction — people want their news.

"In any case, once the doors were shut and everyone was locked inside, the Lord of one of the Legions of the Dead — they split you up by how you died; it's easier than using nationality or anything else — decided that the time was right for a power play. He and his mounted a coup. Now, normally this attempt would have been nipped in the bud, but it turns out that the Emperor himself had vanished. The other Deathlords couldn't decide who was going to lead the troops; it was a lot like watching Sir John French and his lot in action, to be honest. As a result, by the time any defenses got organized, it was too late. The other Deathlords holed up in their towers, but the cities and Byways were abandoned to the Smiling Lord and his lackeys. They're victims of violence, you see, so our little tiff back in the Skinlands gave the Smiling Lord reinforcements the likes of which living generals have never seen. The end result is what you see outside." I wave vaguely at the window. "A storm that's been blowing for years, and which shows no inclination to slow down. It would have blown us right out of this shack if Jason here hadn't done something to protect us, God alone knows what. The Empire is in the Smiling Lord's hands, because the Emperor is missing and the usurper's got more troops than the rest of the Legions put together."

"For the moment," Jason interjects, and there's a hollow weariness to his face. "Death's coming to millions more, Solomon, I'm sad to say. The scales will be balanced."

Horrified I stare at him. "What are you saying? That millions of people are going to die to feed the other Legions, just for the sake of throwing out the Smiling Lord?"

"No," says Jason. "At least, I don't think so. It's not clear, even to me. But I don't think so, no — not that my soul could bear it if it were." He looked old then, and sad.

"That's a relief, I think," I say, and rub my temples. Adam just starts hacking again, a troubled look on his face.

"But this is terrible," he says. "The Empire must be preserved. Don't you agree?"

"I used to," Jason replies with a terrible sound of despair. "I'm not so sure any more." He stops for a second, cocks his ear. "The storm's letting up, Adam. You should probably go now while there's a break in the weather. Here." He reaches into his robe and pulls forth a pouch. "Take this. It'll buy your way into the Citadel, and you'll make your way from there. Hurry, the lull won't last for long."

Adam takes the pouch, which clanks with the weight of coins, and stands. "I should not leave you here," he says, all the while looking at the door.

"Go," I tell him. "I travel faster alone." Jason nods assent and makes shooing gestures.

"Thank you. Thank you both," Adam says, backing quickly away. His footsteps are inaudible within seconds.

Jason and I look at each other in silence for a long moment, then each of us says simultaneously, "I know your secret."

We both burst into laughter after that, though Jason calms down first. "So," he says in between wheezes, "Who was that message really for?"

I play innocent. "What message?"

"The one you tried to bluff your way past the guards with. If that was for the Anacreon, I'm a tea tray on the desk of the Smiling Lord."

"You were there?"

"Of course I was. Just don't ask exactly where." He makes a face designed to seem innocent, and I start laughing all over again.

"All right. You have me. I'm a runner for the other seven Legions. There's a cell of Iron Legionnaires holed up in that town waiting for communiqués from the Island, and I was trying to get their letters through. I did have a message for the Anacreon, however, just in case the bluff actually worked."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir. It was an order to pull troops back from the walls, straight from the Island."

"The Smiling Lord would order that?"

"Of course not. But there are any number of people — the other Deathlords among them — who have gotten very good at imitating his style over the years." That sets off new gales of laughter, and it's minutes before we can talk again.

"So," I say when I finally stop wheezing, "What's your game, then?"

"Game?" Jason pretends to look puzzled and fails. Miserably.

"Yes, Your Most Imperial and Shoddily Clothed Majesty. Your game. I'm amazed at how many slips you made."

Jason — Charon, for I'm sure that's who he is — sobers instantly. "Not a game, really, not at all."

"Then what?"

"Trying to save the Empire, I think. It's clear that the view from the Tower is a clouded one. I'm trying to see what needs to be done from street level, as it were. Trying to hear voices that don't belong to the great and powerful and long-dead. Trying to feel what the souls in the Legions feel, and attempt to understand what Stygia's about these days. I don't mind telling you, Solomon, I'm old, and very tired, and everywhere I go I see so much work to be done."

"And the rebellion?"

"Not unanticipated, but not welcomed, either. The Smiling Lord, in all his guises, has always been ambitious. I expect the wheel will turn, perhaps after I resume my throne, perhaps before." He sobers. "There are a great many deaths coming, Solomon. Anchor yourself well; the storm's not half done yet, and a great many Fetters are going to snap like strands of spiderweb before it's through."

"Wonderful." I stand, and walk over to the motorcycle. "How long do you think this break in the storm is going to last?"

"Long enough for you to reach your next stop, Solomon. That much power remains to me."

I bow sardonically and start up the motorcycle. "Thank you, Your Majesty. I do have one last question before I take my leave, though."

"Yes?"

"Why trust me with this? Why reveal yourself to a messenger, someone who's bound to carry the news?"

"Because if you tell people I am out here, Solomon, you're not spreading news. You're spreading hope. And even *in extremis*, I can provide my people with that much. So do this for me, Solomon. Spread a little hope to my cities. And with any luck, I'll see you in Stygia when this is all over and we can discuss how it went."

I gun the engine. "Well, if you put it that way…."

Charon smiles. "I'll put it any way I need to, to be honest. It's the nature of rule. Now get moving. Even I can't hold off this storm forever."

He's lying about that, too, I believe. He could have held the storm for a good long while, maybe forever, if he'd needed to. But perhaps that's the point of the whole exercise, that waiting for him to do everything has led to… this. To this destruction, this waste, this war. Perhaps it was time for ordinary souls to take the burden — of hope, if nothing else — on themselves. Or perhaps he was just feeding me a line to get me out of his little hideaway. In the end, it doesn't much matter. The skies are, if not clear, then at least not stormy. The road ahead is open and I have a message to deliver — a new one, perhaps, but one as old as the world.

I wonder which Necropoli need some hope. All of them, I suspect. I guess I'd better get a move on. I've got some news.

here are no damned trees in Leeds. It's just as well, really — trees that are perfectly healthy to the living look leprous and skeletal to me. All I have to deal with here is industrial squalor. I correct myself: industrial squalor and the need to get my message across before I become a forged bit of that squalor myself.

I can see the local Renegades watching me. Four watch from the rooftops, another pair hides behind the dustbins and at least three are trying not to make any noise behind me. Amateurs, the lot of them.

"It's all right," I call. "You can come out. Castor sent me." I hold up the compass as a symbol of my identity and pray that there's no one here with a grudge against my old gang. "I'm an outrider for Castor, and I need to talk to you."

"'Castor ain't done us no good," one of the figures on the rooftop says. "Wot's 'e wantin' us for now?"

"London," I say. "There's been a coup."

I hear excited rustling in response to that. There are snatches of conversation, the sounds of men sizing up their opportunities. "Castor's in charge, then? Hell, wot's he need us for, then?" The voice from the roof is insistent, cynical. I mentally sigh.

"Castor's not in charge, the Grim Legion is. They marched in and took the whole town. Castor and all of his people — myself included — don't like this. We're going to take the city back. The old regime may have been a pain—" their loud laughter forces me to pause, but I take the response as a good sign "—but at least we could do business. The new lads, well, they're something else entirely. Vicious. Mean-spirited. Angry. They'll forge you soon as look at you, they will. And if we let them squat on London, how long is it going to be before they start looking elsewhere?"

There's murmuring on the roof and behind me, and I can distinctly hear a few comments about "soft southerners needin' help." The boys behind the bins are actively arguing. That's another good sign. No one's taken a shot at me yet (not that it would do them much good if they tried). And as I stand here and wait for yet another gaggle of ragtag Renegades to decide whether they're going to line up under my banner, I lift my eyes to the heavens. In how many other places across England is this scene being repeated tonight? How many more wraiths will it take before we're ready to storm the walls that Castor and I helped to build? And is it all worth it — pulling together every half-disciplined mob on the island for the sake of throwing out one band of totalitarians and replacing it with another?

Then I think about what Sturgis and his men did that first week after they took the city — the heads on pikes, carefully maintained so that they keep screaming all hours of the day and night; thick black clouds of smoke that had been my friends billowing from the forges; the sounds of three centuries' hard work getting torn down because some fool in Stygia decided he needed to throw his weight around. It would be worth it — worth the souls of everyone here and then some — to put an end to that.

The four from the roof are coming down, cautiously. The three behind me have moved into the open. It's time to bring it home, as it were. I put on my most winning smile and go to work. London is occupied tonight, but not forever.

Picture yourself in another place, in another time and another world. Imagine yourself wandering the red poppy fields left behind by the tide of the War to End All Wars, a ghost revisiting a site of tragedy or triumph. See yourself fighting the wars of the Restless Dead, battling to preserve the eternal Empire of Stygia or doing your best to bring it down, all while the Maelstrom winds howl. Close your eyes and get a sense of those images, that history, the sorrow and the joy that such tableaux can engender.

Welcome to **Wraith: The Great War**.

Wraith: The Great War is a supplement for **Wraith: The Oblivion**, chronicling a pivotal time in the history of the Underworld. While the basic rules and regulations of Wraith remain unchanged, prepare to find an afterlife dramatically different from the one familiar to ghosts of the modern age. Charon still rules his Empire directly (in theory), though none have seen him in years. The Fourth Great Maelstrom, spawned by the carnage of the Somme, rages unabated. The Shadowlands and the heart of the Empire are essentially cut off from each other; each Necropolis is an island in a sea of howling foes. The arts of the dead, the Arcanoi, are different, more suited to an age when nights are darker and technology less prevalent.

While the living world recovers from the war, the Dead are still trapped by it. The detritus of warfare — ghosts of tanks, zeppelins and planes, massed ranks of drones endlessly recreating doomed charges, clouds of poison gas wandering the Underworld in search of new victims — surrounds and sustains the empire in its darkest hour. Stygia itself has fallen to treachery. Beset by foes within and without, the Dark Kingdom of Iron teeters on the brink of collapse.

Nor is Stygia alone in its hour of sorrow. World War I was the first truly global conflict, and that fact is reflected in the afterlife. Souls owing allegiance to the Jade Empire, the Bush of Ghosts and even the far-flung afterlife of the Indian subcontinent are all part of the mix. Unliving travelers brave the Maelstrom in an attempt to return home — or find themselves prisoners of worlds they never made.

And it is into this cauldron of intrigue, terror and triumph that you now propose to step. Are you ready to climb into the ghost of a Sopwith Camel and do battle with Spectres on the Maelstrom winds? Can you help defend a Citadel against the Shadow-eaten hordes storming its gates and the Grim Legion traitors already inside its walls? Will you help send the lost souls of the Bush of Ghosts safely on their journey, or can you take the part of a prisoner in a strange afterlife trying to get home? Do you take advantage of the turmoil in the empire to dabble in the lands of the living — flappers and gangsters, expatriates and poets all await your touch — or do you turn your hand to supporting the new regime?

The Twilight Era

The setting for **Wraith: The Great War** is the period from Armistice Day — November 11, 1918 — until the eve of the 1929 stock market crash that ushered in the Great Depression. Those 11 years are the start, in game terms, of the Twilight Era, precursor to the modern World of Darkness. Wraiths and other supernaturals do not use this label; game developers do. Wraiths speak of the Fourth Great Maelstrom, the storm that rages during this time and belches Spectres and other unpleasant things into the midst of the Restless Dead. The Maelstrom continues until it is quelled — that is, until all the Shadow-eaten who essentially constitute the storm are defeated and the Nihils are sealed. Again, in game terms, we know this happens because another Great Maelstrom occurs after the Hiroshima blast in 1945 (for my money, the true start of the World of Darkness). The point of any Storyteller game, however, is the stories *you* tell, not the stories we tell to provide you a framework. If the Artificers Guild gets wiped out in *your* **Great War** game, so be it. In other words, as usual, if anything in this book's rules or settings displeases you, change it. Make it your own.

On Nomenclature

Apart from this introduction and the appendix at the end of the book, the terms "World War I" and "First World War" do not appear in these pages. The text adopts the phraseology of the period instead, and wraiths mean their own Underworld conflict when they refer to "the Great War." The Skinlands conflict they speak of sardonically as "the War to End All Wars," or simply "the war."

How to Use This Book

Wraith: The Great War is a historical supplement to **Wraith: The Oblivion**. The text of the book you hold presumes a certain familiarity with the modern-era game and the Storyteller roleplaying system. Rules specific to **Great War** appear here. Rules common to both games appear only in **Wraith: The Oblivion**.

Chapter One: War and Aftermath describes the historical particulars of World War I and how they help pave the way for the wraithly Great War.

Chapter Two: The Rules of Engagement explains Underworld combat for land, sea and air, plus how the Fourth Great Maelstrom affects wraiths and their environs.

Chapter Three: I Think, Therefore I Am a Wraith offers instructions for creating Twilight Era wraiths.

Chapter Four: I Am but the Shadow of Myself tells the reader how to create a Shadow for a **Great War** character.

Chapter Five: The Outsiders and Others discusses wraiths from other Dark Kingdoms who play major roles in Stygian history at this time. This chapter also presents Mortwights — called Mutilés in this era — as characters.

Chapter Six: My Death's Many Tales presents Storytelling aids and building blocks for **Great War** chronicles.

Chapter Seven: The Enemies of My Friends details what wraiths' foes are up to during this period.

Chapter Eight: A Great War Appendix contains settings and items specific to the **Great War** milieu.

Lexicon

abambo: Bush of Ghosts (q.v.) term for African wraiths (plural)

ace: Pilot who has downed five or more opponents in aerial combat

Amaterasu: Japanese sun goddess; her descendants were the Emperors of Japan

Annals of Pestilence (a.k.a. Journals of Bone): Transcribed utterances of the Skeletal Lord

Benandanti: A mystical fraternity (literally — females are often prevented from joining) whose members can perceive wraiths in the Skinlands and astrally visit the Underworld

Behest: The name Stygian wraiths apply to the Arcanos practiced by Moriman (q.v.)

Beaufort-Granogrec Scale, the: A system for measuring relative Maelstrom (q.v.) intensity

Black Mask, the: The espionage order of the Grim Legion

Bleak Legion: Not a true Legion, but a Russian branch of the Silent Legion

Boer: A South African of Dutch ancestry

Boche, the: Nickname the Allies applied collectively to Germans

Breathless Dead, the: Stygian name for Spanish Flu victims

Bushido: The Japanese "Way of the Warrior,"; the essential spirit of the samurai

Bush of Ghosts, the: The African Deadlands; in Stygia, commonly called the Dark Kingdom of Ivory

Cataphractoi: The heavy cavalry of the Legion of Fate

concertina: A type of barbwire

Displace: The name Stygian wraiths apply to the Arcanos practiced by Tvashtriya (q.v.)

doughboy: Slang term for United States soldiers; used mainly by Americans

Flesh Corps: An order of the Penitent Legion; similar to the Beast Corps, but this order uses moliated Leviathans instead of barghests or the like

Fourth Great Maelstrom: Psychic storm that ravages the Underworld during the Twilight Era (q.v.)

gaijin: Japanese slang for foreigner

geisha: Japanese female performer, musician and artisan of the highest order; often mistakenly considered mere prostitutes by Westerners

Generals of Oblivion: A select group of Nephwracks who serve Oblivion directly, and who side with (or against) Malfeans as they choose

Great War, the: In the Skinlands, the War to End All Wars (q.v.); in the Underworld, the War of the Dead, which follows the Skinlands conflict

hun: A Jade Kingdom term for the half of a wraith's soul that is of intellect and spirit; the Psyche

Hun, the: Allied nickname for Germans during the War to End All Wars

ibambo: Bush of Ghosts term for an African wraith (singular)

Imperialist: A member of the Grim Legion's "New Stygian" regime; to opponents, an Insurrectionist

Insurrection, the: The Grim Legion's effort to take control of the Dark Empire of Iron

Jade Kingdom, the: The Asian Deadlands

Johnny Songbirds: Itinerant Chanteurs

kuei: Jade Kingdom term for a malevolent spirit ruled by *p'o*

loka: Swar (q.v.) term indicating one level of the "upper worlds" in the Indian afterlife

Lost Generation: Label applied to the British youngsters who were nearly wiped out by the War to End All Wars

Loyalist: A wraith who opposes the Smiling Lord's forces during the Insurrection

Maelstrom: A turbulent venting of "matter" from the Tempest and/or the Labyrinth into the Shadowlands; routinely accompanied by Spectres

Magisterium Veritatis: The Stygian secret police

Ministry of Intelligence: The Iron Legion's espionage order

Moriman: Bush of Ghosts term for "witch doctor" or "spirit man/woman"; a practitioner of the Behest Arcanos

Mutilé: A common type of Spectre; in the European Deadlands, a Mortwight

nawab: Indian government official

Night Mail: An organization of wraithly aviators who transport information between Necropoli

Night of Short Chains; the: Usually Loyalist (q.v.) name given to the Grim Legion seizure of Europe's Anacreons in the overthrow of the old Hierarchy

No Man's Land: In the War to End All Wars, the battlefield that extends between opposing sides' trenches

Ocean: Bush of Ghosts term for the Tempest

Office of Maelstrom Preparedness: Wraiths dedicated to predicting, and ultimately quelling, the storms that plague the Underworld

pals' battalions: Groups of British and Scottish soldiers who enlisted together to fight in the War to End All Wars

pandemic: A global epidemic (e.g., the Spanish Flu)

Peng Lai: Jade Kingdom term for "Paradise"

p'o: Jade Kingdom term for the half of a Japanese soul that controls movement and physicality; the Shadow

ronin: Japanese term for a masterless samurai; a member of the warrior class who does not serve any *daimyo*

sappers: British term for soldiers who tunnel beneath enemy emplacements to plant and deploy explosives

sati: Indian practice of "widow burning"; immolation of a surviving wife on her husband's funeral pyre

Scavenger Folk: Wraiths who glean Maelstrom debris, which they sell or trade

seppuku: Japanese term for honorable ritual suicide

shell shock: A traumatic response among soldiers to modern warfare; symptoms include flashbacks and disorientation

Sinkinda: Bush of Ghosts term for Spectre

Somme, the: Site of a key 1916 battle in the War to End All Wars; also, ground zero for the Fourth Great Maelstrom

soulwelding: A variation on soulforging used to maintain vessels that have crossed the Shroud

stosstaktics : German battle plan, characterized by strong pushes forward

Swar: The Deadlands of India

Tenno: Japanese Emperor, chief of the dominant Yamato clan

Tommy: Slang term for British soldiers

Tvashtriya: A practitioner of the Displace Arcanos; an artisan of Swar (q.v.)

Twilight Era: Period of the 20th century that precedes the modern World of Darkness

uitlander: African term for foreigner, outsider; also, white man or Caucasian

Ukiyo: Japanese term for entertainment sectors of the populace

War to End All Wars: The conflict that comes to be called World War I

Yank: Slang term for American soldiers; used mainly by Europeans

Yama: (Mythical?) lord of the Dead in the Indian afterlife and judge of all souls

Yamato Damashii: (Japanese) The "national spirit of Japan"; philosophy combining reverence of the Emperor with appreciation for modern weaponry and tactics

Yellow Springs: Jade Kingdom term for China's Deadlands

Suggested Resources

Books

• Anthony, Patricia, *Flanders* — This novel combines the horrors of warfare and alcoholism with a protagonist who talks to the dead through his dreams.

• Eksteins, Modris, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* — One of the more recent and best books on the war experience in Europe and its impact on people's world-views in the years immediately following. The chapters on trench life, soldiers' understanding of duty and civilians' ignorance are particularly good.

• Gilbert, Martin, *The First World War: A Complete History* — Remarkable detail and thorough nuts-and-bolts treatment of battles, campaigns, weaponry and more. A bit long, but you can skip around easily.

• Graves, Robert, *Good-bye to All That* — Graves' memoirs of his life before, during and after the war. A fascinating portrait of one man's redefinition of himself in the wake of untold horror and death. Essential for its candid reporting of the atrocities committed by soldiers on both sides.

• Harrison, Jim, *Legends of the Fall* — This intense novella differs in effect from the popular film adaptation. Read the fiction for its metaphorical ghost story and its trenchant fatalism.

• Mosse, George, *Fallen Soldiers* — Mosse's look at the culture of soldiers, the war dead and how the living dealt with and remembered the vast numbers of casualties.

• Remarque, Erich Maria, *All Quiet on the Western Front; The Road Back* — The classic novel of the War to End All Wars, *All Quiet* is moving in its simplicity. Remarque's sequel, *The Road Back*, traces the fortunes of the survivors, trying to readjust to civilian life.

• Tuchman, Barbara, *The Guns of August* — The story of the first few weeks of the war and the realization that the conflict would not be over by Christmas. Full of anecdotes demonstrating how tragically outdated fighting techniques had become.

• Winter, Jay and Badgett, Blaine, *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century* — A companion volume to the PBS series (available on videotape), this book is full of photos, maps of battles and personal accounts of the war's impact. Complete, compelling and a great introduction to many previously obscure aspects of the war.

Movies

• *Gallipoli* — This harsh lesson in clashing values shows how the war worked to dismantle notions of heroism and honor in combat. "Harrowing" is an appropriate word for this Peter Weir effort — Spectre players take note.

• *Life and Nothing But (La vie et rien d'autre)* — (French) Bertrand Tavernier's masterpiece of postwar uncertainty and coping. Philippe Noiret stars as an army officer whose duty is to determine the fate of every unaccounted-for French soldier. Brilliant, tragic and altogether absorbing.

• *Paths of Glory* — A perfect distillation of the war's essential injustice. After French soldiers fail to go over the top to certain death, the high command selects scapegoats for execution to discourage their fellows from similar behavior. A tough-minded and effective film.

• *Regeneration* — Trench poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen meet in this adaptation of Pat Barker's Booker-winning fiction. Some images here (including an overhead catalog of the dead, wounded and shell-shocked) are not to be missed.

• *Wings* — Ignore this silent film's romantic clichés. Devote your attention to its depiction of aerial combat, which is often astonishing. No cheesy model-work here, just incredible aerobatics and plane-mounted cameras.

Music

• *From Cake-Walk to Ragtime* — For source music to conjure the popular sounds of the era, this French two-CD set can't be beat. These monaural recordings are themselves ghostly, and exactly right in their sadness.

• *Glass, Philip* — This famed contemporary composer's intricately rhythmic film scores provided background during much of **Great War**'s development, and they met terrific approval from several playtesters. Of particular interest are recordings for the films *The Secret Agent*, *Koyaanisqatsi*, and *Powaqqatsi*. *The Low Symphony*, which is not a film score, perfectly evokes Maelstrom season.

ne gray Thursday, the storm finally broke — or maybe it was just an eye of the Maelstrom passing over our position. It didn't matter much. We were chained like Thralls and herded out to the River of Death by our new Grim Legion taskmasters. Before the coup, I had been a Marshal of the Iron Legion, responsible for bringing hundreds of souls across the Shroud with a minimum of pain and disorientation. Now, I was just one of dozens in a ragged line, forced to clear storm debris from the Byway. Armed guards marched and swaggered on either side of us, trading catcalls and rough jokes with each other while ignoring the chattel. Once, any of them would have snapped to attention if I so much as passed him in the hallway; now I was less than the dirt below. Things change. The wheel always comes around, as my old friend Levy used to say.

We reached the River of Death after an hour's march. It was a startling sight, even to jaded eyes like mine. The flow of water had been choked. Standing pools hid beneath a rank miasma like the clouds of green gas so many of these dead children with guns remember so well. The trunks of the river's few trees had splintered, cracked and fallen across the waterway, where they served as a rough and treacherous dam. Upstream and down, the story was the same — jagged hunks of ghostly wood, bare branches reaching to the heavens, thrown by the force of the storm into the river.

"Jesus God," Velasquez gasped beside me. "Four hundred years across the Shroud, and never have I seen such devastation." Velasquez had been the Anacreon of the Emerald Legion, an assignment he supposedly landed as a reward — a soft job to relax in for a few decades after his hellish field service. Instead, he'd wound up here, next to me on the chain.

I looked back at him and shrugged. He narrowed his eyes and pursed his thin, pale lips. Down the line, the Legionnaire in charge of our work detail was shouting about how we needed to have a waterway cut through the trees by the time the storm returned. The more experienced of us laughed — as soon as the storm returned, all our work would be undone anyway. One of the men at the front of the column laughed a little too hard, and the Centurion decided to demonstrate his authority. A half-dozen troops fell on the poor fool — Davis, former Expeditionary Force and one of Cap'n Bony's men, by my recollection — and brutalized him with the butts of their relic rifles. The rest of us put our heads down and waded into the water to begin hauling away the offending logs. Davis' beating was just another to add to the long list of incidents for which there would be an accounting once the wheel turned again.

And, as Levy said, it always turns.

Chapter One: War and Aftermath

Four Years in the Skinlands

We intend to sing the love of danger. We will glorify war....
— from the *Futurist Manifesto*, 1909

Prologue: "Thus the August madness descended...."

War's fuse is lit on June 28, 1914, when a Serbian nationalist named Gavrilo Princip guns down Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie as they ride in a motorcade through the streets of Sarajevo. The fuse burns rapidly after that, as Emperor Franz Josef of Austria asks Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany for his support in a war against Serbia, knowing full well that any action against the tiny Balkan nation will bring Russia into the conflict on Serbia's side.

Within weeks, the entire European continent plunges into the fray. Following its respective obligations according to the convoluted network of multinational alliances that determined the course of European politics, Germany joins with Austria against Russia and Serbia. France joins to support Russia, and after Germany invades Belgium on August 1, Great Britain joins the fight on the side of the occupied Low Country.

On August 1, 1914, citizens pack themselves into the town squares of capitals across Europe to hear the announcement that war has arrived. Emotions run at fever pitch in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg. Hymns of praise and thanksgiving arise spontaneously from the congregated masses.

The chance to fulfill a streak of bravado suppressed by decades of Victorian restraint entices thousands of young men to enlist that very first day. The first armies of the War to End All Wars constitute the largest volunteer army ever to fight a major European conflict. Each side predicts a quick victory. Every soldier envisions himself home by Christmas.

1914

On the first hour of my first day
In the front trench I fell.
(Children in boxes at a play
Stand up to watch it well.)
— Rudyard Kipling, "The Beginner"

"Paris for lunch, dinner in St. Petersburg"

German cavalry units cross into Belgium on August 4. Village after village falls to the advancing divisions, as the antiquated Belgian army soon exhausts its defensive capabilities. On August 5, the Germans roll out their largest gun — "Big Bertha." The pride of the Krupp munitions works, Big Bertha is a gargantuan mobile siege cannon that fires 16.5-inch shells weighing 1,800 pounds over a range of nine miles. Over the next several days, Big Bertha's crew of 200 proceeds to pound the forts and bunkers that protect the cities of Liège and Louvain.

The last of the defenses falls on August 16, leaving the invading forces free to overrun the little nation. The civilian population fights on, resorting to sabotage, snipers, guerrilla tactics and other forms of resistance to delay the progress of the Kaiser's troops. The invaders respond brutally, torching towns and summarily executing men, women and children for refusing to surrender.

France, believing the invasion of Belgium to be a bluffing tactic, sends most of its army toward the Ardennes forest, hoping to stop the Germans there. Bedecked in their outmoded uniforms of royal blue coats and *pantalons rouges* — bright red pants — the French march in classic block formation on the German artillery battalions. The German guns cut the French to pieces with barrages of shelling. During four days in the thick of the Ardennes, the French lose over 40,000 men.

The Germans continue to cut down every formation the French muster against them, and the French lose an additional 100,000 men. The remnants of the French army falls back toward Paris, and General Joseph Joffre cables the capital to report that the Germans will be at the gates within 12 days. Parisians panic and leave before their home falls to the Hun hordes; soon, the rails and roads leading out of the city are gorged with refugees.

Entrenchment

The British army, having crossed the Channel on August 9 with a tiny expeditionary force of only 120,000 men, fares no better. German forces rout the British at Mons in Belgium, forcing the entire BEF to retreat. By the first week of September, the German army stands 25 miles outside the French capital. Joffre, his army pushed back to the city gates, launches a counteroffensive in order to save Paris. To get reinforcements to the front, the military governor of Paris, Joseph Galliéni, commandeers civilian vehicles and drivers to transport French troops from the capital into the heat of battle; 6,000 men actually arrive in Parisian taxicabs. For five days, British and French forces suffer mind-boggling casualties in the Battle of the Marne. By September 10, the German juggernaut can push no closer to Paris, and the intricate plans of the German General Staff are rendered useless.

The casualties are flabbergasting on both sides. France loses over 1,000,000 men in the war's first 150 days; Germany loses an equivalent number, and all they have to show for it is Belgium. A stalemate ensues; both sides dig into the earth and prepare to wait each other out. A series of trenches hundreds of miles long transects the heart of France. Waves of soldiers get sent "over the top," only to be met with the greeting of machine-gun fusillades. When the costs of this method of warfare prove too high, generals resort to continuous, massive direction of men and artillery into the enemy's trenches, hopefully eroding the opposition's will to fight. Attrition becomes the name of the game — a game in which the last one left standing at the end wins the war.

1915

The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war.
— American general Philip Sheridan to Otto von Bismarck, 1870

Christmas comes and goes, and the eager volunteers of August 1 remain in France. The past summer's prediction of a quick, valorous contest disappears from peoples' minds. Yet the vision of a "knockout blow" continues to mesmerize the generals. For this blow to come, people throughout Europe and the colonial sphere are forced to make sacrifices. Shortages and wartime inflation increase starkly; the image of the "profiteer" and speculator circulates as a reviled figure. Women, immigrants, children and the elderly step in to home front production lines to fill holes left by departing soldiers. War enters the modern age. Its prize is dear. Its effects are total.

Total War

On April 22, at the Second Battle of Ypres, German forces release chlorine gas against French national and African colonial forces. Borne by the wind, the greenish-yellow clouds of lethal chemicals panic the African troops, who flee the area and leave Ypres exposed. British and Canadian troops close the gap, but their presence at Ypres lowers the number of troops who participate in the Artois offensive, which claims over 300,000 Allied casualties. On May 7, the German submarine *U-20* torpedoes the

Cunard liner *Lusitania* off the Irish coast. The passenger ship sinks within 18 minutes, killing nearly 1,200 people.

Gallipoli

Desperate to force action somewhere other than the stalemated Western Front, Great Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, proposes an attack on the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli, to capture the Dardanelles in the eastern Mediterranean. A joint British-French naval attack commences on February 19, but an attempt to force the straits ends in disaster, as six Allied ships are sunk or damaged by mines and the naval force withdraws.

Life in the Trenches

Prior to 1914, field fortifications are a part of every army's training. Used for building redoubts and siege works, the ideal field fortification is an excellent design, capable of shielding the men inside it while allowing them as much comfort as they're likely to find on campaign.

The ideal was nothing like the reality of the western front during the War to End All Wars, because the reality boggles the imagination. Soldiers invariably dig fortifications and go to ground when an assault finally falters. Usually, this means the trenches are dug in areas swept by enemy fire. The soldiers perform their excavations unsurveyed, with insufficient supplies and under fire. Because every foot is so crucial and retreat so unthinkable to the tactics of the day, men are almost never allowed to adjust their lines for defensive purposes

It is never anticipated that these first, desperately scraped trenches are to be the basis of a series of defensive lines used for the next several years. Improvement of such fieldworks into permanent defensive structures is, in most cases, strictly forbidden by officers, who don't want their men becoming too comfortable. These trenches are not the neat six-by-four corridors of siegework and training demonstrations, with carefully laid goosenecks and duckboard walkways. They are yawning, irregular, flood-prone pits hacked into the landscape by men desperate for any shelter against the sudden death that dominates the sunlit world above.

The result is close to Hell on Earth. Winter is the best season in the trenches. With the ground frozen, all a soldier has to worry about (other that the usual death by snipers, gas and random shelling) is frostbite and death from exposure.

In the summer, it is much worse. When the ground softens, many of the trenches collapse, suffocating their occupants beneath tons of stinking mud. Literally millions of mosquitoes, flies and gnats compete with the ever-present lice, fleas and ticks for the blood of the trench-dwellers. The mosquitoes breed in the stagnant drainage ponds, and in the filthy puddles at the bottoms of the craters that, like some strange moonscape, surround the trenches. The flies breed elsewhere — in the tons of rotting human and horse flesh, buried shallowly or left to rot where it falls on the battlefield.

This carrion breeds not only flies, but disease. The War to End All Wars is the first major war in which deaths by enemy weapons outnumber deaths from disease, but only because of the positively surreal numbers of bodies cast mercilessly into the gears of battle. Every form of disease imaginable festers in the mud and rotting human flesh that blankets the battlefield, only to be lifted up and churned together by artillery, then spattered across the helpless occupants of the trenches. In many places, latrines are the special targets of trench mortars, adding the men's own waste to the burden of filth each soldier bears.

In the end, the vast majority of those soldiers subjected to the hell of the trenches are sent like cattle to the abattoir by officers of, at best, questionable competence. First tortured in the trenches, then murdered in the no-man's-land between them, the Dead of the war cross the Shroud in vast numbers.

Many veterans who enter the Underworld during this period have corpora that include gas masks instead of faces. When the warning whistles sounded in the trenches, these individuals did not have a gas mask, or found (too late) that they possessed one of the many war-era masks that didn't work. Thus, the mask becomes part of the way they view themselves in the Deadlands. Some wraiths are contorted into a form that reflects their deepest fears or faintest hopes. It is not uncommon for war victims to lack distinguishable facial features or possess a carapace-like corpus. These features reflect the shell of detachment such soldiers developed with which to face the atrocities of war. Wraiths felled by disease are often gaunt, pocked and twisted, their corpus mirroring the relentless suffering that finally overcame them. A wraith's clothes tend to manifest themselves in the way the wraith subconsciously wants or expects to appear. Thus, military uniforms and hospital gowns are common during the Twilight Era.

The Dead come not just as Restless and Shadow-eaten, however but as countless squadrons of Drones as well. Empty save for the misery of the trenches and the agony of their deaths, whole regiments of Drones go mechanically about their daily routine. In many places, these Drones are still armed and ready to respond to the next sortie or trench raid. Even discounting the Spectres and the maelstrom, harvesting Drones on Great War battlefields is quite hazardous.

On April 25, British, French, and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) forces attack the Gallipoli peninsula. Reinforced Turkish soldiers, shooting from the peninsula's well-defended hills, quickly pin the Allied force down on the beaches and keep them there. Unable to move inland, Allied soldiers dig themselves into the low hills and beaches and remain there for several months. They endure conditions faced by no soldier in France. Dysentery abounds; the stench of rotting corpses reaches Allied ships three miles out at sea. Finally forced to accept the obvious failure, Allied officers begin secretly to withdraw troops from the trenches during the freezing winter of 1915. The retreating forces leave elaborate booby traps in their wake to give the impression that the dugouts are still occupied. The retreat is completed by January 1916. The troops endure a total of 265,000 casualties, of whom 46,000 die.

Genocide

The Allied attack on Gallipoli leaves Turkey, an ally of Germany and Austria, feeling surrounded on all sides. The loss of life defending the Dardanelles further heightens paranoia among the upper echelons of Turkey's young nationalist government. In order to stop what its leaders see as a stranglehold on the country, Turkey makes a decision to expel the entire ethnic population of Armenians from its borders. The night before the Allied landings at Gallipoli, Turkish authorities round up hundreds of Armenian intellectuals, clergy, journalists and other professionals and summarily execute them.

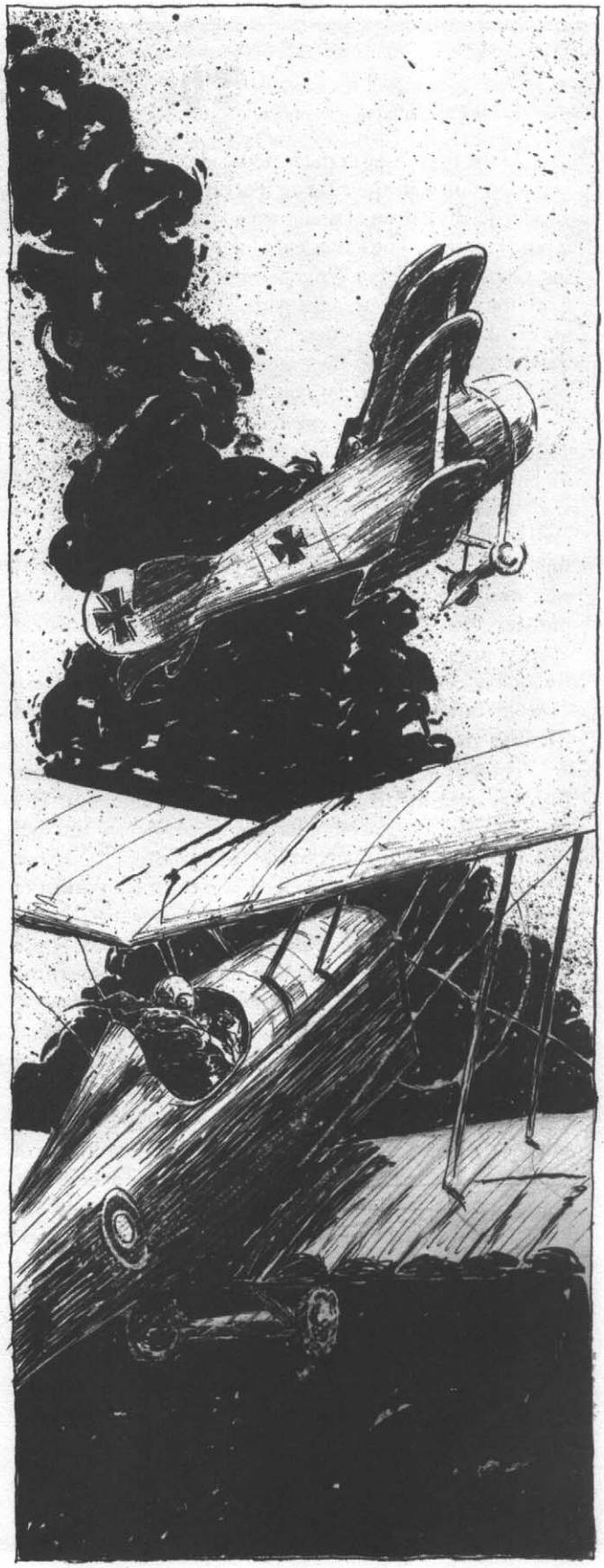
The act begins a two-year process of Turkish repression against the entire Armenian population living within the borders of the speedily collapsing Ottoman Empire. During the 24 months after the landings at Gallipoli, Turkish nationalist authorities uproot every Armenian community in the Empire and expel the inhabitants to camps in the Mesopotamian desert. The combination of the forced march and the disease-infested conditions of the camps alone claims between 500,000 and 1,000,000 lives.

Turkish soldiers raze Armenian villages and towns, confiscate 75 percent of Armenians' wealth and enlist the aid of bandits and assorted thugs to "escort" the deportees out of the country. Theft, rape and outright murder become widespread occurrences along the deportees' journey. Corpses choke the Euphrates River — corpses of adults summarily executed and children thrown into the water to drown.

1916

A single question circulates throughout Europe: When will the war end?

At the start of 1916, the answer seems to be, "never." Germany remains firmly planted in the trench-scored earth of the Western Front. The Allies' record in battles — the debacle at Gallipoli, several massive defeats for the Russians in the east



The War In The Air

At the beginning of the war, the idea that "those dashing young men in their flying machines" might soon engage in deadly battles of their own above the fields of honor is pure Futurism. The fantasies of Jules Verne notwithstanding, Orville and Wilbur Wright's flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina is only a few years past. Thus, planes of the era are cranky, incredibly delicate contraptions. Make of cloth and plywood, many of these aircraft simply fall apart during flight for no particular reason.

Aerial battlefield reconnaissance is nothing new in 1914. Armies have been using tethered hydrogen and hot air balloons to get a bird's eye view of the battlefield since the American Civil War. But the mechanisms of powered flight are so new, and promise so much, that it seems impossible to many that these aircraft could be used in warfare. Yet by the war's end, the brave but anonymous pioneers of aviation are supplanted in the imagination of every youngster by Allied heroes such as Albert Ball, Eddie Rickenbacker and their Central Powers nemeses, men like Oswald Bolecke, Hermann Göring and Manfred von Richthofen, the dreaded Red Baron.

These new knights of the sky are the true heroes of the War to End All Wars, at least in the public eye. The war on land is a brutal bloodletting, where victory and success are distinguished only by how many tens of thousands the generals of each side can feed into the meat grinder of battle. At sea, it is an even less dramatic war; it is a battle of constant probing, where each side seeks a decisive battle without being willing to commit to one. In contrast, the war in the skies is heroic. The pilots are individuals, and their victories depend on their personal skill and heroism, not on bloody hammering or the intricate dance of dreadnought-era fleet maneuvers.

The reality is far different than the dream. By the end of the war, the Allies give their pilots only five hours of training before sending them into combat. The average life expectancy of a pilot on the Western Front is only 3-6 weeks, and American pilots suffer 50 percent mortality rates. For some early British units, mortality rates are as high as 95 percent. By the war's end, a majority of fighter pilots and almost all of the great aces are dead.

By the end of the war, air combat has a lingo all its own, and an elaborate scoring system based on individual achievement. Aces — fliers who have shot down five or more aircraft — become the darlings of the wartime press, as they alone rise above the misery of the abattoirs below to engage in single combat. Meanwhile, the half-trained recruit pilots who make up the bulk of the air corps are the cannon fodder.

Yet the beginning of the war in the air is not nearly so impressive. At first, pilots from the opposing sides often wave cheerfully to one another as they go about their tasks. Alas, such sentiment soon vanishes as the first air-to-air clashes take place, fought with pistols and lengths of chain lobbed at the enemy planes' propellers. As the camaraderie of the early days deteriorates and conflict becomes more sophisticated, a scramble to mount effective guns takes place. Everything from tail and wing mounted guns to pusher props and guns firing directly through armored propellers are tried.

The Germans have a significant advantage for much of the early war, largely because of superior aircraft and higher pilot competence. For some time in 1916, the Germans also have the Fokker interrupter, a rod-and-cam assembly that allows the guns of their planes to fire straight ahead, through the blades of the propeller. The Allies, lacking this simple device, are at a massive disadvantage for several long months.

As the war progresses, so does technology. Designs become differentiated, with different types of planes built for different jobs. The Allies copy the Fokker interrupter and redress their poor early efforts with exceptional planes like the SPAD series and the Sopwith Camel and Pup. Planes' maximum altitude and airspeed increase, and their wings stop tearing off with such depressing regularity. The first bombs are used, followed shortly thereafter by the first specialized bombers. Ugly, ungainly planes that can carry a payload of only a few hundred pounds, these primitive aircraft cast a long shadow forward in history.

By the end of the war, the fighting ace is the hero of the masses. The airplane is irrevocably established as part of the arsenal of modern warfare, and the air the new field of glorious single combat. Throughout the years after the war, aerialists carry this glamour with them, both flying with the eagles and, for the first time, making the world a smaller place.

Of course, not all the combat pilots and aerialists survive their adventures. Those who find themselves in the Shadowlands find their talents much in demand. Here, pitted against the Maelstrom and Oblivion's forces, much of the spirit of the old days is revived. In many places, a pilot will break off a mission and return to base if his opponent sets up for a good shot. On the frontiers, the group of pilots who call themselves the Night Mail put aside their political affiliations to make sure that the news gets through and that contact is maintained between the Necropoli.

— reads like a Greek tragedy. Lord Kitchener, the British Minister of War, dies on board the British cruiser *Hampshire* when it strikes a mine as sea. Britain, as a nation, is shocked at the news. The Austrian emperor Franz Josef, whose recalcitrance regarding Serbia fed the flames of war, dies after a 68-year reign.

In the opinion of the generals, victory means saturation: throwing enormous amounts of men and materiel at the enemy. In 1916, two major battles on the Western Front, Verdun and the Somme, manifest the nature — and the cost — of this line of strategy.

Verdun

On February 21, 1916, German troops, employing a new strategy proposed by General Erich von Falkenhayn, bombard an eight-mile long front outside Verdun, in northeast France. German artillery brigades launch over 1,000,000 poison-gas and explosive shells at the bastion; several Big Bertha cannons fire their infamous one-ton shells.

Two days later, German troops advance on French dugouts with a new weapon: the flame-thrower. The thick forest in which French troops are entrenched burns to charred stumps. On February 24, German troops take Fort Douaumont; propaganda leaflets dropped by German aviators onto French encampments announce the seizure of the fort and proclaim that the end is near for France.

French general Henri Pétain takes command of the Verdun situation. Pétain orders a coordination of artillery and infantry, and begins to inflict equivalent numbers of casualties on the Germans. By the end of February the German advance bogs down; the German forces inside Fort Douaumont become prisoners in their own spoil: in command of the fort, but surrounded by an unbreakable French force.

The Battle of Verdun drags on for 10 months, with the prize (and the demarcation of the Western Front) going to whomever holds Fort Douaumont. By December 1916, when German forces are compelled to abandon the fight, both sides suffer more than 700,000 casualties. Both armies fire over 40,000,000 artillery shells in continuous barrages that last through the duration. Trenches collapse, burying whole squads alive. Limbless torsos of dead men hang from trees, in places where soldiers have been literally blown apart by the bombardments. France eventually wins the Battle of Verdun, but she loses three-quarters of her army in the effort. From now until the end of the war, British and Imperial forces bear the brunt of the Allied effort on the Western Front.

The Somme

Northwest along the front, the British gear up for what they believe to be "the big push" that will break the German line once and for all. British general Sir Douglas Haig, pressed into a major offensive by Pétain, plans a massive bombardment and advance over the enemy's positions along a 30-mile front at the Somme River.

On June 23, British artillery begins a merciless shelling of the German lines. Over the next week, Haig's forces unleash a million and a half shells on the Kaiser's forces; the intensity of the bombardment is so loud that it can be heard clear across the English Channel. General Haig predicts that the barbwire will all be cut and the German trenches buried under mounds of earth. The advance will be, literally, a walkover. "Not a rat will have survived," Haig tells his men.

At 7:30 A.M. on July 1, British soldiers — an all-volunteer force — climb out of their trenches and embark on the mile-and-a-half walk across no-man's land to the German positions. They advance ceremoniously, at a parade-ground pace, Scots regiments playing bagpipes and other units kicking soccer balls as they go. Almost instantly, they meet the steel rain of artillery shells and machine-gun bullets from the German side. The enemy, despite expectations, endures. Entire units of "pals' battalions" (so called because they comprised volunteers from entire neighborhoods and villages throughout Great Britain) perish in the enfilade.

Fourteen thousand men fall in the first 10 minutes of the march. Officers and NCOs reach their objective, only to discover that their entire squadron has been cut down. The barbwire, assumed to have been destroyed, is hardly scathed; men catch themselves on the concertina and either tear themselves apart or are perforated by machine guns while they try to worm their way out of the mesh. British artillery continues to blast at the German lines, but their efforts are in vain; over one-third of the shells launched are duds. By noon, the British throw over 100,000 men into the cauldron of battle. Privates are ordered not to rescue the wounded and the fallen. Most die where they lay. By sunset, German casualties number about 6,000 dead and wounded. The British suffer 10 times that many, a third of whom die.

Women and the War

Despite the restrictive gender expectations of the era, during the War to End All Wars, women manage to take a variety of roles that had been previously closed to them. British women participate "at home" as munitions factory workers and police, and in the "Women's Land Army" as agricultural laborers and timber-cutters. In 1917, the British government establishes the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. Uniformed women volunteers (none of them commissioned) go to France, where they perform clerical, administrative and communications duties.

On the other front, Russia sends the Women's Battalion of Death into battle. These 300 soldiers, commanded by Maria Bochkareva, defeat and capture 2,000 Austrian troops. The reward from their male fellows is a beating for Bochkareva, whom the jealous troops force to disband the battalion.

Across Europe, women serve in field hospitals to tend the wounded and the dying. Some women drive ambulances. Their jobs are quite dangerous, as are any that take place in a war zone — but especially in the breeding ground for disease that this conflict is.

The battle rages throughout the summer. On September 15, 49 British tanks bull their way onto the battlefield. Only 18 reach no-man's land — and cross the field at a speed of half a mile per hour, making excellent targets for German artillery. By November, weather makes it impossible for Haig to continue the assault. The Allies lose nearly 800,000 men in five months of battle, the Germans nearly 540,000. The British forces, in 20 weeks of fighting, push a total of six miles eastward. Haig had expected to move 10 miles on the first day alone. By 1918, the Germans regain most of the lost ground.

1917

The winter that inaugurates 1917 is one of the coldest on record. Coupled with the war's hardships, families across Europe suffer more acutely during the beginning of 1917 than during the past two years. Coal is virtually unattainable; nighttime casts a thick, unfriendly blackness across the continent's cities. The United States enters the conflict in April, but the Russian army, following the political and social upheaval back home, pulls back from all its positions in July, effectively bowing out of the war altogether.

Casualty lists break the seven-figure mark, and the installation of decidedly hawkish politicians — David Lloyd George in Great Britain and Georges Clemenceau in France — ensure that the conflict will be fought to the finish. Clemenceau states such sentiment plainly: "I make war, war and nothing else."

Mutiny

By the start of the war's third year, the end is nowhere in sight. German forces still hold Belgium and remain within range of Paris. In March, the Germans pull back 20 miles to what becomes known as the "Hindenburg line"; as the invaders leave their original headquarters at Péronne, they raze the entire town and leave a sign for Allied troops: "Don't be angry, just be amazed."

Anger and amazement crack the ranks of Allied troops. On April 17, a futile attack by French forces on the slopes of the Aisne River claims the lives of more than 750,000 men. Their lives buy the French a Pyrrhic prize: 500 yards of territory. Told to resume the attack, French soldiers refuse; over the next six weeks, 68 divisions — over 500,000 men — decline to participate in any more offensives. The French high command replaces presiding officer General Robert Nivelle with Pétain; Pétain discontinues the offensive and the mutiny finally ends.

Passchendäle

In the summer of 1917, Douglas Haig launches another attack on the German lines, hoping to make the Germans suc-

cumb under the intensity of another British offensive. For the third time during the war, the town of Ypres plays host to another slaughter: the Battle of Third Ypres, or Passchendäle.

At 10 minutes after 3 A.M. on June 7, Allied sappers set off 19 huge mines under the German lines at the Messines Ridge. A tremendous blast of over 1,000,000 pounds of explosive is heard as far away as Paris and London. Spearheaded by New Zealander brigades, Allied forces quickly take the ridge, but regroup soon afterward and do not resume the offensive until six weeks later.

By the time the Allies mount another attack, summer rains turn the entire region into a massive swamp. Haig persists with the offensive, sending troops across the slough and into the relentless downpours. Men and pack animals become stuck, slowly drowning in quicksand-like conditions. Those soldiers who find temporary refuge in shell-holes soon become trapped in endless rivers of mud and rain, and drown in the muck. Still the offensive continues, as ordered by Haig; soldiers employ their dead comrades as stepping-stones to ford the miry expanse.

Canadian forces finally take the bombed-out village of Passchendäle in early November; Haig calls an end to the offensive on the tenth of November. The British suffer more than 250,000 casualties in taking the strategically irrelevant town. The "breakthrough" anticipated by Haig does not even end in a draw; Germany loses 50,000 fewer men than the British do.

1918

1918 brings a feeling of uncertainty as to the war's outcome. Germany remains solidly dug in on the Western Front; Paris is still within striking distance of the Kaiser's forces. An Allied naval blockade slowly squeezes Germany's food and munitions production, but the unrestricted submarine warfare strikes massive blows to Allied shipping routes.

The Spring Offensive

Russia, in the throes of revolution, signs the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, which surrenders all Russian claims to Poland, the Baltics, the Ukraine, Finland and other significant territory in the East. Having effectively won the war on the Eastern Front, General Erich Ludendorff launches a massive offensive in the west on March 21.

At 4:40 A.M. on March 21, the largest all-out artillery strike of the war hits the junction of British and French forces in Picardy, near the Somme. Seven thousand guns fire off over a million shells in four hours; one shell in every four carries poi-

The Weapons of the War to End All Wars

By 1914, masses of evidence indicate that the face of warfare is changing. European strategists can look at the results of the American Civil War, the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War to see that marching men to the decisive point on the battlefield is becoming prohibitively expensive. Despite this fact, the Great Powers of Europe never really anticipated that the War of 1914 might be any less decisive than the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Generals discard the evidence of wars abroad as "frontier wars," not worthy of consideration. Not until the middle of the war, with French fire and movement and German *stosstaktics*, does either side truly begin to approach the problem posed by the ever-increasing range and accuracy of weaponry.

In the war, the average foot soldier carries a medium-caliber bolt-action rifle with an internal magazine of four to six shells. These rifles are capable of firing 12 or more aimed rounds per minute with accuracy to a distance of several hundred yards. Massed fire from these extraordinarily effective weapons can devastate attacking troops, as had been proven several times during both European and Colonial wars during the latter half of the 18th century.

The awesome impact of crew-served weapons on the battlefield is far more important. Rapid-fire, light artillery like the French 75mm and the British 18-pounder could inflict horrendous damage from over 1,000 yards away on infantry advancing in anything but skirmish lines. Crew-served machine guns can lay down 600 rounds of accurate area-fire per minute. Although shorter-ranged than the quick-firing artillery pieces, machine guns are defensive weapons with the advantage that the enemy must eventually come to them. A properly situated heavy machine gun, of which the water-cooled Maxim is prototypical, can cut down virtually any number of infantry, so long as the ammunition holds out and its position isn't compromised.

The result is a ghastly bloodletting unlike any the world has yet known. In the *first six weeks* of the Battle of Verdun, the French alone lose 90,000 men. On the *first day* of the Somme, the British lose 60,000 men (in contrast, during the far-distant Vietnam War, the United States will lose about 55,000 men over the course if its decade-long involvement). Against this level of defensive firepower, the offense has almost no chance of success. No amount of *elán* or courage can drive men forward to victory on a battlefield where their death or dismemberment has become a matter of mathematical certainty.

Seeing this, planners from both sides struggle to find a way around the unavoidable fact that Europe is too small for her armies to maneuver on. Massive cannonades, superheavy artillery and ever-larger assaults are attempted. When these tactics fail, the quest for superweapons begins. Of the many developed, only tanks prove even moderately decisive, and by the time these unreliable prototypes are first deployed *en masse* at Cambrai in 1917, the war is nearly over, decided by the entry of the Americans into the conflict and the starvation of German industry by the British naval blockade.

son gas. The saturation bombing destroys all of the trenches in the target area; only craters and a few lucky survivors remain.

After four years, the line finally shifts. German troops advance 14 miles into the shattered British territory on the first day. But the German advance stalls within a week. The line bulges, but does not break. The British fall back, leaving behind hundreds of guns, but the ordnance is quickly replaced from large Allied stockpiles. The German forces, in their haste to push the British farther and farther back, overrun their artillery support. In time, no artillery can be mustered to support ground troops.

Ludendorff refuses to quit. He hits the British in Belgium, and in June and July, he goes after French forces to the south. The outcome is identical: Rapid initial success peters out as the artillery cannot advance fast enough to support the infantry. By mid-July, the great German offensive stalls dead. At that point, the Allies mount a counterattack. Quick victories are recorded throughout July and August.

In late September, Allied forces breach the Hindenburg line, and cut German defenses apart. The end is only a matter of time.

The War at Sea

The war takes place at the culmination of a revolution in naval combat. In less than a century, armored, coal-fired steamships with turreted, breech-loading rifles have replaced wooden-hulled sailing ships armed with muzzleloaders. A great naval arms race between Britain and Germany dominates the turn of the century, as both sides struggle to build a fleet that can provide mastery of the seas and, thus, mastery of the other power's colonial dominions.

The war at sea is inconclusive. Both sides seek a decisive battle, but neither can afford to lose that battle. As a result, neither will join an engagement except under what their admirals believe to be conditions of assured victory. The outcome: stalemate. Their capital ships too valuable to use, Britain and Germany's light forces fence with one-another for control of the sea lanes. Only one major battle is joined: Jutland. Unfortunately, poor fighting conditions and an unwillingness to press for a decisive outcome prevent it from being more than a desultory exchange of fire between the dreadnoughts. What it is, however, is the final burial of the battlecruiser concept. Several of these ships, as fast and as armored as a cruiser but as heavily gunned as a battleship, go up at Jutland from massive ammunition explosions after suffering relatively minor hits.

Most of the war at sea is best analogized as two strong men with their hands on each other's throats, squeezing to see who dies first. The British use their light forces to strangle Germany through a naval blockade. The Germans retaliate, using submarines to wage unrestricted warfare on ships traversing the Atlantic ocean. Unfortunately for the Germans, the Kaiser's submarines do not take ships according to "prize rules", an established method by which ships are seized and their crews and passengers either repatriated or interned. Instead, they simply sink them with torpedoes, guns or mines. Many at the time, particular persons sympathetic to the British cause, see this as barbaric and inhuman (conveniently forgetting Sir Francis Drake and the Sea Dogs). These attacks against shipping in the North Atlantic result in the sinking of the *Lusitania*, an American passenger liner. The *Lusitania*'s destruction is one of the primary goads that brings the United States into the war on the side of the Allied Powers.

Plague

Yet the denouement of war is heralded by a deadlier, more powerful enemy. In the autumn of 1918, a decidedly virulent strain of influenza appears in Spain and scythes a path through the country. The "Spanish Flu," which actually stems from Asia, affects 80 percent of the country's population. The disease rampages throughout Europe and the east coast of America. Millions die on the European continent; public servants, trolley operators and store clerks habitually wear masks to guard themselves against the disease. Homes undergo fumigation at a desperate pace. Some people go so far as to don gas masks against the outbreak.

All measures prove futile. Seven million people die in India. The sickness depopulates the entire town of Accra in present-day Ghana; streets and public squares fall eerily silent. Australia halts traffic between its states to keep the pandemic under some sort of control. Nineteen-thousand people succumb to the disease in New York City alone. Influenza hits rich and poor, soldier and civilian, adult and child. All stand as equals in the crosshairs of death.

As quickly and inexplicably as it arrives, the pandemic disappears in the summer of 1919. By the time the flu has run its course, over 21 million people perish — more than one percent of the entire world's population.

To End All Wars

To celebrate the conclusion of hostilities every patient will be allowed an extra piece of bread and jam with his tea.

— from an order posted in the Scottish medical wards, near Étaples, France, November 11, 1918

At 11 A.M. on November 11, Germany and the Allies sign an armistice treaty at Compiègne outside Paris. The War to End All Wars is over.

It kills more than 10,000,000 European, American and colonial soldiers. An additional 20,000,000 survive the war blind, crippled, maimed, mutilated, shell shocked, or permanently disfigured by the devastating new weaponry used during the conflict. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia are in upheaval. France and Belgium are in shambles.

The peace made at Versailles in 1919 proves even more hate-filled and fear-inspired than the war itself. Allied representatives dictate terms that will eventually cause widespread hyperinflation and unemployment throughout Germany for several years. Germany is compelled to accept full responsibility for initiating the war; the "war guilt" clause of the Treaty of Versailles reverberates throughout the political landscape. Ultranationalists and the army speak of a "stab in the back" by a pessimistic, critical and (in some cases) treasonous home front that resulted in the loss of the war. Political murders of several prominent figures occur in the wake of the treaty. Emergency *Freikorps* militia, composed mostly of war veterans and their former officers, brutally quash Communist and Socialist disturbances throughout the nation, but revolution remains an ever-present threat to the stability of the fledgling postwar government.

The Allies redraw the map of the globe, as they carve up the Middle East and Germany's colonial empire. International cooperation embodied in a League of Nations, so forcefully wished by American president Woodrow Wilson, rings hollow in the wake of Versailles. The United States refuses even to join its chief executive's political child, instead turning inward and leaving Europe to its own devices. Congress passes the 18th Amendment, ushering in Prohibition, in an attempt to impress the world with the country's moral foundation. Prohibition will eventually turn practically every major American city into a war zone between the government and organized crime.

Even the pall of death loses its power. Memorials, graveyards and monuments to the fallen and the missing appear across Europe, but the speeches in commemoration of what it all means lack the force to draw emotion. The ideals of the old inspire few to anything beyond repression, listlessness or willful ignorance.

The War to End All Wars erases an entire generation of young men, the flower and future of European civilization, from the pages of history. The "lost generation," as the survivors comes to be known, become the creators and inheritors of the modern century. These adrift individuals will watch, wonder at and precipitate, in two short decades, another worldwide conflict more devastating and horrifying than anything the war could have become.

They are, after all, well-practiced.

A Decade Among the Dead

And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, —
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
— Wilfred Owen, "Strange Meeting"

Prelude to War

Although the Stygian insurgency has its roots in the death and destruction of the War to End All Wars, seeds of the wraithly Great War exist nearly a century earlier. In the late 1820s, it

gradually comes to light that the Fetters of each and every Deathlord, and of Charon himself, have been destroyed. The Unfettering, as some imperial historians dub this event, is never officially attributed to anyone. Various enemies of the state are scapegoated, but few of the Deathlords believe that the true culprit is ever apprehended. Mostly, they suspect one another. Following the Unfettering, Charon becomes increasingly aloof. As the Deathlords bicker, and accusations fly, the Imperator retires to the Onyx Tower for increasing spans of time. For the last years of the century, Charon remains unseen in public.

Speculation and rumor abound. Some claim that the loss of his Fetters has plunged the Imperator into Oblivion. Others, unaware of his intermittent appearances, say that Charon must have resolved his Fetters and paused in his Transcendence only long enough to unfetter the Deathlords. The Deathlords themselves make no public guesses, but they all attempt to learn the truth privately.

Several reported sightings of Charon in the Labyrinth come around the turn of the century. Some Grim Legionnaires — proto-Doomslayers, really — tell their superior that they've seen the Imperator wandering their "hunting ground." The Grim Legion keeps this report quiet at first, especially because there's doubt about its veracity. When a cadre of Doomshade-stalkers from a different Legion reports a similar sighting that becomes public knowledge, the idea begins to gain credence among the well-informed. Both the Grim and Iron Legions dispatch teams to the Labyrinth in hopes of finding the missing imperator. One survivor returns to the capital to confirm the rumors. Stygian citizens, recalling Charon's ages-old journey below to liberate Nhudri, begin referring to his absence as the Second Descent.

By the beginning of the War to End All Wars, Charon has not been seen in public for nine years. His absence emboldens the Deathlords. Their Legions begin to stretch the boundaries of the *Dictum Mortuum*, Charon's law against interference with the Skinlands. The most popular move is the formation of the "Bloody Legion," a group of Grim Legionnaires and Spook arsonists who actively resist the depredations of necromancers. Although their methods are unorthodox and often involve violating the *Dictum*, only the most conservative souls are willing to condemn actions that harm vampires and others who enslave wraiths. The initial success of the Bloody Legion feeds the Smiling Lord's arrogance, and furthers his Legion's reputation

Somewhere near Necropolis Paris, 30 October 1914

To Roland Paquette, Grim Anacreon, Paris

Dear Sir:

It is with a sense of growing urgency that I write to inform you of the situation presently facing my men. The past several weeks of conflict in the Skinlands have resulted in staggering numbers of souls passing through my detachment's clearing point. Hundreds of new souls arrive at our station each week — as many as 10 times normal.

Such massive numbers have already taken their toll on my detachment's men and resources. Reapers are working at nearly full capacity to sort through and claim new souls before such individuals fall victim to Spectres, which have themselves increased activity in response to the new arrivals. My Centurions are barely holding off the constant attacks of soul caravans from Spectres and Renegades. Manpower has been stretched to its limits, and the effects are manifesting themselves. Last week, we had one of our best soulforgers collapse at his forge into a Harrowing. It seems his Shadow used the endless stream of work to trick him into hammering himself. He survived but is in no condition to resume his duties.

I strongly and respectfully request reinforcements in the form of Reapers, soulforgers and troops to be dispatched here forthwith. Without such additional help, I fear that many of these present and future souls will be lost to us forever.

Respectfully yours,

Jules Appiér

Marshal, Grim Legion, Paris

for dispensing harsh justice. The true measure of the Deathlords' effrontery comes in the official response to the capital's wartime overcrowding: Though the order to expand the city into the surrounding Iron Hills does issue from the Onyx Tower, questions remain regarding the order's authorship.

An Imperial Proclamation

TO ALL CITIZENS OF THE EMPIRE, GREETINGS:

We remember with a fond heart the days when Stygia stood only as a small outpost on the shores of the Isle of Sorrows, facing alone the void of Oblivion. Since those first days of millennia past, our beloved capital has grown and transformed to an impressive degree. All who have made the journey within our walls have been graciously welcomed into the great and glorious community of the Empire. And it is such force of numbers that has allowed Stygia and the Empire to survive all that Oblivion endeavors to hurl against it.

Yet as the trappings of life bend and change like the great River of Death itself, so too must Stygia change if it is to continue to be the eternal beacon against the darkest forces. We have begun to reap the death-crop that is being sown in the Land of the Quick, and the bitter harvest has grown to such an extent that the old walls of the capital are no longer sufficient to house all who come here seeking refuge against the contumacious entities that would devour their very spirits.

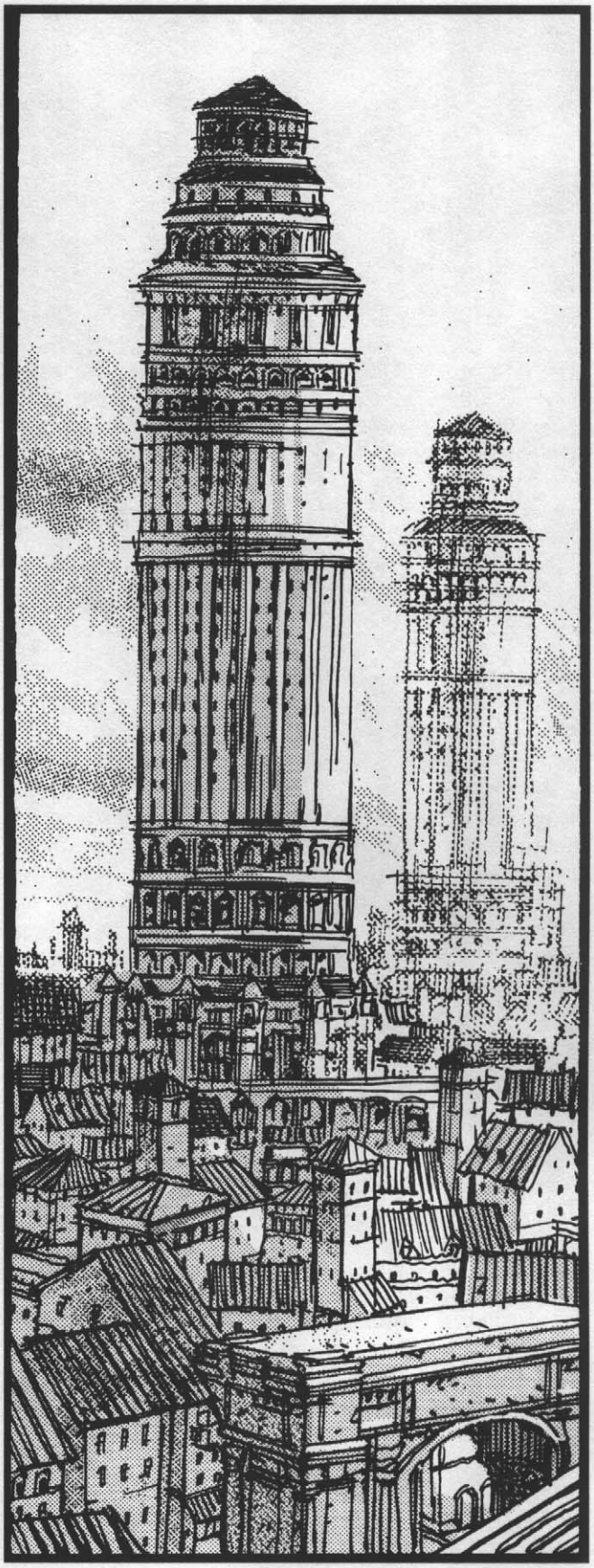
Therefore, we do decree and commit to the erection of several towers outside the old walls of the capital, on the outskirts of the Iron Hills, to be used as dwelling places for all wraiths who come to the Isle of Sorrows during this time of slaughter in the Land of the Quick. May all who look on the towers see Stygia; may all who cross their thresholds feel as if they enter the city gates themselves.

Done this day of 1 January, 310 Anno Stygia Post Tertium, wherewith we set our hand and seal.

Charon, Imperator

A Frolic of Their Own?

Even before rumor's of Charon's loss to Oblivion, some Legions behave as if they answer to no one and nothing. In Russia, Bleak Legionnaires seemingly take it on themselves to reap and conceal the souls of many Japanese wraiths who perish fighting at Port Arthur in 1904 and 1905. They clearly intend to use these wraiths as bargaining chips with the Dark Kingdom of Jade, but the position of the Stygian wraiths in the region becomes increasingly tenuous as more Jade Kingdom wraiths die in the violence of the era. It does not escape the notice of Jade Censors that nearly 60,000 Japanese die in the region, yet the Jade Emperor's profit in souls from the conflict amounts mostly to drones. Obviously, someone (or something) had taken these ghosts: The question was, who? Their investigations are stymied by Bleak Legion counterintelligence until 1914, when Yu Huang finally learns the numbers, location and history of the interned wraiths. (No one knows



The Iron Hills, Stygia, 22 August 1915

For the Eyes of His August Lordship, A Report Follows:

"The Imperator trusted us," the dead Russian says.

Mikhail Sobkoviak, the last remaining member of Outpost 9, tells me the story of his unit. I follow him as he patrols the perimeter around the Iron Borough, the name given to the collection of towers being erected by order of the proclamation of January 1st.

The construction proceeds slowly. As of this writing, six half-built monoliths halfheartedly overshadow Ferrum Septimum, the seventh and smallest of the Iron Hills. In addition to the Thralls normally pressed into service on any Imperial building project, 600 wraiths from the Dark Kingdom of Jade assist in the process. The Jade wraiths are prisoners, captured and transported here by Outpost 9, a detachment of Bleak Legionnaires who operated secretly within the Jade Empire. Balanced atop the highest points of the unfinished soul-iron skeletons, dozens of these wraiths toil feverishly to finish the last couple of buildings. Sobkoviak points to the laborers perched high above. "I brought them here," he says. "From Japan."

Mikhail Sobkoviak claims to be the only survivor of Outpost 9. All of his fellow Legionnaires either fell to Jade forces or vanished on the journey to Stygia.

"I was part of Mother Russia's forces. We were stationed in China, at Port Arthur, with the fleet when it was attacked and sunk" – in other words, when the Japanese navy stole into the harbor and attacked the majority of the Russian fleet, most of which was sitting in drydock. Sobkoviak was killed in the attack, as were many of his comrades. When they arrived in this world, they found themselves outsiders, trapped behind the enemy lines of the Jade Kingdom.

That is, until a delegation from Stygia arrived at the court of the Jade Emperor to open negotiations for the return of Stygian souls. Sobkoviak remembers the clandestine arrival of delegates from the Silent Legion at his outpost.

"There were only two of them, but as they approached they carried a banner of the Silent Legion to let us know who they were. I thought that foolish; after all, how could they be sure who we were? But they brought urgent orders from the Imperator himself. Orders of the utmost secrecy."

The emissaries said that the Hierarchy had concluded that the Jade Emperor was not going to give up his Stygian souls without a serious battle. In response, the Deathlords had agreed to contact whatever able Circles of wraiths might reside in the Jade Kingdom to enlist their aid in "balancing accounts," as they put it. "They wanted us to go out and reap Japanese souls: those soldiers and sailors whom we had killed in warring with Japan. The Deathlords assumed that there had to be some Japanese souls wandering around Shadowlands Port Arthur. The thinking was that Japanese in the vicinity would likelier be Enfants and easier to capture. And that's what they wanted us to do.

"It was suicidal, and I said as much to the Silent emissaries. They refused to listen. They said that we were the only outpost left, and that as loyal soldiers and good Russians, we had to do what we could. The Imperator trusted us.

"When you're a soldier – especially when you're a Russian soldier – you follow orders."

After two-and-a-half years of relentless patrolling and abducting, the Legionnaires of Outpost 9 had captured several hundred Japanese wraiths. They housed the lot of them in caves they'd discovered. Mikhail Sobkoviak and his comrades pushed the boundaries of luck to their extremes. And one day, luck pushed back.

Jade forces reached the outskirts of Port Arthur on 1 May 1913. That evening, Sobkoviak and the men of Outpost 9 loaded 612 prisoners into a dozen relic railroad cars from the Trans-Siberian line. A decision was made, straws were drawn, and Mikhail Sobkoviak was chosen to lead the transport to Necropolis Moscow, where it would be rerouted to Stygia. The next morning, before the Jade forces attacked, Sobkoviak and three other Legionnaires broke through the Jade lines with their cargo and sped off toward Shadowlands Russia.

"I remember looking back at the camp and seeing it go up in a ball of green fire. I lost over a hundred comrades and friends that day."

The journey was not much easier. By the time Sobkoviak departed Moscow, he had lost his three fellow Legionnaires. Mikhail made sure the transport caught up to the Midnight Express, the fabled train that always comes around to Stygia, and rode the final leg of the journey, disembarking at a seldom-used station outside the walls of the capital with his cargo.

Mikhail Sobkoviak has been silent about the events of Outpost 9, until now. "Charon never wanted these souls, if you ask me. But they're here, in the heart of the empire, and something has to be done with them. I wonder whether there could have been another way to get the leverage against the Jade Kingdom instead of this. My comrades deserved better. These Japanese deserve better. But don't take anything I say as the truth. I'm just an ignorant soldier, after all."

– Witnessed and submitted by Graeme Peerless,

Roving Eye and Emissary to the Beggar Lord

exactly how the information leaks out: The most common theories involve betrayal by another Stygian legion, a mole within the Bleak Legion, or some combination of the two.) Regardless of how he finds out, the Jade Emperor's reaction is swift and decisive. The Bleak Legionnaires have little time to defend themselves against a full-scale attack by Yu Huang's forces. Nevertheless, they manage to send the bulk of their captives by rail to Stygia. There, the Japanese form an unexpected and unwanted burden on an already swollen community. They are put to work as Thralls constructing towers in the Iron Hills.

Naturally, Jade ambassadors characterize this entire incident as an act of war. The official Stygian response is to again demand repatriation of *Russian* souls reaped at Port Arthur by Yu Huang's forces, whereupon talks effectively end.

Exiles

Of course, thanks to the War to End All Wars, the Japanese wraiths enthralled in the Iron Hills are only the earliest of Stygia's "outsiders" — souls destined for (or snatched from) some other Dark Kingdom. Among the droves of dead Europeans who cross the Shroud during the war are Indians and Africans dragooned into service by the British and the French. Although death does much to enlighten most Europeans, the habits of a racist life sometimes die harder than a human body. Thus, many Stygians regard outsider wraiths, who should have gone to Swar or the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, as nothing more than resources for soulforging. Still others bear the wraiths of India and Africa no particular ill will: They prey on them as they'd prey on anyone who was defenseless in the Shadowlands. In time, a few Swar wraiths develop their native abilities at the Displace Arcanos, which saves them from low-level victimization. It also attracts attention from the Artificers, Masquers and Usurers, all of whom are extremely interested in this largely unseen ability.

Some of the Indian wraiths, feeling well lost in Stygia and suffering dreams of what can only be their proper place in the Underworld, immediately set out alone for Swar. Others, however, try to join with their fellows to make the journey. The Tempest is unusually active, however, and along with the efforts of three Guilds, it is a rare caravan of souls that reaches the Indian Deadlands. African wraiths face similar complications in their attempts to leave Stygia — except that, thanks to Europe's earlier slave trade, the potent Ivory Kingdom Arcanos, Behest, is already a known quantity here. Like the Indian wraiths, the *abambo* find their unique abilities in high demand, but mostly from Guilds that are more likely to regard an *ibambo* as a tool to grab than as an individual to persuade or cajole. Soon enough, however, outsiders wishing to go "home" find their options considerably narrowed.

The Fourth Great Maelstrom

2 December 1915, 310 Anno Stygiae Post Tertium

I have seen so many millions of souls pass my way since the days of the first Eternal City, the grand Empire of Rome. I have escorted men, women and children of all ages and shapes through

the coldest and blackest recesses of this world, and my corpus has suffered the wounds of Spectres and other foes for centuries. I should have met my ultimate destruction many times over.

I have done my duty, with neither spite nor favoritism toward any of my charges, since I came to this world. All this while I have trained myself to feel nothing, for Death always attracts more guests.

And yet this war has brought out feelings I swore I had relinquished long ago. There exists a sense of pointlessness in every one of the countless faces I have ferried to their destinations. Soldiers and civilians, old and young, rich and poor, all seem to carry a common understanding of some great futility to which their lives have been sacrificed. Their old gods of honor, courage and love of country hold no place in their hearts any longer. The Shadowlands turn colder each day with the sense of a gathering storm. And I do not consider myself boastful when I say that I can tell the approach of a storm.

— Datian Severus, Ferryman

The Fourth Great Maelstrom begins in 1916. Its largest eruption is at the Somme battlefield, a Nihil that remains Europe's largest until the storm's end. Almost simultaneously, however, the Maelstrom boils from countless Nihils across the continent — and around the world. The Tempest immediately enters a frenzy of Spectre-driven violence; only the ablest Harbingers escape intact, and then only if they're close to a Necropolis.

Necropolis Florence is immediately torn asunder by the storm, its defenders overwhelmed by Spectres. The few wraiths who escape tell of the city's transformation into a Spectre Citadel, where barrow-flame pyres burn perpetually, fueled not only by relic artworks but also by the corpora of Chanteurs and Sandmen piled onto the cold blazes. The Spectres of Florence ride out on each new Tempest gust, making attacks as far afield as Rome and the Isle of Sorrows.

Other Necropoli fare far better against Spectral incursions. During the first half of the Skinlands war, the Paris Necropolis grows tremendously as vast numbers of people enter the afterlife and equally great numbers of objects become relics. With great foresight, the Paris Anacreons had used the newfound materials to fortify their city, and their increased populace to prepare for Spectral incursions.

Berlin likewise fights well against the Maelstrom. Its strict political structure reacts rapidly, and its experienced Chanteurs keep spirits high — a vital spiritual complement to the Necropolis' more conventional defenses. Even the few Renegades in Berlin recognize the Spectres as the real enemy. Some even see the Maelstrom as an opportunity to earn future tolerance from the local Anacreon in return for performing the dangerous missions no one else wants.

Chicago, however, fares poorly against the Maelstrom. Torn apart by greed and individual ambition, wraiths here are easy prey for the agents of Oblivion's General Burr. While the Spooks' Guild battles the Monitors for control of the city's criminal rackets, only the Haunters put up any kind of concerted fight.

While the Maelstrom rages, the average wraith on the street (or, more likely, in hiding) sees no action from Charon, and hears nothing but silence from the Onyx Tower.

The Banished, the Conscripted

Several months after the Maelstrom begins, it disgorges some unexpected travelers: Europeans and Indians who had died in Africa begin arriving at the gates of the Constantinople Necropolis. They are afoot and in pitiable condition, having *marched* through the storm from the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. These wraiths tell horrific stories of having been bewitched in the African Deadlands and forced to leave that place by the Ivory Queen and her Moriman. Their tales grow only more terrible as other wraiths repeat them. More Restless arrive by the same means, and it soon becomes obvious that the Bush of Ghosts (as Ivory Kingdom wraiths collectively refer to themselves) is cleaning house. What troubles Stygians most about this cruel banishment is the realization that the arriving survivors number less than one-tenth of the total wraiths sent into the Maelstrom. Some wraiths who dream of reaching Swar or the Dark Kingdom of Ivory abort their travel plans after the first waves of marchers reach Stygia.

10 November 1916

There isn't one of us who didn't picture himself dead in his mind's eye. And I'll wager anything that most of those pictures were pretty damned glorious: young men in full gear charging across fields of battle like the knights of old. Maybe replaying our own personal death scenes over and over again from time to time helped some of us get over the fear of death. I had my death all planned out, too, down to the last detail: targeting that baby-skewering, Belgian-raping Hun. He'd take to the sky on his black Fokker wings, and I'd chase him around the clouds, and show him who was king of the air. I'd be staring down the barrel of my gun, firing straight into the enemy's fuselage. He'd get me, too — it was sort of fair and noble, in a way. Sure seemed a lot better than those poor bastards down there on the ground.

I never got that death of mine. I doubt any of us did, to be honest, but I never even got the chance. The day before I was going to fly my first combat mission, my SPAD developed mechanical problems in the air. To be blunt, the engine detached from its housing at 5,000 feet and engine, plane and yours truly fell like rocks. My name's on the wall of remembrance at the aerodrome where the Escadrille is stationed, actually, and the date of my death: CYRUS EBURN: 1 MAY 1916. It's a simple memorial. One name looks the same as another on the wall, no matter if you died staring down that enemy plane or staring at your engine block as it plummeted to earth. No one's the wiser.

Except me, that is. I'll tell you straight, I never thought that death would be like this. But whatever brought me here to this world, I know that it was to continue the fight. No matter what I signed up for in this war, it wasn't to die like this. I had a cause I wanted to fight for, and I'll be damned if I can't find a way to fight it.

— Cyrus Eburn, Pilot, Escadrille Americaine

Of course, the start of the Maelstrom does nothing to slow the pace of the Skinlands war, so stray casualties of the Boer and Zulu Wars, among others, are like sand grains in the desert. The Dark Kingdom of Iron strains itself to the breaking point to accommodate them all. And still they come.

Recollections of 2d. Lieut. Ian Fogg, formerly of the 9th Manchester Fusiliers:

28 July 1917

The last thing I remember before blacking out was crawling on my belly in four inches of stinking, stagnant water. I was about 10 meters underneath no-man's land, inching my way along a tunnel that stretched from our trench to just under the Hun's machine-gun placements southeast of our position. It took close to three weeks to dig that bloody thing, stabbing and scooping the hard French clay. We made wagers on what day and time a shell was going to hit the earth just right and bury us all under tons of dirt.

That proverbial shell never hit. In the final account, the damned bomb I was carrying to place under the Hun's trenches blew up in my face. At first, I thought I had simply blacked out, for I woke up above ground. I thought my mates had heard me pass out and pulled me back along the entire length of that damned tunnel to our trench. I remember the ground being clammy and unnatural, nothing at all like the floor of the trenches or the dense muck of that homemade sewer. And I remember the silence. There was nothing around: no guns, no men, no civilians. A dark, empty field in a dark, empty place.

When I had gotten my bearings I saw a figure standing over me, a female dressed from head to foot in a hooded cloak and carrying a long walking staff. I thought she must be one of the locals, but what she was doing in that outfit in the middle of July, I had no idea. With the cloak and staff, she resembled the Grim Reaper's sister.

"Do you speak English? *Parlez-vous anglais?* Can you tell me where I am?" She shook her head at me, almost disappointedly.

"You are at the beginning of your destiny," she replied. I'm sure a bewildered look crossed my face, for she replied, "Come. There is much to see."

Notice To All Citizens: Maelstrom In Effect

The Office of Maelstrom Preparedness has determined that the storm unleashed on 1 July 1916 is of sufficient severity to be categorized as a Great Maelstrom. In order to ensure the safety of the citizenry and property of Stygia and the Shadowlands in its entirety, the following emergency ordinances are hereby put into operation:

1. *Citizens are asked not to venture out into the storm under any circumstances.* If you find yourself caught outside during the start of a Maelstrom, proceed immediately to the nearest enclosed shelter and wait there until the storm has subsided.

2. *Citizens are required to obey all warnings signifying the approach of Maelstrom winds.* The OMP reminds all citizens of the Empire to heed the system of bells created expressly for this purpose. Three bells rung in quick succession announces the oncoming winds. At this signal, citizens are to retire to the bunkers located throughout the city. Four bells rung in quick succession indicates that the storm has passed, and citizens are free to emerge from their respective shelters.

3. *During a Maelstrom, the word of any and all Legionnaires is henceforth considered binding.* Any citizen who does not heed the orders of an official representative of Stygia will be immediately detained and questioned.

4. *Citizens are asked to maximize the use of the network of tunnels stretching throughout the capital.* Even in times of calm weather, citizens are discouraged from venturing into the open unless absolutely necessary.

The Office of Maelstrom Preparedness has not yet been able to predict with any certainty how long the storm will last. Therefore, the aforementioned regulations will remain in effect until further notice. It is expected that all citizens of the Empire will follow the aforementioned rules and thus maximize the efficiency of all Imperial authority.

Signed this 10th day of July 1916, 311 Anno Stygiae Post Tertium.

Quentin Fordyce, Esq.,
Chief Imperial Pluviometrist,
Office of Maelstrom Preparedness.

I shook my head vigorously for a moment, not sure I had heard her correctly. "What did you say? Who are you?"

She pointed to my left arm. "You are the one whom I was sent to find. You have been given the Lady's mark." I looked down at my left forearm and saw it: a crude line-drawing of a triangular form, something that looked a bit like Aladdin's lamp.

"You are dead, Ian Fogg. This is the world of the Dead. The Shadowlands, some call it. You were brought here by Fate herself."

"Who are you?"

"A friend. Now come. There is much to see." She led me across the field to the shore of a stream running fast with black water. On the shore sat a small reed-boat. The woman gestured to the boat, and I climbed in and sat. She climbed in behind me and pushed off the shore with her staff.

And everything changed.

The Insurrection

Stygia's situation following the Maelstrom's outbreak is dire. Every Necropolis is under siege, and leadership from Charon is nonexistent — as many believe the Imperator himself to be. War-dead outstrip the capacity of organized Legion Reapers, while Heretics and Renegades gladly pick up the slack. In some areas, Renegades armed with fresh relics are able to drive Hierarchy soulgatherers away from the battlefields and claim all the fresh kills for themselves.

Even so, the war swells the ranks of the Legions, and no Legion benefits more than the Grim. The Smiling Lord knows Charon is gone for now, possibly forever. Seeing the entire Hierarchy in peril, and fully expecting one of his fellow Deathlords to attempt a coup if he doesn't, he makes his move.

On what comes to be called "the Night of Short Chains," the Grim Legion hits every European Necropolis with all the force it can muster, seizing strategic locations and "jailing" other Legions' Anacreons (either putting them in chains or making them *into* chains). Some Anacreons surrender without a fight, and a few are even allowed to keep their positions as figureheads; others fight or flee. Depending on their skill and luck, they either form the nucleus of a nascent resistance, or they form armor and weapons for Stygia.

The Smiling Lord mounts this insurgency with the popular approval of the newly dead. After all, thanks to the Bloody Legionnaires, he can point to an example of his ability to overcome supposedly superior opponents. Furthermore, his policy of allowing soldiers to avenge themselves on their incompetent officers, on both sides of the Shroud, makes his banner attractive to the most violent wraiths of the Underworld. Of course, his pandering to violent appetites has predictable effects on the Shadows of his followers, and many are consumed by their dark urges, despite his precautions.

One cornerstone of the Stygian Insurrection is the continued services of the Pardoners: The Smiling Lord isn't so arrogant as to attempt a coup without their help to keep the Psyches of his troops dominant. Although he cannot obtain their support, he's willing to accept their neutrality as long as they keep castigating his troops. They do so for fear of the empire's future should they turn away altogether from any side in what might prove a lengthy struggle. Nevertheless, remarkably little rancor is directed at the Order of Pardoners, apart from that of a few Charon Loyalists who claim the Pardoners could end the Smiling Lord's shenanigans in an instant by refusing castigation to all Grim Legionnaires.

As for the other Guilds, most proclaim neutrality. The Masquers, for example, do so and sell their services to both sides. The Usurers do the same, and they proceed to make a staggering profit during the struggle. Their avarice endears them to no one, and after a Heretic gang executes a daring robbery of one of their Pathos vaults, the practice of robbing Usurers becomes commonplace. The Proctors, erstwhile allies of the Grim Legion, make a decision of conscience and refuse to rebel against Charon. For their loyalty, they're hunted down like dogs in any Necropolis sworn to the Smiling Lord. Without the Proctors, however, the Grim Legion's ability to affect the Skinlands is severely curtailed. To regain their lost influence, they ally with the Puppeteers, who are eager to regain their lost legitimacy.

Stygia, 24 December 1916,
311 Anno Stygiae Post Tertium

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

To His Most August Lordship:

Final reports from the Legionnaires at Verdun have calculated the final arrival of no less than 500,000 new recruits into the Legion. The Legionnaires have already begun the task of redistributing the vast numbers of recruits into already existing Legion detachments in order to fill depleted ranks, or failing that creating new detachments altogether.

Adding the above tallies to those received from the action at the Somme River and various other engagements since the beginning of Quick hostilities over two years ago, and the number of new recruits into the numerous divisions of our Legion stands well into the low millions. I trust that these figures meet with Your Lordship's satisfaction and approval.

Vale,

Hiram, Scrivener

Of course, the Guilds don't *officially* exist, so their neutral "public" attitudes about the rebellion are easy enough to espouse, whatever the reality in each Guild. No such middle ground exists for the other Legions, most of which resist the Smiling Lord's bid for power. This uncooperativeness comes as no surprise to the Insurrectionists: After all, the other Legions have the most to lose from the Grim Legion taking the position of "first among equals." The Smiling Lord predicts severe resistance from the Iron Legion, so compromising their extensive intelligence system is a key step in his plan for conquest. As a result, the Iron Legion gets the worst of the Night of Short Chains. The Penitents fare little better: The Laughing Lady is forced to abdicate, but she later escapes house arrest and becomes a figurehead for Charon Loyalists. The Emerald Legion sides with the Grim Legion, but more from self-interest than ideology. Both the Silent Legion and the Legions of Fate largely ignore the Smiling Lord's power-grab: Both direct their energies against the Maelstrom, instead. As for the Legion of Paupers, it manages to profit from the situation by doing nearly nothing. Confounding the Smiling Lord's expectations, however, it is the Skeletal Lord who resists most strongly and effectively.

Despite the Legions opposing them, the Grim fare well at the beginning of the Insurrection. The Smiling Lord's enemies are many, but weak, whereas his Legion's strengths are numbers and location. The Night of Short Chains gives the Legion control of most European Necropoli. London fights bitterly, but succumbs in the end. Berlin resists, through a combination of military might and political guile: Basically, Berlin's Iron Anacreon convinces Grim Legionnaires in the Necropolis that taking Berlin would gain the Smiling Lord little, because the city is sure to spend more time fighting the Maelstrom than supporting the ousted Hierarchy. The coup goes sloppily in Vienna: Although the Grim seize the Necropolis, combined guerrilla actions by Renegades and Loyalists ensure that the Smiling Lord cannot hold it. The seizure in Brussels goes remarkably well. The other Legions' Anacreons are removed with surgical precision, and before the resistance fighters even realize what's happening, they're presented with the Grim Legion's *fait accompli* victory. In contrast, Lisbon fights long, hard and bitterly before the Grim Legion reaps despot Antonio Machado Santos to tip the scales in its favor. Paris supports the Grim Legion initially, but later becomes a hotbed of resistance. Ironically, its strong defense against the Maelstrom leaves its citizens time and energy to plot against their "new imperator." In addition to Loyalist guerrillas (many claiming that the ousted Laughing Lady herself is leading them) and Heretic cults centered in the city's cathedral Haunts, there are also Renegades who want to strike while the Grim Legion is divided among multiple enemies.

The Grim Legion spends considerably less energy and attention on the far side of the Atlantic. After all, the bulk of its new troops are in Europe, and ferrying them through the Tempest during a Maelstrom is no easy task. New York becomes a Grim Legion stronghold, but the new Anacreons underestimate the power of the Spooks' Guild and try to wrest control of profitable winnowing operations from it. The only other Necropolis the Insurrectionists try to control is Chicago, and after seeing it picked apart by Spectres, the Smiling Lord decides it isn't worth the effort.

TO ALL CITIZENS IN
THE GRIM LEGION, GREETINGS:

As we sit here in our place of authority and observe the state of affairs that has gripped the European Skinlands, we remain all too aware of the horrors visited on all the courageous men and women who enter our ranks after having paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Quick war. And we remain saddened by the lack of any central voice of authority in the Onyx Tower to address the specific plight facing many of these new members of the Grim Legion. Charon has ignored the needs of these numerous, recent additions to our order for too long. Wraiths, require stable and decisive leadership more than ever in the present storm season, as does the entirety of the Empire. We have seen this, and we can keep silent no longer.

Therefore, after careful consideration and with the best interests of our constituent Legionnaires in mind, we have stepped into the seat of authority vacated by the long-reigning imperator. We call on all conscientious members of the Grim Legion to join us in proclaiming a New Stygia, one in which the concerns of those brave men and women of all nationalities who have fought and died throughout the centuries in war will receive the credit and support they rightfully deserve. Only then do we believe that the collective fight against Oblivion will result in ultimate and total victory.

The Smiling Lord

The Loyalists Rally

Smaragdine duplicity! Who could have foreseen it?

— From the *Journals of Bone*, the word of the Skeletal Lord, dated the 31st of October, 1918

The Smiling Lord expects major opposition from the Skeletal Legion and its lord, who remains completely loyal to Charon. What the master of the Grim Legion fails to anticipate is the Spanish Flu.

Concentrating on the more visibly dangerous Ashen Lady, the Grim Legion fails to destroy or imprison many Skeletal Anacreons, who then flee the Grim-held Necropoli to plot a counterinsurgency. Many of Charon's Loyalists flee to Berlin (where they're tolerated) or Lisbon or London (where the Grim Legion's enemies welcome them). As the struggle between New Stygia and its opposition continues, some of the resistance fighters move (or return) to Paris, to fan the flames ignited by the Laughing Lady's presence (or rumored presence).

More commonly, Skeletal Anacreons and other Charon Loyalists flee to smaller Necropoli — or even isolated Haunts

outside a dead city. Of course, any Haunt that's even moderately secure against a Maelstrom is likely to be inhabited already. The response of the Skeletal resistance to owners of coveted Haunts varies from place to place — and by numbers and armament on both sides, of course. Some pay dearly for a haven. Some form temporary alliances with Heretics or Renegades. Some simply seize a Haunt by force.

Some Grim soldiers earn the thankless task of chasing Loyalists from one small settlement to another. In the throes of the Maelstrom, no travel is safe: In a few memorable incidents, groups of Loyalists and New Stygians halt battles in order to join forces against the Spectral storm.

Many Guilds help the Gaunt Legion — as much as they can without getting punished by the Grim, that is. Nhudri, the Grand High Artificer, lays down his hammer, and many Artificers follow his lead. Grim Legion Artificers who decide their Legion ties are stronger than their Guild obligations are not punished by the Guild: They're punished by overwork, processing both drones and any who resist the new order. Wealth and patronage from wraiths in power is their reward. The Harbingers help anyone who needs (or can afford) transport through the Tempest, but many refuse to risk their afterlives to ferry Insurrectionists against Loyalists, or vice versa. The Oracles split, but both the Delphic and Haruspice factions join the Loyalists wholeheartedly, while overall Oracular support for the Grim Legion is flaccid at best. The Spooks join the Loyalists for ideological reasons — more because of their hatred for the Grim Legion than for any dedication to Charon. As things fall out, the Spooks take the opportunity of the Great War to ruin the Monitors and muscle their way into the Fetter protection rackets: Loyalists openly help them in several Necropoli, in return for Pathos kickbacks and demolition jobs on the Fetters of the local Grim Anacreons. Driven out of their niche by the Spooks, the Monitors try to forge an association with the Grim Legion, which doesn't like them and has bigger fish to fry. As for the Masquers, they maintain a façade of neutrality, but the friction between the shape-changing Guild and the new ruling Legion only increases as the Great War slogs on. The Masquers are too widespread and well-hidden to crush directly, so they can't be attacked on the Grim Legion's terms. On the other hand, they're too sly and slippery for the Smiling Lord to outmaneuver (especially when he's dealing with the Iron Legion), so he can't compete on their terms. The two groups achieve an uneasy stalemate, but as the Smiling Lord tries to slowly rein in their power, the Masquers respond by gradually undermining the Grim grip on the cities.

The Skeletal Lord starts the Great War outnumbered, outgunned and facing a popular opponent who is entrenched in the biggest Necropoli. Against this unhappy array of disadvantages, the Gaunt Legion hides three aces in the hole. The first is foresight. The second is the Spanish Flu. The third is Charon himself.

Foresight comes from the Gaunt Lord's early knowledge that Charon has departed the Onyx Tower. Even a soul far less perceptive than he would have realized that someone, sooner or later, would try to seize power. When the Night of Short Chains begins, his Anacreons are prepared to flee and armed to resist.

More importantly, the Skeletal Lord gains access to a group of soothsayers, all killed by the influenza outbreak. Literally babbling prophecy as they exit their Cauls, the first of these spirits are used to find others, then all are quickly sheltered at defensible positions. From these oracular prisoners, the Skeletal Lord learns the pandemic's full extent. He knows he doesn't have to resist the Smiling Lord right away; all he has to do is wait for the Spanish Flu to fill out his ranks, while the other Legions and the Maelstrom whittle away the Smiling Lord's power.

Finally, there is the Skeletal Lord's connection to the absent Charon. No one knows the full extent of their communication. No one knows if the Gaunt Lord finds Charon with his new Oracles, or if it's Charon who tells him where to find the prophets. Only a few learn that the Gaunt Lord holds Charon's blade as assurance of the imperator's return — but those few are the subtle and the powerful, and knowing that Charon may return is a powerful argument against supporting his usurper.

The Agora Falls

When the Smiling Lord declares himself imperator, he claims that only his Legion has the numbers, skill and organization needed to combat the Maelstrom and provide justice for the war-dead. Might is needed (he says), and his prowess justifies his actions. For the Smiling Lord to rule, his power over the Dark Kingdom of Iron must appear unshakable.

Even the most secure Necropolis in New Stygia houses those who resist the Smiling Lord. When the Great War turns against him, however, it is not due to Loyalist subversion. It is not due to Guild pressure, or Spectral attack, Heretic resistance, mortal interference or even Charon's return. It is due to the actions of a handful of Renegades who storm the Agora, in the heart of Stygia itself.

It is true that the Grim Legion is overconfident of security in the capital. It is true that the Maelstrom is raging and that every soldier is needed to keep the walls secure. Nonetheless, it seems like nothing less than a miracle that a band of independent wraiths could snatch a major landmark of Stygia from the grasp of the "New Imperator" himself.

It's not a tactical move: the Agora is difficult to defend and of no strategic importance. Its seizure is a symbolic and ideological move, meant to do no more than show how weak the Grim Legion's grip really is. The rebels know the move is futile. They know they can't hold the Agora long — in fact, they don't even control it for a full day before they're overrun. It doesn't matter: they intend to be martyrs for the cause of freedom, and they succeed.

The ultimate fate of the "Agora Dozen" is a matter of much speculation. The Grim Legion claims that all the "traitors" were caught and moliated into instruments of torture for use on anyone who would emulate their folly. Others believe that the Twelve (or Thirteen, in some accounts) went down fighting,

determined to greet Oblivion, rather than let their corpora become weapons for the Insurrectionists. Some Renegades claim that a few (or even all) of the Agora Dozen escaped, deftly sneaking past the attacking Legionnaires to form new cells of defiance. Several individuals claiming to be the infamous Lucia show up in various Necropoli, preaching revolution.

The most significant rumor is that all 12 of the Agora Renegades attain Transcendence through their act of resistance. Depending on which Heretic you ask, the Twelve/Thirteen were claimed by Charon's returning spirit, or Jesus, or Ahura Mazda, or they simply evaporated into columns of light before the startled eyes of their assailants.

The repercussions ripple throughout New Stygia. Renegade and Heretic bands in every Necropolis increase their harassment of the Grim Legion. As Insurrectionist soldiers turn their attention to putting down active rebellion, the Guilds are watched with a less attentive eye; theft, corruption and sabotage become ubiquitous. Furthermore, the discouragement of the Grim Legionnaires lowers their resistance

Stygia, 26 November 1918, 313 Anno Stygiae Post Tertium

For the Eyes of His August Lordship, A Report Follows:

Inside the Tower of Bone, the Skeletal Lord paces back and forth on a narrow mezzanine that fronts the structure's dual portholes. If he sees anything out there, it's a miracle, for the Maelstrom beats against the smooth, dark-tinted soul-glass so hard that the panes rattle and shudder. God help everyone in here if they break.

Far below His Skeletalness, on the Tower's trading floor, the acoustics give one the feeling of being physically assaulted. The Tower's sole room, normally eerily quiet even for the Shadowlands, resonates with the unmistakable chatter of deals being brokered. Every corner, alcove and patch of floor is occupied with Skeletal bureaucrats and representatives from the other Legions pleading, insulting and threatening each other. They're arguing over the only thing worth arguing over – other people's souls. For the last few months, souls have flooded the Skeletal Legion, arriving at a pace that outstrips even the tallies of the Insurr–pardon me, the Grim Legion. The influenza pandemic sweeping across the Skinlands pours thousands of new souls into Stygia and the various Necropoli like blood streaming from an arterial wound. Because these wraiths died from disease (at least as far as Old Bonyhands is concerned), they are reaped by Skeletal functionaries.

Then the game begins. The other Legions send delegates to the Seat of the Ossified One to make their case for one shipment of influenza victims or another:

"These souls died of wounds, not influenza; they belong to the new emperor." "Those souls you harvested at Necropolis Reims took their own lives rather than suffer from the sickness; they belong to the Silent Legion." "The disease infected these souls' minds and they went mad; my mistress the Laughing Lady demands possession." Ad infinitum ad nauseam, a morass of whining little beggars (no offense intended, Your Lordship) traipsing through your house day in and day out. It's little wonder the Skeletal Lord prefers to stare out into the storm. Compared to the atmosphere inside, the Maelstrom's a calming influence.

I watch as one of the administrative suckfishes approaches His Lordship and hands him a report on the newest batch of souls that have fallen into the Legion's possession. The Skeletal Lord glances at the first few lines and then flings the scroll disgustedly over the balcony rail onto the floor. The noise seems to be getting to him. His Lordship bellows for silence, his unmistakable euphony cutting through the din like a torpedo. With one word – *"Out"* – he clears the hall. Delegates, clerks and Legionnaires hastily make their way to the exit. The day's trading is over.

Amid the rush of people, I see the discarded scroll on the floor, where it's being trampled by scores of feet. I make my way over and quickly snatch up the document, briefly glancing up at the balcony. His Lordship is staring out into space. I unroll the scrap and read. It states that a new shipment of "special" souls has arrived, and it requests a detachment of Centurions to oversee processing.

Suddenly one of the clerks of the Skeletal Legion, snatches the document from my hands and demands to know who I am and exactly what I think I'm doing. I stare at this bugger for a minute and explain that I represent the Beggar Lord, one of His Skeletal Lordship's closest allies. I tell him that the Beggar Lord would be most interested in a firsthand report on His Lordship's operation.

In the end, I get permission to accompany the patrol mentioned in the report. The clerk escorts me below, into the vast web of tunnels underneath the capital. After a few twists and turns we enter a tunnel as wide as a city boulevard. Sitting in the tunnel is a relic tank: my ride. The clerk moves alongside the tank and shouts to the driver that he's getting another passenger, His Lordship's orders.

I squeeze myself through the hatch and into the tiny cabin, which holds five Centurions. The tank begins to roll through the tunnel. I grab a handle as the body of the machine tips back and the sounds of the storm pick up. We travel up an unseen incline, and as we level out at the apex, the unceasing boom of the storm slams against the tank. Even though every peephole is clamped tight, the Centurions blindfold me so as to ensure that I cannot remember the route. I am more than a little nervous sitting in the cramped compartment, which jumps and jars along the journey.

I ask what is meant by "special" souls. Derisive laughter is my answer. Someone to my right speaks. "Didn't His Lordship tell you?"

"No," I reply.

The voice sighs laboriously. "'Special' wraiths died in the influenza plague and crossed over with the ability to see the future. His Lordship says they can tell who's going to win the war."

"Oracles?" I ask.

"Guild, non-Guild, who can say? They've got the mark of Fatalism, and that's the important thing."

No wonder the Skeletal Lord's been keeping this part of the operation away from prying eyes. He's got a secret weapon, or what he thinks is a secret weapon, in these "special" wraiths. Visions of a counting room full of crystal-ball gazers pop into my head.

After an eternity, the tank mercifully stops. We have arrived. I feel the icy smoothness of a blade cut the blindfold from my face. We clamber out of the belly of the tank, and the Centurion in charge points to the memory of an old village church off in the distance. "That's the place."

We're somewhere near the echoes of a long-ago battle, for I can feel the ceaseless shrieking of shells echoing through my frame. Shells that hurtle like the Furies through the air, but never land.

I walk a few paces to get a better look at the church, and suddenly I hear the roar of the tank behind me. As I turn around, it bounds off into the distance. Bloody hell, the storm's picking up.

I sprint for the church and make it inside just before the roiling winds come. I bolt the doors shut against the pounding rain and turn around to get my bearings.

What I see stops me cold.

Oracles are all around me: sitting in pews, packing the confessionals, prostrating before the altar and mindlessly dunking their heads in the baptismal font. They are all in bad shape. Some of the worst cases have translucent corpora, and I can see the outline of blackened, bronchial lungs through the yellowed outer layer of their chests. One Oracle, his face pockmarked from disease, stands at the podium and holds forth to the assembly like the Pope at an Easter Mass.

Each Oracle is flanked by two copyists of the Order of the Quill, who furiously transcribe every uttered syllable. Nobody stops me as I wander around the room; the scribes are too busy taking dictation to notice me. I look over the shoulders of several of the copyists and notice that they are writing in *scriptio continua* – no punctuation or spacing between words, like the inscriptions on ancient Roman ruins: ANDTHEFIRESHALLVISITONTHEFOLLOWERSOFTHELION ANDEAGLEANDTHEFRUITOFTHEFIELDSHALLBECLEFTINTWAINANDTHEHAWKSHALLFALLLIKETHETOWEROFOLDAND NEWASTHEFOGRISESTOCLAIMITSMEASURE...on and on and on. Take out the functionaries, and the whole scene is some grotesque parody of a Catholic service, as if every feast day on the liturgical calendar were being celebrated all at once. The Laughing Lady would appreciate this.

As I move up and down the aisles, one young woman, flailing and gesturing in full trancelike wonder, knocks my notebook to the floor. I bend down to retrieve it and notice that her right ankle is chained to the pew. I stare along the underside of the pews in my line of sight and discover a Gordian knot of chains and manacled limbs.

The entire operation is some damned Roman slave ship (or Roman Catholic slave ship, to keep the metaphor relatively intact). Every man, woman and child – and there are quite a few children here – is condemned to prophesy until the Skeletal Lord gets the answers he wants, or until the poor devils succumb to sheer exhaustion.

In any war, information is the best ammunition, and the Skeletal Lord claims to hold the monopoly on that precious commodity. Now we know how he gets it.

– Witnessed and submitted by Graeme Peerless,

Roving Eye and Emissary to the Beggar Lord

to the Spectres of the Maelstrom, even as the Loyalists' high spirits repel them somewhat.

Perhaps the most immediately important result of the Agora seizure is the abandonment of the new regime by the Emerald Legion. Never known for his inflexible loyalty, the Emerald Lord changes horses midstream, hoping that this time he's picked a winner. Naturally, it doesn't escape his attention that his treachery against the Smiling Lord is sure to weaken the New Stygian cause. His new Loyalist allies see things the same way, and they are mostly willing to let bygones be bygones in return for the support of an entire Legion. However, after one of the other Deathlords anonymously circulates the name by which the Emerald Lord is know to his peers — Smaragdus, the ancient Roman term for emerald — his Legionnaires are dubbed "Smags," "Smargs," "Ragdogs" and even less pleasant manglings.

The perceived sacrifice of the Agora martyrs has another effect: It convinces Hirobumi Ito, a Jade Kingdom expatriate and Renegade, that the time is coming to break the Paper Cage. He does not strike immediately. Instead, he times his action carefully, waiting for two concurrent events: a small Grim Legion victory and a manageable phase of the Maelstrom. The second is simple, as the storm's intensity around the capital waxes and wanes constantly. The first takes a bit more patience, and eventually some effort. Ito makes an alliance with a small group of Renegades, then ensures that they're betrayed to the New Stygians. The easy victory lets the Grim Legionnaires think they're getting things back under control. The Maelstrom distracts them. During a downpour of tears and human teeth, Ito's Bushido Clan attacks the Iron Hill prison of the Jade Kingdom wraiths. Every wraith he can cajole or command participates, and they succeed in smashing through the Legion perimeter and freeing their enthralled fellows.

Coming on the heels of the Agora seizure, the sundering of the Paper Cage stuns the Smiling Lord's regime. The first had been a symbolic gesture, inspiring but ultimately futile. The second is a devastating blow.

The Great War

Hurt by the Spooks and the Loyalists, the Monitors' Guild makes a desperate gamble. Learning of the Emerald Lord's plan to defect to the Loyalists, the Monitors offer him a generous portion of their remaining treasury to make their acceptance by the Loyalists part of his deal. Along with the carrot of their riches (which are diminished, but still nothing to dismiss), the Monitors hold up the stick — Smaragdus' betrayal of the Smiling Lord.

The Emerald Lord thinks it over, and agrees to help them, if they give him a "modest advance" on the promised loot. Unfortunately for the Monitors, he's lying. He takes their earnest money, then tells the Smiling Lord that the Monitors are planning to join the Loyalists. Smaragdus directs the Grim Legion to one of the Monitors' remaining hidden Haunts, and while the Grim Legion has its hands full crushing the Monitors, the Emerald Legion defects.

Driven out by the Spooks, betrayed by the Emerald Legion and battered by the Grim Legions, the Monitors have one remaining goal: revenge. They don't get it until 1921, but their mills grind fine, if exceedingly slow. The Emerald Lord watches as, one by one, every wraith close to him falls into Destruction Harrowings. His Shadow grows stronger, his Fetters fail to sustain him, the Pardoners are unable to ease his burden, and after an ill-timed Catharsis he is driven from his office by his own Anacreons.

Only then do the Monitors close in.

Meanwhile, the Skeletal Lord has his day in the sun. Watching his ranks swell, listening to the words of his hidden prophets, the Skeletal Lord makes his move at just the right moment. At his base in Necropolis Madrid, the Skeletal Lord builds his strength. In particular, he recruits any Moriman he can find, promising future aid in return for temporary loyalty. When his forces are assembled, he marches and sails a vast army down the Targus river to Lisbon, destroying every Spectre in his path. The beleaguered Grim Legionnaires of Lisbon seal the gates until the Skeletal Lord arrives at the head of his army to brandish Siklos — the blade of Charon himself. When the people of Lisbon learn of this sign, the Loyalists rise up as one, even as a century of Grim Legionnaires abandons the Smiling Lord and declares renewed fealty to Charon.

The loss of Lisbon pains the Smiling Lord, but less than the implication that the Gaunt Legion can clear a path through the Maelstrom when the Smiling Lord cannot. Accordingly, the Smiling Lord announces throughout the empire that he has no energy to spare putting down rebellions such as the Bushido Clan and the Skeletal Legion (and he lumps them together in just that fashion). Rather, he is preparing a crusade to liberate a city held, not by rival wraiths, but by the servants of Oblivion itself: Florence.

This declaration of intent is backed with action: He announces a general amnesty for any criminal wraith, Heretic or Renegade, who follows him to Florence. He promises loot, from the legendary treasures of Florence. He promises long-term safety, because wiping out a Spectre haven is sure to deter attacks ranging from Stygia to Constantinople. Finally, he promises to personally lead the charge.

Renegades of every stripe, particularly Proctors and Haunters, join his crusade. The Silent Legion and the Legion of Fate both agree to send troops — the Silent Ten Thousand from Constantinople, along with a battalion of Cataphractoi from Russia and a battalion of Stygian Foot from the Isle of Sorrows. Even St. Petersburg sends an elite detachment to aid in the Florentine Crusade. Though numerically small, the New Humanity soldiers' ferocity and prowess is matched only by the oddness of their appearance and the aloofness of their attitude.

When the Skeletal Lord seizes Lisbon, he gains credibility — something the Smiling Lord sorely needs after his recent setbacks. The Florentine Crusade is a gamble, and a big one, to regain it. In the spirit of "fighting the true enemy, Oblivion," The Smiling Lord even offers amnesty to any Gaunt Legionnaires who elect to desert the Skeletal Lord and join his noble cause. Predictably, none do, and just as predictably, he accuses the Skeletal Legion of narrowness and self-interest.

While the Smiling Lord gathers his strength, the Skeletal Lord is forced to spend his. It becomes apparent that he had secured the aid of Ivory Kingdom wraiths by promising that Lisbon's Harbingers would "repatriate" the lost souls to Shadowlands Africa as soon as possible. The *abambo*, gathered in numbers for the first time, are a force to reckon with, and impatient to depart. The Lisbon Harbingers, on the other hand, are understandably reluctant to undertake a long Tempest trek during a Great Maelstrom — especially given their suspicion that the Bush of Ghosts is likely to prove inhospitable. The Skeletal Lord urges the Moriman to be patient, but their forbearance is exhausted. He tries to cajole the Harbingers, with no success. He contemplates using force, but his hold on Lisbon is not as strong as he'd like it to seem. Lisbon becomes a seething cauldron of bad feeling between the *abambo*, the Harbingers, and the new Skeletal Legion rulers. This unrest attracts Spectres, making the whole situation a powder keg. Eventually, one Harbinger crew agrees to take a load of *abambo* to Africa — but they have room for only 50 passengers aboard the *Deborah*, their schooner. The *abambo* community erupts into internal violence as the stranded wraiths struggle for berths on the schooner. When the schooner is reported lost in the Tempest along with all hands, some *abambo* decide that waiting is a good idea after all. Others, however, begin to mutter that the whole business with the *Deborah* had been a Skeletal Legion setup from the beginning. The limited berths were calculated to create dissent, and the passengers were dumped to get rid of a dangerous problem, the outsiders claim. Worse, their "tragic loss" was being used to justify doing nothing for the remaining Ivory wraiths.

As things are falling apart in Lisbon, something else is coming together in Paris. Francis Beaufort and Jean Granogrec, the masterminds behind the Iron Legion's Office of Maelstrom Preparedness, believe they may have developed a way to predict large-scale Nihil openings. The two scholars gather a disparate (and desperate) collection of Spooks, Haunters and Harbingers to test their theory. Unfortunately, their method is not very sensitive: Only Nihils in a limited range of breadth can be detected. The storm theorists need field operatives to test the accuracy of their predictions.

As it happens, the masterminds of the OMP are onto something. Their field observers suffer many casualties as the storm students refine their predictions, but the losses are not in vain. By the time the Gaunt Legion takes Lisbon, the Paris Necropolis has a technology that could allow Legionnaires to ambush Maelstrom Spectres as they emerge — if the Necropolis authorities can be convinced to risk so many troops.

Oblivion's Maw

REPORT — CONFIDENTIAL

5 August 1918

To His August Lordship:

It is with profound regret that I must report the loss of Frederic van der Holm, Anacreon of the Warriors of Lethe. Anacreon van der Holm fell to the minions of Oblivion during an engagement near the Necropolis of Ypres. While responding to reports of a massive Nihil opening in the area, our unit was suddenly ambushed by a contingent of Mutilés. Anacreon van der Holm dispatched half of our unit to deal with the newly opened Nihil, while he personally directed the remainder of our force into a defensive position to hold off the encroaching horde of Spectres.

I was put in charge of the weaker left flank, while Anacreon van der Holm took command of the right flank. Unfortunately, Anacreon van der Holm underestimated the might of this particular force of Spectres. While dashing from one side to the other to shore up the right's defenses, a Spectre overtook him and dragged him into the Nihil, which our forces had not yet managed to cap. I put Marshal Gwynn in charge of the left flank, which held up well, and rushed over to regroup the right side of our defenses. The battle lasted several hours, and we suffered losses of about 15 percent, but our forces successfully repelled the onslaught and closed up the Nihil.

However, I can maintain no joy in our victory, having experienced the loss of an exemplary leader and fine warrior such as Anacreon van der Holm. I have personally taken charge of the Warriors of Lethe, and await further instructions from Your Lordship as to our next assignment, although I fear that whatever leadership I bring to the Warriors pales in comparison to that exhibited by Anacreon van der Holm.

Yours respectfully,

Marcus Stavaston, Silent Legion

Acting Anacreon to the Warriors of Lethe

While the Skeletal Lord struggles to secure his hold on Lisbon, the Smiling Lord's crusade marches to Florence where it is destroyed. One soldier in five makes it back to Stygia, and it is rumored that the Deathlord himself escaped by the narrowest of margins. The fortunate survivors tell stories of entire divisions of soldiers undergoing simultaneous Catharsis and turning on their fellow attackers. Only the Silent Ten Thousand make it as far as the city walls, where barrow-flame pours on them like heavy rain.

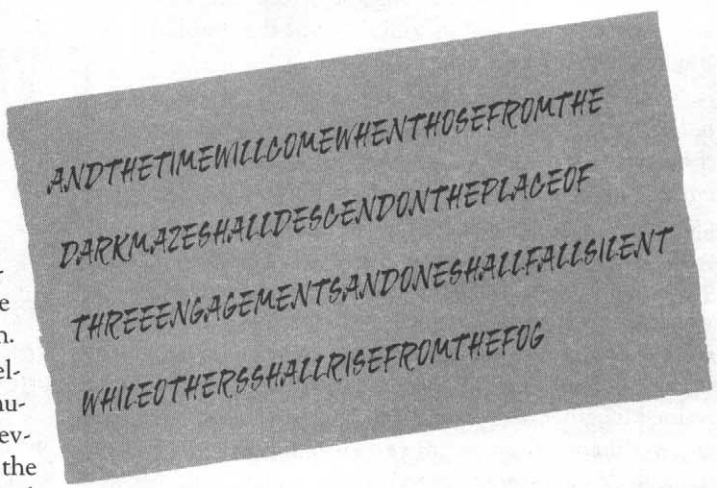
The rumor begins to circulate that each Great Maelstrom is the birth pangs of a new Malfean, born when humankind discovers a new form of evil and brutality. Believers in this terrifying doctrine contend that Florence is the home of this new Malfean and is a portion of the Labyrinth extruded up into the Shadowlands.

The ruinous first Florentine campaign weakens the Smiling Lord further, but the Skeletal Lord is unable to gain from his rival's weakness. For every wraith who thinks the Smiling Lord lost the battle through arrogance and ignorance, there's another who thinks the Gaunt Lord held back from the battle to ensure the usurper's defeat. Renegades in cities across Europe find new converts among the disillusioned. Vienna declares its independence of both Charon *and* the Smiling Lord, and proclaims itself a sovereign kingdom. Both Deathlords would like to conquer it, but the fear and suspicion within Lisbon, Paris and Stygia itself attract Spectres and Maelstrom winds. Combined with internal dissent, some question whether the cities can survive — let alone reach forth to conquer.

Factions in the War of the Dead

Legions are, for obvious reasons, the determining factor for wraiths in this era. Except for outsiders and Spectres, all Restless belong to one Legion or another. Even Renegades who are reaped by Renegades and fed a steady stream of propaganda on how oppressive the whole Stygian Paradigm is... even these wraiths, if only in theory, belong to one of the Legions. Guilds are secondary. Every practitioner of Kinesis is an Artificer, but not every Artificer belongs to the Guild. Yet, every Artificer, regardless of Guild affiliations, has membership in some Legion. The question is always a simple one: How did you die?

The answer, of course, isn't always so simple.



The Skeletal Legion: Victims of Pestilence and Famine

The Skeletal Lord and The Seat of Dust

The Skeletal Lord is ruler of the Skeletal Legion and the most dangerous of the three great Deathlords. Not because his Legion is the largest, however (though it has been during certain periods of history), but because "Old Bonyhands" himself is quite mad.

Charged with the governance of persons who die from either disease or malnutrition, the Skeletal Lord is one of the three or four most powerful beings in the Dark Kingdom of

Special Orders

The Hands of Bone: Marked by their skeletal hands and faces — moliation no wraith outside their cadre is permitted bear — the Hands of Bone are the palace guard and servants of the Skeletal Lord. All Hands of Bone are specially trained in the arts of Usury and rumored to have access to special arts that allow them to bring illness and malnutrition to the Quick. Each Hand of Bone has a special artifact bow and a soulfire crystal-studded crown that functions as a soulfire mask. They bear Stygian steel swords, and their robes are known to resist even the dreadful cutting edge of that substance.

The Breathless Dead: The Spanish Influenza epidemic is devastating, and massive numbers of wraiths sweep across the shroud in numbers that dwarf even the war-dead. As with the victims of many epidemics, the Breathless (as many call them) drift into exclusive social groups for mutual support. This cliquishness is nothing new to the Skeletal Legion, which has adapted itself to handling vast cohorts of victims with a strong sense of group identity. The Legion recognizes the inevitability of these cadres and embraces them; the Breathless are organized into independent units, trained together and encouraged to share Haunts. As the groups thin out, they are either merged together or broken up, and the survivors promoted. There is a naturally a great deal of hostility toward epidemic victims among the Legion's regular recruits, as the ties that form among victims of a particular disease can lead to favoritism.

Iron. He also believes himself to be the incarnation of Pestilence, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Viewing Charon as the incarnation of Death and leader of the Horsemen, the Skeletal Lord is the foremost defender of the empire against the insurgency of the Grim Legion. He sees the Insurrection as an attempt by War (the Smiling Lord) to usurp Death's place as chief Horseman.

Luckily for Stygia, aside from his megalomaniacal world view, the Skeletal Lord's madness hasn't dulled his political savvy. His servants transcribe his every word into the Annals of Pestilence, also called the Journals of Bone. These Annals are not just a record of the Skeletal Lord's hours-long monologues on disease as a metaphor for practically everything Ñ they also include exhaustive records of the astute statecraft that has kept the Plague-dead alongside the Grim and Iron Legions in the contest for the title of Stygian top dog.

The Seat of Dust, the Skeletal Lord's headquarters, is a baroque edifice, covered in elaborate bone sculpture and filigree. The Legion pays almost twice the market rate for relic bone of any sort. Beneath these intricacies of mosaic and scrimshaw, however, the Seat is one of the most formidable fortresses in Stygia, second only to the Onyx Tower and the Seat of Thorns. The Legion long ago perfected a process by which winnowed bone chips can be ground, mixed with specialized additives and formed into remarkably fine and durable shapes. The meters-thick walls of the Seat of Dust are fine examples of this handicraft. Unlike most of the Deathlords' fortresses, which are also houses of idolatry for the Passions, the Seat of Dust is nothing but a fortress and an administrative center.

The Legion

The Skeletal Legion is a highly efficient organization. Sickness, while not pleasant, is a fairly common and not particularly traumatic way to leave life behind. Thus, like the Iron Legion, the Skeletal Legion has a large, relatively well-adjusted staff of bureaucrats and soldiers. This capable administration is a major advantage in the Underworld, where most Legions spend as much time keeping their own troops functioning as actually doing their jobs.

The Skeletal Legion adds steadily to its numbers throughout the war, both in the trenches and at the Central Powers' home fronts, where many civilians die of starvation and exposure. This increase is inconsequential, however, in comparison with the Smiling Lord's gains. It is only in 1918, during the Spanish Flu outbreak, that the Skeletal Legion catches up. Yet, despite a structure intended to absorb vast influxes of new recruits, the Legion is overwhelmed by combination of the pandemic, the Maelstrom and the Insurrection. It takes years for the recruits to be gathered, trained and armed. Until then, the Skeletal Lord's policy of only committing these new recruits as complete units leaves the Legion hard-pressed to challenge the forces of the Smiling Lord and still guard the parapets against the forces of the Maelstrom.

The Iron Legion: The Victims of Old Age

The Ashen Lady and The Seat of Shadows

Ailiandra is the only Deathlord whose name and history are commonly known. A relative latecomer to pre-Republican Stygia, Ailiandra was a Celtic chieftainess whose early submission to Stygian rule made her something of a celebrity when Charon first established his hold on the Dark Kingdom of Iron. When the Republic was founded, Ailiandra's assumption of her position as the Ashen Lady was relatively common knowledge. She was ambitious then, and the passing of years has done nothing to quench the fires inside her.

In opposing the Grim Legion's rebellion, the Ashen Lady acts as much to defend her own ability to seize power as Charon's empty throne. Unfortunately for the Iron Legion, during the early years of the 20th century, the Smiling Lord's spymasters compromise a number of officials in the Iron Legion Ministry of Intelligence. When the Night of Short Chains comes, Iron Legion officers and intelligence assets are rounded up by the hundreds and forged. While the Iron Legion continues to resist, in most places its members lack leadership, and many of their plans have been betrayed by their own intelligence apparatus. Although they struggle on throughout the Insurrection, and even score some victories while holding the line as the Skeletal Legion trains its troops, the Iron Legion alone cannot turn the tide.

The Seat of Shadows itself is perhaps the most beautiful building in the Underworld. Rebuilt shortly after the Italian Renaissance by the greatest architects of the Western world, the structure is both baroque and bleak. Within and without, every wall and fixture in-

Special Orders

Ministry of Intelligence: Tobias Smeck, in life a small-time London pickpocket, controls the MOI (pronounced as the French *moi*). Despite his unassuming beginnings, Smeck has managed to retain his post far longer than any other member of the Ashen Lady's cabinet. The MOI oversees all Iron Legion intelligence activities, including internal affairs, political and strategic intelligence, counterespionage and covert action (though the units used for the latter are formally under the command of the Ministry of Defense). The ministry is both hated and feared within the Legion, since only the Ashen Lady's immediate aides and the Salon are immune to its powers of summary detention and investigation.

Grim Legion success at turning major players in the Iron Legion's prized intelligence network not only contributes to the Iron Legion's massive setbacks early in the rebellion, it also provides the Smiling Lord with vast amounts of intelligence on the other Deathlords free of cost.

The Iron Battalions: The Iron Battalions are *the* premier fighting force of the Iron Legion. With the exception of the Legion of Fate's Cataphractoi and the troops of the Unlidded Eye, the Iron Battalions may indeed be the most fearsome fighting force in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. The enlisted ranks of these units are made up entirely of career noncommissioned officers, and the officer corps is made up of the best long-service officers to die of old age. In order to qualify for membership, not only must the soldier have served 20 or more years of military service among the Quick, he must also have spent five or more years of that service on campaign. After 10 years of regular service in the Legion, an officer or soldier qualified for the Iron Battalions may enter a yearly competitive examination held to fill vacancies in the units. Ones who qualify are used as individual fillers, and enter at the lowest possible rank (private soldier or subaltern). Not only is the pay exceptional, the perquisites are excellent. An enlisted soldier of the Iron Battalions automatically outranks any noncommissioned soldier of the Legion, and an Iron Battalion officer likewise outranks any non-Iron Battalion officer, regardless of rank. Promotion in the Iron Battalions is based purely on merit. The officers of the Iron Battalions may not be military geniuses, and they may not have the *elán* of youth, but they are the luckiest, hardiest, most determined soldiers in the Underworld. There are usually between three and five Iron Battalions constituted at any given time, and one of them is always on duty as the palace guard at the Seat of Shadows.

fixture inspires feelings of respect for the wisdom and dignity of age. Wraiths who have been carefully moliated to display all the good characteristics with advanced age quietly stroll the halls and common areas of the Seat. All seem perpetually engrossed in profound contemplation or conversations of flagrant erudition.

This dignified façade is a stark contrast to the pursuit of *au courant* thinking by the Salon (the Ashen Lady's coterie of favorite artists and thinkers). This dichotomy is explained in the slogan, "The Latest Thinking With The Most Careful of Scrutiny." The Legion sees the Seat as a place of serious inquiry, where the most educated of intellectuals examine brave new approaches to seeing the world. Though the truth of the matter might be open to debate, the Seat of Shadows certainly *looks* like such a place of contemplation.

The Legion

Of the three Great Legions, the Iron Legion is the one whose position is the most secure. The Grim Legion must worry about peacemakers, and the Skeletal Legion must fear the doctor. However, it is part of the natural order of things that everyone will eventually get old and die. The result is somewhat similar to the growth of amoral character in a child who has always had what she wanted, a sense of inevitable greatness that colors the Iron Legion at every level. For example, its resistance to the rule of the Smiling Lord has less-than-admirable motivations. There are persistent rumors at high levels of the Stygian bureaucracy that the Smiling Lord used his infiltration of the Iron Legion's intelligence network to pre-empt efforts to do likewise by the Iron Legion.

Of course, this competition for power is not the only cause of the strife between the two Legions. Many of the firebrands in the Grim Legion are behind the idea of revenge for the war-dead. By way of contrast, many of the Iron Legion's newest recruits had been, until recently, the old men who sent those war-dead to their graves. With the Grim Legion on top, there is little doubt that the victims of the War To End All Wars mean to have their revenge. And this debt is only the most recent of many long-standing scores that might be settled between ambitious men and the pawns they had expended in quest for fame and glory.

The Grim Legion: The Victims of Violence

The Smiling Lord and The Seat of Burning Waters

The Smiling Lord easily qualifies as the most openly aggressive of the Deathlords. While the Ashen Lady deftly spins her web of schemes, the Lord of the Grim Legion simply smashes his opposition with a steely gauntlet. When Charon was on the throne, constant intervention was required to placate the Victims of Violence and rein in their excesses. With the imperator absent, the Grim Legion's rebellion is almost foreordained.

While this program of naked aggression might seem reprehensible, its goals are nevertheless considered laudable by some. The Smiling Lord and his armies do not make war for power or glory, but for an ideal: justice. Alone among the Deathlords, the Smiling Lord strives to bring to justice criminals who murder among the Quick and then cross the Shroud into the Underworld.

In this crusade, he and his Legion are staunchly opposed by the rest of the Stygian bureaucracy. The Underworld is a chance to begin again, their opponents maintain, not a place of punishment for the crimes of life. Of course, as the Smiling Lord is fond of pointing out, the staunchest advocates of that policy are those wraiths who have the most to fear from justice.

When Charon was on the throne, a compromise was reached: those criminals who had escaped punishment by the laws of the Quick for murder (and *only* murder) could be subjected to trial by the Grim Legion. After the First Ferryman's departure, however, the Grim Legion quickly begins to widen its purview. With so many war-dead swelling his ranks, the Smiling Lord extends his claim over the officers of the armies, whose gross incompetence, he charged, had murdered an entire generation of young men. The objection of the other Legions, after several years of fierce bureaucratic exchanges, is one of the major reasons for the Grim Legion's revolt.

Special Orders

The Black Mask: The spies and assassins of the Smiling Lord have a reach second only to the Iron Legion's espionage organization. The era immediately before the Insurrection sees them in their top form. The Black Mask is the organization behind the Night of Short Chains, the eradication of the Iron Legion's military and administrative leadership and the similar (if less destructive) neutralizations of the other Legion's Shadowlands organizations. That same day, agents of the Black Mask open the Seat of Succor's postern gate for the Grim Guard. Grim Legion troops and the Smiling Lord himself force the abdication of the Deathlord of Madness and her replacement with a Laughing Lady of the Grim Lord's choice.

The Black Mask alone is not enough to produce this intelligence triumph, even with most of the Iron Legion's secrets at its disposal. Indeed, prior to their rebellion, the Grim Legion cuts a deal with the Seven Families of the Monitors' Guild, Stygia's most experienced extortionists. In exchange for information and assistance, the Grim Legion initially allows the Monitors free reign under its regime. While a bonanza for the Grim Legion, the decision is a disaster for the Seven Families, who come into devastating conflict with the Loyalists of the Spooks' Guild as a result.

The Advocates: During the Twilight era, the Advocates and their courts are some of the most terrifying institutions of Grim Legion rule. As always, the Advocates try their cases against those wraiths who murdered in the Skinlands. However, they also try their cases against wraiths indirectly responsible for murder (primarily senior military officers) and any of the Restless who shelter or abet suspected murderers in escaping the justice of the Smiling Lord (meaning any opponent of the Grim Legion). Although the other Legions' own cadres of Advocates do their best to defend the innocent, most judges and juries are hopelessly biased in favor of the Grim Legion. Across the Underworld, countless officers and political leaders are denounced as murderers and sent to the forges after only a perfunctory trial.

Only the Smiling Lord, with his rust-streaked Stygian steel armor and his form moliated into the appearance of exquisite brutality, could sit on his throne at the Seat of Burning Waters and be at home. Built of soulsteel and relic iron, and faced with Stygian steel, the Seat of Burning Waters is blackened by the imposing moat of flames that gives it its name. A clever contrivance, the moat is paved with soulfire crystals kept constantly at the height of their radiance. Into it is poured plasm from the Sunless Sea, and murderers the Smiling Lord cannot find a more practical use for. Much as with a soulfire torch, the victims' Pathos burns off before their corpora do, and those criminals cast into the moat can survive for days, sometimes even weeks, before plunging into Oblivion. At times, the billowing flames reach a hundred or more feet into the air. The screams make the area around the Seat of Burning Waters one of Stygia's less popular vicinities.

The Legion

The Grim Legion is probably the most ideologically charged of the Legions. Its membership is held together by bonds of common death, not by any administrative system. This feeling of unity makes these Legionnaires a powerful and determined force when mobilized. Of course, large-scale organization is not one of the Legion's strong points. Whereas the Legion's intelligence and planning operations forces are strong, it lacks an organized military to carry out the plans. Instead, the Legion relies on forces that individual Necropoli raise in response to local conditions.

As a result, a Grim Legion army in the field tends to be composed of a large number of highly idiosyncratic units. Greek phalanxes, bicycle-mounted light cavalry and infantry battalions practicing the latest *stosstaktics* fall in side by side. The result is often less than perfect.

Although they are weak as an assemblage, the Grim Legion's troops are strong on their home ground. Rather than adhere to a mediocre standard that works somewhat well in almost all circumstances, the troops of the Smiling Lord adapt fully to the local conditions. It is only after the Skeletal Lord begins to campaign openly against the Smiling Lord that the Legions loose organization proves to be a liability.

This attitude of local autonomy colors not only military affairs but also political matters. The Grim Legion can be one of the best or the worst of the Legions to belong to, depending on the quality of the local administration. During the Twilight Era, the Stygian side of the Legion places practically no guidelines on local administrative policies, other than that orders be obeyed and the tithe paid on time. While the Black Mask makes sure things didn't get out of hand, the quality and mood of the local administration still vary a great deal from place to place. All, however, remain devoted to carrying out the mission of the Legion.

The Emerald Legion: The Victims of Happenstance

The Emerald Lord and the Seat of Thorns

The Emerald Legion is the most conservative of the Legions, and the Emerald Lord enjoys his position as the venal old man of Stygian politics. Frankly Machivellian, utterly resistant to change and blatantly on the take, the Emerald Lord — Smaragdus, to the other Deathlords — throws his lot in with the Smiling Lord because he thinks the Grim Legion's coup is likely to succeed, and he wants to be on the winning side. When the situation deteriorates in the years after the Night of Short Chains, the Emerald Legion abandons the Smiling Lord and joins the Loyalist forces.

While not a very nice person, the Emerald Lord is an extremely astute politician. He manages to successfully ingratiate himself with the Loyalists enough to escape everything but a *pro forma* investigation into Emerald Legion misdeeds. Unfortunately for the Emerald Lord, the Smiling Lord is not the only person he leaves in the lurch when he abandons the rebellion. The Monitors' Guild is also left at the mercy of the Spooks. It is generally believed that the survivors of the Seven Families are responsible for Smaragdus' exceedingly unpleasant end.

The Seat of Thorns is perhaps the single most spectacular building in the Underworld. Faced with brilliant slices of emerald-green soulfire crystals inside and out and surrounded by an almost half-mile thick labyrinth of malevolent, sentient thorns, the Emerald Legion's headquarters is virtually unassailable. The slices of crystal that adorn the exterior are fully charged and hot enough to send a wraith who accidentally leans against one into a Destruction Harrowing. The interior passageways can be similarly charged from special Pathos reservoirs to incinerate anything within them. The thorns, which are quiescent under normal conditions, can be ordered to defend the palace, thus making approach to the Seat impossible without weeks of costly and meticulous siege work. Similarly, the character of the mirrors within the Seat can be changed. Instead of reflecting the viewer's past (as they normally do) they instead offer misdirection, or portray the failures and fears of those who regard them.

Special Orders

The Eyes of Emerald: The Eyes of Emerald are the secret police of the Emerald Lord. Long considered to be everything but an extension of the Seven Families, the Eyes of Emerald are Monitors, almost to a wraith. They do adequate to excellent work as spies, especially when the target is vulnerable to bribery or extortion via his Fetters. Their real job, however, is to make sure that not one quarter-obolus owed to the Emerald Lord is withheld, and at that they are without peer. Even the most crooked, dishonest Anacreons make sure they pay the Emerald Lord his cut. There are plenty of examples about what happens to officials who don't. Most of them can still scream.

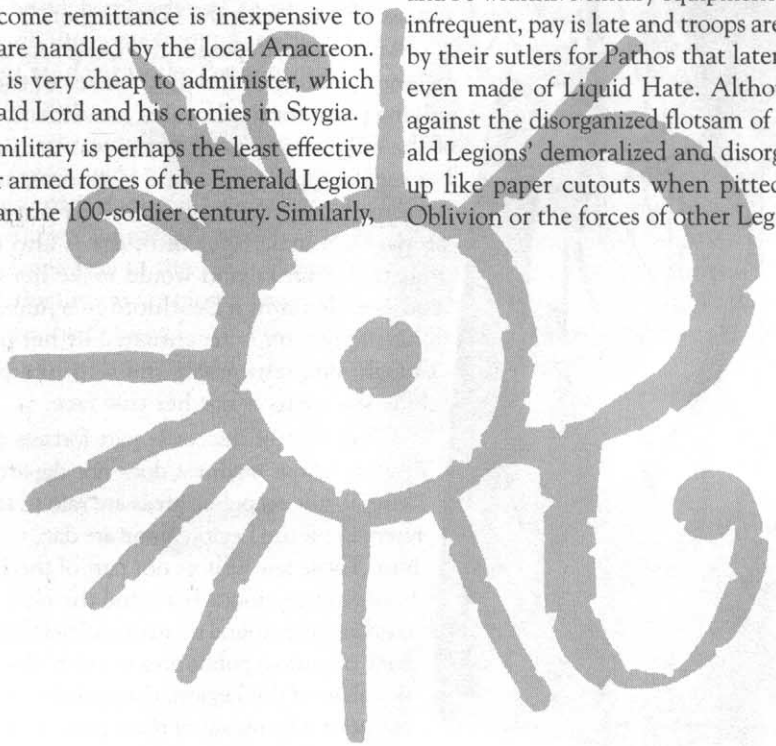
The Viridian Guard: The Viridian Guard is the garrison for the Seat of Thorns. They dress well and are exceptionally talented bullies. While not elite, they do have adequate martial skills. Most are not members of the Emerald Legion at all, because the Emerald Lord fears the plotting of his own Anacreons too much to trust anyone seconded from their command. Instead, mercenaries, Spooks and other cutthroats compose the vast majority of the force. The Viridian Guard does a good job protecting the Seat of Thorns during the Maelstrom. Spooks within its ranks are key to opening communications with the Loyalists when the Emerald Lord decides to switch sides, and also in eliminating those Monitors present in the Seat once the change comes.

The Legion

The Emerald Legion has much the same character as its leadership. Its Anacreons operate as tax farmers. They must remit a certain amount of relics, Pathos and souls to the Emerald Legion on a quarterly basis. Those who fail to do so are relieved and, if particularly inept, soulforged. Anacreons can dip into the till to whatever extent they're able, as long as operations maintain a semblance of day-to-day functionality, and they keep meeting their quotas. The resulting graft, inefficiency and repression are typical of such administrative systems. Of course, fixed income remittance is inexpensive to maintain, as all expenses are handled by the local Anacreon. While brutal, tax farming is very cheap to administer, which makes it fine by the Emerald Lord and his cronies in Stygia.

The Emerald Legion military is perhaps the least effective of the Legions. The regular armed forces of the Emerald Legion contain no unit smaller than the 100-soldier century. Similarly, there are no noncommissioned officers in the century, and the only staff are whatever qualified soldiers the commanding Centurion can cull from the ranks. Although ineffective, this organization has a low payroll and requires very little administrative overhead. It is, in short, quite cheap, which makes it quite attractive to local Emerald Anacreons, who essentially pay out of their own pockets for their local garrison.

For this same reason, the other aspects of the Emerald Legion military are quite often substandard. Centuries are typically far under strength, usually containing between just 30 and 50 wraiths. Military equipment is often shoddy, training is infrequent, pay is late and troops are often charged high prices by their sutlers for Pathos that later turns out to be diluted or even made of Liquid Hate. Although they fight acceptably against the disorganized flotsam of the Maelstrom, the Emerald Legions' demoralized and disorganized troops usually fold up like paper cutouts when pitted against the Generals of Oblivion or the forces of other Legions.



The Penitent Legion: The Victims of Madness

The Laughing Lady and the Seat of Succor

The Penitent Legion tends to the victims of madness, both ones who die because of their own insanity and those who die from the insanity of others. A small but politically ambitious legion, the Penitent Legion is torn asunder by the Insurrection. On the Night of Short Chains, the Smiling Lord himself, along with 250 members of the Grim Guard, forces the Laughing Lady to abdicate her throne.

Although the legitimate Laughing Lady manages to escape into exile after her abdication, the new Lady holds her mask of office. A split develops within the ranks of the Penitent Legion over which of the Laughing Ladies should be followed. The Imperialists, mostly the specialist troops including the Flesh Corps and the Beast Corps, choose to march under the banner of the Grim Legion. The Loyalists, who include most of the Keepers, the Skirmisher Corps and the Phalanx Corps, side with the Laughing Lady-in-exile.

Prior to the Insurrection, the Laughing Lady is mostly known for her reap first, ask questions later recruitment policy and her willingness to soulforge the more demented among her ranks into tools rather than put up with their antics. This latter policy is, of course, supported by Grim Legion. This sympathy of attitude is the primary reason that the Legion's Artificers, the Flesh Corps and the Beast Corps choose to stand with the Grim Legion.

After being deposed, the Laughing Lady becomes a tragic figure and symbolic of the illegitimacy of the Smiling Lord's claim. A rallying point for the Loyalist movement, the Laughing Lady is one of the enigmatic figures of the war. It is never clear how much of her sentiment for the cause is sincere, and how much simply opportunistic. While she is definitely not the saintly figure Loyalist propaganda makes her into, she is also not the scheming villain that the Grim Legion would make her out to be. The Laughing Lady's exile limns a Deathlord in a human light for the first time. This impression is accentuated by her tendency to go unmasked, though, unquestionably the waif-like portrait of innocence undone she wears is not her true face.

The Seat of Succor is part fortress and part hospice for those Restless whose madness does not depart them once they join the Dead. While its public areas are safe to travel through, those places reserved for the Legion alone are dangerous for outsiders to venture into. Those few visitors not part of the Penitent Legion often confront strange visions here, and the near certainty that the passages are changing around them to mislead them, and eventually spit them back out into a public area or back alley. For those wraiths who are members of the Legion, the experience is obviously somewhat different: it is by means of these passages that the Laughing Lady slips the Grim Legion's noose, and escapes into exile.

Special Orders

The Keepers: The Keepers watch over their fellow Legionnaires for the influence of the Shadow. This task is extremely important among the Penitent, as the Legion considers insanity a manifestation of Oblivion in the Skinlands and Shadowlands alike. Wraiths without their full faculties are closely monitored by the Keepers. For Restless with serious problems, therapy with a Pardoner or time in the Seat of Succor is recommended. For Legionnaires who don't respond to this regimen of treatment, assignments as barghests or components for the Beast and Flesh Corps await. After the Night of Short Chains, most Keepers remain loyal to the Lady-in-exile. During her exile, the triage process for the mad is much shorter. Wraiths who demonstrate antisocial tendencies are immediately sent to the assault corps (by the Loyalists) or used as fodder for the arts of the war-Masquers (by the Imperialists).

Keepers are widely disliked, because their External Affairs division not only acts as an espionage operation, it also watches the officials of other Legions for signs that they may have become Shadow-eaten. Some serious problems arise with Keepers whose decisions are influenced by their own Shadows. While lionized by the Smiling Lord, this operation has a troubled history, and exists on borrowed time during the War of the Dead.

The Flesh Corps: Also called the Tide of Horror, the Flesh Corps is the partner unit to the Beast Corps. However, where the Beast Corps uses barghests specially moliated for combat, the Flesh Corps uses the great, striding Leviathans. A Leviathan is crafted from several dozen souls who are lobotomized, moliated together and fitted with Stygian steel armor and tusk-laden bridles. Large howdahs containing lancers and riflemen rest on its back, and the resulting creature provides the impact of armor with the speed and rough-country capability of cavalry. Although sometimes troublesome to maintain, the Leviathans of the Flesh Corps and the warhounds of the Beast Corps provide the Smiling Lord with an armored spearhead that the Loyalists simply cannot match.

The Legion

The Penitent Legion's ranks swell with the dead of the War to End All Wars. It is ruled early in the war that they, and not the Silent Legion, are the recipients of soldier-suicides who crack from the pressure of heavy bombardment or other war-related stresses. Hard times on the home front add to the muster as well, and the war years are good for the Penitent, at least until the Grim Legion's rebellion.

The Penitent Legion focuses a great deal of attention on the Shadow, and is largely preoccupied with fighting Spectres until the Grim Legion's usurpation of the Laughing Lady's throne. After the Night of Short Chains, the Legion's attitude changes considerably. The members of the Flesh Corps and Beast Corps who stay with the Legion are mostly seconded to the Grim Legion to reinforce the Smiling Lord's troops. Skirmisher and Phalanx Corps units of questionable loyalty are left to fight against the Generals of Oblivion — many go to Russia and other remote locations. While Loyalist units still hunt the Shadow-eaten around their encampments, most save their strength for the fight against the usurpers of their Deathlord's throne.

Those Restless who are truly mad and reaped by the Legion meet differing fates, depending on which faction they fall into. Those Enfants taken by the Imperialists are quickly used to fill out the ranks of the Beast and Flesh Corps. Enfants taken by the Loyalists are formed into assault units. The violent or otherwise dangerously insane are armed with simple weapons and pointed toward the enemy, often guided by basic forms of Nhudri's Embrace. Many of these mad jannissaries become Shadow-eaten during the war, but continue to be used in the assault units and kept chained in close proximity to other, non-Shadow-eaten shock troops.

The Legion of Fate: Fate's Chosen Servants

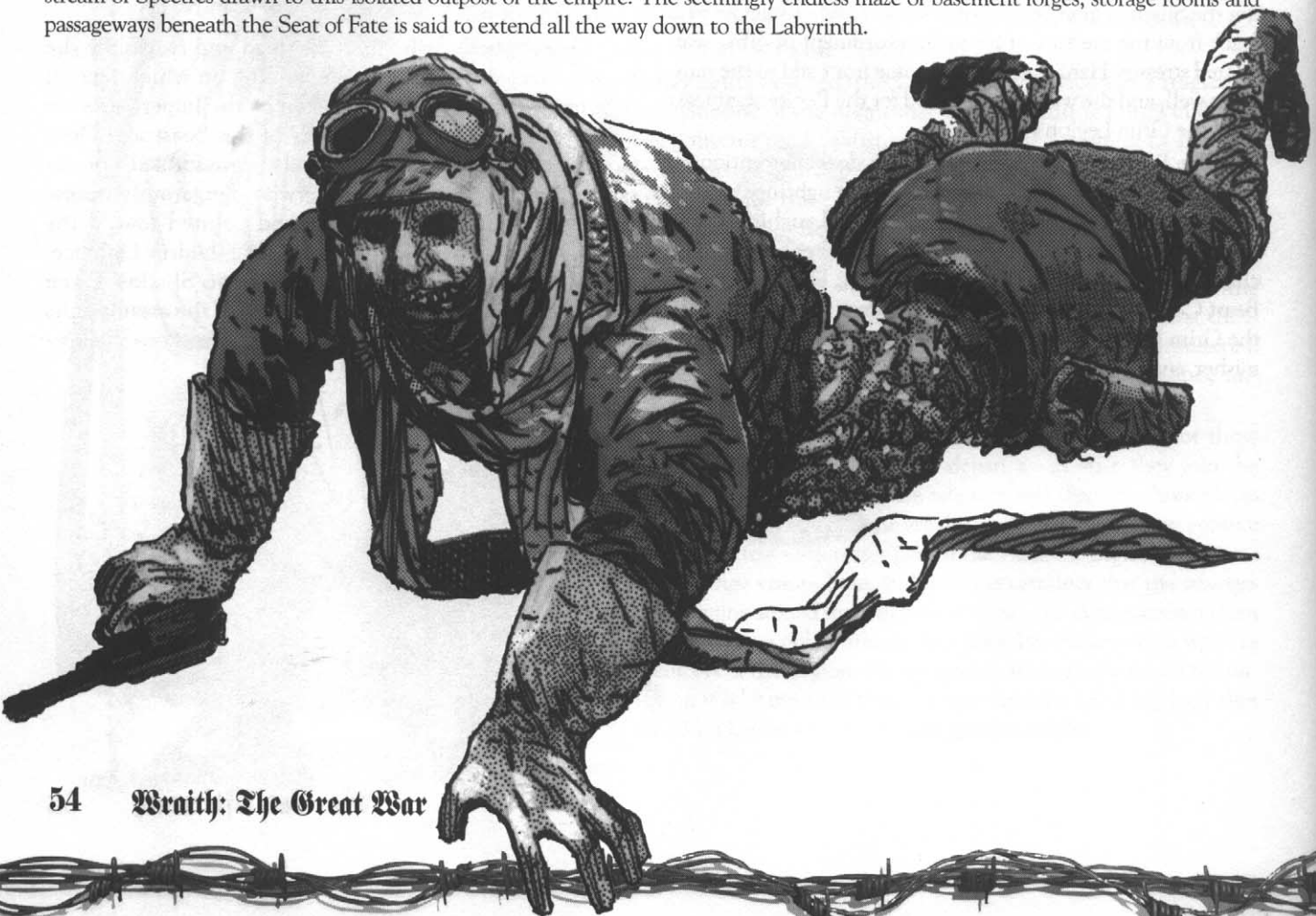
The Ladies of Fate and the Isle of Eurydice

The Ladies of Fate are generally believed to be heavily moliated wraiths. Extraordinarily talented seers, the Ladies act as the surrogate rulers of the Legion during the Lady of Fate's regular absences. A being of unknown origins, the Lady of Fate gave Charon his mandate to rule the Deadlands. Many think her to be nothing more than a master Oracle, whereas others consider her the incarnation of the wyrd. Whatever the case, she is immensely prescient and the equal of any of the Deathlords, though not the demonstrated superior to any of them.

There is a persistent rumor that the Lady of Fate is long gone to Oblivion, or that she never really existed at all, and is a fabrication of the Ladies of Fate, who take turns impersonating her. Another set of rumors suggests that the Lady may be a Malfean.

What is true is that the Legion of Fate clearly exists for the benefit of the Lady of Fate first and other considerations second. It is generally assumed that the Lady of Fate has the good of the Underworld as a whole in mind, as her actions seem to show as much. Obviously, not everyone agrees. Whatever the case, agents of the Legion of Fate definitely tend to assume that their prescient leadership is on top of things when it issues orders. Thus, functionaries are willing to perform even seemingly counter-productive tasks without hesitation.

The Seat of Fate is a sprawling mansion located on the Isle of Eurydice, which Charon bestowed to the Lady of Fate as her personal domain in gratitude for the assistance she has provided during his rule. Eurydice sits in the Tempest between one and three days by ship from Stygia, depending on the weather. The island is completely covered by the Legion of Fate's headquarters, a low structure in the Iberian style. The many courtyards of the *hacienda* provide shelter for groves of very carefully watched and tended trees, practically the only growing wood in the Underworld. Through its control of these trees, the Legion of Fate provides one of the most valuable resources in the Stygia — paper. Though not a fortress per se, the rocky cliffs of Eurydice and the sprawling nature of the compound make it very difficult to launch an effective attack against the Seat. The defenders receive constant training in hunting the stream of Spectres drawn to this isolated outpost of the empire. The seemingly endless maze of basement forges, storage rooms and passageways beneath the Seat of Fate is said to extend all the way down to the Labyrinth.



Special Orders

The Cataphractoi: The Legion of Fate's five battalions of heavy cavalry are the premier force of the Underworld. Though significantly inferior to the Stygian Equitaes in number, the Legion of Fate's Cataphractoi are superior to them in armament (and some say, training). Normally used for Byway patrol, the Cataphractoi are redeployed to the Shadowlands once Spectres and the Maelstrom make the Byways too dangerous for regular traffic.

The Silver Hammers: The Legion of Fate as a rule soulforges only Spectres, Drones and dangerous Heretics. Although the output of its forges is small, the Legion produces a highly valued form of Stygian steel called Glisten. While not significantly harder than regular Stygian steel, Glisten has a shining, almost quicksilver appearance. Explanations for this strange appearance vary, though the process has not yet been duplicated. Some say that the forging process used does not originate with Nhudri. Others say that such steel receives its finish because of the silver hammers used by the Artificers of the Legion of Fate. The tools are said to be forged from the silver pennies used to pay Charon's Tithe. More sober speculation suggests that the finish and particularly malleable character of Glisten is due to a secret annealing or quenching solution. Whatever the case, the Silver Hammers are the Legion's master smiths, and they produce not only its trademark oil-on-water steel, but also some of the most complex, beautiful and powerful Artifacts in the Underworld.

The Legion

The members of the Legion of Fate all theoretically could be claimed by another Legion. Just like normal people, the Fated die from old age, violence, sickness, madness and whatnot. However, Restless who are marked for service with the Legion bear the mark of the Lady of Fate rather than the deathmarks of their method of death. The Legion is *very* serious about making sure all wraiths marked for service in the Legion actually arrive into the Lady of Fate's service. Even the worst slavers turn Enfants with Fate's deathmarks over to the Legion, rather than face the vengeance the Ladies visit on Restless so unwise as to deny them their chosen souls.

The Legion of Fate remains largely uninvolved in the Insurrection, barely even deigning to acknowledge the Grim Legion's existence. The result is incredibly galling to the Smiling Lord, as it is intended to be. The new prospective leader of the Stygian government is unable to so much as attract the attention of Charon's legitimizer and closest advisor.

The Legion does, however, take a strong interest in the Fourth Great Maelstrom, and in fighting the Generals of Oblivion. After the Maelstrom begins, the Legion quickly shifts battalions of the Stygian Foot to the Seat of Fate, thus stripping away its contribution to the Stygian garrison (which means little, as the city is shortly an armed camp of the Grim Legion and its supporters). The other five battalions of the Foot, along with the Cataphractoi, help combat the forces of the Maelstrom in the Shadowlands. At first dispersed, most of these forces (two battalions of the Cataphractoi and three battalions of the Stygian Foot) end up deployed to Russia as additions to Wolseley's Silent and Iron Legion forces. The rest work to reinforce hard-pressed garrisons and round out forces that take the field against the Generals of Oblivion. By the end of the war, only two squadrons of Cataphractoi remain, and the five battalions of Stygian Foot are little more than reinforced companies; however, this strength consists of replacements added during wartime, and not warriors trained up to the Legion's regular standards.

The Silent Legion: The Victims of Despair

The Quiet Lord and The Seat of Silence

The Quiet Lord benefits from the War to End All Wars and the turmoil that follows it, as he always does from hard times. And as always, he gives no sign if this development disturbs or pleases him. Said by some to be a redeemed Spectre, the Silent Lord is probably the most reserved of the Deathlords, and definitely the least ambitious. He takes little notice of the rebellion going on around his Legion and instead devotes his efforts to combating the Maelstrom and the Generals of Oblivion.

Although the Quiet Lord participates in the struggle for souls — to do otherwise is political suicide — it is fairly obvious to all and sundry that he isn't really interested in becoming the foremost Stygian power, but in preserving his position. After the ruling is made to give the Laughing Lady control over the ranks of the war suicides, he simply nods and continues on, perhaps a bit more dourly than before.

Of all the Deathlords, there is little doubt that the Quiet Lord is the one the most concerned for the health and welfare of his troops. Though the suicide rate among the Silent Legion is high, the survival rate among those wraiths who last through their first six weeks is remarkable, given that all of them made the conscious decision to end their Quick existence. For Legionnaires who cannot bear to continue, he introduces the Steel Martyrs, wraiths who volunteer for the soulforges, to prevent Oblivion's increase.

The Silent Lord is known for his vociferous opposition of the Grim Legion's policy of judging the Dead for their crimes among the Quick. The Victims of Despair paid enough in life and in the moment of their death, he maintains. Despite the Legion's neutrality in most matters, there is an organized campaign to protect the victims of the war-dead's anger, both among the Silent Legion and in

Special Orders

The Warriors of Lethe: This elite unit comprises members of the Silent Legion who do not wish to continue their existence, but who would like to make a more active contribution to the fight against Oblivion than a career as a broadsword. Fearless combatants, the Warriors of Lethe are always at the forefront of the fight against the Shadow-eaten. They are the last force to give up their mission of Byway-clearance, keeping the Paris-Stygia byway open for three months after the Maelstrom begins. They are withdrawn to Stygia only after the Silent Lord concludes that the casualty rate is too high and the force is being wasted. For much of the war, they serve as palace guard to the Seat of Silence and the designated militia fighting Spectre attacks against the city. One company serves with the Ten Thousand in Russia, and some individuals execute missions across the Shadowlands. As a whole, however, they and the Guardians of the Labyrinth serve as the impartial protectors of Stygia during the years of the Maelstrom and the Insurrection.

The Bleak Legion: Made up of the Despair-dead of Eurasia, the Bleak Legion is the only really organized force in the Shadowlands of rural Russia. Sharing responsibility with the local outposts of the Legion of Fate, the Bleak Legion works to defend the thousands of small, frontier Necropoli from marauding Spectres. The inhabitants are protected against minor threats and, when possible, evacuated from the path of major ones. The Bleak Legion's numbers are spread all across Russia, and they make little impact on the major battles of the war. However, they are essential to beating back Shadow-eaten agents and acting as scouts and sources of information.

Stygia as a whole. Many hide within the Silent Legion, their faces changed and their paperwork carefully lost during the Insurrection. Others, more closely hounded, are smuggled out to the Loyalists or even given to Ferrymen for safekeeping.

The Seat of Silence reflects the beautiful gloom of daybreak in a cemetery on a rainy morning in late fall. Silent, ornate and gloomy, its arabesque spires rise above the Stygian skyline around them. Within its quiet halls, the sobs and wails of despair are swallowed without echo by the shadowy gulfs. Those members of the Legion who still feel the weight of their mortal lives on them come here and bewail their fate into the void. After they finish expressing their sorrow, specially trained Pardoners attempt to help them through their grief and to come to terms with their condition.

The Legion

Like the Penitent Legion, the Silent Legion sees average recruits into its ranks as having lost their first battle with Oblivion already. There is, however, a difference. In the Silent Legion, failing to save an Enfant from her self-destructive impulses means failure. In the Penitent Legion, it just means more fodder for the Legion's war machine. Many members of the Silent Legion are willing to violate the *Dictum Mortuum* to save Enfants before they even cross the Shroud. No doubt the fact that they prevent such a large number of suicides contributes to the Legion's small numbers, but the Smiling Lord is never heard to complain.

The Silent Legion is a corps of individualists. They brought themselves here, and they wear that final act of free will as both a stigma and a badge of honor. Those members who make it for more than a few years are also survivors. They often lived and died in harsh locales, and they tend to haunt the same sort of lonely, dangerous places in the Shadowlands, including prisons, ghettos and particularly isolated rural areas in northern Europe, where suicide has always been a major cause of death.

Often spiritualistic, Silent Legion members are harshly critical of what they see as Heretic exploitation of the hopeful for temporal ends. The Silent Legion provides a large number of Pardoners, Oracles and volunteers for the *Magisterium Veritatis*' Heretic-hunting operations. Although the Silent Legion is strongly negative about the Heretic movements, they are almost openly supportive of individual members who pursue Transcendence. Individuals in the Legion depart with Ferrymen on a regular basis, and even within the ranks, most members of the Legion have at least heard of someone alleged to have passed Beyond.

The Legion is not particularly military in character. Mostly, its members make fine scouts, scholars and seers, but only fair soldiers. Local military commands are primarily defensive militia. Wraiths of particularly warlike bent are usually sent to the Ten Thousand, the Legion's primary military unit. Commanded by a general named Xenophon, who may or may not be the historical leader of the same name, the Ten Thousand plays a central role in campaigns against several Generals of Oblivion in the Middle East and Maghreb.

The Legion of Paupers: The Victims of Mystery

The Beggar Lord and The Seat of Golden Tears

There is much speculation as to why Stygia's smallest "true" Legion is led by the Dark Kingdom of Iron's most simperingly ambitious politician. Some people maintain that he was a political enemy of Charon who was put there to keep him out of the way while still giving him the honor of the title "Deathlord." Others maintain that the Beggar Lord's personality is a natural outgrowth of his position: If you had to lead the Legion of Paupers, you'd whine too.

The Beggar Lord is wry, bitter and implacable in his willingness to ride on the political winds for his own benefit. During the Insurrection, the Beggar Lord is the most well-paid neutral in Stygia. Rather than sell himself to one side or another and be caught in the devastating tides of war, the Beggar Lord chooses a much wiser course. For a few souls, and a moderate contribution to his coffers, he allows first one side and then another to persuade him against involvement in the conflict. Having developed a fine eye for such matters over the centuries, the Beggar Lord manages to secure such payments again and again, while never quite making the price so high as to engender an active dislike for his Legion. A little too weak to field forces in the battle against the Generals of Oblivion, and strictly neutral in the Rebellion, the Beggar Lord's forces participate mostly in local defensive actions.

Special Orders

Legion of Revelations: To say that members of the Legion of Revelations are the spies of the Beggar Lord is a grave misstatement. Everyone in the Legion, at some level, is a spy of the Beggar Lord. While every Legion encourages its members to uncover secrets, in no other Legion do people actually pass the information along the line as much as the Paupers do. The Legion of Revelations is the Pauper Lord's cadre of *special* spies. Their missions range all across the spectrum, but their primary bailiwick is counterintelligence. When you depend on handouts from your potential enemies, you have to screen them closely. The other Legions are of little interest to the Legion of Revelations — mostly, everything the Beggar Lord needs to know reaches him through normal channels. However, the Legion of Revelations has superior espionage resources in locations such as the Dark Kingdoms of Jade and Ivory. While the Legion of Revelations is good at Doppelganger-hunting, the Beggar Lord forbids his troops to enter the Labyrinth, and so its intelligence on the Labyrinth tends to be spotty at best.

Legion of the Onyx Tear: Almost every Deathlord has a palace guard, and the Pauper Lord is no exception. His is just... smaller than everyone else's. Of course, this fact allows him to be very choosy about who goes where. Never totaling more than 25, the Legion of the Onyx Tear comprises the emissaries, advisors and bodyguard of the Pauper Lord. Although its members' tall, black masks are a common sight in the Agora, the Legion of the Onyx Tear is almost never seen outside Stygia. Forbidden to gather in groups larger than six, Legionnaires are perhaps the most mysterious of the various praetorian organizations. They are also very close-mouthed about their duties, and while there is no known way out of the Legion other than the forges or Oblivion, there is a fairly high turnover rate.

Overall, the Beggar Lord and the Victims of Mystery consider the Great War a definite win.

The Legion

The Legion of Paupers is typified by an attitude that mirrors the Beggar Lord's. Its membership is primarily wraiths seen as misfits and clowns. Members are usually considered wraiths too clueless to know how they died; it's a fairly important moment and difficult to miss. The ones who do know how they died are castoffs from the other Legions given to the Smiling Lord as political concessions, or because they're freaks and nobody else wants to deal with them. While a small minority of very lonely wraiths hate their new existences, most of the Legion learns to embrace the misfit society. Those wraiths who don't cope usually have serious enough Shadow problems that, one way or another, they don't stay around for long.

Paupers are odd. The Beggar Lord doesn't really expect discipline or absolute obedience. The Deathlord of the Paupers has his battles to fight in Stygia, and he has no doubts that the individual Necropoli have their own problems as well. Everyone knows the Legion's situation; people who really want to work gradually move to fill working positions, and those who really don't want to work end up with menial jobs and minimal responsibility. Anacreons are often called in to confer with the Beggar Lord, to take his plans back to their Necropoli and see how they can be implemented, if at all. Word of mouth carries the news from Anacreon to Anacreon, and general policies are instituted over the course of several years. It isn't very methodical, but the Legion is small enough that informal methods work and eccentric enough that local implementation of centrally dictated policies is a must.

This impressive display of individuality doesn't mean that the Legion of Paupers is asleep at the switch. Its members are just as aware that most of Stygia would happily see them all sent to the forges, and just as intent as the Beggar Lord in carving out a secure niche for themselves. While the other Legions are busy with their infighting, the Legion of Paupers quietly volunteers to take care of the bothersome bureaucratic tasks necessary to keep Stygia running. There's no question of the Beggar Lord's motives, but none of the other Legions are in a position to turn down the offer. Surprisingly, while their methods are often quite eccentric, the Paupers prove to be quite efficient, even if their offices contain positions such as Lost Document Finder and Assistant Manager in Charge of Confidential Records Browsing.

The Guilds During Wartime

The Guilds play a distinctly secondary role during the War of the Dead. Basically, the Guildmasters bide their time and attempt to spread their influence while staying safely out of sight. During the Twilight Era, the Guilds can be generally divided into four categories.

The Great Guilds

The Great Guilds are an integral part of Stygian existence. Without the Arcanoi of these Guilds, the society of the Restless would soon break down. For this reason, control of the Great Guilds is one of the foremost priorities of both the Loyalists and the Imperialists during the Insurrection — whichever side can gain total dominion over even one of the Great Guilds can starve the other of invaluable resources.

The Great Guilds spend most of the conflict attempting to do their jobs and avoid being drawn into the struggle raging within the Hierarchy.

Individuals within the various organizations do, however, become involved. Some give their allegiance for political advancement, and some for feelings of personal loyalty or ideology. Most low-ranking guild members unfortunate enough to side with the Insurrectionists end their existence as fodder for the ever-hungry forges, but a few of the more politically adept manage to save their corpora.

Artificers

The Artificers are the Guild most torn by internal conflicts during the Insurrection. Shortly after the beginning of the revolution, Nhudri silently refuses to forge materials for the new lords of the Hierarchy. Taking his behavior as a divine directive, the Cult of Nhudri immediately begins agitating for the Guild to withdraw its support from the Grim Legion. The Nhudrites are not alone in agitating for the Guild to take a side; many other prominent Artificers see the civil war as an opportunity for the Guild to regain legitimacy in exchange for siding with one of the factions.

While the Artificers present a face so blandly neutral as to seem almost serene, the internal struggle between the Guild's pro-Loyalist and pro-Imperialist factions is vicious. The fanatical determination of the Nhudrites is telling — by the time the Grim Legion finally surrenders, the pro-Stygian forces within the Artificers are on the verge of victory. In the end, the primary effect of the Great War on the Artificers is to considerably strengthen the Cult of Nhudri as a political force within the Guild, and the pro-Loyalist Lord Ember's position as Guildmaster.

Masquers

On the surface, the Masquers seem far more politically neutral than the Artificers. The Guild certainly manages to reap a great deal of profit from the Insurrection. By adhering strenuously to their rigid code of ethics, most Arrangers manage to take contracts for both sides during the entire Great War without raising the ire of either. However, the well-informed Insurrectionists suspect quite rightly that the Guild's leadership is ultimately loyal to Charon and his defenders. The cause of this loyalty, the Guild's sheltering of several Mnemoi, is never discovered. Regardless of this fact, the Masquers come under bureaucratic attack during the war, and several of their ranking members are conscripted into the ranks of the Grim Legion and "sent to Barcelona" (the euphemism of the day for suicide assignments).

While the Artificers are torn by internal battles and some forges are cooled by the Maelstrom's closing of the Veinous Stair mines, the commercial side of the Masquers is as busy as ever. Their services sculpting soft goods and crafting barghests are also invaluable, not just as ways to "disappear" targets, but to maintain the quality of life in Stygia and fight against the Spectres carried by the Fourth Great Maelstrom. During the Maelstrom, a number of Artifacts created via Moliate are made available to replace similar objects made from scarce Stygian steel. Some of these, such as living chains, weapons with a barghest-like intelligence, are successful even after the Maelstrom. Others, masks, for example, made from moliated corpora, are wartime improvisations that fall out of favor when the original Stygian steel products return.

Pardoners

More than any of the other Great Guilds, the Pardoners stand aloof from the Insurrection. Without even the opportunistic profiteering of the Masquers' Guild, the Pardoners strive to bring their services to all those who need them. They not only castigate, but mediate—sometimes merely by showing up. Most Hierarchs, Loyalists or Insurrectionists are unwilling to fight in the presence of a Pardoner. Ones who do usually suffer a harsh tongue-lashing, either from a Pardoner or their more sensible fellows.

Obviously, this impartiality is difficult during wartime — the very act of castigation, with its baring of the soul, is an irresistible lure to espionage professionals, just as confession is among the Quick of the Catholic Church. Pardoners, however, have a significant advantage over the Church in terms of protecting the sanctity of their rites; each and every one of them *knows* the ritual of castigation is an invaluable tool in combating the Shadow. As a result, the subversion of Pardoners is a significantly more difficult task than breaching the sanctity of the confessional. Additionally, the Pardoner's in-house security establishment, the Beacon, specializes in detecting and excising just such venalities and subversions.

The least-known and perhaps the most heroic struggle of the Fourth Great Maelstrom is the valiant effort by the Beacon to keep the Pardoners free of *Magisterium Veritatis* and infiltrator agents. During the course of the war, over 120 Beacon field agents are Harrowed or sent to Oblivion in the course of duty. By the sacrifice of these martyrs, wraiths are able to submit to the ministrations of the Pardoners without worry. Otherwise, many of the Restless with military and intelligence ties would be unable to rid themselves of Angst without security concerns.

Usurers

The Great War is the apogee of the Usurers' Guild. With their massive Pathos-banks and exorbitant interest rates, the great

Stygian Trusts finance both sides during the Grim Legion's rebellion in the same manner that they had backed the Revolt of the Guilds. The wealthy heads of the Trusts were tycoons by the end of the war, staggering forward under a wealth of Pathos almost beyond comprehension.

But their riches bring persecution as well as power. Sentiments against war-profiteering run high in post-Rebellion Stygia, mostly because of the detrimental effect the Usurers have on efforts to combat the Fourth Great Maelstrom.

The Working Guilds

The Working Guilds are the *bourgeoisie* of the freewraiths. They are entertainers, government functionaries, prostitutes and the purveyors of favorable auspices. For most members of the Working Guilds, the Fourth Great Maelstrom and the Insurrection are nothing more than difficult and dangerous times, when people have to get by as best they can. A few members of these Guilds are lucky and become famous, fabulously powerful or deliriously wealthy. Many more are swept up and torn apart by the twin winds of Maelstrom and war. For the majority of the survivors, events echo as a time when oboli were scarce and just getting by was far more dangerous.

Chanteurs

Even discounting the sudden importance of diplomacy (for the Diplomats are nearly a breed of their own), the Chanteurs work hard during the Great War. Spirits in wartime are always in need of brightening. Some Chanteurs achieve tremendous notoriety performing for the troops, or as artists who entertain audiences of the rich and powerful in Stygia and the major Necropoli. Others work with little rest and, in many cases, no pay. Many of these minstrels, called "Johnny Songbirds," have never aspired to performance before the Maelstrom. Inspired by nothing more than the urge to good Samaritanism, the Johnny Songbirds move among the people of the Dark Kingdom of Iron, lifting hopes and spreading such good will as they are able.

Whatever its specifics, wartime music is rarely subtle. While many of the marching ballads, Pathos-hall ditties and paeans to agony are profoundly moving, the Twilight Era's Keening is mostly devoid of deep or subtle meaning. It is a time for emotions of the heart, not the mind.

Harbingers

While the rhythms of the Harbinger's frontier lifestyle are disrupted, their rough brotherhood survives. Brave or suicidal Harbingers collect outrageous fees to keep communications open with Stygia for official business. Most private guide and courier agencies cease to negotiate or honor contracts requiring travel through the Tempest a few weeks after the Maelstrom begins. The vast majority of Harbingers are unwilling to dare the Skinlands-Stygia run — often called Maelstrom Road — and instead adapt to the conditions of the Shadowlands. There, the Harbingers serve as couriers and scouts for the armies of the Restless, and as messengers and guides for those unfortunates forced to travel during the Maelstrom.

The Harbingers remain staunchly apolitical during the Insurrection. While unwritten, the Harbingers' rules of conduct are as inflexible as the Pardoners' Oath. As with the Pardoners, a great deal is done by the combatants to subvert that code. The self-policing done by the Harbingers is of course much less formal than that of the more organized Pardoners, but it is infinitely more harsh. The penalty for unethical behavior is either to be thrown head-first into a Nihil or secured to a remote tree or lamp-post with Nhudri's Embrace and left for the storm winds.

During the Maelstrom, the Harbingers feel responsible for educating the populace about the dangers of the new environment. In many Necropoli, those affiliated with the guild teach the basics of their art to any wraith willing to learn. Seen by many as a blatant ploy to gain good public relations for the Harbingers' Guild, the program nevertheless makes vital survival skills available to many of the Restless who would otherwise be helpless against the storm winds.

Oracles

Individually, the Oracles are largely impartial to the Insurrection, or rather, they gravitate to one side or neither as their moral compass impels them. At the upper levels of the Guild, however, the Pantheon is torn by internal struggles. The Delphics are openly in league with the Skeletal Legion, trading fortunes for the right to recruit the flu-dead, who often exhibit strong oracular abilities. The Haruspice likewise gravitate toward the Loyalist cause, while the Gamblers toss their hat in with the Grim Legion, placing a soft hedge on neutrality. Throughout the Great War, the Pantheon scuffles over the Guild's allegiance in a fashion much less dignified than the bureaucratic struggle of the Artificers. It is an unlucky Haruspice indeed who doesn't have a chance to examine the plasm of a barghest that was, until recently, a professional colleague, and rare is the Gambler who doesn't gain a new set of soulsteel dice from the travails.

Sandmen

The Insurrection and the Maelstrom together finish the process of regaining the Sandmen's Guild the legitimacy it lost during the War of the Proscenium. The abstract and beautiful dreams of the Sandmen are more sought-after during the Fourth Great Maelstrom than at any time since their fall from grace. For the great talents of the day, wages are extraordinary. For the average performer, it's the usual starvation existence, but with tighter schedules and more worries to put them off their mark.

It is not mere chance that during the 1920s, hopeful human dreams existed in unprecedented numbers alongside the dark currents of postwar nihilism. To many among the Quick, it seems as if a new age is dawning, an age of modernity and hope. In the darkest years of the Maelstrom, these hopeful dreamers provide a beacon for the Dead. It is because of the heroic actions of the Sandmen that many of these rays of hope continue to shine, undarkened by the depredations of the Shadow-eaten. For every nihilist, it seems there are three Sandmen dedicated to protecting the dreams of the Quick against the terrors that the Maelstrom brings. Both in dreams and in the Underworld itself, these brave practitioners of Phantasm, often with few martial skills and armed with only the crudest of weapons, challenge the Shadow-eaten for the dreams of the liv-

ing. Unlike the arc-bright displays of the Haunters, however, the war of the Sandmen is far from spectacular. In some places, Sandmen are even persecuted under charges that their policing of dreams is nothing more than a ruse for *Dictum Mortuum* violations.

The Criminal Guilds

The Criminal Guilds are the underworld of the Underworld. As they are all outlaws, times of civil unrest are times of opportunity for them. Wars are fought over territory between the Spooks and the Monitors. More wars are fought in the name of the Legions by the Proctors and Puppeteers as they struggle for position in the Skinlands. And of course, there is the Haunters' Guild's strange, lonely war against the Shadow-eaten. To the Criminal Guilds, the Great Maelstrom and the rebellion are not the dramatic center of the era, but a backdrop against which much more personal drama occurs.

Haunters

The Fourth Great Maelstrom is a manifestation of everything the Haunters hate — the all-consuming, static, entropic sameness of Oblivion. Even the least spiritual among the Haunters feel an obligation — almost a compulsion — to place themselves between the Underworld and the forces of the Maelstrom. With a unity unheard of in their fractious ranks, the era's Haunters are some of Stygia's most staunch defenders. Many simply go about the day-to-day business of pulling down the Shroud, but always with an eye out for the activities of the Shadow-eaten. Others become driven shells, warrior-servants of the Wylding. Unwilling to cooperate with local authorities, or in many cases with each other, the Haunters fight a thousand lonely little wars against Oblivion during the Fourth Great Maelstrom.

Needless to say, their behavior is of immense assistance to the Haunters' far-from-sterling reputation. The few Hierarchy troops still charged with enforcing the *Dictum* are doubly glad for this change — not only are the Haunters doing battle with the forces of Oblivion, they are often doing so rather than bothering the Quick. Not that this respite is anything but momentary; the Haunters' place is quickly filled by the resurgent Alchemists, and for every Haunter who ceases to meddle with the Quick, there are 10 Spectres with significantly more lethal notions of Haunting to take their place.

Monitors

The Seven Families' protection operations make the Monitors the unchallenged lords of the Stygian underworld, yet during the first few years of the Maelstrom, their organization is shattered. Pitted against the brutal Spooks and deprived of the communication that makes their operations so effective, the long reach of the Seven Families is suddenly cut short. The genteel and sophisticated traditions of the Families get swept away under a tide of vicious young Spooks. In some places, particularly where the Families' hand was too heavy, the Spooks are given the implicit go-ahead by the local wraiths. In Loyalist Necropoli, the Spooks are often openly assisted by the Anacreons. In many places, the Monitors are forced to the edge of legitimacy, only to find that no wraiths trust them enough to actually employ their services.

Proctors

The Proctors are traditionally the Shroud-crossing Guild friendliest to the Stygian Hierarchy. The Proctors generally cross the Shroud without endangering anyone, with more interest in experiencing the sunlight and life of the Skinlands than in amassing wealth, power and worshipers there. As a result, the Hierarchy has long had a *quid pro quo* with the Proctors' Guild. The heads of the local Proctors' Society perform whatever minor errands the Hierarchy needs run among the Quick. In exchange, the local Hierarchy troops look the other way as long as the Proctors don't step out of line.

After the Grim Legion's rebellion, the Proctors' Congress convenes in Stygia at immense risk to the delegates. There, they decide to support the Loyalists, rather than the Insurrectionists. Proctors' Societies across the empire quietly inform the Anacreons of the Grim Legion that they have chosen to remain loyal to the old regime, and that their services are no longer available.

This sudden and unanimous desertion by the Proctors leaves the Grim Legion with no other Skinlands assets beyond a small cadre of Risen agents. The Insurrectionists take the Proctors' stance as a betrayal — in Insurrectionist Necropoli throughout the empire, the penalty for the practice of Embody is soulforging on the first offense.

Puppeteers

Aside from the Solicitors, the Puppeteers are the most heavily persecuted Guild. Even Haunters and Spook firebugs are extended more tolerance. But times change after the Insurrection begins. The Puppeteers have always had close relations with the Grim Legion — members of both organizations tend to have abiding interests in the Risen. The Grim have always had some dealings with the Puppeteers as a result. After what the Smiling Lord sees as the betrayal of the Proctors' Guild, the Grim Legion makes diplomatic overtures to the Puppeteers.

The agreement offered is simple — in exchange for the Guild's assistance in the Skinlands, the Grim Legion promises not to pursue Puppeteers. Once the Smiling Lord is victorious, the Puppeteers are to occupy the place of favor previously held by the traitorous dogs of the Proctors' Guild.

A great deal of evil results from this agreement. Puppeteers' Guild membership expands rapidly. Many Risen are created indiscriminately, and many Puppeteers become Shadow-eaten from repeated use of Obliterate the Soul. For much of the Maelstrom, rising is considered a fine way to sit out the festivities of the Maelstrom and the Insurrection. With the Hierarchy in chaos and the desperate, unconditional support of the Grim Legion, things get out of hand. In Chicago, for example, Puppeteers (Risen and otherwise) spend much of the Maelstrom battling the Shadow-eaten over control of organized crime among the Quick.

Spooks

The Fourth Great Maelstrom is a time of outrageous success for the Spooks. Of the war-dead and the flu-dead, the vast majority of wraiths who wish to reach back across the Shroud are of the mindset to do it with Outrage. Many of the traditional Pathos

sources are also cut off, either by the depredations of the Maelstrom or demands of the Insurrection. The Spooks fill that void. Filled out with angry new advocates of the Cause, rich from their Pathos-legging and protected by the Loyalists, the Spooks grow to exert tremendous influence during the Twilight Era.

Obviously, not every Spook becomes involved with a ward boss' attempt at criminal overlordship. Many circles of Spooks hire themselves out as mercenaries. The Guild itself casts its lot with the Loyalists for ideological reasons, and many Spooks swell the ranks of the Loyalist forces. Others serve as bodyguards for important merchants and Hierarchs.

The Forbidden Guilds

As with the Criminal Guilds, the Forbidden Guilds profit immensely from the Great War. The Maelstrom and the revolt weaken the mechanisms of justice, allowing these long-repressed arts of the Dead to blossom again, in a limited fashion. The Alchemists, who make a major comeback during the Fourth Great Maelstrom, are still considered an alternative to the Haunters. As for the Solicitors, their webs certainly expand to encompass more victims. If this gain is a genuine step forward in their plans, or nothing more than adaptation to the changing circumstances of the era, only the Center of the Wheel — the legendary mastermind of the Solicitors' Guild — knows.

Alchemists

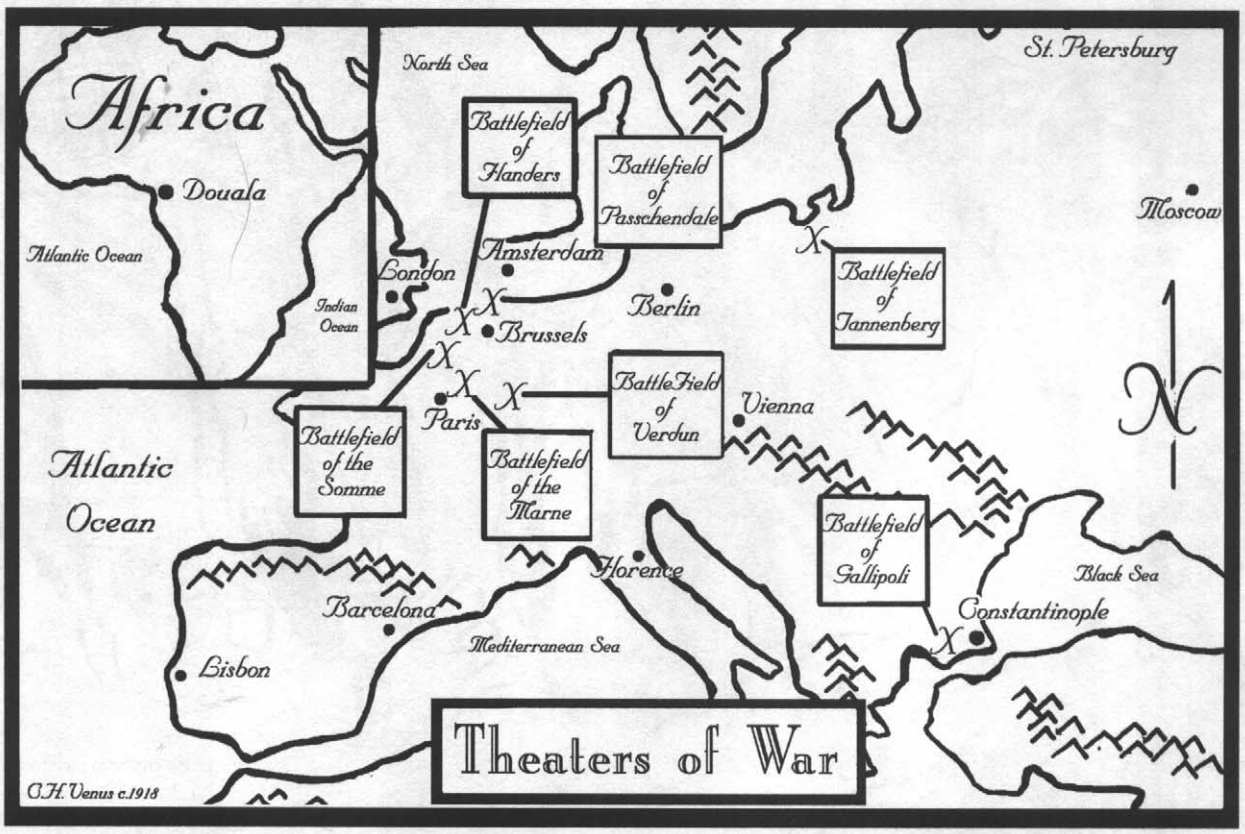
The Great Maelstrom presents the Alchemists with an incredible opportunity. The proscription of their Arcanos was always taken the least seriously. Alchemy was the last of the Forbidden Arcanoi to be banned, and it is an open secret in the Underworld that the Spooks and Monitors had conspired with the Artificers to squeeze the Alchemists' Guild out of existence.

During the Maelstrom, the Haunters are largely distracted by their own crusade against Entropy, and the Spooks and Monitors are too busy slugging it out over territory to protect anyone's Fetters or drive the Quick from a Haunt. The Alchemists fill the void. The long-hidden practitioners of Flux quietly begin to make themselves available to a public desperate for their services. By the end of the Maelstrom, the Alchemists have established a tenuous hold on legitimacy. Although driven underground when the situation in the Underworld once again becomes stable, the risks the Alchemists take to pursue their forbidden art are far fewer than before the War of the Dead.

Solicitors

The Solicitors' Guild unfolds its tendrils during the Great Maelstrom and reaches out to engulf new dupes. These new recruits serve as foot soldiers for the meat-grinder of Guild internal politics, and to advance whatever ultimate goal the Center of the Wheel has in mind for the Solicitors.

Even at this great remove from the Guild's ban, it is never suggested the Solicitors be approached for aid, not even by the Smiling Lord in the darkest hours of his defeat. To approach and interact with a Solicitor is to surrender one's free will and soul into his possession, and this lesson is not one which fades easily. Of course, by the time one *considers* interacting with them, it's often far too late — the Solicitors' interactions with you are likely to have begun long ago.



t's quiet along the barricade. Lucia sits complacently on the highest point of the barrier and watches for trouble. She takes a pull from a flask of liquid something-or-other and looks through a pair of relic field glasses she separated from a luckless Grim Legionnaire.

"Anything stirring?" I ask.

"Not a soul," she replies, and we both laugh at the old, old joke. The Legions, or Legion really, won't be coming again today. Around us, the burned-out buildings smolder as little pockets of barrow-flame flare up through the debris. We can hear the Maelstrom winds howling in the distance, but the streets of Stygia are quiet today. The soldiers assaulted our position this morning, and we drove them off. The Smiling Lord isn't used to defeat. He'll take a day or so to regroup and plan, and then he'll strike with everything he has. The rest of the empire is falling down around his ears, but he'll come after us first. His other enemies are soldiers, after all, not Renegades. We're an insult to his fine and mighty military organization. He'll come for us first.

"I wish we hadn't chosen the Agora," Lucia says quietly. "Too many entrances. Not defensible."

I shrug. "We knew we couldn't win this fight coming in. The idea was always to make a statement and to raise a banner for others to rally around. By holding this place, even for a day or so, we've done that. Those who come later will manage to do more."

She sighs and puts down the glasses. "I suppose. That'll be a great comfort when the hammer comes down."

"We knew the risks," I say gently. She shakes her head in disagreement.

"No. We knew the cost."

Off in the distance, I hear trumpets. I was wrong; the Smiling Lord is coming back today. I loosen my sword from its scabbard as Lucia climbs back to her post. She gives a low whistle and drops back down for cover. "They're coming with everything," she says. "This is it."

I reach out and squeeze her hand once.

"No," I say. "This is just the beginning."

I smile to give her hope, but she doesn't return the gesture.

Chapter Two: The Rules of Engagement

The Twilight Era is one of open warfare in the Shadowlands. Between the rebellion of the Grim Legion and the Fourth Great Maelstrom, battles and military operations are constant backdrops to afterlife in the Underworld. This chapter provides rules for guiding characters through the wraithly press of battle on land, sea and air.

These rules simulate skirmishes and battles as experienced by characters involved in them as soldiers, sailors and pilots. They are storytelling aids, a way for a troupe to work through the dramatic situation of a battle. They are *not* strict re-creations, a description of the overall flow of the situation or a realistic abstraction of command, control and logistics issues.

What the rules *do* provide is a fast-paced and exciting framework for the Storyteller to use in handling small-unit actions, aerial combat and naval engagements. Many characters active in the Underworld during the Great War are going to participate in these sorts of violent events, or at least witness them. The twin scourges of Maelstrom and Insurrection are conflicts without front lines or civilians. Even wraiths of a decidedly unmilitary bent must live through the day-to-day hazards of life that threaten to sweep away the Underworld and its inhabitants.

On Land

Combat on the battlefields of the War to End All Wars was confusing and deadly; battlefields of the Fourth Great Maelstrom are doubly so. Damage may come from bursting artillery, various projectiles or hefty chunks of debris blown aloft by Maelstrom winds. Regardless of the cause, random Harrowings are all too common. Officers have a difficult time

When To Skirmish?

Here are some rules of thumb for when to use the skirmish system:

- If cursory observation cannot immediately take in all the details of the battle.
- If the Storyteller characters allied with the characters outnumber the characters.
- The both sides contain a total of a dozen or more combatants.

keeping their units together amid the storm winds and chaos, and a great deal of responsibility falls to small-unit leaders. Whereas those organizations that have already adapted to the modern age and the need for dispersed formations do well, Legions and Generals of Oblivion whose thinking has yet to advance past the Napoleonic era often suffer.

Military clashes between the Legions and battles against Spectres aren't the only uses for this system. The outcome of any large fight (whether between gangs of Monitors and Spooks or between bandits and the inhabitants of a remote Necropolis), can be determined using this system.

Determining Situational-Awareness

The single most important sort of information on the modern battlefield is situational-awareness — understanding what the hell is happening and why. Situational-awareness is both difficult to gain and essential to success. To simulate it, the skirmish system does not use the normal Storyteller initiative and turn system. Instead, it uses a situational-awareness roll and a length of time called the combat turn, which can range from 30 seconds to several minutes.

To determine who goes first, and how often, every participant in the battle makes a situational-awareness roll at the beginning of each combat turn. The situational-awareness roll is Wits + Alertness, with a normal difficulty of 6; however, it can be modified by the situation. Players of characters operating under exceptionally good conditions roll at difficulty 4. Examples of wraiths experiencing excellent conditions are unspotted snipers, artillery crews not under counterbattery fire and troops not under significant fire who are watching enemy soldiers advance on them from downwind. Players of wraiths performing under extremely arduous conditions roll at difficulty 8. Examples of such arduous conditions are artillery crews receiving counterbattery bombardment, infantry forced to ground by heavy fire and soldiers trying to march into the teeth of the Maelstrom. Remember, though, that as common as relic rifles and other firearms are during the Twilight Era, relic *bullets* remain scarce. Many Circles are likely to have only one weapon among them with usable ammunition. Rifles are valued more as mounts for bayonets, but individual Storytellers may wish to alter this basic fact of the Underworld.

The number of successes on the situational-awareness roll determines who acts first, and how many actions each wraith receives. For each success on the situational-awareness roll, a character may take one action that combat turn. Unlike normal Storyteller combat, there is no declaration of action. The highest roller immediately declares and executes his action, followed by the next highest roller, and so on, until all the characters participating in the combat have taken an action. Wraiths who achieved multiple successes on their situational-awareness rolls then repeat the cycle, again going from highest number of successes to lowest. This process continues until the highest roller has taken her last available action.

Characters who run out of actions early and are left standing on the field of battle without cover are quite likely to be mowed down. This disadvantage is intentional. People caught in the middle of a skirmish and unsure what's going on tend to find a safe place to hunker down and wait for things to quiet.

Planning

The situational-awareness roll may be made at a difficulty one lower than normal if there is a concrete and well-defined objective to the character's actions. "Concrete and well-defined objective" means acting on a plan that has been designed *before the combat begins*. Such things include ambushes, meticulously planned commando raids and professionally performed abductions. If characters want the well-defined objective bonus, they should be able to explain their plan to the Storyteller *before* combat begins.

The Hand Is Quicker than the Eye

Certain powers give a character the ability to move more than once per normal turn. They include the Pandemonium power: Tempus Fugit, the Merit: Speeding from **Dark Reflections: Spectres**, the Shade Power: Tentacles and the Thorn: Shadowplay. All except Tentacles are simulated by adding one die per extra action to the character's situational-awareness pool — speed just isn't as useful in large combat situations as it is in one-on-one fights. Tentacles, ever an unusual justification for moving twice per round, are treated differently. Rather than add one to the Spectre's roll, Tentacles allows the user to add two dice to his pool for any melee combat he participates in.

New Botch Rules

Under the new rules governing botches, a 1 rolled still cancels a success, but any success on a roll saves the player from botching. *Only if no successes occur along with any 1 does the player botch.* Again, a dozen 1s plus one 6 on a roll of difficulty 6 no longer constitutes a botch; however, on a roll of difficulty 6, a 5, 5, 4, 3, 1 result is a botch. This system, unlike the old one, does not penalize players for having large dice pools.

The environment of a typical skirmish is very dangerous — windblown debris, massive engines of destruction flattening all in their path and stray patches of barrow-flame all add up the make a battlefield into an extremely deadly place. To simulate this environment, a botch on a situational-awareness roll indicates the wraith has been struck by some random battlefield hazard, the nature of which is up to the Storyteller. When a botch occurs, the player rolls one die. If the result is from 2 to 10, the wraith takes that many dice of damage, which may be soaked as normal. If the outcome is a one, roll the die again. The character takes the result as that many dice of *aggravated* damage, which can also be soaked as normal.

There is a drawback to this sort of forward planning. When things come apart, it can take some time to consider alternative actions. To perform an action not directly related to carrying out her plan, a character must sacrifice an additional action. This sacrificed action is subtracted from the character's total number of actions available, not "stolen" from her next action — surprised characters tend to run out of actions very early in the combat turn.

Fire and Movement

These rules really deal with only combat and movement in-depth. Obviously, this being a roleplaying game, other situations are sure to arise. An attempt to include rules for even a small fraction of likely situations would be a massive undertaking, which would overlook one of the massive strengths a roleplaying game has over the average war game — the presence of the Storyteller to adjudicate complex situations. It is suggested that the Storyteller use her best judgment and the Dramatic Systems chapter of **Wraith: The Oblivion** to resolve attempts at noncombat actions by characters. Where time is of the essence (for example, in the activation of Arcanoi), assume each action the character takes in a combat turn to be roughly equal in length to a standard **Wraith** turn. So, for example, a character whose Arcanos is active for three turns can draw on it for three actions of a combat turn.

Movement

Characters in skirmish combat can dash a distance equal to their normal walking distance every action. This rate assumes relatively normal terrain and weather. Sprinting up a mountain of bricks with the Maelstrom blowing at force four definitely slows down a character. Characters are entitled to use every action for a flat-out run — the Dead don't lose their breath, after all. On the other hand, brave souls racing across a busy battlefield are likely, at some point, to cross one of the Underworld's rare fields of fire. Players should make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) to sprint through an enfilade. As usual, Spectres have no such compunctions about risking their corpora, as any Legionnaire who has seen 50 Shades charge a gunnery emplacement can attest.

Close Formation

By the late years of the 19th century, the killing power of artillery and massed rifles had already made close formation (soldiers standing one arm's length from their fellows beside them) obsolete. By the end of the war, even extended formation has fallen out of favor because of the machine gun. This tactic is replaced by the system of fireteams and advances by rush familiar to the modern soldier. The inhabitants of the Shadowlands, however, are not so quick to innovate, especially given the relative scarcity of firearms and artillery in the Underworld.

For generals, close formation allows the regular movement of troops to concentrate mass attacks against a short segment of frontage. For individual soldiers, the primary advantage of close formation is that they cannot be attacked from the side unless the formation breaks or is flanked. The disadvantage is that bullets fired at a close formations are almost certain to hit someone, and that area-of-effect weapons such as artillery can destroy dozens of targets at a time.

This consequence is problematic to represent in a game: Random carnage isn't very dramatic. Normally, it won't be a problem, as characters aren't usually the foot-slogging infantry types. However, existence during wartime being what it is, there's always the chance that characters might find themselves as part of some military unit. It is suggested that if characters in a close formation come under fire, the Storyteller use the following system. Roll a number of dice equal to the intensity of fire the formation is under (difficulty 6). Use one die for scattered fire, three dice for a rifle, musket or arrow barrage and five dice for artillery and machine-gun attacks. For each success, the character takes damage equal to the result of one die, soakable as normal damage. Each die of damage is soaked as a separate attack.

Standard Combat

Combat in the **Wraith: Great War** skirmish system is *considerably* faster than normal Storyteller combat, and it is often as destructive as can be. Storytellers should be aware that before running a fight with these rules, they ought to have Harrowings for all the players' characters planned out, and decide what happens if the major Storyteller characters involved are Harrowed or destroyed.

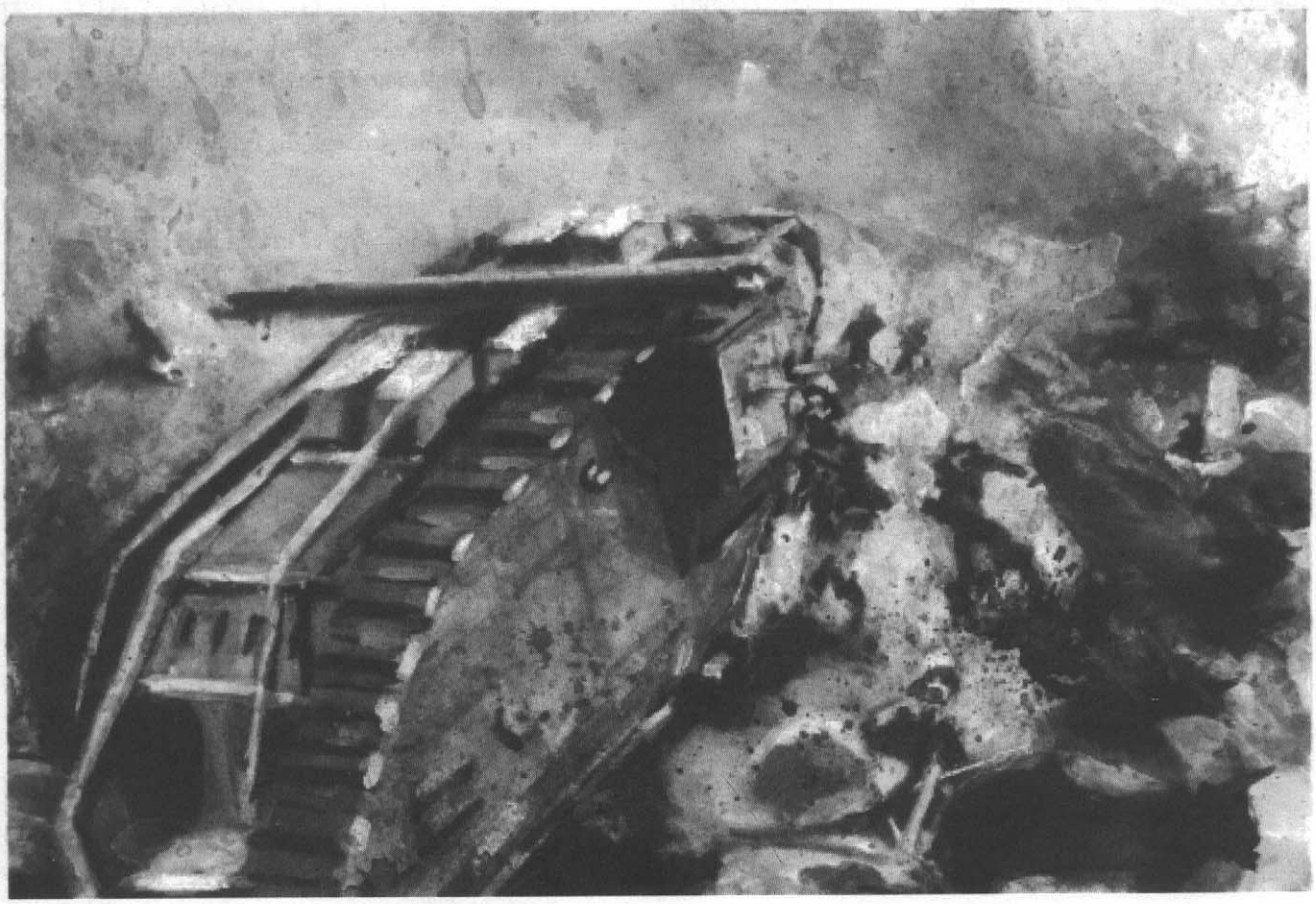
Firing a ranged weapon at someone (or something) is a Perception + Firearms (or Archery, if appropriate) roll at a difficulty of (5 plus the level of the blowing Maelstrom). Modify this difficulty for range and aiming, as usual. There is no Dodge in skirmish combat. Successful attacks with a firearm do dice of damage equal to (the weapon's damage rating plus the number of successes scored by the character), as normal.

Melee combat is a resisted roll of each character's Dexterity + Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts (difficulty 6). Shields add one or more to the opponent's difficulty, as normal. The character who wins the resisted roll does dice of damage equal to the damage rating of her weapon plus her Strength plus her net successes on the resisted roll. Characters in Melee who wish to disengage from the combat must either win the round of Melee or give their opponent a free shot at their back as they disengage. A Storyteller should obviously let roleplaying influence such events, but as a rule, once characters are involved in Melee, they should either leave it as victors or feet first. Note that Melee combat effectively happens twice as fast as ranged combat, because of the use of resisted rolls.

Characters who are attacked by multiple assailants in a Melee have their full Dexterity + Melee (or whatever) to oppose each opponent. Unless they come across their equal in the press of combat, warriors of exceptional skill can carve quite a path across the battlefield. Characters in Melee who are using combat arts of their Arcanoi either make a normal combat roll (if the art requires them to successfully touch their target) or else they use the Attribute + Arcanos check to both activate the art and act as their resisted roll for the exchange. The net success, not the total successes rolled, of a character making an Attribute + Arcanos check in Melee are counted as successes for activating the Arcanos. Damage in a skirmish is soaked as normal.

Reaction Combat

Combat is fast — even an undrilled character can get off six or more aimed rounds per minute with a bolt-action rifle. Melees take only a few seconds to play out. Someone who does nothing but fight can do an awful lot of fighting in the minute or so covered by a skirmish combat turn.



Characters may spend an action to declare reaction combat. If they have a ranged weapon, this mode means the character is staring down the barrel of his gun and ready to shoot any opponents who present themselves. In Melee, it means he stands ready to engage anyone who comes within reach. Normally, a character can react only to action in the 180-degree arc in front of him (90 degrees if using a bow, rifle or machine gun). The arc covered by a reaction combat is called the beaten zone.

Whenever a target passes through the character's beaten zone, the reacting character *may* attack the target with her full dice pool. Note that a Melee reaction combat is still a resisted roll, so it may provide unskilled characters with little more than additional chances for a Harrowing.

Characters involved in reaction combat may continue to make reaction attacks against anything that moves through their beaten zone until they choose to take another action or are unable for some reason to continue. The latter normally means entering a Harrowing, being grappled successfully or running out of ammunition (not usually a problem for melee reaction combat).

Obviously, a significant edge goes to individuals using internal-magazine bolt action rifles and, even more so, machine guns. This advantage isn't an insuperable one — marksmen in pre-magazine days often had people handing them preloaded weapons. Someone passing loaded crossbows or flintlocks allows the character to maintain reaction combat as long as the pre-loaded weapons hold out, or as long as the loaders can keep up with demand. Characters cannot, however, load for themselves. Even a relatively quick reload like a breech-loading rifle or a box magazine disrupts the reaction combat. And again, keep in mind just how precious ammo of *any* kind is across the Shroud.

Storytellers should be sure to use *well-defined* beaten zones. Make the player give you a fair idea of the character's position. As a rule, if the character would have to change position significantly (spin around, rise to his feet) to make an attack, he can not make a valid reaction combat attack.

Armor

Not only is ammunition hard to come by in the Shadowlands, but the idea of protection that armor provides is at least as important as the armor's physical form. Relic plate mail is as useful blocking bullets as broadswords. All armor, whether chain-mail or flak jackets, provides its normal protection against all attacks that don't specifically ignore armor, such as the Shade power: Miasmal Breath or the Usurer art: Withdrawal.

Heavy Weapons

Heavy weapons do the lion's share of the damage in modern warfare. The individual soldier exists primarily to occupy ground and work the crew-served weapons. In the War to End All Wars, many heavy weapons become relics. These relic weapons are out there in the Shadowlands, doing much the same thing they did among the Quick. Ammunition is scarce, and getting rarer with every day of Skinlands peace, but there are still enough shells to support important offensives and feed the guns defending the major Necropoli. Characters involved with any organized military force are sure to come in contact with the weapons of mass destruction sooner or later. What follows are some basic rules for the major kinds of heavy weapons likely to appear in a **Great War** game.

Cover

Finding cover is important to the long-term health and welfare of characters who spend a lot of time on battlefields. Cover adds one or more points to the difficulty to hit characters, depending on their amount of cover and the cover's resistance to attack. As an example, a character shooting a bow at a target half-concealed behind a thin wooden door might add two to the difficulty of their attack, whereas a character shooting at the same target with a rifle might only add one.

Light Artillery

Light artillery was the backbone of divisional batteries in the War to End All Wars — the vast majority of field pieces were of this sort. First among these weapons (at least in fame) was the French 75 millimeter, called the "Saucy Cans" by American foot soldiers, although the British and Germans both fielded similar pieces.

To fire a light field piece, all the principal crew members of the piece (usually three to five in number) must use all take three full actions to load it, bring it into battery and (on the third action) fire. An undercrewed piece needs (principal crew x 3) actions to make it ready to fire, but even one person can eventually bring a piece of light artillery into action.

To fire, the player commanding the piece then makes an Intelligence + Heavy Weapons roll. Assuming the piece is firing airburst shrapnel shells, the difficulty of this roll is 6. Shrapnel shells burst in a small black puff roughly 20 feet above the ground and pepper everyone in a 15-foot radius with sharp bits of shell-casing and metal ball bearings, all traveling at supersonic speeds. Shells such as this are among the primary reasons that close formations are no longer in common use in the Skinlands. Characters in the area of effect of an airburst take six dice of normal damage plus an additional die for each success the commander's player achieves to fire the gun. This damage can be soaked as normal. Roll damage individually for each character in the area of effect — shrapnel scatter patterns are *far* from regular.

Cannons under risk of close assault can fire a kind of shell called canister (also called grapeshot). Canister shells

have no projectile *per se*. Instead, they have a very light sheet metal casing with several quarts of shot inside, essentially turning the piece into a shotgun with a three-inch bore. Canister has a very short effective range — canister from a light artillery piece does full damage only to targets within 30 feet of the cannon's mouth, and half damage to targets 60 feet away. Firing canister is difficulty 4. Canister does eight dice of normal damage plus one additional die per success the commander's player makes on her Intelligence + Heavy Weapons roll.

Artillery can also fire high-explosive shells. The normal use of high explosive shells, bombardment of an enemy position, is little more than dangerous manual labor. In any case, there are too few shells in the caissons of the Underworld for bombardment. Thus, most high-explosive shell is used for the direct-fire engagement of vehicles or entrenched positions such as machine-gun nests and Citadel gates. Hitting a point target with high-explosive shell is difficulty 8. For high-explosive strikes from light artillery roll three dice for armor penetration (see "Tanks and Emplacements"). Treat trench mortars as light artillery that can fire only high-explosive shells to engage fixed, point targets.

Medium Artillery

Medium artillery runs from four to six inches (100 to 150mm), has a much-increased punch, and is otherwise quite similar to light artillery. Unless noted in this section, use the light artillery rules for medium artillery. Heavy artillery and the great siege guns of the War to End All Wars are not covered under these rules — anything that scoops out craters 20 feet wide and drives men near the impact site insane with panic isn't worth assigning a damage value to. Use such weapons as backdrops and plot devices, not as something to shoot at your players for n + 1 dice of damage.

Medium artillery takes five actions per principal crew member to load and make ready to fire. Unlike light artillery, medium artillery is too heavy for one person to bring into action. A minimum of the principal crew (five to eight soldiers) is required to bring the gun into action (though unskilled labor can be used for at least half the crew). Teams of horses are normally used for transport, but in the Underworld, the only alternatives are manual labor or the rare artillery tractor. Medium artillery does 10 dice of damage plus the successes on the commander's Intelligence + Heavy Weapons roll. Out to 50 feet, canister does eight dice plus the number of successes the commander's player makes on a Heavy Weapons roll. Medium artillery's canister damage is halved between 50 and 100 feet, and negligible thereafter.

Medium artillery is rarely used for either airbursts or canister. It is used primarily to fire high-explosive in bombardments and against point targets. In direct fire against point targets, a medium artillery piece does five dice of armor penetration.

Heavy Machine Guns and Antitank Rifles

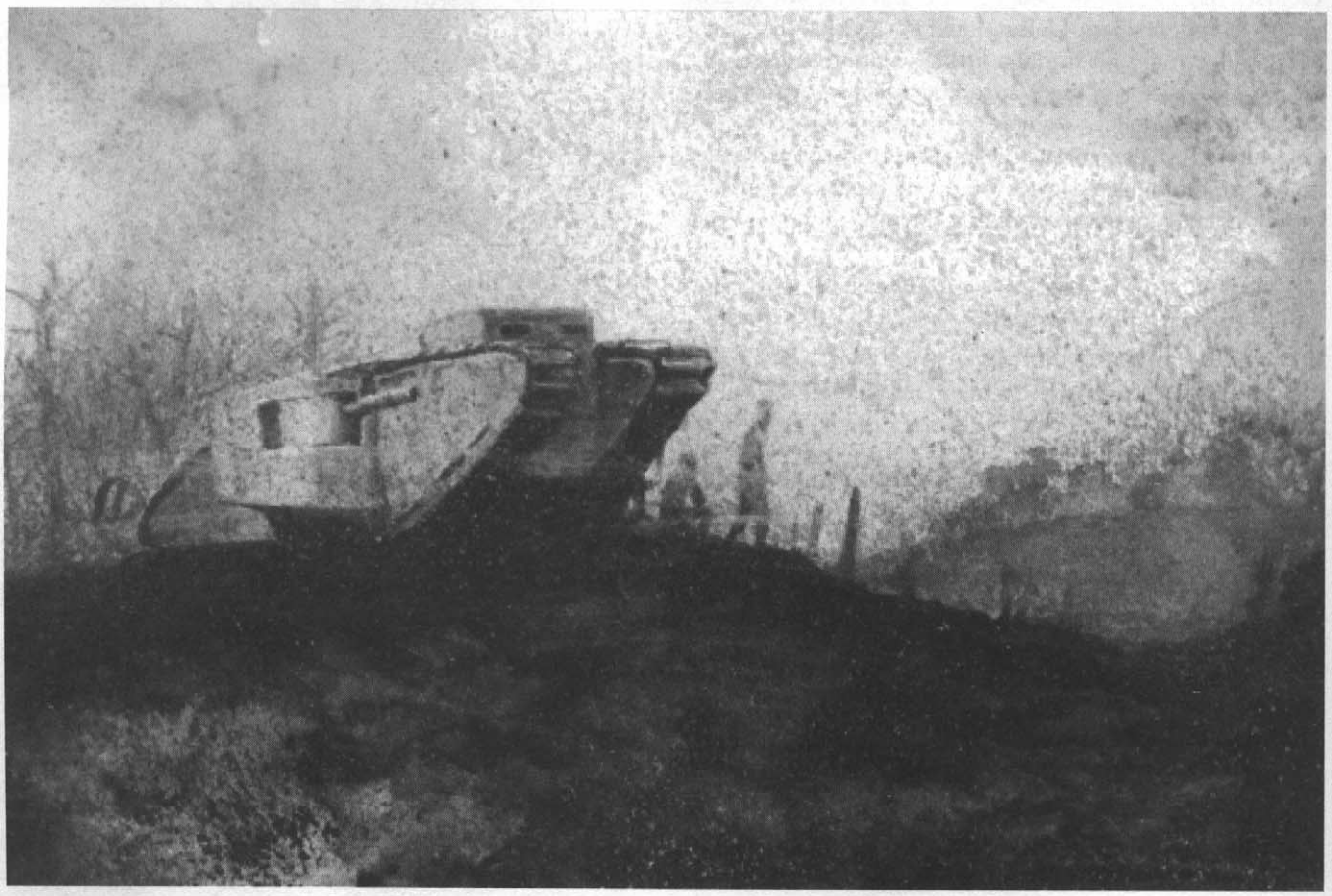
The typical heavy machine gun of the period is the water-cooled Maxim. The water jacket (the tube around the barrel that looks like an elongated oats can) allows the barrel to remain cool long after an air-cooled barrel would have warped and melted. Tripod-mounted for accuracy, the belts of most machine guns are "continuous feed," meaning that one belt can be hooked to another. As long as the loader has ammunition (*extremely* rare in the Shadowlands) and hasn't fallen into a Harrowing, the gunner never has to stop and reload. Tripod-mounted for accuracy, machine guns can potentially fire as long as the ammunition and the water supply hold out. In the Underworld (where there is no water and no actual friction, so it's unnecessary), the ammunition obviously gives out first. However, these tremendously effective weapons, like all small arms, are almost totally useless against armored vehicles or fortifications.

Not all machine guns are powerless against armor. The American M-2 is quite effective for piercing light armor. In fact, it's designed for the purpose. Weighing over 100 pounds, these weapons are "heavy" in all senses of the word. Similar-caliber but single-shot weapons called antitank rifles enter common use after the war. Problem is, there are few heavy machine guns or antitank rifles in the Underworld, and there is even less ammunition. Those few that are available are tremendously valuable, however, and generally subject to confiscation by the first military organization that comes across them. Skilled gunners are likely to be inducted along with their weapons.

Tanks and Emplacements

Armored vehicles and emplacements are essentially immune to small-arms fire — that's part of the design specifications. That is about their only advantage; tanks of the Great War era are unsafe, mechanically unreliable, slow, cramped, furnace-hot, full of noxious fumes and just generally unpleasant. However, their one advantage is enough for them to revolutionize warfare.

There are quite a few tanks in the Underworld; tanks are the receptacles for a lot of love, frustration, fear and anger. Although many of them are without ammunition, or have had their weapons replaced by Shadowlands improvisations, they and their crews are still out there. During the Fourth Great Maelstrom, the many armored vehicles in the Shadowlands are often in the thick of the fighting.



Tanks and The Game

Due to their large crewing requirements and constant demand, heavy tanks make excellent hooks to hang a game around. A tank crew invariably experiences a sense of community that makes a good reason for them to stay together in the afterlife. Also, tanks are rare and important and thus by extension, so is the tank's crew. Such soldiers who start the game unassociated with any one of the Underworld's many armies will constantly be fighting for their independence and trying to keep their Pathos-hungry war machine functional.

On the other hand, tanks are *not* necessarily great things to give the opposition. They are very large and can easily crush your game under their treads. Characters who come up against a tank and are not armed with one of a limited number of very rare items have three choices. They can think very quickly and try to finesse their way out, they can run away or they can go into Harrowings. Tanks provide great background and dire threats. However, unless the game is very combat-oriented, with the characters hauling around major military hardware, tanks should probably *stay* in the background.

Resolving Armored Combat

The crew members of a tank all roll individually for their initiative to determine the number of actions they may take in a skirmish combat turn. For large vehicles, the Storyteller may wish to make one roll for all crew members. Tank-mounted machine-guns and light artillery fire on unarmored targets just as if the weapon were not mounted on a tank. The only difference is that weapons mounted on a tank cannot engage in reaction combat fire against person-sized targets. Foot soldiers are hard to keep track of and (compared to the ponderous bulk of a tank) very quick. They must generally be hunted down and crushed individually. Tanks and artillery pieces can, however, declare reaction fire against other armored vehicles, trucks, Leviathans and any objects large enough to easily track through the primitive gun sights.

Attacks made by tanks against other tanks, or by artillery against tanks, is resolved precisely as if it were fire against a point target by the artillery piece. These rules assume a stationery weapon firing at a moving target. If the target is not moving, subtract two from the difficulty. Likewise, if the gun is in a moving tank, add two to the difficulty of the shot. Tank guns have a crew of two. It takes two actions to load and lay a tank gun, either one from each crew member, or two from a single wraith if the gun is undercrewed.

To resolve attacks on armored targets by heavy weapons, roll a number of penetration dice determined by the armor rating of the weapon (see the Weapons Chart, p. 77) against a difficulty determined by the strength of the armor . If any penetration die is a success, the shot penetrates.

The effects of penetration are determined by the number of successes on the attack. A single success may injure a crew member, damage instruments, jam a gun mount, or otherwise inconvenience the target. Three successes render the vehicle inoperable. Five successes destroy the tank by igniting the vehicle's soulfire and ammunition. Wraiths inside must roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to get out before being consumed and sent into Destruction Harrowings. Even ones lucky enough to bail out in time may take some aggravated damage, at the Storyteller's option. Multiple penetrations of a tank's armor have cumulative effects, so a tank penetrated six or seven times with an antitank rifle is, at best, going to have mechanical problems.

Emplacements

Emplacements are fortified positions, often made from relic concrete or armored with Stygian steel. They usually feature machine guns, and occasionally light artillery pieces as well. For the purposes of convenience, treat emplacements as tanks without treads. In general, emplacements are invulnerable to anything but direct fire from artillery pieces. Note that, just as with tanks, budding Sergeant Yorks can always attempt to creep close and toss grenades or discharge flame-throwers into the firing slits. Such matters are for the Storyteller to adjudicate, however. These rules deal with attempting to knock emplacements out through the simple, brute-force method.

Emplacements are considerably more durable than tanks, especially because they have no moving parts or complex machinery. One success injures a crew member of a pillbox or emplacement. Three successes kill or injure severely several crew members. Five successes knock out the weaponry in the emplacement permanently. Machine guns mounted in emplacements may be used for reaction combat fire against infantry.

Armor Chart

Type of armor	Difficulty for penetration dice
Wooden barricade	4
Sandbagged emplacement	5
Armored car armor	6
Light tank/reinforced emplacement	7
Heavy tank armor	8
Concrete bunker/ Stygian Steel	9
Reinforced Stygian steel citadel portals	10

Weapons Chart

Weapon	Number of Dice rolled to penetrate armor
Rifle or MG firing AP ammunition	1
M2 or other 12mm+ MG, antitank rifle	2
3-inch gun firing HE	3
5-inch gun firing HE	5

At Sea

A ship is the irreducible minimum necessary to fight at sea. This section covers ship-to-ship combat. It also covers certain basics of ship handling. Note that what follows is a system for telling dramatic stories about dead people sailing ghost ships to war through a supernatural storm. It is not a simulation of actual naval voyages and combat. Many factual details are purposely simplified or omitted. Please do *not* try to use this information as a guide to taking a ship or boat out in heavy weather — you will die.

Travel at Sea

Travel by sea vessel is one of the safest ways to cross the Tempest during the Fourth Great Maelstrom. With their thick hulls and ability to carry large complements of marines, relic naval vessels serve as the most reliable means of transport between Stygia and the Shadowlands during the Insurrection. Such vessels are surpassed in speed only by dirigibles, but airships cannot begin to compete with cargo ships for carrying ability, or with naval vessels for sheer military might.

The vast majority of the vessels that ply the Byways of the Tempest and the waters of the Shadowlands, military and otherwise, are wooden-hulled. At the time of the Fourth Great Maelstrom, iron-hulled ships have been crossing the Shroud for just over half a century, as opposed to several thousand years for wooden vessels. Most ships are either wooden relics or built from faux-wood fabricated from moliated corpora. Though significantly less durable than metal or soulsteel vessels, wooden ships can be "healed" via Usury and Moliate, whereas metallic hulls must be carefully mended or patched by Artificers.

Most armored ships are relics, but a number of Artifact dreadnoughts are laid down in the Stygian slipways just before the beginning of the Maelstrom. Part of a naval arms race with the Dark Kingdom of Jade, the construction of these ships is delayed by Artificer work-stoppages during the Insurrection.

Travel in the Shadowlands

Whenever possible, ships travel in the Shadowlands rather than the Tempest. In the Shadowlands, the squalls of the Maelstrom are occasional hazards, and navigation is no more difficult than on land. In the Tempest, the storm is a constant hammerblow, and accurate navigation is impossible save by the most skilled of Harbingers. Yet travel to the Tempest is almost necessary, and not simply because of the need to travel to Stygia. Combat in the Tempest is more forgiving than on the seas of the Shadowlands, and there are shortcuts to be found in the Tempest that decrease the amount of time needed for a trip dramatically.

Moving Haunt (Lifeweb •••••)

[Note: These rules replace ones included in Sea of Shadows.]

Moving Haunt is a Lifeweb art used on relic vehicles, particularly ships, but occasionally vehicles such as tanks, wagons and the like. Through use of this art, a relic can be made into an Artifact capable of being powered by soulfire or other forms of stored Pathos rather than by the directed Pathos of the user. Such objects can also be modified by skilled Artificers, allowing for strange hybrids between the arts of the Quick and the Dead. Most importantly, and as the name implies, the newly-created artifact is also a Haunt. Note that this protection extends only to the inside of the vessel, or to passengers huddled beneath the gunwales (for open-topped boats). Anyone working the rigging or otherwise exposing himself to the elements must have some form of Maelstrom protection or suffer the full effects of the storm.

System: To use this art, the Monitor must first use Splice Strand to make the object a Fetter. The user then rolls Stamina + Lifeweb. The difficulty of this art varies, depending on the size of the object to be made into a haunt. A car, tank or sloop would be difficulty 4. A destroyer or caravel would be difficulty 6, and a dreadnought or large dirigible is difficulty 8 or even 9. Before making the roll, the Monitor must pay a number of Pathos equal to the difficulty of the roll, plus one temporary Willpower. The number of successes is the number of *permanent* Willpower she *may* spend on making the target into a Haunt. The level of the Haunt is equal to the number of permanent Willpower expended. This Haunt level cannot be added to, only replaced with a new one of higher value. Before spending permanent Willpower, the Monitor performing the task may choose to abandon the attempt if she does not feel she has achieved enough successes

In the Shadowlands, relic naval vessels need only worry about the Maelstrom, vessels crewed by Spectres, pirates and quite possibly privateers and submarines of political enemies. In the Tempest, all these hazards are present as well as others. These added dangers of the Tempest include Spectral boarding parties, cyclones of slashing madness, massive vortices pulling the stuff of the Tempest down into the hidden seas of the Labyrinth, and attack by strange Plasmics ranging from the Kraken to the shoals of Shroudrippers that flock along the Byways.

Depending on the size of the ship, there is a certain point at which it can no longer safely endure sailing across the seas of the living while being buffeted by the winds of the Maelstrom. Small ships such as galleys, drakkar and barques must turn into the wind at Maelstrom force two, and they are battered apart by force-three Maelstroms. Medium-size ships such as caravels, old-style warships and turn-of-the-century destroyers must turn into the wind at force three and must flee the Shadowlands at force four. Dreadnoughts, battlecruisers and heavy cruisers must turn into the wind at Maelstrom force five, and they can potentially withstand any amount of hammering, though in reality storm damage to exterior fittings can make even a large ship ineffectual within a few days.

Tempest Slipping

The ability to move between the Tempest and the Shadowlands is necessary for most ships to do their job. The process of transition is accomplished via the specialized Argos art Tempest Slip. This art, used almost exclusively in seagoing vessels, allows a single large object, such as a ship and its crew, to cross into the Tempest through a temporary Nihil similar to the holes created with the Argos basic ability Tempest Threshold. Unfortunately, unlike Tempest Threshold, the Nihil formed by Tempest Slip does not always seal itself behind the ship. It often remains for hours or even days, shrunken and tattered, an entrance into the Tempest large enough for even the most grossly mutated Shade to crawl through. As a result, the areas outside major Shadowlands harbors are often dangerous places, subject to sudden squalls pouring forth from the innumerable Tempest Slip-induced flaws in the fabric of the Shadowlands.

Travel in the Tempest

Travel in the Tempest is extremely dangerous during the Fourth Great Maelstrom. In such conditions, it can be difficult to remain aware of simple facts such as physical orientation and sea level. Even patrolled, well-marked Byways are often cut or temporarily obscured by the storm. In order to navigate in the raw Tempest, the player of the pilot of the ship must possess the Pilot skill and make a successful Perception + Argos roll (difficulty 9). Navigation using a Byway is difficulty 7, but Byways do get cut, and they are irresistible lures for Spectres and pirates. During the Maelstrom, many captains prefer to take their chances with the storm rather than run the risk of attack. Note that, during the Fourth Great Maelstrom, skilled practitioners of Argos often face impressment into acting as navigators for naval vessels.

Tempest Slip (Argos ••••)

Tempest Slip is the ability to open a Nihil and guide a large naval vessel through the resultant opening. This art is hard on the Harbinger — repeated use of Tempest Slip without giving the pilot a chance to recover can cause a Harrowing. The art is also hard on the Shadowlands, as unskilled Harbingers routinely leave a rip that takes hours or even days to close.

System: The player rolls Strength + Argos against a difficulty determined by the size of the vessel to be guided into or out of the Tempest. A sloop is difficulty 4, a destroyer or large sailing vessel is difficulty 6, whereas a battlecruiser or dreadnought is difficulty 8. Only a single success is needed to open the Nihil. Additional successes indicate the rate at which the Nihil closes. A Nihil opened with a single success lasts several days, one opened with three or more successes lasts several hours, and one opened by five or more successes closes immediately. Botches with the art are often quite terrible. Ships can come through with the wrong orientation to the "surface" of the Tempest, wind up in the midst of a Spectre raiding party waiting at the harbor mouth, or leave behind a Nihil that never heals.

Tempest Slip costs a point of temporary Willpower and a number of Pathos equal to the difficulty of the roll. Tempest slip also causes a number of levels of corpus damage to the Harbinger equal to the number of 1s rolled on the Strength + Argos roll.

In the Tempest, there is no danger of Maelstrom winds smashing a ship against the unyielding surface of the ocean which wraiths can walk on if they're feeling brave — only the Haunt level of the ship matters. Ships with Haunt levels two or more points lower than the Maelstrom force are damaged by the erosion of their identity under the wash of Oblivion-driven particles and the chaos of the Sea of Shadows.

Among the chief dangers of travel in the Tempest are Spectres and sessile Plasmics. These creatures often attach themselves like barnacles to the bottom of a vessel and obstruct the movement of the ship. To remove them, sailors often must be "keelhauled": Heavily protected against the Tempest, crew members are lowered on safety chains to move along the hull of the ship and cut away any Spectres or Plasmics. Casualties usually run high during these efforts. This arduous procedure of hull cleaning can normally be avoided by making brief Flying Dutchman-like appearances in the Shadowlands, thus forcing most of the hangers-on off the hull and back into the Tempest. During the Twilight Era, however, the Maelstrom prevents this technique from being particularly effective.

Some ships remove the Spectres in the Tempest, whereas others do so in the Shadowlands. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. In the Tempest, the Maelstrom is generally more severe, but concepts like "up," "down," "left" and "right" don't exist to impede the efforts of the workers.

Most barnacle-Plasmics are not particularly dangerous, just tenacious and sharp-edged. Others, such as the dreaded "snappers," are quite unpleasant, capable of removing the appendages of incautious workers. Spectres, who often lurk amid the barnacles, are most dangerous of all, especially long-toothed Shades who try to chew through a ship's hull and open it to the Tempest. "Tempest watch," stationing wraiths below decks to check for signs of Spectral gnawing, is a tradition on Stygian ships much like fire watch on the ships of the Quick. One of the tricks clever Stygian captains often use to evade pursuit is to lead unsuspecting pursuers' ships through areas known to be infested with Spectres and Plasmics. These creatures then ideally batten themselves onto the pursuers, foul their hulls and slow their progress.

War At Sea

Like war in the air, naval warfare follows a pattern dictated by the nature of the "battlefield." Vessels engage in a duel of spotting and maneuver, as each attempts to reach the optimal range of their favored weapons, or else to flee the engagement entirely.

Sighting

Sighting is difficult in the Maelstrom. Even in the Shadowlands, the constant squalls and blowing debris make maintaining visual contact with opposing forces difficult. In the Tempest, not only are perceptions grossly distorted but visibility over a thousand yards is unheard of, and visibility over a few hundred yards is very rare. These conditions make breaking off engagements quite easy; pursuit is difficult and the massive range advantage of modern breech-loading naval rifles over older pieces is neutralized by the atrocious visibility.

Members of a ship's watch should have their Perception + Awareness pool assigned to them. This value is generally the average of the Perception + Awareness values of those working as lookouts. Poorly trained or understaffed watches have two or three dice, average watches have four or five dice and crack watches have six or (very rarely) seven dice. Note that even the Restless Dead grow listless and bored after a few hours of peering intently at the horizon. Watches that aren't relieved regularly should take a penalty of between one and four dice, depending on how long they've gone unrelieved and how numbing the conditions are. The greater the Maelstrom force, the more fatiguing the watch. Watches in the Tempest or during combat are, as a rule, twice as fatiguing as a similar watch in the Skinlands.

Ship Size	Difficulty Adjustment Versus		
	Small ship	Medium ship	Large ship
Small (galley)	zero	-1	-2
Medium (caravel)	+1	zero	-1
Large (cruiser)	+2	+1	zero

In the Shadowlands: The watch crew should make Perception + Alertness rolls with a difficulty of 5 plus the current Maelstrom level. Use of telescopes or binoculars by the watch subtracts one from the difficulty of spotting rolls. Spotting rolls begin at a range of (300 yards x [6 minus the current Maelstrom force]). If the spotting roll fails, another roll may be made every five minutes or every time the ships close another 300 yards. Do *not* add one to the difficulty of spotting rolls for each previous failed roll. Ships are automatically spotted after they fire or at (100 yards x [6 minus the current Maelstrom force]).

The number of successes determines the amount of detail recognized. One success indicates that the ship is seen, but no more information than its general type is available ("Large sailing ship off the starboard bow at a thousand yards!"). Three successes indicate that the general type of ship and its colors (if flown) are visible ("Three-masted Grim Legion man-of-war off the starboard bow at a thousand yards!"). Five or more successes indicate that the specific ship is identified, if the watch has access to naval lists ("Grim Legion man-of-war *Antelope* off the starboard bow at a thousand yards!").

In the Tempest: The watch crew should make Perception + Awareness rolls. The difficulty of this roll is equal to 5 plus the current force of the Maelstrom. (The number of successes x 100) is the number of yards at which the vessel's crew becomes aware there is another ship near by. Ships sailing on a Byway or lurking near one multiply the number of successes by 150 to determine the number of yards at which the crew spots another ship on the Byway. It is assumed at these ranges that the watch can rather easily determine the character and identity of spotted ships.

Engagement

During the engagement phase, ships effectively compete for initiative with resisted rolls based on each captain's Wits plus each helmsman's Argos (difficulty 6). Difficulty for the initiative roll changes depending on the kind of ship it's confronting, per the presented chart. The winner can close or open the range 10 yards per success. At the end of the engagement phase, a ship may fire some or all of its ready guns that bear on a target.

Combat

Assign the director or crew a die pool to reflect its skill. Directors are centralized, mechanical devices for gun-laying, just coming into common use in and around the War to End

All Wars. While generally significantly better at their job than the individual gunnery stations, their communications with the turrets can be disrupted, forcing the turrets to fire independently. Gun crews have Heavy Weaponry pools with values assigned in the same fashion as for watches — poorly trained gun crews have two or three dice, good crews have four or five dice and crack gun crews have six or occasionally seven dice.

All naval combat is considered to occur simultaneously. The difficulty to fire at a ship is 6 for short range, 7 for medium range, and 8 for long range. What range the engagement is taking place at is for the Storyteller to decide; long range has a different meaning in the middle of a force-four Maelstrom than in near-perfect weather. Gunfire in the Tempest is always difficulty 8. As a rule, modern ships should roll once for each barrel, whereas large ships from the age of fighting sail group their guns into banks of five or 10, depending on how many rolls the Storyteller feels like enduring.

Central direction automatically lowers the difficulty of the shot by one. If, however, the director is knocked out or the communicating cables are cut, the mount(s) disconnected must make a Heavy Weaponry roll (difficulty 8) to switch over to local direction during the turn after communication with the director is lost. At least one success is required to fire the gun. One success increases the difficulty by two for the rest of the turn, and two successes increase the difficulty by only one. Three or more successes allow the gun to be fired without penalty. Note that these penalties are only for the first turn after the gun(s) begin independent fire — even the most inept crew can aim and fire a gun locally after a short period of confusion.

Breech-loading weapons fire once per turn. Muzzleloaders must spend a turn being swabbed and loaded before being run out to fire. Ships do not run with their guns loaded — it's bad for the gun and the shells. Some (pirates and bait-ships, for example) may do so for short periods of time.

Damage

Conventional shells: To resolve damage by conventional shells, roll a number of dice equal to (the shell's damage rating plus the number of successes achieved on the crew's Heavy Weaponry roll) versus a difficulty equal to the ship's armor. Each success does a point of damage to the ship.

Ships take a -1 die penalty to all actions and 10 percent to their speed for each 25 percent of Structural Integrity they lose. The Storyteller *may* choose to have attacks that score five or more successes on their damage roll score a critical hit of some sort, slowing the ship, knocking out weapons or possibly even striking the bridge and depriving the ship of its nerve center. However, the ships of the Dead aren't nearly as susceptible to critical damage as the vessels of the Quick. Flooding and damage to machinery spaces just don't have the same effect on memories as they do on the real thing. Artifact ships are only marginally more vulnerable to critical hits than relic vessels.

Range and Damage Ratings

Breechloaders

Name	Damage
Light (3-4 inch) naval rifle	3
Medium (5-6 inch) naval rifle	5
Heavy (8-10 inch) naval rifle	7
Very heavy (11-13 inch) naval rifle	10
Huge (14-15 inch) naval rifle	13

Muzzleloaders

Name	Damage
Light (5-6 pound) (5 guns)	4
Light (5-6 pound) (10 guns)	8
Heavy (10-12 pound) (5 guns)	6
Heavy (10-12 pound) (10 guns)	12

Stygian steel nosecaps: Some shells have their nosecaps (the ultra-hard armor piercing tip of the shell) replaced by Stygian steel. These dense nosecaps give the shells significantly better armor penetration. Reduce the difficulty of damage rolls for such ammunition by one. Other than their high cost and the difficulty of procuring them, there is no penalty for the use of Stygian steel nosecaps. The round shot fired by muzzle-loading guns can be made from Stygian steel to gain the same bonus, but such items are much more rare.

Living chain shot: Chain shot is made up of chains with small balls on the end that cause the chains to whirl through the air like bolos toward their targets. Used to clear decks and destroy rigging rather than to damage hulls, chain shot was just as devastating as one might imagine. Living chain shot is the Underworld's answer to chain shot (which is considerably less effective in the Underworld). Blessed with the faintest spark of malevolent intelligence, living chain shot is forged from Stygian steel and comes in one-pound lengths. The chains ensnare wraiths on the deck of a ship as they whirl through the air. Wraiths targeted by living chain shot must make three or more successes on a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 8) to avoid the whirling menace. Living chain shot does dice of aggravated damage equal to (8 plus 1 die) per chain to a wraith hit by it. If the

Armor Ratings

Galley / Knorr / Barque / Victory Transport	5
Corvette / Submarine	6
Destroyer / Frigate	7
Battlecruiser / Cruiser / Man-of-war	8
Pre-Dreadnought Battleship	9
Dreadnought Battleship	10

target drops into a Harrowing, the living chain shot continues on, possibly striking targets behind her. If the target is not Harrowed immediately, the chain wraps around her firmly, giving a one-die penalty to all actions until the shot is removed. Chain shot continues to inflict one level of aggravated damage per hour until the wraith falls into a Harrowing or the chain is removed by a Masquer using Sculpt. While largely useless in ship-to-ship engagements, chain shot is often used to soften up a ship just prior to a boarding action. Needless to say, living chain shot is horrendously expensive and illegal for anyone but the Stygian navy to produce, own or use. Living chain shot can be fired from muzzle-loading guns only.

Barrow-flame Ammunition: These thin-walled cylinders of Stygian steel contain liquid barrow-flame, a relatively stable form of barrow-flame that can be collected on the outskirts of large blazes. The nosecap contains a live soulfire crystal. When the shell strikes its target, the cylinder splits and splashes the shell's contents, now kindled by contact with the soulfire crystal, across the target. The result is unspeakable. Barrow-flame shells used against an Artifact boat is almost certain to burn it to the waterline. They also have a similar effect against ships made from White Jade. On any other ship, including ones armored with True Jade, the barrow-flame does little more than superficial damage. To wraiths caught inside the blast, however, the effect resembles that of napalm on the Quick.

The Storyteller should assign a number between one and 10 to all wraiths in the area of effect, depending on how much of the splash they catch. This number equals the number of dice of aggravated damage they take each round. Armor cannot help soak this damage, but supernatural abilities such as Dream Cloak and Martialry-created armor can. Barrow-flame can be scraped off with a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8). Each success removes one die of the barrow-flame. A botched roll causes persons scraping at the barrow-flame to get a point of it on them for each 1 rolled. This mishap does not lessen the amount on the person being scraped, so someone scraping themselves can theoretically spread it around and take enormous amounts of damage.

Use of barrow-flame rounds is exceptionally unpopular with gunnery crews, as a single mishap is so potentially devastating. Storytellers should not be inclined to mercy when assigning botch results to gun crews handling barrow-flame rounds. Barrow-flame rounds can be fired only from breech-loading guns.

Torpedoes

Torpedoes are a recent innovation in the Skinlands during this era, but their potential is recognized quite rapidly. Just one of these propeller-driven bombs can break the back of a destroyer and cripple even a mighty dreadnought. Only their slow speed and visible wake make torpedoes less than perfectly effective.

In the Shadowlands, these weapons are not quite as effective as they are among the Quick. Torpedoes are rare relics, and they don't really have a volume control. Torpedoes sink ships that could otherwise be taken by boarding or crippled through surface action and forced to surrender. As a rule, only warships carry torpedoes, and even they don't use them very often.

Also, relic torpedoes work reliably only in the Shadowlands — the composition of the Tempest is different enough from water to make the warheads of relic torpedoes function considerably below optimal levels. Torpedoes that function in both the Tempest and the Shadowlands are available, but they are Artifacts, not relics; consequently, they are expensive and difficult to produce.

Like any other part of a crew, the Torpedo team should receive a dice pool between two and seven to reflect its overall competence.

Relic torpedoes need three Pathos to activate. The torpedo team makes a roll (difficulty 7) to hit its target. Torpedoes travel at the rate of 250 yards per turn. On the round of impact, the target ship may make a roll equal to the helmsman's Wits + Argos (difficulty 8) to dodge each incoming torpedo. An undodged torpedo does 16 dice of damage. The difficulty of torpedo damage rolls is always 4, regardless of the target's armor.

I Use Flux on the Lion!

As a general rule, Arcanoi that make an object a Fetter (such as Splice Strand) can work on any object. However, the arts of various Arcanoi used to preserve and damage Fetters are generally designed to preserve objects that are smaller than the character and that reside in the Skinlands. Fetter Sentry and similar arts are not sufficient to protect relic or Artifact naval vessels, save for very small ones (no larger than a Ferryman's boat). There are arts available that are capable of protecting large Underworld objects such as naval vessels, but these are closely guarded secrets of the Guilds and the Stygian navy. For secrecy's sake, these arts are more often used to create Artifacts than they are taught to practitioners of the Arcanos.

Ramming and Boarding Actions

Ramming and boarding are standard tactics in ancient, medieval and Renaissance naval battles, but they have been largely abandoned by the late 19th century — naval rifles have become accurate and fast-firing enough to render closing impossible. In the Underworld, however, guns are less effective, and firing at anything like maximum engagement range for modern weapons is nearly impossible. Also, even the most decrepit vessels are valuable to the Restless; a hull is often more valuable than any cargo to the pirates of the Tempest. Seizure of ships is thus a central part of naval combat in the Shadowlands.

Ramming

Ramming is usually done with the intent of holing a ship and sinking it. Ships without hulls specially strengthened for ramming are often damaged severely by the act.

To ram, a ship must achieve a number of successes on the engagement roll sufficient to close the range between vessels to zero yards. The helmsmen of ships then make opposed Wits + Argos rolls (difficulty 6). The winner of the roll may decide whether ramming occurs or not. Ramming between vessels of the same size does three dice of damage to each ship per net success. The difficulty of this damage roll is 5. A ship equipped with a ram does five dice of damage per net success to the target ship. The difficulty of a ram-equipped ship's damage roll is 4. The target does three dice of damage per net success to the ram-equipped ship, and the difficulty of the target's damage roll is 7.

Ships that have rammed are automatically considered alongside for that round. If both vessels took three or more levels of damage, they are locked together and cannot be disengaged without at least 10 successes on the engagement check (see "Boarding Actions").

Ramming Between Ships of Different Sizes

Ramming between ships of one size class difference favors the larger ship. If the smaller ship wins, and is unequipped for ramming, both ships take three dice of damage per net success. The difficulty of the damage roll against the larger ship is 7, while the difficulty against the smaller ship is 5. If the smaller ship succeeds and is equipped with a ram, the ships both take does three dice of damage per net success, and the difficulty of the damage roll is 6 for both vessels.

If the larger ship wins the ramming contest, both ships take three dice of damage per net success. The difficulty of the damage roll is 4 (for the target ship) and 6 (for the ramming ship). If the larger vessel is equipped with a ram, the attack does five dice of damage per net success. In this case, the difficulty of the damage rolls is 4 (for the target ship) and 8 (for the ramming ship).

Ramming between ships with a two or more size class difference is a totally one-sided affair. If the larger ship hits the smaller ship, the smaller ship is crushed; no specific rules are provided. If the smaller ship scores three or more net successes, generous Storytellers may allow debris to clog the target's screws or permit the passengers of the smaller vessel to swarm aboard the target before it is crushed.

Boarding Actions

The first step to a boarding action is pulling alongside. This obstacle can be surmounted either via ramming or through the engagement test. If a ship can decrease the range to an opponent to zero yards, it can be declared alongside. Ropes and scaling ladders make the vessels fast. Each round, the contestants make the engagement test as normal. Instead of opening or closing range, however, the ships

attempt to gain or negate successes to stay alongside. If either side can accumulate five successes, it can either pull away or make itself well and truly fast to its prey. In either case, the contest ends. If both crews wish to pull away or stay alongside, the contest automatically ends. Rounds of the engagement test are generally marked by a stiff exchange of fire between the marines on the vessels. Brave souls often attempt to swing across on ropes and disrupt the steerage of the enemy vessel. Many are cut down for their trouble. Ships alongside cannot generally exchange fire with their normal guns, though smaller pieces used specifically for boarding actions are often deployed.

Boarding actions don't lend themselves well to high levels of abstraction. As such, they are left to Storyteller fiat. If characters are involved, the Storyteller may simulate the action with the skirmish combat rules (see p. 69). For the purposes of this abstraction, one combat round of skirmish fighting equals one naval combat turn, unless the Storyteller says otherwise. Storytellers should keep in mind that the Restless need not eat or sleep, and that boarding actions are quite common in the Tempest. There are many more marines on modern naval vessels than could be carried among the Quick, and sailors tend to have at least a dot or two of Melee. The primary targets of any boarding action are the engine room and the bridge. Even if a vessel can't be taken, it can be put out of action for the rest of the battle if everyone on the bridge is Harrowed or the machinery is barrow-bombed. On older naval vessels, the primary goal is to whittle down the crew to the point where the vessel is no longer in fighting shape. Older vessels are much more amenable to seizure than the ships of the 20th century. Naval battles between wooden ships often feature the same crew transferring to a captured ship several times in a mass combat, or else splitting off prize crews and taking multiple ships into action.

Multiple Ships

Ships are considerably more constrained by their medium than are aircraft. Slower and lacking the ability to operate in three dimensions, nautical vessels are considerably easier to hem in. As a result, ships have a harder time taking on multiple opponents. Although naval vessels can divide the fire from their various weapons as they wish, ships must split their dice pool on the engagement test between multiple opponents. Note that ships still receive their full difficulty modifier for size/maneuverability to each roll; they just don't get many dice. Realistically, there should be complex rules for keeping the battle line, armed ships covering unarmed ships and other, similar complexities. There are no such rules. Similarly, there are no rules for simulating large naval battles. Storytellers who wish to refight the Battle of Trafalgar using the Storyteller system are welcome to improvise such rules. Most Storytellers are probably going to be comfortable improvising the results of battles outside the characters' involvement.

Pursuit

Eventually, some captain decides she can't win a battle and attempts to make a run for it. All that a ship must do to escape pursuit is to move beyond spotting range of its closest pursuer and remain there for five turns. At that point, it is presumed to have slipped away. Given the small distance ships move per success on the engagement test, pursuit can last a long time, just like stern chases in the real world. Ships that are the subject of a stern chase don't have to split their dice pool for the various engagement tests, they just make one roll that all pursuing ships compare their results to. It's up to the Storyteller to determine when normal combat has ended and a stern chase has begun. While it is certainly possible to continue firing on a ship at the extreme edge of visual range, it's not common practice, and it is generally considered a waste of ammunition.

Repair

Various naval vessels exist in the Underworld, and each is repaired differently. Damage to relic naval vessels heals as their crews perform "repairs" on them. These repairs are actually an investiture of Pathos and corpus, though the wraiths doing the repair work often don't realize it. Relic naval vessels require three points of Pathos, a point of corpus and one man/hour of work to heal one point of Structural Integrity. The constant additions of repair parts is unnecessary; workers find whatever they need in the ship's parts store, hence the loss of corpus levels. Wraiths who understand what is happening can use specialized Usury arts to repair damage to relic ships. While more efficient, these arts take just as long to perform.

Artifact vessels made from moliated corpora are repaired by a hybrid of Masquer, Pardoner and Usurer called a "ship's mother." These master shipwrights were once distantly associated with the Masquers' Guild. Ship's mothers use specialized arts to rebuild and reinvigorate the corpus of older vessels. In the Twilight Era, many are Hierarchy employees, while others work for factors, the Usurers who back the major shipyards and trading houses. It is because of ship's mothers that every vessel in the Dark Kingdom of Iron has a bowsprit reflective of its nature. Through tending to the bowsprit, ship's mothers are able to monitor and check the spread of Oblivion's rot throughout a vessel. Some well-tended ships are more than a thousand years old.

Artifact vessels made from soulsteel or Stygian steel are the most difficult to repair. Work on soulsteel vessels generally requires an Artificer who can mend or patch while working in the vertical. Soulwelding is a difficult art; treat it as a secondary skill that cannot be higher than the character's soulforging skill. Wraiths repairing soulsteel must have at least one dot in soulwelding, have access to basic soulwelding tools, and must work under the supervision of someone with at least three dots in soulwelding. Work on Stygian steel armor plate is incredibly difficult. Artificers performing the work must have at least three dots of soulwelding, and must work under the supervision of

someone with soulwelding of at least four, and such an instructor must have her soulforging specialty in Stygian steel or her soulwelding specialty in Stygian steel welding.

In The Air

The War to End All Wars ushers in a new theater of conflict — the air. The first primitive flying machines are lucky to stay aloft, yet by 1916, aircraft are being armed and forced through elaborate aerobatic maneuvers to gain advantage in the battle for the skies. By the end of the war, specialized reconnaissance planes, fighters and bombers are all in service.

The Dogfight

The dogfight is the intense struggle between pilots as they attempt to bring their guns to bear long enough to fire a good shot, while preventing their opponent from doing the same. This struggle defines air warfare during the war, when all the classic aerial combat maneuvers are perfected.

Perception

The first step in any dogfight is the battle of perception. The pilot who spots his opponent first has the invaluable advantage of being able to attack or evade before the opposition even knows he's there. Unless the characters are for some reason expecting the fight (for example, a challenge to a one-on-one aerial duel), they should make opposed Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 5 plus the current Maelstrom force). For each net success, the winner can decrease the difficulty of her roll in the turning fight by one, to a minimum of 3. The battle of perception takes place only once during a given engagement — after the first turning battle, a pilot is assumed to maintain awareness of her opponent's locations.

The Turning Fight

After determining the winner of the battle of perception, the turning fight begins. At this point, the pilots make opposed Stamina + Pilot rolls at a difficulty of ([5 plus the current Maelstrom force] minus the character's net successes, if any, on the Perception roll). The number of dice in a pilot's pool cannot exceed the Maneuverability rating of his plane. Additional dice may be added to the pool, up the limit of the character's Stamina + Pilot, but each additional die does a die of damage (difficulty 6) to the plane's Structural Integrity rating. If either character manages to gain three or more net successes in the turning fight, she may either take a shot at her opponent or attempt to disengage from the battle. If neither pilot gains the necessary three or more successes for

a disengagement or a shot, the turning fight continues. After the first round, however, the successes from the battle of perceptions cease to matter; Piloting, Stamina and the dogfighting ability of the plane become essential.

The Shot

A pilot who scores three or more successes on the turning fight may choose to take a shot at his opponent. This "shot" obviously isn't a single bullet, but a long, well-placed burst of machine-gun fire. The player rolls his Perception + Pilot (difficulty 7). Success does a number of dice of damage equaling the damage rating of the gun to the opponent's plane's Structural Integrity. Successes do not add to this damage roll. If the plane's Structural Integrity drops to zero or below, the plane immediately begins spiraling earthward.

Three or more successes on the attack roll mean the fire strikes the pilot, who takes the damage rating of the gun plus (the attacking pilot's successes minus three) in dice of normal damage. Five or more successes indicate a critical hit on the plane. The plane takes the damage rating of the gun in Structural Integrity damage, and the player must immediately roll its remaining Structural Integrity (difficulty 8). If he does not achieve at least one success, his plane begins to crash, just as if its Structural Integrity had been exhausted.

Disengaging

A pilot who wishes to break off a dogfight must make a Wits + Pilot check with a difficulty of (9 minus the current Maelstrom force). The pilot cannot roll more dice than his plane's Maneuverability rating, unless he wishes to take an automatic die of Structural Integrity damage for each die past the plane's Maneuverability rating. Even a single success allows the pilot to break free of the dogfight and escape.

More Than Two Aircraft

Not all fights are pre-arranged duels where the combatants meet above some specified location. Flights of two to five fighters are standard among the Quick, and though the flights of the Dead are somewhat smaller, the Restless rarely fly alone. Fighting six or seven planes single-handedly is the classic death of an ace, and the confused flurry of unexpected dangers is perhaps the most challenging combat environment possible. Multiple planes add complications to the simple process of air-to-air combat, and this section describes how to run large combats with relative ease.

Spotting

Flights of multiple aircraft enjoy an advantage at spotting targets, but because most aircraft do not carry a wireless, this advantage is limited. Each pilot makes her Perception + Alertness roll individually. Each may choose to notify the flight of the presence and location of enemies by wagging her wings and gesturing wildly, or she may dive directly on their targets. A character must sacrifice one success to notify her flight, but notification allows all members of the flight to substitute the notifying character's remaining net successes for their own. On the other hand, the character can take all her successes and break off, leaving the rest of her flight to fend for themselves. Although this makes the lead character likely to get a kill or two, it also means she may be without effective backup.

Fighting

Fights between large flights of aircraft boil down to a large number of individual dogfights. Each plane must "pair off" with a plane from the opposing flight. The pairing should be determined randomly unless the planes are for some reason easy to tell apart. If there are more planes in one flight than in another, then the "extra" planes may distribute themselves as they wish, either engaging in a number of two-on-one fights, or all joining forces to engage a single aircraft.

Planes engaged by more than one opponent make a single turning fight roll, but increase the difficulty by one for each plane engaging them after the first. Depending on their rolls, planes may find themselves taking shots at some enemies while being shot at by others. Resolve all combat and apply the damage simultaneously.

Planes engaging two or more enemies can choose to ignore some of their attackers. This tactic is very dangerous, as the attackers are likely to get off shots. On the other hand, a grudge or simple target fixation might make concentrating on one opponent to the exclusion of all others seem like a good idea. A plane that ignores attackers does not take a penalty to the turning fight difficulty for each ignored attacker. On the other hand, the ignored opponents make *their* turning fight rolls unopposed, so they are quite likely to score the three successes necessary to get off a shot.

Planes that disengage from dogfights need only succeed in disengaging from the planes directly attacking them. However, they must succeed in disengaging from all of their attackers at once. Fights that go on for some time often spread apart, and the Storyteller is within his rights to declare fliers out of the fight for several turns after they knock out an opponent.

Planes that join a fight already in progress make the usual Perception + Alertness roll against their opponents, except that pilots of opposing planes are at +1 difficulty for each plane they are currently engaged with. As usual, the Perception bonus adds only to the plane's first round of combat. Other than this initial chance for a surprise shot, aircraft that enter a dogfight fresh receive no bonus against planes which have already been dogfighting for some time. Even though the new planes have significantly more energy, it is assumed that the newly-entered planes soon slow down to the speed of the fight.

Complications

Not every battle is as simple as a clash between two fighters, or even three or four. Everything from airships to Arcanoi can make their presence felt in the field of aerial warfare. Below are some of the most common complications likely to arise in aerial battles. As always, final adjudication of any event is up to the Storyteller.

Extending

Planes in a dogfight lose speed as they turn. This fact means little in the actual dogfight, when both combatants are equally slow. A plane that has just left a fight is, however, extremely vulnerable to a plane that is not moving as slowly. After a plane leaves a dogfight, treat its Maneuverability rating as one lower, minimum 1, for every turn it spent in a turning fight. It regains Maneuverability naturally, at the rate of one point per turn spent in straight and level flight, or two points per turn spent in a dive for speed (which, of course, sacrifices altitude).

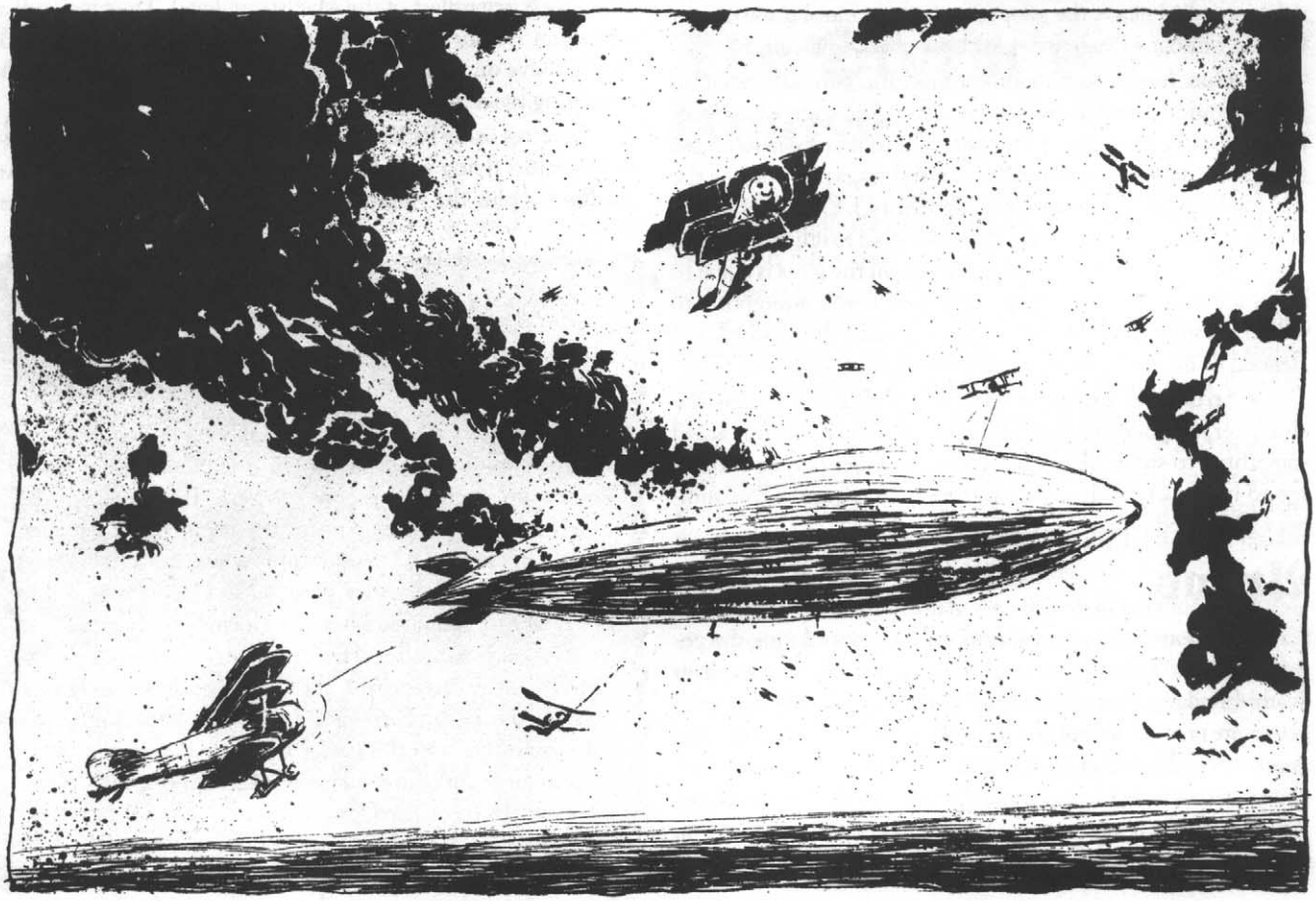
Tail Guns

Tail guns are not the most effective weapons. Sideways and rearward shots at a crossing targets are hard. Most planes armed with tail guns use them to discourage incoming fighters, not in any real hope of shooting down targets. Setting up for a tail-gun shot increases the difficulty of the pilot's rolls in the turning fight by one. However, a tail gunner may make a resisted roll (difficulty 8) versus the shot of an opponent who wins the turning fight. Successes on this roll subtract from the opponent's successes on his shot roll, and if the tail gunner wins, not only does it ward off the attacker, it does damage just as if the tailgunner had taken a shot with a number of successes equal to the net successes on the resisted roll.

Zeppelins

Rigid airships are rare in the Skinlands and are even more scarce in the Underworld. The magic of dirigibles to the human mind makes them durable in a way balloons can never be; the phenomenal ability of rigid airships to resist Maelstrom winds makes these relics valuable, almost beyond price. The Grim and Emerald Legion both have several airships, as do the Legion of Fate and the Victims of Mystery. The are used as courier, troop and supply transports, and as patrol vessels in the chaos of the Tempest. Most carry Harbinger helmsmen and can slip between the Shadowlands and the Tempest like a naval vessel.

These airships are partly of Skinlands manufacture, and partly rebuilt with material from the Shadowlands. Portions of most airships are constantly engulfed in barrow-flame, which mimics their fiery Skinlands ends. Although a few, like LZ-4



and L-59, retain their original condition, most are rebuilt for the military demands of the Underworld. The surviving skin of the typical Stygian airship is armored with several hundred souls' worth of Stygian steel; this paper-thin soulsteel membrane is charged with Pathos and warded against the Maelstrom by specially developed Castigate arts.

Most airships have heavy defensive weaponry, and all are well-armored. Treat them as plot devices. If you must, consider them to have three tail guns trained on each incoming fighter. Additionally, airships are proof against critical and pilot hits, and their armor automatically soaks three points of Structural Integrity damage from each attack. Airships cannot effectively maneuver in the turning fight.

Botches

Botches during air combat can have a variety of effects. Below are listed some of the most common sorts of botches, for Storytellers unfamiliar with early air combat.

• **Loss of Control:** Planes of the War to End All Wars offer pilots less than perfect control. A character must make a Strength + Pilot roll (difficulty 8). To bring the plane back under control, he needs one success for every 1 rolled on the botch. One attempt is allowed each turn. Until the plane is back under the pilot's control, it is treated as if the engine had stalled: The pilot is unable to roll during the turning fight, and the difficulty to hit her is 4. However, unlike a stalled plane, the pilot of an out-of-control plane cannot bail out without a Dexterity + Athletics check (difficulty 9).

• **Gun Jam:** Plane-mounted machine guns are prone to jamming and somewhat awkward to clear. Characters whose guns jam may make Dexterity + Firearms rolls (difficulty 7) to unjam them. This action is an extended one and takes place during the turning fight (if the character is dogfighting). Characters without multiple actions must split their dice pool to unjam the guns. The number of successes required to unjam the guns is equal to the number of 1s rolled on the botch. A botch attempting to unjam them means the gun is jammed until dismounted and cleaned by an armorer or other gunsmith on the ground.

• **Structural Damage:** A botch of this sort means the character has pulled or pushed on the stick too hard and caused something to snap. The plane takes a number of dice of damage to its Structural Integrity (difficulty 6) equal to the number of 1s rolled on the botch.

Argos

Maelstrom Navigation is essential for pilots during the period. Without knowing it, even the simplest trip can result in death. Similarly, Storm Robes are also favored. Although most planes are proofed against the Maelstrom to a limited extent, the same cannot be said of their pilots. Pilots who don't alter their planes into moving Haunts generally favor Storm Robes instead.

Many pilots choose to learn the less practiced art of Phantom Wings (see **Wraith: The Oblivion**, p. 137), for "bailing out" of falling planes. Harbingers using Phantom Wings cannot roll in the turning fight, and they suffer a gun's damage rating plus the opponent's successes on the attack roll. Harbingers using Phantom Wings may attempt to deter incoming aircraft as if they were planes equipped with a tail gun, just so long as they have a fast-firing weapon and sufficient ammunition. Although bailing out with Phantom Wings is unreliable (such wings are often torn off by Maelstrom winds), it's better than relying on a parachute, almost none of which cross the Shroud in any case. More experienced Harbingers generally rely on the art of Travel for their escape.

Tempestos and Tempest Weaving

Tempest Weaving and Tempestos both offer Spectres the ability to travel on the winds of the Maelstrom. These arts are of varying use. The art Ride The Soul-Storm (Tempest Weaving ••) allows Spectres to remain aloft on the Maelstrom, but provides them with no real control. Spectres using this art are similar to a wraith using Phantom Wings, but they cannot effectively return fire against attackers.

Tempestos, however, allows a Spectre to maneuver quite well. Players of Spectres using the art Ride the Nightwind (Tempestos ••) may make Dexterity + Athletics rolls in the turning fight, just as if they were aircraft. All their rolls are at difficulty 8, regardless of the Maelstrom level. They may roll a maximum number of dice equal to the number of successes they achieve on their roll to activate Ride the Nightwind, not exceeding twice the current Maelstrom force.

Spectres using Ride the Nightwind take damage as if they were wraiths flying with Phantom Wings: the weapon's Damage Rating plus the number of successes the enemy achieves

Maelstroms and Fetters — New Rules

Wraiths of the Twilight Era may have Fetters thousands of miles and oceans or continents away, but those Fetters are essentially useless to them. The effects of the Maelstrom temporarily corrupt the normal link between wraith and Fetter. As a result, only a wraith's local Fetters are considered to exist for purposes of Harrowings and so on. A wraith in Europe whose one local Fetter is destroyed goes into a Destruction Harrowing, even if he has a half-dozen healthy Fetters back in Chicago. A wraith in France with one European Fetter and a slew back home automatically snaps back to the Fetter in Poitiers, and not to his ones in New York, after a Harrowing. Although many foreign wraiths try to use Harrowings as a shortcut home, all such attempts result in painful failure.

on her attack roll. Spectres with Ride the Nightwind activated may take "shots" at a plane with ranged weapons, Melee weapons or Shade powers. As normal, three or more successes are necessary to hit the pilot (for powers that affect only corpus). Spectres may forgo their critical hit if it would render the attack useless. Successes do not add to the Structural Integrity damage from hand-to-hand weapons and personal attacks.

Maelstroms: The Storms From Beneath the World

The storms that blow up from the dark depths of the Underworld behave like nothing in the living world. They erupt somewhat like volcanoes, then spread sometimes like tornadoes, sometimes like hurricanes. But Nihils are very different from volcanic vents, and the "atmosphere" of the Shadowlands obeys its own rules.

The Matter of Storms

What is a Maelstrom?

The answer may seem too obvious a question to bother with. A Maelstrom is both an environment and a condition. First, it is literally a storm: disturbances brought up from the Tempest and Labyrinth to roam for a while through the Shadowlands. But it also has a spiritual side. Within the Maelstrom's "clouds," we see a realm where Oblivion holds more power than it usually does where we dwell. Spectres, our former brethren, move through those clouds, using the storm as a base of operations for attacks upon us. When the storm blows, they enjoy protection from the damage they normally suffer here, removed from such direct contact with Oblivion.

When we fight the storm, we fight it both corporeally and spiritually. We must protect our Haunts and Citadels, of course; if we're destroyed, the fight ends there. But we also fight the Spectres. Until they're driven back down into the depths, the storm does not recede. This is true of all Maelstroms, from tiny local incursions to the Great Maelstrom we face today. We must root out Oblivion's servants before Oblivion's climate retreats.

Minor Maelstroms blow up in response to changes in the condition of the Labyrinth and the Tempest. Nobody in the Shadowlands knows a great deal about that. A Harbinger would tell you some about the Tempest if only the Guild weren't illegal, while Labyrinth "suicide forces" will tell you stories whose details defy all but their tellers' Pardoners to separate into fact fable and hallucination. Your predecessors on Maelstrom-watch have compiled a long list of potential warning signs and some estimates of probabilities, but there remains a very large element of guesswork and intuition.

Great Maelstroms happen primarily because of what we, the Restless Dead, and the living do. When we and they change the moral boundaries of our shared existence, it has repercussions in that final land. The Labyrinth has waited hungrily for us from the beginning of time, but it also changes and grows in response to our choices. When we open new vistas of imposed suffering, we feed Oblivion. Its first servants, the Malfeans, fall into slumber and great winds cast the lesser breeds up at us. For the Spectres, this seems to be a time of both delight and torment. While they relish the chance to work harm upon us, some feel being barred from the Labyrinth, even temporarily, as a very great loss. This does us little good, though, as they only seek relief from their pain through multiplying ours.

Whether they should or not, however, the Deathlords do not treat this unit as any sort of freelance moral advisory squad. As students of the precursors to Maelstroms, we can diagnose many of the as-yet-unnoticed evils within both Shadowlands and Skinlands society. But we must confine our efforts to preparing reports on the symptoms our masters are willing to acknowledge.

The Storm's Course

The smallest Maelstroms burst through one or more Nihils within a few miles of each other, and exhaust themselves in no more than a few days. Observers sometimes find an obvious cause, sometimes not: It might be the result of a strong flow toward Oblivion from a local atrocity, or just part of the ineffable evolution of the Labyrinth far below. These small storms consist of waterlike plasm shot through with pieces of whatever recently fell through the Nihils involved. Spectres in the vicinity take advantage of the storm to shoot up and over barriers such as Citadel walls. Rain comes in spurts, ranging from stinging to the equivalent of small-caliber handgun fire. Wraiths in the affected area stay under shelter and are usually safe within Haunts and solid structures.

Between actual storm fronts, the Shadowlands sometimes experience "drizzles." These light showers of Tempest-stuff don't do any actual damage but provide enough influx from the Labyrinth and the deeper recesses of the Tempest to protect Mutilés and other Spectral forces from degradation.

Stronger Maelstroms also use existing Nihils, but in addition they can rip open their own passages up into the Shadowlands. These openings range from gaps just wide enough for a firehose-like blast of plasm to chasms miles

across. Distance and perspective skew around the bigger holes; they're not simply openings into the depths of the Underworld, but into other realms of space altogether. Their "depth" combines the literal fact of holes with a metaphor for the real relationship of the Shadowlands with the Tempest. Even when a particular gap isn't spewing forth random Tempest debris or legions of Spectres, its very presence creates unease in wraiths in the area. Shadows gain strength from the faster connection to Oblivion, and senses work unreliably for Psyches.

Stronger Maelstroms have more varied composition. Not just waterlike plasm, but plasm of other kinds gets carried up from the Tempest: acidic, corrosive, hallucinogenic, disease-laden and stranger varieties. Up from the depths of the Labyrinth and the Tempest come the last remains of wraiths who failed to survive Harrowings, Spectres who plunged into the Well of the Void after suffering irreparable damage and the sad creatures who crossed the Shroud mindless. Whatever parts of them mattered the most linger longest, so Maelstrom clouds seethe with eyes, artificial limbs, skin from arms and the other places of one's own body it's easiest to see, scar tissue from memorable wounds and the like. Likewise, pieces of objects that didn't become relics (and of relics or artifacts destroyed again in the Shadowlands) whirl through the storm. When the storm breaks and it "rains," the debris falls like gunfire or worse; depending on the intensity of the storm, it may be more dangerous to stand outside than to face major artillery pieces or battleship guns.

The Cycle of Storm

Before a Maelstrom erupts, astute observers may notice several warning signs. Nihils open more readily and last longer. Spectral attacks of all kinds become more frequent. Disturbing dreams come to more sensitive wraiths. Shadows become more cunning and careful. This "warm-up" period generally lasts a week or two, though it may begin no more than a day before a Maelstrom and may go on for weeks without the storm ever actually breaking.

The first hours of a Maelstrom resemble a volcanic eruption in the Skinlands. Smoke and ash rise from Nihils. Then clouds shoot up, sometimes in narrow plumes that rise miles high before spreading, sometimes spraying in all directions to create fog or low clouds. In 12 to 24 hours, storm clouds spread for miles around the points of eruption. A force-one Maelstrom lasts a day or two, dispersing over the course of the next day.

Nearly all Maelstroms begin the same way. Stronger ones continue to build. Each level of force-increase takes one to five more days to develop, lasts about a week longer, and takes two to three days to weaken back to the next lower level.

Force-one Maelstroms are fairly common. Most Necropoli experience at least one a year, and areas where there's war, plague or other large-scale suffering in the Skinlands get one every month or two. Force-two and greater Maelstroms rise less frequently: Most Necropoli see no more than five per decade, with at least one a year in places of sustained suffering. The world's great sinkholes of despair — New York's slums, Calcutta, Moscow and the like — receive force-three Maelstroms every few decades, whereas other Necropoli encounter them no more than once a century. Force-four Maelstroms never strike most Necropoli except in the aftermath of force-five, or Great Maelstroms, though force-four storms may blow in response to genocide, successive bloody revolutions and other extended horrors.

Great Maelstroms do not occur randomly. They punctuate eras in the common life of humanity, marking the end of a set of hopes and dreams and the opening of new fields of pain. Their passing inevitably changes Stygian society, sweeping a great many wraiths down into Oblivion, creating both opportunity and need to do things differently in the aftermath. Great Maelstroms are the milestones in Stygian history.

It takes years or even decades for the winds of Great Maelstroms to settle down. Force-five storms mark their outbreak, and may occur several more times in the next few years. Force-one conditions (in the mildest "drizzle" form) prevail across most or all of a Dark Kingdom for years after the Great Maelstrom begins. Force-two and three storms hit most Necropoli every few weeks, or more frequently; force-four storms pass through at least once a year. Gradually, as wraiths begin driving back Spectral forces, something like normal conditions returns. It can take five to 10 years, but eventually extended periods of calm return, with force-one storms being events rather than the norm, and the higher levels occurring less frequently. Occasional upswings in storm activity may occur for decades afterward, however.

Maelstrom Intensity on the Beaufort-Granogrec Scale

The modern science of Maelstrom quantification and resistance begins with the death of Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort in 1875. He was then 101 years old and naturally joined our beloved Iron Legion. While alive, he'd devoted much of his attention throughout the years to analyzing the behavior of storms. In the Skinlands, the leading system of wind-measurement bears his name. Here in the Underworld, he relishes the fresh challenge of storm perils greater than any he could have imagined, combining his roles as man of science and military leader to protect all wraiths from this dire menace.

The functions of Maelstrom study and defense remain spread throughout the Legions in haphazard manner. Beaufort joined forces with fellow Iron Legionnaire and amateur meteorologist Jean Granogrec (died 1877, age 92) to press for the Office of Maelstrom Preparedness. We hope that we may gather together the disparate forces within the Dark Kingdom of Iron under a single administration. So far, our primary success has been conceptual. Beaufort and Granogrec worked out a comprehensive

scale against which to measure Maelstrom force, and it has been adopted unanimously by all our Maelstrom-studying colleagues.

Force One

Winds blow up to 40 mph, with occasional gusts higher. There's almost always "rain" of some kind, composed of various liquids brought up from the Tempest through Nihils. Some solid debris falls, but seldom in pieces more than a few inches across and almost never with cutting edges or other dangerous features; dead and dying Plasmics are most common. Few Spectres move through force-one storms.

System: The maximum damage done per scene to unprotected wraiths is four dice. This damage is almost never aggravated. The typical damage is no more than one die per scene; damage increases only as gusts move through. Class Two armor offers complete protection, as do even minimal walls and ceilings. Haunts reduce damage by two dice per Haunt level, even if they're physically weak; the spiritual power in them resists Oblivion.

Force Two

Winds blow up to 80 mph, with stronger gusts. Rain falls constantly and often comprises smelly, strangely colored liquids and live, wriggling Plasmics. Solid debris patters constantly down and ranges from uprooted divots of Shadowlands "ground" to knife-edged fragments of bone and Stygian steel. Spectres move routinely through the storm.

System: All movement outdoors or anyplace the wind can reach is at +1 difficulty. Wraiths outside shelter take from four to six dice damage per scene; this damage is aggravated about one quarter of the time. Armor provides its usual protection. Haunts reduce damage by one die per Haunt level. The storm blows in windows, rips away loose roofs and the like, but it cannot break through solid structures.

Force Three

Winds blow up to at least 120 mph. Torrents of rain fall, mixed half-and-half (or more) with bizarre and dangerous liquids, living creatures, and potentially dangerous debris. Spectres swirl through the storm and converge on anyone exposed for more than a few minutes.

System: Every scene, wraiths exposed to the storm take six to eight dice of damage; this damage is aggravated up to half the time. Armor provides one less die of protection than usual. Haunts reduce damage by one die per Haunt level. All outdoor activities are at +2 difficulty (or more, if there are more obstacles in the way). The storm smashes through flimsy doors, roofs and walls and leaves occupants vulnerable to the storm and its inhabitants.

Force Four

Winds blow at speeds of 200 mph or more. Rain and debris slash in from all angles and penetrate all places not tightly sealed against the elements. Spectres speed along, attacking anyone who remains outside for as little as a minute.

System: Exposed wraiths take eight to 12 dice of damage each scene; about half the time this damage is aggravated. Armor provides one less die of protection than usual. Haunts reduce damage by one less die than Haunt level. All outdoor activities are at +3 difficulty or higher Buildings that lack strong reinforcement may partially collapse.

Force Five

Force five represents the points of outbreak for Great Maelstroms and other moments of most profound chaos. They don't occur very often, and they are almost never survivable.

There is no ready way to measure the intensity of force-five winds, which transcend anything in Skinlands hurricanes. Anyone trying to move in these winds will most probably end up whisked into the sky, to be dashed to the ground somewhere far away (if the individual isn't torn to bits by Spectres in mid-air). Spectres converge almost instantly on any wraith who ventures outside shelter.

System: Exposed wraiths take 14 dice of damage or more per scene, usually aggravated. Armor provides half normal protection (rounded down); Haunts reduce damage by one die per two Haunt levels, rounded down. Only massive Citadels, structures of Stygian steel and the like have much chance of standing.

The First Line of Defense

The Office of Maelstrom Preparedness

The Office of Maelstrom Preparedness springs from the work of Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort and his Iron Legion colleagues in the late 19th century. Before then, several of the Legions had maintained units of their own, with a lot of potentially useful information lost due to inter-organization rivalry. As the sciences of meteorology and vulcanology developed among the living, a growing number of wraiths entered the Shadowlands with knowledge and theories that applied to some aspects of Maelstrom behavior. The Iron Legion provides some measure of coordination, arranging deals as necessary with the other Legions to compensate the Deathlords who let their Maelstrom observers work under the Iron aegis.

Most of the OMP's staff works in offices scavenged here and there across the Isle of Sorrows. The organization squeezes

in wherever it can. Before the Fourth Great Maelstrom broke, roughly 100 people analyzed field reports from the OMP's Storm-seekers and tried to draw out patterns. Once the Maelstrom struck, all the Legions rushed to throw more people at the task. The OMP grew to more than 1,000 full-time workers plus twice that many assigned as "liaisons" and other categories made up for the occasion.

The rush hurt as much as it helped. Stygian management moves slowly and inefficiently at the best of times. Experienced Maelstrom analysts believe that at least as much information got lost in ever-changing shuffles as was gained by adding more would-be problem-solvers. At least half the pre-Maelstrom veterans quietly ignore the newcomers and pass along enough data to keep their juniors busy, while sharing truly important reports only with one another. Generational disputes help keep newer analysts from gaining the experience that might make them valuable, thereby perpetuating the problem.

To avoid arguments over information-hoarding, all reports from the OMP get readied in nine copies and delivered (with accompanying pageantry) to Charon's tower and the Deathlords' citadels simultaneously. Usually the reports go immediately to some underling, but the point is to keep showing publicly how the Legions cooperate. After the show, OMP clerks make more copies to go to Anacreons and other interested parties. The OMP also maintains a "reading room" where the public at large can examine results. Every so often a bystander has something important to contribute — not often, but even one insight that helps save a city warrants a fair amount of inconvenience and patient dealing with all the insights that prove specious.

Field Offices

The OMP maintains subsidiary offices in many Necropoli, usually tucked away in some back corner of the Citadel and staffed by one or a few individuals with long-standing personal interest in Maelstroms. Their major responsibility is to keep the reports sent from Stygia in order, but they do often also perform some of their own research. In particularly storm-wracked Necropoli, the offices may take on extra importance, with chiefs selected for social skills as well as technical ability, and larger staffs that coordinate their work with the operations of the Legion forces stationed in the area.

The field offices also do the practical work of advising individual wraiths and groups on how to defend themselves against Maelstroms. The OMP collects reports of what does or does not work and tries to collate them, though inevitably there are duplications and contradictions. Nonetheless, a Necropolis that follows OMP recommendations stands to gain. With a thorough overhaul, buildings can be substantially fortified (in game terms, they gain the equivalent of two- to five-dots worth of armor). Thorough preparations, which require the cooperation of all the Legions present and the majority of the wraiths in the Necropolis, can reduce the effective force of a storm by one level.

The Storm-Seekers

Finally, the OMP directs the activities of its own specialized observer force, the Storm-seekers. These brave wraiths equip themselves with what they think they'll need and stride into Maelstroms for first-hand observations. The standard "storm kit" consists of Stygian steel armor with multiple soulfire crystals and living chains (see **Buried Secrets** or **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**) with hooks in the end to anchor the wraith during strong winds. Weapons are optional, though most Storm-seekers like to carry whatever relic firearms they can obtain.

Withstanding Oblivion

All wraiths seek to survive. The moment they really want to find annihilation, they can. So the one thing that all wraiths share is the desire to find protection against damage and destruction. Maelstroms make self-protection a difficult proposition to fulfill, however.

Citadels

In most Necropoli, the Anacreons rule from the strongest, most defensible building. Whatever original strengths the building had gain reinforcement from Stygian steel and Labyrinthine stone. Whatever armed troop strength the Anacreons can muster patrol the area.

No defenses work perfectly, though. Strong walls may repel Renegade raids, but they're useless against Maelstroms if the roof overhead suddenly *isn't*. Even the bravest guards can do no more damage to intruders than their weapons and Arcanoi allow, and no amount of determination can make up for the absence of sufficient armor when claws, acid, nails and stranger attacks come pouring out of the sky. In the final two years of the War to End All Wars, at least 10 percent of the Citadels standing firm at the start of 1916 fall to Spectral hordes and the great storm. The Deathlords keep some secrets from the masses, so nobody knows just how much higher the true toll is; less than half of all Necropoli fall, but perhaps not a lot fewer.

Twilight Era Citadels need constant repairs. Getting supplies and workers becomes easier only in the late '20s, as counter-offensives push back Spectral beachheads. Nevertheless, with every force-three storm, and greater, some Citadels reach their limits and collapse.

Haunts

A Haunt is, by definition, a place where the tie between living and Restless Dead is particularly strong, the barriers that

separate them weaker than usual. The environment of a Haunt is therefore the antithesis of Oblivion.

In the Shadowlands, spiritual truths take on tangible form. Spectres find it difficult to cross the threshold of a Haunt, while the alien rain spatters harmlessly (or at least less harmfully than usual). Corrosive plasm becomes relatively safe, merely obnoxious or unpleasant. This protection exists even for Haunts that cannot offer firm corporeal defenses: If they have strong walls and defensible borders, those benefits combine with the spiritual protection. Anacreons thus favor Citadels that have Haunt value in addition to their other merits.

When Maelstrom clouds throw the Shadowlands into deeper darkness, Haunts are often visible as little regions of light. Wraiths who must move from one shelter to the next in the midst of a storm dash from one pocket of safety to the next.

Defenses

Personal Protection

Ladies and gentleman, wraiths of every condition, come gather for your chance to procure the finest Maelstrom defense wares in three Dark Kingdoms! Our Traveling Numinous Prophylaxis Exposition has what *you* need to keep corpus and soul intact! Why suffer the depredations of Maelstroms one moment more, when we can supply your every need, both individual and collective?

Friends, the foundation of any sensible scheme of personal protection is armor. Sacred works throughout the ages summon us to put on a holy armor. Well, this fine suit of Stygian steel is the very incarnation of those instructions, forged from the remains of wicked men and women, sanctified by previous wearers' honorable service to the Hierarchy, now available to you at very reasonable prices! If you were to go to that great Citadel I see in the distance and seek to purchase a suit of armor such as this, you would be refused, and most likely rudely rebuffed. How is it that I can offer you what they cannot? The secret is simple, my friends. This very suit was granted to its last wearer as an expression of gratitude for valor, and thus he was able to will it to the Exposition after his untimely passing. His final misfortune is *your* gain!

Now, the very best thing you can do when you find yourself facing the wrath of darker realms is to keep moving. You all know that, even this fine Stripling, er, child here knows that. But you also know that some fierce winds blow more strongly than mere corporeal strength can withstand. Then you need an anchor. You could try raiding the nearest harbor, but ship captains take a dim view of people walking off with their anchors. Instead, why not try our specially prepared living chains? Watch them swirl! See how we've fitted the ends of the chain with custom-designed hooks, the fruits of long, laborious research in our home offices and careful consultation with the Storm-seekers. Wrap this around you and let the anchors sink, so says the Office of Maelstrom Preparedness, and only a force-five gale is likely to sweep you away.

Having clad yourself against the slings and arrows of the outrageous Maelstrom, you need some slings and arrows yourself. Or perhaps you favor some other sort of weapon. That's fine, ladies and gentlemen, we have them all, from relic and Artifact handguns to the very best in well-crafted swords. Today we have a special feature for you! Look at these swords, taken from Jade Empire pirates slain in battle against our beloved Legions, and brought here for sale to you today through diplomatic negotiations of the most delicate sort (mixed in with a little old-fashioned craftiness, if I dare say so myself). Your souls matter to us, my friends, and we spare no effort to offer you the best means of self-defense.

Bringing you these weapons is a constant struggle, I must say. Some unfortunate areas have lost so many good wraiths that there's an over-abundance of equipment of all sorts. Other areas, like this fine community, prosper in the face of adversity. I'm glad to see it! But that means you have more wraiths than the local supply can accommodate. That's where we of the mercantile class enter in, friends. We run the risks so that you don't have to, nourishing the gardens of safety and wholeness like rivers bringing the mineral wealth of highlands to the valleys.

Now, step right up and let's talk about just how many oboli these wonderful pieces of equipment may be worth to you....

Collective Protection

Would someone please close the window? Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I apologize for the noise from outside; if I'd known that that traveling huckster — "Numinous Prophylaxis" — were going to do his show today, I'd have rescheduled. In any event, let's proceed.

Each of you represents a collective concern of some sort within this Necropolis — one of the Legions, a mercantile association, a neighborhood gathering and so on. You, as their representatives, need ways of protecting groups of wraiths and

The Shield of Eyes (Level 3 or 4 Artifact)

Many Plasmics have eyes covered over with thick protective lenses. Among the most sought-after products of winnowers' work, this shield consists of dozens of such Plasmic lenses forged into a metal lattice. The finished shield resembles a leaded glass window, sparkling in available light. It provides the same protection as Stygian steel against Maelstrom-borne intrusions — storm debris as well as Plasmics and Spectres. The Level 3 version of the Shield is circular or rectangular, about three feet across, whereas the Level 4 version is a canopy just big enough for a person to crouch under.

goods of various sorts, not just individuals. I'm here to discuss with you techniques you may wish to consider.

That charlatan outside does have a number of valuable points mixed in with his sundry deceits. You do want armor, and you do want living chains to act as anchors. But there are complications he's not discussing. The simple fact is that good armor is scarce. There are always more wraiths with legitimate claims on armor than there are suits available. What he's selling, if it's Stygian steel at all rather than gimmicks through moliation or worse, was scavenged from fallen soldiers. Let Legionnaires capture you wearing their possessions, and they'll likely take you along with it, and your corpus will help provide someone *else's* armor. Your best course of action is to cultivate contacts in the local administration and secure official sponsorship.

Weaponry is a different matter. Living chains and the like are indeed legitimately for sale, and you may purchase and use them. What you must keep in mind is how thoroughly your local Anacreons regulate the possession of weaponry in their jurisdiction. If this Necropolis is like most, you'll need to pay a registration fee and submit to some form of peace-bonding but otherwise be allowed to proceed. My advice upon encountering stricter restrictions is this: don't argue. The fact that we're here talking about defenses against Great Maelstroms means that this isn't an ideal time, and I've seen myself cases of belligerent wraiths simply cut down by impatient soldiers.

Even though we're inland here, it is very much worth your while to seek out a commercial shipping venture.

What Doesn't Work

Look up there, brother, at the lords in their tower. Look out in the square, at the gaudy soul hawking his wares. If they spoke of me at all, they would say that I peddle superstition. But they're the fools! Trust in them, brother, and your soul will soon enough tumble into Oblivion like the last leaf of autumn. What you need is the ancient wisdom they deny.

Look at this. Not such a pleasant sight, is it, this severed hand, withered and brown? But it's a precious relic. It once belonged to a mighty warrior of centuries past. He perished in the final blast of the Third Great Maelstrom. But this, his hand, remained, clinging to a rope that tied him to the walls of his Citadel. When you carry this hand with you, his spirit enters into you. No fancy Arcanoi apply here, brother, only the great principle of sympathetic magic. Use it to your gain.

And look at this. This may seem to be merely another obolus, but that's not so! This is one of the first hundred coins forged by Nhudri after Charon brought him up out of the Labyrinth. In it rests a small piece of Nhudri's own soul and his unparalleled understanding of matters Labyrinthine. Carry it with you, and Spectres flee from the strength it lends you.

Not to your taste? Then consider this vial of simple soulforged glass. Look at the water within. That's water drawn from the Sunless Sea beyond the Isle of Sorrows, against that great seawall which protects the City of Iron Gates. This water carries in its pristine depths the essence of defeated Spectres, and when you carry it with you, Spectres not yet defeated recoil from you as an unlucky target for them.

And there's so much more here....

Lifeweb ••• (Comrades in Arms)

Comrades in Arms allows a wraith to bind together the crew, cargo and ships as one "unit" for a short period of time. It allows any Arcanos to be used on the whole group as if it were a single object. Its most common use is to allow a ship and its crew to pass easily between the Shadowlands and the Tempest through the use of the Argos art Safe Passage.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Lifeweb (difficulty 9). The binding costs three Pathos to make and one Pathos per hour to maintain.

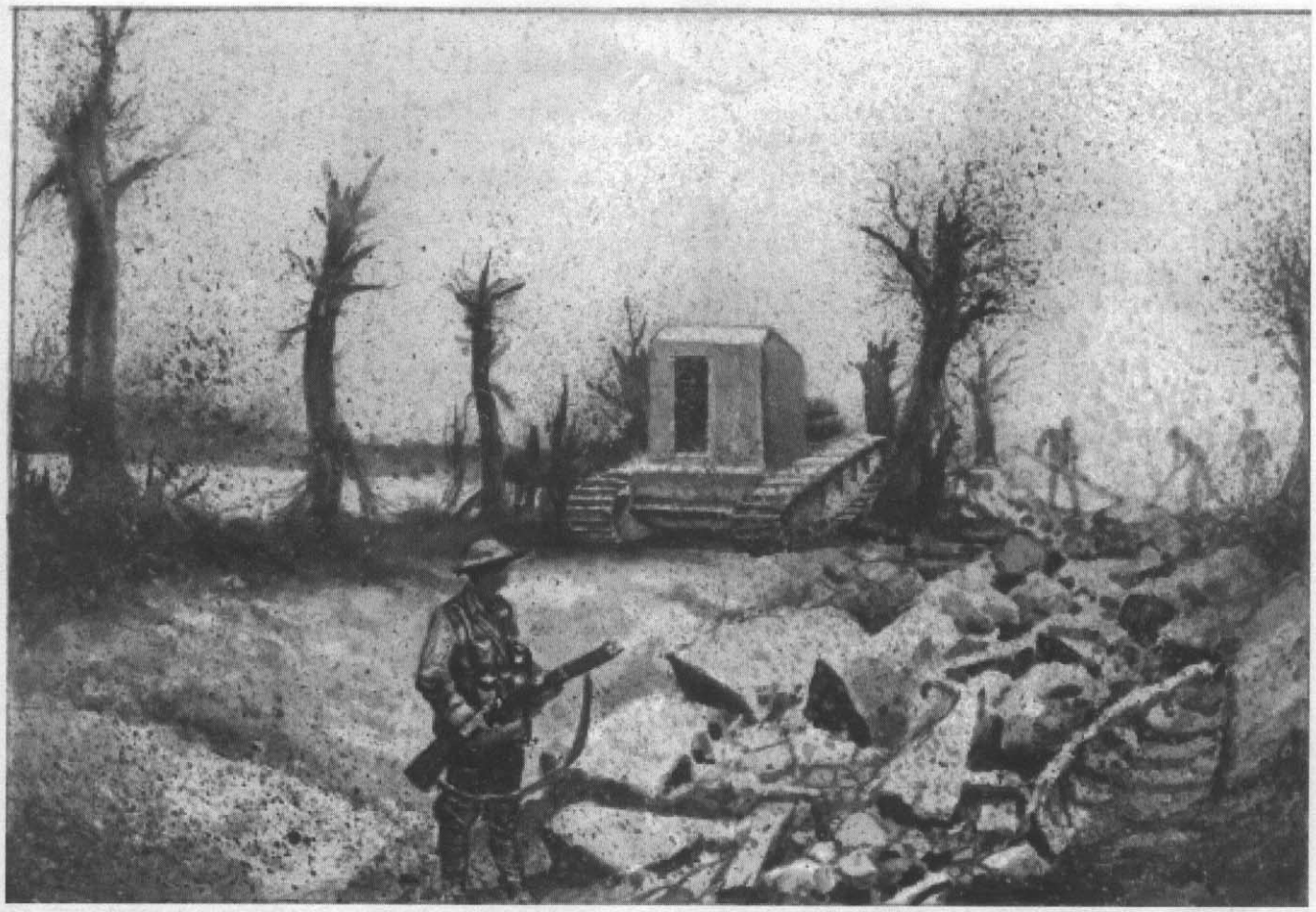
Reaping the Whirlwind

Maelstroms are not without some benefit. Several subcultures and a significant sector of the Stygian economy depend on the storms for their existence. More specifically, these groups rely on the detritus cast up by the receding storm winds.

The gathering of detritus (called "winnowing") is a time-honored profession in Stygia. Much like collecting rents from agricultural property among the Quick, owning a successful winnowing operation is seen as a respectable means to wealth among the Dead, as well as a mark of status. In the Dark Kingdom of Iron, the right to winnow an area after a Maelstrom is highly profitable. By ancient law and tradition, a freewraith has the right and duty to gather up detritus from within a stadia of his Haunt and either keep such pickings or dispose of it, usually by selling it or dumping it into a convenient Nihil. Areas unclaimed by individual freewraiths are gerrymandered between the Legions according to the politics of the day and legal precedents last revised centuries ago.

The larger legions generally send out patrols to winnow their appointed areas themselves. This often means that the Anacreons and Marshals in a given Necropolis send their personal Thralls out to winnow the areas under their Legion's control, and they use Legion troops to ensure the safety and honesty of the operations.

The smaller Legions generally sell, lease, rent or raffle off their winnowing rights to a private concern. The process of disbursing winnowing contracts varies from location to location, depending on local conditions. In some places, the Legion's entire Necropolitan claim is sold off for a flat fee per annum. More common, particularly in larger Necropoli, is the auctioning off of winnowing rights on a district-by-district basis for a percentage of the profits.



The process of awarding winnowing rights to private contractors and supervising their work generally involves corruption of Chicagoan proportions. The *Magisterium Veritatis* — the imperial secret police — estimates that in 1920, 87 percent of the winnowing contracts awarded in major Necropolitan areas are influenced by nepotism or personal gratuities. Venality dominates these operations at every level, from the Anacreons and Marshals who award the contracts to the Centurions and Legionnaires who oversee the operations. In the New York Necropolis, winnowing operations are openly operated by former members of the Spooks' and Haunters' Guilds, and are rumored to serve as fronts for proscribed Guild activities.

This pervasive profiteering is looked upon with great displeasure by the Legions' parent organizations in Stygia, which collect tribute from the various Necropoli in the form of Thralls and winnowed Relics. Each Legion has its own internal affairs division, such as the Legion of Fate's Order of the Scarlet Sword and the Iron Legion's Ministry of Intelligence. These organizations, often operating in concert with the dreaded *Magisterium Veritatis*, strive endlessly to keep graft at a manageable level. They operate under no illusions — all of them know that corruption is inevitable in a tax farming system like the Stygian empire. By ruthlessly soulforging everyone involved in serious malfeasance, these organizations set a bar on how far such criminality can go before it draws official attention. This extreme punishment usually deters even the mindlessly greedy, or at least gives sufficient incentive for their peers and underlings to report them to the proper authorities.

All during the Great War, winnowing is an incredibly dangerous (yet highly profitable) endeavor — as rewarding as Usury. Many conventional organizations are unable to operate during the Great Maelstrom, when both supply and demand are at their highest in centuries. Those Restless that *are* able to operate despite the civil war, the Maelstrom and the constant threat of Spectre attack reap immense profits. Many more fall to Oblivion trying.

The Burden of the Winds

Every imaginable sort of debris is blown up by a Maelstrom. By far the most common detritus is rubbish of limited immediate value. Much of this material is organic or semi-organic; bits of fresh bone and tumorous tissue, impact-deformed bullets, lost teeth, steel surgical screws and plates

The Limb Markets

Among the most common sights in the bazaars of the Twilight Era are the purveyors of limbs. The Fourth Great Maelstrom seems to cast up an endless tide of severed extremities. Some limbs have been blown off cleanly by Skinlands artillery, whereas others have gotten mangled on the battlefield and later amputated in an attempt to save a patient's life.

This flood of severed limbs is a blessing both to the Mutilés and to the Restless who crossed the Shroud missing one or more of their extremities. Considerably less expensive than Artifact prostheses, these severed limbs require only a moderate mastery of Moliate (and Castigate, especially when dealing with a Mutilé) to attach. The attachment of severed parts becomes something of a cottage industry during the Insurrection, notably among wraiths who are attempting to redeem Mortwights. Most limbs don't last very long, withering away over the course of (at best) several months. Also, some limbs are only marginally useful. Mangled limbs or ones grossly disproportionate to a wraith's corpus are often all that some purchasers can afford. Anxiety over the appearance of these mismatched parts causes some recipients to gain dangerous levels of Angst. Mutilés *and* wraiths who obviously display such appendages sometimes earn the pejorative label "gallimaufry" — scrap heap.

Gathering severed limbs is a challenging pursuit. Large and highly charged with emotion, limbs quickly evaporate back into the Tempest after Maelstrom winds recede. Winnowers must be swift at their tasks to harvest these fruits of the storm. Limbs are generally gathered in tumbrels or other wagons and kept wet with plasm until they can be taken to a wholesaler. There, they are sold in lots of a dozen. The wholesaler then evaluates the limbs and places the average and lesser ones in large tanks of plasm. There, they can be inspected by potential buyers.

Particularly fine limbs are packaged in jars or individual containers, for sale to cosmetic Masquers or to buyers for Stygian interests. While professional grafters are usually uninterested in mediocre arms and legs, a wraith with a regular source of fine or relatively undamaged limbs can often sidestep the middle man and earn considerably more than wholesale for limbs. Of course, most limb wholesalers wish to remain the only game in town, and keep regular contact with members of the Masquers' Guild. Wraiths who trespass on a wholesaler's monopoly often find themselves in sudden need of a limb grafter's services as well.

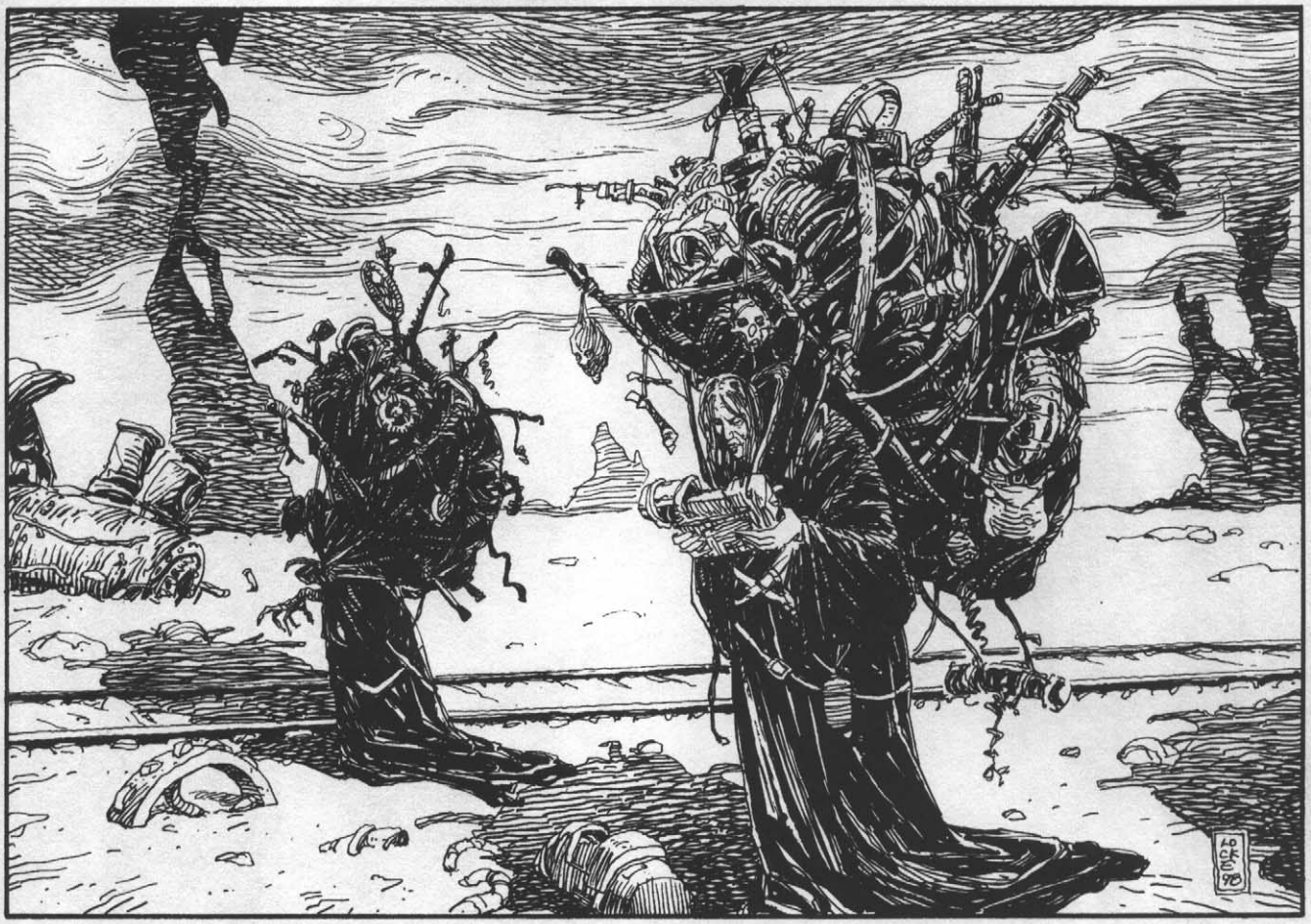
What undoes the open limb markets is the gradual realization over the course of the Fourth Great Maelstrom that some attachments constitute violations of the *Dictum Mortuum*. Relic arms and legs that come from a still-living individual prove remarkably more durable than other kinds, but once attached to a wraith or Mortwight, they contribute to literally maddening "phantom limb" sensations in their original owners. Naturally, the eventual outlawing of the practice fails to stop it, but it does drive it behind the scenes.

— any sort of bodily residue. Other bits are less immediately identifiable. This debris can include splinters and broken chunks of wood, shards of glass and virtually every other imaginable sort of small trash. Most of these bits are only useful for decorative purposes, though clever winnowers can often make a profit from even these scraps. Even the uneducated know that tiny bits of soulsteel, Stygian steel, chips of Labyrinth material and other, less identifiable materials are often mixed in with the storm debris. Gleaning for these gems is a common job for casual labor that usually pays according to the amount of material sifted out. Talented gleaners can make as much as an obolus per day of work. Unfortunately, the work is seasonal and the splinters often cut workers' hands into unrecognizable masses of wounds. Useful raw materials gleaned from the winnowings are generally either used in the Necropolis of their harvesting or sent in bulk to Stygia.

Not all the castoffs of the storm are mere wind-polished fragments. The Tempest contains every sort of relic — some Obliviographers say it contains (or has contained) *every* relic. Whole objects are fairly common, in conditions ranging from severely damaged to immaculate perfection, as if the storm winds had polished the item before laying it in a winnower's path. No one object is any more likely to be encountered than any other — for every top-grade revolver left gleaming on the ground, there are hundreds of cigar shears, bits of cheap jewelry and prized childhood toys. Most of the intact relics and Artifacts not of immediate use to the Legions should make their way to the local marketplace to be sold for oboli or Pathos. The reality is that most winnowed relics in fact end up "evaporating" along the way. Many are either requisitioned by Legion higher-ups or else bought by their proxies at unrealistically low prices before the objects actually reach the marketplace.

The People of the Storm

The gleanings of the Maelstroms aren't just a boon to the Stygian economy, but the heart of several subcultures. There is a Stygian saying that for every phenomenon unique to the Underworld, there is at least one cult or class that makes the phenomenon the center of its existence. Maelstroms are no exception.



The Scavenger Folk

The Scavenger Folk are called any insulting term for wanderer or outsider that comes to the lips of the speaker. The Scavenger Folk roam the Shadowlands as tinkers and traveling merchants, and sometimes as thieves and bandits. Most of them follow railway lines and shelter themselves from the Maelstrom in culverts and well-hidden Haunts whose locations they learn from others of their kind. As they travel, they gather up what debris they come across and sort through it. The debris they can sell or repair they add to the immense packs that serve as a sort of uniform for their kind.

Many of the Scavenger Folk are skilled craftsmen and masters of repairing damage that the Tempest inflicts on Relics, or at least masters of seeming to have repaired such damage. They have a terrible reputation as dishonest businesspeople, and to be "scavved" means the same thing among the Restless as being "gypped" does among the Quick.

Scavenger Folk are generally well-educated in Fatalism, Phantasm, Lifeweb and Usury. Their talents in these Arcanoi along with the insular, wandering subculture, obscure internal language and complex system of warning symbols makes many observers believe that the Rom influenced Scavenger culture at some point in the distant past. Many believe the Scavenger Folk know a form of Usury or Fatalism that they can use to mark a wraith who harasses or angers them for abuse by other Scavenger Folk who come across the unfortunate in the future.

Whatever the case in days of old, the Scavenger folk are clearly not Romani by the time of the Great War. In fact, the Scavenger Folk as a rule include some of the most brutal thrashers of false mediums outside the Labyrinth. By virtue of their visibility, fraudulent "gypsy" mediums soak up the vast majority of the punishment meted out by these self-appointed avengers of the Dead.

here are so many here; all stacked like cordwood. Every so often one breathes his last, and the others set to howling for the orderlies to take the corpse away. They don't want the reminder of mortality so close.

I watch this repetitive drama through Shroud-dimmed eyes. My job is to wait for the orderlies to take away the bodies, then dart in and reap the souls that remain before someone new is thrown onto the dirty sheets. Sometimes I get lucky, and they take time to change the linens before the new patient comes in. Sometimes I'm unlucky, and two or three die while I'm cutting away the Cauls of others. In the end, it all balances.

There have been five deaths already today. Two of those left behind no soul; they departed for Heaven, Hell, Oblivion or wherever it is that the Quick whose business is resolved when they die finally go. A third soul went Drone. He's over in the corner, hacking his phantom lungs into puddles on the floor, and he'll presumably do so until a sweeper squadron comes through to carry him off to the forges. Failing that, he'll carry on for all eternity, or until the nurses and patients walk through him enough times that he discorporates from the abuse. He and the others like him aren't part of my assignment, so I ignore him.

The other two souls are the ones I reaped. They're huddled behind me at my post, where they stare at me, mutter to themselves and wait. Both of them are marked with the Legion's deathmarks and some strange, faint symbols around their eyes. I've never seen these decorations before this particular assignment, but my commanding officer seems to think they're very important. He comes by every day with an armed escort to take the new recruits back to the haphazard "Citadel" we share with the other refugees.

The Commander takes care to reassure me every day that what I'm doing is important. He says he wishes he could switch my assignment to something less macabre, but that I'm the best at calming the new souls when they come across. "The new recruits," he calls them with a little laugh, and then he takes the day's catch back to the Citadel for briefing and indoctrination. I've seen a few of the ones I've brought across come back later as part of the armed escort, so I would guess that what we're doing is successful. I never see the ones with the new marks again though.

I've brought over 300 souls across in this one sick ward, and there's no end to the epidemic in sight. Three-hundred new recruits for the commander. Three-hundred new souls in the Skeletal Legion.

Three hundred souls who'll help us take back the Necropoli from those bastards in the Grim Legion. They got their reinforcements during the war. Now it's our turn.

At the end of the ward, I hear a woman coughing. There's a rattle in her throat that hadn't been there before. The men and women in the beds to either side are turning away. They know what's coming.

I unsheathe my knife. I know what's coming, too.

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
— Wilfred Owen, from "Anthem for Doomed Youth"

Just as any great epic needs its heroes and villains, a **Wraith: The Great War** chronicle requires characters, and each character fills a bit of both roles. The first step in creating a realistic, thought-provoking alter-ego for the chronicle at hand is to begin with an idea: the shell of a character concept. Think of your favorite character from a story that you've read or a movie that you've seen recently. What made that character so compelling? Was it the way he spoke, his views on love and life in general, an aspect of his distant past that made him act the way he did in a specific situation? Interesting characters are subtle combinations of vibrant hues and earthy tones, of remarkable strengths and humbling weaknesses. Of course, there is no shortage of infallible *wunderkinds* out there: supremely competent, relentlessly charming, devastatingly beautiful. But such superheroes are only that — superheroes. Larger-than-life constructs of someone's imagination, with all the depth and appeal of plywood. Oftentimes, a character's personality can be overshadowed by the vast array of powers she may possess. The point of roleplaying is to leave these mythical heroes to the pages of legend and to create a believable character — one whose perfections may be derived from conquering his flaws. After all, some of the greatest battles are ones fought within.

That said, the early 20th century provides a fascinating variety of people and situations on which to draw. Begin by deciding who you want to play. Because the War to End All Wars and the influenza that followed it touched the lives of practically the entire world's population, your character can be of any culture or background — with the Storyteller's approval of course. The most important thing to do is to avoid creating a character who's sure to cause irreconcilable friction with the rest of the group. While a little give-and-take between wraiths in a Circle can be interesting, a constant struggle to feed each other to the Kraken is not, and it gets tedious quickly. Ideally, there should be some reason why your Circle comprises the wraiths that it does. For example, it was not uncommon during the Great War for a group of eligible men from a given town to join the war effort together, request to be assigned to the same regiment, and be in the same trench when a howitzer shell landed in it. Of course, the *raison d'corps* is up to the players' choosing; it can be the result of simply sharing a Fetter or Passion, or it can be a complicated, conditional alliance.

The Storyteller should guide players through the character creation process. A Storyteller who answers questions and walks players step by step through the basics helps the process go more smoothly. Most importantly, the Storyteller should discourage players from creating characters who may not fit with the planned chronicle, or who badly conflict with the other characters. The creation process may require an entire session, but you'll find that a group of thoughtfully made, well-rounded wraiths is infinitely preferable to a bunch of mindless warmongers looking for Plasmics to slay and oboli to hoard. Once you've completed these preliminaries, you may start running Preludes to help both Storyteller and players get to know the characters better. For more on Preludes, see p. 102.

Character Creation

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow...
John McCrae, "In Flanders Field"

Step One: Your Concept

The first step for a player in the character creation process is to come up with a basic character concept — that is, a sentence or two describing who the character is and giving a general idea of his personality and experience. More details are fleshed out as the creation procedure progresses.

Right now, however, there are a very few fundamental guidelines to which players must adhere. Since **Wraith: The Great War** deals with incidents during the tumult of the early 20th century, characters are likely to have died around that time, or shortly before. Characters come from any nation, and from any background. No one was left unscathed by the period's events. To this end, an hour or two at the library is time well spent, as it can provide some basic facts from which to build a convincing and historically accurate character.

At this stage of the character creation process, players need only answer three questions about their character: Who were you, how did you die and why are you still here as a wraith?

Who Were You?

What part did you play in the incidents that exploded around you? Did you somehow promote the spread of death, loading gas-filled shells into a cannon or attending the relief dinner despite your worsening fever? Or did you fight it: handing out anti-draft pamphlets in the streets; removing shrapnel shards from lacerated flesh; sequestering yourself like Prospero in "The Masque of the Red Death" from the flu pandemic? In the end, however, you died, and your character concept comes down to what you want and what the Storyteller will permit. Here are a few examples from the period:

• **Amnesiac** — You wake up, you're stuck in this dreary place, you're dead, and you have no idea how the hell you got here! Then again, perhaps it's better that you don't know....

• **Artist** — You saw things while you were alive that you could've conveyed to the world so poignantly, if only you'd gotten the chance. Now you're dead, and there's nothing you can do about it... or is there?

• **Clergy** — All this misery and suffering around you, with people in constant need of spiritual reassurance! It's enough to try the patience of a saint! Of course, you may very well be one soon, seeing as how you've stopped breathing.

• **Diplomat** — If only you hadn't died when you did, you could've been the next Jean Jaurès, Woodrow Wilson... or Kaiser Wilhelm II.

• **Laborer** — From field to factory, you toiled endless hours to serve both your family's and your country's well-being. Were you proud of your honest work, or did you instead resent your life of toil?

• **Medic** — Whether you were a field surgeon, a conscientious objector or a volunteer nurse, you helped whoever needed helping. But where were they in *your* time of need?

• **Radical** — Assassinations and dynamite were your bread and butter. You just never got the chance to attempt that final act they would've never forgotten. Or maybe you did, and something went horribly wrong.

• **Soldier** — Having fallen in the line of duty, you never got a chance to rack up one more kill, or see your family one last time, or have words with the people responsible for getting you into this damned war.

• **Victim** — For whatever reason, everything you had was taken from you. But all this suffering serves only to strengthen the soul, or so they told you right until the end.

• **War Profiteer** — They say war is hell, but it's a godsend for industry. Your mill was turning out reliable killing machines and a damn good profit margin to boot. Maybe you should've felt guilty, but who's got time for that when there's business to be done?

How Did You Die?

Your means of death can determine a large part of your wraith's personality, and in **Wraith: The Great War**, it crucially determines your Legion affiliation. There are almost as many ways to die as there are to live. Some examples are:

• **Chance** — Your death was what people referred to when they claimed that life wasn't fair. Maybe you stumbled on an unexploded mine *after* the war ended, or you had an accident at the munitions factory. Maybe you booked a ticket on the final voyage of the *Lusitania*. Victims of Happenstance are drafted into the Emerald Legion.

• **Malady** — Influenza was the biggest killer of the period, claiming 20,000,000 souls. Of course, trench life during the war was a perfect environment for contracting pneumonia, consumption, typhus and all manner of similarly fatal afflictions. Persons whom disease claims enter the Skeletal Legion.

• **Who Knows?** — The means of your death remains a gap in your memory. Perhaps you wish to fill it someday, perhaps not.... Those unfortunates whose deaths are enigmas to them serve the Beggar Lord in the Legion of Paupers.

• **Old Age** — You were too old to serve, and you lived a life too lonely to catch the grippe. Some would say you were one of the lucky ones. Wraiths who die a natural death enter the Iron Legion.

• **Starvation** — There was simply no food around, and you needed to eat. Starvation was a major killer, especially in post-war Russia. Did you do everything you could to survive before your enfeebled body finally gave out? Russia recorded incidents of cannibalism during this time. Persons who die of want are ushered into the Silent Legion

• **Suicide** — They blamed it on shell shock, but you know that you simply couldn't live with the atrocities you'd witnessed (or performed) any longer. Individuals who intentionally killed themselves enter either the Silent Legion (for victims of Despair) or the Penitent Legion (for victims of Madness).

• **Violence** — Did you die slowly, clawing at your throat as mustard gas dissolved your lungs, or quickly at the business end of a machine gun delivering 500 rounds per minute? Perhaps you didn't die in battle at all, but were the victim of murder most foul. Ones who die in this way are drafted into the Grim Legion.

• **Fate** — You survived years of combat, only to shoot yourself fatally while cleaning your rifle. Or perhaps the doctors had pronounced you cured — then they watched you slip away in an inexplicable relapse. Actually, one's *method* of death has no bearing in this case; one must simply be destined to join the Legion of Fate.

Why Are You Still Here?

There's a reason you're here in the Deadlands and not plucking a harp somewhere else. Your regret can either be passive — something you never had a chance to say or do — or active, perhaps something you did that you wish you hadn't. Below are a few ideas.

• **Failure** — You died with regrets over something at which you'd failed. Now, it seems, you have the opportunity to fix it.

• **Guilt** — You'll never be able to forgive yourself for the sins you've committed, not in a million years. Of course, if that's how long it takes....

• **Legacy** — You left something of value behind, whether a descendant, a pupil, or something into which you invested a great deal of yourself.

• **Love** — Love never dies, but you did. The desire persists, though, and you are bound to see it consummated, one way or another.

• **Missed Opportunities** — You feel as if you died without really living first. Now you have a second chance, of sorts.

• **Revenge** — After everything they did to you, it isn't fair that you're dead and they're still enjoying life. It's time to even the score.

• **Uncompleted Goal** — There was one personal crusade that, had you completed it, would have let you die happy. Yet you didn't do it, and you're not happy.

• **Unfulfilled Destiny** — You could've been great, or at least made people believe you were. Is it really too late now?

Example of Character Creation

Step One: Concept

Charles' character is an American dreamer named Martin Lee. Martin grows up in the slums of New York City, where he and his family didn't have much beyond one another, because that's how Charles' real grandfather lived. Reared to believe that a determined person can always make something of himself, Martin decides he has to be the toughest kid on the block. This choice guides him to a career in the army, which proves to be

Character Creation Chart

- **Step One:** Character Concept

Choose Concept, Nature and Demeanor.

- **Step Two:** Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Physical/ Social/ Mental into primary (7), secondary (5) and tertiary (3).

- **Step Three:** Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: Talents/ Skills/ Knowledges into primary (13), secondary (9) and tertiary (5).

- **Step Four:** Select Advantages

Choose Arcanoi (5 points), Backgrounds (7 points), Passions (10 points) and Fetters (10 points).

- **Step Five:** Finishing Touches

Record beginning Pathos (5 plus Memoriam) and beginning Willpower (5).

Spend freebies.

- **Shadow Creation**

See Chapter Four.

not so different from his childhood — except that now he's *paid* to be the toughest guy on the block. He makes sergeant and then sets about molding the soldiers he leads in his image. When the United States enters the war, Martin's section is one of the first to go "over there." Martin and his men weather several months on the Western Front, but after a sniper's bullet kills Sergeant Lee in the trenches, things go downhill for everyone.

Charles realizes that, even after death, what Martin wants to do most is protect others, starting with his men. The character's tough-guy façade is exactly that, so Charles gives him the Caregiver Nature and the Bravo Demeanor.

Step Two: Attributes

Martin's primary Attributes are Physical, reflecting his youthful experience as a street tough and his career as a soldier. Three points go to Stamina, two to Dexterity and two to Strength. Charles imagines that there are farm boys in Martin's section who are stronger than their sergeant, but as their leader Martin knows he has to be able to outlast the lot of them — and he can.

Mental is Martin's secondary category. The man is a scrapper, not a sharpshooter. Still, this is an area that may require freebie-point attention later.

Social is the tertiary category, reflecting Martin's brusque way of dealing with others. Two points go to Manipulation because he uses a lot of low-level trickery to make civilian boys into military men. One point goes to Appearance. Years of fisticuffs have left Martin slightly unlovely, but not monstrous. Charles allots no points to Charisma, which means Martin is nobody's win-friends-influence-people kind of sergeant.

Step Three: Abilities

For Martin, Talents are primary due to his upbringing in the slums, the so-called "school of hard knocks." The rest are honed by the military to make him an effective warrior. Charles devotes three points to Alertness and another three to Brawl. Dodge and Subterfuge each get two points — Martin's sure to be in the path of a bullet or two, and he may have to convince some *hausfrau* that he's one of the Kaiser's boys. A point each in Athletics and Urbanism are naturals for this character; the point in Awareness contradicts expectation, but characters who always conform to expectations are dull.

Skills, which are Martin's secondary Abilities, further reflect his training in the Army. Firearms and Leadership are areas where sergeants must excel, so Charles spends three of nine points each on these. Melee (bayonets) and Stealth are also things he'd learn about and have to teach, too, so each receives one point. Pilot encompasses vehicles of land, sea and air in this game, so Martin's one point means he first learned to drive as a soldier behind the wheel of a truck.

Knowledge is tertiary among Martin's Abilities. Two of these five points go to Heavy Weaponry to represent the character's interest in a new weapon, the machine gun, that troops are learning about stateside. Too bad there aren't enough of the rapid-firing guns for Martin's section to have one abroad. Finally, Charles puts one point each in Bureaucracy, Linguistics and Medicine. The last shows the character's Caregiver Nature peeping out, and the first comes naturally to low-ranking military officers. The bit of Linguistics represents the respectable German he picked up from his immigrant friends in the slums.

Step Four: Advantages

At this point, Martin's looking pretty limited in terms of interaction with others. To keep him from degenerating into a wraithly curmudgeon, Charles chooses a Legacy Background at two points, meaning that the sniper killed the character on one of Europe's larger battlefields. Because the remaining men in Martin's section remember him as the man who pulled them out of the fire repeatedly, Charles gives him Memoriam, also

Freebie Point Costs

Attributes — 5 points per dot
Arcanoi — 5 points per dot
Arcanoi Basic Abilities — 3 points per Arcanos
Willpower — 2 points per dot
Abilities — 2 points per dot
Passions — 2 points per dot
Backgrounds — 1 point per dot
Fetters — 1 point per dot
Pathos — 1 point per 2 dots

at two points. Martin's reputation of protecting his "troops" — whatever Circle he's in, now — has given him a limited Notoriety of one. Martin's strong sense of self gives him some control over his shadow, so he takes an Eidolon of two.

For Martin's five points of Arcanoi, Charles gives the character two points of Moliate. Another two points go for Fatalism. (Maybe he'll suffer fewer sneak attacks now.) Finally, a point gets Martin some Castigate, which is invaluable during Maelstroms, which makes sense for the protector that he truly is.

Charles doesn't have to ponder Martin's Passions for long: A big one is certainly **Protect the Troops (Hope) 4**, and whether the character's men are still in Europe or not, it extends to other associates as well. Equivalent to this Passion is Martin's desire to **Defend the American Dream (Faith) 4**. Finally, Charles allows a little selfishness into his vision (perfectly all right — this guy's not a saint, after all): **Make a name for myself (Greed) 2** is Martin's last drive, albeit minor.

For Martin's Fetters, Charles, having drawn on his own family, makes the character's aging parents important parts of their son's afterlife. They receive a rating of four. Their last postcard to him, a picture of home that Martin left in the care of a French woman he made love to one afternoon, also has a rating of four. The woman herself, an middle-aged widow named Annette, was his last paramour, and she is his last Fetter, at a rating of two.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Like all wraiths, Martin's Willpower begins at 5; his Memoriam score combines with that number to determine his Pathos of 7.

Charles has 15 freebie points to fill out Sergeant Lee. He looks first at Martin's Perception score and decides it should be one point higher. That Attribute purchase costs five freebies. Next, Charles spends another five freebies to obtain a dot of Argos for the character. Being able to move about freely would be important to someone like Martin. Three freebies go toward the basic Lifeweb ability, so he can keep track of his two local Fetters, and the last two freebies buy Martin another point of Willpower, for a total of 6.

Thinking again about Martin's youth, Charles realizes that the character hates bullies. He started toughening himself up after he tried to come to the aid of a neighbor and got one of his teeth punched out. His teeth grew in crooked thereafter, which accounts for Martin's low Charisma (he remained sensitive about his looks, which include a pug nose and receding hair). His hatred of bullies made him an avid foe of Germany, too, and despite his acquaintance with German children in his childhood, he's still a bit biased against Restless German soldiers in the Shadowlands.

And now, Charles begins thinking about Martin's Shadow. For an example of Shadow creation, see p. 146.

The Death Concept

Your character's death can greatly influence her personality as a wraith. Is she a nurse who died right after she uncovered the inhumane practices at her field clinic? Does she seize the opportunity to set things right? Or is she at peace with her means of passing and wondering why she has not Transcended? Although your character's death can be a natural outcome of her Prelude, sometimes it is better to begin with her death experience and work backward, plotting the Prelude that led up to it. Of course, the player may have to compromise with the Storyteller if her death does not fit into his ideas for the chronicle. An enthusiastic Storyteller can create a short Prelude situation wherein the decisions a doomed character makes determine the circumstances of her death: A wise character may die with dignity intact, whereas a foolish one may pass away unheralded — even scorned.

Awakening

The manner of a wraith's reaping once he awakens across the Shroud can strongly affect his views of the Deadlands. A Jade Kingdom wraith who escapes Stygian Thralldom has a decidedly different view of the Underworld than a wraith who is drafted into a Legion or one who's recruited into a Renegade gang. It is this part of the Prelude that allows you to develop your character's after-death Backgrounds. For instance, two dots in the Allies Background may stand for the selfless wraiths who helped the character flee the soulforger's anvil when he first crossed the Shroud. Such experiences help determine exactly what the character thinks about the realm of the Restless.

Even if your character died many years before the period in which the chronicle takes place, it's a good idea to run a Prelude. The character can briefly outline life and death experiences, then jump forward to the time of the chronicle. If for no other reason, this practice is useful in explaining how a character who has been around for so long is no more powerful than a just-reaped Enfant.

Questions Answered

Despite all of the details you've already invested in your character, there are still so many more needed to create a truly comprehensive personality. If you don't get a chance to answer some of the following questions in the Prelude, at least be thinking of them during the first few sessions of the chronicle. Ideally, you should be able to answer many of them from your character's perspective.

- **How did you die?**

You may already know your basic death concept: Now is the time to fill in the details. The Restless never tire of hearing each others' death tales — the more lurid, the better: "After my plane was shot down behind enemy lines, I ambushed a Hun and lifted the uniform from his body. I would have escaped to safety, but I was killed when a nosy corporal found I didn't speak a word of German," tells a lot more about a character than, "I got shot down."

If I Should Wake Before I Die

Like **Wraith: The Oblivion**, **Wraith: The Great War** assumes that characters begin already across the Shroud. But a troupe may want to have its characters experience the Skinlands of the era leading up to the Fourth Great Maelstrom before they encounter the Shadowlands. Here are some guidelines for doing so.

We Happy Few

This sort of chronicle takes more planning than some. The characters need, in the first place, some reason to associate in life: They might be members of the same military regiment, or the students and faculty of a school, or inhabitants of a small village somewhere remote. For any male who was between about 12 and 50 years of age during the War to End All Wars, the presumption must be either that he served in the war or he had some very strong reason for not doing so, such as a serious disability.

The characters might all die in a single event — a gas attack on a regiment, for instance, or a village massacre during one of the revolutions in eastern Europe — or their deaths may take place over the course of several years. If the latter condition applies, then players and Storyteller need to think about how the living characters can remain in contact with the already departed. A totally divided troupe isn't satisfying; whether through Arcanoi, contact with mediums (see **Mediums** for many good ideas) or something else, the living and dead characters need some way to interact with each other.

The living-characters phase of the chronicle might take place before, during or after the War to End All Wars. If the characters die before its end, then they have the opportunity to become established in the Underworld before the events of the wraithly Great War. The changes in Shadowlands society during that era can then come as a surprise, particularly if the players haven't read the rulebook.

Like Unto Himself

Below is a condensed guideline for creating living characters.

- **Concept.** Choose Nature and Demeanor as usual.
- **Attributes.** Set category priorities. Allocate 6 points to primary attributes, 4 points to secondary attributes and 3 points to tertiary attributes.
- **Abilities.** Set category priorities. Allocate 11 points to the primary category, 7 points to the secondary category and 4 points to the tertiary category.
- **Advantages.** Allocate 5 points among Backgrounds. Do not choose from Eidolon, Haunt, Legacy, Memoriam, Notoriety or Relic at this time. The Backgrounds, Allies and Contacts apply to living people, by definition.
- **Willpower.** Willpower begins at 3.
- **Freebie Points.** Allocate 21 points as you wish. Attributes cost 5 points per dot; Abilities cost 2 points per dot; Backgrounds cost 1 point per dot; Willpower costs 2 points per dot. You may choose to hang onto these points until the character dies.

Crossing the Shroud

Characters get a second round of character creation once they've died. Now players bring their characters' point totals up to the norm for wraiths.

- **Attributes.** Add 1 point to one of the Attributes in the primary category, and 1 point to one of the Attributes in the secondary category.
- **Abilities.** Assign 2 points to Abilities in the primary category, 2 points to abilities in the secondary category and 1 point to an Ability in the tertiary category.
- **Arcanoi.** Choose 5-dots worth of Arcanoi, as usual.
- **Backgrounds.** Assign 2 points to Backgrounds of your choice. The Storyteller may wish to allow players to reduce their levels of existing Backgrounds, so as to take advantage of the Backgrounds available only to the Restless Dead.
- **Passions and Fetters.** Choose 10 points each of Passions and Fetters, as usual. They should reflect the actual events of play, the whole point of which is to build up a sense of the character in life, and to make postmortem data reflect that. Remember the prescribed division of Fetters for wraiths caught away from home by the Fourth Great Maelstrom (see p. 84).
- **Pathos.** Pathos begins at 5, plus 1 per dot in Memoriam.
- **Willpower.** Add two points of Willpower to what the character has at death.
- **Freebie points.** Characters get 5 points to spend on freebies at this time, plus any points held over from the initial phase of character creation. The costs given above continue to apply. Arcanoi cost 5 points per dot; Arcanos basic abilities cost 3 points per Arcanos; Passions cost 2 points per dot; Fetters cost 1 point per dot; Pathos costs 1 point per 2 dots.
- **Shadow.** Create the Shadow as usual.

- **How old were you when you died?**

Your age may be closely connected to the way in which you died. If you died in combat, were you a starry-eyed youth who lied about his age to fight for his country, or were you a grizzled Boer War veteran, called reluctantly back into service? Perhaps you were a war orphan or the venerable town elder. The age at which you died can affect your appearance, your relative life experience and your personal opinion of your fate.

- **What were your family and friends like when you were alive?**

Your childhood can have a profound effect on your adult life. Were your parents generally accommodating and kind, or were they strict adherents to the proverb, "Spare the rod and

spoil the child?" Did you even have parents, or did you fend for yourself in an orphanage or on the streets? Did you look forward to chess games with your friends every Friday night, or did you break shop windows with the scamps down the way instead? How did your friends and family react to your demise?

• How did you view the war?

Did you see the "War to End All Wars" as just that: a necessary evil to ensure peace? German citizens saw it as a defensive maneuver, to prevent Russia and France from encroaching on Germany's borders. Perhaps you supported the combat until it touched you personally — a family member killed in action or a home destroyed by an invading army can be a brutal lesson about the horrors of war. Maybe you never liked it from the beginning, for reasons ranging from the humanitarian to the selfish.

• Where did you die?

The location of your death may be important in establishing your attachments to a certain place or particular people. Did you die among friends? In a prison camp among the other fellows from your regiment? Alone in bed, delirious with fever? At prayer in church when an errant shell brought the ceiling down on you? The geographical location of your demise may be important, too. Characters who die at the sites of some of the war's major battles may be in for a very nasty time when they materialize on the other side of the Shroud....

• What was your standing in Quick society?

Your social station in life has very little to do with your subsequent position in the Deadlands. It can, however, determine the views and attitude toward others that you bring with you to the other side of the Shroud. The aristocracy was crumbling but still widely extant during the early 20th century. Were you one of its strictest adherents, embracing your perceived superiority even more tightly in the face of possible deposal? Perhaps you were forced to ride in third-class carriages and bow to those stuffed-shirts because of nothing other than the circumstances of your birth. Did it infuriate you, or did you humbly accept your station in life?

• What are your personal goals?

Your goals should go beyond a simple regurgitation of your Passions. Every character has objectives, both long-term and otherwise, that he tries to fulfill. Happiness is in scant supply in the Deadlands — where do look to find yours? Is there a long-lost someone that you hope to find in the Underworld? Are you trying to get home to another Dark Kingdom, or are you just trying to make the best of it in Stygia? Do you wish to rise in the power structure or remain unshackled by responsibility? As usual, try to keep your character concept in mind as you consider these questions.

• Where do you spend your time?

Are you a real "Hauntbody," with your Circlemates constantly having to drag you from the comfort of your personal

space? Or is there a preordained place where everyone regularly meets, one that serves as a source of Pathos, entertainment or just privacy? Would you give up this place for a newer one, or have you invested it with a great deal of sentimental value? Questions such as these illustrate the wraith's contact with the world around him.

• **Do you hold any cultural intolerances?**

Old stereotypes die hard. Even harder, sometimes, than those people who hold them. The War to End All Wars occurs in a time of rampant prejudice, and the politics of war are the politics of hate — shown in posters, films and children's tales of the time. Barbaric Germans, backstabbing British and bloodthirsty Russians are all grist for propaganda mills attempting to instill a sense of righteousness on every side of the war. Some of this bigotry survives in the Deadlands, and as a result, a wraith may stubbornly cling to gross misconceptions about people he's never encountered.

• **When did you die?**

The age of your character isn't as important here as the Age in which he died. The War to End All Wars takes place at the apex of the Industrial Revolution. To wraiths who died before the mid-19th century, the world of **Wraith: The Great War** may be a very confusing place. The period in which your character lived may determine his level of comfort with the technology he confronts in the chronicle. When your died may also influence your opinions on equality, morality and politics.

• **What are your greatest regrets? Your greatest triumphs?**

Your character's memorable moments go a long way toward defining what sort of individual he is, in both his mind and yours. Of course, the impact of certain events is wholly subjective. One soldier's triumph in ambushing and killing a resting group of enemies may be another wraith's regret at such a cowardly act of murder. Sometimes, the simple things mean the most to us, such as the soldier who trained himself to walk again after a devastating war wound, or the nurse who spent so much time at the infirmary that she missed her daughter's fourth birthday. The deeper you dig for such "memories," the more likely you are to strike gold.

The above questions are just a start: The more information you are able to add to a wraith's history, the easier it is to discern her motivations during the chronicle. All the thought and creativity (a bit of applied research never hurts, either) that you invest into your character at this point is sure to be well-rewarded after a few sessions, once you really begin to get a feel for her.

Traits

Now that you have established most of the intangibles of your character, you must now focus on his Traits. Traits are the structured framework within which you place your character's memories and aspects of his personality. While this framework forms the general boundaries of his capabilities in dots and numbers, it is your imagination that determines what makes him unique. The ranges of the Traits are intentionally left ambiguous to allow room for interpretation and use as guidelines for how your character acts, rather than as hard-and-fast rules. Remember that you may include specialties for any Attribute or Ability above 3.

Archetypes

Here are a few period-specific Archetypes to add to the ones in **Wraith: The Oblivion**. Also, feel free to make up your own.

Au Courant

The Au Courant always feels compelled to push the borders of common tastes — if it's already been done, you've already lost interest. A few risks in experimentation are acceptable, if they result in something that no one's ever seen before. Your greatest fear lies in falling out of step with modernity.

— Regain Willpower when you discover an innovative spin on an old idea.

Commando

Whether anyone appreciates it or not, you're the one who gets the job done — the tougher, the better. You're no stranger to pain, and you'll never let it distract you from the task at hand. Your willingness to charge ahead can sometimes cause headaches for the group, however, as you don't like to slow down so others can catch up.

— Regain Willpower whenever you accomplish a task at great risk to yourself.

Curmudgeon

Life is just one long chain of ironies. You generally count on the worst possible result: That way, if you're wrong, you're pleasantly surprised. You find that other wraiths are always doing something selfish that inevitably gets them in trouble — just as you predicted it would.

— Regain Willpower when you predict a situation's outcome based on your understanding of the way the world works.

Idealist

While others suffer the drudgery of today, you revel in the promise of tomorrow. You brim with ideas and dreams of the way things should be, and you always look for someone who might share your vision. Others may say you refuse to accept reality, but that's because you shouldn't have to.

— Regain Willpower every time an unexpounded idea of yours comes to fruition, just the way you knew it would.

Manipulator

You are fascinated with the way people think — such knowledge helps you to second-guess their hidden motives. To

learn more, you are always carrying out little informal experiments that allow you greater insights into the minds of other wraiths as individuals and of society as a whole.

— Regain Willpower when your insight into another wraith's personality allows you to predict his next move.

Patrician

Life had been good to you, but that's because you were born with the best gifts. However, you'd easily have made it on your own, and you feel little sympathy for others who can't. These beliefs seldom earn you any friends, but your greatest fear is that someone might prove you wrong about yourself.

— Regain Willpower whenever you manage to stand out among a group of achievers.

Pragmatist

You've got a goal in mind — now you must detail all the steps to get from where you are to where you want to be. The reckless may criticize your slow, methodical approach, but you don't want to fail because something important wasn't taken into account before you started. Remember: For want of a nail, the war was lost.

— Regain Willpower every time a careful plan of yours produces a result greater than expected.

Reformist

Be it unfair social policy or despotic leadership, you seek to eliminate the bastions of oppression around you. Whether you choose unbridled terrorism or less violent means is up to you, but you always seek to make the cure fit the disease. This moral crusading often makes enemies of the ones you seek to change, especially in high places.

— Regain Willpower whenever your actions cause others to question the status quo.

Rumormonger

The best way to spread important information is by word of mouth, because it's so hard to trace back to the source. You enjoy being at the center of things, and having wraiths come to you for the latest news. You always know just what to say to ensure that whatever you tell someone gets passed along to others.

— Regain Willpower whenever you cause a piece of privileged information to become part of public conversation.

Attributes

Attributes are the basic units that make up a wraith's being; they rate how a wraith's corpus compares physically and how her Psyche compares both socially and mentally to those of other wraiths. A wraith's Attributes derive from her knowledge of her innate capabilities, and they are therefore very resistant to change.

Physical Attributes

A wraith's preconceptions of himself form his corpus and mold how he looks in the Deadlands before he even sheds his Caul. These pre-existing beliefs explain how some wraiths can be stronger, faster or hardier than others. Physical Attributes are the easiest to quantify, and they apply to a variety of game mechanics.

Strength

Strength determines a wraith's competency at physical tasks, whether they involve sentient or non-sentient targets. Lifting a desk, bending bars or subduing another wraith are all Strength-related feats. A wraith with but a single dot in Strength can barely heft a loaded backpack onto his shoulder, whereas five dots in Strength allow a character to punch through the side of a barn!

Dexterity

Dexterity covers both fine and gross motor skills. Situations that rely on either speed, grace or control fall into Dexterity's domain. A wraith who routinely trips over his own feet has a Dexterity of 1, but a wraith with a Dexterity of 5 is a physical virtuoso — intimately aware of his body's every move.

Stamina

A character's Stamina determines her physical endurance and her ability to resist adverse situations such as unfavorable weather conditions, disease and pain. A character with a single point of Stamina won't last even one round in a boxing ring, whereas a character with five will still be fighting several matches later.

Social Attributes

Social Attributes determine how well a wraith interacts with others. They define where a wraith places himself in society and how well he is able to deal with other wraiths regardless of social standing or affiliation.

Charisma

Charisma is the wraith's overall social magnetism with regard to other wraiths. It determines how quickly the wraith can make friends, engender a positive view of himself and keep acquaintances close. A character with a single dot in Charisma is probably the butt of jokes, even from people who have just meet him; a person who meets a character with five dots is likely to talk about him for years to come, even if they met only briefly. Unlike Manipulation, Charisma works on the force of a character's honest appeal, not through deceit.

Manipulation

Whereas Charisma operates on good faith between parties, Manipulation derives its effectiveness through trickery. A combination of natural skill, valuable experience and the

willingness to use them, Manipulation is the ability to get people to do your bidding unwittingly. A single dot in Manipulation reveals either a truly honest person or a horrible liar. A wraith with Manipulation 5 could sell matches in Hell. Failure on a Manipulation roll can have adverse consequences, as people often don't like to realize they are being fooled.

Appearance

Appearance doesn't simply dictate how attractive a character is, but how well she carries herself. Whereas the other Social Attributes require a varying expenditure of time to truly take effect, Appearance communicates through the all-important first impression — a complex panoply of body language, facial expression, and other physical cues. A wraith with Appearance 1 is often dismissed solely on her looks; one with Appearance 5 receives undue respect and attention because of hers. Although masks are prevalent in the Underworld, this Attribute cannot be hindered by the presence of one, since subliminal cues are such an important part of a character's Appearance.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes are a wraith's intellectual capacity, composed mainly of his memory, critical thinking, speed of thought and general knowledge. These Attributes measure his ability to think deeply enough to plan out what to do in a given circumstance and quickly enough to implement such a plan.

Perception

Perception determines a character's ability to look beyond the obvious, to the little details hidden in the seams of any situation. A single dot in Perception means that the character may be too absorbed in his own world to notice the one around him. Five dots indicate a mind that can not only detail an entire incident with near-perfect accuracy, but one that can also focus immediately on minutiae of particular interest. Perception applies to all five senses, and allows scrutiny of anything from a mood change to the faint bitter almond smell in a drink.

Intelligence

The Intelligence Attribute rates how well a wraith thinks; how ably she can fit the pieces of a situation together to make a coherent whole. It determines her ability to handle complex concepts as well. A wraith with a single dot in Intelligence cannot seem to grasp the obvious; one with five dots is a true prodigy, performing intellectual feats that seem almost magical. Intelligence also measures the amount of general knowledge the character possesses.

Wits

Wits determines a wraith's ability to react quickly and correctly to a sudden change in his environment. A wraith with a single dot of Wits is seldom able to do or say the right thing when he wants to, even though he may think of it at a later time. One with five dots is lightning-fast — whether in board games, word games or war games.

Abilities

Talents

Every character has a number of talents — intuitive proficiencies that improve mainly with experience and natural-born ability. Such Abilities come so innately that even if your character possesses no dots in a Talent, you may still roll with no penalty, as everybody possesses at least a basic working knowledge of these Traits.

Alertness

Although Perception may be applied to specific items, tasks or situations, Alertness is used specifically to measure the character's attention to her surroundings. A single point in Alertness provides a basic idea of one's surroundings, such as associating footfalls with the approach of another; five points gives a character the keen senses of a cat on the prowl. A wraith may also focus her senses — an activity requiring a Perception + Alertness roll (variable difficulty) — to acutely perceive things in the Skinlands.

Athletics

Athletics is a complex Talent, combining Physical Attributes with stylized motor skills. It measures not just competency at sports, but how well you climb trees or dive into trenches. With one dot, Athletics allows a character to kick a football with reasonable accuracy. With five dots, he is the stuff of football legend: a Knute Rockne, perhaps, or one of The Four Horsemen. Remember, any roll that simply requires an Attribute (such as a straight Strength roll for lifting) does not involve Athletics.

Awareness

Awareness is the ability to sense nearby supernatural occurrences. With this Talent, you may detect the presence of Arcanoi or Spectres and tell when something inexplicable is about to happen. A single dot in Awareness lets the character pick up on signs of Arcanos use that others might miss; five dots allow the character to count the number of mouths on a Plasmic *before* it jumps from the Tempest.

Brawl

Brawl generally covers any kind of unarmed combat, from the Jade Kingdom's deadly martial arts to keeping a hungry barghest from tearing out your throat. A character with a single dot in Brawl may have been able to beat his kid brother at wrestling most of the time. A character with five dots, however, has little need of a relic blade or gun: her fists are deadly enough weapons.

Dodge

Dodge is the all-important skill of getting out of the way. Regardless of what comes at you — mortar shells, well-aimed kicks or thrown billiard tables — Dodge allows you to duck, sidestep or otherwise get out of harm's way. One dot provides you with the sense not to peek over the trench edge when explosions erupt around you; five dots might allow you to stand in a Skinlands hailstorm and avoid every single stone. The Dodge Ability covers Brawl, Melee and missile attacks.

Empathy

Empathy allows you to (figuratively) put yourself into another wraith's corpus. Characters possessing this Talent can assess what others are feeling. A character with a single dot in Empathy generally picks up on sarcasm; a character with five dots can see through the most experienced poker face.

Expression

Expression is a measure of how well you can speak or write, regardless of the topic. People remember what a character with a high Expression rating has said, even if they don't remember the character himself. One dot in Expression means that a character's essays received astonished remarks in high school. Five dots mean that a character's essays received astonished remarks in the New York Times.

Intimidation

Wraiths with a knack for Intimidation are good at coercing others through implied (or actual) pain. There is a delicate art to ensuring compliance through threat, and the character with many points in Intimidation may be a certifiable Torquemada. A single dot in Intimidation allows the character to cow children by yelling; five dots allow him to cow gangsters by laughing.

Subterfuge

Subterfuge involves, all euphemisms aside, the finer points of lying. This Talent allows you not only to stretch, alter or hide the truth, it also allows you to tell when others are doing the same. If you have one dot in Subterfuge, you might be able to put one over on your mother once in a while. With five dots, you could convince advancing Russian soldiers that you were born and raised in Moscow, even if you've never left Bavaria in your life.

Urbanism

This Talent is not merely the domain of vagabonds and urchins, but of anyone who wishes to profit from a city's secrets. The

art of street survival, Urbanism affords a character understanding of street customs, the black market and ways of blending into the local populace, among other things. A character with one dot in Urbanism could find a safe place to hide in an unfriendly city; a character with five dots could find a safe place to test artillery.

Skills

Skills are Abilities for which you might have a general knack, but which still require rigorous training to fully benefit from them. If you attempt to roll against a Skill in which you possess no dots, you must make that roll at + 1 difficulty, reflecting your lack of experience in that particular field.

Crafts

In recognition of the historically recent shift to industrialization and the lag time between folkways in the Skinlands and ones in the Underworld, Twilight Era characters with the Crafts Skill can also do things otherwise considered to be Repair. They can take raw materials and refine them into something of use or beauty, or they can fix anything from a grandfather clock to a sagging bridge pylon, if given the proper tools. Gem-cutting, glass-blowing and basket-weaving are all covered by this Skill, as are mending and tinkering. Conversely, a wraith with Crafts knows how best to disable a machine with his Outrage or recognize the distinctive handiwork of a practiced soulforger. One dot in Crafts means that the character can assemble crude furniture from raw material. Five dots denote someone who can perfectly restore antiques with glue and sawdust. This skill may require specialization at higher levels. The number of successes on a Crafts roll determines the quality of the finished work.

Etiquette

Although it suffers a major blow during the early 20th century, high society still exists and (in some cases) becomes all the more rigid. Etiquette is especially useful in diplomatic encounters. A single dot allows you to tell your dinner fork from your salad fork, whereas five dots might have allowed you to charm Queen Victoria.

Firearms

A very common Skill among wraiths entering the Deadlands at this time, Firearms covers not only the use of a gun but how to maintain and repair it as well. A wraith with only one dot in firearms probably never made it through training, whereas a wraith with five dots could hit a sparrow in a sea squall. Firearms does not cover artillery, nor does it include weapons such as bows or slings.

Leadership

Leadership is a measure of how well you can get others to follow your orders. It differs from Intimidation and Subterfuge (although it may have aspects of each) in that it causes people to comply through respect, rather than fear or trickery. One point in Leadership allows you to lead a small group in a relatively inconsequential matter; five dots gives you the potential to lead entire nations. This Skill is used mostly in conjunction with Charisma or Manipulation.

Meditation

Meditation is the ability to center one's thoughts. One dot indicates a character who can meditate in a quiet room with few distractions. A wraith with five dots can meditate during an artillery barrage. By meditating, a wraith may catch up on lost Slumber. The number of successes gathered from a Stamina + Meditation roll (difficulty 8) determines the effective number of Slumber hours gained per hour of meditation.

Melee

Melee involves the ability to fight using a variety of hand-to-hand weapons, including swords, bayonets, clubs, chains and broken bottles. A single dot in this Skill might prevent you from cutting yourself while showing off with a sword. Five dots gives you a mastery of weapon combat rivaling that of some of the deadliest Jade Troops. The Melee Skill also provides knowledge of proper care for your chosen weapons.

Performance

In contrast with the spoken words and writing of the Expression Talent, this Skill covers the performing arts: singing, dancing, acting, playing an instrument or similar pursuits. Performance also allows you to know the society surrounding your particular art form and how well you fit into it. A single dot denotes either untrained talent or brief lessons, whereas five dots signifies a legendary artist of the era. Advanced levels of Performance may require some specialization.

Pilot

Relic vehicles in the Underworld do not require a great deal of specific training to operate, unlike their counterparts in the Skinlands. Rather, these devices can be controlled by their owner's desires, rather than his knowledge of their inner workings. The Pilot Skill consists of this general knowledge about vehicle operation, from zeppelins to cruisers to armored tanks. It also encompasses the period's automobiles, and therefore comprises the Drive Ability. One dot implies that the character knows how to start up and turn off the vehicle easily — it's just the parts in between that give her a bit of trouble. A character with five dots can captain a variety of vehicles expertly.

Stealth

Stealth allows a character to move quietly and hide unnoticed. Of course, modifiers are often applied depending on

the surroundings and the items that the character is carrying as she tries to be silent. With a single dot, you could fool war bond solicitors into thinking you're not home. With five dots, you could travel the length of the Western Front without being harassed. Stealth rolls are usually made against another's Perception roll.

Knowledges

Knowledges are those Abilities that can be gained only through a determined application of the mind, both in and out of the classroom. Oftentimes, Knowledges are learned from a willing mentor, but many wraiths in the Underworld are self-taught. A player may not make a roll involving a Knowledge that her character does not possess. This disallowance reflects the inability of a character without a certain Knowledge to "fake it," in contrast with Skills and Talents.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is your ability to understand the tangled workings of the system on both sides of the Shroud and either unravel it or make it even more muddled for others. A single dot in Bureaucracy allows a character to finagle a bit more than his fair share of relief supplies. Five dots allow him to deny relief to entire countries, if he so chooses. Bureaucracy is also a measure of a character's organizational skills and his ability to execute plans.

Enigmas

The Enigmas Knowledge comes from dedicated practice and experience at solving all kinds of mysteries. From jigsaw puzzles to Zen riddles, knowledge of Enigmas allows individuals to mold vital details into a coherent solution. A character with one dot can guess the punchline of a knock-knock joke from time to time. A character with five dots can untie the Gordian Knot.

Heavy Weaponry

This catch-all category encompasses everything from mounted machine guns and field artillery to torpedoes and naval cannons of every era. Although broad in Skinlands terms, Heavy Weaponry knowledge applies to a considerably narrower range of ordnance in the Underworld, due to the general lack of relic ammunition. Thus, howitzer crewmen can carry their experience across the Shroud for work in soulsteel pillboxes or with muzzleloaders aboard ghostly warships. Note, however, that a player must declare a specialty in this area, regardless of his rating, and he suffers heightened difficulty with weaponry outside his specialty. For example, a machine gunner dragooned into artillery duty might face difficulty 8, rather than difficulty 5 (Storyteller's discretion). One dot indicates someone who once watched a howitzer being deployed. Five dots signifies a gunner who could put a shell on a *pfennig* 50 miles away.

Investigation

Characters with knowledge of Investigation know the proper methods of locating evidence and performing forensic analysis on it. At higher levels, you can deduce more important facts, such as *modus operandi* or the layout of a crime scene. A single dot signifies a character who knows to follow a trail of blood for further clues. Five dots signify a character who can reconstruct the victim's life story from such a trail.

Law

Unlike Bureaucracy, Law deals with the strong arm of the system, the one that can put you away for a very long time. A single dot in Law indicates that your character generally knows what *not* to do in order to stay out of jail. A character with five dots could shame a Deathlord with his knowledge of Stygian jurisprudence. Knowledge of law allows you to manipulate the mechanisms of the legal system within certain limits.

Linguistics

Although the language of the Underworld is a universal one, wraiths often cross the Shroud with knowledge of multiple Skinlands vernaculars or pick them up in the Deadlands. Not just a measure of how many languages you can speak, Linguistics also determines your penchant for identifying accents, reading lips and, to a certain extent, linguistic mimicry. Linguistics applies not just to Skinlands languages; it may also be used to study the baleful tongues of the Underworld, from the obscene chatter of Striplings to the cryptic sign language of the Ferrymen. The number of dots that you possess in this Knowledge determines the number of languages that you can speak, the number doubling with every dot: One dot equals one additional language; two dots equals two additional languages; three dots equals four additional languages, and so on.

Medicine

Medicine is an indicator of how familiar you are with the workings of the human body, and with practices that are both beneficial and detrimental to it. One dot implies that you may have undergone a briefing on first aid before you went to battle; having five dots means that you were innovating techniques for heart surgery in its infancy. While of little use in the Deadlands, this Knowledge may be used to aid a living Fetter — or combined with Outrage to enhance the Arcanos' damaging effects.

Occult

This Knowledge allows you to delve into some of the darker aspects of the Twilight Era. It comprises a general familiarity with such exotic practices as Caribbean *voudoun* and *kyrta* dolls from India, as well as knowledge of the supernatural beings that lurk just out of sight in the Underworld. One dot denotes a character

who attended a few seances or Tarot readings. Five dots imply a character who could have given Sir James Frazer pointers.

Politics

A character well-versed in this Knowledge is familiar with the political system in both theory and practice, allowing him to know exactly whose apples to polish if he wishes favor from on high. A character with a single dot in Politics may have kept up with national campaigns in the news; one with five dots may have been the driving force behind those campaigns. Politics includes political structures in both the Skinlands and the Deadlands.

Science

This Knowledge considers both practical and theoretical knowledge equally: Dots in Science can mean both a familiarity with linear algebra and an ability to mix lethal poisons from the contents of the pantry. One dot means that you did all your reading in zoology class. Five dots implies that it was your research that students were reading in zoology class. Although the laws of science are seldom consistent in the Underworld, they may be of use to a wraith trying to affect things across the Shroud.

Backgrounds

Whereas the other Traits on a character sheet deal mainly with the things a character may *do*, Backgrounds reveal what a character has *done*. Thus, these Traits may not be raised through experience points: Experience allows us to learn from our past, not change it. Backgrounds are the Traits that can help to elucidate and strengthen a character concept by defining her history and context. They may be used to reflect the wraith's past activities, both before and after she entered the Deadlands. They may also determine how other wraiths treat the character, as certain Backgrounds, such as Status and Notoriety, may be known to others before they even meet the character.

Backgrounds often complement each other, but they don't necessarily have to. The skillful choice of Backgrounds can either reveal new facets of a character's personality or simply strengthen old ones. For example, a large amount of Notoriety and a small amount of Status make a character very different from one with little Notoriety and much Status. In the first case, the character with great Notoriety finds that wraiths she has never met know much about her afterlife, but they may not show her much deference until she lives up to her reputation in their eyes. In the second, the character may be able to access

privileged resources and command respect among the Hierarchy, but few wraiths outside the bureaucracy pay her any notice.

The Storyteller should take just as active a role in Background choice as the player. As the chronicle demands it, the Storyteller may have to manipulate distribution of points in order to make the characters fit well into the story. For example, it would not make sense for a character to immediately possess points in Mentor or Status in a chronicle that begins with his entry into the Shadowlands. Alternately, a chronicle that begins with the characters as Hierarchy agents may require that they possess a dot or two in each of these Backgrounds.

It may be necessary to combine Backgrounds with a pertinent Attribute for certain rolls. A character may need to make a Manipulation + Notoriety roll, for example, to get into an exclusive club on name-recognition alone.

Allies

What a hopeless place the Deadlands would seem without friends! Even more so than in life, wraiths find it necessary to seek support and solace in comrades when the weight of existence grows too heavy to bear. The Allies Background serves to represent these unions. While it rarely includes the members of a wraith's Circle (indeed, few Circles are so harmoniously composed), it may include her closest friends, comrades at arms or any other inhabitants of the wraith's world who might share a kindred bond with the character.

Like any friend, Allies may come to a character's aid, but they expect the same in return. Points spent in this Background do not buy indentured servants with boundless generosity and patience. No one likes to feel he is being used by his friends, and Allies who are continually called on for favors while receiving few in return stop associating with the character. The Storyteller can have a hand in clarifying exactly who the character's Allies are, and the developing relationship between a character and a friend close to her heart can be the basis of many a tale.

Characters may also choose to have Allies on the other side of the Shroud — perhaps talented mediums who have made the wraith's acquaintance through their skills. Players wishing to have mortal Allies should consult their Storyteller for approval in these cases.

None: Perhaps your character is shy and withdrawn, a loner or is simply so disagreeable that he hasn't drawn any other wraiths to him.

- • A single Ally — your lone confidant in an uncaring world.
- •• Two Allies
- ••• Three Allies
- •••• Four Allies
- ••••• Five Allies; how do you maintain so many close relationships?

Artifact

Highly prized among the Restless, Artifacts are items that have been infused with certain functions or powers that aid the wraith fortunate enough to carry them. These objects are tirelessly searched out by any wraith powerful enough to take them and safeguarded jealously by any wraith not strong enough to defend them. A wraith who possesses an Artifact must be forever wary — the more powerful the Artifact, the more likely others are to try to relieve the owner of it. A character who purchases this Background at any level must work with the Storyteller to create a story that plausibly explains how she came by the Artifact, and why she has been allowed to keep it.

Characters may choose this Background more than once, and thus possess multiple Artifacts, the usefulness of each determined by the number of dots the character allocates to each one. Alternately, characters may instead concentrate dots on a single Artifact to make it all the more valuable — and sought after.

None: Due to either bad luck, indifference or inexperience, your character (like most wraiths) possesses no Artifacts.

- • A small, seemingly insignificant Artifact
- •• A minor Artifact, with limited use, such as a gramophone that only barghests can hear.
- ••• An Artifact with many uses, or one that serves a continuous need, such as a helmet forged of Stygian steel.
- •••• A powerful or unique Artifact, such as a mask that can form itself to its owner's whim.
- ••••• An Artifact of legend and awesome power. Such Artifacts have a notoriety all to themselves, and they may attract the unwanted attention of avaricious wraiths if flaunted carelessly.

Contacts

Unlike Allies, Contacts are not the wraith's close friends, but rather ones she has encountered who are willing to work for her. There is almost always an outright price for such aid, whether a favor owed in return or material compensation, but the character can count on it as being a fair recompense for the service rendered.

There are two types of contacts represented by this Background: major Contacts and minor ones. Major Contacts are wraiths who work closely with the character, and are usually willing to exchange services, goods and information within a certain domain. Examples of such areas include Stygia, the Skinlands, the Hierarchy and the Guilds. You may have one Major Contact in several different fields, or multiple ones within a single field in order to have true influence there. The Storyteller may help the player develop the personalities and locations of a character's major Contacts. Minor Contacts specialize in the same general field of interest as a character's major Contacts, but are usually less well-informed or less helpful than major ones. A character wishing to delve into her minor Contacts in a certain field may spend a period of time determined by the Storyteller and roll against her Contacts rating (difficulty 7). The number of successes rolled dictates how much information the character gleans.

None: Although the character may be a Contact for another wraith, she has no useful contacts herself.

- • One major Contact and one or two minor ones in a given field.
- •• Two major Contacts and a handful of minor ones.
- ••• Three major Contacts and a number of minor Contacts, across several different areas.
- •••• Four major Contacts, allowing you access to information and favors from myriad broad fields, or near-omniscience in one area.
- ••••• Five major Contacts — and you're always nodding to minor Contacts wherever you go.

Eidolon

Eidolon is a measure of a wraith's ability to resist her Shadow — *its temptations*, insults and assaults on her consciousness. Wraiths who possess Eidolon are not necessarily moral, nor are they mentally unshakable. Instead, they possess a sort of spiritual mettle that allows them to resist their Shadow's manipulations. The Eidolon is an intimate part of a wraith's Psyche. Some are so strong as to present themselves as separate entities, and they may play a strong-armed angel on one shoulder to the Shadow's devil on the other. To possess Eidolon, the wraith does not necessarily need some special insight into her Shadow (although some wraiths have it), but rather an innate ability to resist its incitements to self-destruction.

In game terms, each point of Eidolon allows the player one extra die per session to help the character resist any of the Shadow's seductions (including Thorns). Eidolon may also be used during a Harrowing to allow the wraith some control over the course of events. A player may choose how many of the Eidolon dice he wishes to use in a given situation, but he may never use more than his allotted number of dice per session.

None: You have no walls with which to protect yourself from the Shadow's constant siege.

- • You don't always play the chump to your Shadow's pranks.
- •• Occasionally, you can turn your back on your Shadow, but doing so only makes it angrier.
- ••• You have the courage to say "23 Skidoo" to your Shadow. Sometimes it listens.
- •••• Your Shadow must tax its intelligence and resources to influence you.
- ••••• Your Eidolon is a near-impenetrable bastion against which your Shadow is forced to mount exhausting attacks that may not even have an effect.

Haunt

The place that was the most meaningful to a character in life may remain so after death, becoming the character's Haunt. In this special place, the Shroud is weakened, and a wraith may find Arcanoi simpler to use and her Shadow much easier to confront. A wraith's Haunt serves as her home, fortress and retreat — a place where she can Slumber in comfort and safety.

Haunts are occasionally shared by several wraiths, who facilitate the area's defense, but their relations can be fractious — in the Shadowlands, objects of value cannot be shared for long. If the Storyteller allows it, players may combine their Background points to purchase a shared Haunt, the details of which are left up to the Storyteller and players. The physical place with which the Haunt is connected in the Skinlands generally carries the appearance of the stereotypical haunted house: ominously rundown and decayed. Haunts may be connected to a particular Passion or Fetter, or the Haunt itself may serve as a potent and significant Fetter to the wraith.

Inside the Haunt, the Shroud is lowered by the number of Background points that are invested into the Haunt itself (but it never goes lower than 2). Additionally, many Haunts gather Memoriam, which may be reaped by any wraith who spends time there. A character may wish to both share a communal Haunt with his comrades and possess a private Haunt for himself. In this case, he must purchase this Background twice: once for the group and once for himself.

None: There is no place in the Shadowlands that you may safely call your own. Has it always been this way, or did you somehow lose your old Haunt?

- • A tiny area, perhaps a closet or forgotten foxhole.
- •• It's not much, but you call it home: the size of an abandoned trapper's cabin just large enough for yourself and a guest.
- ••• A fair-sized Haunt, maybe an abandoned barn. You may accommodate several wraiths comfortably here.
- •••• Either a house-sized Haunt with ample quarters for guests or a special Haunt — one that is well-defended or somehow hidden. Perhaps it is even mobile: a ghost ship, for example.
- ••••• The legendary spooky mansion on the hill or an entire abandoned factory is yours for the haunting.

Legacy

Memory is to the Restless as faith is to the clergy: It validates their existence in the world. Wraiths derive strength from the remembrance of the living, as these thoughts lift them above the decay of the Deadlands and link them to the heartbeat of the Skinlands. Unlike the Memoriam Background, Legacy deals not with the memories concerning the wraith himself, but those evoked by his accomplishments, even after his name has long since faded. For example, when someone cites a work, they may speak of the author in the present tense, e.g., "In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare creates a...." A long-dead artist cited as if he still drew breath is thus, in a sense, immortalized, at least in word. In the Underworld, this timelessness runs deeper than words alone.

A character's Legacy can be represented by physical objects, such as a statue cast in her honor or a school she helped found. The Legacy Background also covers a character's ideas

that have carried on after her death: a philosophical tenet, a children's book or simply a tradition at the local Odd Fellows Hall. War memorials are a common way for fallen soldiers to gain solace from the remembrance of their struggles in historical battles. Once per story, a wraith may draw on her Legacy for comfort — a process of reaffirmation which physically manifests itself as restored corpus. To do so, the wraith must travel either to the site of the Legacy or to an important place associated with its creation or dissemination. Once she is there, her player must roll a number of dice equal to the level of the Background at difficulty 7. The number of successes rolled represents the number of corpus levels that the wraith may heal instantly. Aggravated damage, however, requires approximately one hour of attendance at the site per corpus level healed.

(**Note:** Any soldier killed in combat at the site of a major battle must take at least two dots of Legacy, which represent the memories inherent in the mass commemorative there.)

None: You have left nothing behind in accomplishment or idea.

- Your prowess in a drinking contest is immortalized on the wall of a pub somewhere.
- •• You fought in several major battles of the War to End All Wars.
- ••• You created something popular that carries your name, allowing you to join the ranks of Samuel Morse and Thomas Crapper.
- •••• Your work set off a major literary or artistic movement.
- ••••• An idea of yours is responsible for the lives (or deaths) of millions.

Memoriam

Pathos, the emotional energy on which wraiths may call, can be gained through distressingly few means. Memoriam is one of them. The emotion that the living invest into their memories of loved ones who have died fuels a wraith's existence. The only way for most residents of the Skinlands to interact with a wraith is through their memories, by posthumously attributing thoughts and feelings to others who can no longer experience such things. A statement that seems innocuous in the world of the living, such as "Aunt Glasya would turn over in her grave if she knew that," can have a significant effect on the other side of the Shroud, for it represents the persistence of memory for the wraith.

The nature of these memories, whether fond or unpleasant, is unimportant. Memoriam is based solely on the number of people who still honor (or curse) the wraith's name. Once per session, a wraith may call on these memories by evoking the feelings that others in the Skinlands retain for her. By rolling her Memoriam (difficulty 8), a wraith may gain one Pathos point for each success that she receives on the dice. A botch, however, may result in the immediate or impending loss of a permanent Memoriam point as the sands of time inexorably weather away memories and feelings.

None: Your death impacted no one. Why did you fail to make a mark on anyone else's life? Of course, you may have died so long ago that you have disappeared from the general consciousness.

- One person refuses to let your memory fade. Lover, compatriot or mortal enemy?
- •• A few people remember you and the way in which you affected their lives.
- ••• Perhaps you have a family and a group of co-workers or classmates who keep your spirit alive in their minds.
- •••• Your name is still spoken within a large group — perhaps a community or a military regiment.
- ••••• An entire nation sheds tears (of sadness or of joy?) at your passing.

Mentor

Entirely different from the Contacts or Allies Backgrounds, the Mentor Background provides the character with a teacher, protector and supporter. It does not provide for the character an associate with whom he may swap favors or a comrade to whom he may turn (although some Mentors occasionally serve both these purposes). The relationship between a Mentor and the character is complicated and personal. Some are purely professional, such as the Centurion who trains a would-be Legionnaire for future service. Others are more informal, in which the Mentor may also serve as friend, confidante, even lover. The Storyteller and player should briefly discuss the Mentor's relationship with her ward and how the two came to associate.

Mentors can impart their knowledge of many subjects to their wards, from Arcanoi to new Abilities to general knowledge of day-to-day life in the Necropoli. The Mentor (i.e., the Storyteller) alone, however, decides what information is shared. Mentors have also been known, on occasion, to bail unfortunate pupils out of dangerous situations. Pupils should not come to rely on this aid; a Mentor who is continually being called on to save her charge from one mess after another soon begins looking for a new, less troublesome pupil to instruct.

None: You haven't found a Mentor worthy of your attention yet, or perhaps no potential Mentor has yet found you worthy of *his* attention.

- A Mentor of small importance, with little more experience in the Underworld than yourself.
- •• A Mentor with some connections and with a few years of experience to share.
- ••• A well-respected Mentor with a modest amount of power and connections.
- •••• This Mentor is powerful, well-connected and possesses the ability to make things happen with a word to the right people.
- ••••• A prestigious and all-knowing Mentor, perhaps a Ferryman or an Anacreon. A Mentor of this level has his pick of wards and may expect great effort and obedience from a pupil.

Notoriety

A character's fame in her mortal life has very little impact on her standing in the world of the Restless. After all, no matter how rich or famous a person might be, he begins his new afterlife in the Deadlands no better off than the servant who may have shined his shoes daily. There are, of course, some wraiths for whom the Restless wait, like the inmates of a prison anticipating the arrival of a well-known lawbreaker into their fold. These wraiths tend to be the exception, however, rather than the rule.

Just as in life, it is possible to cultivate a reputation among the inhabitants of the Underworld. Renegades and Hierarchs who take a very active role in their chosen fields are quick to develop certain distinctions, oftentimes unenviable ones. Characters who purchase points in the Notoriety Background are purchasing a place in conversations held throughout the Deadlands, as well as certain expectations about their behavior. Wraiths with a great deal of Notoriety find that they are given much unwanted attention as a public figure, with wraiths always making demands of their time, whether for advice, favors or criticism. Of course, with the burdens of fame come its rewards, and they are also welcomed into places and circles from which others of their status might be shooed. Remember that just as fame in life does not lead to Notoriety after death, an unassuming life in the Skinlands may not necessarily hamper renown in the Underworld.

None: You are like any other wraith — a nameless mask among thousands. Do you desperately wish to shed your anonymity or do you prefer it to the alternative?

- • Your name is known to a select group of wraiths.
- •• Perhaps you are whispered about for something you did or said at the last Council meeting.
- ••• It seems that many more wraiths than you are familiar with know your name.
- •••• Your name is common currency in Shadowland conversation.
- ••••• It is difficult for you to go anywhere unrecognized.

Relic

There are items in the Skinlands to which powerful emotions or persistent memories are attached, even after their destruction. On their eradication or burial in the land of the living, these objects enter the Underworld as relics. Although some relics may possess an inherent degree of significance, such as a national treasure or a jailer's keys, most have little meaning for anyone save a single person. Oftentimes, that is enough. One of the merits of the War to End All Wars (for wraiths, anyway) is the widespread destruction —and consequent Underworld reappearance — of valued items. Lucky socks, a favorite doll, a broken pocket-watch passed down through generations — items such as these are likely to reappear in the Shadowlands after their disappearance from the Skinlands. Objects that are handmade, increasingly rare in this period of rapidly developing industry, can be found in the Underworld, especially if made for personal use rather than sale. For a wraith to possess a relic, it need not necessarily have belonged to her in life. Like the living, wraiths can acquire unwanted (or improperly guarded) property.

Just as with Artifacts, wraiths may take this Background more than once, investing a certain number of points into more than one relic to possess multiple objects of varying significance.

None: You have no possessions. Did you just enter the Shadowlands, or do you prefer the life of an ascetic, unencumbered by goods?

- • Your relic is seemingly insignificant, perhaps a judge's gavel or a favorite gramophone cylinder.
- •• A minor relic. A lucky pen, for example.
- ••• A relic with a moderate degree of usefulness, like an ornamental cavalry saber or field glasses.
- •••• A major relic with moving parts that can be powered by Pathos, such as a motorcycle.
- ••••• An invaluable relic that was perhaps famous in the Skinlands — the envy of wraiths everywhere.

Status

Status is a more concrete recognition of rank in wraith society than Notoriety. A wraith may be officially or unofficially in the records of an organization, or universally recognized by that group. Unlike Notoriety, however, Status is not necessarily contingent on individual achievement. Just as in the Skinlands, many wraiths in the Bureaucracy of Stygia have done little more than support the right ladder-climbers to attain the authority that they now possess.

Status is not the exclusive domain of the Hierarchy. Heretics, Renegades and even the Guilds all have members of greater and lesser standing. A wraith may even purchase Status in more than one group, such as among Renegades and Hierarchs (though for obvious reasons, this practice is uncommon in the Deadlands). Status can be used to elicit favors from authorities, but with it comes additional responsibility and expectations for the character.

None: You have no rank in any Underworld society.

- • You are a mere initiate. Unpleasant duties that no one else wants are often thrust upon you, but these chores reaffirm your status as a member of the group.
- •• You have proved that you can handle tasks of some importance.
- ••• You have made it to the middle ranks. Although your orders may not have a great impact, at least you are in a position to give them.
- •••• With your proven loyalty comes power and privilege. You generally have access to the group's resources, and you are trusted by higher-ups who confide in you.
- ••••• A leadership position. You have nearly unrestricted access to anything within the organization's power and take orders only from the top. Players' characters are unlikely to rise any higher than this.

Arcanoi

Arcanoi are the hidden arts of the Restless. Equal parts conviction and craft, they can be learned from another or picked up through observation and experience. Most wraiths enter the Shadowlands with an aptitude for one or two Arcanoi, then slowly develop others over time.

Argos

Harbingers

Basic Abilities

Maelstrom Navigation: During the Fourth Great Maelstrom, most Harbingers learn the art of navigating in the Skinlands rather than the Tempest. The thin fog and misty precipitation of even the Maelstrom's lowest ebbs make traveling off a well-marked path or roadway extremely dangerous, and the destructiveness of Spectre wrecking crews means that very few paths remain well-marked. Wraiths trained in Maelstrom Navigation can extend their senses through the visual obstructions and gain a sense of their location.

System: The player must make a Wits + Argos roll (difficulty equal to the level of the Maelstrom being navigated plus four). A success indicates the user does not become lost, though the route she chooses may not be optimal. Three successes allow her to take a safe and speedy route to her destination, and five successes allow her to take a shortcut and save a significant amount of time, or bypass a major danger along the route. A new roll should be made every time the Maelstrom's severity increases, or whenever a major change of environment or direction occurs.

Tempest Glimpse: This art allows the Harbinger to peer into the tempest. This sort of scrying is quite difficult during the Great War, but the opportunity to detect Spectres gathering in the Tempest is too invaluable to pass up. Note that even though the Harbinger using this art remains in the Shadowlands, beings or creatures on the other side of this "window" can see him, too. While using Tempest Glimpse, the Harbinger can communicate with persons in the Tempest as if they were the same distance away in a normal direction.

System: Following a successful Perception + Argos roll (difficulty 5), the player may make Perception + Awareness checks to distinguish shapes moving in the storm below the world. The normal difficulty for the Awareness checks is 8, but each success on the Perception + Argos roll lowers this difficulty by one.

• Enshroud

The ability to go unseen is more valuable than ever during the Fourth Great Maelstrom. Thus, the first art taught to a new Harbinger is invariably Enshroud — the ability to cloak oneself in shadows and become invisible in the gloom of the Shadowlands. When first activated, the wraith suddenly vanishes with a gesture of her hands, as if she had suddenly pulled the fabric of the Shadowlands in front of herself.

System: The player spends a point of Pathos and makes a Dexterity + Argos check (difficulty 6). Each success allows the user to stay Enshrouded for one turn. Enshrouded wraiths may act on others, even attack them, without becoming visible.

•• Storm Robes

By drawing the shadows thickly around herself and saturating them with Pathos, the Harbinger can create protective garb against the Maelstrom. Although not the most resistant form of protection, Storm Robes are simple and consume little Pathos. The robes are the dark, mottled gray of a stormy evening sky. Storm robes normally last until taken off, but they are also bulky and uncomfortable, hiding the face and muffling the voice. However, if the Harbinger ceases to travel, the Maelstrom Robes usually disintegrate within a few scenes.

The Arts of the War-Dead

The arts of the Great War are not the same as those of **Wraith: The Oblivion**. The constant warfare — both among the Restless and against the Shadow-eaten — gives Arcanoi more of a martial character. Similarly, arts evolve to protect the Restless against the knifelike winds of the Fourth Great Maelstrom. And of course, different times breed different mind-sets. Thus, different styles of effects predominate in Outrage and Pandemonium, and the modern art of Inhabit is not yet possible, given the narrower incidence of sophisticated electrical machinery.

At the Storyteller's discretion, characters may be permitted the option of purchasing the standard **Wraith: The Oblivion** arts for their Arcanoi, either at character generation, when they raise their Arcanoi or as additional arts. Whether this is permitted, and to what extent, is entirely at the Storyteller's discretion. It is suggested that characters be required to seek out special tutelage or to spend extra time to learn the standard **Wraith: The Oblivion** Arcanoi (if they are available at all), because during the Great War, very few Enfants and Lemures are taught the peaceable arts. Characters from the beginning of the period, who may have been trained before 1916, are much more likely to know the original arts than a wraith reaped after the beginning of the Fourth Great Maelstrom.

System: The player spends two points of Pathos and rolls Strength + Argos with a difficulty equal to (the maximum intensity of Maelstrom the robes are conjured to withstand plus four). Each success reduces the per-scene damage of the Maelstrom by one die. Storm Robes exposed to a Maelstrom of greater intensity than they're designed to withstand are rapidly (within one scene) reduced to tatters.

••• Flicker

With this art, the character can "dip into" the Tempest, using its irregular geometry to virtually catapult himself across the Skinlands. To Skinlands observers, the user seems to flicker from location to location along a path to her destination, hence the art's name.

System: The player spends a Pathos and makes a Dexterity + Argos roll (difficulty 4). Each success allows the character to reduce the travel time to a destination by one turn. Characters may not decline successes — thus, it is possible to overshoot a location and end up hanging in midair or in an otherwise unpleasant situation. Players may, however, choose to roll less dice than their total pool. Botching Flicker generally leaves the character stuck partially through a solid (i.e., Shadowlands) object for a length of time determined by the Storyteller.

•••• Travel

With this ability, the wraith slips through the metaphysical shortcuts along the surface of the Tempest to his destination, without traversing the distance in between at all. Wraiths using this ability seem to instantly fade out of existence only to fade back in a few seconds later at a different location.

System: Each use of Travel costs four Pathos. The player makes an Intelligence + Argos roll (difficulty 8). Each success allows the character to Travel approximately 100 yards, and he arrives at the beginning of the next turn. The player adds four dice to his initiative pool due to surprise, and he may take his full turn's worth of action(s). This art can be used only to travel to a location the character is familiar with. A botch generally results in the character manifesting at a random location — usually one within several miles of the intended destination.

••••• Maelstrom Bridge

By expending Pathos to weaken the Shroud and pulling the fabric of the Shadowlands closer to the Skinlands, the Harbinger can cause the Maelstrom to briefly manifest in the land of the living. This event is a frightening experience for the Quick, with flashes of black lightning, rains of blood and bone fragments and driving spatters of Angstblack, even indoors. These effects induce extreme terror in most exposed mortals and can potentially cause serious harm. Any such Maelstrom detritus evaporates back into the Underworld within a few minutes.

System: Maelstrom Bridge costs a number of Pathos equal to the local Shroud rating, and it causes the user to gain two Angst. The player makes a Strength + Argos roll (difficulty equals the local Shroud level plus four; maximum of 10). Mortals in the targeted vicinity suffer the effects of the Fog as if their Willpower were four lower than normal. Also, Quick subjected to the effect suffer damage as if exposed to a Maelstrom of an intensity equal to the number of successes the player rolled minus three. If the result is zero or below, the Maelstrom is only cosmetic and does no physical damage. The Maelstrom persists for a number of turns equal to the number of successes the player rolls to create the Maelstrom Bridge attempt. This art permanently lowers the Shroud by four in the area affected, to a minimum of 4.

Castigate Pardoners

Basic Abilities

Bulwark: This ability to guard against the Maelstrom is invaluable in the Twilight Era, and many Pardoners teach the art of Bulwark to anyone willing to learn it. Although Bulwark provides significant protection, it is also quite limited. Bulwark persists for only a single scene, and the Pardoner and the subjects may move no faster than a steady walk. Also, wraiths protected by a Bulwark cannot attempt any aggressive actions against Spectres outside the barrier — to do so shatters the Bulwark.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Castigate (difficulty equal to the Maelstrom's level plus 4). She must spend one Pathos for each level of the Maelstrom, but may extend the Bulwark to wraiths touching her character directly when the Bulwark is created. While the Bulwark is active, persons within it are unaffected by the Maelstrom. Spectres may not attack wraiths within the Bulwark, but they may hover around its edges in hopes that the protective barrier might flicker out.

Soulsight: With this ability, a Pardoner can examine subjects and roughly estimate the power level of their Shadows. This ability can also be used to detect Spectres by sensing the immense power of their Shadows, though it is less than completely reliable. A Pardoner cannot examine her own Shadow with Soulsight.

System: The player rolls Perception + Castigate (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines the amount of information the Pardoner learns. The results are normally on a vague scale from "very weak" to "imminent Catharsis," but more successes may allow more information to be gained, at the Storyteller's discretion.

• Wrestle The Devil

This ability allows the Pardoner to force his Shadow to give him assistance. Although the art is quite easy, it also angers the Shadow. Use of this art is a signal to the Shadow that

the Pardoner is playing hardball — those Pardoners unable to take as good as they give should avoid it.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Castigate (difficulty 5). Each success forces the Shadow to give the Pardoner one Shadow die that is placed in a pool. This pool of Shadow dice cannot exceed five, and cannot be added to or renewed until it is emptied. These dice can be used any time the Pardoner wishes, or even thrown away. Until the pool is empty, the Shadow may not offer Shadow dice normally (not that *that* is likely to be a problem). As usual, each 1 rolled on the Shadow dice gives the Shadow a point of Angst.

Use of Wrestle the Devil requires one point of Pathos and gives the Shadow one temporary Angst.

•• Faustian Rapport

Pardoners cannot use Faustian Rapport on themselves, but they can use it to see into the souls of their subjects and gain a deep understanding of the Shadow. This ability allows the Pardoner to decrease the difficulty of Purify rolls, but is not without risk. Pardoners can come to understand the Shadow too closely, and themselves gain Angst.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Castigate (difficulty equal to the target's permanent Angst). For every success, the difficulty of his next Purify roll against the target is decreased by one. However, if the Pardoner botches, each 1 rolled becomes a point of temporary Angst. Each use of Faustian Rapport costs two Pathos and gives the Pardoner a point of Angst.

••• Purify

Through the use of Purify, a Pardoner can cut away at the spiritual infection of the Shadow. The actual method varies from Pardoner to Pardoner. Many use hellfire-and-brimstone sermons, whereas others use modern psychoanalysis, or old-fashioned iron discipline and a relic pickax handle. castigation is a dangerous process that requires a significant amount of time during which the Pardoner and his subject are alone and uninterrupted. As Pardoners cannot use Purify on themselves, they routinely travel in pairs.

System: The Storyteller rolls the character's Charisma + Castigate in secret, with a difficulty equal to the subject's permanent Angst score. Both the subject and the Pardoner may spend Willpower on the effort. Each point of Angst removed does a corpus level of damage to the subject of the castigation attempt. If the attempt results in a botch, each 1 rolled on the Purify attempt gives the Pardoner a point of temporary Angst.

•••• Purity Bulwark

By means of faith and purity, the Pardoner may protect an area from the effects of Maelstroms and the depredations of Spectres. An area or structure so protected is painful for Spectres other than Doppelgangers and Mutilés to enter, and the effects of Maelstroms decrease there significantly. Stressful and expensive to maintain, Purity Bulwark is a key to the defense of Citadels against assault.

System: The player makes a Stamina + Castigate roll (difficulty 9). Each success allows her to decrease the severity of the Maelstrom in a given area or structure (size restrictions at the Storyteller's discretion) by one. Dice pools of Spectres in the affected area drop by one per success. The effect lasts one scene per success. Purity Bulwark costs four Pathos and gives the Pardoner two Angst.

••••• Defiance

Defiance allows a Pardoner to confront his own Shadow in a battle of wills. Though difficult and extremely dangerous, the self-castigation that Defiance allows is the supreme sign of self-awareness and self-mastery on the part of the Pardoner.

System: The player makes a Charisma + Castigate roll against a difficulty of his Shadow's permanent Angst. Each success subtracts one point from his temporary Angst. Unlike Purify, no corpus levels of damage result from the use of Defiance. Using Defiance costs one Pathos plus one additional point of Pathos for every point of Angst removed. Failure in an attempt at Defiance adds one to the character's temporary Angst, and a botch adds a point to his *permanent* Angst.

Embody

Proctors

Basic Abilities

Ghostly Touch: Through the use of this ability, the wraith can exert her will in the material world in minor fashions. This ability is very weak, limited to such insignificant phenomenon as making very small ripples in a basin of water, or writing in dust or fog on a windowpane.

System: The player rolls Strength + Embody against a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating.

Maintain the Material Form: Through physical endurance and the expenditure of Pathos, the wraith can maintain himself in an embodied state beyond the point when such a manifestation normally dissipates.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Embody (difficulty 7). Each success adds one to the number of successes already gained for the Embody power currently being used. Maintain the Material Form costs two Pathos to maintain. Failure at the attempt causes the immediate dissipation of the wraith's manifestation.

Sense Embodiment: With the use of Sense Embodiment, the Proctor can tell if Embody has been used in an area recently.

System: The player rolls Perception + Embody (difficulty 8). A single success allows the Proctor to determine whether Embody has been used in an area in the last month. Three or

more successes allow the Proctor to determine what art was used and how long ago and five or more successes generally provide clues as to the identity of the Proctor who used the arts.

• Whispers

With this ability, the wraith may make her voice be heard in the Skinlands. Even under the best of conditions, the wraith's voice is distant, like a crackling phonograph record or a hissing whisper in the target's ear. Wraiths don't need this ability to speak with beings whose senses extend across the Shroud.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Embody. Each success allows the Wraith to speak one short sentence (3 to 7 words). As a rule, unless the area is very quiet (at a seance, for example), the sentence will be audible only to a single subject. Even in quiet areas, it is often difficult to make out words that aren't spoken directly into the subject's ear.

•• Phantom

With this ability, the Wraith partially crosses the Shroud to manifest as a slightly luminous shape similar to that of his corpus, but far less well-defined. This art is often used to frighten the Quick, as mortals who see the Phantom are subject to the Fog. A Proctor manifesting via Phantom may speak, but his words are subject to massive distortion as they cross the Shroud. Proctors manifesting via Phantom have the same difficulties sensing the Skinlands as the inhabitants that the Skinlands have seeing them. The wraith can see about as well as a person immersed in clear, well-lit lake waters.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Embody with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating, and the number of successes equals the number of turns that the apparition persists. Users who wish to frighten the Quick may roll Manipulation + Embody against a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. Each success lowers the target's Willpower by one point for the purpose of determining Fog effects. Unpleasant cosmetic moliation and haunting-type Arcanoi such as Pandemonium and Keening can significantly lower the difficulty of the Manipulation + Embody roll. A wraith is not actually in the Skinlands when manifested via Phantom — an impact with his form will simply force him to become incorporeal and disrupt the manifestation. Using Phantom costs one Pathos per attempt.

••• Shadow Presence

A Proctor using this art can cross the Shroud more fully than as a Phantom. Proctors who use Shadow Presence manifest as two-dimensional shadows "cast" on a wall, floor or other surface. Although they cannot interact with the living world any more than a wraith using Phantom can, their shape is much more sharply defined, and their senses are far less distorted. They cannot, however, communicate in any fashion other than body language. Wraiths using Shadow Presence cannot change positions while they are observed, but they can slide across surfaces or under doors while unobserved. The shadow cast resembles the wraith's silhouette in life.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Embody against a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating to activate Shadow Presence. Each attempt costs one Pathos. Each success on the Shadow Presence roll allows the Proctor to remain Embodied for one turn of activity. Time during which the Proctor is frozen in place does not count against this limit.

•••• Corpse

Through the use of this power, the Proctor is able to cross the Shroud in a solid and immobile form. The wraith's appearance, based on her self-image, is often rather idealized. The Proctor appears paler than she did in life, with darker hair. Her skin is cold to the touch. As the name suggests, a wraith Embodied via Corpse resembles a dead human in rigor mortis.

System: The player makes a Manipulation + Embody roll. Each success allows her to cross the Shroud for a full scene. Characters who cross the Shroud *may* choose to substitute their Manipulation for their Appearance, to reflect the idealization of their physical form.

••••• Slip the Lethan Bonds

Slip the Lethan Bonds allows a Proctor to slip gently across the Shroud via a process of meditation and a "forgetting" of his Restless state. While in the Skinlands, the Proctor is almost fully human, though cold to the touch. She is nevertheless capable of normal life activities such as sex, eating and sleep. Even the Shadow is quiescent. However, the meditative state that allows the Proctor to remain in the Skinlands is quite delicate. If it is disrupted, the psychological impact of returning to the Restless state unprepared can cause the Proctor to have serious Shadow problems.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Embody, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. For each success, he may cross the Shroud for a single scene. During this time, his Shadow falls silent, and may not spend Angst, attempt Catharsis, activate Thorns, offer Shadow dice or otherwise take any form of action.

If the wraith encounters a situation which causes her to make a Passion or Dark Passion roll, including situations involving the emotion underlying the Passion or Dark Passion, the manifestation is disrupted. The user is immediately cast back across the Shroud into the Shadowlands, and she gains a point of temporary Angst. She *must* then make the Passion or Dark Passion roll at the normal difficulty. However, regardless of whether the roll is for a Passion or a Dark Passion, each success causes him to gain a point of temporary Angst.

The Proctor must spend three Pathos and one Willpower, and he must spend at least five minutes centering himself each time he attempts to Slip the Lethan Bonds.

Fatalism

Oracles

Basic Abilities

Augur: Through his attunement to the web of Fate, the Oracle can sense the overall importance of a person, place, thing or event.

System: The character rolls Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 6). Success indicates that the Fatalist has detected which objects in the scene are ultimately important in the web of Fate. In addition to providing plot hooks and foreshadowing, this ability also helps discern other players' characters and which Storyteller characters in a scene are important.

• Sensing the Strands

By touching an object, the Oracle can read the interplay of strands that have passed over it recently. This process allows the Oracle to sense who touched the object recently and what it was used for. Important or emotionally charged events leave significantly stronger impressions on the object than normal use does. Any mistakes in the use of this art can be very dangerous, often overwhelming the Oracle with impressions or even causing him to lose track of his own identity.

System: The player rolls Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 8). The number of successes dictates the clarity and coherence of the impressions he receives. One success coveys basic emotions and actions. Three successes convey a general understanding of the last significant event in which the object played a part. Five or more successes allow the Oracle to get a good idea of whose hands the object has been in and what they've done with it for a good long while.

•• Foreshadow

The wraith's attunement to the web of Fate allows her to sense the vibrations given off by the approach of danger.

System: The Storyteller should secretly roll Perception + Fatalism (difficulty 6) when the character faces some serious threat. Each success generally grants the Oracle one turn of preparation and a fair knowledge of what the upcoming hazard is. Note that this danger sense predicts only serious impending physical danger — it doesn't go off if the Oracle walks near an armory, but it might if she approaches hidden and unexploded artillery rounds. Each successful use of Foreshadow causes the Oracle to gain one Angst.

••• Interpretation

This art allows fortune-telling along the standard model. The wraith, using relic tools, performs a tarot reading, casts runes, opens the Bible, Qu'ran or Torah to a random page, spills out tea-leaves or otherwise attempts to see what Fate holds in store for the subject. Attempting to perform this art without the appropriate relic props is extremely difficult.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Fatalism (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). If the subject of the Interpretation is present, both she and the Oracle may spend Willpower to aid the result. For each success, the Oracle can ask the Storyteller one question about the subject and what's upcoming in her life. Although the Storyteller cannot lie or decline to answer, cryptic riddles, leading or ambiguous phrases and incomplete answers are all permissible. This art costs two Pathos per use, and working without props increases the difficulty by two. The Oracle may use this art freely on himself.

•••• Presage

As a wraith's knowledge of the web of Fate increases, she may begin to understand the motions of the Wheel even in stressful situations. Through the use of Presage, the Oracle can anticipate her opponent's actions and give herself an edge in combat.

System: The player makes a Wits + Fatalism roll (difficulty 8). Each success allows the character a free die that she can add to her Dodge pool for avoiding the opponent's next attack. There is no limit to how many bonus dice may be added to the Dexterity + Dodge pool, and if the player wishes, she can use only the bonus dice to dodge, saving their other dice for more important actions. This art costs two Pathos per use.

••••• Luck

At this level of mastery, the Oracle can actively reweave the web of Fate. Through the use of Luck, these stands can be made to favor the Oracle.

System: At the beginning of each story, the player rolls Wits + Fatalism (difficulty 6). The number of successes rolled equals the number of 1s the character may negate during the story. This effect does not work during Harrowings, and it can be activated only once per story. Luck costs two Pathos and one Willpower.

Keening

Chanteurs

Basic Abilities

Perfect Pitch: This ability allows the Chanteur to detect Keening in active use.

System: The player rolls Perception + Keening (difficulty 6). The trained ear of a wraith with Perfect Pitch can automatically detect Keening that is not cloaked by the Sotto Voce ability. To detect Keening concealed via the use of Sotto Voce, the Perfect Pitch user must gain at least as many successes as the opposing character did on his Sotto Voce roll.

Sotto Voce: The Chanteur may conceal her Keening within normal singing, public speaking and conversation via Sotto Voce.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 7). Even a single success is enough to prevent the untrained ear from detecting the Keening effect imbedded within the sounds. Successful or not, Keening that does not involve song is still at the regular +1 difficulty.

• Dirge

A favorite among wraiths who specialize in removing unwanted mortals, this art allows the Chanteur to bring one of the darker emotions — hate, fear, bitterness, loneliness, lust, ennui and the like — welling up within listeners.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Keening (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines how long the effects last on the Quick. One success indicates a few minutes of passion, and five successes seriously affect their emotions for a week or more. Darkness and gloom are the meat and drink of the Restless, however, and so wraiths are far less readily affected by the Chanteur's art — each success on the Dirge roll rouses the desired emotion in the Restless for but a single turn.

Dirge costs one Pathos and grants the user a point of temporary Angst.

Note that while mortals within "earshot" of the Chanteur are affected by Keening, the Quick cannot actually *hear* the Chanteur unless the wraith uses Embody or some similar art to make his voice audible.

•• Ballad

The lighter form of Dirge, Ballad causes listeners to experience the "higher" emotions, such as love, duty, courage, compassion, patriotism and self-respect. This art is often used in public speaking as well as for the purposes of entertainment and in manipulating the Quick.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Keening (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines the length of time targets are swayed. Just as in Dirge, one success versus mortals indicates a few minutes of emotion, whereas five indicate a week or more of influence. The Restless are less easily moved in these ways — each success indicates only a single turn of influence over their emotions. Ballad costs one Pathos to activate.

••• Muse

Through the use of this art, the Chanteur can plant an idea in the head of a listener, who believes himself to be the idea's initiator. The uses of this art are countless, ranging from Solicitor-like political manipulation to the defense of Fetters and Necropoli against inhabitation by the Quick.

System: Muse requires a Manipulation + Keening roll, with a difficulty of the targets' Willpower (in case of multiple targets, use the highest Willpower among the affected characters). The more successes, the more directly the targets follow the user's commands. Three or fewer successes mean that the Chanteur inspires the targets, but they go about things in their own unique way. Four successes mean the targets do more or less what the Chanteur wanted, as long as it isn't particularly dangerous. Five or more successes cause the targets to perform exactly as the wraith desires. Muse works on the Quick, the Dead and the Awakened with equal effectiveness. Muse costs two Pathos and causes the Chanteur to gain a point of Angst.

•••• Brendan's Lay

Brendan's Lay allows the Chanteur to travel through the Maelstrom and even the Tempest without harm, either from the winds or from Spectres, so long as she can continue to sing and pay the art's Pathos cost. This art affects a fairly wide area, about 15 feet in every direction, so the Lay can provide protection to a fairly large number (Storyteller's discretion) of others as well as to the Chanteur. Obviously, while the Lay is in effect, the Chanteur cannot verbally communicate with others

System: The player rolls Charisma + Keening, with a difficulty equal to the maximum Maelstrom intensity to be protected against plus four. Each success allows the Chanteur to maintain the Lay for one scene. If the Maelstrom intensity increases, or the Chanteur wishes to extend the Lay's duration, she may at any time pay the cost of the art and roll Charisma + Keening again, substituting the new result for the number of scenes of effect currently remaining. If the Lay is not resung for an increase in Maelstrom intensity, it collapses within a few turns. Spectres may not attack those wraiths inside the effect of the Lay, but wraiths inside the protected area may strike from its confines freely. Brendan's Lay costs one Willpower and three Pathos per attempt.

••••• Songs of the Living

By investing his very soul into his voice, the Chanteur may sing a ballad that evokes the joys of existence and the beauty of life. This emotion-laden song is extraordinarily damaging to any Shadow-eaten exposed to it, but the amount of determination required to sing it is extraordinarily hard on the Chanteur as well. There are rumored to be Spectral equivalents to this art.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Keening (difficulty 8). Each success does one die of aggravated damage and causes a Spectral target to gain one point of temporary Composure. If the Chanteur scores three or more successes on his roll, the Psyches of Spectres in the area of effect may choose to roll for Catharsis, whether their temporary Composure is higher than their Being or not.

Songs of the Living costs four Pathos and two Willpower per use. This art cannot be concealed through the use of Sotto Voce.

Kinesis

Artificers

Basic Abilities

Sense Kinesis: Through the use of this ability, an Artificer can tell if Kinesis or Displace has been used on a Skinlands object (or, in the latter case, on a wraith).

System: The player makes a Perception + Kinesis roll (difficulty 6). A success means the Artificer can tell if Kinesis has been used on an object in the last month or so, and, in a general sense, about how long ago. Sense Kinesis also detects the presence of a Displacer currently within an object or wraith, including the user (see pp. 159-160). Additional successes allow the wraith to feel further back into an object's history or to gain clues about the identity of the Arcanos user.

Straddle: An Artificer can conceal himself in a Skinlands object without suffering any corpus damage. Straddle lends no control over an item the Artificer invades, and he may remain within it for a limited time only.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Kinesis to insert his corpus into an object. He may remain there for a number of turns equal to successes on the roll. That number also determines the number of successes required for a second Artificer (or Displacer) to force out the first by subsequently Straddling the same object. The arts Sense Kinesis and Sense Rider can detect an Artificer so concealed. Destruction of a Straddled object confers a corpus level of damage to the Arcanos user.

• Bind

The Artificer passes her hand through a Skinlands object, causing its parts to seize up momentarily. Through this art's use, Artificers can cause machines they touch to suddenly and inexplicably malfunction. Clocks stop, automobiles stall and large or complex machines grind to a halt. The machine can be restarted manually, but stopped clocks and the like do not restart unless shaken. Devices without moving parts are not affected by this art.

System: The player rolls Strength + Kinesis, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes equals the number required to restart a targeted device. The emotion invested in swearing repeatedly, rapping the device or kicking it sharply causes one attempt to count as three.

•• Reliquary

Through the use of Reliquary, the Artificer may strengthen a relic or an inanimate object by imbuing it with Pathos. Although not as effective in the long term as the banned Flux art Strengthen, Reliquary makes an object far more durable in the short term.

System: The player makes a Strength + Kinesis roll (difficulty 8). For every success, the Artificer can invest a point of Pathos in the item. Each invested point causes the object to survive one incident that would otherwise result in its breakage. Prized wine glasses miraculously bounce on a stone floor, stained-glass windows remain unbroken by the impact of a booted foot, and the shock of artillery fire fails to crack fine china. After each incident, a point of the invested Pathos evaporates. When the Pathos is gone, the object is vulnerable to breakage once again. An Artificer can place only as much Pathos in an object as her Kinesis rating. Kinesis costs one additional point of Pathos per point invested.

••• Haywire

The wraith can seize control of a single Skinlands machine and grossly manipulate it. An Artificer can, for example, cause an automobile to weave, suddenly squeal to a stop or accelerate to full speed, but he cannot actually drive it.

System: The Artificer makes a Wits + Kinesis roll, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success permits the wraith to perform one general action to the device. Note that the Artificer cannot control the object unless he's touching it, so having an automobile zoom to full speed is a waste of his other possible actions unless he's in or on it. Each action costs one Pathos. If the action is directly related to murdering someone or other similar mayhem, the Artificer also gains a point of temporary Angst.

•••• Claim

An Artificer can place herself in contact with a Skinlands object and effectively make it an extension of her body. While she remains unattuned, she can only sense through the object (for example, knowing who is in which rooms of a house the wraith haunts). If the wraith is attuned, however, she gains complete control over the object. Automobiles can be made to drive themselves, guns to fire on their own and factories to become lethal funhouses.

System: The player rolls Wits + Kinesis with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. As usual, if the object is a Fetter, the difficulty may be reduced considerably. The number of successes dictates the maximum size of the object that can be claimed. A book requires only one success, a car three and a large structure like a house, factory or mansion requires five or more. Claim costs three Pathos per use, and it lasts until contact with the object is broken. If the Claimed object is used for foul deeds, the Storyteller may award between one and three Angst.

Attunement comes with experience and the investment of Willpower. One Willpower would be the sole requirement

to attune to a gun, whereas a car might require three, a house five and a factory or mansion eight or even 10 points. Once the object is attuned, the player need only score a single success on his Strength + Kinesis roll to Claim the item fully.

●●●●● Ludd's Grip

By inducing parts of a Skinlands machine in operation to seize up and run backwards, the Artificer can cause the device to tear itself apart. A meat grinder or clock suffers irreparable damage, whereas a more dangerous machine such as a blast furnace or artillery piece probably suffers a somewhat more spectacular demise.

System: The player rolls Strength + Kinesis, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes determines how severe the results are. A single success is likely to result in little more than an unimpressive snap or sproing, whereas three or more successes produce as impressive an end as the device might undergo. If the wraith is attuned to the device, only a single success is needed to make the object's breakdown to be as majestic (and lethal) as possible.

Ludd's Grip costs three Pathos and a point of Willpower to activate, and it causes the Artificer to gain a point of temporary Angst (or more, if the art is used with lethal intentions).

Lifeweb Monitors

Basic Abilities

Locate Fetter: This art allows the Monitor to sense the area around any of his Fetters. It can also be used to sense a Fetter's distance and direction from the user.

System: The player rolls Perception + Lifeweb (difficulty 6). Each success adds one die to a Perception + Alertness roll to sense the area around the Fetter. This remote Perception + Alertness pool cannot be larger than the character's normal Perception + Alertness pool. The player may also make an Intelligence + Lifeweb roll (difficulty 6) to get a general estimate of the Fetter's direction and distance.

● Lifeline

By making a temporary link between himself and another of the Restless, the Monitor may construct a "lifeline," a pseudo-Fetter that connects the two wraiths. This link allows the wraiths to share their strength to resist

the assaults of the Maelstrom, and it also assists rescue attempts if the subject is swallowed by a Nihil or carried off by a Spectre.

System: The player makes a Manipulation + Lifeweb roll (difficulty 7). Once the Lifeline is forged, the Monitor must sit quietly, monitoring and maintaining the tether. If he ceases to do so, the Lifeline immediately dissolves. For each successes rolled creating the Lifeline, the Monitor can lend the target an additional die to all pools related to resisting the winds of the Maelstrom, though this bonus does *not* add to soak attempts against the damage inflicted by the Maelstrom. The number of dice so lent cannot more than double the recipient's original die pool.

If the wraith falls, or is pulled, into the Tempest, the Monitor is immediately aware of the fact. Monitors can use Locate Fetter with great effect on the subjects of Lifeline. Even a single success allows the Monitor to discern the target's location, condition, surroundings and distance. As long as some form of communication is possible between the Monitor and the rescue team, a Monitor maintaining a Lifeline can easily guide the rescuers to the target.

A Monitor may create and maintain multiple Lifelines, but no wraith can have more than one, and the Monitor cannot lend more dice than her Strength + Lifeweb pool or her Willpower, whichever is lower. This art costs one Pathos per Lifeline created. Pulling someone out of the Tempest costs one additional Pathos.

•• Fetter Sentry

By forging a link between himself and a Fetter (his own or someone else's) a Monitor may protect it against damage by putting his very corpus on the line. This art can be extremely dangerous, because a sudden attack on the Fetter can force the Monitor into a Harrowing.

System: The player makes a Stamina + Lifeweb roll (difficulty 8) to forge the link. Thereafter, any damage the Fetter would suffer, the Monitor now suffers instead. This damage may be soaked normally, and it is never aggravated. For every success after the first on the roll to establish the Fetter Sentry, the Monitor gains an additional soak die when resisting damage to the Fetter, to a maximum of the Fetter's rating. The Monitor may terminate the bond at any time, but to do so is considered extraordinarily bad form. Additionally, the link cannot be broken in order to avoid damage that has already occurred to the Fetter.

Fetter Sentry takes three Pathos to forge, and it costs one Pathos every two days to maintain. This ability does not work on Fetters that are currently or that have previously been used as Conduits. A Monitor can maintain as many Fetter Sentries as he has points of Lifeweb.

••• Splice Strand

This art allows the Monitor to create an attachment between a person, place or thing and a wraith, effectively making the Skinlands component a Fetter. Both the object involved and the wraith for whom it becomes a Fetter must be touched at the time the link is created. Monitors can attach Fetters to themselves as easily as to any other wraith.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Lifeweb (difficulty 7). If successful, a new Fetter is created, with a rating of 1. This art can also be used to reattach another wraith to a severed Fetter, though this activity is difficulty 8. Creating new Fetters costs one Pathos, and one point of Pathos must be paid per day to maintain the Fetter. Reattached Fetters have no maintenance cost, but a point of temporary Willpower must be spent to reforge the bond between the wraith and her Fetter.

•••• Sever Strand

This terrible art can rip a Fetter from a wraith, thus lessening his connection with the Skinlands and sending him into a Harrowing to add insult to injury. The Monitor must touch the Fetter in question to tear it away. This art is a favorite of Spectres, Monitor protection rackets and Hierarchy agents interested in taking Renegades out of the picture for good.

System: Once the Monitor pinpoints the Fetter, his player make a Strength + Lifeweb check, with a difficulty of the target's Willpower. The target may spend Willpower to subtract one success from the attempt. If the attempt succeeds, the Fetter is entirely severed and the Wraith drops into a Harrowing with the former Fetter as the target. Severed strands may be reattached with the Splice Strand art or by the former owner touching the Fetter and spending a point of *permanent* Willpower. Sever Strand costs two Pathos and one Willpower, and it causes the Monitor to gain three points of temporary Angst.

••••• Torsion

By use of this art, the Monitor may pull at Spectres' Fetters and send Pathos across these items, reminding Shadow-eaten of their existence before they became tools of Oblivion. This surge of emotion usually results in the Spectre's sudden paralysis. Obviously, this ability does not work on Spectres without Fetters.

System: The Monitor must touch the Spectre, either with a hand or with a melee weapon. No damage need be done, but at least one success must get past the target's Dodge. The user can then (in the same turn) make a Manipulation + Lifeweb check with a difficulty equal to (10 minus the Spectre's highest-rated Fetter). Each success completely paralyzes the Spectre in question for a turn. This art costs three Pathos per use.

Moliate

Masquers

Basic Abilities

Glow: The Masquer can cause her own corpus or that of another wraith emit an inner light of any intensity or color. This art is quite useful during the Maelstrom, and many wraiths who venture into the storm have some part of their corpora moliated to glow like a beacon. The advantage of this effect is obvious for wraiths who become separated from their companions; unfortunately, this radiance makes the moliated Wraith easier for Spectres to see, too.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Moliate (difficulty 7). The number of successes is the number of scenes for which the glow persists.

Deathmasque: This ability returns a wraith to the appearance he had when his Caul was first removed. Note that this process requires a good deal of time, as much as several hours.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Moliate with a difficulty equal to the degree of difference between the wraith's original appearance and her current one. The difficulty is 6 for minor cosmetic changes, 8 for moderate changes and 10 for extensive moliation. The number of successes determines how accurately the wraith's original form is re-created. Deathmasque cannot be used in combat.

The Shaper's Eye: The Shaper's Eye allows the user to detect whether someone has been moliated (whether by another Masquer or by a Displacer), and in what manner.

System: The player rolls Perception + Moliate with a difficulty equal to the Dexterity + Moliate of the Masquer who did the work. The number of successes determines the amount of information gained, and it can range from the type of moliation to the name of the specific Masquer who did the job.

• Imitate

Through the use of this art, the Masquer can change his visage. This art is normally used to mimic another wraith's appearance, but it can be used simply to reshape the Masquer's face into something hideous if she chooses. Imitating another wraith's appearance is easiest when the user has studied the subject, or a skinmask of the target is available (see "Rend"). Imitation can be done from memory, however.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Moliate. If he is working from memory, the difficulty is 8. If he is working with a subject who is present, the difficulty is 5. If a skinmask is available, the difficulty is 4, but the user must don the skinmask — multiple wraiths cannot benefit from one skinmask. The difficulty of the Perception + Alertness roll to detect the disguise via visual inspection is (the number of successes the Masquer scores on the Imitate check plus four). Imitate costs one Pathos to perform.

•• Sculpt

The art of Sculpt gives a wraith the ability to perform gross changes on his own corpus and the corpora of others. The user may add new sensory organs, change color, add luminescence or change appearance radically. The restrictions are that the user cannot add functional extra appendages, functional armor or weaponry other than teeth (all of which fall under Martialry), that she cannot add functioning wings (which are the purview of Argos and useless during the Maelstrom in any case) and that she cannot abandon her humanoid form altogether.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Moliate (difficulty 7). The Storyteller sets the number of successes necessary to achieve the desired moliation. The Masquer may perform an extended test to accomplish extensive tasks, but each roll counts as a use of Sculpt. Sculpting does not wear off after time — unless re-Sculpted, or subjected to Deathmasque, the cosmetic changes are permanent. Sculpt can be used to heal aggravated damage. Each success on the Sculpt roll heals one level of aggravated damage. Sculpt costs one Pathos per use. Using Sculpt to heal aggravated damage costs one Willpower and one Pathos per level of aggravated damage healed.

••• Martialry

With this art, the Masquer can shape parts of her body into weaponry and armor. Although the weapons created with this art are formidable, a corpus shaped into armor is stiff and somewhat cumbersome. The appearance of this bodily arsenal is unique to the Masquer. Some are coldly utilitarian, whereas others are ornate and personalized. Martialry cannot be used on others — members of the Masquers' Guild carried the secret of the art of Girding to the forges with them.

System: To create weaponry, the player rolls Intelligence + Moliate with a difficulty equal to the character's (Stamina + 3). Each success allows the Masquer to add a die to her Strength when determining the amount of damage she does in hand-to-hand combat. Depending on the type of weapon, either Brawl or Melee might be applicable. To create armor, the player rolls Stamina + Moliate, with a difficulty equal to her (Strength + 3). Each success adds one die to the character's soak roll, but every even-numbered (2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, etc.) success adds one to the difficulty of all Dexterity-based rolls.

•••• Rend

This art allows the Masquer to use his knowledge of the corpus to wound his enemies. He can rip chunks out of his opponents, disfigure them or just maim and cripple them, depending on individual style. It is also possible to tear away an opponent's face and gain a souvenir called a skinmask, which is extremely useful for impersonating that wraith in the future.

System: The character using Rend must first hit his target. The attack need not do any damage, but at least one success must get past the target's Dodge. The Masquer then rolls Strength + Moliate with difficulty equal to the target's (Stamina + 3). Each success on this roll does one die of aggravated damage, plus one additional die may be inflicted for each additional Pathos the Masquer chooses to spend. Five or more successes on this roll permit the Masquer to tear off some portion of his foe. This trophy may be her face (which becomes a skinmask) or the Masquer may choose to be innovative. Storytellers should be creative and liberal in the effects of mutilation — it is, after all, difficult and rare.

Rend costs one Pathos, plus however many additional Pathos the player spends to gain extra damage. Each use of Rend causes the character to gain one point of temporary Angst.

••••• Maelstrom Visage

By dint of supreme command over her corpus, the Masquer may channel her Shadow through her form to protect herself from the ravages of the Maelstrom. While this art makes the user immune to the dangerous conditions of the Maelstrom, it is also difficult (not to mention the fact that it feeds the Shadow). Wraiths using Maelstrom Visage have a very distinct, almost metallic appearance.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Moliate, (difficulty 9). If successful, her character does not suffer any damage from the Maelstrom or from secondary Maelstrom effects, regardless of severity, for one scene per success. This art costs three Pathos and one Willpower, and causes the Masquer to gain one Angst plus one Angst for every 1 rolled. A botch virtually guarantees immediate Catharsis.

Outrage

Spooks

Basic Abilities

Leap of Rage: By harnessing his extraordinarily strong emotions, the Spook can leap great distances.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Outrage (difficulty 6). Any successes may be added to successes he rolls normally when leaping or jumping. This art also allows the character to add to his successes to move about in the Maelstrom without being blown down or off course.

• Breath of the Grave

With this art, the Spook may focus her anger through the Shroud by using only her emotion, rather than striking with her corpus or a weapon. The result is a sudden, icy breeze that lasts only a few seconds. The gust of wind is strong enough to blow papers from desks, snatch umbrellas and slam doors.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Outrage versus a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes determines the strength, coldness and area affected by the wind. The chilly breeze and minor Fog effects are enough to spook most mortals below Willpower 8. Breath of the Grave costs one Pathos per use.

•• Rap

With increasing mastery, the Spook may now physically act across the Shroud, though only as a dim echo of his true intentions. This surge of emotion results in a single loud rap. The force is not hard enough to do damage directly, but is sufficient to knock over small objects, startle people in precarious situations or scare the hell out of the crowd at a seance.

System: The player rolls Strength + Outrage against a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes equals the number of knocks the user can deliver. This arts costs one Pathos per use.

••• Adamant Strike

Though supreme concentration, the Spook can now use her pent-up emotions to lash out at the world of the Quick. This blast of concentrated anger is often quite injurious to the target. Adamant Strike can be used in the Shadowlands as well as across the Shroud.

System: The player rolls Strength + Outrage, either difficulty 6 (if used in the Underworld) or at a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success inflicts one health (or corpus) level of damage, which is not aggravated and which may be soaked normally. Adamant Strike costs two Pathos per strike.

•••• Death's Touch

This art allows the wraith a considerably more delicate interaction with the Skinlands than simply lashing out in hatred. A wraith using Death's Touch may manipulate objects, such as opening doors, pulling out chairs or operating a typewriter. He may alternately drag his hand across an object, causing enough friction to make even relatively damp wood ignite and burn steadily.

System: To perform fine manipulation, the player rolls Dexterity + Outrage with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The wraith's degree of control and his ability to perform fine tasks are dependent on his degree of success. This art lasts for approximately one minute per success.

To ignite fires, the wraith must roll Strength + Outrage (difficulty 8 or the local Shroud rating, whichever is higher). The number of successes indicates the size of the fire.

Death's Touch costs three Pathos per use. If used for burning down orphanages or similarly reprehensible ends, it also causes the wraith to gain one or more points of Angst.

••••• Furious Spiral

By lashing out across the Shroud in every direction, the Spook causes objects smaller than a breadbox in a room-sized area to fly into motion. What results is the classic poltergeist effect; the objects whirl in a vortex of chaotic destruction, smashing against walls, furniture, each other and anyone foolish enough to remain in the vicinity. Mortal witnesses suffer the effects of the Fog, and repeated use of this art can lower the Shroud in an area. Note that this vortex is undirected, not aimed. Unless the room happens to be full of cutlery, Furious Spiral isn't likely to be lethal. Wraiths who want to pelt mortals with aimed objects or otherwise pummel the Quick should use either Death's Touch or Adamant Strike.

System: The player rolls Strength + Outrage with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success causes the vortex to persist for one turn. Mortals in the room probably take one or two dice of damage per turn, but the number of dice can vary depending on the number and size of objects in motion and Storyteller whimsy. Each use of Furious Spiral costs five Pathos and one Willpower, and it causes the wraith to gain a point of temporary Angst.

Pandemonium

Haunters

Basic Abilities

Sense Chaos: Through her attunement to raw chaos, the Haunter can sense whether an object or area has been manipulated with Pandemonium. With greater difficulty, she can sense the possibility leached from an object or area by the manipulations of a Shadow or the Shadow-eaten.

System: The player rolls Perception + Pandemonium (difficulty 6). One success is sufficient to determine whether an object or area has been a Haunter's target recently. Additional successes provide additional data. Searching for evidence of Spectres or of wraiths under the control of their Shadows is a separate roll that is made at difficulty 8.

• Bewilderment

Through the use of the Wylding, the Haunter may cause someone to experience jarring disorientation. The type of confusion is the Haunter's choice, and it can include severe *jamais vu* or *déjà vu*, illusory dilation of time so that a moment seems to last forever, or simply breaking the target's train of thought.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Pandemonium with a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. A single success startles the target but has no further effect. Three or more successes add one to the difficulty of the victim's next action, and five or more successes cause the target to lose her next action due to the distraction.

•• Haunting

With this art, the Haunter may call on the Wylding to produce a variety of strange and disorienting effects. These phenomena are mostly the classic haunting effects — blue lights, rattling and thumping, the sound of roaring wind on a still night, distant voices speaking incomprehensible words and strange, half-perceived flitting at the periphery of the subjects' vision.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Pandemonium, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success allows the Haunter to cause a single distinct phenomenon. None of the phenomena caused by Haunting can be directly harmful. The Haunting lasts for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. Haunting invokes the Fog in mortals, and repeated use can lower the Shroud rating in an area. Haunting costs two Pathos per use.

••• Wyldfire

The Wylding is totally antithetical to the entropy that the Shadow-eaten ultimately represent. Haunters who directly manifest the Wylding can use it to inflict terrible wounds on the Shadow-eaten. The appearance of this art early in the Fourth Great Maelstrom causes a considerable reassessment of the Arcanos and its practitioners. When this art is activated, the Haunter's form seems to burn with pallid multicolored flames.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Pandemonium (difficulty 8). The number of successes equals the number of turns (*not* actions) that the effect lasts. While the Haunter burns with Wyldfire, all damage he does in hand-to-hand combat against the Shadow-eaten is aggravated. This effect applies only to damage done via corpus contact — fists, feet or weapons created with Martial Arts. Wyldfire costs three Pathos and a point of Willpower to manifest.

•••• Foul Humor

Use of Foul Humor allows the Haunter to channel her corpus through the Shroud. This extension into the Skinlands can manifest as viscous ectoplasm, hordes of crawling or stinging insects, sprays of blood, piles of maggots, packs of rats and whatever else the Haunter's demented imagination can dream up. This ability is the trademark and crowning glory of the Haunters' Guild.

System: The player states what particular sort of vile substance he wishes to bring forth and makes an Intelligence + Pandemonium roll with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes is the number of quarts of the substance that the Haunter conjures. Damaging manifestations do one die of damage per two successes, though any damage inflicted invariably looks much worse than it is. The vermin (the only sort of creatures that can be conjured with Foul Humor) and other foul substances dissipate after a scene or less, though traces sometimes remain, particularly after three or more successes were achieved. Foul Humor costs one Pathos and one Willpower to activate, and it causes the Haunter to gain one point of Angst.

●●●●● Tempus Fugit

With this art, the wraith can distort not just perceptions, but the flow of time and space itself. The user can make a second stretch into eternities or make the walk up a lengthy staircase pass in an eyeflash. Haunters may not repeat events or loop time with Tempus Fugit, but they can use the ability to accelerate themselves to superhuman speed.

System: The player declares how he wishes to manipulate time (speeding it up or slowing it down) and rolls Intelligence + Pandemonium, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes indicates how much he distorts time in his immediate area. For each success, the Haunter may extend or shorten the amount of time an action takes by one turn. Tempus Fugit cannot further speed up the motion of Awakened beings with multiple actions per turn, but it can slow them down, causing such actions to take a number of *additional* actions to complete equal to the number of successes the user achieves on the Tempus Fugit roll. If used in the Shadowlands, the difficulty of Tempus Fugit is 7. Note that time outside the affected area flows along at the normal rate, so a werewolf drifting through the air toward her target is likely to arrive long after the target has vacated the premises.

Haunters can also focus Tempus Fugit on themselves. The difficulty for this application of the art is 7, and for each success, the user gains an additional action per turn for the rest of the scene. Activating Tempus Fugit to distort time costs four Pathos and one Willpower. Activating it to accelerate the Haunter costs two Pathos and one Willpower.

Phantasm

Sandmen

Basic Abilities

Sift: The Sandman's trained eye can instantly determine how deeply asleep a mortal is and whether she is currently dreaming. The Sandman may also observe the mortal's dreams.

System: The player rolls Perception + Phantasm (difficulty 6). Each success allows the user to peer into the target's dreams for one turn.

● Elysia

Through this art, the Sandman may gently remove a sleeper's soul from his body. This practice does no harm, and it allows the Sandman to transport the soul with her as she wishes. The sleeper continues to go through his regular cycle of dreams and dreamless slumber unless some outside force intervenes. Separated souls are

generally treated with the utmost care, as they can be jostled awake in the Shadowlands and become quite traumatized. Until the soul is replaced, the sleeper cannot be awakened.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Phantasm, with a difficulty dependent on the sleeper's level of sleep. Ones who are dreaming are difficulty 6, whereas ones in dreamless slumber are difficulty 8. Elysia costs one Pathos.

•• Lucidity

The wraith may enter a mortal's dreams and effect changes in them by altering detail and "plot." A detail is generally one specific characteristic of the dream. For example, changing a single detail in a dream of flying over a battlefield at night might alter it into one of flying over a battlefield in the daytime, or into one of flying over a city at night.

System: To enter a dream, the user must roll Manipulation + Phantasm, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. A Sandman need not actually enter the sleeper's dreams to change them, but doing so from outside is considerably more difficult. Entering a dream costs one Pathos. Note that a Sandman is actually *in* the dream, and he can suffer damage or be forced into a Harrowing by the events therein. Sift and the judicious application of Lucidity's other powers help prepare the Sandman's way.

To alter the details of a dream, the player makes a Manipulation + Phantasm roll, with a difficulty equal to the dreamer's Willpower (minimum 4), or (Willpower plus three), if he is not actually present in the dream. Each success allows him to alter one detail, after which he must reapply Lucidity to make more alterations. Each use of this application of Lucidity costs one Pathos.

Altering the plot and general flow of a dream (instantly turning an erotic dream into a nightmare, for example) requires a roll against the target's (Willpower plus three) or (Willpower plus six) if the adjustments are being made from outside the dream. The number of successes indicates the level of control the Sandman has over the dream's new general character. Each use of this application costs two Pathos.

A dreamer in the grip of Lucidity may make opposed rolls of her Willpower versus the Sandman's Charisma + Phantasm to struggle for control of the dream. Sandmen fighting over control of a dream make opposed Charisma + Phantasm rolls. Fighting over a dream takes a point of Willpower (for targeted dreamers) or three points of Pathos (for a Sandman). The winner can make a number of changes to the dream equal to the number of successes by which he or she wins. Three successes can be sacrificed to change the general character of the dream instead. This sort of dream-combat doesn't last long and usually results in a Sandman being Harrowed or the dreamer waking up with a start (dying in a dream does not actually harm the dreamer, it just wakens her). Note that an Awakened being can use her powers in a dream just as if she were awake.

••• Dreams of Sleep

This art lets the Sandman cause wraiths to slumber and dream, just as they did when they were mortal. It also allows Sandmen to put a hysterical dreamer back to sleep after he has been accidentally awakened in the Shadowlands. The Sandman may choose to make the wraith begin dreaming immediately and continues to do so until awakened, or to make the target a "passive," nondreaming observer (see "Dream Canvas").

System: The player need not roll if the subject is willing. If the target is unwilling, the Sandman must roll Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty of the target's Willpower) and achieve more successes than the target, who rolls Intelligence + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). This art costs one Pathos, resisted or not.

•••• Dream Canvas

Through the use of this art, the Sandman can merge multiple dreams into one large dream. This merging is normally done during performances, and it is considerably easier if many of the dreamers are to be passive observers.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Phantasm to merge the dreams. Difficulty is the number of dreams to be merged, but Restless who are passive observers in a dream count as only one-tenth their number, rounded up. The Sandman must touch the forehead of each dreamer, or any part of the dreaming mortal's soul. Dreams created by multiple dreamers can be joined together, so dreamscapes of potentially unlimited size can be created as long as there are sufficient Pathos and trained Sandmen available. Outside of precisely controlled conditions, however, dreamscapes with more than one active dreamer are horrifically unstable and tear themselves apart almost immediately. This art costs three Pathos per use, plus one Pathos per turn per practitioner.

••••• Dream Cloak

With this art, the Sandman can clothe herself in the fabric of raw imagination, an indescribably brilliant fabric composed entirely of dreams. Although arduous to create, the cloak is both resilient and overwhelmingly fascinating to look at.

System: The Dream Cloak costs four Pathos, three corpus levels and a point of Willpower to create. The player rolls Charisma + Phantasm (difficulty 8). The number of successes is added to the difficulty of any attack against the Sandman, and to the difficulty of all initiative rolls made by witnesses of the majestic display. In no case can the difficulty of these rolls rise higher than 9. Closing one's eyes or looking away does not help — once the Dream Cloak has been seen, the eye is involuntarily drawn back to its scintillating brilliance.

This garment also acts as armor. It allows the wraith to soak aggravated damage, and it can absorb as many corpus levels of damage as the number of successes rolled in creating it. After these corpus levels are exhausted, the Dream Cloak continues

to allow the wraith to soak aggravated damage until it dissipates. The Dream Cloak lasts for a number of scenes equal to the number of successes rolled in creating it.

Puppetry

Puppeteers

Basic Abilities

Detect Possession: The wraith may tell whether a mortal is currently being skinridden, or if he has had Puppetry arts used on him recently. Detect Possession also reveals whether a wraith is currently under the influence of the Behest Arcanos.

System: The player rolls Perception + Puppetry. The difficulty is 7 to detect a wraith currently "in residence", and 9 to detect a Consort or a wraith being veered through the use of Behest. Three or more successes give the viewer a good idea of who's doing the skinriding, if the Puppeteer is familiar with the "pattern" the wraith in question leaves when skinriding or veering (see p. 166).

• Skinride

Skinride is the heart of the Puppetry Arcanos. It allows the wraith to slip into the bodies of living mortals, use their senses and experience the world of the Quick again. Users have no control over the mortal host, so most wraiths simply wait to find someone doing something they enjoy and climb aboard. In order to use any of the more advanced Puppetry arts, the Puppeteer must be skinriding his victim.

System: To slip into the body of a host, the player rolls Dexterity + Puppetry, with a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. The number of successes indicates the number of successes another wraith must score to force the skinriding wraith out of a host and take his place. Wraiths inside a host take one corpus level of damage for every health level the host loses.

•• Spasm

With this art, a wraith can briefly exert control over one of her host's extremities. Among other effects, the Puppeteer can cause the victim to lash out, pull the trigger of a gun or misstep when walking on a flight of stairs. The result can also be subtle, causing the Quick to manipulate objects without awareness. For example, the user might reset the time on a pocketwatch though its owner believes himself to be only toying with the item.

System: The wraith must first skinride the host. The player then rolls Strength + Puppetry (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Victims alert for the attack may oppose it by rolling their Willpower (difficulty of the wraith's Strength + Puppetry).

The more net successes the wraith achieves, the better her control. Each success allows the wraith to force a limb into one action, and three or more successes are required for fine manipulation. This art costs one Pathos per use. If the target resists, the Wraith gains one Angst as well.

••• Ventriloquy

By taking control of a willing host, usually a spiritualist or medium performing a seance, the wraith may speak through her. The resulting voice is almost identical to the wraith's voice in life.

System: The wraith must first skinride the host. The player rolls Intelligence + Puppetry with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes is the number of turns the wraith may speak through the channel. This art cost one Pathos per use, and the wraith cannot stop the host from severing the connection.

•••• Anesthesia

This art allows the wraith to take control of a willing host who is in a trance, or of a sleeping target, or of a mortal in a coma or catatonic state. The wraith has complete control over the host. However, if the Puppeteer makes any sudden motions, or if loud or otherwise shocking distractions occur, it is quite likely that sleeping victims may awaken. Note that a skinriding wraith can nevertheless quietly and calmly make a little speech, put a pistol to the head of his subject and pull the trigger. The shouting of the others at the seance might disrupt the possession before the "suicide" occurs, but maybe not. Catatonic and comatose hosts do not wake up when startled, and are, as such, quite valued.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Puppetry, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes is the number of scenes the wraith may remain in control of the target. The target may resist possession with a Willpower roll, so that each success represents one scene fewer that the wraith retains control. This art costs three Pathos. If the Puppeteer seizes control of a target in a coma or forces a willing channel to perform self-destructive acts, the wraith gains one Angst. Note that a body drugged into a trance is fumbling and slow to react, even if the wraith's mind is crystal clear.

••••• Obliterate the Soul

After making a host into a Consort through extended contact, the Puppeteer can displace the Consort's soul, which is devoured by the wraith's Shadow. The Puppeteer may now enter the body via Skinride and automatically assume control of it. Whenever the user leaves, the body becomes unresponsive and resembles a catatonic. The body does not survive for long without the soul, but until the flesh dies and begins to decay (about two to three weeks), it is the sole property of the Puppeteer.

System: The Puppeteer must have used Anesthesia at least 10 times on the host and must be skinriding. The player then begins an extended roll of Strength + Puppetry with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating or the victim's Willpower, whichever is higher. Once the Puppeteer has accumulated successes equal to the target's Willpower, the target's soul is devoured by the Shadow.

This art can be attempted only once per month — at the stroke of midnight during the new moon. Unless the Puppeteer can gain at least one success on the attempt, she must wait until the next new moon to try again. However, if she can manage to get even a single success, she may make more rolls whenever she is able.

Each roll for Obliterate the Soul costs five Pathos and two Willpower, and it causes the wraith to gain a number of points of temporary Angst equal to the target's Willpower. The Hierarchy makes extraordinary efforts to track down Puppeteers who practice this art, as they are so likely to become Shadow-eaten from its use.

Usury

Usurers

Basic Abilities

Assessment: The Usurer can determine the health of a person, either Quick or Dead. Careful scrutiny of a target shows wounds or other areas of poor health as black slashes or splotches. This ability can also be used to detect an area's life energy, which appears to be red and seething.

System: The player makes a Perception + Usury roll (difficulty 6). One success at scrutinizing a person allows the Usurer to gauge the target's relative level of health; three successes allow the Usurer to determine the precise number of wounds or of corpus levels lost, and five or more successes allow identification and diagnosis of each individual wound. If used to detect someone, one success allows the Usurer to determine whether anyone is in his general area and whether the target is Quick or Dead. Three successes allow the Usurer to pinpoint the location of sensed individuals and to accurately assess their numbers. Five or more successes allow the Usurer to generally determine targets' health and, if the persons detected are familiar to the Usurer, possibly their identities.

• Transfer

The wraith may move Pathos between herself and another wraith, or between herself and a Till. This transfer is visible to the Restless as a brief, brilliant halo around the Usurer and her target.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Usury. If the wraith is donating Pathos, taking Pathos from a willing subject or trans-

Till (Variable Level Artifact)

The Till is an Artifact commonly used by Usurers. A complex and unwieldy assemblage of soulfire crystals and soulsteel mechanisms in a Stygian steel case, the Till is the repository for Usurers' working capital (as they call the Pathos they keep at hand to cover transactions). Tills range from 10 to 50 points of Pathos in capacity, though some larger do exist. Some important Trusts (associations of several powerful Usurers) have Tills capable of holding tens of thousands of points. Ownership of such gargantuan Tills is far beyond even the most optimistic projections of the average Usurer, but among the greatest of Stygia's Pathos barons, the size of the Trust's main Till is a matter of competitive status. Each point of the Artifact Background spent on the Till allows it to hold 10 points of Pathos, accessible through the Usury art, Transfer.

ferring Pathos to or from a Till, the difficulty is 4. If stealing Pathos, the difficulty is the target's Willpower. In order to steal Pathos from unwilling targets, the Usurer must first successfully touch them. She need not do any damage, but at least one success must make it past any Dodge successes a target makes. The number of successes on the Manipulation + Usury roll equals the amount of Pathos transferred or stolen. If this art is used to steal Pathos from the unwilling, it causes the Usurer to gain a point of temporary Angst.

•• Charity

By pouring his own corpus into a wraith or mortal, the Usurer may heal wounds. This effect manifests as the Usurer exhaling his corpus onto the target. This ability can be used across the Shroud, even if the Usurer has not used another Arcanos to manifest himself on the other side.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Usury. The difficulty equals his subject's current corpus or health level. Each success allows one point of corpus or health to be transferred. Each transferred point of corpus heals one health level or corpus level of damage.

••• Withdrawal

This art, the reverse of Charity, allows the Usurer to steal away life with but a touch.

System: To use this art, the Usurer must first touch her target. She need not do damage, but she must get at least one success past her opponent's Dodge. The player then rolls Manipulation + Usury (difficulty equals the victim's Willpower). Each success allows the Usurer to steal one of her victim's health or corpus levels and add a point to either her own corpus or Pathos. This art can be used only while the Usurer is below her maximum level in either Pathos or corpus. The Usurer may not "drain off" health or corpus levels that take her above the maximum ratings in those Traits.

•••• Danegeld

Through the use of this Arcanos, the Usurer can make a one-sided contract and metaphysically "pay off" a Spectre with Pathos. While the Danegeld remains in effect, the affected Spectres are unable to hinder or attack the Usurer, even if the Usurer attacks them.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Usury, with a difficulty of the Spectre's Being plus three. Each success prevents a targeted Spectre from attacking the Usurer for one turn. Danegeld costs three Pathos per use.

••••• Lien

This art allows the Usurer to place a lien on another wraith's good health. For every point of Pathos the Usurer invests in the target, the target must match the Pathos (or Angst, if a Spectre) or suffer damage thereafter.

System: To use this art, the Usurer must first touch his target. He need not do damage, but he must get at least one success past his opponent's Dodge. The player then announces how much Pathos is to be spent on the Lien and makes a Charisma + Usury roll with a difficulty equal to the number of points he wishes to invest plus three. Targets must immediately pay an equal amount of Pathos (or Angst, if a Spectre). For each point they fail to pay, they take one die of normal damage for a number of rounds equal to the number of successes on the Lien roll. This damage may be soaked, but only with Stamina. Multiple Liens may be active on the same target. Each use of Lien causes the Usurer to gain two points of temporary Angst.

The Forbidden Arcanoi

The Insurrection and the Fourth Great Maelstrom sufficiently distract Stygian authorities, who otherwise punish the practice of the following proscribed arts harshly. Only Mnemosynis remains largely unknown during this period of *laissez faire*. Individuals are another matter, and smart wraiths are as cautious as ever around practitioners of the Forbidden Arcanoi.

Flux Alchemists

Basic Abilities

Grave Mold: Through the use of this art, the Alchemist causes the growth of mold, lichen and mildew in an area. These growths promote decay, and they are often quite unsettling to mortals as well. These fungal blooms wither away if exposed to sunlight or warding, and they cannot be made to grow on living things.

System: The player rolls Strength + Flux, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. The number of successes is the number of square feet that may be covered with fungoid growths.

Sense Fluxion: The Alchemist can detect the use of Flux on an object or area. Depending on the degree of insight the user gains, he may be able to tell what arts were used, and even to recognize the individual style of the alchemist.

System: The player rolls Perception + Flux (difficulty 8). The number of successes determines the amount of information gained. One success indicates that the Alchemist can determine whether Flux was used on an inspected object. Three or more successes allow him to determine the art used and some trademark flourishes of the Alchemist who used it. Five or more successes allow inspecting Alchemists to determine precisely what hand was responsible for the Fluxion — although they may not be able to put a name to the Alchemist who performed the deed, they'll recognize that Alchemist's handiwork work if they see it again, or if they see the Alchemist in question at work.

• Rot

This art allows the Alchemist to age a small, nonliving item. Fabric and paper yellow and become brittle. Wood or glass warps perceptibly at the Alchemist's touch. Metals tarnish, rust or otherwise oxidize slightly. Objects heavier than fabric and paper can be marred but not significantly damaged with this art.

System: The player rolls Strength + Flux against a difficulty of the local Shroud rating. The number of successes determines the amount of material that can be damaged. One success might only weaken the strap of a dress, mar a window or ruin a few pages of a book. Five successes allow an entire wardrobe to be ruined, a large picture window to be made impossible to see through clearly or an entire encyclopedia to be reduced to brittle scraps. Each use of Rot costs one Pathos.

•• White Stone

This art allows an Alchemist to perform certain spiritual operations on an object that render it more resistant to breakage.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Flux (difficulty 7). Each success increases the difficulty of attempts to break a certain object by one, to a maximum of 10. Keep track of the number of successes, as different methods of destruction may require different difficulties. An application of White Stone requires one Pathos per success. This art can be used only once on a particular object. White Stone is compatible with both the Lifeweb art Fetter Sentry (p. 123) and the Kinesis art Reliquary (p. 121).

••• Black Stone

Through this process, the Alchemist can promote serious decay, even in durable objects. Glass warps and cracks, iron and steel rust and less durable objects disintegrate. Although only a small area can be affected, the well-timed failure of a single axle, cable, rivet or link of chain can have devastating consequences.

System: The character makes a Stamina + Flux roll with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating plus any modifiers for the object's durability. Each success increases the volume of material affected. One success is sufficient to cause the already-overstressed recoil cylinder of a howitzer to rupture. Three success are enough to snap an axle or reduce the consistency of a stair riser to that of goat cheese. Five or more successes are required to significantly damage bridge cables or structural beams. This art costs two Pathos per use, and it may cause the wraith to gain Angst if he uses the art for lethal mayhem.

•••• Racing Corruption

Through this art, the Alchemist causes an area's speedy deterioration. The individual effects are minor — metal objects tarnish suddenly, improperly balanced objects fall over, china chips, already overstressed screws pull themselves free, glass warps and cracks. This effect is primarily useful for frightening the Quick, but it has some other limited applications.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Flux, with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success causes the Racing Corruption to persist for one turn. Because the gnawing effects of Flux are constant, the resulting effects increase in magnitude as turns go by. The first turn's effects might not be noticeable, but by the fifth turn the Fog definitely takes hold as doors come crashing off of cabinets, bedsprings snap through mattresses, glass and china spontaneously shatter and chunks of plaster fall like autumn leaves from the walls. At least five successes are required to make an area dangerous from weakened floors or widowmakers. Repeated use of this art in an area can lower the Shroud rating there. Racing Corruption costs two Pathos plus one Pathos per turn of effect, and it causes the Alchemist to gain a point of temporary Angst.

••••• Automaton

Through the use of Flux, the Alchemist can build a body for herself from manmade objects. This body can be made of scrap metal, bricks, magazines and books, bedclothes or virtually any

other object, as long as it is something created by the Quick. This being has the character's physical characteristics, and damage to it is subtracted from the character's corpus levels. This form is extremely formidable, and its use is often cited as one of the reasons the Alchemists were banned from Stygia.

System: The player rolls Strength + Flux with a difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating. Each success indicates a bonus that can be applied to the wraith's Physical Attributes, at a rate of one die per success. These bonuses should be reflective of the materials used to form the body, and the Storyteller has the final say over how these bonuses can be allocated. Except under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., if it is made out of burning timbers or molten iron), this form does normal, damage.

Intimation

Solicitors

Basic Abilities

Twinge: By making eye contact with another, Solicitors may become aware of the desire uppermost in the target's mind at that instant. This effect is often less than informative, but in the middle of an important conversation or immediately prior to combat, it can prove invaluable. Like all the powers of Intimation, Twinge can be used on the Awakened, the Quick and the Dead with equal ease.

System: The wraith rolls Perception + Intimation (difficulty 7). The degree of success is irrelevant — Twinge cannot detect anything beyond the most immediate surface thoughts.

Self-Intimation: Self-Intimation allows a Solicitor to resist the effects of Intimation used against him by another Solicitor.

System: Whenever an attempt at Intimation is made against a character with Self-Intimation, the Storyteller secretly makes a roll of the target's Intelligence + Intimation (difficulty 6). Each success subtracts one from the number of successes achieved by the Intimation attempt. A botch indicates that the Intimation effect doubles in duration or intensity.

• The Gleaming

The simplest art of Intimation makes a single solid object irresistibly attractive to all who see it, save the Solicitor who deployed the Gleaming in the first place and any other Solicitors who succeed in negating the effect with Self-Intimation. This blatant use of the Arcanos is typically considered hopelessly unsubtle by experienced Solicitors.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimation (difficulty 7) to infuse an object with a desirability it might not otherwise possess. Each success on the roll causes the Gleaming to persist for a scene. Any wraith who glimpses the object during the art's duration must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or be seized with the overwhelming desire to possess the object and have it exclusively as his own. Failure on the Gleaming roll leaves the object as attractive as it would normally be, whereas a botch makes it profoundly unattractive to onlookers. The Gleaming costs one Pathos per use.

•• Quash

Quash removes an individual's desire for something. Its target can be a simple want, such as hunger, or something as complex as the need to feel loved. This ability can be incalculably useful as a treatment for the emotionally damaged, as well as extraordinarily devastating if used aggressively. Quash is unsubtle — it simply deletes a want from the victim's psyche and leaves a gap her thoughts often wander over — like a tongue worrying a chipped or missing tooth.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Intimation, with a difficulty equal to the subject's Willpower. The number of successes determines how complex and deep-seated the need removed may be. One success removes a moderate, short term desire for an object, whereas five successes allow the termination of passions verging on the obsessive, such as a mortal's sex drive or a lifelong hatred of the person who murdered the target's father.

Wraithly Passions can also be dimmed with Quash, though the Solicitor must have a good understanding of a Passion (usually through Deepest Desires) to attack it. For every three successes rolled, the targeted Passion is *permanently* reduced by one.

Quash costs two Pathos per use and causes the wraith to gain a point of Angst if used outside a therapeutic context.

••• Deepest Desires

This art allows a Solicitor to perfectly understand the needs and wants of the target. This understanding is potentially perfect, in many cases surpassing what a parent, lifelong friend or companion of many years might gain from experience.

System: The player rolls Perception + Intimation (difficulty 8). The more successes rolled, the deeper the understanding the Solicitor gains. Three or more successes allow the Solicitor to learn the target's Passions, though not her values, and five or more successes indicate a perfect understanding of what makes the target tick. The number of successes on sequential Deepest Desires rolls are not cumulative. This art costs two Pathos.

•••• Cravings

Cravings allows a Solicitor to implant in her target the irrational desire to do something. It is the Solicitor's decision exactly what desire is created. It might be anything from reading a book to hurling oneself into the Somme Nihil. As with

Quash, absolutely no attempt is made to harmonize this artificial want with the victim's psyche. Unless the Solicitor is quite careful, victims are likely to realize that they have been mentally manipulated in some fashion (yet remain powerless to do anything about it).

System: The player must formulate *precisely* the nature of the craving to be instilled. She then rolls Manipulation + Empathy with a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. The difficulty of the Willpower roll the victim must make to withstand acting on the impulse when the opportunity presents itself is (the number of successes plus three). Restless victims may spend Willpower on this roll. After a number of points of Willpower are spent equal to the number of successes the Solicitor achieved on the Cravings roll, the urge is overcome — though the victim will still desire to perform the act, she may resist the desires without a roll. Cravings costs three Pathos and one Willpower, and it causes the Solicitor to gain a point of Angst for every two successes rolled.

Botching

Those who play with cats inevitably get scratched. A character who botches an Arcanos roll can face dire consequences, and it is up to the Storyteller to devise some effect from the failed roll. For example, a botched Outrage roll may result in the wrong target being affected, or a temporary loss of Stamina for the wraith overextending himself through this power. A botched Keening roll can cast a Chanteur's projected emotions back on himself, whereas a botched Argos roll can strand the unfortunate wraith in the Tempest. The effects are never predictable, and the Storyteller is encouraged to mold them to fit the situation. There may be no effects, as the character may simply experience failure as punishment enough. The creative outcomes of a thoughtful Storyteller, however, can add a certain flair to the game.

••••• Cupitatis

Cupitatis allows the Solicitor to duplicate the effect of Cravings or Quash, except that the negation or obsession seems to be a totally normal outgrowth of the target's experience and perfectly integrated into her worldview. Even the most potent persuasion is usually ineffective in convincing victims of Cupitatis of their sudden mental changes.

System: The player makes a roll as if for Quash or Cravings. The number of successes indicates how difficult it is to persuade victims that their desires are artificially induced. Self-discovery and recovery from even one success is still a matter of roleplaying rather than mechanics. Even those few Intimation victims who can begin to come to grips with the fact that their desires are artificially induced spend the rest of their existence trapped with a mind full of implanted desires and synthetic passions.

Alternate Arts

In most Arcanoi, there are many variations on the powers at lesser levels. These variations, called "ancient arts" or "new arts," can be learned instead of the basic arts listed here for the same point cost. For example, a wraith with the Phantasm Arcanos could choose to learn the level two ancient art Conclave (see **Guildbook: Sandmen**), instead of the basic level one art Elysia.

A wraith who learns an alternate art in lieu of the regular one for a given Arcanos level should make a notation in the appropriate section of her character sheet describing the alternate art she has picked up. If she decides to learn the basic art for that level, the experience point cost is as follows:

Arcanos Level	Point Cost
One	1
Two	3
Three	6
Four	9
Five	12

A wraith may not acquire alternate arts higher than her level of training in a given Arcanos. Thus, alternative arts cannot be purchased unless a wraith possesses at least one level of experience in the Arcanos in question.

Arcanos Markings

The eldritch practices of the dead leave their mark not only on the mind and soul of the dabbler, but on his corpus, too. Although the physical remnants of Arcanos usage serve to indicate Guild affiliation, it is not a wraith's presence in a Guild that creates these marks, but her use of the craft itself. A wraith does not have to be a member of the Guild of Spooks to develop the knotty, misshapen look of an experienced user of the Arcanos.

Wraiths who use more than one Arcanos, or who tinker with the mongrel arts known as Tempered Arcanoi, are known to bear the marks of more than one craft. Wraiths piebald with such distinctive features are not as uncommon as they once were, as the Restless are forced to expand their powers in order to survive in the crush that follows the War to End All Wars. If the effects of two Arcanoi directly conflict (such as the radically different ways in which Argos and Intimation affect users' eyes), marks associated with the art used primarily appear most prevalent, with the secondary art manifesting itself in subtle ways. For instance, a Harbinger who

occasionally uses Intimation (which stains its user's left eye green) possesses jet-black eyes, but under the right light, an olive sheen is apparent in the left orb.

Wherefores

The secret arts that a wraith learns become more than simply powers she can draw on at will: They become her strengths and weaknesses, the way she views Restless society, the way she views herself. Using an Arcanos means invoking the wraith's comprehension of the craft and matching her Arcanos dice with those of an Attribute (Strength + Puppetry, for instance). Usually, she must also burn an amount of valuable emotional energy to fuel the art. Any cost for the Arcanos, whether Pathos, Willpower, corpus or shouldering additional Angst, must be paid in full whether the attempt succeeds or fails.

The context in which it is invoked has a profound effect on an Arcanos. The pulse of the living can drown out death's cry, making Arcanoi more difficult to activate in heavily populated areas. The Shroud forms a protective barrier between the Skinlands and the Deadlands; in most situations, the difficulty of Arcanos rolls equals the local Shroud rating. Generally, the Shroud rating stands at 9, but it can fluctuate depending on the place or time. The Shroud weakens in graveyards and buildings with grisly pasts, battlefields and on Walpurgis Night and other occasions devoted to the dead. The sacred area of a wraith's Haunt can also thin the Shroud somewhat. Whatever the circumstance, however, the Shroud rating may never drop below 4.

Attunement

Attunement involves steady practice of wraithly arts and investment of Willpower into a subject until that person or object becomes an easier target of Arcanoi. This process is used mainly with Arcanoi that affect the Skinlands, especially Embody, Puppetry, Inhabit and Pandemonium. People whom a wraith has attuned are known among the Restless as Consorts.

Attunement is a form of identification with the victim. Each time a wraith successfully manifests to, skinrides or hides within a subject, the wraith may spend one Willpower to strengthen the connection between herself and her target. The closer a wraith was in life to the target, the easier attunement is for her. For example, attuning to someone the wraith never met while she was alive might cost five Willpower, but a dear friend or relative might require only two. Once she attunes to someone, the wraith finds that certain Arcanoi, such as Puppetry, have powers that can affect only Consorts. If no attunement results are given underneath the Arcanos listing, it is up to the Storyteller to decide whether the Arcanos can be attuned at all. If so, she must then consider its possible effects.

On Tempering Arcanoi

Charon's disbanding of the Guilds in 1598 led to a greater dissemination of heretofore forbidden Arcanos knowledge. More specifically, some wraiths who'd mastered one Arcanos sought to broaden their powers by combining them with other Arcanoi altogether, experimentation the Guilds had discouraged in their ascendancy. Although traditionalist wraiths denounced these new, or "tempered," Arcanoi as bastardizations of the sacred arts, tempering continued. Prior to the chaos that attended the Fourth Great Maelstrom, adventuresome wraiths viewed their Arcanoi the way alchemists of old viewed their reagents. Alone, each element had certain abilities inherent to its nature; by combining select elements, it was possible for the experimenter to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Also like alchemy, it was possible for a careless or unwise innovator to create a foul mixture that could cripple him, or even bring about his demise. Tempering one Arcanos with another can carry with it dire consequences, but many wraiths brave these risks in order to achieve powers otherwise unknown by the Restless.

In game terms, a character must first possess one of the Arcanoi to be tempered at level five before he can even attempt combined arts. Generally, this costlier element of any tempering effort is the one that the tempered Arcanos more resembles in effect. Animate the Dead (Usury 2 plus Puppetry 5), for example, is a Puppetry effect modified by Usury. Second, the player must use experience points to purchase the "lesser" of the Arcanoi to be tempered, *even if his character already has the Arcanos at or above the appropriate level.* Thus, someone already having Usury at level three must nevertheless expend 10 experiences points (4 points to "learn" the basic ability, plus the desired level of the Arcanos [2] x 3) for the purpose of Animating the Dead.

If the player wishes to temper Arcanoi not described below, he must provide the Storyteller with a general description of the proposed Arcanos combination and its effects. The Storyteller may choose to allow the new power, disallow it or modify it in some way. She should then tell the player how long it will take the character to combine the two Arcanoi. Generally, the wraith must spend a number of months equivalent to the total skill levels involved in the Arcanoi to be tempered. For example, the tempered Arcanos Masquerade (Moliate 2 plus Embody 5) requires about seven months of careful work. The Storyteller may opt to increase or reduce this time commitment based on the availability of a willing mentor. If the character in question already has the Mentor Background, the Storyteller *may* reduce preparation time by one month per level of Mentor. A player lacking the Background can choose to pursue a Mentor through

roleplaying, but the Storyteller should treat after-the-fact Background purchases as stringently as she likes (see **Wraith: The Oblivion**, p. 228).

A wraith who decides to undertake tempering must find a place where he can easily harvest Pathos, for experimentation with the arts of the Dead exacts a heavy spiritual and emotional toll (one to four Pathos per day, depending on the levels of the Arcanoi being tempered). During the project, the wraith must make three rolls: the first two are made during the trial and error of experimentation, the third made once the wraith is finally able to attempt his new tempered Arcanos. The first time, the player rolls Intelligence plus the level of the lower Arcanos that is being Tempered. The second time, he rolls Intelligence plus the level of the higher Arcanos. The final roll is a simple Willpower roll as the character attempts to invoke the untested power for the first time. All rolls are made at difficulty 7, and Willpower may not be invested into any of these rolls. A botch on any of these rolls means that the character has been overcome by the strain of Tempering and must start over again.

For the character to succeed, the three rolls together must generate at least as many successes as the combined dot total of the Arcanoi being tempered. For example, a wraith attempting to combine Outrage 3 with Keening 5 would need eight successes total to prevail. If the grand total is less than the required amount, the wraith may suffer some ill effect from the mismatch of the two powers. Loss of an Arcanos (Storyteller's choice) for a story, a drop in Willpower (temporary or permanent) or temporary reduction in dice pools may be the price of personal defeat. The Storyteller may choose to worsen the penalties in proportion to the shortfall of successes rolled. The character may attempt to temper these Arcanoi again, however, with the difficulty reduced by one due to the experience gained from his previous attempt. Charon protect the character whose grand total of the three rolls results in a botch (no successes, plus a 1 or 1s rolled), for the unfortunate immediately plummets into a Destruction Harrowing, as if he had lost all of his Willpower. If he survives this Harrowing, he returns to the place of experimentation. He will have lost a temporary point of Willpower, but also two points of temporary Angst for his victory in the wake of defeat.

Some Tempered Arcanoi

Below are a few examples of Tempered Arcanoi, but players should be encouraged to develop their own.

• **Animate the Dead (Usury 2 + Puppetry 5):** A wraith who develops this power may insert her corpus into the body of an organism that has died recently in order to control it for a short time. The body must still possess some semblance of working muscle tissue for the wraith to control the host's movement, which limits this Arcanos to creatures that have been dead for only a few days. Although the user may speak only through corpses of the freshly dead, she may cause any animatable carcass to emit simple noises.

System: The player must initially spend one Pathos and transfer a number of corpus relative to the size of the creature being animated. Generally, a creature the size of a mouse would require one corpus; a dog, two corpus; a person, three corpus; a horse, four corpus. Having done so, the wraith must invest two Pathos per scene to keep the body animated. This art bestows a point of temporary Angst.

• **Masquerade (Moliate 2 + Embody 5):** This tempered Arcanos allows the wraith to manifest in the Skinlands as someone or something other than himself. He may elect to manifest in the guise of someone else, an object or as something completely fantastic — an angel on high or a bloodthirsty demon. For a short time, mortals remain unaffected by the Fog and see the wraith as he wants to be seen.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Moliate to alter himself into the form to be seen in the Skinlands. The difficulty varies depending on the task: a familiar person is a 6, a mundane object is a 7 and a fantastic being or unfamiliar person would be an 8 or 9. Each success indicates the authenticity of the disguise as well as the number of scenes that the wraith may appear on the far side of the Shroud. This art costs a Willpower point and two Pathos.

• **Mirror Monster (Phantasm 2 + Pandemonium 5):** As a mortal gazes into a mirror, this power allows the temperer to gaze into the depths of her target's soul. A wraith using this tempered Arcanos may manifest a target's worst fears in the mirror while the person stares into it, and he may even cause the dreaded image to appear to reach beyond the confines of the glass toward the target for a fleeting moment. Feared enemies, vermin, natural disasters and other private fears can be seen by the target only, and dissolve quickly. Although the manifestations inflict no physical damage, forcing a person to come face-to-face with his deepest fear often traumatizes him badly.

System: A successful Perception + Phantasm roll plus the investiture of a temporary Willpower point allows the wraith to manifest the target's greatest fear in the mirror for a turn. An additional two Pathos causes the horrid vision to "escape" the mirror's confines, enveloping the victim for another turn. Use of this power grants one temporary Angst.

• **Shadowstrength (Castigate 3 + Usury 5):** Whispered rumor has it that this dark discipline was developed by Spectres and passed on by wraiths in the grip of Catharsis. Indeed, it is hard to believe that any wraith might otherwise willingly impart this knowledge to another. With but a touch, the wraith may expend Pathos to subvert the Psyche of another and allow her Shadow to manipulate her corpus as it sees fit. Although they refuse to speak of it, most Pardoners are well aware of this tempered Arcanos' existence, and they seek to eliminate anyone who dares learn its secrets. Frequent abusers of this power are identified by their black-stained teeth, acquired by coaxing Shadows from their lairs.

System: To use this Arcanos, the character must be touching her target, and the player must make a Manipulation + Usury roll, difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. Each success causes the target to take on one point of temporary Angst, each at the cost of one Pathos to the character. If this roll causes the target's temporary Angst to exceed his permanent Willpower, he must immediately roll for Catharsis, with the difficulty for his Shadow reduced from 6 to 5. If the target's Psyche is not overcome, any temporary Angst bestowed by Shadowstrength is lost, but the Arcanos' Pathos cost to the character is still paid. Whether it succeeds or fails, this grim art causes the user to gain two Angst.

he Maelstrom made Cholly lose his head. Well, I suppose it was his own fault for looking down that Nihil right when he shouldn't have, but even so.... Cholly was one of those idiots who insisted on begging Fate to crush him; I don't think he'll be coming back any more.

When the storm blew in, Cholly collapsed with a scream like metal on slate, and the rest of our patrol just ran for the gates. Coventry's not the largest Necropolis in the Underworld, but it's a sturdy little fortress, and it's held against local Maelstrom winds before. We thought that this one was another regional blow and that it would soon be over, or that the bulk of the storm would be occupied in leveling what remained of the European Necropoli. We were quite wrong, of course.

As we sprinted for the gates, the landscape around us lit up like we were in the middle of an artillery bombardment. From every side, geysers of glowing Maelstrom-stuff exploded out of the ground, pierced the heavens and boiled across the sky. The landscape lit up with a hellish glow, a tarnished bronze-colored light that made everything look old and feeble and weak. And from all around us, we heard Spectres calling, each to each, as they rode the winds into the Shadowlands.

Ahead of us, the gates were closing. The storm bell tolled with a sound like titans' hammer-strokes, each pulse more frantic than the last. We could see the soldiers desperately working the mechanism that would shut the doors, that would keep us outside to face the storm's fury. Behind me, I could hear dim clangs as Caius shed his armor and dropped his sword in an effort to add more speed.

I slipped through the gates as they clanged shut. Caius was still outside, perhaps 50 feet behind. I tried to make the soldiers re-open the gates, and I got a sword haft to the face for my troubles. Hranulf held me down as the Overlord in command explained, more with pity than with anger. It took too long, he said — once the gates were re-opened, there was no way they could be closed in time to keep the storm out. And then there were the Spectres.

So once Hranulf let me go, I stood there and listened. I listened to Caius' frantic pounding on the gate outside. I listened to him curse and plead, and call on the gods he'd stopped believing in 20 centuries before I was born. I listened as the Maelstrom winds flayed his corpus to tatters, and as the Spectres came to take what was left of him in their claws. Soldiers surged to the walls around me to defend the city; others hid behind locked soulsteel doors. But I just stood there and listened in shame. I was glad it had been Caius and not me.

But next time it will be you, my Shadow whispered. Next time....

Chapter Four: I Am but the Shadow of Myself

When one tears away the veils and shows them naked, people's souls give off such a pungent smell of decay.
— Octave Mirbeau, *The Diary of a Chambermaid*

Every wraith's Psyche exists to fulfill its Passions (or at least to try), but the wraith has darker ambitions, ones that tend toward its own destruction as well as harm to others. These Dark Passions and the archetypal nature that ties them together define the wraith's Shadow.

The Shadow is an entity in itself. Maelstrom winds carry the many voices of Oblivion into every Haunt, and into every head. The wraith's darker side becomes aware of itself. Strengthened by contact with Oblivion undimmed by flesh or Shroud, the Shadow develops abilities and goals of its own. Thus, every wraith fights a two-front war, with one battle line inside himself.

The Darkness Within

The specific features of a Shadow are as individual as the wraith's Psyche. Dark Passions don't merely negate or invert Passions, nor must the Shadow's Archetype be merely a mirror the Psyche's Nature. Rather, the Shadow brings together all the aspects of the wraith that would undermine its goals: Whatever would make failure and defeat more likely, that's what the Shadow is.

When the Shadow gains sufficient strength, and when the Psyche is worn out, the Shadow may try to temporarily displace the Psyche. When the Shadow wins, Catharsis takes place, and for a while the Psyche exists only as a voice in the back of the Shadow's head.

Some Shadows act in simple, if cunning, ways when they control the wraith. There's always room to spread destruction, confusion, discord and despair. Some Shadows, however, proceed with more calculation. Acts good in themselves can serve Oblivion as well as overt malice. Kindly encouragement of an Enfant's grandiose plans, for instance, may hasten the wraith to a Destruction Harrowing or to conversion into a Spectre. Promises of help and professions of love do at least as much to set up a wraith for trouble as curses might. If it helps lead a wraith to destruction, it's a good idea to at least some Shadows.

The Shadowguide

Wraiths' divided nature shows up in the course of play. While you play your wraith's Psyche, another member of the troupe plays your Shadow, and you play someone else's Shadow. Shadowguiding allows for real, meaningful conflicts and interaction: When your Shadow offers its opinion, you get a genuinely different point of view. Likewise, when you, as Shadowguide, offer temptations (or support), that Shadow's Psyche faces an actually distinct personality.

Don't take Shadowguiding as license to turn abusive: Players aren't competing with each other. Shadows and Psyches do war against each other, with existence or annihilation as the prize. But players and Storytellers need to keep the game's considerations distinct from the real world. Driving the players into Oblivion along with their characters isn't the point.

Summary of Shadow Creation Steps

• **Step One: Archetype.** Choose a Shadow Archetype from the list, or work one out with your Storyteller.

• **Step Two: Angst.** Roll one die per point of Psyche Willpower, difficulty 6. Each success gives the Shadow a point of permanent Angst. Any 1s rolled do not cancel successes for this purpose. Even if you roll no successes, the Shadow begins with a minimum Angst of 1.

• **Step Three: Dark Passions.** Divide seven points among Dark Passions.

• **Step Four: Freebie Points.** Divide 10 freebie points among Angst, Dark Passions and Thorns. Permanent Angst costs 5 points per dot; temporary Angst costs 2 points per dot; Dark Passions cost 1 point per dot. Thorn costs vary. See p. 145 for the list of Thorns.

Shadow Character Creation

The steps of Shadow creation come once your character's Psyche is done, but you should be thinking abut the Shadow along the way. They are, after all, the two forces warring for control of the wraith. The Shadow should be an intriguing and worthy challenger to the Psyche. Go through the following steps in consultation with your Storyteller and your Shadowguide: They both have a stake in this aspect of your character, and they may have good ideas.

Step One: Archetype

Just as Nature sums up the essence of the Psyche's drives, Archetype gets at the heart of the Shadow. It may be the straightforward reverse of the Nature, but doesn't have to be. If you have the opportunity to play through a Prelude and get a sense of the character in life, a choice of Archetype often emerges naturally. If not, at least take the time to consider what the character's deepest weaknesses are, where the impulse to self-defeat is strongest. Often that's not what lies near the surface; a well-chosen Archetype should illuminate secrets just as a good Nature can.

The list that follows suggests the range of Twilight Era Shadow personalities, but it is not intended to be definitive. Some Archetypes are dark variants on Psyche Natures, and it's possible for a wraith to view the world through two different filters drawing on the same underlying inspiration.

Sample Archetypes

Again, feel free to adapt these for your particular wraith, or use them as guidelines for creating your own. Every light source casts its own shadows; the range of Shadow Archetypes is as vast as the range of wraiths.

• **The Anarchist** — Power corrupts. All the world's evils flow from concentration of power: Poverty, crime, vice and exploitation all derive from the power that some people wield over others. The Anarchist yearns to bring Oblivion to the top: to overthrow every structure and set individuals free to remake their own destinies… or to perish in the attempt. Anyone holding power and anyplace decisions are made may become the Anarchist's target. The Anarchist assists the Psyche in any action that interferes with the schemes of rulers and potentates, or that assists individuals and small groups seeking to take charge of their own affairs.

• **The Deserter** — All institutions fail. If they ever kept their promises, the Deserter wouldn't now be a doomed ghost roaming the Shadowlands. But they all lied. Under the circumstances, the Deserter's only remaining priority is self-preservation until such time as the liars can be punished. The Deserter favors self-preservation above all else. Whenever things get tough, the Deserter looks for a way to leave the tight situation, preferably a way that ends up bringing harm to the wraiths it's abandoning. They're liars, too. Since they failed, they deserve whatever fate meets them. The Deserter, meanwhile, will seek out some new group. In short order, the Deserter always succeeds in finding the flaws that make the new group equally unworthy, and the cycle of betrayal continues.

• **The Id** —The Id constantly urges the Psyche to satisfy the passions of the moment, without regard for the consequences. There is no existence but in the present, and no reason not to be satisfied here and now. The Id helps the Psyche find relief. In the end, of course, the quest for relief leads to the ultimate respite in Oblivion; the Id wants the road there to be as enjoyable as possible.

• **The Maggot** — Everything valuable the world may have ever held is dead, and the Maggot's helping dispose of the corpse. Most wraiths lack the courage or integrity to face up to the truth of the moment. The Maggot takes active delight in forcing them to see that their hopes are all doomed. Whenever there's something of value or importance, the Maggot is there to wear it down and scatter the pieces. The Maggot finds most satisfaction in confronting a landscape devoid of props, sources of security, comforts or shelters. It does not rest until all the bones of the Shadowlands glisten in the last rays of sunshine, just before Oblivion sweeps it all away forever.

• **The Merchant** — The Merchant knows that the value of a thing is what that thing will bring. Nothing needs remain with its current owner if the price is right. The Merchant is willing to try any deal, particularly one that leads the Psyche into a compromised position. The Merchant gets its thrills from complicated arrangements that leave all the participants disappointed. When the Psyche occupies a position of authority, the Merchant cheerfully seeks to trade away not just the wraith's own possessions but all the resources the wraith oversees. If the deal turns out to be bad for the recipients, well, all the better.

• **The Nurse** — The world hurts, and the Nurse is there to tend its wounds. The Nurse brings comfort at every level: first, removal from the source of hurt, then psychological peace and finally the ultimate release of annihilation. The word "hospice," in its modern sense, isn't in wide use during the Twilight Era, but many Nurse Shadows know and use it. They help the Restless Dead prepare to finish the task of dying. The Nurse fights fiercely, when necessary, against anyone who destroys souls that are unprepared (soulforgers, for example) or anyone who extends the hopeless existence of the dying rather than allowing them to prepare for the inevitable (Pardoners). The Nurse understands that hope itself is an affliction to be overcome and wields all the weapons at its disposal to sever the Psyche from whatever ties keep Oblivion at bay.

• **The Officer** — Oblivion and the universe are at war, and Oblivion's forces need clear leadership. This Shadow bullies its Psyche into a position of leadership, which the Shadow then uses to organize and direct Shadows and Spectres in the vicinity. The Officer assists its Psyche in advancing through the ranks in its Legion, or some other path to administrative authority, using this position to undermine Oblivion's enemies from the inside. The Officer values rank above all, in all things; even in purely personal matters, the Officer punishes its Psyche for violations of the chain of command. Because the Office knows that it's the right being to lead Oblivion's army, it also punishes the Psyche for yielding to others; authority, once obtained, must never be released.

• **The Opium-Eater** — Life is pain. So is death. The Opium-Eater seeks to drift away from the stultifying sorrows and banalities of existence on clouds of bliss. Sweet satiation is the Opium-Eater's one goal. Why fight? Why argue? Do whatever's necessary to get back to the drug, or Arcanos, or whatever it takes to leave the world's cares behind for a while.

• **The Patriot** — This Shadow carries into death the unshakable conviction that his nation was right in life and remains so across the Shroud. He'll see all of the afterlife destroyed rather than allow his beloved homeland to suffer insult. He might consent to work with wraiths of other nationalities, but only as long as they show proper deference, and if he's not leading he'll do his best to undermine or betray their efforts. To the Patriot, all questions boil down to one: Who's asking? No scheme proposed by his countrymen can be fundamentally bad, and no scheme offered by a foreigner can ever be altogether trusted.

• **The Peasant** — Life is simple, and death should be, too. The Peasant waits patiently for Oblivion to sweep over everything and carry it away. In the meantime, this Shadow endeavors to keep its Psyche away from the complications and temptations of existence anywhere but on the farm. The Shadow rewards actions that are unambitious and in keeping with the ancient traditions of agrarian life, and it tries to interfere with actions that reinforce evils like modernism and urbanism. The Peasant also favors behavior that subordinates the individual Psyche to a larger whole, such as a clan or village, as long as it's nothing outré like rebellion. The Peasant rewards quiet acquiescence to the scheme of things, knowing that Oblivion is sure to arrive in its own time.

• **The Revolutionary** — The world's pain springs from injustice. The Revolutionary seeks to slake individual pain and the sufferings of the world at once by overthrowing all established institutions. Whereas the Anarchist seeks to smash down any successors that might arise, the Revolutionary hopes to build a new set of institutions on the ruins. Whatever the Revolutionary's cause is, it's the only thing that matters —

during the Great War, goals as diverse as Marxist-Leninism, Calvinist Christianity and anti-industrial Luddism can all motivate Revolutionaries. All that's necessary is the drive to destroy in the name of a future order.

• **The Scapegoat** — The Scapegoat exists to suffer, as often and in as many ways as possible. Wherever others labor under a load that the Scapegoat might relieve, this Shadow steps in to assume the burden. Inevitably the Scapegoat takes on too much responsibility and begins to fail at crucial tasks, making problems for the Psyche and any others who've come to rely on the wraith. The Scapegoat encourages the Psyche to help others, to intervene, to provide the rallying sacrifice. If a task is noble and self-destructive, the Scapegoat's likely to whisper encouragement and provide support. Nothing pleases the Scapegoat more than to feel itself and the Psyche sink together toward Oblivion for the very best of reasons. Any cause that matters to the Psyche can provide occasions for suffering, but the Scapegoat also reminds the Psyche that other causes warrant sacrifice as well — it's the sacrifice itself that matters.

• **The Taxonomist** —The Taxonomist Shadow helps the wraith see past the illusions of emotion to achieve mastery over her surroundings. Anything that smacks of illogic rouses the Taxonomist to scorn; whenever the wraith shows signs of believing in limits to reason or of acting foolishly, the Taxonomist Shadow draws on its repertoire of tricks to compel a return to "wisdom." Because each phenomenon has its quantifiable role in existence, monsters and other menaces need not be feared, just classified.

• **The Superego** — The Id constantly advocates satisfying the whims of the moment. The Superego opposes it by acting as the internal voice of discipline and restraint. The Superego therefore methodically thwarts the Psyche's current ambitions, for it knows that they do not best serve long-term interests. It also reminds the Psyche of the larger issues being overlooked in the heat of the moment. Every Psyche needs its brake and governor; the Superego takes up this chore. It *is* a chore, too, as the Superego reminds the Psyche from time to time, an unpleasant duty that the Psyche could render unnecessary if it only let the Superego assume control. In the meantime, the Superego persists in attempting to bring at least a measure of rectitude to the Psyche's actions.

Step Two: Angst

The game-term *Angst* sums up all the things that power a Shadow: despair, doubt, anger, greed, a sense of unfinished business and every other impulse toward failure. Pathos sums up hope in the possibility of completing what's been left undone; Angst includes all the things that might prevent completion. Whenever the Psyche suffers defeat, there's a chance that the Shadow might gain strength because of it; this strength manifests as Angst.

Like Willpower, Angst has permanent and temporary ratings. Temporary Angst can rise higher than permanent Angst, to a maximum of 10 points. When it reaches 10, the Shadowguide can choose to trade it for a one-point increase in permanent Angst. Thus, the Shadow becomes stronger.

To determine permanent Angst at Shadow creation, roll one die for each point of Willpower (difficulty 6). Each success represents one point of permanent Angst. Rolled 1s do not cancel successes in this case, and every Shadow begins with a point of permanent Angst, even if you roll no successes. Temporary Angst begins equal to permanent Angst.

See pp. 146-7 for ways Angst may be gained and lost. The Shadowguide should keep track of changes in both temporary and permanent Angst, so that the wraith's Psyche player never knows for sure how strong the Shadow is.

Step Three: Dark Passions

Dark Passions define the Shadow's motives, just as Passions do for the Psyche. Describe each Dark Passion with a short imperative statement followed by the core emotion in parentheses. Each Dark Passion also has a numerical rating to indicate how strong that particular obsession is. For example, in life, Karl was a artist with great dreams about the social and artistic possibilities of an international brotherhood transcending nationalism. Then the War to End All Wars came. Drafted and killed in an early battle, he endures by transferring his dream of a universal society to Stygia. His Shadow draws on his accumulated frustrations with the Dark Passion **Smash all military order (Envy) 3**.

Dark Passions can be the mirror images of Passions — the desire to destroy a loved one the Psyche protects, or the urge to shelter people the Psyche seeks to punish. But they can also reflect drives that don't directly match up with Passions in any simple form. In the example above, Karl might have no Passions concerned with militarism or politics.

The Shadow begins with seven points of Dark Passions, which can be increased during the freebie-points stage of Shadow creation.

Creating Dark Passions

Dark Passions require some thought. It can be tremendously helpful to play out one or even several sessions of Prelude dealing with the character before death. Use the experiences and attitudes revealed there to help define the Shadow. (See the optional character creation system on p. 102 for an approach that puts extra emphasis on pre-death experience.) If your troupe doesn't do that, make thorough use of question-and-answer time to develop a sense of the wraith's strengths and weaknesses, and work from there.

An American soldier killed while fighting against Bolshevism in Russia might have as his major Passion **Return home to family (Love) 5**. It can be inverted as **Keep away from family (Self-Loathing) 4** or **Return home to destroy family (Anger) 4**. Both Dark Passions work directly to undermine the intent of the Passion.

Dark Passions may also draw on other self-destructive aspects of the wraith established during character creation. A nurse with a very strong sense of duty might have a Dark Passion of **Resist Slumber (Honor) 3**. Honor is not a bad drive itself, but here it's being used to wear the wraith down and hasten the triumph of Oblivion. An opera singer whose promising career was cut short by influenza might have an obsession related to her death, either **Flee from all appearances of disease (Fear) 3** or **Torment people dying of disease (Rage) 3**. In the first case, the wraith remains in denial about her passing; in the second case, she's trying to spread her own misery to others.

Finally, Dark Passions may develop as a consequence of the wraith's behavior in the Shadowlands. A wraith who enlisted in an imperial army from one of that country's colonies

Common Dark Passions

Treachery. Not all hopes die during the Twilight Era. New nations emerge. New organizations arise. New ideologies gather support. Wraiths who supported those causes in life rejoice at continued success. Their Shadows can strike the most effective blows by undermining the new features of the Skinlands, or (if a particular Shadow isn't well equipped to pursue *Dictum Mortuum* violations) the new groups' supporters in the Shadowlands.

Twisted Love. Countless millions of loves get cut off prematurely by war, disease, mishap and other unhappy turns of fortune. Loss and the yearning for reunion pervade European society; spiritualism of all kinds resurges in popularity after a pre-war decline, among the countless people seeking solace. Across the Shroud, many wraiths also seek to return to their loves. When they find they can't, jealousy, envy, rage, despair and greed emerge as dominant emotions.

Tyranny. Across Skinlands society, countless individuals proclaim their right to rule all the rest. Their justifications range from class privilege to biological destiny to the pragmatic possession of greatest force. In temperament, they range from saintly idealists to ruthless power-seekers to profoundly amoral villains. Whatever the details, however, when they or their followers cross the Shroud, the impulse to rule becomes a feature of many Shadows. No cause is so good that it can't be construed as justification for bullying, violence and oppression.

and now waits stranded by the Great Maelstrom may become obsessed with the journey home at *any* cost: **Abandon allies (Homesickness) 4**, or perhaps **Plunge into the Maelstrom (Desperation) 3**.

Step Four: Finishing Touches

After allocating the points all Shadows have to spend, it's time to customize. Allocate 10 points among the various features of the Shadow, which have the following costs:

- **Permanent Angst** costs 5 freebie points per dot.
- **Temporary Angst** costs 2 freebie points per dot.
- **Dark Passions** cost 1 freebie points per dot.

Thorns are special abilities that some Shadows possess. They range from minor tricks and flourishes to abilities with profound consequences for any wraith in the vicinity. The Shadow can use Thorns both while the Psyche is in control and during Catharsis (except where specifically noted otherwise or where the Thorn makes no sense if the Shadow is in control).

Thorns

Many of the Thorns given in **Wraith: The Oblivion** (p. 170) work in the Twilight Era as they do later, but not all. With experience comes refinement; with changing expectations, some techniques rise in popularity while others fall from favor. Use the following list to supplement and modify the Thorns listed in **Wraith: The Oblivion** and the **Shadow Player's Guide**.

Shadowed Sight: 1 point. The Shadow can manipulate the light in both the Shadowlands and the Skinlands, creating a variety of disturbing effects. Common applications include sudden darkness (blotting out all the lights within arm's reach), luminous vaguely defined figures that move along oblivious to their surroundings and distorted human shadows without any source. It normally costs two Angst to create a Shadowlands effect and three Angst to create one in the Skinlands. During Catharsis, it costs the Shadow one less Angst than usual to use Shadowed Sight. The Shadow defines the effect when using the Thorn; the effect lasts for the rest of the scene.

Shadowed Smell: 1 point. The Shadow can manipulate scent in the Shadowlands and Skinlands. Common effects include the sharp stench of rotting meat and grave mold, the smoke and ash left over after an intense fire and the salt of sea air. The costs to use Shadowed Smell are the same as for Shadowed Sight.

Shadowed Sound: 1 point. The Shadow can manipulate sound in both the Shadowlands and Skinlands. Common effects include the classic paraphernalia of hauntings (such as rattling chains, low moans and rising shrieks that end abruptly),

the muffling of all sounds in a room and echoes in spaces that normally don't reverberate. The costs to use Shadowed Sound are the same as for Shadowed Sight.

Shadowed Touch: 1 point. The Shadow can manipulate tactile perceptions in the Shadowlands and Skinlands. The most common effects are an icy chill in a particular spot like a doorway, a dank breeze or the soft touch of fabric and fingers that suggests the presence of unseen individuals. The costs to use Shadowed Touch are the same as for Shadowed Sight.

Idee Fixé: 2 points. The Shadow can attempt to stimulate one of the Psyche's Passions to an intensity that briefly dominates the wraith. The Shadow spends a point of Angst and rolls the adjusted temporary Angst against the Psyche's Willpower. If the Shadow wins, a Passion of the Shadow's choice becomes so strong that the Psyche must act in some way that qualifies for an effort at regaining Pathos or forfeit a point of Willpower.

Shell Shock (Dissociation): 2 points. This Thorn is most common among Shadows of individuals with combat experience, but it can appear in anyone — the condition is known as "Dissociation" among civilians. By spending a point of Angst, the Shadow can keep the Psyche from regaining Pathos from a particular Passion for one scene. The Psyche can try to overcome the Thorn's effect by rolling Willpower against temporary Angst. The cost rises if the Shadow tries to block more than one Passion in a scene: two points of Angst for the second, three for the third and so on. While a Passion is blocked, the Psyche feels emotionally numb in matters related to that Passion.

Neuralgia: 2 points per level. The Shadow can inflict pain and mental distress on the wraith. The Shadow spends a point of Angst and sends crippling agony through the wraith's corpus; for the next turn, the wraith's dice pools fall by one for each level of the Thorn. If the wraith's dice pool falls to zero, she enters a hallucinatory state, like seeing the Shadowlands as if through her Caul again. This distortion lasts the rest of the scene. This Thorn can be activated after the wraith declares an action (*as long as it's before dice actually get rolled*), and it can be resisted if the Psyche spends a point of Willpower. Shadow Dice can be offered while Neuralgia is in effect.

Collective Unconscious: 3 points. The Shadow can communicate directly with other Shadows without the knowledge of the Psyches, but only if the Shadows are of the same archetype. The wraith can make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) to notice that the Shadow seems distracted, but can't perceive the conversation.

Pact of Doom: 3 points. With the constant presence of the Great Maelstrom allowing Oblivion's forces to roam more freely than usual, Shadows in **Wraith: Great War** can teach Dark Arcanoi at regular cost; wraithly and Shadow arts of other Dark Kingdoms can be taught for an extra point of Angst per dot (though Stygian wraiths cannot practice Behest or Displace).

Example of Shadow Creation

Milla waited all her life for something to believe in, some cause to fight for. She never found it in life, but discovered it in death. For her shadow, Kyle decides The Deserter would be perfect: It stands in complete opposition to her Architect nature, always wanting to run away from whatever she has built. The Shadow wants the two of them to be alone, forever

Kyle rolls eight dice (Milla's Willpower) to determine her Shadow's Angst rating. He gets four successes on a difficulty of 6, so the Shadow starts with four permanent points of Angst. Kyle then goes to work on The Deserter's Dark Passions. He decides that one will be to **Cause Mistrust (Hate)**, both on Milla herself and all those around her. He gives it a rating of 3. He also decides to include the Shadow's desire for solitude. Thus, Kyle creates **Avoid all others (Fear)**, and assigns it an equal rating of 3. To further cause Milla pain, he also gives her Shadow, **Hurt everyone who cares for you (Rage)**. He spends the last point here.

Kyle has 10 freebie points to spend on the rest of the Shadow's traits. For Thorns, he wants to make sure the Shadow has the tools to make everyone hate and mistrust Milla. For her first Thorn, he chooses Aura of Corruption. It's useful for making everyone around Milla view her suspiciously. He next chooses Shadowed Touch, in hopes that other wraiths will be hesitant to associate with someone who can bestow Angst with mere contact. Instead of adding another Dark Passion, Kyle decides to give the Shadow Shell Shock (Dissociation). He figures that the Shadow might use it to cause Milla to see how vain her hopes at building something great really are. He spends the last two points to give the Shadow a temporary point of Angst.

Angst

When Angst outstrips Willpower, the Shadow may gain temporary control (see Catharsis, p. 147). When Angst rises even higher, the Shadow may assume control of the wraith altogether, displacing the Psyche and marking the transition from wraith to Spectre. Thereafter, unless the Spectre somehow finds redemption, it serves Oblivion until it meets its own extinction.

Acquiring Angst

Unless specified otherwise, all of these Angst gains add to temporary Angst. When temporary Angst reaches 10, the Shadowguide can choose to spend it all to raise permanent Angst by one.

• **Arcanoi.** Some Arcanoi do damage to a wraith's Psyche; when a Psyche-controlled wraith uses them, the Shadow reaps

the harvest of destructive passions. However, when a Shadow-controlled uses these arts, temporary Angst is lowered, since the Shadow is now using up its own resources.

• **Shadow Dice.** The Shadow can offer assistance to the Psyche... at a cost. At the Shadowguide's discretion, the Shadow can extend up to five Shadow Dice to assist in any single roll. If the wraith accepts — and the use of Shadow Dice is always voluntary — each 1 rolled on a Shadow Die adds one point of temporary Angst.

• **Dark Passions.** When the Shadow has a chance to exercise its own motives, it may gain Angst from them just as the Psyche gains Pathos from Passions. When the wraith acts in a way that directly fulfills a Dark Passion, at the Storyteller's discretion the Shadowguide may roll against the Dark Passion (difficulty 7). Each success on this roll adds a point of temporary Angst. If the Shadow pesters the Psyche into Dark Passion-fulfilling action, the difficulty for the roll is 9 rather than 7; it's easier to reap reward from actions the Psyche chooses for its own reasons.

• **Storyteller Discretion.** The Storyteller may decide to award one or more points of temporary Angst in various circumstances: when a wraith is forced to act in direct contradiction to a personal code of belief, when a wraith experiences sustained stresses that feed Dark Passions, when a wraith fails at a task of deep personal importance, when a Fetter is destroyed against the wraith's will or when a Passion falls due to neglect. The Psyche player should be consulted; these are matters of roleplaying as much as of mechanics, and they shouldn't be forced on the wraith.

Losing Angst

Angst rises much more easily than it falls. But some things can and do reduce temporary Angst.

• **Botching a roll while the Shadow is dominant.** Anytime a Shadow botches a roll while it's in charge, it loses one point of temporary Angst for each 1 rolled when no successes are present, as opposed to canceled (see p. 68 for the new botch rules).

• **Castigation.** The Arcanos of Castigate can drive Angst down. Only the most experienced practitioners can use it on themselves; most wraiths must seek out another wraith to have it performed on the seeker.

• **Angst-generating Arcanoi used by the Shadow.** When the Shadow is in control of a wraith and uses Arcanoi that normally add one or more points of temporary Angst, those points are subtracted instead. The same applies to failures and botches that would normally add Angst.

Catharsis

Wraiths do not altogether control their own actions. Sometimes the Shadow rises up to seize command. The period during which the Shadow makes decisions is known as Catharsis.

The Shadow may attempt to initiate Catharsis whenever temporary Angst exceeds the Psyche's permanent Willpower. The Shadowguide spends one point of temporary Angst and rolls the adjusted rating (difficulty 6). The Psyche player resists by rolling permanent Willpower plus Eidolon level (difficulty 6). If the Shadowguide gets more successes than the Psyche player, the Shadow assumes control for the next scene.

While the Shadow dominates, it may pursue its own ends with only the most minimal interference from the Psyche. The Psyche retains, at best, only a small voice in the back of the Shadow's mind. The Psyche player continues to control the character during this time; the Shadowguide may take on the role of the temporarily suppressed Psyche, or she may focus on her own wraith for the duration of Catharsis. The Shadow may use the Psyche's Arcanoi in addition to its own Thorns, though it cannot draw on the Psyche's Pathos to power them. It cannot spend Willpower or do anything to reduce Pathos below 1. The Shadow may also pursue its Dark Passions, and indulge them far more freely than when the Psyche is in control.

The Shadow may let the Psyche know what the Shadow is doing during Catharsis, or it may keep its actions secret. If the Shadow chooses to keep the Psyche ignorant, the Psyche can retain awareness only by rolling Eidolon dice against difficulty 7. A wraith who lacks Eidolon or who has used her Eidolon dice already in that scene automatically loses awareness of the Shadow's actions. She often emerges from Catharsis to face the aftermath of terribly harmful actions "she" has committed.

During Catharsis, the Psyche player draws on the Shadow's character sheet for information during that scene. The Psyche may fade into silence, or the Shadowguide may play the Psyche as "back-seat driver" for the duration of Catharsis. This second option lets the Shadowguide remain involved and makes things that much more complicated and potentially interesting for the primary player.

The Eidolon

The Eidolon represents a third aspect of the wraith's personality, the embodiment of all the Psyche's strongest virtues and purest purposes. Storytellers and players may wish to handle it in play as an actual distinct internal entity that manifests itself when called on, given voice as needed by the Storyteller. Or they can simply play out uses of the Eidolon Background as the wraith mustering its spiritual reserves and reaching inside for renewal. The Storyteller may also choose to grant glimpses of the Eidolon as the wraith stripped free of its darker nature, a vision of possible Transcendence that appears in moments of spiritual triumph.

Harrowings

Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And life is perfected by death.
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "A Vision of Poets"

Wraiths face moments of crisis when they suffer great damage: loss of the last point of corpus or Willpower, loss of a Fetter or loss of the object of a Passion. The Psyche fights to preserve itself, while the Shadow experiences a rush of power and the opportunity to finally push the wraith into Oblivion. As the crisis begins, the wraith plunges down into the Tempest (or beyond it, into the Labyrinth) to suffer through a psychodrama known as a Harrowing. If the Psyche prevails, the wraith escapes and returns to one of his local Fetters (see "Fetters and the Fourth Great Maelstrom," p. 149). Depending on the nature of the struggle, if the Shadow wins, the wraith either meets its end then and there or escapes with permanent damage.

Stygian folklore says that once upon a time Harrowings were lessons rather than gauntlets to be run. Whatever the truth of the matter, the fact is that in the Twilight Era, Harrowings are brutal, unpleasant events, where survival is more important than edification. The Great Maelstrom ousts most of the Spectres from their homes for the duration as the Labyrinth reconfigures itself to accommodate new moral (or, rather, immoral) potential. Most Spectres hate this dispossession, and they bring an extra measure of bitterness to their roles in Harrowings.

The Experience of Harrowing

When a wraith suffers an injury that triggers a Harrowing, a Nihil opens beneath the wraith and she plummets from view. In calmer times, the victim falls immediately into the Labyrinth, but the Great Maelstrom brings complications. The wraith first spends hours or even days in the dark void of the Tempest, where she hears only demonic winds and the steady, triumphant voice of the Shadow.

The Shadow, meanwhile, reaches out with Oblivion's help to seek Spectral assistants. Psyche and Shadow tumble through the Tempest until the Shadow arranges its cast and briefs Spectral performers on the roles they'll play. The Spectres search for an accessible portion of the Labyrinth and direct the Shadow to it. While these preparations continue, the Psyche's sense of time may vary. Some Psyches retain full awareness of their experiences while waiting in the Tempest, but others find it all blurring into a timeless impression of dismay and impending doom.

At last, everything prepared, the Shadow drags the Psyche down to the end of the journey. The Psyche may or may not have a brief perception of the Labyrinth zooming past. Then, usually without transition, the wraith seems to be in the midst of an altogether different scene. The Harrowing itself, the core psychodrama, now gets underway.

The wraith confronts a nightmare. As in nightmares, logic varies. Drawing on their various arts and the innate malleability of the Labyrinth, the Spectres involved change roles, reshape the furnishings of the Harrowing, and do their best to induce a terminal confusion in the wraith. The Shadow directs the scene, providing memories, hopes and fears out of the Psyche's mind for the Spectres to draw on.

Only one rule governs the nature of a Harrowing: there must be a way out. For reasons that remain mysterious to Shadows and Spectres, they simply can't set inescapable traps. Some hidden force compels them to ensure that some set of actions and responses lets the wraith pierce the illusion, regain her control of self and leave. Spectral theologians argue about the nature of this force, with theories ranging from the Eidolon to Charon's magic to a self-destructive impulse within Oblivion; the rest of the Shadow-eaten curse the limitation and proceed as best they can. The wraith's task is to search for that resolution and act on it.

If the wraith succeeds, the Labyrinth expels it almost instantaneously back to the Shadowlands, to some safe point. (The nature of the refuge varies, depending on the type of the Harrowing.) If the wraith fails, again depending on the nature of the Harrowing, she's ejected back to the Shadowlands in diminished condition or tossed directly into Oblivion.

The Mechanics of Harrowings

Target Harrowings

Most Harrowings take place because the wraith has just lost or is about to lose some key feature. The target of the Harrowing is called its Quarry, and the Shadow is very much in the role of hunter closing in for the kill.

In each case, if the Psyche player roleplays her way to the successful resolution — and remember that there must be one, and that it must bear some sensible relation to the nature of the Quarry — no dice rolling is called for at the end. If the player fails to resolve the dilemma, then at the end of the Harrowing, she rolls permanent Willpower (difficulty 9), with a single success sufficing for the wraith to escape. The Storyteller may reduce the difficulty to 8 or even 7 as a reward for particularly good roleplaying that happened not to lead to a purely roleplayed resolution.

If the wraith has Eidolon, the player may roll his Eidolon rating (difficulty 9) to manipulate the Harrowing. Each success allows the wraith to change one aspect of the scene and

help make resolution easier. If the wraith has Willpower to spend, a point of Willpower can add an automatic success in usual fashion... as long as the wraith has more than one point. If the Harrowing was triggered precisely by impending loss of Willpower, the wraith doesn't have the option to commit suicide by plummeting to zero Willpower in the midst of the Harrowing.

The Psyche player makes a roll only if roleplaying fails to bring satisfaction; success indicates an intuitive leap, sheer luck or some other way out besides careful attention and intelligent response. Thus, the wraith has two chances of escape, with mechanics as a fallback from roleplaying.

A Harrowing shouldn't run on indefinitely: Ten minutes of game time is usually quite enough for everyone involved to participate in the experience without it taking over the session. When the Storyteller notices a wraith getting dangerously near a Harrowing threshold, she consults with the Shadowguide between sessions to work out the outlines of a Harrowing, and make arrangements with the other players to be ready for it. That frees up more actual playing time to deal with the experience itself.

• **Willpower.** A Target Harrowing with Willpower as the target takes place when the wraith is about to do something that might bring him to zero Willpower. The Shadow arranges a psychodrama that threatens a Passion or Fetter. If the wraith survives the test, he escapes with the Quarry intact and retains that one point of Willpower. Failure means that the Psyche player must roll a number of dice equal to the rating of the Quarry (difficulty 8). The wraith loses one point from its rating *for each failure* (nonsuccess) on the roll. If the Trait falls to zero or less, it's gone forever (adding its little piece of strength to Oblivion's slow but inevitable growth). The wraith snaps up to a local Fetter (if any remain) or to the point where he was sucked into the Harrowing (if no Fetters remain), and he regains Willpower up to his Intelligence rating. A botch on the Harrowing roll — which is required only if the wraith doesn't roleplay his way out of the Harrowing — means that the Quarry Trait disappears no matter what its rating was. Further, the Psyche player must roll the wraith's permanent Willpower against the Shadow's Angst (difficulty 6). If the Shadow wins, the wraith loses a point of permanent corpus.

The Storyteller may opt for a Destruction Harrowing on the wraith's loss of the last point of Willpower if, in the Storyteller's judgment, the wraith spent the point in a particularly foolish or self-destructive way. This penalty is an extreme one, however, not to be used lightly. Remember that loss of permanent corpus imposes a cap on temporary corpus, and thus makes it more likely that more Harrowings triggered by corpus loss will happen in the future.

• **Passion.** A Target Harrowing with a Passion as its target takes place when a wraith is about to lose her last point in a particular Passion. Peaceful and voluntary resolution doesn't trigger Passion Target Harrowings, but neglect and the Shadow's depredations do. The theme of such a Harrowing revolves around the Passion. On successful resolution, the wraith returns to a European Fetter or point of Harrowing. If the wraith fails or botches, she loses the Quarry Passion, and the Psyche player must also roll against the rating of a second Passion selected by the Storyteller (difficulty 5). Failures on this second roll subtract from the level of that second Passion. Finally, after a botched Passion Harrowing roll, the Psyche player must roll permanent Willpower against permanent Angst (difficulty 6) and achieve at least one success lest he lose a point of permanent corpus.

• **Fetter.** A Target Harrowing with a Fetter as its target takes place when a wraith is about to lose his last point in a particular Fetter. The triggering event is the death of a living Fetter or the destruction of a nonliving Fetter. The Harrowing proceeds like a Passion Harrowing except with the Fetter as focus. Success, failure and botches have the same results as in Passion Harrowings, except that if the wraith loses his last Fetter to the Harrowing, he's cast out into a random point in the Tempest. Thereafter, he'll be unable to enter the Shadowlands. Success does not allow the wraith to keep the Fetter, but the wraith can consider it resolved rather than destroyed.

• **Corpus.** A Target Harrowing with the wraith herself as the target takes place when she loses her last point of corpus. Success lets the wraith escape to a European Fetter (or point of entry into the Harrowing) and regain corpus up to the level of her Stamina. Failure results in the loss of one point of permanent corpus, while a botch sends the wraith into a *second* Harrowing, again with the wraith as Quarry. A wraith who loses her last point of permanent corpus in a temporary corpus Harrowing immediately enters a Destruction Harrowing.

Fetters and the Fourth Great Maelstrom

The Fourth Great Maelstrom interferes in mysterious ways with spiritual ties that cross oceans and the borders of Dark Kingdoms. In calmer times, a wraith in Europe who loses all his European Fetters would thereafter return to Fetters elsewhere. That's not possible in the **Great War** milieu. Once the last European Fetter fails, the wraith faces a Destruction Harrowing, even if he has Fetters elsewhere. Wraiths with scattered Fetters therefore have incentives to gather their Fetters together. Of course, the Maelstrom also makes extended travel in the Shadowlands and Tempest dangerous....

The same phenomenon affects other parts of the Underworld. For chronicles set outside Europe, simply substitute the region that chronicle uses for "Europe" and "European" in the preceding references.

Destruction Harrowings

In a Destruction Harrowing, the wraith himself is always the Quarry. Failure leads directly to Oblivion. With the stakes so high, the Storyteller should be careful not to invoke Destruction Harrowings too often, and once they begin, the Psyche player should take great care not to make foolish mistakes.

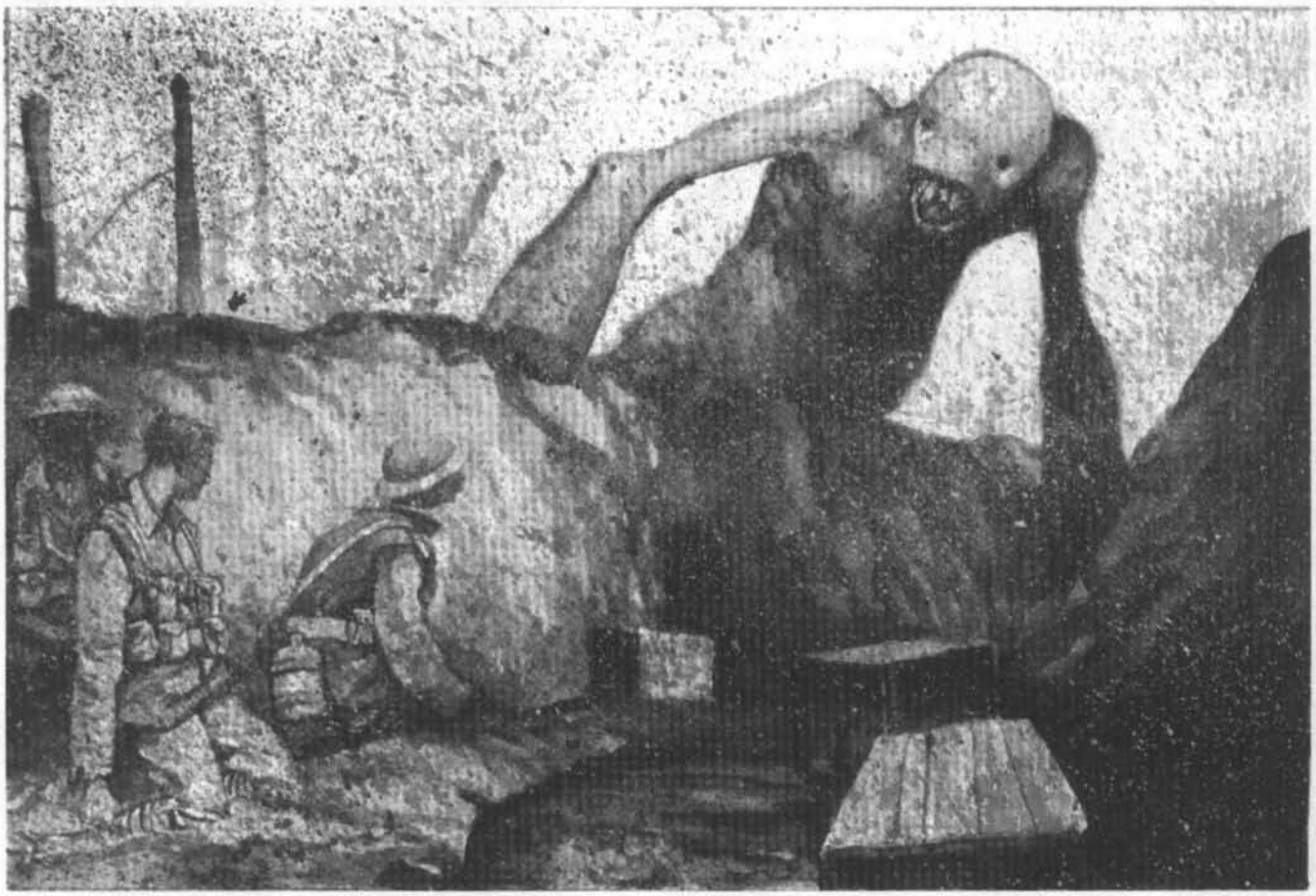
• **Willpower.** A wraith about to spend her last point of Willpower usually enters a Target Harrowing. If the Storyteller feels that the last point went to something particularly wasteful, frivolous or contrary to the wraith's nature, then the wraith may fall into a Destruction Harrowing instead. Initiating a Destruction Harrowing for extreme foolishness or bad roleplaying should be rare. At the end of the Harrowing, the Psyche player rolls permanent Willpower against permanent Angst (difficulty 6). On success, the wraith returns to one of her Fetters and hangs onto the last point of Willpower. On failure, the wraith immediately plummets into Oblivion, never to be seen again. At Storyteller discretion, on a botch the wraith may become a Spectre, perhaps to return someday as a nemesis for another character.

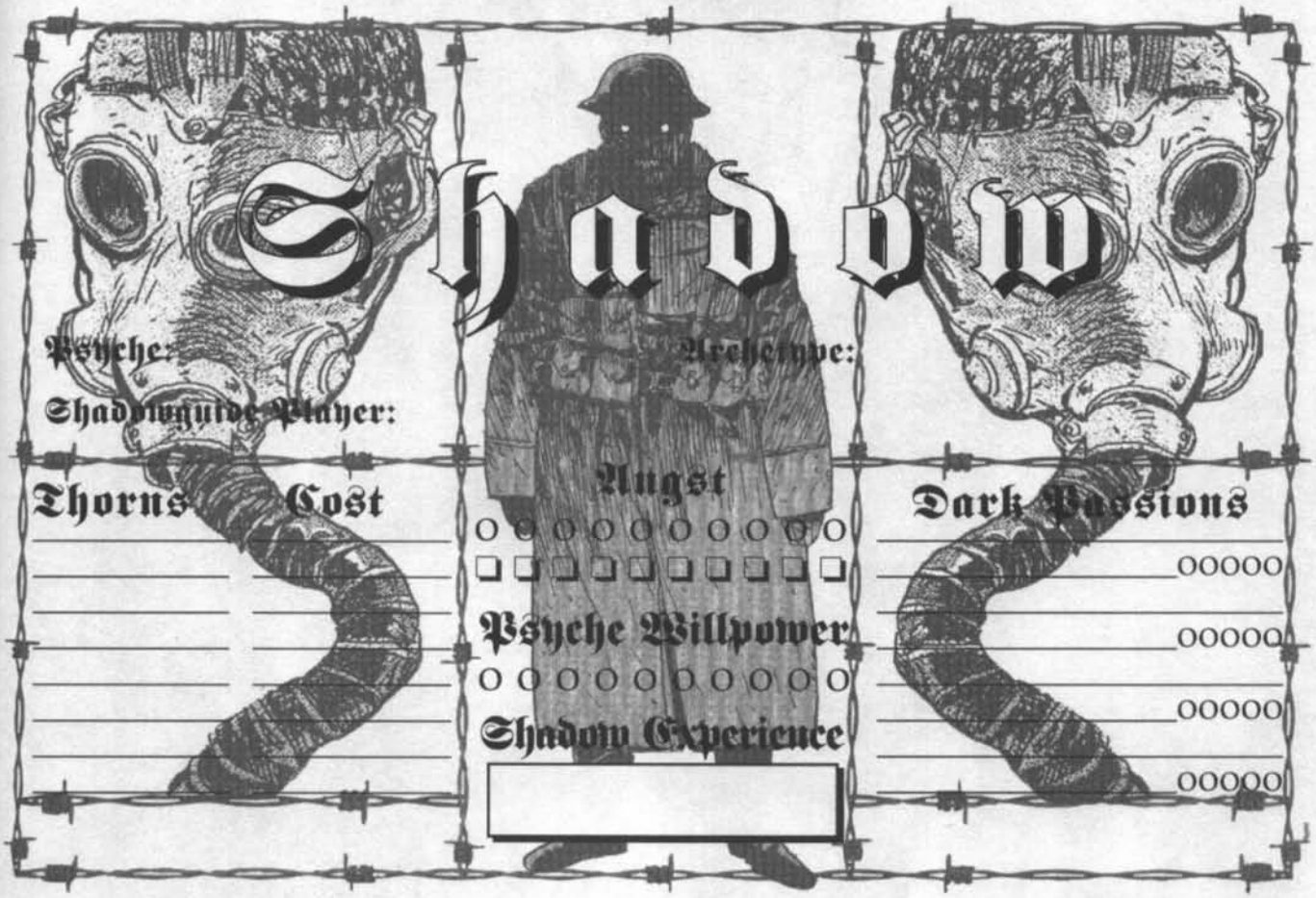
• **Passion.** A wraith about to lose his last point in his last Passion dangles on the brink of losing all emotions. He's numbed and detached. The roll at the end of the Harrowing again pits permanent Willpower against permanent Angst (difficulty 6). If the Psyche player wins, the wraith returns to a European Fetter (see p. 149) if he has one, or to a random area of the Tempest if not. On failure, the wraith loses his will to remain one of the Restless Dead and tumbles, emotionless, into Oblivion. On a botch, the wraith might become a Spectre.

• **Corpus.** A wraith who faces losing her last point of permanent corpus has only the slimmest, most tenuous hold on Shadowlands existence. Here, too, the final roll is permanent Willpower against permanent Angst (difficulty 6). On success, the wraith returns to a European Fetter or a random point in the Tempest. On leaving the Harrowing, she regains one point each of permanent and temporary corpus. Failure leads to immediate destruction. A botch on this roll usually leads to the wraith's becoming a Spectre.

Group Harrowings

Sometimes a whole group of wraiths faces a Harrowing simultaneously. Group Harrowings happen more often during Great Maelstroms than in better times. Wraiths may have a Fetter in common, and if it's lost they all enter the Harrowing together. They may also do so if they all reach zero temporary corpus at the same time, due to storm damage, combat and the





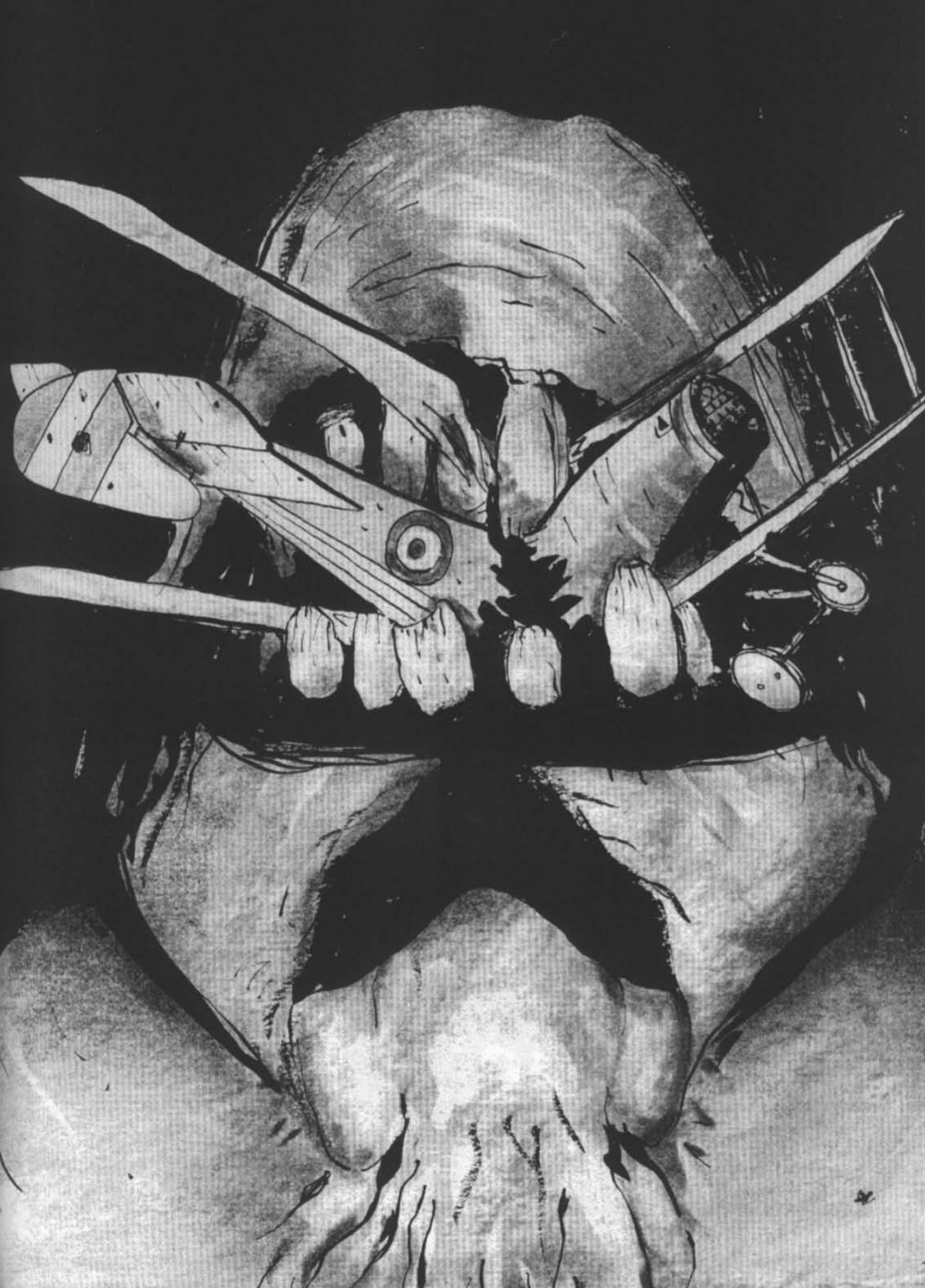
like. Because the players are all involved in the Harrowing through their wraiths, the Storyteller bears sole responsibility for the Spectres who populate the scene.

When the Quarry is a shared Fetter, the wraiths may choose to act as a unit for purposes of resolution or to resolve the Harrowing separately. If they act together, the player of the wraith with the highest rating in the shared Fetter makes the roll, and that roll's success or failure applies to the whole group. If that player fails, then the player of the wraith with highest Willpower rolls that wraith's Shadow's permanent Angst (difficulty 6). On success, the Fetter is still lost but the wraiths escape unharmed and usually all snap back to the same point. A failure on this second roll costs each of the wraiths a point of permanent corpus. A botch may have more dire consequences, from reduction in another Fetter's rating to (in cases of spectacular failures in both roleplaying and dice rolling) the group becoming Spectres.

If the players decide to resolve the Harrowing separately, use the normal resolution rules. The Storyteller may decide to require rolls only from players who fail to resolve the challenge through roleplaying. In this case, some may retain the Fetter while some lose it.

Rewards

When a wraith triumphs over a Harrowing purely through roleplaying without the Psyche player needing to roll dice, the Storyteller should grant some kind of reward. For Target Harrowings aimed at a Passion or Fetter, strengthen it by a point. For Destruction Harrowings, reduce the Shadow's temporary Angst by one to three points, depending on the difficulty of the challenges presented and the skill of the player's roleplaying. Surviving a Destruction Harrowing boosts a wraith's self-confidence tremendously, and the Shadow suffers diminished resources in the wake of squandering its opportunity.



o one's quite sure how Biggleton keeps his plane in what passes for the air over here. Silly sod shot his own propeller off during his first combat mission, and the blasted thing didn't show up here when the rest of the crate did. Still, it taxis and it flies, and now that Biggleton doesn't have to worry about things like gravity, his Camel flies like a dream. He's got 35 confirmed kills so far, while that American, Luke, is a distant second. I'm only at 18, but I'm quite happy to still be in one piece. In life, getting shot down meant that you had a short, unhappy trip and a warm impact to look forward to, but it was all over in a matter of moments. Here, we're not quite so lucky. If you're so unfortunate as to be brought down on this side of things (say, your kite takes enough slashes through the wing, and it folds up like a used napkin), down you go into the Tempest. Then you drop down some more, and you keep on falling and... you get the idea. I'm firmly convinced that some of our early casualties are still plummeting, and every so often I have the mad idea of launching into a power dive (no need to worry about stalls here) to see if I can catch them.

The lads on the other side have it lucky, you see. Put enough holes in them, and they simply burn up or crumble.

In any case, it's flight time again. The winds are high, the Spectres are thick and word from the Anacreon is that there are a half-dozen persistent Shades clawing at the doors of the Citadel. Time for work.

Today's flight wing is a dozen strong — unusually large, but then again, the Anacreon's been getting progressively more worried since we stopped receiving communiqués from Munich. As usual, the pilots are mixed — two Americans, three Brits, a brace of French, a handful of Germans and one very determined Senegalese named Phillipe who knows more about how these things run than the rest of us put together. I question the wisdom of risking him, but he demands his occasional turn behind the joystick, and the Anacreon's amenable. Chain of command and all that, I suppose.

We take to the air smoothly and assume a standard "V" formation. Biggleton flies point, Luke has his left wing and I take his right. Phillipe's in the middle of the formation on the left, and the unspoken orders are to protect him at all costs. Up ahead, we can see the Citadel; behind us, the lights of the aerodrome fade as the storm winds whip up. The Maelstrom's not too bad today — the gusts are minor enough that we can almost correct formation without thinking about it. I can hear one of the resurrected SPADs coughing behind me and to the right. It's a comforting sound, oddly enough.

We draw closer to the Citadel and see the Shades the Anacreon was so upset about. From this distance and angle, they're hardly more than specks, but knowing how far from target we are, those specks must be rather awfully large in person. Now the enemy spots us and peels away from the battlements to meet us mid-air. The specks grow larger and resolve themselves into hideous shapes, twisted and bloated monsters with fat, slow-beating wings.

Ahead of me, I hear Biggleton's guns starting to bark. A second later, the American opens up as well. The Shades' formation comes apart with a shriek, and one dives straight at me. I yank the stick back and pull up and over it (him? her? immaterial) as I grin with the exhilaration of it all. It's a pity, I think, that I had to taste death to feel so alive. And even as one of the Germans screams his way down into a Nihil, I realize that I wouldn't have missed this for the world. A Shade claws open the belly of Phillipe's SPAD and prepares to gut Phillipe as well; I come about with the beast in my sights and open fire. It falls away with a roar, and Phillipe erratically climbs to a safe altitude.

Nineteen confirmed kills, now. Perhaps I can catch Biggleton after all.

Charter Five: The Outsiders and Others

What Happened

Everywhere, soldiers are dying.

In the War to End All Wars, theaters of combat appear on several continents and oceans. The media call it the "European War," but it is a true world war that does not end at Western boundaries. Europe's foreign colonies are unwittingly dragged into a conflict they barely comprehend. Africans and East Indians are drafted to serve largely as cannon fodder — a servitude whose intentionally terminal nature makes it more awful than slavery. The Far East joins with a considerable mass of soldiers and resources: Chinese soldiers, ineffective but numerous; Japanese soldiers, few but proud; Annamese, and others besides in bewildering array. The years pass, the armies swell, and the war's profile guarantee that nearly no culture extant can avoid feeling the ripples of war by 1918.

The French wantonly assign their North African colonial subjects overseas, thereby stranding many a lost and wounded warrior far outside his element. Likewise, the British, low on troops at the onset of the war, grab haphazard villagers from India and East Africa, but rarely station such soldiers outside their native borders. Great Britain's unwillingness to utilize its "colored" reserves costs many years of minor battles that might have added up to an earlier Allied victory. However, the English sometimes "lend" Indian and African colonial troops to France, thus foisting the onus of relying on soldiers whom the English considered mere "dark brutes" onto the less discerning French. France, unlike England, does not place prejudice before the chance of winning the war, and it fights with everything at its disposal.

Seeing themselves as superior to all others, the Germans deploy their native fighting units in West Africa like wind-up

toys to consume ammunition that might otherwise harm German or Austrian commanders. Germany's more surreptitious means of manipulating extranational troops is the diabolical brainchild of Max von Oppenheim, who advises the Kaiser. Coveting India, Kaiser Wilhelm II incites Indian rebellion against the British — his political agenda thickly disguised in the trappings of a Muslim Holy War, one in which the Kaiser purportedly converts to Islam. Devout worshippers of Allah die in droves believing this grand charade.

In death, there is no discrimination. The common colors on battlefields are the tan of soldiers' khaki uniforms and the bright, hot red of soldiers' blood. The warriors who die in this global conflict are every possible shade of human — and every one who dies proves humanly fragile.

Scattered Soldiers

Many people decry this war as insanity. Chaos. Apocalyptic mismanagement of literally planetary proportions. Indian troops freeze under layers of coats in the wintry French countryside while Japanese laborers work the British Isle's farmlands as agricultural relief, freeing more Englishmen to die in the trenches. On African soil, Germans lead *Schutztruppe* consisting of Askari packet-bearers against the 13th Rajput and Kashmir Rifle units of the British Indian Army. Oftentimes, Boer and Arab troops mix their rebellious skirmishes into the global fray without much notice.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, the Siberian plains swallow Enver Pasha's Turkish hordes, who freeze to death in winter engagements against well-rested, well-camouflaged and well-bundled Cossacks. Japan wages war with an expansionist eye toward Korea and mainland China. The restless sons of samurai itch for glory of their own. India becomes a playing field for England's capitalists versus Germany's opportunists. Too many die from poor communication and the bravado of commanders safely distant from the front lines.

Countless noble and brave soldiers die in unfamiliar territory. However, a poor and anonymous Bengali (or Senegalese or some dark-complexioned other) often dies before the rich, white and well-connected lay down their lives on some battlefield. This inequity causes a deep tension in many units. In mixed companies of colonial and "motherland" troops, soldiers are equally likely to be struck by "friendly" fire as by the enemy's. Bayonet wounds or holes caused by close-range rifle fire mark the backs of many European corpses in the African bush. Parisians are gunned-down in the muddy trenches of the Niger Valley, Arab *dhows* flee treed snipers in Kenya, Punjabis die of malaria, heat exhaustion and thirst while huddling in Janis ports under siege.

But West and East also join during the war in ways they never had in peacetime — binding one another's wounds and gaining swift promotion in the ranks regardless of family, class or caste. Whites and blacks march together, Hindus laugh with Christians over dinner conversation, and everyone understands homesickness and a longing for peace without needing a common language to express such notions. For all the hardship, there is also opportunity for a future that crosses national lines and continues to build the burgeoning global economy.

Of course, all that is for the living.

The dead often rot where they fall, their corpses grossly abused: twisted in blocks of ice, or made into carrion for scavenging animals, or into bloated, blue carcasses in tsetse swamps. Few receive proper burials. Many non-European wraiths blame their current status on this single fact. For these lost souls, the war goes on. They learn, to their dismay, that their tours of duty do not end with death....

Somebody Else's Hell

These misplaced souls, stranded in Stygia, are the lost children of the other Dark Kingdoms. Already torn from their homes and families, they depart the living world comforted by the illusion that they would have places in Heaven among their honored ancestors. Instead, they again find themselves trapped in a world full of white people — dead ones, this time. The European Underworld bears no resemblance to their Lands of the Dead — no ambrosia, no guardian animal spirits, no ancestors extending welcome at their esteemed arrival in the company of great warriors. There are only the harsh winds of the raging Maelstrom and the heavy chains of Stygian steel that yoke the outsiders into the newest harvest of Thralls; or, should they manage to escape, the brand of "Renegade," not by choice but by their very nature as outsiders.

Death is a great equalizer. A Reaper tears open the Caul and a new wraith emerges. An Enfant is "born," and regardless of what sort of skin, eyes, hair or lips he had in life, now he is just like everyone around him: dead. But for the misplaced ones, there is usually a greeting of mild surprise and off-handed words like, "You know, your kind doesn't belong here." Redundant words without comfort. But for those wraiths who revile the White Man's Hell, these words imply something else, something familiar that lies just beyond the storm. *If only I can get there....*

Pawns from Swar

India is heralded as the Crown Jewel of England at the turn of the century, but the gem is showing cracks. Long under the colonial rule of Great Britain, the Indian populace rumbles periodically with bouts of revolution that are continually quashed by British regiments. Great Britain is nervous with its finest prize: The Indian Mutiny of 1857 still brings nightmares of servants slaughtering their sleeping masters. Therefore, all the classes there are controlled with a stern but wary hand. Until the early 1900s, India had been a lowly second in the Eastern seas before the Dutch seized the best spice islands in

Indonesia. Suddenly, India becomes the only door to the wealth of silks and spices for King Edward VII and, later, his progeny King George V and Queen Victoria II.

The East India Company seeks to bribe an obliging *nawab* into a British import monopoly contract, but no such puppet steps forward; England keeps assassinating the candidates, in hopes that the next one might be better suited for the job — for *somehow*, this arrangement must work. The growing consensus among the advisors and economists is that most colonies are not proving to be as profitable as first projected; Java, West Africa, South Africa and even Canada are undergoing "reconsideration." India, though, is never in question. The nation is far too valuable to the British, and India's Brahmin know it. Other nations recognize the plight of India under British rule (most sharply the Americans, who'd shed English rule themselves, and the French, who had recently freed themselves from Napoleon III's smothering monarchy), but the one country that steps forward to assist the revolutionaries is Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany.

Germany senses imminent change in the East with calculated interest. In fact, from the time that Japan rises like an infant dragon to cast aside the incredible might of the Russian and Chinese armies, England eyes India with a new, inspired glimmer: If Japan can be a great power in the East, why not India? Japan's stance as a superpower alongside China is never something considered seriously by the West; but once it is a *fait accompli*, the possibilities for British India, with far more population and resources than that tiny island, are plain. Kaiser Wilhelm II anticipates the renewed interest in the Indian state, and sees an opportunity for a real conquest: to be taken seriously by his relatives, cousin George, grandmother Victoria and his distant cousin Nicholas. For Germany to wrest such a major colony from King George V would undermine his resources, his eminence as Emperor of India, and such a move would gain Germany a multitude of soldiers willing to do its bidding. It proves too easy a scheme for Wilhelm or his advisor, von Oppenheim, to resist or to deny. The seeds are already in the ground — what the Kaiser needs is some manure to make them grow.

Haji's Holy War

"The East is waiting for a man..."

— Kaiser Wilhelm II, granted political power June, 1888

India's continuing revolts against the British spawn the Council of India in 1858, general elections to foster a self-governing colony in 1906 and the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms, which recognize Muslims as the quintessential special-interest group of India. This combination provides fertile soil for Berlin's ruse. India's Muslims are a very religious and impassioned

people, frustrated and fervent after years of trying to make themselves heard among the Hindus. They are also a key to Great Britain's colonial ruin.

Germany seeks an edge against Britain, one both economically viable and immediately available. A holy war, as the Christian past had proved, is cheap, provides lots of enthusiastic participants and draws self-motivated leaders whose willing sympathizers could accomplish what hundreds of trained troops could not. Wilhelm, already allied with Turkey's minister of war, Enver Pasha, knows that *mujahed* troops are all but crying out for Allah's retribution against all who would hinder their expansion. Using the weight of a holy writ, Wilhelm plans to gather the "black sheep" of international royalty — the Emir Habibullah of Afghanistan, Djemal Pasha, the Shah of Persia and the Ottoman Sultan "Abdul the Damned" — together to purge the British from the East.

Obviously, this ploy is meticulously orchestrated. First, a rumor is circulated that the leader of Germany has made a pilgrimage to Mecca, converted to Islam and taken the name and honorarium "Haji" Wilhelm "Mohammed"; second, Muslim scholars "discover" vague passages in the Koran that Wilhelm is ordained by god to free Islam's people from infidel rule; and finally, the Germans are all to be considered Muslim-friends, as they are led by their prophetic Haji, until the country undergoes formal conversion to Islam — an event conveniently scheduled *after* the holy victory.

The response is immediate and intense. Supplied with German arms, Indian rebels in London, San Francisco and other major cities unite across castes and beliefs to destroy the British among them. Carriage bombs, a favorite device of Punjabi assassins, take the lives of key officials and their families. Fires are set to grand houses and factories, thus destroying both British goods and British citizens. Gunfire and explosions become commonplace accompaniments to the rallying cries of turbaned men and praying women. The Kaiser smiles.

Meanwhile, once the British realize their personnel-poor position in the war, they rally Hindus and Muslims alike by the thousands to serve Mother England. However, these conscripts are stationed in the areas most important to Britain: Uganda and Kenya to secure the Nile Valley, and Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia to guard the access routes to valuable trading ports. Unfortunately, with rebellion thick in the air, it's risky to give these troops arms... yet when it becomes obvious that no other choice remains for the Allies, the British command issues these draftees rifles and sends them *immediately* overseas. There, most die, as the British delay weapons' training for all but their elite Indian troops for fear of exacerbating the rebellion; consequently, the soldiers are largely unprepared for the crack German brigades who await them in Africa, Egypt and France. The Indians are mowed down by machine-gun fire, bombed in air raids and poleaxed by climate conditions including the extreme heat of an African January or the intense cold of February in France. Many more die from exposure, thirst and disease than from a bayonet blade or the "quick lead-poisoning" of a bullet.

Outside the Wheel

Throughout this war, only faith holds true, but for Indians who die far from home in this conflict, even faith fails. Obviously, were this horrendous struggle the will of Allah, these Indian Dead would find themselves in the illustrious City of Delights until Yama judged their souls for their next incarnation. Instead, they find themselves trapped far from the 21 Hells of Swar. They find themselves lost in the lowest of Hells and robbed of any chance of reincarnation.

Many Indians sent abroad to die in French relief units make their way to the revolutionary Paris Necropolis, and there face the suspicion and dread of the Insurrectionist Hierarchs — until their Dark Kingdom's unique Arcanos shows through, anyway. Bengali and Rajput troops torpedoed at sea wash up on the shores of Shadowlands Italy or Greece, or drift on Maelstrom-stirred currents to the Isle of Sorrows (a feat of survival that leads some Stygian wraiths to speculate about Fate's interest in these outsiders). In these ways, many Hindu and Muslim wraiths come through the Shroud into alien realms. Many more, driven by inner remembrance or outside influence, follow them.

A number of young wraiths feel the tug of karma and cannot help but submit. The destiny of a half-recalled dream or the nagging notion of unfinished business often leads to a forlorn, brown building that stands almost patiently in Highgate, England.

The Ivory Trail

There is little to spur hope among souls intended for Swar during their undetermined exile in Shadowlands Europe. Tales trickle in about the City of Delights, a place full of lush gardens and running streams and delicacies to taste, just as in life. Rumors spread of Yama's palaces being just beyond the Tempest and storms of Spectres... but any thoughts of leaving in quest of Swar and its wonders wither once the sleepwalkers, outsider wraiths banished from the African Deadlands, begin to arrive in Stygia.

These wasted wraiths march to Necropoli at the empire's southernmost reaches. Their tattered corpora still move forward, long after these bewitched Restless began begging for collapse. A few plummet to Oblivion the instant they complete their forced march, but the survivors tell stories that banish hope for outsiders wishing to trek cross the waves of shadow. What occupies the places between the Dark Kingdoms, they say, are things best left unseen by any wraith.

They had marched from the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, a place also known as the Bush of Ghosts, where a phantasmal jungle pressed thick, and bizarre noises filled the shadows. There were dead Africans there, and animals and birds, and even ancient trees with trailing vines made of smoke and mist. The Bush was horrifying and vivid in the way it still choked as it had during life. Leaves crunched underfoot, and wet, sucking noises filled a wraith's head as he stumbled for escape... and there were the eyes. The eyes were everywhere.

The first wave of sleepwalkers recounts nightmarish experiences: inky hands passing over them and deep voices issuing like storm-winds from the maws of apes and giant snakes, their words ephemeral and easily forgotten. The soldiers' bodies had been like stone, frozen in a state beyond terror. Every foreign-born person who crossed the Shroud in Africa had become a statue, unable to do anything but scream. They'd waited. The Africans among them had begun to wake, stretching out of stasis and drifting off into the shadows in graceful dream-dances — separating wheat from chaff until only the whites, Asians and Indians had remained. Alone, paralyzed and lost, they'd wondered if their fate was to spend eternity this way.

However, a decision had come from beyond the curtain of leaves declaring banishment to some other Hell, to someplace these wraiths belonged, rather than imprisonment in the Bush of Ghosts. It had been a simple order: All who desecrated Shadow Africa with their malnourished, strangely shaped souls were to leave. Twittering voices had mocked them and queried how these frail things might pass through the storms sweeping off the Ocean where the *Sinkinda* screamed? Silence had made plain that it was the *outsiders'* problem. Bodies forced, at last, into motion, they had begun to march, erratically at first, then with a growing rhythm. Behind the rhythm was a message, so subtle in its thrumming that none could remember what it was, nor voluntarily tell it to anyone once they had arrived on "friendly" turf. But the African Moriman, the wraiths who'd set them marching, implanted this message in every outsider, for the masters of the Bush of Ghosts knew that most of the banished ones would never reach their destination.

Out on the Byways, a churning mass of chaos had engulfed the sleepwalkers. And still they'd marched. Many had cried out in agony and shredded their own faces, yet still they'd marched. Ones of strong will had managed to pitch themselves off into space for release or to dredge up some nascent Arcanos and fend off the claws of those malformed creatures preying constantly on the marchers as they strove through the storm. And still, their numbers ever dwindling, the remaining outcasts had marched. Through blackouts and stretches of insensate stupor, they'd marched unerringly and unendingly. Their lower limbs moving without respite, their heads buzzing with implanted instructions, their eyes burning with the horrors that separate the Bush of Ghosts from Stygia, the exiles had marched until they'd fulfilled their allotted penance and reached the Dark Kingdom of Iron. There, they'd fallen.

Theirs is but the first of many such waves. As the Maelstrom continues to seethe, more throngs of soldiers and colonists straggle from its grasp, their eyes glazed over, their legs pumping furiously. Those first survivors name their ordeal the "Ivory Trail." Ultimately, thousands follow this harsh path. Indians, many of whom had served the British in Africa as colonial police, make this awful journey and find themselves in yet another strange Hell (even though the Moriman had said the banished were going someplace they belonged...). Most, however, are grateful merely to have survived such an unspeakable ordeal.

Sisters of Sati

Sati: In Vedic mythology, wife of the Hindu god Shiva. She burned herself to death when her father sought to dishonor her husband. Sati: a woman's suicide in her husband's funeral pyre; self-immolation, death by flame.

The individual act of sati became a widespread combustion when the women of conquered villages refused to submit to Mongol invaders of centuries past, again when Muslims overran India's rural villages and again when the British announced that they would remain in India's conquered territories.

The British, horrified by this barbaric practice, outlaw sati in 1829. Police scatter the chanting onlookers and pull half-charred girls screaming from the fires. But when the War to End All Wars beckons India's men and the villages become outposts of forlorn women, the wives left behind know what must come next. Reportedly, just after menfolk make their last goodbyes, women begin to gather tinder and store for the inevitable day. When it comes, wives, mothers, sisters, concubines and in-laws hurl themselves into the flames in mass, self-destructive mourning for their dead men. Even so, most Indian widows suffer the dishonor of lacking a *true* pyre, as the bodies of their men typically remain lost in foreign lands.

After such a scene is doused in milk and covered with the *chunri* shawl of those sacrificed, British investigators routinely turn up evidence that calls into question whether the woman (or women) had died voluntarily, pressured by family and caste for "propriety's sake," or whether they had been *pushed* into the funeral pyres by their often well-educated, pro-sati male relatives. Nevertheless, sati fever grips people from the cities to the isolated villages, and masses of women are literally dying to be with their mates.

They get their wish.

In the Deadlands, such women awaken in Stygia as Enfants, attired in the singed white sari (or, sometimes, merely the charred corpus) of a "proper" widow. Assaulted with the hedonism around them, many crumple into meek despair or Thralldom. However, those Indian women who had longed to live outside their traditionally circumscribed roles find Stygia's fluid rules of gender and race quite satisfying and the strictness of the Hierarchy comfortingly familiar. Typically, these women become capable navigators of Stygian politics. Combining such proficiency with the Arcanos unique to Swar allows these outsiders to manipulate the system as if they'd created it. And so, the "Sisters of Sati" content themselves on this *loka*... for now.

Displace

Yes, I can reshape your corpus for you... but I must do so from the inside. Yes, I know you cannot do this thing, but it is the only way I work. So, sahib? Shall we proceed?

Displace combines elements of Kinesis, Moliate and Usury. In Swar, the Arcanos' chief use is for "creating" all the splendid "foods" and comfortable accouterments which characterize that Dark Kingdom. Basically, wraiths who belong to that kingdom but who attempt one of the three aforementioned Arcanoi in Stygia find themselves facing certain restrictions and having certain advantages — none of which apply to Stygian wraiths. Conversely, no Stygian wraith can ever practice the art of the Tvashtriya.

Tvashtriya

Death strands numerous Rajput, Punjabi and Bengali troops and trench-diggers — whom the British export from colonial India — in the Dark Empire of Iron. Unlike wraiths of the other Dark Kingdoms who turn up in Stygia, the Tvashtriya are not necessarily Renegades in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Stygia has no treaties with Swar, so the Hierarchy isn't opposed to seeing such wraiths enthralled or integrated into the bureaucracy in more pleasant ways. However, all Tvashtriya experience dreams of Swar, with its seeming ease and plenty. Stygia's relative bleakness is something to be fled for most of these wraiths.

Once such wraiths master their Arcanos, they can render another wraith into an amorphous soulstuff, a substance they can then reshape into all manner of Artifacts. What distinguishes Displace from Moliate and Usury is that a Tvashtriya must wraithride a target before he can have any other effect on her. Although Straddle (and the detection of other wraiths using it) is a basic ability for practitioners of this Arcanos, Tvashtriya can have no further interaction with objects across the Shroud. Every other aspect of this art involves wraithly corpora.

A Tvashtriya wraithriding another faces risks similar to the ones that affect someone who is straddling: Damage inflicted on the ridden wraith affects the wraithrider equally. This rule includes Arcanos damage such as what Early Withdrawal might inflict (i.e., a Usurer directing that art at someone who is wraithridden gets *double* corpus levels). Tvashtriya cannot insert their corpora into mortals, relics or Artifacts.

Practitioners of Displace obviously make great spies, a fact that makes these wraiths welcome in any Renegade Circle and hunted by the Legions. The Artificers', Usurers' and Masquers' Guilds pursue them relentlessly in effort to learn the Displace Arcanos — which they can never do. Many individual wraiths are uncomfortable with the invasiveness of the Arcanos and therefore seek moliation by Tvashtriya — or Pathos infusion from them — only as a last resort.

Botches

Depending on what a Tvashtriya is attempting inside another wraith, botches can have a range of results. Typically, a botch causes a boomerang effect wherein attempted theft of Pathos drains it from the Tvashtriya or efforts to infuse a wraith with corpus instead drain the target of health. Nasty failures can trap a displacer inside his subject.

Basic Abilities

Straddle: The wraith may invade a Skinlands object, which conceals the Arcanos user from other wraiths. The user cannot be perceived through normal wraithly senses but likewise cannot perceive whatever transpires around his hiding place. Efforts to detect a wraith using Straddle may be audible to the Straddle user as a faint buzzing. No corpus damage results from this invasion.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Displace to invade an object. Successes on this roll equal the number of scenes the user may remain hidden within the object. Other wraiths can detect him there only with Sense Rider, the Artificer ability. Destruction of the concealing object immediately reveals the displacer and does him one corpus level of damage. The number of successes on the initial roll determines how many successes a rival Tvashtriya would need to force out another Displacer already straddling an object.

Sense Rider: The wraith may detect others in his immediate vicinity who are straddling a Skinlands object, or ones who are wraithriding the corpus of someone else (or the user).

System: The player needs only one success on a Perception + Displace roll (difficulty 6) to determine whether a physical object or a wraith's corpus (including a character's own) is being ridden. More successes can help determine the invading entity's nature (or whether more than one might be wraithriding). Three or more successes allow a wraith to identify a vacated object or corpus as having recently been ridden.

• Wraithride

A Tvashtriya who can make contact with the corpus of another wraith can invade the target's corpus and remain there for an indefinite time. A successful wraithrider finds herself in a dark, quiet place; normally, she has no perception of events outside the host wraith except for the host's entry into Slumber (which causes a displacer's "environment" to brighten) and attempts to detect the rider's presence (which the Displacer might notice as a buzzing noise). Wraithride provides no control or influence over the host wraith. It also exposes the rider to all damage that the host wraith suffers, including Harrowings and theft of corpus or Pathos. Also, should a wraithriding Tvashtriya fall into a Harrowing, she drags her host along with her. A Usurer who receives "extra Pathos" from a wraith can sometimes infer the additional presence of a wraithrider.

System: The player rolls Stealth + Displace to invade a target's corpus. The number of successes achieved must be exceeded in a resisted roll for another wraithrider to force the first out of the host. Although a successful wraithrider can be *intentionally* detected only through the use of Sense Rider or Sense Kinesis, a wraith who uses Transfer (or other applicable Usury ability) on a ridden wraith can determine the presence of a rider in her target's corpus with a successful Intelligence + Usury roll (difficulty 8).

•• Deflect

Deflect allows a Tvashtriya to combat others' attempts to sense his presence when he's riding an object or another wraith. This art also lets a wraith channel damage from his own corpus to that of a wraith he's in contact with as the damage occurs.

System: Obviously, a Tvashtriya must first successfully ride an object or corpus before he can attempt to deflect efforts at detection. Also, he must realize that someone is attempting to detect him, which requires one success on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6). To avoid detection, the player makes a contested roll of his character's Manipulation + Displace against the seeker's Perception + Kinesis or Perception + Displace, as appropriate. Detection by a Usurer *cannot* be deflected; in that instance, the cat — or, rather, the corpus level/ Pathos — has already left the bag. It's up to the Usurer to make sense of the excess profit.

To deflect damage, the wraith must make physical contact with a target who can receive it (wraithrider cannot deflect damage). The player rolls Manipulation + Displace. The number of successes equals the number of corpus levels of damage the Displacer can channel.

••• Transfuse

A Tvashtriya riding another wraith's corpus can lend Pathos to her host or take Pathos from her host. If the host is not in Slumber at the moment of transferal, he can notice the event, as can onlookers: Bestowal of Pathos produces a momentary scintillation around the host's corpus, whereas theft of Pathos causes fleeting waves of darkness to sweep across the host's corpus.

System: Once the Tvashtriya is successfully wraithriding a target, the player rolls Stamina + Displace to bestow Pathos or Dexterity + Displace to steal Pathos. The difficulty to bestow Pathos equals the host's current Pathos, whereas the difficulty to steal Pathos equals the host's Willpower.

Pathos theft with this art grants the Tvashtriya one temporary Angst.

•••• Reconfigure

With Reconfigure, a Tvashtriya can make various changes to his host's corpus. Minor alterations can be effected during the host's Slumber without rousing the host. Such changes include making part or all of the host's corpus luminescent (as with the Moliate ability, Glow), transparent (to let the Displacer visually reconnoiter his surroundings; a wraithrider looking out while her host Slumbers inside a Fetter sees only impenetrable darkness) or resonant (so he can hear the host's surroundings; dead silence means the host is inside a Fetter). Any more extensive alteration attempted with Reconfigure on a wraith in Slumber may rouse the host. Major alterations with this art include new appendages or sensory organs, modified teeth or extremities. A favorite Tvashtriya trick is to make the host resemble the Displacer, then abandon the lookalike/host, who serves as a decoy.

System: Once a character has successfully wraithridden a host, the player rolls Intelligence + Displace (difficulty 7), with the number of successes required to be determined by the Storyteller, based on the goal of the Tvashtriya. Changes made with Reconfigure to the host's corpus can likewise be undone with Reconfigure or the Moliate ability Sculpt. Otherwise, Reconfigure's effects are permanent. If a Tvashtriya attempts to use Reconfigure on a host in Slumber, the target's player should roll Perception + Awareness and be roused on a successful roll (difficulty 8).

This art costs one Pathos to use, and the host loses one corpus level. Use of Reconfigure on an unwilling host grants the Displacer two temporary Angst; on a willing host, one temporary Angst.

••••• Transmogrify

Masters of Displace can change a host's corpus into nearly anything (mostly inanimate stuff, though), including a form that can be consumed for Pathos "nourishment."

System: Once a character has successfully wraithridden a host, the player makes a contested Wits + Displace roll against the host character's Willpower (difficulty 7 for both). Three or more net successes for the Tvashtriya allow her to render the host into an "edible" form that grants Pathos to the consumer. Many users render a target into a form resembling a cluster of grapes. Each "fruit" a wraith ingests confers one Pathos; a cluster contains one grape per point of Pathos the target possessed at the time of transmogrification.

Any use of Transmogrify costs two Pathos and grants the Tvashtriya three temporary Angst.

Ivory Knights

Africa knew the White uitlanders, enough for most young men to take to the hills when the recruiters came demanding "volunteers." The land was carved and divided like a roast pig among the platters of England, Germany and France. Africa lay under the curse of the "Seconds": East Africa pledged its loyalty to Queen Victoria II daily, while across the central savannah, other distant family-clans fought and fled the honor of obeying the willful Kaiser Wilhelm II. At the same time, France quietly insinuated itself into the everyday lives of Senegal and the northern islands until the two cultures had birthed a unique blend of *Africanes Française*, amazingly loyal to the new French nationalism.

Thus, when war splits Europe into the Central Powers and the Allies, Africa itself is torn at the seams.

The majority of African draftees in the British and German armies are not soldiers on active duty, but serve instead as personal attendants, porters, guides and interpreters for the German and British officers. In the beginning, there is minimal direct contact between these "nobler races" and their subordinates. But when the native warriors are ordered to take up arms, they prove themselves to be a frighteningly effective killing force. Combining the tactics of tribal combat with the European paranoia of the vengeful slave, African soldiers make a serious psychological impact on any foreigner whom their colonial governors have them target. The more open-minded and clever administrators procure these human weapons and deploy them with calculated intent.

France, the most color-blind of the European powers, assigns its colonial subjects as it does any other Frenchman of fighting age: wherever the military effort needs support. West Africans under French hegemony find themselves trekking the breadth of their continent, crowding aboard huge ships and sailing across stomach-churning seas to fight on strange shores.

> *"I was the second son of a warrior's third wife and had no battle honor to my name. I obeyed my father's will that I would go to the German war and earn myself a place of distinction. It was his decree. I obeyed the British edict that the children of my village would attend the Christian church on the Sun's Day, and the Quadri brotherhood would secretly preach to us at night about the reverential Muslim god. Both these priests I obeyed. I was circumcised as a man in my puberty season and underwent the spirit trials to secure my attachment to the land. All this I did to appease those in power. Alas, my failure to stand on the legs I was given by Allah has brought me here to this ignorant hell. I have lost my taste for blind obedience. I will not submit again."*
>
> — rallying speech of Salifou Serer, Renegade chieftain

Upon disembarking, these Africans gather together in their military camps, where they behave like the reunited members of a long-separated family. Garbling the vernacular of a dozen language groups, they share news of home while they endure the quick "military training" courses. Once a man could march in line, fire a weapon and understand the unfamiliar one-word orders, he was dispatched to the Western Front. Entire regiments of these young African men died at Damery and Conakry; the aftermath of these battles scattered illiterate tribesmen into the night without a word of civilian French to aid them. Behind them, old enemies lay side by side in the dirt: the Bambara, Fula, Somba, Susu, Mossi, Mandinka, Kuranko, Yalunka... all clad in foreign uniforms, cotton clothes decorated with bullet holes and spreading stains.

The British, having learned harsh lessons from the Boer revolts in South Africa, rarely arm a Negro or send one abroad. They prefer that a colonial subject sport a back-breaking pack strapped to his head and shoulders, or a spoon and a stew pot for cooking local game (best enjoyed with a bit of fine wine from one of those aforementioned packs). As a result, many East Africans escape roles as soldiers, but not as casualties of war. The British have their Indian Army, the Germans have their Turkish and Arabic regiments, and Africans are often caught in the middle when rival units clash on tribal lands throughout North, Central and East Africa.

To Germany, Africa is a tool to be used like any other gun or shell — as efficiently as possible until its usefulness is gone. The German high command orchestrates its complex and specious Holy War to impress the Muslims in Turkey, India and Afghanistan. Germany hopes to woo the faithful into siding with its "divine mission" — the eradication of those oppressive heathens who dare encroach upon Islamic lands. (The Germans are very careful to stress that "oppressive heathens" means only those Europeans that Germany says it means, mainly the British and the Russians) This ploy works far too well on the average farmer or merchant, people starving under foreign influence. The momentum of this religious fervor spreads swiftly to touch all of Allah's Africa.

What Lies Behind the Sky

Africans who die abroad awaken in the European Deadlands. Immediately aware that something is amiss, many shout childhood curses... and find themselves answered in kind by surprised (but no less determined) Stygian Reapers. The universal Language of the Dead breaks the barrier that had most hindered African soldiers during their wartime lives. It cannot dissolve whatever cultural beliefs about the afterlife a given *ibambo* might hold, however, which can lead to eccentric behavior by some of these outsiders. Alas, all of them understand the shackles that sometimes follow freedom from their Cauls.

African women constitute one of the largest segments of the females killed in the War to End All Wars. Most often, they are the last vestiges of those tribes. The Germans and British demand that military quotas be paid by the tribal chiefs. Death is the penalty to any who refuse to part with their sons. Some choose death, many do not. The women remaining are beaten, raped and slaughtered amid the struggles of the opposing European armies.

However, some young women stay by their mates throughout the trials of war. Translating their traditional roles as companions in the bush, they join their men in service to the foreign regimes. These women bring comfort and healing for body and soul as nursemaids, lovers and living links to home. They bandage wounds, set broken bones and stitch torn flesh closed with thread or sinew. Most European commanders refuse to permit a woman to accompany their ranks, but sometimes an officer is lenient or dull-witted. A particularly committed wife might disguise herself as a young male porter and so attend her beloved. Loyal to their husbands and driven to endure whatever he might dare, these dedicated wives eke out survival alongside their men and his company until death claims one, the other or all at once.

Yorro was staring at his hands and shaking. From the cuticles of his fingernails, inky bubbles were forming and winding up his arms like baby snakes. That was when Yorro started screaming. He watched his skin become etched in black, like cracks in dried mud or rivers of ink climbing up his arms and under his shirt to join in a knot where his heart was — or had been. He was shrieking and trying to scratch them off. Pale juice wet his fingers, and it looked nothing like blood, nothing at all. Once he calmed down, he told me that everything was clear to him now (which scared me most of all). He kept staring at a ragged bit of cloth that had blown against his boot. He said I was part of him, and he was part of the bar on the Rue du Vent, which was part of our corner barstools, which were part of the floor. And if he could find a nail from that floor, he could find me again. Or anyone else. Or anything. That was when I knew he was leaving, but that I would never be alone.

from *What the Moriman Tells Me*, by Lieutenant-Colonel Henri Giroux, unauthorized biographer of "Gory Goree," (formerly Private Yorro Kamara), freelance Moriman

Actually, few wraiths find themselves gathered in this way during the Fourth Great Maelstrom, which abates only haphazardly, and only the most stalwart of Reapers harvest Enfants in these unpredictable lulls. But being dead can grant a great capacity for patience, and so some Africans enter the afterlife as Thralls in the Dark Kingdom of Iron.

As if finding afterlife in the wastes of a European Hell is not enough of an insult, it is common knowledge in Stygia that African-born people belong to the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, where the ancestors of these dead conscripts dwell, as should the conscripts themselves. Likewise, it's common knowledge that dead Africans should not be made part of the Stygian empire, as citizens *or* as Thralls, according to the pacts between the two Dark Kingdoms. Between the Maelstrom and the Insurrection, however, the finer points of afterlife law tend to be ignored.

Realizing that they are disconnected from nearly everything that they'd known in life, African soldiers yearn to return "home" with an intensity many Stygians find disturbing. The Europeans shrug and mutter about how the outsiders are "much better off here" than in the mysterious Bush of Ghosts. But the animal spirits and the Old Ones call to the *ibambo* soul and demand that the honorable traditions of fam-

The Song of the Sleepwalkers

As if possessed by some invisible entity, a Caucasian wraith every so often enters a trance-like state and utters the words, "Come home!" to a bewildered African wraith.

Pity Ivory's errant citizen. Every soul longs to find the place that it belongs... and little comfort comes to the African, who is told his place is not here not only by Stygian wraiths, but by his fellows in the Bush of Ghosts speaking through the mouths of Stygian wraiths! Transcendence is not nearly as real to him as is the distant Bush of Ghosts. I remember, when I was alive, seeing my slaves raise their eyes towards heaven (at one time or another) and know that life was better somewhere else. It seems an infinite cruelty to have it happen again in death.

Who wrote the songs those sleepwalkers sing? I fear the Ivory Queen alone knows the answer.

— diary of Professor Lawrence Cheshire III, Iron Legion anthropologist

Dear Bellman–

Reports continue to trickle down from our bureaucracy sources about the Ivory Queen's latest demands upon Stygia. Apparently, some sleepwalker presented himself to the Anacreons yesterday and stated that all African wraiths must be returned to the Bush of Ghosts immediately. Perhaps her recent "deliveries" via the Ivory Trail have been a bizarre gesture of good faith; then again, they could serve just as well as a warning. The question is, what does she want more, her men or her monopoly?

In any case, those familiar with the Moriman are intrigued to say the least. Their Arcanos offers a new class of domination, and its very existence encourages sadistic urges we've all felt but would never want to suffer ourselves. The Guild is eager to learn what they've got over us. Until we figure it out, the Big Guys are more inclined to let our guests stay awhile. Considering how powerful a whole continent of these Moriman could be, I'd guess the Deathlords are betting the Queen's reach is longer than her grasp. So, as long as the Maelstrom's going on, repatriating these folks just isn't an option. Our fellows seem inclined to agree. I'm sure they must know what they're doing….

Me, I'm laying low until this is over.

Your Humble Servant,

Jinx

ily obligation and venerating warriors be upheld... yet none willingly cross the ocean while the Great Maelstrom rages on. Laden with curse upon curse, the *abambo* must haunt a foreign home.

The Politics of Arcanoi

Ironically, a great many Africans are swept into yet another morass of European conflicts: the Renegades and the Guilds versus the Deathlords. Each group has its private agenda for sheltering the telltale foreigners from the prying eyes of the Legions and their powerful masters. Many seek either some edge against the Smiling Lord and his usurpation — that, or a way to ingratiate themselves to the new imperator.

The Guilds had earlier focused interest on those *abambo* who'd arrived in Stygia after lives as slaves to the Quick in nations across Europe. In life, many of those unwilling expatriates had turned to the traditional patter of the spirit-wielder, the "witch doctor," and grasped their family charms to their chests or tossed cowrie shells in the hull to scry their future on the battlefields. In death, they demonstrate a fearsome Arcanos that Stygians dub Behest. The slave trade ultimately wanes, and the opportunity for wraiths in the Dark Kingdom of Iron to master this potent wraithly art vanishes.

Efforts to smuggle Behest's secrets from the Bush of Ghosts prove worse than fruitless, once nearly igniting a war between the two Dark Kingdoms. But the War to End All Wars delivers potential practitioners of the Arcanos to Europe's Deadlands in unprecedented numbers. Sometimes confused with the ghosts of American Blacks (who die serving the United States in Europe, but who lack any aptitude for Ivory's unique art), Behest's practitioners develop emblazoned black lines that trail from hands to heart. Such are distinguishing marks of the Moriman.

Behest

I can find you, move you, with a wave of my hand. No, I'm not mouthing pretty words at you, my friend, I'm threatening you.

The African *ibambo* is a four-part entity combining a soul's "immortal essence," the dark "shadowself," the sleep-traveling "dreamself" and the entwining "heartlife" that bridges the physical and spiritual worlds. Much of living Africa, conceiving the world to be abundant with spirits, sees each animal and plant as housing a soul of its own. Thus, their human dead do not leave the living world behind; they merely slough the body from themselves and reside in a "spirit Africa." They respond when properly called by one among the Quick — a medicine man or witch doctor — or among the Dead — the wraith known as a Moriman. Belief spins reality in the intricate Web of the Dead. With Behest, *abambo* can intimately sense the strands touching every wraith... and *pull!*

Behest is an Arcanos that melds aspects of Lifeweb, Puppetry and Fatalism. It parallels the practice among the Quick of bewitching others through effigies or personal belongings, for both derive from the African understanding that a person is a spirit who affects (and can be affected by) the spiritual realm of the world. In the Skinlands, menstrual blood buried or washed away in a river, cut hair and fingernail clippings secretly buried in the earth, and bodily remains completely disposed of by scavenger or flame all ensure the owner's spirit cannot be abused by magic that incorporates these materials. Precious items or personal weapons are often burned or buried with their owner, in part for respect, but also for security. Caring for things, holding them "close to the heart," imbues them with a link to the human spirit that still binds in death.

This link applies all the more so to wraiths. African wraiths can sense, with their heartlife, the imbued connection of all things in the Deadlands. The truly gifted master of Behest can even follow the lines of spiritual bonds to living Fetters across the Shroud. Although any wraith may learn from skilled Puppeteers to manipulate unsuspecting Quick, only the *abambo* may do such to another *wraith*. Individuals learned in Behest find employment as the most valuable assassins, extortionists and saboteurs among the Dead. Location, physical manipulation and energy drain are potent weapons against an unsuspecting wraith... especially when the target can be utterly destroyed from a distance.

The average wraith lavishes intense concern on her Fetters, people or objects of importance on the other side of the Shroud, while being relatively oblivious about the persons and things of similar importance to them in the Deadlands. Behest affects the Deadlands and its residents. An *ibambo* toying with Behest outside the Bush of Ghosts is ignorant and free of the stringent laws that restrict abuse of the Arcanos. Like a neighborhood of gun-owners, crime is low in the Dark Kingdom of Ivory; knowing that everyone is similarly armed keeps miscreants in line. On the other hand, Europeans are not taught the importance of protecting their cherished *objets de morts*. For most Moriman dwelling in Stygia, the combination of vengeance and advantage afforded them by their power is simply too much to resist.

The Western mind sees death as the absence of life. Africans know death is still part of the Web of Life, but, for one who is dead, there is also access to the Web of Death. Normally, these *abambo* would have become revered witch-doctors, spiritualists or spell-casters for their tribal faction in the Bush of Ghosts. But without the framework or guidance of the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, a practitioner of Behest in the European Deadlands is left to carve his own niche.

Aware of the premium placed on their services, bold Moriman abandon the uniform shirts they wore upon awakening in Stygia. They display their distinctive Arcanos markings with pride and defiance — for few wraiths are foolish enough to draw the wrath of Behest's masters. Of course, a few individuals manifest in tribal garb from the start.

Right Hand/ Left Hand

There are two Hands in the art of Behest: location and manipulation. The ability to master each Hand is enhanced by the object with which the Arcanos is being guided, and the expertise of the Moriman herself. But one must exercise both Hands equally in order to be truly strong. The Right Hand seeks and finds. The Left Hand steers and strikes.

Botches

Botch results vary considerably depending upon what aspect of the Behest Arcanos was (unsuccessfully) attempted. Most often, the target wraith simply cannot be located, leaving a "cold trail" or sometimes a false one. Mimicry is the curse of Moriman who flub efforts to control another wraith: That is, the target unknowingly dictates the motions of

the Moriman. This outcome can be merely humiliating or completely disastrous. Behest is a superb weapon, as long as you can avoid being its target.

Restrictions

Lifeweb and Fatalism cannot be practiced by an *ibambo* in any other fashion than through the channels of Behest. Puppetry, on the other hand, is an element of Behest, but may also be taken as a separate Arcanos to be used specifically on the living. Behest is purely a manipulation of wraith and soulstuff energies; Puppetry affects the living, man or beast. These fields of play are separate, and both are open to the *ibambo* Moriman.

Behest has no spatial range or limitation to its use — as long as the target is somewhere on the planet, it can be found. What varies is how much time may be required to follow the connective strands to their source: The closer in proximity the Moriman is to his target, the sooner the task may be accomplished. The target "eluding" Behest is the cover-up term for a Moriman's failure to produce results.

And in the European hells, time is not to be wasted, for as an African wraith remains outside the Bush of Ghosts, his very soul mutates into the dyad soul of a Stygian wraith, into Psyche and Shadow. With their four-part self vanishes the ability to ply Behest. Practice of this Arcanos is a finite trade outside the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, and clients must pay handsomely for the Moriman's sacrifice of precious time.

Basic Ability

Link: By concentrating on a particular wraith, the Moriman can sense areas, individuals or objects connected to the target of inquiry. Practitioners of Behest understand that, eventually, through the Web of Being, everything touches everything else. Thus, a Moriman who starts at one place and follows the strands can ultimately discover what it is that he seeks. This ability, the foundation of the Arcanos as practiced in Stygia, lacks several elements that help it work in the Bush of Ghosts, however. There, afterlife communities are smaller and more insular, so users of this art usually have a more limited field of choices when making sense of the hidden world Link makes plain.

A Moriman using Link meditates on one of the Restless, then "exhales" a cloud of smoke (about the size of a human head) that coalesces into the image of a person, place or thing connected to the wraith in question. Such representations are often meaningless to the Moriman, for Link offers no hint about who, where or what is represented, how important it may be to the wraith under examination, or even on which side of the Shroud the represented thing is. In the Dark Kingdom of Ivory, other wraiths of the Moriman's tribe assist by scrutinizing the smoke representation for anything that might be familiar. Stygia's breadth being much greater than the Bush of Ghost's, this form of divination can be far more cryptic and frustrating, and the postwar presence of wraiths from still other Dark Kingdoms doesn't help, either. *C'est la guerre.*

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Link. Thereafter, the Storyteller secretly makes the Moriman player's Perception + Behest roll (difficulty 6). One success shows the user a place recently visited by the target or something he recently handled. Two successes reveal a relic belonging to the target, and three show an Artifact. Four successes show the target's chief Haunt, and five or more successes reveal a Fetter.

Smoke representations linger for a number of turns equal to successes on the roll, then they dissipate. The Storyteller might choose to handle these manifestations' transitory nature by answering a number of specific questions also equal to successes on the roll. In any case, players should be required to roleplay searching for whatever they see in a Moriman's smoke. The idea is not to hand them the Fetters of another on a platter, but to make them think about what they've seen, where it might be found and how it can be of use. Thorough description of scenes becomes paramount in Storytelling such quests. Link has no Pathos cost but does cost one corpus level. This art can be practiced only once per day.

Items closer to the "person" of a targeted wraith lower the difficulty of most Behest arts beyond the basic ability. Thus, a Moriman who has skinmasks of wraiths he's attempting to find or control has an easier time than a practitioner who has only relics belonging to the targeted Restless.

Item	Difficulty
Skinmask/ severed extremity	5
Fetter	6
Chief Haunt	7
Personal Artifact/ relic	8
Recently handled object/ recently visited locale (Underworld)	9

• Delve:

A Moriman armed with the appropriate link to another wraith can enter a trance-state and experience what that wraith has recently undergone. Although Delve lets the practitioner detect the recent surroundings — and feelings — of her target, this Right-Hand art does not confer "mind-reading" abilities or control of any sort.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Delve. Thereafter, she rolls Empathy + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). One success bestows the target's recent mood. Two successes give visual impressions, including faces the target saw and details about his environment. Three successes add fragments of auditory information to the mix — incomplete sentences and ambient noise, for example. Four successes vividly re-create the target's surroundings, and five or more successes reveal when the target had this experience and how he felt during it. This art costs one Pathos.

•• Trace

By grasping an item belonging to the wraith under examination, *or* by occupying a space recently vacated by that individual, the Moriman can determine his target's current location. When using an object, the practitioner must surround it with a nimbus of exhaled smoke; when using a locale, he must occupy the *exact* space that the target did and surround himself with smoke. Within

the exhaled cloud, the strands of Fate glow and shift. The strand that extends outside the smoke leads to the target.

System: Roll Investigation + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). One success merely points in the target's direction, whereas five successes establish a glowing thread between the practitioner and the sought wraith. A player may not turn down successes, so extreme success can have the disadvantage of alerting a target (who needs only one success on a Perception + Alertness roll [difficulty 5] to realize something's up); however, a player can use less than his total dice pool for the roll. Strands made visible by Trace remain that way for a number of scenes equal to successes on the roll. This art costs one corpus and one Pathos.

••• Scry

The third level of the Right Hand lets a Moriman with a usable link enter a trance-state to simultaneously perceive what another wraith perceives. Scry, like Delve, does not make the practitioner aware of a target's thoughts, but it does reveal some of the descried wraith's emotions.

All successfully applied Behest arts, Right Hand and Left at this level of expertise and higher, are visible to other wraiths using Soulsight. A glimpse with Soulsight at a wraith "invaded" by a Moriman's consciousness shows knotted strands shaped just like the ones that merge on the practitioner's chest (no two Moriman have identical Arcanos markings), but radiant, not dark. The Shadows of a Moriman and her target can communicate freely during any use of Scry.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Scry. Thereafter, roll Empathy + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). The target may make a Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6) to realize someone is using Scry on him. One success allows the target to make a Willpower roll to resist the Behest user. Should the Moriman win this contest, her successes determine the amount of information she receives exactly as they do with Delve. Scry lasts for a number of turns equal to successes on the Empathy + Behest roll. This art costs two Pathos and one Willpower.

•••• Divine

Although rumor has it that further Right-Hand powers exist for practitioners of Behest in the Bush of Ghosts, Divine is the uppermost such ability for a Moriman dwelling in Stygia. It allows the user a glimpse of what Fate holds in store, either for the Moriman herself or for another wraith. Practice of this art does not require a link, only meditation upon the individual seeking divination. After meditating, the Moriman expels smoke that coalesces into a scene of the future.

System: The player needs at least one success on an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 6) before she can attempt Divine. Thereafter, roll Intelligence + Behest (difficulty 8). One success gives a blurry tableau, whereas three allow a silent play in miniature, complete with recognizable individuals and settings. The smoke representation endures for a number of turns equal to successes on the roll. This art costs one corpus, two Pathos and one Willpower.

••• Twitch

Use of the Left Hand stems from mastery of the Right Hand — a Moriman cannot affect wraiths she cannot find. Thus, the practitioner must first successfully Scry her target. The effects of Twitch on a victim are limited to the most minor of bodily manipulations: a stumble, a rolling of the eyes, an irritating tingle.... Such changes are tiny, but potentially devastating if well-timed and ill-intentioned. Moriman dabbling with the Left Hand routinely cause missteps that throw unsuspecting wraiths into walls, other wraiths and off staircases into space.

System: After successfully using Scry on the target, roll Dexterity + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). At this point, the target (if aware of what's happening) gets a second chance to use Willpower to resist the Moriman. The number of net successes determines what minor corpus stimuli or spasms the Moriman may cause, and to what degree. One success might cause the target only to nudge that jugged Spectre someone foolishly left on the parapet, yet fail to push the container off. Two successes make the action more of an elbow lunge, something a suspicious onlooker *might* believe intentional. Three or more successes take things up to an open-handed shove. Players should be encouraged to pantomime whatever actions they wish the target to commit; irritations are portrayed by the Moriman player pinching or tickling herself. This art costs one Pathos and confers one point of temporary Angst.

•••• Murmur

The second level of the Left Hand lets the Moriman speak through another wraith's mouth (or whatever orifice the target commonly uses). The practitioner's utterances sound exactly like the victim, unless the Behest user consciously wills otherwise.

System: The Moriman must successfully Scry the target. Thereafter, roll Intelligence + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). As with Twitch, the target may resist with Willpower. The number of net successes determines the number of turns that the Moriman may speak through the target. This art costs two Pathos, and it confers one point of temporary Angst.

••••• Veer

Through exertion of will and mastery of her Arcanos, the Moriman makes another wraith into a puppet squatted upon the practitioner's expert hand. Veer encompasses all wraithly "motor skills," and it allows the user of this art to march her victim into the nearest Nihil, or to defend himself from an attack that the Moriman anticipates but that the target of Veer does not.

System: Once the Moriman succeeds in using Scry on the target, roll Dexterity + Behest (difficulty varies; see chart). As with Twitch, the target may resist with Willpower. The number of net successes determines the number of turns that the Moriman may control the target. This art costs two Pathos plus one Willpower, and it confers one point of temporary Angst.

Jaded Kings

Upon the passing of power from the 16th shogun to Emperor Meiji in April, 1868, Japan enjoys the swell of new nationalism and pride in its divine leader. Unimagined success against China and Russia at the turn of the century grants Japan new respect among the world powers. It is an era for conquest that calls sirenlike to the bored *ronin*, who had grown restless without causes to fight for since Shogun Tsunayoshi's reforms had remade their class into what he envisioned as "philosophical warriors."

After international pressures force the island nation to return its war prize, Liaotung, to China, the Japanese vow they will never again lose face to any outside authority such as the "Triple Intervention." Eager to erase its humiliation on the world stage, Japan accepts the terms in the Treaty of Portsmouth with England. Beyond merely agreeing to destroy those German warships occupying Japanese waters, Japan ambitiously declares war on the Central Powers and leaps into battle. The island nation's 1914 surge into the war is reminiscent of its 1904 victory at Port Arthur, but its opponents of a decade earlier are now its allies, a fact that makes each triumph all the sweeter. Japan is finally running with the "big guns."

However, Japanese fighters protect only their territory in the Eastern waters. Having no desire to fight the *gaijin's* war, the island nation instead hopes to acquire Manchuria and the Korean peninsula in the event of an Allied victory. The Japanese keep their home territories secure and teach memorable lessons to the Germans and the Turks, all the while strategically placing their own units throughout Eastern Asia. Their only direct offering to England is the "lending" of talented Japanese farmers and lower-class workers for agricultural assistance. This course frees British farmers to appease the Allies' desperate need for soldiers. These "assisting" Japanese are actually working off tax debts that had become commonplace since the rise of the *zaibatsu* and taxation to balance old *daimyo* IOUs. These unfortunates have no choice but to go where their government directs, and thus some planters and farmhands die far from home in the bombing that plagues the British countryside.

The Sons of Samurai

The nation's prized warriors, the samurai, abiding by their code of loyalty, simple living and deep honor, keep the glorious past alive for all Japan. While most masterless samurai (*ronin*) had forsaken the "simple living" ethic during the hedonistic Era of Prosperity, all are impassioned to regain what honor they'd lost by shedding generous amounts of foreign blood for the Emperor. Whereas the last "true samurai" had left the living in an honorable fashion (decapitation by a comrade), the next generation is eager to revive the traditions their fathers bungled as warriors.

These soldiers are not romantic samurai horsemen from the silk paintings, they are modern, menacing and often ruthless warriors. Japanese soldiers' codes of polite, military conduct stand in sharp contrast to the institutionalized sadism they visit upon enemies who allow themselves to be taken prisoner. No "honorable" warrior would submit to such shame; thus, all POWs are obscene reprobates and are to be treated as such. Soldiers who survive this torment attest to its brutality.

Japan's law dictating universal military service at age 21 (or at the height of five feet) takes effect in 1873. By then, the Japanese have been refining the secrets of musket technology brought from abroad for hundreds of years. The twin samurai swords have been replaced by the modern rifle and the bayonet. Nearly every adult knows all the ways to kill another human being with such weapons. Soldiers' mental conditioning, stressing absolute loyalty to Japan and the Emperor, begins with three lessons that date from elementary school: obedience, benevolence and service to the nation. This unquestioned loyalty creates the strongest warriors from the East that the western world has yet encountered. And they are soldiers unafraid of death.

Until they die, that is.

The Tactics of Mistake

Those Japanese who die fighting Germans and others during the War to End All Wars actually play nearly no role in the wraithly conflict known in Stygia as the Great War. Nevertheless, Jade wraiths, specifically dead Japanese ones, are present in the European Deadlands of the Twilight Era in surprising numbers. The story of how they come to be there requires a look at another conflict between the island nation and a major Western power: the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5.

In the Skinlands, nearly 60,000 Japanese die taking the Russian fortifications at Port Arthur. In the Shadowlands, from one of the easternmost Stygian outposts, Bleak Legionnaires fan out and clandestinely reap these Jade Dead and intern them. Their orders are to gain Stygia a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Dark Kingdom of Jade, and they do so. Scarcely a Drone escapes the Russians' net. The Legionnaires place the ghosts of nearly every infantryman who'd followed (and perished under) Admiral Heihachiro Togo in underground pens made from Japanese Drones. Throngs of Asian wraiths remain hidden in Bleak Legion custody... until Jade Censors uncover the operation in 1914.

When it becomes clear that the Jade Emperor intends to claim these souls he considers rightfully his, Bleak Legionnaires make certain that these souls slip beyond Yu Huang's reach. The Stygian troops load more than 600 souls aboard a train bound for the heart of the Iron Empire. When the train arrives in Stygia, the surviving Legionnaire and his cargo are greeted with shock. The entire secret project seemed to have been forgotten during the unsuccessful bargaining mission with Yu Huang. Worse, the already-overpopulated Isle of Sorrows finds itself burdened with an unexpected shipment of new immigrants who are not at all happy to be there.

Prisoners of War

Not long after the first of the Japanese wraiths land in the Bleak Legion's secret dungeons, uprisings begin: Captive soldiers attempt to break through walls with sheer will and lost strength. Believing the forged soulstuff to be real, rotting wood, the prisoners typically collapse to the floor and mutter evil curses and useless magics. Their next efforts are mental endurance exercises designed to convince the mind that it is willing to break bone in order to escape from iron chains. Unfortunately, these Enfants do not yet understand their own corpora and, lacking bones, manage only to bend themselves sickeningly around their bonds. The captives' last resorts, however, *do* get their captors' attention: Several prisoners engage in *seppuku*, ritual suicide. After all, even in death, non-existence is the samurai's preference to the dishonor of imprisonment.

Not about to be robbed of their hard-won bargaining "trade goods," Bleak guards try to break the spirits (so to speak) of these honor-bound warriors who'd rather destroy themselves than remain captured by an enemy. They fail in that effort, but do dissuade further attempts with a simple, contrived barb: They claim that souls who leave this afterlife without penance for sins find themselves removed from the reincarnation cycle. Never to be reborn as any animal, human or divine spirit, the rebellious would stay here, on this stratum of existence, as a common object with no chance of return to the living world. After that, there were no more suicides. But there was patience. Retribution, the Japanese realized, would have to wait until *after* they arrived at their destination: Stygia.

Hell Money

During the internment of these Japanese wraiths, things begin to appear beside them, recognizable things that are hidden quickly. Money, silk, *objets d'art*, straw animals and gold-leaf paper cranes — tiny gifts full of Pathos. It comes in unexpected bursts, then ceases. Again and again over time, the offerings come, and the soldiers save or consume them. They breathe in the Pathos of these gifts and see home. When the explanation of the phenomenon occurs them, it is both a relief and a crushing blow.

Relatives, they realize, are sacrificing wealth to honor their beloved and departed family member. In keeping with tradition, money and things of value are burned to help the Dead in the next life. The explicit obligations of family and honor demand these offerings — *and* that the spirit help his relations in return... but how? As much as these exiled Japanese ache to hear the pleas of their siblings or to aid their parents in some trial of the living, they cannot. Trapped in some Hell far from home, how can they answer? Would the money stop coming? Would their souls break? They know they are failing as members of their family and as Japanese fighting men by not fulfilling their obligations. Their know their honor is slipping, their surnames tarnishing. Thus, many of Stygia's Japanese prisoners teeter between the relief of their incoming Pathos and the despair of their foiled Passions. More so than in most cases, their gifts from across the Shroud warrant the name "Hell Money": enriching and damning, sweet and painful all at once.

The sounds of fumbling wraithly feet alert the Japanese prisoners of their imminent relocation. They understand soon enough that they are not to be exchanged for Restless Europeans as they had come to believe. Loaded hastily onto massive ghost trains, their last familiar sight is of Shadowlands Port Arthur — lost to them in both existences. Their transcontinental journey is an eternity of jostling walls and wheels clacking rhythmically against rails. Wherever they're bound, they believe, it cannot be worse than the ghostly Russian dungeons....

Death can make a soul forget such things such as labor camps.

When the transit finally ends, the Japanese are hurried like cattle off the train and into the cavernous pens burrowed into the Iron Hills. The POWs are linked into the "chain gangs" of other Thralls assigned to build up the Stygian suburbs whenever the Maelstrom waned. When the winds die down and the howls slide into echoes, the Thralls scuttle like ants onto the blossoming architecture and make the city grow. These places were filled with multi-leveled towers and larger bridges to accommodate the swelling population of the war's dead. It takes some minor convincing for the warrior class to be re-assigned the lower worker monikers, but many adopt the outlook that this must be a type of incarnation wherein they could work off their sins and ascend into the next manifestation, the way these European Thralls spoke of Transcendence.

Paper Cages and Iron Will

For many, though, this existence holds no honor, and the risks are worth it to save face. A handful of Japanese wraiths working the upper floors of the bleak, alien towers willfully plunge to their destruction rather than serve Stygia in shame. Unfortunately, there are no second chances. Stygian authorities move beyond the ethereal threat of forbidding reincarnation by soulforging to a more effective tactic: All Japanese POWs from Port Arthur are to spend the remainder of their time at forced labor, confined to the ground floors of the Iron Towers "for their own protection." The foundations of the monstrous towers, once built and crammed to bursting, became a ghetto known as the Paper Cage. The dredges of Thralldom and other truly lost souls spent years in its crushing embrace.

And yet, there are always some who harbor thoughts of freedom that cannot be denied. If withheld from *seppuku*, there was always flight. Even during the train ride, the Japanese see that there are other places between Port Arthur and these Iron Hills; foreign cities with familiar names and a place called Stygia just within reach. Patience and ingenuity give others a chance to break free and find another path. Sometimes, a truly fortunate Thrall would be "assaulted" by a terrifying, gas-masked

giant. Such ghosts of the war leave instructions on bits of paper or symbols on rocks to show a way out of the camps. These routes always lead to a Renegade stronghold hidden in the midst of the Stygian populace, an invisible bastion that leaves not a ripple to mark its presence.

The Bushido Clan

Hundreds of Renegade compounds exist during the Twilight Era in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. There are large communes and underground railroads, families of malcontents and political unions, but for most of the Japanese, there is really only Bushido Clan. For these outsiders enduring forced exile in the Western Deadlands, the clan is freedom. The warrior spirit of the samurai was the ultimate aspiration for a Japanese boy, and Bushido kept hope burning in Japan, long after the churches and palaces died. The Renegade leader, Ito, knows this truth well and hopes the name might inspire his countrymen to gather together here, far from the clutches of Yu Huang and the Yellow Springs.

The exact numbers of the clan are unknown except to the highest echelon: it's safest that way. Its methods are secretive and its logistics deeply contorted, but the common goal of its members is to free all the Japanese held prisoner by the "governments" of the Dead. This credo against government gains Bushido popularity in some circles and derision in others. The frequent disguise of the Bushido operative's *kiheitai* is the "Gas Masked"; no longer the shoddy protection it was in life, but the moliated face of its possessor. Like a bizarre chameleon, the Bushido agent blends into the new crowds of the war's victims and can carry out his honor-bound mission undisturbed. A simple "adjustment" can keep individual participants eluding the authorities forever. Vanity is no consideration in the Bushido Clan. Everything may be sacrificed for the greater mission: to overthrow the Jade Emperor and fashion a Japanese Deadland in peace. For this end, they need the shelter of Stygia and the aid of the Europeans. That seems to be forever the fate of Ito's dreams; in this life, and possibly all the rest.

Hirobumi Ito

As a young man barred by his homeland's traditions from visiting the rest of the world, Hirobumi Ito longed for Europe. Japan was first introduced to foreign life early in 1600's, but rejected it once the myriad of politics surrounding Christianity began to shake the island empire. Japan secluded itself from the rest of the world, and it would remain secluded for the next 200 years. But some who were exiled followed their "savior god" instead of the honored *Amaterasu*, and others who wished they were so lucky to be given an open invitation to freedom. Ito, born to a peasant family in 1841, became a learned man driven to explore the Western world.

Ito smuggled himself on a ship headed for Shanghai and later gained passage on a freighter to London to gain knowledge of the West for himself. His special interest was in how a small island such as England could gain an Empire that even stretched to the shores of China — mighty China, which cowered before the British naval fleet and its power ever since the Crimean War; China, which also fell to Japan in the Sino-Japanese War. The similarities were intriguing.

When Ito read that Japan was attacking Western ships at Shimonoseki, he hurried home. Instead of war, he founded a treaty born between Great Britain and the Japanese Emperor... although it was the Shogun who wielded the true power. Ito, like many of his countrymen, was concerned that the rightful rule of the divine-born Emperor was lost in the ancient politics of the Shogun and daimyo. His politics forced him to hide many times from powerful proponents who wished Japanese life to remain the way it had for the past 800 years, but the scholar knew nothing ever remains constant. Even luck.

Ito's luck changed when his final flight as a rebel led under the floorboards of a teahouse room where a helpful young woman stowed him away (she later became his wife). Ito masterminded the coup that joined clans Choshu and Satsuma to overthrow the last Shogun and bring the Emperor to rightful rule. The Meiji Restoration was born, and Ito was its first Prime Minister in 1892. All was well until that business with Manchuria. Korean rebels ruled the streets and one assassin's bullet on October 26, 1909 did what no samurai sword had managed earlier. Ito died feeling no completeness about the liberation of Japan. He could not know that his work was far from over.

Ito entered the Jade Empire and was horrified to learn that, in the Japanese afterlife, China ruled everything. Like some sick joke, Japan was nothing more than one lotus flower among many in Yu Huang's garden. Ito's beloved Japan was more enslaved than ever, and even death offered no escape. And, as his karma dictated, Ito knew what he had to do.

Finding passage to the Western Deadlands was far more difficult than departing Japan for Europe, but weighed with far lesser risk. After all, he was already dead and *this* pattern of events was like an old, familiar stroll. He headed for the one place he knew well: London. Within the London Necropolis, Ito immersed himself again in politics the likes of which he

> Almond-eyed wisps of grace, Japanese women are the rarest foreign females in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Like white jade in the Garden of Life, they are guarded jealously against outside influence, much as they are among the Quick. Japanese girls were never ones to roam far from home. During the War to End All Wars, older times, thousands of years of tradition, still hold sway in Japan. Women stay home, behind the windows, behind the walls, behind the locked doors and behind barred gates. Very few living women venture beyond the island's shores, and the same is true of dead ones.

had never known before. There was the Hierarchy with its upheavals after the imperator, Charon, had slipped away and left the Grim Legion to suck the marrow from the bones of empire; there were Heretics and Renegades beating their palms at the feet of these Deathlords, and somewhere in back whispered Guilds of forbidden powers with politics all their own.

Ito makes no secret of his ultimate goal: the end of Yu Huang's reign over the Japanese dead. And again, his vision earns Ito a mark of distinction, and again he flees from all who would end it along with his existence (such as it is). But dying once gives him a sort of malleable charm for squeezing through obstacles and procuring a face to match. Ito has been moliated so many times, not one artist in the dozens he's used can remember the leader's original countenance. Ito's common visage, a gas mask, is the favorite disguise of the Bushido plainclothesman. Eerily effective, few look twice at the monstrous headgear for fear of recalling things too unpleasant to ponder. And that is exactly how Ito prefers it.

Unified Body: Initiative, Damage and Martial Arts — New Rules

Outside of mass combat (see Chapter Two), the Storyteller system now uses a new method of calculating initiative. Players roll one die and add the result to the sum of their ratings in Wits and Dexterity. Players declare actions based on the total of these three numbers, highest numbers getting to declare last. This formula simulates a character's detection of some change in his environment and how quickly his body reacts to that perception.

For example, Cyrus, Lucia and Milla round a corner in the Paris Necropolis. They see a gas-masked figure battering one of their friends into a Harrowing! The three characters' players and the Storyteller all roll one die each and combine the result with the sum of each character's initiative rating (Wits + Dexterity). Lindsay, Milla's player, rolls a 2 and adds it to 6 (Wits 3, Dexterity 3) for a total of 8. Lucia gets an 8, too, and Cyrus a 7. The stranger in the gas mask gets a 6. That means their players get to hear what everyone else is doing before they must declare their actions. The Storyteller declares the masked attacker's action — multiple actions, activation of Arcanoi and expenditure of Willpower would be announced at this point — then Cyrus' player, then Lucia's and Milla's.

Play proceeds to the attack phase, when all declared actions are implemented. Exceptions occur if a character delays her action, takes a defensive action or is committing multiple actions (with the art Tempus Fugit, for example). As long as a character has an action left, she may postpone her action and take it anytime thereafter. Defensive actions are ones in direct response to attacks, and can be performed anytime, as long as a character has an action left. Multiple actions are always performed last. If more than one character delays her action or is taking multiple actions, they occur in order of initiative rating.

To simulate the martial arts of Jade Kingdom wraiths, these characters receive an initiative advantage. Any Jade wraith with at least four dots in Brawl or Melee may take Martial Arts as a specialty. When determining initiative, players of these characters roll *two* dice, not one, and use only the higher number to calculate their initiative rating. In the preceding example, if the gas-masked stranger is actually a Japanese Renegade with the Martial Arts specialty, his initiative rating would be 12, rather than 6 — rolled 7 and 3; added the 7 to 5 (Wits 2, Dexterity 3). And so, the martial artist would act first.

For more detailed Martial Arts rules see **Dark Kingdom of Jade** pp. 125-6.

The Jade Way

The Ways to Wind

Two-Part Soul

No one is "politically correct" in death. European souls are a struggle between Psyche and Shadow, African souls balance among four aspects of their incarnation, and Japanese souls are a melding of the *hun* and *p'o*. The *hun* is the incarnation of intellect and spirit, the driving force of life and death; the *p'o* is movement and physicality, the ebb and flow through the waters of existence. In death, these split (and equate to the Psyche and Shadow, respectively). Learning the Ways of the *hun* and *p'o*, as well as affecting those aspects in others, are the paths of power open to the Asian wraiths. These doors are closed to all others foreign to the Empire.

But much the same as the ties to home and family grow dim away from the birth land of Japan, the Ways dissipate into mist the longer the Japanese soul remains outside of its ancestral territory. The *hun* and *p'o*, over time, identify with the European Psyche and Shadow, and lose all that distinction entails and all the powers that go with it. There is more than one reason to hunger for home.

The Way of the Scholar

Ever since the Era of Prosperity, the scholar has risen to new heights in the lives of the Japanese. Tsunayoshi, the "shogun scholar" of the 17th century, sought to balance the warrior with philosophy and spiritual enlightenment to calm the restlessness of soldiers during peacetime. In death, this practice became an awakened sense of the *hun* — a sensitivity to the Psyche of the wraith — one that could be molded and manipulated by the higher artist's will.

This art is a delicate one, as even the most masterful Scholar knows there are limits to the human will.

Basic Ability

Studious Nature: The Way of the Scholar demands self-discipline, self-control and study of the highest order. Those without the tenacity must seek power elsewhere, for here, there are no half-hearted attempts at mastery.

System: All Knowledge rolls are made at a difficulty one lower than normal. In addition, Scholars may specialize after one level in a Knowledge.

• Discern the Lie

By reading the fluctuations of another's Psyche, the Scholar is able to discern who is telling an untruth.

System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 5 plus victim's Subterfuge level). A botch gives a false reading which is sure to cost the Scholar honor (and no small embarrassment) once discovered.

•• Inquiry

Forcing his will upon the subject, the Scholar may elicit the truthful answer to a single question. The answer may be couched and phrased however the subject wants, as vaguely as possible if so desired, but may not tell an outright lie. As in discourse with the legendary djinni, words ought to be chosen carefully.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower). The more successes, the more complex a question may be asked to force a specific, truthful answer. This art costs one Pathos; a botch drains a second Pathos and adds one temporary Angst.

••• Authority

Much like Inquiry, but instead of asking a question, the Scholar issues a command. This command must be obeyed by the subject (except any self-destructive act, whether directly or indirectly suicidal to the subject's knowledge). The wording must be particular as the subject may "creatively interpret" any ambiguity.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty equals the subject's Willpower). The more successes, the more complex a command may be given to force a specific act. One success equates a simple one-word command, while five successes may allow a paragraph-long command full of detailed instruction. The command must be given immediately after casting, or the force of will fades. This art costs one Pathos per success. Each botch bestows one point of temporary Angst. The subject usually does not know that this art has been used upon him, and he comes to realize the manipulation only in the event of a botch.

••• Filial Duty

A truly subtle manipulation of the Psyche's honor is fooling a subject into thinking the Scholar is to be treated as a trusted friend or revered family member. In this way, the subject willingly cooperates without tedious railing against an enemy. While the subject cannot do something that would be totally against his nature, thus causing him to question the honor of this "dear" person, the subject aids the Scholar in any way possible in the name of friendship and family.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Expression (difficulty equals the subject's Willpower). The subject, once enamored, will be helpful according to the number of successes:

One success: one hour
Two successes: six hours
Three successes: one day
Four successes: one week
Five successes: one month

••••• Subsume the Will

This art represents the final level of mastery over the *hun*. The Scholar now has the ability to control the minds of others by implanting commands permanently within the minds of subject wraiths. Through this art, likened to the Bush of Ghost's Arcanos, Subsume the Will is more graceful than the forcible manipulations of Behest.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Leadership (difficulty of subject's Willpower plus two). The more successes, the more intricate the implanted orders. These orders may not go directly against the subject's personality or nature, but may prey upon their "weaknesses" or "follower" roles to ensure compliance. In order to weave this art, the Scholar must spend an entire day with his subject, spending one Willpower and three Pathos to complete her work. Botches cost one Willpower per mistake and two points of temporary Angst.

The Way of the Farmer

The Scholar disciplines the *hun*, the Farmer cultivates the *p'o*. Language, mind and manipulation seem distant arts compared with base fear and intimidation, the tools to harness untamed souls. Farmers are to Jade much like Pardoners are to Stygia, but Farmers do not deal with the corpus, just the *p'o*. Unique to the Farmer's skill is the gathering and reaping of the monstrous *kuei*, souls without *hun*.

Basic Abilities

***Kuei* Howl:** Farmers can mimic the call of the Shadow-eaten. This ploy can attract other hungry spirits who believe it

is one of their own closing for a kill. The bait that lines the trap, the Farmer may gather the *kuei* for harvest. Used as a distraction, the howl is chillingly effective against other wraiths who fear the *kuei*. Many Renegade groups use such howls as a "Morse code" to communicate under Maelstrom cover.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 6). A successful howl can be heard for 100 yards. Botching a howl is... unfortunate; it alerts all *kuei* in the area who immediately gather and attack the unsuspecting Farmer.

• Finding the Hidden Ghost

The Farmer's crop is the excess of *p'o* — without the balance of *hun*, all those controlled by *p'o* are like a weed in the garden. The Farmer's calling is to find it and pluck it out. (This includes *kuei* and those in the grip of the *p'o*, or Shadow.)

System: The player rolls Perception + Investigation (difficulty 6) which enhances the user's senses to cover an extra 15 yards in diameter. The Farmer becomes aware of any creatures ruled by their *p'o* in the area: *kuei*, Spectres and wraiths fallen into Catharsis. Botches include inaccurate readings that generally overlook any such spirits the user might otherwise have located.

•• Cowing the Bestial Spirit

There is only one way to control the *p'o*: fear. By speaking in such a manner that would forcefully threaten a *kuei* or wild soul into compliance, the Farmer can order the spirit to perform any number of actions or, at least, to not attack the Farmer.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 7). The effects last 10 minutes per success and the number of successes increase the possible reactions:

One success: the subject flees in terror

Two successes: the subject cannot advance upon the Farmer, only retreat slowly

Three successes: the subject is frozen in place

Four successes: the Farmer may render the subject unconscious

Five successes: the Farmer may control the subject's movements

••• Purify

This art has similar effects on the *p'o* as Castigate does on the Shadow (level three power, Purify). It can reduce the temporary Angst pool, but it cannot affect any permanent Angst.

System: The Storyteller rolls the Farmer's Charisma + Way of the Farmer (difficulty of the subject's permanent Angst score). Each success reduces temporary Angst and one corpus level from the target; any 1 rolled gives a temporary Angst to the Farmer. A point of Willpower may be spent to aid the art.

•••• Deaden Spirit

All spirits enslaved by their *p'o* — *kuei*, Spectres and wraiths in Catharsis — are beings fueled by anger and hatred. These fiery emotions must be calmed in order for the Farmer to gather the tamed beast.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty 8) to mollify the spirit of *p'o*. The subject will take no aggressive or sudden actions for a number of rounds equal to the number of successes rolled. It's energy is sapped, reducing it to muttering or grumbling to itself, but without the strength to follow through on its dark desires. A botch, however, means the *p'o* is incensed and attacks the Farmer, who also gains three temporary Angst.

••••• Reap the Hungry Ghost

The Farmer mastering the *p'o* may now reap the corpora of these spirits, gathering them up like rice. This art is effective only once the *kuei* have been subdued and, ideally, deadened of spirit. *Kuei* actively attacking or engaging in hostile actions are not affected by this art. Spectres and wraiths under control of their *p'o* (Shadow-selves) are similarly immune.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Crafts (difficulty 7). Much the same as moliating or soulforging, the corpus of a *kuei* becomes malleable. The Farmer can mold this spirit down to a blob of essence that can be carted and sold at a tidy profit in oboli. This process takes considerable skill; involving a half-hour of time spent per corpus level harvested and two points of Pathos. Any 1 rolled "ruins" one corpus level of *kuei* that has "gone bad" as well as gaining the Farmer one point of temporary Angst.

The Way of the Merchant

Leeches of others' skills and prosperity: This rank was that the of merchant in living Japanese society. However, such qualities are embraced in the Yellow Springs and certainly in the Western Deadlands. To the Japanese wraith, the Merchant is invaluable — providing the essential link between the honorable sacrifices of loved ones and the Pathos wraiths need to thrive in the afterlife. Those wraiths who practice Usury recognize the common element, but the Way of the Merchant is for Japanese wealth.

Basic Abilities

Jingle Jingle: Merchants can literally smell money. They can detect any solid form of Pathos made by using the Mint Money art or the Displace art Transmogrify. The range is 20 feet in any direction. This art can alert a Merchant to wealthy patrons and pickpockets alike — thieves and hagglers can both be foiled by the nose that knows.

System: The player rolls Perception + Way of the Merchant. A botch merely betrays the sense, scenting money where there is none. (Oftentimes, users get flustered and temperamental when they do not find what they expect.) Use of this art grants one temporary Angst point.

• Transfer

Much like Usurers, Merchants may "lend" their Pathos to another wraith or "borrow" it from her. Use of Transfer causes a yellow glow around the target point where the Merchant and victim touch. (Corpus contact is required.)

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Way of the Merchant. When lending Pathos, the difficulty is the target's current Pathos. When borrowing Pathos, the difficulty is the target's Willpower. The number of successes equals the number of Pathos points available for transfer; a botch confers one temporary Angst point for each 1 rolled. This art costs one Willpower point.

•• Cash Money

The most popular and useful skill of the Way of the Merchant converts the sacrificial offerings of the client's living relatives directly into Pathos. Once converted, this Pathos can be kept or given to another wraith. The Merchant has his pound of flesh, the question is: Who gets to ingest it?

System: Cash Money for a client is a two-step process: First, the player rolls Manipulation + Way of the Merchant against the difficulty of the amount of Pathos represented in the sacrifice; second, Transfer is employed to allot Pathos to another wraith. Botches cause the loss of Pathos in the conversion, a type of depression of resources; points lost equal the number of 1s rolled.

••• Withdraw Essence

Merchants may Withdraw Essence from a Farmer-won *kuei* or similarly cowed *p'o* spirit. This art is a particularly nasty, but effective, way to gain another's Pathos. Neither subject being may have been reshaped into another sort of object, but is encouraged to be caged to facilitate the art.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Way of the Merchant (difficulty 5 plus the number of Pathos points to be gained). This art costs one Willpower and a botch confers one point of temporary Angst.

•••• Returning the Favor

To the Japanese, filial obligation is of the utmost importance. Merchants in the Jade Empire use this art to aid a pious relative by imbuing mortals with Pathos, giving a boost of emotional energy. Results of this transfer across the Shroud vary considerably, depending on the number of points bestowed:

One point allows a mortal to reduce the difficulty of a single action by one.

Two points allows the mortal character to re-roll a failed die cast.

Three points restores one point of Willpower. No more than three points may be Returned at one time.

(**Note:** While Japanese wraiths are located outside the Jade Empire, they cannot give Pathos to their relatives who live far away. However, displaced Asian wraiths may give this boon to Western mortals in the nearby Shadowlands… though they seldom do.)

System: A Merchant does not have to Manifest in order to "cash out" to a mortal, but he must be within five feet of the subject. The player rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty equals the number of Pathos points transferred plus four). This art costs the user one Pathos point and one Willpower point. A botch means an equal number of Pathos points wasted and confers one temporary Angst per 1 rolled as "tax."

••••• Mint Money

Nearly the reverse of Cash Money, this art lets the Merchant fashion Pathos into a form that can be easily transported and transferred to another. Coin strings and paper rolls are the most common forms of such foreign "oboli," though more exotic treasures can be fashioned by an artistic hand. Coins bearing the Merchant's profile or papers sporting her mark may gain her some notoriety and serve as advertisements of her skill.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Way of the Merchant (difficulty equal to the amount of Pathos converted plus four.) Yet, the new currency is sadly ephemeral, lasting 24 hours per success. This trait ensures that transactions take place promptly and that the Merchant stays in business. This art costs two Pathos and one Willpower. Any botch grants two points of temporary Angst per point of Pathos attempted in the failed conversion.

The Way of theSoul

Jade wraiths, like the Stygian castigators, are able to deal with the darkness that burdens the soul. Unlike citizens of the Iron Empire, Jade wraiths prefer to do the honors themselves.

By turning inward, the truly devout mind can cast out demons and vanquish the personal foe better than any outsider might. Unable to affect another's *p'o* with much success, each person depends on her own ability and the Way of the Soul is a path for one to walk alone.

Basic Ability

Negotiation: With an intimate knowledge of one's own *p'o*, there lies a greater understanding in how to control its seething anger. Those Jade wraiths who practice the Way of the Soul, commonly called Doctors, can sometimes convince their *p'o* to back away and be subordinate to their higher will. This is a test of one's personal balance, for if the action is unsuccessful, the withheld *p'o* will renew its attack with more vehemence than before.

System: The player makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 9) when she finds her *p'o* attempting to take control of her *hun*. Negotiation is the process by which the Doctor tries to soothe the *p'o* into a more quiescent state. A success makes the *p'o* forfeit one point of temporary Angst and cease any further attempt at control; however, a failure allows the *p'o* a Catharsis roll (difficulty 5). A botch grants the *p'o* immediate control over the *hun*.

There is no obligation for a Doctor to employ Negotiation. The threat alone may be enough for some *p'o* to submit. Many Doctors have the self-discipline to accommodate their divided selves at given times when balance is necessary for continued peace. Negotiation is a challenging art wherein neither the Doctor nor the *p'o* is certain of the outcome, and both generally wish to avoid the confrontation altogether rather than risk its harsh consequences.

• Coax

Equated with the Castigate power of the same name, this art allows the Doctor player to "modify" the aid proffered by the *p'o*. This manipulation can minimize the damage the *p'o* may inflict through a conscious effort by the disciplined Doctor.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Way of the Soul (difficulty 6). Each success allows another die to be removed from or added to the Shadow Dice pool. This art costs one temporary Angst point.

•• Nullify Thorns

The Merchant can temporarily prevent his *p'o* from using one of its Thorns.

System: The player makes a contested roll of Stamina + Mediation (difficulty equal to points of Angst). Success prevents the use of a single Thorn for one half-hour per success. This art costs one Pathos, and a botch awards the *p'o* one point of Angst.

••• Give Higher Passions

The Doctor may try to "tip the balance" in himself by temporarily inducing some of his own Passions in his *p'o*, thus replacing (for a time) one of its Dark Passions.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Meditation (difficulty of the *p'o's* Angst level plus two). Each success means the *p'o* possesses the new Passion for 24 hours in lieu of a Dark Passion (chosen by the user). This art costs two Pathos; a botch grants the player two points of temporary Angst.

•••• Alter Demeanor

A true level of mastery is reached when the Doctor can actually alter the Archetype of her *p'o* for extended periods of time. Any Archetype may be forced upon the *p'o* — even ones normally reserved for the opposing *hun*. This wraith is managing to entrance the *p'o* in higher pursuits such as love instead of hatred. This art is a self-creation of the greatest essence and requires the sturdiest soul for its accomplishment.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Manipulation (difficulty equal to the Angst level of the *p'o* plus four). A success grants one week of Alteration. A botch results in the *p'o* gaining four temporary Angst and one permanent Angst. Even a mere failure grants one point of temporary Angst. This art costs three Pathos.

••••• Inner Peace

Likened to the Castigate art, Defiance, the Doctor similarly rises to meet the enraged *p'o* — but instead of railing against it, the Doctor merges with it, mimicking the unity they enjoyed while a living soul. A *p'o* thus embraced in Inner Peace becomes reluctant to assert itself at all for days at a time.

System: The player makes an opposed roll of her Willpower against the Angst of the *p'o*. If successful, the two join as one and may work in unison. The player thus gains Pathos from all her Passions — the Dark Passions and the *hun's* Passions — and she is able to use them in both her Arcanoi and Thorns. These capabilities are drawn from both temporary Angst and Pathos pools. Everything is available. The wraith is not fully in control of himself at this time, but neither is the *p'o*. Joining ends once the *p'o* levels of temporary Angst have been expended. A botch awards the *p'o* immediate control and three points of temporary Angst to the subsumed Doctor.

Mortwights as Characters

Mortwights — or Mutilés, as they're also called during this period — are the least of the Restless Dead, apart from the utterly mindless Drones. To wraiths not yet under Oblivion's sway, Mortwights are simply more of the enemy. But to the higher castes in Spectral society, Mortwights warrant no consideration. Mortwights are the expendables in Oblivion's ranks, cheaply created and easily spent. Thus, the only community Mortwights have is the one they make.

Most Spectres once were wraiths; they fought and lost the battle against Shadow domination. Mortwights never had the chance: Dying a particularly violent and horrific deaths, they entered the Underworld Shadow-eaten. Whatever they know of wraithly existence, they've learned by observation. From the moment of death, some form of the urge to destruction dominates. It sets the Mortwight on one of three paths, the third far less common than the others.

• The independent search for Oblivion. Either singly or in small groups, many Mortwights associate only with their own kind. Together, they seek to elude both wraithly hunters and Spectres who would be the Mortwight's masters. While they last, they try to advance Oblivion's cause in their own ways, whether organized like guerrillas or haphazard like berserkers.

• The quest for position. For each Mortwight pursuing independent action, one or more seeks a place within the ranks of Oblivion's servants. The higher castes usually assign such Mortwights to "frontline" duty that leads to rapid destruction, but sometimes an especially lucky Mortwight attracts favorable attention. Then may come assignment to safer duties and even the opportunity to rise to higher castes.

• The pursuit of redemption. A few Mortwights seek a different sort of annihilation: not the destruction of their corporeal being, but the surrender of control and self-awareness to the Psyche. Redemption is the hardest goal of all, with the Mortwight likely to find little help from any side. It is a bitter pursuit, often motivated by a desire to hurt Oblivion as well as oneself. But sometimes it leads to the emergence of a new soul prepared to confront Oblivion from a position of self-mastery.

Children of the Storm

Mutilés normally lose two points of corpus for each day they spend in the Shadowlands, but the Great Maelstrom sustains them. For each day a Mortwight character spends in the Shadowlands, roll temporary Angst against a difficulty of (9 minus the current Maelstrom force). Each success cancels a point of corpus loss. The Mortwight can spend Being on this roll. On a botch, the Mortwight must return to the Tempest for one day per each 1 rolled.

Character Creation

Step One: Concept

Choose a Nature and a Demeanor from the list given in the chapter on Shadow creation, p. 141-143. With your Storyteller's approval you may also draw on the lists in **Wraith: The Oblivion** and the **Shadow Player's Guide**, but keep in mind that not all types may be appropriate for the era in general or your chronicle in particular.

Step Two: Attributes

Assign Attributes as usual.

Step Three: Abilities

Assign Abilities as usual.

Step Four: Advantages

• **Dark Arcanoi.** Mutilé characters can know only Dark Arcanoi; they must acquire Arcanoi during play with experience points and roleplaying out the process of finding a wraith willing to teach Spectres. Your character begins with one automatic dot in Hive-mind and one automatic dot in Tempest Weaving, and it has five dots to allocate at will.

• **Backgrounds.** Like other Spectral characters, Mutilés begin with five dots of Backgrounds. Your character cannot acquire Eidolon, Notoriety or Wealth.

• **Dark Passions.** Mortwights begin with 10 points of Dark Passions; see the section on Dark Passions for Shadows, p. 144. Dark Passions should relate strongly to other aspects of your character. Think what drives follow naturally from your character's Nature, Demeanor and manner of death. The highest Dark Passion rating provides your character's Being.

• **Fetters.** Mutilés have 10 points of Fetters, chosen as for wraiths. They relate to painful or otherwise unpleasant moments. Most Mortwights have their site of death as a Fetter. Mortwights cannot resolve Fetters, but they can lose them to destruction.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

• **Angst.** Mutilés begin with 5 Angst, and they can buy more with freebie points, up to a maximum of 10 points. Spectres gain Angst through the exercise of Dark Passions, via the same mechanic wraiths use to gain Pathos from Passions.

• **Being.** Spectres don't have Willpower. Their equivalent is Being, which combines emotional essence, spiritual strength and self-control. Being has temporary and permanent ratings, like Willpower. It powers some Dark Arcanos arts, and it can be spent in situations where wraiths would spend Willpower. Being begins at a level equal to the Mutilé's highest Dark Passion rating. It has a specific quality, taken from the Dark Passion's description — Hate, Envy, Lust, Despair and so on.

• **Corpus.** Mutilés begin with 10 corpus. Each time a Spectre botches a roll, however, it loses a permanent point of corpus. When it reaches zero corpus, a small Nihil opens to carry it off into the Void. Spectres and wraiths in the area must roll Dexterity + Athletics, or use Argos, Tempest Weaving, Tempestos or Outrage, to avoid falling in, too. Beings who take the plunge find themselves somewhere near the Well of the Void. See **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth** for more about the unpleasant possibilities this fate presents.

• **Freebie Points.** Like other Spectres, a Mutilé has 20 freebie points to spend. They can't be used to weaken the Psyche.

Abilities	2 points per dot
Angst	2 points per dot
Dark Arcanoi	4 points per dot
Attributes	5 points per dot
Backgrounds	2 points per dot
Being	2 points per dot
Fetters	1 point per dot

• **Appearance.** A Mutilé's corpus always vividly reflects his manner of death. The longer a Mortwight survives, the more his other features show the taint of Oblivion, as well.

• **Idiosyncrasies.** Mortwights are individuals. Think about what makes this character different from the others who died in the same place or in the same way. What keeps her from just letting go? What might make her stop?

Dark Arcanoi

Mortwights of the Twilight Era have more opportunity to roam the Shadowlands (even, under some circumstances, the Skinlands) than their counterparts of the late 20th century. Arts preserved only as theory since the Third Great Maelstrom suddenly become relevant, and Spectres of all kinds scramble to pass the lore as widely as possible.

Contaminate

This Arcanos deals with the perception and encouragement of Oblivion's taint in others. During the Great War, most Spectral teachers draw on models taken from battlefield medicine.

Basic Ability

Diagnose the Darkness: The Spectre can perceive Oblivion's influence in others, gauging the overall strength of a wraith's Shadow and of Dark Passions in both the living and the Restless Dead.

System: Roll Perception + Contaminate, difficulty 6. One success provides the Spectre a very general sense of Oblivion's influence in the target: specifically, whether the Shadow's Angst is more than 5 and whether any Dark Passion has a rating higher than 3. Two successes let the Spectre also gauge whether the target has more Angst, about the same (within a point more or less), or less than the Spectre, and whether any Dark Passions are higher than the Spectre's. Three or more successes let the Spectre identify the Shadow's Archetype and the nature of its Dark Passions. Four or more successes let the Spectre know the precise Angst and Dark Passion ratings.

• Dissect

The Spectre can determine a wraith's Nature by studying its traces in the reflection provided by the Shadow.

The Doomed Teaching the Damned

Wraiths in Catharsis or whose Shadows possess ways of communicating without the Psyche's approval can and do teach Arcanoi to Spectres. So do Spectres who learned Arcanoi before succumbing to Oblivion. But Mortwights, occupying the very lowest rung on the ladder of sentient Spectre castes, seldom get attention or respect from the other castes, so they're likely to have better luck looking for wraiths with poor Shadow control.

System: Roll Intelligence + Contaminate (difficulty 6). On a success, the Spectre learns the target's Nature. On a botch, this art costs one Angst.

•• Contamination of the Tongue

The Spectre can speak directly to a wraith's Shadow, and even when the Shadow isn't in charge, it can provide brief answers.

System: Spend one Angst and roll Manipulation + Contaminate versus the target's Manipulation + Castigate (difficulty 6). Each success lets the Spectre ask the Shadow one question (or make a one-sentence statement) and get a one-sentence answer. The Shadow takes momentary command to speak with the wraith's voice and mouth, which is extremely disconcerting to most wraiths.

••• Contamination of the Soul

The Spectre can drain her own Angst and pour it into a target's Shadow. The Angst emerges as a dark, noxious fluid, and the transfer requires corporeal contact, whether it's spitting the Angst into the target's mouth, injecting the Angst via a moliated "syringe" or some other method.

Being Rapacious

Whenever a Mutilé comes near a wraith or mortal with a Passion or Dark Passion of the same quality as the Mortwight's Being, there's a risk that the Spectre might enter a frenzied spiritual hunger known as Rapaciousness. The Mutilé's player rolls temporary Being (difficulty 8). On failure, the Mortwight must attack the target to free and devour the Oblivion within. The Mutilé can spend a point of temporary Being to stave off Rapaciousness for one scene. Particularly tempting prospects may require more points of Being, at the Storyteller's discretion.

System: Spend one Angst and roll Stamina + Contaminate (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Each success lets the Spectre transfer one point of Angst and gives the user's Psyche one point of temporary Composure. The Angst remains fluid for a single turn, to allow for injection and the like. On a botch, each 1 leads to a point of Angst draining out and being lost.

•••• Contamination of the Mind

The Spectre can assist a Shadow into Catharsis, even when the Shadow on its own wouldn't have the strength to overcome the Psyche.

System: Spend two Angst and roll Strength + Contaminate (difficulty 9 or the target's Willpower; whichever is higher). On success, the Shadow immediately gains control as if through a successful Catharsis roll. On failure, the Spectre loses a third point of Angst and the targeted Shadow loses one Angst as well. On a botch, the Shadow can take no action of *any* kind for the rest of the scene.

••••• Contamination of the Will

The Spectre can concentrate Oblivion's force within another wraith or Spectre, thus providing resources to use in developing temporary abilities.

System: Spend three Angst and two Being, and roll Charisma + Contaminate (difficulty 8). Each success grants the target's player one freebie point to spend in accordance with the rules for Shadow or Spectre character creation (depending on which sort of being the target is). The temporary abilities bought with these points manifest immediately; the points can't be hoarded. The Spectre can't use this ability on himself; only one entity can use Contamination of the Will on a given target per scene, and each entity can use this art only once per day.

At the end of the scene, roll temporary Willpower (or Being, for Spectres) to see if the temporary abilities last into the next scene. The difficulty is (10 minus the current Maelstrom force). The target must get as many successes as it has temporary freebie points. If not, the abilities go away.

Failure grants the Psyche one Composure per 1 rolled; a botch costs the Spectre the loss of one experience point per 1 rolled. If the Spectre has accumulated experience points handy, they're lost immediately. Otherwise, the next points to be earned are lost.

Corruption

Use the standard arts given in **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**, but reduce difficulties by one per level of local Maelstrom rating, down to a minimum difficulty of 4

Hive-mind

Use the standard Hive-mind progression given in **Dark Reflections: Spectres** and **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**. Note that Hive-mind doesn't always work in the form of explicit question-and-answer exchanges. A Spectre who seeks to know something may find the answer presented in the first word of each sentence said by random passersby, written on murals and sandwich-board advertisements, occurring in the chorus of a popular song or otherwise folded into the surroundings. Hive-mind infuses a Spectre's environment with meaning.

Leechcraft

Leechcraft is the counterpart to Contaminate that allows the Spectre to snatch away the resources of others to strengthen himself. Before the outbreak of the Fourth Great Maelstrom, Larceny is the common name for this Dark Arcanos. Spectral experience during the War to End All Wars gives it a battlefield-medicine frame of reference.

Basic Ability

Darkness Visible: The Spectre can gauge the general strength of Oblivion in another being, whether living or dead.

System: Roll Wits + Leechcraft (difficulty equals target's Willpower). On success, the Spectre can tell whether the creature's highest Passion or Dark Passion is greater than, equal to or less than the Spectre's own Being.

• Leach Corpus

The Spectre touches a wraith or Spectre and drains the target's corpus.

System: Spend one Angst and roll Manipulation + Leechcraft against a difficulty of the target's Willpower. Each success drains one point of corpus, making it tangible as a sludgy fluid that evaporates at the end of the scene. The Spectre can drink (or inject, or otherwise consume) the liquid corpus itself and gain one point of corpus for every two points ingested — up to his maximum — or pass it to someone else. Others gain one point of corpus for every three points ingested (round down). Leech Corpus cannot heal corpus lost due to botches, but covers corpus lost through general wear and tear.

•• Inflame Dark Passions

The Spectre can "share the wealth" of Dark Passions by channeling Oblivion through herself to fuel the dark side of others. This art is a dramatic one. The Spectre's corpus erupts in a spray of pustules and foul-smelling secretions, which swarm across the space between the Spectre and her chosen targets. The ejecta burrows into a target's corpus and leaves behind vivid rashes and boils for the duration of the art's effects.

System: Spend one Angst and roll dice equal to the rating of the Spectre's strongest Dark Passion, difficulty of (8 minus the local Maelstrom force; minimum difficulty 4). Each success is a point of Dark Passion that the Spectre can grant to another wraith or Spectre by touching the target. Any points not allocated by the end of the scene are simply lost. On a botch, the Spectre loses one point from her strongest Dark Passion per 1 rolled, until the end of the scene.

It takes three successes to create a new Dark Passion; existing Dark Passions rise by one level per point the Spectre chooses to allocate. The target must exercise the Dark Passion and gain Angst from it by the end of the scene or the extra points slip away. If the target can do so three scenes in a row, the extra points become permanent.

(**Note:** The Spectre cannot raise her own Dark Passions)

••• Leach Suffering

The Spectre draws on the pain of others to create Angst for himself. When a Spectre uses either this art or Leach Essence, the stolen aspects of the target flow out of any open wound as a clear fluid that rapidly darkens and thickens to a dull sludge. The Spectre collects the sludge and drinks it.

System: Roll Strength + Leechcraft against a difficulty of the target's Being or Willpower immediately after inflicting aggravated damage. Each success lets the Spectre gain one Angst per success, up to a limit of the number of points of damage inflicted. On a botch, the Spectre loses one Angst per 1 rolled.

•••• Leach Essence

The Spectre can draw on the pain of others to heal Being lost to botches, which does not return any other way.

System: Spend two Angst and roll Stamina + Leechcraft (difficulty of the target's Being or Willpower plus two; maximum 9), immediately after inflicting aggravated damage. Each success lets the Spectre regain a point of any statistic lost to Oblivion. The Psyche gains a point of temporary Composure for each point regained this way.

The Spectre cannot use this art and Leach Suffering following the same attack — the player must choose one or the other, if the Spectre knows both.

••••• Graft Oblivion

The Spectre seeks to preserve itself by shifting the burden of Oblivion to other beings in its vicinity, thus betraying its own nature as a servant of Oblivion. Use of this art alienates any other Spectres who learn of it, except ones seeking redemption.

System: Immediately following a botched roll, spend two Angst and two Being, and roll Charisma + Leechcraft against a difficulty of (10 minus the local Maelstrom force). Each success lets the Spectre project a point of permanent corpus, which would otherwise be lost, in the form of a temporary Plasmic

entity, a small flying parasite. Each parasite then flies off to attack someone in the area. Roll the Spectre's Being against the target's Willpower (difficulty 6). If the player succeeds, the parasite burrows in and makes the target lose a point of corpus (or a health level). Each of the Oblivion-shedding parasites can attack a separate target, at the Spectre's discretion.

If the initial Charisma + Leechcraft roll succeeds, the Spectre loses no corpus. If it fails, normal botch effects apply. On a botch, double the usual corpus-loss takes effect. Win, lose or botch, the Psyche gains two points of temporary Composure when the Psyche uses this art.

Maleficence

Use the standard arts listed in **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**.

Shroud-Rending

Only Mutilés may learn this Dark Arcanos, which remains imperfect in this era. Other Spectres don't suspect the existence of Shroud-Rending, and because no other caste pays attention to Mortwights, no other Spectre is likely to learn of it. Spectres of other castes cannot see Mutilés who've used Shroud-Rending while the Mortwights are in the Skinlands.

System: Spend two Angst and one Being; the Mutilé's Psyche gains a point of Composure. Roll Strength + Shroud-Rending against a difficulty of (the local Shroud rating minus the local Maelstrom force, minimum difficulty of 5). With one or more successes, the Mortwight rips open a hole in the Shroud and plunges through, taking one level of corpus damage along the way. The Mutilé then stands in the Skinlands, which is tangible to the user, but not vice versa. He can, however, use any Arcanoi or Dark Arcanoi that affect the Skinlands (such as Embody). Arts that work only in the Underworld remain unusable across the Shroud, even for users of Shroud-Rending.

Because Shroud-Rending is a blunt instrument at this stage of its development, it lacks levels of effects. Instead, the number of dots a character has in this Dark Arcanos reflects the amount of time the user can safely remain in the Skinlands.

- • One hour
- •• Two hours
- ••• Four hours
- •••• Eight hours
- ••••• 16 hours

The Mortwight can roam freely, but he must return to the exact spot where he left the Underworld. Shroud-Rending works only when initiated from the Shadowlands; a Mutilé who cannot return to the point of entry is in serious trouble. After the safe time elapses, the user begins to suffer degeneration. The only alternative way back is to jump through a Shroud-Rending hole opened by *another* Mortwight still in the Underworld.

A Mortwight who stays past his safe time in the Skinlands begins to rot, degenerating to a mindless frail condition. First he loses Angst at one point per hour, down to a minimum of one. He can regain lost Angst through the exercise of Dark Passions, but even regained, it continues to trickle away. Once Angst reaches the minimum, Being falls (also at one per point per hour) to a minimum of one. Then mental and social attributes fall, one at a time in the order chosen by the Mutilé's player, to zero. Finally, Dark Passions fall one at a time, starting with the lowest-rated one, at one point per hour, down to zero. Only the highest-rated Dark Passion survives.

The stranded Mutilé instinctively seeks some shelter where the Shroud is thin and there exists the opportunity to exercise any remaining Dark Passion. He can automatically sense Shroud-Rending being used anywhere in the area, and can use another Mortwight's Shroud-Rending hole anytime within one hour after the hole is created. If the Mutilé manages to return to the Underworld, lost ratings return in the reverse order of their disappearance, one level per hour. Permanent Being falls by one point, however; the experience of extended Skinlands existence leaves the Mutilé weaker forever after.

Tempestos

Use the standard arts listed in **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**. Reduce difficulties by one per level of local Maelstrom force.

Tempest Weaving

The arts of Tempest exploitation come more readily to Mortwights than other Spectres, and while the Fourth Great Maelstrom blows these arts have greater-than-usual versatility. The Tempestos arts deal with movement through the storm, whereas Tempest Weaving involves manipulating the storm where the Spectre is.

Basic Abilities

Storm-Horn: To Tempest Weaving Spectres, each element of the Maelstrom cries out with a distinctive voice. The Spectre can make out the pitch and timbre of each Nihil nearby. Once the Spectre has approached a particular Nihil, she learns that Nihil's voice and can recognize it again, whether it's the Shadowlands opening or the end in the Tempest (or Labyrinth). In addition, the Spectre can speak to a known Nihil, quieting it for a moment and listening at it to hear whatever sounds carry from the other side.

System: Roll Perception + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 6), to hear Nihils. Each success lets the Spectre hear one Nihil, in order of increasing distance from the Spectre. There's no upper limit on the range of this ability; it's possible to hear across very long distances in the deeper layers of the Underworld. When encountering a Nihil the Spectre has approached

before, she can roll Intelligence + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 4) to recognize it. On a Perception + Tempest Weaving roll (difficulty 4), she can quiet it for one scene and hear whatever sounds are being made at the Nihil's other end.

Hole in the World: Once a Spectre has identified a Nihil with Storm-Horn, she can travel through it with moderate effort, even if it's been sealed. Nihils leave faint but distinct traces which Tempest Weaving can exploit.

System: Roll Stamina + Tempest Weaving, (difficulty 8 minus the local Maelstrom force). On a success, the user opens a Nihil that lasts long enough for her to jump through. She emerges a few turns later (the exact timing is a matter of Storyteller discretion) from its far end.

• Storm-Lash

The Spectre can draw strength from the Maelstrom and use it to renew Angst and Being. He steps naked into the Maelstrom, and as the storm beats him down, he becomes reinvigorated.

System: Roll Stamina + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 9 minus the local Maelstrom force). Each success, up to the limit of the force level, lets the Spectre regain a point of corpus or temporary Angst. Two successes can let the Spectre regain a point of temporary Being. This ability costs one Angst to use, which the Spectre might well gain back. Storm-Lash is often used several turns in succession, to let the Spectre become fully healed.

•• Thread of Corruption

The Spectre can infect a relic with a subtle infusion of Maelstrom force. The relic thereafter carries a distinctive taint of Oblivion, requiring Angst for use by anyone not yet Shadow-eaten. It also emits a unique note that Tempest Weavers can track.

System: Roll Wits + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 9 minus the local Maelstrom force). It takes one success for each level of rating in the relic. Thereafter, the relic requires a point of Angst to draw on its special abilities, unless the user is a Spectre or a wraith in Catharsis. Arts that detect Oblivion's presence detect the corrupted relic. Whenever the object's user botches a roll to resist damage from Maelstroms, the corrupted relic takes one more point of damage than usual.

••• Unweave the Self

The Spectre literally unweaves herself, dissolving into a cloud of fine threads that can drift on the storm.

System: Spend a point of Angst and roll Dexterity + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 9 minus the local Maelstrom force). On any success, the character becomes a small collection of Maelstrom debris resembling a shredded garment, capable of going wherever the Maelstrom is blowing. The Spectre can remain unwoven for one hour per success rolled. On a botch, the Spectre takes one level of corpus damage from particularly unsuccessful efforts to separate pieces of herself. Unweaving and reweaving each take one turn per level of temporary corpus.

•••• Reweaving

The Spectre can pull pieces of lost objects from the storm (or from Destruction Harrowings) and reassemble them. This art doesn't allow a great deal of control over what emerges, however.

System: Spend a point of Angst and roll Dexterity + Tempest Weaving (difficulty 7 minus the local Maelstrom force, minimum difficulty 4). The Psyche gains a point of temporary Composure and keeps it for one hour per success rolled.

One success produces a small object without combat applications but possibly with other significance. A favorite toy known to have been a Fetter of an associate of one or more wraiths present, now lost to Oblivion, for instance, might produce a strong emotional reaction beyond the innate power of the object. With two or more successes, the object contains a point of Dark Passion, which the Spectre can suck out and convert into Angst. On three or more successes, the Spectre pulls out the pieces of a one- or two-point relic, usually one belonging to a wraith destroyed recently during the storm.

The Spectre can also aim for a more specific object. The base difficulty is 8 for any member of a broad class of objects (any pistol, for instance, or any pocket watch), or 9 for a specific object. Efforts to retrieve objects that don't, in fact, exist anywhere in the Maelstrom cost Angst and grant Composure for an hour, but simply fail automatically.

The Reweaving process takes a turn. The Spectre can decide at any time to let the object return to the storm; doing so takes a point of Angst and one turn, no roll required.

••••• Carve the Chaos

The Spectre imposes his will on the formless stuff of the storm and forces it — temporarily — into a solid form. Normally, this art works only in the depths of the Tempest or the Labyrinth, but during the Great Maelstrom it can apply with difficulty to the Shadowlands as well.

System: Spend two Angst plus a point of Being and roll Intelligence + Tempest Weaving. The difficulty is 7 in the Labyrinth or Tempest, 9 in the Shadowlands during storms of force three and greater, 10 during force-one or force-two storms. The Psyche gains two points of temporary Composure from the effort. A space as large as the Spectre can cross in a couple of turns (about the volume of one large or two small rooms) takes on whatever details the Spectre imagines.

"If Charon was nothing but talk," the cloaked figure said, "why were you ever a part of the Hierarchy in the first place?" The stranger clearly had no interest in ingratiating himself to the four wraiths who had pulled him into their already-crowded relic tank just as the Maelstrom broke.

The Old Man snorted. The vehicle had stalled after moving a few hundred yards through the Maelstrom, thus prompting his bitter anti-Charon rant in the first place. It almost seemed that he blamed Charon for the Maelstrom and any difficulties the Underworld faced in its wake.

"Charon may not be nothin' but a puppet on the Deathlords' strings, but that don't make the alternatives any better," he said.

"You're insane," Starkweather said; the turncoat Grim Legionnaire had been chosen for this mission to prove his commitment to the Loyalist cause. The contempt he directed at the Old Man made the others wonder again about his loyalties. "The Death Lords can't even agree to work together now *when the entire Hierarchy needs them the most."*

"Then Charon shouldn't have left us with this pitiful excuse for a government in the first place," the Old Man said, turning away from everyone to reach back into the bowels of the tank's engine. He wasn't quiet long.

"We got us a problem," he said.

Starkweather muttered ominously behind his heavy mask. Looking at him gave Arthur — a British tank-driver who'd only been recently reaped — the chills. Starkweather's location at the very center of the tank made the Grim Legionnaire the only one of them able to fully stand, a fact that made the man even more intimidating.

"I'd love to keep arguing with you," the Old Man grunted, "but the soulfire crystals don't we have look used up. I ain't gonna be able to get it goin' again without more crystals. You wanna keep debatin', that's fine by me, but after we figure out what to do."

"How can our fuel be gone already?" Arthur asked. "We barely moved!"

The Old Man shrugged and tossed the tank pilot a dull-looking rock. "All I know is, that's a spent crystal," he said.

Starkweather turned to Louis Wilson, the Oracle who'd managed to get them all on this suicide mission to find and retrieve a tank in the Shadowlands of the Somme. "What do you think, Oracle? Politics or practicalities? Or maybe you'd like to get out and push?"

"Did you hear—" the Old Man began.

"I heard every word," Starkweather snapped, "but before we go on, I want to know who I'm stuck with in here. First we see who's loyal to the Hierarchy, then we decide about the fuel problem. Is that agreeable, Louis?"

"That's an odd choice of topic for a two-time traitor," Arthur said, immediately feeling less brave than he had before speaking up. He was wondering if his Shadow might be up to its old tricks when Starkweather grabbed him. Most of the other Loyalists moved as quickly as they could to defend the driver, but the cramped interior made most activities impossible — though Starkweather was handily managing to throttle Arthur.

"Stop, all of you!" The voice of the hooded stranger fairly echoed inside the tiny vehicle. The stranger was struggling, but not to separate Arthur and Starkweather. Instead, he was restraining the Old Man, who was still struggling fruitlessly to reach the tank's hatch. "Our problem is not a lack of soulfire but a plenitude of Shadows. Each of you needs the services of a Pardoner. This fellow is in the grip of his dark half. He sought to expose us all to the Maelstrom!"

The Old Man gaped. "No! He's lying! He was trying to undo the hatch—"

"Look in the machine compartment," the stranger said. "You'll find the sack of fully charged crystals our friend concealed there. Obviously, he installed a nearly depleted one to create just such a scene as we have here. To distract the rest of us."

"You know a lot for a chance refugee from the storm," Starkweather said. "Next you'll tell us you're a Pardoner."

Louis held up a glowing red stone where they could all see it. "He certainly is right about the crystals," the Oracle said. "Care to show us your face, stranger?"

Still gripping the Old Man with one arm, the wraith used the other to sweep back his hood. His features were handsome, calm and vaguely Mediterranean. "Belial, of the Confessors, at your service," he said.

"I don't believe this," Starkweather said, though without much conviction.

"Fate is a strange and gracious lady," Belial replied. After a moment's silence, he added, "Come, let's get away from here. I can't practice my art under these conditions."

Shortly thereafter, the tank lurched into motion and again began to beat its way through the storm.

Chapter Six: Why Death's Many Tales

The only ghosts, I believe, who creep into this world, are dead young mothers, returned to see how their children fare. There is no other inducement great enough to bring the departed back.
— Sir James Barrie, *The Little White Bird*

Wartime, Story Time

Tales of the afterlife and the unsettled dead are ghost stories, no matter when they're set. Nevertheless, the ghost stories that you and your troupe can create playing **Wraith: The Great War** are meant to differ from ones set within the framework of modern **Wraith**. Some themes, such as love, hate and vengeance are timeless, but different settings open up many possibilities for games that the modern setting does not. Here are a few suggestions.

• **Preserve Mutual Fetters** — Examples of good Fetters for Twilight Era soldiers far from home include prostitutes, photos or letters of loved ones, a pocket bible, or a friend-at-arms who is wounded but survives the war (and remains in Europe afterward). A good way to bring a Circle together is for its members to have Fetters in common that are endangered. If the Circle members have a common goal of helping their recovered buddy get home, can they fol-

low him without being destroyed by the Great Maelstrom? What might they do if their old comrade gets influenza? If they learn that he is a reckless or deranged person, do they try to change his behavior? Another Fetter who might be in danger frequently is the prostitute. What does the Circle do when she gets roughed up? Perhaps the prostitute led to the deaths of others who are also wraiths and those Restless want to kill her. If the prostitute has some disease she is spreading, how does the Circle respond? What might their Shadows tell them to do?

• **Meet the Gaunts** — The United States has a disposable culture, especially in the modern era. A wraith's Fetters are unlikely to survive in the New World more than 50 to 100 years past a person's death. Things are different in Europe, where a soldier's pocket watch may have belonged to his father or grandfather before him. Buildings from the Roman Empire still stand in parts of the Old World. This enduring antiquity allows ancient wraiths to continue their existence in the Shadowlands. Some of these wraiths remember the Third Great Maelstrom (or even the Second), and they may have tricks on how to survive. Some may have knowledge of lost Arcanoi or abilities using current arts never dreamed of by younger wraiths. Such information won't come without a price, of course. A Gaunt might share her secrets only after a younger wraith exacts revenge on some enemy for her, or performs some task in the Far Shores. Knowledge is valuable, and Gaunts have a great deal of it. What might a nascent wraith do in order to identify an enemy's Fetter, or learn a forgotten art? Is information that might resolve a Fetter worth the betrayal of a friend? Is the identity of a wraith's killer worth political duplicity?

• **Loyalists/ Insurrectionists/ Renegades** — Nearly every Twilight Era Necropolis has at least three major factions: The Insurrectionists try to keep what they have taken, the Loyalists try to reclaim what they have lost and Renegades dream of something different from what these two factions can offer. The Grim Legion has the advantage in most cities, but they are only one Legion. They rule by fear and numbers rather than by noble goals and deeds. If the Insurrectionists want to stay in power, they must win the loyalty of others outside the Grim Legion. Ousted Hierarchs have lost the upper hand, but they still retain established tradition and understanding of Shadowlands "geopolitics" superior to what most Insurrectionist upstarts possess. The

Loyalists can also claim Charon's rule was mandated by Fate, and it's therefore wrong for anyone to usurp the role of imperator. Renegade factions may have a chance to make a real difference during the titanic clash. Wraiths can spend entire adventures working for one of the factions or trying to avoid the attention of any of them. Masquers make excellent spies. Wraiths with Outrage or Puppetry can be used to destroy Fetters. Is the entire Circle loyal to one particular faction? What happens when they meet someone they knew among the living who has joined a different faction? Does the Circle destroy other wraiths to serve its own ends? What happens when their Fetters and Passions conflict with their new loyalties?

• **Braving the Maelstrom** — To be caught in a Great Maelstrom is to fight for survival. Spectres attack anything that moves. They use their Dark Arcanoi to inflict Oblivion on the Dead whenever possible. The storm's black lightning, harsh winds and strange rains can destroy even the toughest wraith. Even those Restless lucky enough to find shelter must wonder how long can it last. Wraiths caught outside are ready to commit any violence necessary to gain access to a shielding Haunt. The Maelstrom may destroy such shelter bit by bit, leaving the claustrophobic wraiths inside panicked and their Shadows ready to overwhelm them. Having wraiths of different nationalities or ethnicities in the shelter may exacerbate this process. Does the Circle stand up to protect a few foreign wraiths when it might mean being tossed outside with them? Are the wraiths willing to send out weaker wraiths to certain doom? What happens if wraiths trapped outside attempt to damage or destroy the shelter unless they're allowed inside? What happens if half of the Circle is caught outside the shelter? Or if the whole Circle is on the outside and the only chance at safety is to attack the wraiths inside?

Many wraiths are sent out to combat the Fourth Great Maelstrom. Of course, until its component Spectres are defeated and the Nihils plugged, the storm rages on. Wraiths can be members of various Legions sent to make a difference in the battle with Oblivion unleashed. Such conflicts can be as simple as a tussle with Spectres or a more complicated and protracted campaign around a Nihil. The technology of "modern warfare" allows for different types of battles. Consider a clash where the wraiths have biplanes or perhaps even a dreadnought!

Another possibility is search and rescue missions. A member of the Circle somehow becomes trapped outside shelter. Do her friends allow her to be torn apart by Spectres, or do they put their own existence on the line for a comrade? This type of scenario works well when there is not a storm currently in progress but the Circle members learn, either through Fatalism or some other means, that the Maelstrom is due to increase in intensity within the next few days — or even hours.

• **Vengeance on the Skinlands** — Persons who die in situations like the ones characteristic of the War to End All Wars often become wraiths with grudges. It may be difficult to wreak vengeance on blameworthy parties in the Skinlands, though: A wraith may lack the appropriate Arcanoi and need to find another wraith with such abilities. Because the *Dictum Mortuum* is not as strenuously enforced during the Twilight Era, selective (i.e., political) punishment of the law's violators can come as a brutal and final surprise. Usually, however, the Grim Legion is more forgiving, as its members understand a need for vengeance. But merely finding the commander who sent your company "over the top" to certain death, or the enemy soldier who just didn't feel like taking prisoners that day, can be a real challenge. The road to vengeance can (and should) be long, frustrating and destructive for all who tread it.

• **The Long Way Home** — The war displaces millions of people. Soldiers come from all over the world to fight in Europe, Africa and the Far East. The war's devastation leaves many people stranded refugees — and many Restless, too. Some wraiths have Fetters an ocean away. Some might find eternal peace if only they could tell their wife and children farewell. Travel is not easy in the 1920s, and intercontinental transit is quite rare. Transatlantic phone lines arrive only near the end of the period, and the Arcanoi to take advantage of them come years later still. Travel by slow boat almost guarantees doom in the Great Maelstrom. Some ghostly Europeans might have been forced onto the Ivory Trail from Africa and, contrarily, have scores to settle there, in addition to surviving loved ones or other Fetters. But travel between Dark Kingdoms is Spectre-plagued, storm-wracked and treacherous, as wraiths who survive the Ivory Trail can report, and few of them are eager to repeat the experience. Thus, many wraith Circles may have members from several different nations. Does a wraith help her compatriots get home, only to find herself stranded even farther from her own goals? Or does she encourage her Shadow by following the path of "every wraith for himself"?

• **Out with the Old...** — The early 20th century is a time of enormous upheaval. Radio becomes an important source of entertainment. The Ford Model T rolls out, and buyers can have it any color they want, "as long as it's black." Einstein is recasting the physical model of the universe and Freud's theories are changing the way people think about thought. Yet the scientific changes are nothing compared to the social ones: Nearly every nation is undergoing a cultural revolution. Jazz and marijuana are all the rage, even as Prohibitionists fight against "demon liquor." Western women are demanding the vote. Governments are falling as ripples from the war sweep in along with economic hardship. All of these changes can play havoc with a wraith as the things he draws Passions from become obsolete and fade away. How does a wraith who is addicted to riding drunkards deal with

Prohibition? Do jaded jazz-age sensibilities leave wraiths cold or energize them? Do the Restless fight for the status quo or help change the world?

• **The Dead March** — A truly sadistic Storyteller may want to create a chronicle featuring a Circle whose members die in Africa. These poor wraiths end up outsiders in the Bush of Ghosts after death. Give them some time to get really lost in the strange culture of the Ivory Kingdom. Threaten them with imprisonment, Thralldom or destruction. Then, after a few sessions, have the Moriman send all foreign wraiths marching along the Ivory Trail.

The Ivory Trail should be a truly horrible ordeal that destroys most of its participants. Its victims must march continuously, even through the worst conditions of the Great Maelstrom. If the Circle is alone, there is little chance of its survival. Its members must band together with other marchers, some of whom they may not have liked in life. Perhaps the soldier who gave orders in life is forced into a subservient role in death. The indolent corporal who never lifted a finger to help anyone in the Skinlands might find himself the hero of the hour as he fights off a Spectre single-handed.

A story like this one needs to focus on the characters' remoteness from anything civilized. The Circle is basically cast adrift. The scenario should not be one torture session after another, though. Occasionally place the wraiths in some exotic place or in an area of temporary safety. Give them glimpses of the Far Shores or other realms that might hold clues to solving problems in the future. Finally, the scenario does not end when they get home. Marching the Ivory Trail makes the Circle members strange to their own kind, and the Insurrectionists and Loyalists are sure to want to use wraiths strong enough to survive such an experience. Others may question them about what they saw, and wraiths foreign to Europe may want to know how to return to their own homelands.

The Charon Chronicles

Perhaps the most daunting hurdle for **Great War** Storytellers is any chronicle that includes Charon as a character. What follows are some basics to help you bring Stygia's errant imperator and first Ferryman to life — so to speak.

In the modern **Wraith** game, Charon casts an enormous shadow on the proceedings because of his absence. The same is true to a different degree in this game, because he is unaccounted for during the Twilight Era, but only a few wraiths believe he might no longer exist in the Underworld. Of course, what he's doing is getting a view of Stygia from street level, evaluating his citizens, his laws and the

state of the Underworld as a whole. In other words, in **Wraith: The Oblivion**, players presume that Charon is nowhere that their characters are likely to encounter him; in **Wraith: The Great War**, players are likely to expect Charon to be just about anywhere. Part of your challenge is to work him into stories without letting him take over stories. Another part is to portray him as a character and not just a plot device.

Despite Charon's absence in **Wraith: The Oblivion**, most books for the modern game that discuss the empire in any detail contain solid hints about what kind of ruler he is, and what kind of wraith, too. It's no secret that he lived and died in the culture of ancient Mycenae, so learning a little about that civilization can't hurt. The volumes in the **Guildbook** series offer good insight into the Imperator, as does the history section of **Wraith: The Oblivion, 2nd Edition**. Keep in mind, though, that a little Charon is sure to go a long way: If you stitch him into every **Great War** chronicle, he's sure to become tedious, as any overused story element does.

Apart from "haunting" your games, Charon can be a menace to chronicles in another way, too: He is a character of nigh-infinite power within the context of **Wraith**, so the temptation exists to have him do miraculous things to dazzle the players — or to save them from some lethal situation. Again, too much of anything wears out its welcome quickly, and players are likely to resent obvious Storyteller rescue missions. Plus, because Charon is traveling in disguise during the Fourth Great Maelstrom, he's under some constraints in terms of using his power openly. Causing the Maelstrom to abate locally with a wave of his hand or yanking someone free of a Harrowing are, indeed, acts within the Imperator's ability — but if he does these things while in the guise of an escaped Thrall, his charade's probably over. Then again, remember that he *is* Charon, so assume that he can influence other wraiths or their environment clandestinely, even when he's doing something miraculous. It's nice to drop hints, but players usually like a mystery. Consider that, sometimes, a Circle might encounter Charon during his wanderings without ever realizing who he truly is. Alternately, he may reveal himself immediately, depending on what his immediate goal is.

Storytellers who include Charon in any **Great War** chronicle should always keep in mind what the Imperator is about: Primarily, he's observing. He is watching his citizens face difficult times. Are they up to the challenge? Do they demonstrate proper Stygian values? And what are "proper Stygian values"?

Some of the laws Charon creates are mysterious or abhorrent — slavery and its uglier cousin, soulforging, for example — to modern sensibilities, but they were created to keep certain souls from feeding Oblivion. Charon wants to know whether his laws are still helping the empire withstand the pull of nothingness, the gravity of the Underworld. And he wants to know how Stygia's citizens *feel* about his laws. In a place where emotion determines reality, laws that feel oppressive *are* oppressive, and they've become part of the problem.

In other words, he's questioning as well. He wants to know how wraiths choose between obeying the law or doing what is right — and, indeed, what the Restless believe "right" is.

Presume that Charon does *not* seek to send wraiths to Oblivion, unless someone seems to be actively struggling to get there already, and to take as many others with her as possible. He might *threaten* wraiths with soulforging or some other horrible fate, depending on his current guise, but such threats are usually hollow. On the other hand, Charon has a temper, and characters who try to harm him might find themselves in an Underworld of trouble. How far he'll go to protect other wraiths from themselves is inversely proportional to their capacity for self-destructive stupidity. In other words, wraiths who try to club Charon senseless and rob him when he's in the guise of a helpful Pardoner probably don't warrant aid or even mercy in the Imperator's view. In situations of his own making, however, chances are that he'll do things he probably shouldn't — miracles.

But *when* does he perform miracles? And why? Or why not? And how do his miracles affect the game?

Again, Charon should never be a mere *deus ex machina* who solves characters problems for them because he can. Such behavior defeats the purpose of watching for grace under pressure, and it's dull for the players. And even for Charon, miracles come with a price. Unlike other Ferrymen — for Charon can profitably be seen as one of these mysterious wanderers, despite the strife between him and them — the Imperator still has his Shadow. Every Ferryman hesitates to use powers that transcend ones available to most Restless because doing so strengthens one of the Pasiphae, the Labyrinth-roaming "amputated" Shadows of Ferrymen. In contrast, Charon might learn the cost of a given miracle right away, as he is subject to Catharsis, like any other wraith with a Shadow. And Charon, old and immensely powerful as he is, has an old and immensely powerful Shadow — not something he'd like to see set loose while a Great Maelstrom is *already* raging.

In game terms, Storytellers should treat Charon's miracles as Arcanoi at the six-dot level *at least*, and assign *permanent* Angst accordingly. In the unfortunate event that the Imperator's Shadow should take control, Storytellers can treat it as the Anarchist (although other Archetypes may be chosen) and assign it *any* Thorns/ Dark Arcanoi, potentially even ones for Shadows of other Dark Kingdoms (see the **Shadow Players Guide**). At this point, players may wish to pray....

As for what Charon looks like or sounds like, if you strain to make him more "noble," "imperious" or something else that basically boils down to pompous, well, that's what

you get. Just remember, he's trying to blend in and go unnoticed. Except when he wants to be noticed. If he reveals himself, it helps to have older wraiths (if present) in the company of the characters assume postures of silent respect. With any luck, your players will get the idea and follow suit. Times being as dire as they are, though, Charon's probably unlikely to stand on ceremony. He wants to see Stygia's citizens eye to eye, not eyes to the ground. He's genuinely curious to know how wraiths feel about the massive change afoot in the empire.

And how does Charon feel about things? Consider that the Underworld is full of Oracles and other soothsayers, beings of proven ability at predicting the future of the Dead. Charon's future isn't so rosy. After the current Great Maelstrom ends, another is on the way only decades later, and another still before the end of this century. The Imperator will have to make a tremendous sacrifice, with no guarantee that doing so will save anything that he's built.

Finally, in one-shot chronicles where players portray characters who meet once, then scatter to the corners of the Underworld, consider having a player portray Charon. This dodge throws players off-balance, as their natural assumption is for Charon to be a Storyteller character. Obviously, such a player (and his Shadowguide) should be ones the Storyteller feels he can trust not to abuse the character or the other players. The fun in a game of this type is to find real challenges for Charon: If he's in the guise of a Pardoner, how does he castigate an Oracle without revealing his true identity? If the players are portraying Insurrectionist Legionnaires trying to track or destroy Charon through his Fetters (which, during the Twilight Era, are the entirety of the Skinlands, so Behest and Lifeweb efforts to this end always have inconclusive results), how far does he let them go? What if Charon has to perform something miraculous and thereafter needs castigation himself?

Charon can be one of the most exciting aspects of any Great War chronicle. Choose carefully which sort of story you want him in and think about the ways his presence might affect it. Then throw away your conclusions, because the players are sure to alter them anyway. The best rule of thumb is to think about the character *as* a character, to understand how he's likely to respond in a range of situations. You know... roleplaying?

• **The State of the Empire** — Charon uses his skill at moliation to wander in different guises and explore the empire. He tries to put himself in a position to learn more about individual wraiths. He may come on the Circle as it's being attacked by Spectres or caught by the Maelstrom and help them. Later, he tells them that he is a soldier of the Emerald Legion, weary of the long battle and again doubting his loyalties in the War of the Dead.

He asks the characters to tell him their stories and whether the Hierarchy has helped or hindered them during their time in the afterlife. He wants to know if the empire he's fighting for has truly protected those souls whom it supposedly exists to help. If the characters are willing to talk, it can be an opportunity for players to take the role of Storyteller for a while as they share tales of their time among the living or of their entry into the Underworld.

• **Shadows** — Charon often travels Deadlands Europe as a Pardoner, openly carrying his iron lantern. The Circle encounters him in this guise after one of its members runs afoul of the authorities due to a nasty Catharsis.

Because some Pardoners visit sadistic tortures on a client in the course of quelling the Shadow, wraiths are cautious about whose castigation services they engage. Charon intervenes in the case of the errant Circle member and says he can take care of the matter. Others in the Circle may be wary, especially given the lack of alternative Pardoners that coincides with the appearance of this mysterious volunteer. They might fear that their friend is to be saved from her Shadow only to meet some terrible fate at the hands of this eager stranger! Should the characters try to discourage Charon's efforts, local authorities threaten to soulforge their compatriot rather than tolerate her Shadow's misbehavior. Should the Circle member submit to Charon's ministrations, however, she finds herself subjected only to intense conversation, the disguised Imperator folding his inky fingers as he ponders the depths of her Shadow.

The wraith's Shadow recoils, and the enigmatic Pardoner tells her that she is now free to go; however, he clearly expects payment of some kind. If she offers some service, he may ask that her Circle undertake some mission. If she fails to do so, the Circle finds that its troubles with the local authorities have only begun.

• **Custodians** — Revealing his true identity to the Circle, Charon tells its members that he has been observing them and that he wishes to entrust them with a great responsibility. The Hierarchy controls many terrible and dangerous relics, items Charon does not want any side in the power struggle to possess. He wants the characters to guard one such object and not allow it to be used. He promises them some reward later, but for now they must neither reveal that they have the item or that they have seen him. Insurrectionist and Loyalist troops may pursue them to claim the item, and their own Shadows may tempt them to use it. The custodianship may be only a test by Charon, or the item may truly prove instrumental in the fate of Stygia.

• **Tests I** — Moliated to the form of a wretched, chain-trailing Thrall, Charon begs the Circle for succor. He claims to have escaped his masters after surviving a Harrowing. Now he needs help in escaping slavery for good. He says that he died on a European battlefield and became a Thrall after

falling prey to unscrupulous wraiths who promised him oceanic passage back home — for borrowed oboli he was later unable to repay. He is clinging and desperate and probably not very pleasant company.

After a short time, the Thrall shudders as if fighting for control, then begins to speak in a different voice. He tells them that he was lying at first, and that he was made a Thrall after committing atrocities — crimes against the living and the dead. He says that he should be returned to his imprisonment. This voice then fades and the Thrall renews his plea for mercy.

Charon wants to see how the wraiths react. Do they send the Thrall away or try to help him? Do they return him to his imprisonment if a reward is offered? Does it influence their decision if his master is important to the Loyalists or the Insurrectionists?

• **Tests II** — If the Circle has a nemesis, Charon anonymously sends them valuable information: Their enemy has only one Fetter left in the Skinlands and he can be banished if it is destroyed! The message they receive directs them to that Fetter. The complication is that the Fetter is a living person — perhaps a relative of the enemy, or a lover, or a nurse who eased the person's last days among the living. Charon's own law, the *Dictum Mortuum*, forbids harming the Quick, so Charon probably intervenes to prevent the Fetter's actual destruction, but otherwise he watches to see what the Circle chooses to do with this information. Do the characters commit murder to rid themselves of a foe? Does learning about this living person give them new insight or sympathy for their enemy? How do their Shadows use this opportunity to play on their uncertainties and fears?

Charon might also tip off the Circle's enemy, so the Fetter may be protected. He may also want to see how that wraith reacts, or he might do so simply to assure that the Fetter is not actually killed. Does the enemy move first to defend his Fetter or to attack the wraiths who know about it? If it comes to a crisis and he pleads with them not to kill the person, how do they react?

• **Mission of Mercy** — The war makes the world seem smaller. Thousands travel far from their homes to fight and die in foreign lands. Technology and politics make interaction with other nations more common for Quick and Dead alike. Charon wants to foster good relations with these other kingdoms if possible, and is looking for ways to send that message to their leaders.

Charon introduces himself as a powerful Hierarch in exile and asks the Circle to free foreign wraiths slated for Thralldom or forging in the Dark Kingdom of Iron. In the battle between the Hierarchy and the Grim Legion, these prisoners are often seen only as raw material, but Charon sees a longer-term benefit in returning them home with his message. The rescue is sure to be dangerous, and Charon cannot help much without revealing his presence, but he promises the wraiths some other favor or reward if they complete the mission. They must break into a Grim Legion prison, free the captives, then find a way to hide them and transport them home. Charon provides them with information about where the prisoners are held, and Ferryman contacts to aid them along the way. He also gives them a thick, sealed scroll, which they are to convince the freed prisoners to take home with them.

Themes

Many of the original themes of Wraith — fear, terror, horror and gothic romance — are appropriate in this setting. This section deals with the specific themes of the Twilight Era. Certain feelings and types of stories are suggested by the setting itself and they are discussed here to help spark the imagination of Storytellers.

Change

Perhaps the most important theme in the Great War era is tension between the old and the new. Every aspect of life in the early 20th century has been affected by this contrast. New and base methods of fighting replace the chivalric ideal of earlier wars. Technology is exploding, often literally. Social revolution is everywhere.

Wraiths find the old ways threatened in the Shadowlands as well as the Skinlands. Before the 1900s, it was inconceivable that the traditional powers of the Hierarchy could be overthrown. Now, generations of oppressed wraiths may finally have the upper hand against their former ruling class.

Enfants may be more trouble to control than were ones of past generations. The throngs of new dead, while perhaps less experienced as wraiths, are dangerous by the sheer weight of their numbers.

The shock of sudden changes may lead a wraith to question other long-held beliefs as well: He may question the traditional rejection of Heretical teachings and face a crisis of faith. He may find the courage to speak out against the cruelties of Thralldom and soulforging. Others may see this time of upheaval as an opportunity to grab power and resources for themselves.

Technology

Technology is changing faster than during any preceding period. In warfare, the horse gives way to the tank, the bayonet replaces the sword and submarines sink the frigate. The telephone begins to connect the world for the first time. The airplane becomes a staple of warfare and eventu-

ally a means to travel across the ocean. Wraiths who can bring these new devices into the Underworld are sure to have a strong advantage. A relic battleship is an incredible weapon — if its Dead crew can be convinced to cooperate and run it. Fighter planes and heavy artillery may be crucial in the battle against the Maelstrom and Spectres. Can the wraiths gather weapons before the forces of Oblivion snatch them?

These powerful new relics can also disrupt the balance of power. Can the Insurrectionists get to a relic tank before the Loyalists bring it to their side? New wraiths have the edge when it comes to using the new technology. Gaunts may have seen the Quick using twentieth century weaponry, but only the Enfant has actually held a "tommy-gun" or flown a plane. Most factions work hard to recruit wraiths with these specialized skills. Many Circles may bring useful technology with them, only to find they lack the Pathos to fuel their weapons and vehicles. Do they sell these objects to the highest bidder, or donate them to a cause they believe in?

Disillusionment

The War to end All Wars was so named because it left the world hoping never to see its like again. It was the first European war where modern (i.e., dirty) fighting came to the fore. Prior to this conflict, there was a formality, at least in theory, to the way warfare was to be carried out. Armies fought in neat, straight lines. Soldiers and generals were expected to behave honorably and respect one another as gentlemen. Sneak attacks or guerrilla tactics were rarely employed, and forces that used them were looked down on.

During this war, however, things change. Bombs fall day and night. Mines and mustard gas — weapons that hide from their targets and kill indiscriminately — replace the cavalry and saber, which did their jobs without so many civilian casualties. Europe's innocence and idealism died in the trenches. Were the characters old soldiers, "unfairly" killed? They can use the afterlife as a chance to avenge themselves. Perhaps the characters were civilians who took the wrong path down a mined thoroughfare. They might try to save others from similar fates in the upheaval and strife of postwar Europe.

Some wraiths may have been soldiers who went to war expecting a heroic experience and finding instead an ugly, anonymous death. A wraith who died in a filthy trench choking on mustard gas may take up a cause in the Shadowlands to finally satisfy his romantic dreams of heroism and justice. Other former soldiers, tough and bitter after their life in the war, are resentful of the leaders who sent them to die, and unwilling to accept *any* authority in the Shadowlands.

Revolution

Social structures are being overthrown as well. All of Europe is caught in recession. The poor rise up and in several places to oust the old governments. Starvation remains a strong catalyst for change. Women, having served as police, munitions makers and farm hands while men were at war, are demanding greater rights. Prohibition rears its ugly head. In America, a new sense of power and moral superiority is growing, leading to extremes of both decadence and intolerance. How do the characters feel about the changes in the living world they once occupied? If a wraith still has loved-ones among the living, she may have strong opinions about the kind of world they should live in. Different wraiths in the same Circle may easily find themselves at odds over a rapidly changing political climate. Do new cultural extremes feed the characters' Passions, or do they long for the simpler world of the past? Are they cynical anarchists? Do they act to support such goals as suffrage and prohibition? Do social and philosophical experimentation in the Skinlands inspire them to bring new ideas to the dead?

There is a sense of wild abandon during this time. Even though alcohol is illegal in the United States, speakeasies can be found in every city. Flappers dance the night away while effete men smoke opium tipped cigarettes. Gangsters find millions peddling in vice. All of this frenetic activity comes with a sense of doom. Shadows may thrive on the Angst generated through crimes of passion and debauchery. Wraiths and Spectres may end up in the same smoky bistros. Can they find common ground in the passions brought by alcohol, marijuana, and jazz? Can the Circle avoid the sensual pleasures, or will Oblivion drag them down?

Us and Them

Another theme important to the postwar era is the clash of cultures. Most people before this time were born, grew up and died all within the same city. The war forces people out of their cozy sheltered lives. Soldiers travel from all over the world and are thrown together with strangers. People come from America, Africa and Asia to fight in Europe. Americans of all ethnicities suddenly have to deal with foreign languages and strange lands that they would never otherwise be exposed to. Being forced to deal with foreign cultures may challenge a wraith's beliefs and unsettle his nature.

Are the characters Europeans who never confront an outlander until they've crossed the Shroud? Do they try to learn something from these foreign wraiths, or instead try to cleanse their realm of non-native ideas or peoples? If the wraiths themselves are the foreigners do they try to get

home? Can they find shelter sticking with others of their kind? Do they try to fit in, even at the expense of their own beliefs or culture? How do they satisfy their Passions in an alien environment?

Among the living and the Dead, some people embrace their foreign neighbors. The forces that push to integrate societies manifest in several ways. Jazz music provides a way for blacks and whites to mingle. Black musicians find a voice that is appreciated by white culture as well as by blacks. Civil rights groups have their beginnings. Soldiers abroad learn to appreciate foreign food and culture. Other extremes surface as well. The Ku Klux Klan steps up its violent activity in the Southern United States. Public restrooms are racially segregated. India is still firmly under England's thumb. Africa remains divided up by the European powers. A Circle of mixed races or nationalities may have difficulties working together for survival. Do they harass the foreign Dead or try to protect foreign wraiths from Thralldom? Do they try to influence the politics of the Skinlands?

In the Shadowlands, some cultural problems echo and magnify. While most wraiths suffer a certain amount of confusion when they pass into the Shadowlands, some of the Restless are entering the wrong Dark Kingdom. Indian soldiers fighting England's war for them are far from Swar. The Dark Kingdom of Ivory is a world away for Africans who die in Europe. Many European wraiths see foreigners as inherently dangerous. Some wraiths feel that Indian and African wraiths should serve as slaves or in the front lines fighting the Maelstrom. Others contend that the outsiders should go to the soulforges and be made into cutlery. A wraith's Shadow can gain a great deal of Angst from the tension caused. In fact the entire culture clash can provide Angst for the Shadow and Harrowings involving xenophobia would be entirely appropriate during this time.

European wraiths in foreign Dark Kingdoms are even worse off than their counterparts. There is little hope for mercy in Swar or the Bush of Ghosts. The Ivory Queen rids herself of the upstart Europeans by sending them on the Ivory Trail. An adventure involving the Ivory Trail would be possible, albeit brutal and harsh. Wraiths in other Dark Kingdoms are not forced home, but their differences do make them stand out. Many former colonial subjects, particularly Indian wraiths, may see a European Enfant as a prime target on whom to avenge themselves for political

wrongs. Do the European wraiths flee the wrath of the foreign Dark Kingdoms, even knowing that almost certain destruction awaits in the Maelstrom? Can the Circle talk fast enough or offer anything that might allow them to take shelter in the foreign Kingdoms until the Maelstrom ends? Perhaps the use of Moliate might allow the Circle's members to pass themselves off as natives and assimilate into the new culture.

Loss

The other side of the cultural clash is loss and alienation. The War to end all Wars displaces a lot of people. Soldiers travel far to fight and die. Even native Europeans see much of the familiar landscape of their lives changed. Villages along the war front are destroyed on both sides, forcing surviving inhabitants to move. Many wraiths die far from home. The chances of ever getting through the Maelstrom back to familiar territory are slim at best. But what about the wraith who crosses oceans to find his family or town simply gone? The thought of spending the afterlife in a Necropolis where the people are so strange (if they can be considered people at all...) may send a wraith into depression, fear and ultimately Oblivion.

Some wraiths may prefer the alienation. If nobody cared about the wraith in life, she has little to go back for. A more adventurous wraith may even enjoy the chance to meet new people and learn new things. This type of person should be in the minority. Families live close together during this time. People live within a hundred miles of their birthplace and keep the same neighbors. Soldiers are separated from spouses, friends, and lovers for the first time by the war, and for the second by the Great Maelstrom. Shadows should gnaw at wraiths, constantly reminding them of what's been lost.

While all wraiths have Fetters near the place of their death, many also have Fetters back home that call to them. Whether a child, parent or lover, a person can be powerful Fetter that must be resolved for a wraith to achieve Transcendence. The familiar school, home, or small-town park holds memories for the wraith that are difficult to put aside. Without some way to reach that Fetter, the wraith eventually falls to a Harrowing. A wraith getting Memoriam may be able to all but taste the thoughts and prayers that give him Pathos, but the distance that separates the wraith from people who cared about him are all but insurmountable. Can wraiths find other ghosts from their hometown or even their mother country who are willing to risk almost certain destruction in the Maelstrom just to see a familiar face or hear a friendly voice speaking their native tongue?

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

Office of Origin and Service Instructions

War Office London

TO

Our cohort of "Bloody" Legionnaires lay in wait for days at the little military burial ground, with hopes of ambushing the local grave robbers. Our mission was to keep the graveyard's bones away from any parasites who'd use a man's remains to take control of the wraith he'd become. Instead of vampires or witches, though, something else entirely came into our midst.

I was thinking how calm the weather had been during our stay at the cemetery — just large enough for the graves of three dozen, and scant concealment from anyone who might approach — when I saw a lone figure racing our way. Spectres borne on the storm-front behind him snapped at his heels. He crossed the protective border of the graveyard just as the Maelstrom enveloped the place. Doomshades immediately swirled around us, their talons flexing in anticipation of someone foolish enough to venture beyond the site's safe confines. Usually, Haunts were the best shelter for wraiths when Oblivion's winds began to blow.

But not that day.

The refugee from the storm stood and began muttering in some tongue that I thought might be Italian. Like a highwayman of old, he wore a domino, and he carried a dark, metallic scepter like one I'd once seen in the grip of a Roman Gaunt. The stranger, who seemed angry, pointed his staff at a Brit named Jeffers and barked what sounded like a challenge. I thought, *Jeffers is our best swordsman. He'll gut this hothead with a stroke.* Instead, the stranger swung his rod through the Englishman's relic saber, which shattered as if it were kindling, and into Jeffers. He screamed, sprayed plasm and vanished, a sight that sent me diving for cover through one of the grave markers. I collided on the far side with MacTavish, who'd had the same idea. I heard several of our compatriots shriek in simultaneous agony as they followed Jeffers into Harrowings.

MacTavish and I drew our weapons. I tried to hide my fear as I said, "What the hell is he? Some damn foreign wraith?"

"'Tis no wraith," MacTavish hissed. "He's a mortal trespassing across the Shroud! Follow my lead and you might survive this!" He sprang into motion as the sounds of slaughter continued behind us. I struggled to keep up as we ran along the graveyard's perimeter. Spectres hovered only inches from us. A misstep meant the end, but obviously so did facing this deadly intruder, who had already cut down most of our fellows.

The instant we'd put the length of the burial ground — paltry as it was — between us and the stranger, MacTavish turned and began to work some art whose gestures I didn't recognize.

"Are you mad?" I cried. "He'll be on us before you can stop him!"

MacTavish ignored me, and I thought for less than a second of taking my chances in the storm. The masked attacker had covered half the distance to us when he paused, his face betraying some internal struggle. Then he turned, his mind seemingly made up, and threw himself at the waiting denizens of the Maelstrom. Their ranks closed around him, and in a blink he was gone.

I fell to my knees. "What'd you do?"

"A little Intimation is a precious thing when the Benandanti are feeling quarrelsome." MacTavish paused a moment, then added, "Tell no one of this. It'd mean the forge for me."

Slack-jawed with relief, I only nodded.

Chapter Seven: The Enemies of My Friends

The Inquisition and the Sons of Tertullian

A little over 600 years ago, the Vatican empowered a group of clergymen to uncover and pass judgment on organized heretics. While most Inquisitors became tools for political repression (notably in Spain), a few of them discovered blasphemers whose transgressions went far beyond disagreements with church dogma. They rooted out people who drank blood, not from Christ, but from unholy monsters to gain strength in the service of evil. They hounded cults that worshipped malignant spirits and trafficked with the dead. These standard-bearers of faith became known as the Society of Leopold, and even after the Inquisition at large was suppressed, the Leopolders continued their work quietly at the margins. They routinely ignored lay politics, for they fought a hidden war against the agents of Hell itself.

Although all supernaturals are more brazen in the wake of the apocalyptic War to End All Wars, wraiths are also *everywhere*. The Sons of Tertullian, members of the society who concern themselves specifically with the Restless Dead, see a tremendous increase in reports of hauntings, possessions and ghostly visions during this period. It is the Sons' unenviable duty to investigate all these occurrences.

Many such events are genuine. After all, unless martyrdom is your ambition, a war-death is likely to leave you with unfinished business. But even with all the genuine haunting

going on, there's an even higher percentage of mistaken reports. The majority of the false reports come from hysterical war-widows or others wracked by grief over the loss of a loved one. Furthermore, the mental illness called shell shock frequently involves flashbacks. Thus, when a superstitious or highly religious nurse sees a soldier in a hospital sit up and start screaming out the names of his dead comrades, her first impulse may not be to call for an alienist. Instead, she may run to fetch the nearest exorcist.

To understand Inquisition ghost-hunters of the period, it's necessary to understand the environment they work in. The terrible woes brought on by the war fuel a fascination with mediums and revitalize the Spiritualist movement. Many people are desperate to contact a relative on the Other Side. Lots of others just *don't know* whether a brother, a son or a husband may have died at the Somme or the Marne; such survivors typically prefer to know the worst and start adapting to it rather than spend another day fearing it. Of course, with thousands of people desperate enough to seek information from the realms of the dead, there's enough business to accommodate genuine mediums, as well as far greater numbers of mercenary fakes and even delusional individuals whose powers are nonexistent, despite their persuasive personal belief to the contrary.

Of course, most wraiths know that a mortal who's desperate to contact a deceased loved one is sure to be oozing with Pathos — hope, fear, dread, joy — regardless of any individual medium's abilities. The Restless likewise know that a true channel can, as she promises, convey messages from the Dead to the living, a service that every wraith needs at some time. However, few wraiths want to risk violating the *Dictum Mortuum* by hanging around anyone with *real* powers as a medium. Thus, *fake* mediums of the Twilight Era often attract more ghostly attention than do genuine ones.

However, the Sons of Tertullian perceive only a tiny percentage of this situation. All these exorcists know is that they investigate and sometimes find nothing at all, a truly heartless sham, actual events over which a medium is in charge and sometimes even wraiths who seem to be controlling things.

In general, Inquisitors' *modus operandi* at this time is fairly blunt and to the point. They arrive at the scene of a supposed haunting, identify themselves as members of the clergy and volunteer to help. Of course, if their assistance is turned away, their suspicion is likely to increase. It should also be noted that they always travel by day, and are careful to protect any place where they sleep. This protection generally consists of garlic, crosses, holy water around the doors and windows, plus a roaring fire if at all possible.

Once established, Inquisitors then try to observe the supernatural event. Some of the Sons become quite adept at spotting the common tricks of fraudulent mediums, but others are as gullible as the average person, if not *more* predisposed to believe. If trickery is detected, most Inquisitors expose the fraud — usually as dramatically as they can. Unfortunately (from the Inquisition's point of view), they have no authority over mundane chicanery — and the police often have their hands full with thieves and profiteers. On the other hand, if they witness a genuine supernatural event, the Inquisitors deal with it. What actions they take depend on the temperament of the investigator and the nature of the threat. In the case of a common haunting, an exorcism is usually performed. The Sons of Tertullian know that ghosts are often bound or attracted to certain physical objects, and that identifying and destroying these objects causes an almost certain exorcism. More substantial problems — necromancers rooting about battlefields for remnants of the dead, or factional struggles among practitioners of the black arts, for example — can warrant more personnel and more "direct" action.

The most respected Twilight Era Son of Tertullian is an Englishman named Bernard Wrigley. Reared in the Anglican church, Wrigley converts after encountering a Scottish vampire in 1889. The Inquisition saved him then, and he converted to Catholicism and eventually entered the priesthood in return. Father Wrigley is an unimpressive man to look at, but his early career in the Royal Navy left him prepared better than many for the violence of battling creatures of the night. While some more traditional Inquisitors are suspicious of "the convert," his ability is unquestioned even by his most severe detractors. After he intervenes to protect a rural French village from an especially vicious poltergeist, Father Wrigley begins to specialize in the depredations of "evil spirits."

It's also in France that Father Wrigley confronts his greatest challenge: During a grueling exorcism in 1921, he confronts the spirit of one Georges D'Artois, who swears to commit murder once a day until doomsday. D'Artois also promises to make Father Wrigley a victim on New Years Day in 1925. The apparition then departs, leaving the exorcist with a dying innocent and a mix of revulsion, dread and conviction stronger than anything he'd ever felt. Father Wrigley's pursuit of D'Artois carries the Englishman several times across the breadth of war-torn Europe and into Inquisitorial legend.

Inquisition Exorcist

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Leadership 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Stealth 2
Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 2, Mob 2 (Parishioners)
Willpower: 7 **Numina:** True Faith 2

Son of Tertullian

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2
Abilities: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Animal Ken 1, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Etiquette 1, Herbalism 2, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2
Backgrounds: Resources 3, Retainer 2
Willpower: 8 **Numina:** True Faith 3

Note: Inquisitors tend to be more physically active than a normal clergyman (including their fellows among the Sons of Tertullian), and their bodies usually reflect the effects of such exercise. Apart from this slight health advantage, however, these two classes of exorcist are largely the same. Many of the Sons do become used to dealing with (and detecting) invisible "presences," thus their narrow edge in True Faith. The exorcism ritual varies somewhat among these ghost-hunters, with Sons of Tertullian exceeding even the average Leopolder in their bloodthirsty determination to rid the possessed of malign encroachment.

The Benandanti

In nations along the Adriatic Sea, the rare child born with a film of flesh covering his face sometimes gets recruited to a secret sodality called the Benandanti. Membership begins literally at birth, for an adult Benandante must remove this second skin, known as a caul, and instruct the child in using it if the youth is ever to perceive and enter the world of the Dead. At the outbreak of the War to End All Wars, Benandanti have been venturing into the Underworld for more than 600 years; by its finish, surviving members of the sect have witnessed Skinlands horrors rivaling anything they've ever seen across the Shroud. What they don't realize is that the horrors across the Shroud are all enjoying a fresh start.

Most Benandanti (who are also called "the Unhooded") dwell in Italy. Never very numerous, their numbers are thinned further by the war and its aftermath. Italy and Germany are especially unstable, violent nations at this time. Poverty in Germany is nearly universal, and the Fascist movement is beginning to fester in beer halls — and on piazzas. Italy, too, is divided between its wealthy landowners and its impoverished workers, and their clashes often end in bloodshed.

This desperation and mayhem infects the Benandanti as well. Partisan violence in Italy provides a good cover for settling scores between antagonistic factions of the Unhooded. The two largest such factions are the *Damnati*, or Damnationists, and the *Redentori*, or Redeemers. While both groups share the ability to see and hear restless spirits (and even to enter the Deadlands between sunset and sunrise), their attitudes toward wraiths are markedly different. The Damnationists believe that ghosts are unnatural — a corruption of the natural order, fit only to be exterminated like lice. The Redeemers believe that a ghost is simply a confused soul that requires aid and guidance before it can rest peacefully.

In general, the *Damnati* tend to associate themselves with the fledgling Fascist movement (the Blackshirts), whereas the *Redentori* are more likely to be Socialists or Communists. There are many exceptions of course, leaving a number of Benandanti torn between their political beliefs and their mystical ones. Some *Damnati*, ones who give precedence to the politics of the living, find themselves fighting alongside the *Redentori* against the Blackshirts. Similarly, a Fascist Redeemer sometimes turns on a fellow Fascist for Damnationist beliefs, with the rationale that resolving the conflict between living and dead is of more long-term importance.

As for the small *Risorgeritori* faction, its members are staying clear of politics. They've got bigger fish to fry....

The Risorgeritori

The *Risorgeritori* — or Resurrectionists — use their skills to give dead souls a second chance — by placing them in living bodies. Although a tiny number of Resurrectionists experiment with ejecting a living soul from its body so that a dead one can be inserted, these mad few are abhorred even by their radical brethren. Instead, the *Risorgeritori* "party line" is to house souls in bodies from which volition and awareness have already fled. In the years preceding the war, they concentrate on the mentally retarded, the insane or the catatonic.

The postwar era presents an entirely new world for them. In earlier times, the *Risorgeritori*'s biggest disadvantage is always its size. As the smallest major faction among the Benandanti, the Resurrectionists are ill-equipped to refuse requests (or demands) from the other Unhooded. Between the pull of the *Redentori* (who regard Resurrectionists as zealots and possibly dangerous) and the pushy *Damnati* (who simply despise the radical wing) the *Risorgeritori* usually scuttle around on the margins, surviving day to day and dabbling in putting ghosts into "useless" bodies now and again. They never have much sustained luck, however, as empty shells aren't easy to come by... until the war, that is. The application of industrial technology to warfare ushers in a new era of incapacitating head wounds and debilitating psychological damage. At last, the *Risorgeritori* have a plenitude of vessels for their work, and individual *Risorgeritori* thrive in several provincial hospitals.

Then along comes Achille Diamagetti, M.D., who has just returned from the United States, loaded with American cash and big plans for the *Risorgeritori*. Single-handedly, he unites the Resurrectionist Benandanti into the *Ordo Risorgeritori* — a unified band with proper leadership (him), finances (his) and a plan of attack (penned by him as well).

Diamagetti's father knew when there was money to be made off the Other Side. He demanded high prices for his efforts as a medium and an exorcist (he understood that the sometimes ugly consequences of the first often necessitated the second, but he figured that was the reason Benandanti wield their potent fennel swords), and he used the money to educate his only son, Achille, who became a medical doctor specializing in head wounds and comatose states.

Dr. Diamagetti, trained in the Benandanti tradition by his father, shares the older man's values and easily outstrips him in ambition. Thus, he comes back to Europe and travels from hospital to hospital in search of *Risorgeritori* allies and fresh "vegetables." He purchases a sprawling French manse near Château-Thierry that had eluded shelling, and he rapidly develops a reputation for restoring the shell-shocked and awakening the "hopelessly" comatose or catatonic.

When Dr. Diamagetti receives a new patient at his "hospital," he talks with the family in what seems a sincere tone. He

tells them he probably won't be able to do much, and that even if he can bring Yves (or Jacques or Pierre) around, there's likely to be some brain damage. He points out that personality changes are common, and extreme amnesia is almost universal in these cases. "Your boy may remember nothing of his previous life; he may act very differently from the son you remember."

Most loving relatives don't care, of course, and readily accede to his terms. Thus, once a strange soul possesses the body, all but the most radical changes of personality can be accepted (or at least explained).

Almost everyone on the staff at Diamagetti's facility is a member of the *Ordo Risorgeritori*. Like their leader, many of them have prior experience as orderlies or male nurses in order to be close to "shells." Few others are full medical doctors, however. They're a diverse bunch, and their attitudes range along a continuum. At one extreme is an altruistic, self-sacrificing minority that wants to do what's best for the ghosts. At the other is an equally small number of (for lack of a better phrase) "mad scientists" who are motivated primarily by morbid curiosity or a desire to prepare for their own afterlives. Most of the Resurrectionists are somewhere in the middle, of course.

As for Dr. Diamagetti, he's a complicated man. Like his father, he's no stranger to self-interest. He feels, though, that every wraith he puts into a shell is being spared a nightmarish afterlife. He also consoles himself with the belief that the families of these inhabited shells can at least have the satisfaction of seeing their relatives up and walking again.

Most importantly, Diamagetti is no fool about the realities of existence across the Shroud. He has several wraithly allies who help him to avoid incarnating a Spectre, or someone whose Shadow is out of control. Nonetheless, mistakes occur, and it's one such error that attracts the attention of the *Dannati*.

The Damnati

There are a few *Dannati* who believe that the end of the world is at hand as the War to End All Wars winds down and that the terrifying numbers of Restless Dead are its harbingers. The rest don't believe that Armageddon is imminent.

Most of them do admit that it *feels* as if it is, however.

To Damnationists' eyes, there are simply too many wraiths and not enough time to destroy them all. Incidents of possession are increasing, the Shroud is tissue-thin for miles along the former Western Front, and the interest in Spiritualism is only making it easier for the damned to toy with the living.

In addition to all the Shadowlands activity, the Twilight Era is just not a great time to be living in Europe. Even those *Dannati* who would prefer to stay clear of mortal conflicts (and concentrate on postmortem ones) find it hard to ignore the sweeping changes taking place as Mussolini and his Blackshirts transform Italy into a Fascist state.

Most *Dannati* prefer to draw the fennel sword — the weapon each Benandante fashions for himself in the Shadowlands and yokes to a physical counterpart in the Skinlands — against any wraith or Spectre and let the devil take the hindmost. A few of the very craftiest Damnationists notice that the wraiths are fighting with one another when they aren't trying to interfere with the living. These Benandanti are often willing to ally themselves with one wraithly faction or another — at least for a short time. They almost universally pick the underdogs, because their true goal is to prolong and deepen the conflict. After all, wraiths are many and the Damnationists are few. If one *Dannato* can convince 60 wraiths to eradicate one another, it saves him the trouble of doing so personally.

Late in 1920, several *Dannati* discover something disturbing enough to bring them into common cause: the *Ordo Risorgeritori* and Achille Diamagetti's hospital. It starts with a Benandanti named Michelangelo Agnelli pursuing a group of noisy spirits who seem to be actually *taunting* him. Their feints and retreats eventually lure him to an abandoned bunker where a madman named Georges D'Artois stores the mutilated bodies of his victims. The carnage there sickens Agnelli, but no more than the realization that D'Artois is a ghost (a Spectre, to be precise, but it's a distinction wasted on most *Dannati*) controlling a human body.

Agnelli's encounter with D'Artois leads him to Diamagetti's facility. For most of 1921, Agnelli and five other *Dannati* concentrate all their energies on destroying the hospital, but by that time, Diamagetti is too well established. His numerous wealthy patrons (and a number of grateful skinriders) provide the Resurrectionist with ample protection, but Diamagetti's masterstroke is to reveal his enemies to the Inquisition. Thus, the *Dannati* find themselves branded as heretics, even as their betrayer hides behind his medical reputation. As 1921 wanes, the Damnationists consider two otherwise unthinkable solutions to their dilemma: to unveil Benandanti secrets to the Inquisitors pursuing them (foolhardy), or to find wraithly allies opposed to the *Ordo* and its goals (revolting). Agnelli and company know that either course may have dire consequences for all Benandanti, but their sole alternative looks increasingly to be slow death in some Inquisition dungeon while Diamagetti goes free.

The Redentori

The majority of the *Redentori* focus on dealing with wraiths who cross the Shroud and interfere with the living — often because those wraiths are the easiest to find and have the most direct wishes. Just as a few Damnationists involve themselves in the wraiths' Great War, so do a few of the most knowledgeable and experienced Redeemers. Unlike the *Dannati*, the *Redentori* generally make reliable allies because they want Restless strife to end so that the wraiths involved can move on to the next stage of afterlife. While several of these Redeemers associate themselves with the Spooks of London, a few act as generic peacemakers — doing their best to break up fights between wraith factions and threatening to destroy any ghost who transgresses a cease fire.

In the Skinlands, many *Redentori* join the burgeoning ranks of mediums and try to link the war-bereaved with the ghosts of loved ones. Naturally, such Redeemers come into conflict with *Dannati*, who consider most nonviolent interaction between the living and the dead to be foolish or evil.

Itinerant Benandante

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 2, Crafts 2 (Blacksmithing), Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics 1, Medicine 3, Meditation 4, Melee 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Backgrounds: Mentor 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 7 **Numina:** Ephemera 2

Equipment: Fennel sword, caul, revolver

Note: A Benandante's two chief weapons are his caul, usually integrated into the eyeholes of a domino or cowl for convenience, and his fennel sword, an item perhaps best visualized as a wand or staff. The caul allows its user to perceive the Underworld and wraiths anytime, or to astrally visit the

Sergei Krilov

Although he maintains a low profile among Benandanti of the era, Sergei Krilov earns several *noms de guerre* among the Restless, including "the Destroyer." In one encounter, he manages to send an entire Stygian brigade into Harrowings single-handedly. Wraiths fear him, while his fellows swap tales of his deeds and even claim a few of those deeds as their own. A fearless, remorseless, seemingly effortless exterminator of wraiths, Krilov is an anonymous legend on both sides of the Shroud.

As he begins his war against the dead, Krilov never wavers, nor does he pursue any alliances with wraiths. Thus, he becomes a nameless fixture in Damnationist tradition, his very anonymity further fueling rumor. What Krilov himself fails to notice is that Restless who attempt to follow him and uncover his identity meet with unfortunate, Nihil-related mishaps.

Krilov, fighting on the Italian side, survives the War to End All Wars; his mother and his uncle, Sergei's Benandante mentor, do not. He begins to wander Europe in his efforts to slay more ghosts — real ones, as usual, and the ones that dwell only in his mind. He slips into Bolshevik Russia to seek his long-vanished father, Konstantin, and later turns up in England, where he sends tremors through the ranks of Loyalist and Insurrectionist wraiths alike. Across the Shroud, he's most commonly called "the striding doom of the Dead."

Deadlands between sundown and sunrise. Fennel swords, though sometimes honed to sharpness, are brittle and ill-suited to Skinlands combat, but their touch always does Strength + 3 aggravated damage to Spectres and Strength + 1 aggravated damage to wraiths or their wares. In the Shadowlands, however, these weapons are as durable as soulsteel. Also, touching a skinridden mortal with a fennel sword can be a quick method of exorcism. Handle the result as a resisted roll pitting the Benandante's Willpower against that of his ghostly target; a wraith so exorcised cannot attempt Puppetry on that mortal again for the remainder of the chapter/ session. Finally, unless a Benandante dies and manifests as wraith, he has no Pathos, no true corpus and no command over the Language of the Dead. In other words, wraiths and Benandanti must have a tongue in common before they can converse, and astral-form Benandanti cannot be moliated, wraithridden or soulforged.

The Giovanni

The old earth of the battlefields is thirsty for the wine of our blood.
— Padraic Pearse

Like a two-headed worm, the Giovanni family fattens itself in the worlds of high finance and dark magic. By day, the mortals of the clan amass fortunes behind the scenes; by night, those Giovanni who defy time's grasp, who choose only their own kin to join them in vampiric unlife, chase riches of another sort. They use necromancy to make slaves of the Restless Dead. The War to End All Wars, in part the ugly result of an absurdly expensive European arms race, proves to be a unique opportunity for the family to tie its pursuits together.

The Giovanni are as astonished as anyone by the numbers of soldiers who perish in the "disassembly line" of modern warfare — thanks to weapons whose manufacture had already swelled the family's coffers. Giovanni necromancers move quickly to turn the carnage into further advantage: The inconclusive battles in northern Italy, for example, force a multitude of souls across the Shroud, and the Venetian vampires' traps are waiting.

One particularly bold and busy necromancer at this time is Paolo Sardenzo. Whereas most of the Giovanni prefer to wait a suitable time after a battle's end before venturing forth to harvest souls, Sardenzo likes to be in the thick of things. Using unholy magics, he often inters himself in the battleground itself, ready to rise at sunset and harvest souls.

His cousins whisper that Sardenzo has developed a method to feed off the blood that seeps into battlefield earth — thus consuming sustenance from dying mortals even in his sleep. He denies it, but some feel he does so in a manner calculated to seem insincere. In any event, Sardenzo pays a price for his daring: During one engagement, a shell exploding nearby briefly exposes him to the sunlight, and the scars on his face never completely heal.

Sardenzo's mixture of bravado and bloodthirsty eagerness propel him into the thick of the war: In August of 1917, he watches the regimented slaughter of the Caporetto campaign along the River Isonzo. He likes what he sees, and he believes that such warfare is the key to harvesting the "ten thousand ten thousand" souls the clan needs to rip down the Shroud. His enthusiasm (not to mention skill and raw power) draws many of the most talented Giovanni necromancers into his sphere.

Sardenzo encounters a problem, however, and one of most unexpected origins: a Giovanni wraith. Valentina della Passaglia had been an adequate servant of her family in life, but her experiences in the Shadowlands convince her that rending the Shroud is the most foolish thing the Giovanni could possibly do. Della Passaglia had died like a good ghoul, protecting her mistress from the sun as the aged vampire waited to go soul-fishing at a battlefield. During the day, while her mistress slumbered, a reconnaissance plane suffered engine failure and crashed into the vampire's temporary haven. Della Passaglia, the lone ghoul to survive the accident, tried to put out the flames, but she and her patroness perished. Soon afterward, della Passaglia, as a wraith, fell into a Harrowing.

She emerges from it with an overwhelming conviction that if the Giovanni tear down the Shroud, their control over the Dead is sure to vanish. With the distinction between the Quick and the Dead nearly erased, the clan's power, della Passaglia believes, would be as impotent against wraiths as it mostly is against the living. Wraiths, on the other hand, would find their Arcanoi fully empowered against the living.

Putting wraiths in charge is not an option for the Giovanni, who've been using the Restless as slaves, toys and catspaws for nearly a millennium.

Sardenzo dismisses della Passaglia's fears as mere delusion — possibly generated by her own tricky Shadow, or even planted by some elder wraith who fears his fate once the Giovanni unite the Skinlands and Shadowlands into one kingdom. Ironically, the dead ghoul's arguments convince many wraithly Giovanni to join Paolo's camp. If tearing down the Shroud is going to empower either the Dead or the Giovanni family, then the best option is a dead Giovanni, yes?

The main body of the family would like to dismiss della Passaglia's fears also, but there's no way to be certain until the Shroud is down. The eldest vampires lean toward a conservative course: Do more research on the Dead, they urge, don't rush anything, there'll be plenty of time to conquer the world later. At this point, they still allow Paolo free rein, but his schedule for rending the Shroud within three decades receives a tepid reception from them.

Of course, not every Giovanni is absorbed by the theory and practice of necromancy. Many members of the family concern themselves more with the widespread social and political strife ripping through the Italian countryside. Specifically, they worry about its effects on their fiscal dealings. Two years after the Russian Revolution topples the czar, Giovanni financiers are rightly worried about the same thing happening in Italy (as are most mortal capitalists and landowners). Speculating

about 100,000,000 dead souls transforming the world, in 30 years or 300, is all very well, but it doesn't make a damn bit of difference if Communists seize power and nationalize the family's businesses *tomorrow*.

While the War to End All Wars still rages, Sardenzo's grand plan proceeds apace. Things become slightly more complicated for the Giovanni once the Fourth Great Maelstrom commences: Experienced wraiths face problems more pressing than acquisitive necromancers, but the vampires' ability to peer through the Shroud is as impeded by the storm as wraithly activities are.

Organized wraithly resistance against the Giovanni begins not long after hostilities end among the Quick. A dead corporal named Gaston Belladotti, who narrowly escapes getting jugged by Sardenzo in 1915, soon makes a name for himself within the Grim Legion. He earns promotion to Centurion, at which point he begins his crusade against the vampire clan's ongoing pillage. Belladotti reasons that a Giovanni may be more than a match for any single wraith, but Giovanni are few, and (especially postwar) wraiths are many. Granted, a wise necromancer always surrounds herself with her present slaves before hunting for new ones, and she's sure to respond with her powers to command (or destroy) any attackers. But Belladotti figures that 20 or 30 ghosts, all distracting a target (and her retinue) simultaneously, can allow one to use Death's Touch and ignite the vampire's clothing.

Belladotti's early offensives against the Giovanni work only through a combination of overwhelming numbers, surprise and naiveté on the part of his soldiers, most of whom don't know how dangerous any necromancer is, much less an undead one. His first few ambushes are tremendous successes, as the vampires are used to encountering wraiths in groups no larger than five or six. As the years pass, however, these conflicts change. The once- massive battles of the war are no more. In the Giovanni's native Italy, for example, the stakes are smaller and split among a number of localized clashes between Fascists and Communists. The necromancers grow more cautious, but the potential gains are still too great to be resisted. Some of the more brazen Giovanni — including Paolo Sardenzo, typically accompanied by dozens of enslaved Restless — begin to hunt for winnowers and any other wraiths who are abroad during lulls in the Maelstrom. Belladotti's response is to request more personnel for his "Bloody Legion." Many Grim Legionnaires, tired of the Giovanni's bullying, are all for Belladotti and his crusade. His supporters routinely urge that the Centurion be promoted to Marshal and allowed to directly recruit any Enfants he recovers.

By 1921, the Bloody Legion becomes a major obstacle to the Giovanni family. Sardenzo sees that his dream of a Shroudless world is being pushed into the indefinite future by the clan's elders and fought off by ghosts traitorous to their own or too stupid to recognize their betters. He organizes a half-dozen upstart Giovanni to crush wraith resistance, silence the still-talkative Valentina della Passaglia and, given the magnitude of his success, perhaps even make a grab for control

of the clan. With hundreds of Restless slaves, the vampires embark on their campaign. Right away, they enjoy what they believe is a triumph as della Passaglia vanishes into an apparent Destruction Harrowing. What Sardenzo and friends don't know is that she survives, but as a captive of the Loyalist side. Their mistake may prove costly — but only if their Restless kinswoman can convince her captors to side with Insurrectionists against the wraiths' mutual foe.

Giovanni Necromancer

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Abilities: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 2, Etiquette 2, Finance 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Science 1, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3
Backgrounds: Allies (Variable)
Arcanoi: Behest 3 (Right Hand), Outrage 3
Willpower: 6 **Pathos:** 10

Note: Giovanni vampires receive a Strength rating of 6 to indicate their superhuman physical capacity. Shroudsight allows them to see through the barrier between the realms of the Quick and the Dead (roll the Giovanni's Perception + Alertness, difficulty 7; the effect lasts for one scene). A necromancer can use wraiths' fingerbones to find Fetters. Treat such remains as links, per the Behest Arcanos (see p. 166), and replace smoke manifestations with psychic impressions. Note that while vampires use their "Outrage" power to strike at an individual or object across the Shroud, they can simultaneously be struck by wraiths. A Giovanni must spend one Willpower point to converse with the Restless, as the undead do not speak the Language of the Dead (roll the vampire's Perception + Occult, difficulty 6; success also grants Shroudsight, and the effect lasts for one scene). Finally, in mass-confrontations between wraiths and necromancers who possess Restless slaves, roll one die and multiply the result by four to determine how many "allies" a vampire has across the Shroud.

Spectres

The terrible winds of the Fourth Great Maelstrom bespeak massive, rapid changes in structure deep inside the Labyrinth. The convulsions that power the cataclysm last for more than a decade and involve expanses of tunnel so vast as to defy measurement. Because the structure of the Labyrinth and the state of the Hive-Mind are intimately connected, the impact of this change on the psychology of Spectres is enormous.

Massive shifts in the content of the Hive-Mind and structure of the Labyrinth overwhelm the Being of nearly all Onceborn Malfeans and send them into Slumber. The vast majority of lesser Labyrinth-dwellers are thrust into the Shadowlands and the Tempest on the wings of these massive fluctuations.

The effects of these drastic changes on character of all things Spectral cannot be overestimated. The Onceborn Malfeans are temporarily banished from the scene, and their endless pavane of followers now scatters to every corner of the Underworld. The Maelstrom winds also allow Mutilés and Spectres without Fetters to roam the Shadowlands freely, except during those rare periods when the storm abates completely.

All across the Shadowlands, areas outside the radius of Necropolitan patrols are infested with spirits of evil, making travel dangerous even when the storm is calm. The Generals of Oblivion, talented officers chosen by the Neverborn to be the Malfeans' war-hammers, are on the march in numbers unseen since the Third Great Maelstrom — when Coldheart sacked Stygia itself. All across the Empire, they raise their monstrous armies and march forth to wage war on the forces of Stygia. Oblivion's soldiers lay siege to Necropolis after Necropolis, even as the Restless fight among themselves.

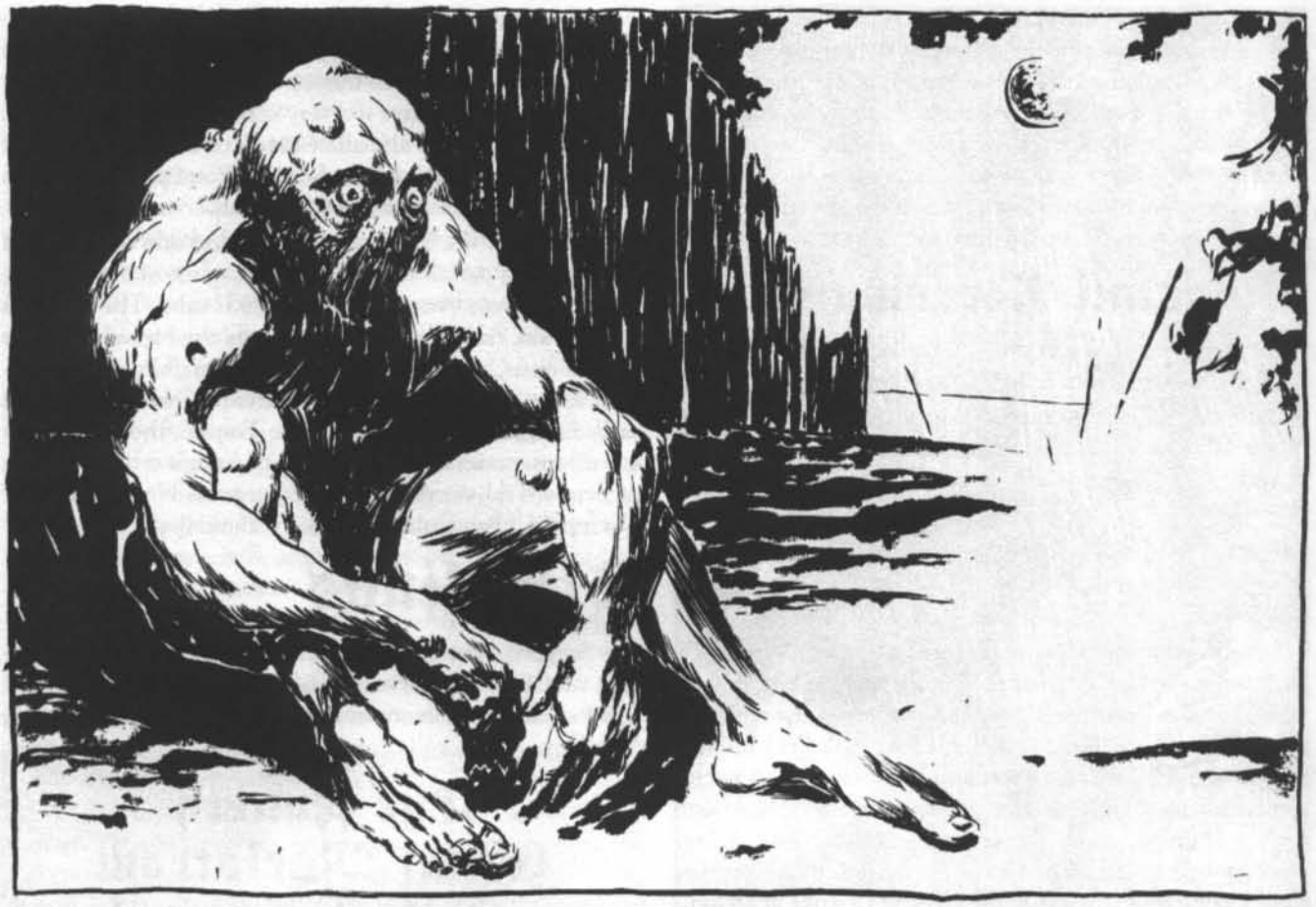
Striplings

Striplings, also called the Neverlived, are the ghosts of children who died and later succumbed to their Shadows. This fate is unfortunately common among the ghosts of the young during

The Fourth Great Maelstrom and the Labyrinth

During the fourth Great Maelstrom, the interior of the Labyrinth is in a state of immense flux. Passages narrow to the width of pins or suddenly expand into cathedrals of endless blackness. Storm winds of incalculable force blow along passageways without warning, and time and distance fluctuate wildly. While some places still harbor stable Amphiskiopoli, most areas are deserted. The deserted regions, called dead zones, are stripped to the bare black material of the Labyrinth or cluttered with storm-blasted detritus from the farthest reaches of the Tempest, debris dropped whenever the Maelstrom winds abate.

The Veinous Stair is particularly affected by the Fourth Great Maelstrom — for the majority of the War of the Dead, it is utterly impassable. A near-solid column of Oblivion-laden air geysers up out of sight from it. In the city of the Iron Gates, Spectres, Shadowed Plasmics and debris for the vast majority of the war rain down. Not only do the daily cascades of charged soulfire crystals and Shades make living in Stygia eventful, they also close off Stygia's sure sources of energy and those materials used in the forging of Stygian steel. For the duration of the war, munitions are desperately short, and commando raids to seize stockpiles of soulfire crystals and other raw materials are common.



the Industrial Revolution, when swarms of Striplings make the manufacturing districts of many Necropoli so dangerous that even Stygian military forces avoid such places. Even so, however, the privations of the war create many new Striplings from children who die from combinations of exposure, malnutrition and neglect. During the Fourth Great Maelstrom, these new Neverlived, together with the veterans of the Industrial Revolution, once again make children's laughter something that inspires fear in even the most courageous of the Restless Dead.

Stripling Brave

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Melee 3, Occult 2, Performance 3, Stealth 4, Urbanism 2

Arcanoi: Embody 4, Keening 1

Dark Arcanoi: Hive-mind 2, Leechcraft 3, Shroud-Rending 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact 1, Shadowlands 3

Fetters: 10 points' worth, including one 5-point Fetter to his neighborhood or factory

Being: Hate 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Angst: 8

Quote: *A child's laughter*

Image: Striplings appear as small children, most often between six and 13, usually grimy, with the black glimmer of Oblivion in their eyes. Most carry spears or knives, handmade from refuse but of surprisingly cunning workmanship. Many adorn themselves or their weapons with fetishes. Symbols of power, such as relic belt-buckles, policemen's badges and whistles, spent cartridge cases and stuffed animals are most commonly used for these decorations.

Possessions: Tattered clothing, spear made from relic pipe and a long shard of Stygian steel.

Roleplaying Tips: You are a brave, a protector of your tribe, the Red Dogs. You also travel to the Skinlands, to recruit others into your tribe who will make good Red Dogs. The Red Dogs are your universe. Through your homage to the master Ñ the Malfean Umbuch-Awamb, Crimson Vulpine Master and the first Red Dog — your Tribe serves Oblivion. You are always at the front of the battle when you attack.

Storyteller Notes: Savages with an affinity for mindless beasts such as *kuei* and Shadow-eaten barghests, Striplings are far more dangerous than their appearance might indicate. Masters of trap and ambush, most Stripling packs are intimately familiar with every nook, cranny and twist of the Necropolis they plague. Prior to an attack

on a Necropolis, many Generals of Oblivion contact the local Striplings and attempt to recruit them as scouts and assassins.

Mutilés

The Great War marks the largest influx of Mutilés — as Mortwights are commonly called in Twilight Era Europe — in Stygian history. The flow of Spectres from the War to End All Wars soon becomes a mighty torrent that floods the Underworld. In the absence of a firm hand on the rudder of Stygian authority, sheer weight of numbers allows some Mutilés to become accepted parts of the society of the Restless. Without the psychological conditioning of the Hive-Mind, many of these Spectres find Redemption. Such turncoat behavior, in part, helps establish the strongly negative reputation of Mortwights among the Shadow-eaten.

Most Mutilés, however, have little desire to seek Transcendence. From the hosts of the most brutally killed war dead come the armies that the Generals of Oblivion employ, Spectres full of hate for the world that literally engineered their murder, and eager to pull all existence down into the Void. In their tattered uniforms and gas masks, these brave soldiers have recaptured the heroic *elán* with which they marched to their deaths. Now, they fight as martyrs for the cause that can never betray their faith. For each of them who falls in battle, there lies a forgetfulness that no amount of agony can ever penetrate — the only reward that Oblivion's foot soldiers seek or desire.

Mutilé Soldier

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Crafts 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Melee 3, Politics 1, Science 1, Stealth 2, Urbanism 1

Dark Arcanoi: Tempest Weaving 4, Tempestos 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Artifact 1, Relics 4

Fetters: 10 points, including one 5-point Fetter to the battlefield he died on

Being: Pain 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Angst: 10

Quote: *A malignant glare from behind a gas mask*

Possessions: Rifle with bayonet and zero to 10 bullets, soulsteel breastplate.

Image: A faceless, silent figure in a gas mask, British-style helmet, heavy, phosgene-resistant uniform and puttees. A line of bullet holes runs neatly across his chest, and there are dark, glistening streaks beneath the entrance and exit wounds. The uniform is an inseparable part of its self-image, with the soulsteel back-and-breast strapped on over the uniform. The rifle, used primarily as a spear and club, is spotlessly clean, and never more than a few inches from the Mutilé's chalky white hands.

Roleplaying Tips: An idealist in life, you were a heroic young man who volunteered to take part in the grand and glorious patriotic adventure of war. During three years in the trenches, you saw the lives of thousands squandered in senseless butchery by inept generals. Finally, you too died at the Somme, shot down by a German machine gun as you moved forward under fire. Now, you are an idealist in death, and you serve Oblivion with your heart and soul. They will all pay for what they did to you and your mates. You do not speak, and you answer only to "Tommy," the traditional name for British soldiers. Silent and economical, you are incredibly savage in combat; your every blow is an act of vengeance against those who took advantage of your generation's idealism.

Notes: A typical Great War-era Mutilé. With a change of helmet and uniform, he could march in the army of any of the Generals of Oblivion.

Doppelgangers

During the Twilight Era, thousands of Doppelgangers are active. With the War of the Dead and the vastly increased number of Spectres roaming the Shadowlands and the Tempest, counterespionage efforts go on the back burner. As a result, the *Magisterium Veritatis* and other Stygian security agencies spend the '20s ferreting out the thousands of Doppelgangers who work their way into the ranks of the Restless.

The methods of Doppelgangers during the Great War remain the same as ever: burrowing inward at every level of society as individuals or small rings, while attempting to damage Stygian society in any way possible. Ones with grand vision and an appetite for danger attempt to rise in the ranks of the imperial bureaucracy. Others work at much lower levels; as corrupt Legionnaires, venal and ineffectual Pardoners, and a variety of other minor but ubiquitous positions. Many are nothing more than regular Necropolitan citizens who happen to act as eyes and ears for the Generals of Oblivion. These Doppelgangers are perhaps the most dangerous, as their lack of ambition makes them the type most likely to survive until they are needed.

Doppelganger Infiltrator

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 3, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Etiquette 1, Investigation 2, Law 2, Melee 1, Performance 1, Politics 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3

Arcanoi: Intimation 2, Lifeweb 1, Moliate 2

Dark Arcanoi: Hive-mind 1

Backgrounds: Artifact 2, Doppelganger Contacts 2, Hierarchy Status 2, Shadowlands 4

Dark Passions: 10 points, including one 5-Point (Greed)

Fetters: 10 points

Being: Greed 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Angst: 7

Quote: *"I don't care if they're at the gates, I can't release additional ammunition to your company until you've filled out the proper requisition forms."*

Possessions: Clipboard, pen, Pardoner's Guard

Image: Just another officious bureaucrat.

Roleplaying Tips: You're just another cog in the guts of the Stygian machine — except you aren't. For now, you're just a functionary. But when your time comes, you'll be ready.

Notes: A dangerously competent agent of a kind that can do real damage to the Hierarchy. Apart from the normal dangers of going up against a Hierarchy official and an agent of a Doppelganger spy ring, suspicious characters are likely to find themselves targets of Quash and Lifeweb.

Apparitions and Nephwracks

Apparitions and Nephwracks play an important role during the Great War period, serving primarily as officers in the armies of the Generals of Oblivion. When the first signs of Oblivion's touch come upon a Mortwight, they are considered seasoned — firmly rooted in their Being and unlikely to become a Nothing or cast themselves into Oblivion. Those Apparitions and Nephwracks who demonstrate leadership ability (or bravery, or brutality, or whatever sort of attitude the General they serve favors) are eligible for promotion. Apparitions normally hold staff, noncommissioned or low-level commissioned rank, whereas Nephwracks serve in command positions.

Obviously, not every Apparition and Nephwrack is an officer. There are countless refugees cast out of the Labyrinth, cut off from the Hive-Mind of their Onceborn masters and unable to return. For these refugees, stripped of commune with the center of their spiritual world, exile to the Shadowlands is a cold one indeed. Many of these exiles destroy themselves, even as others form apocalyptic cults. Some, feeling their exile to be a sign of their spiritually unclean state, quest endlessly for ways to return to the Labyrinth or be purified in the eyes of their Onceborn Lord.

Apparition Commander

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Coldheart: Champion of Oblivion

The Nephwrack general, Coldheart, is one of the most implacable foes of the Stygian empire. Some say that Coldheart created the Tempest during the Third Great Maelstrom by whispering a secret to the Sunless Sea. No one knows what blasphemy he may have uttered, but since that day, the Tempest has never ceased to churn. Around that same time, forces under his command, including three Hekatonkhire, sacked Stygia.

Nine days after the Battle of the Somme ignites the Fourth Great Maelstrom, Coldheart comes forth from the Labyrinth with an army at his heels. His forces cut the major Byways to the Necropoli of the North American east coast. Three days later, Coldheart's blocking forces withdraw from their positions back into the Tempest. He leaves behind the smoking ruins of the Boston Necropolis — the city sacked, its inhabitants carried off, fled or cowering in their Fetters. Stygian military experts believe this action to have been a mere field-test of his forces against a limited target. The empire's armies prepare for the upcoming campaign against the marauder, but for the next year, Coldheart vanishes, presumably to train his forces in some remote staging area.

In May of 1917, on the heels of the Menshevik coup, Coldheart once again makes his presence known. Over the course of three days, he mounts a series of assaults against Russian Necropoli, his goal clearly to tie down Necropolitan militias. The sorties prove successful — most Necropoli recall all soldiers on detached duty and go to full alert. The Rhyazan Necropolis is besieged, and for three months, only the most skilled and daring Harbinger messengers travel in or out.

While regional forces are distracted, Coldheart focuses his attention on the Shadowlands Western Front. While Stygian strategists struggle to free up sufficient military resources to combat his offensive, Coldheart ravages the war zone to reap Restless and Shadow-eaten alike. He inducts the Shadow-eaten into his army immediately, and the Restless are either forged or converted to the Shadow-eaten cause.

Command of the expeditionary force is given to Sir Garnet Wolseley, hero of the British Empire, freshly arrived in the Shadowlands as a subject of the Ashen Lady. Wolseley was perhaps the greatest general of his generation. His military genius aside, Wolseley spent his time among the Quick fighting wars of empire on a shoestring budget, and was thus considered perfectly suited to the task of pursuing a war with Coldheart in Russia, especially given the Smiling Lord's notable reluctance to give up any of his first-rate commanders.

For the rest of the Twilight Era, operating out of his base at the Constantinople Necropolis, Wolseley plays a long game of cat-and-mouse with Coldheart as their forces clash over battlefields and major Necropoli. The Restless general inflicts a surprising defeat on the legendary Spectre in a struggle for the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 3, Drive 1, Empathy 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 2, Intimidation 1, Investigation 1, Leadership 4, Linguistics 2, Melee 3, Politics 1, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 1

Arcanoi: Argos 1

Dark Arcanoi: Hive-mind 4, Maleficence 1

Backgrounds: Artifacts 3, Relics 1, Shadowlands 2, Spectral Status 3

Dark Passions: 10 points, including one 5-point (Duty)

Fetters: 6 points

Being: Duty 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Angst: 9

Quote: *"Sir, we've taken 90 percent casualties in the first three battalions to hit the gate, and the Spectre shock force has been completely wiped out. It looks as if everything is going according to plan!"*

Possessions: Stygian steel saber, soulsteel breastplate, riding crop, scar from Heidelberg.

Image: A young officer in a pristine field uniform, usually with one hand behind his back and the other gesturing imperiously to his men. His saber hangs ready at his side, and his soulsteel breastplate is polished to a near-mirror shine.

Roleplaying Tips: A genuine hero, you radiate the glowing confidence and effervescent disregard for your own safety typical of lower echelon officers in the early years of the war. It is no more an act now than it was then. You are so blasé about your commitment to Oblivion that people unfamiliar with you often wonder if you have any idea what you're doing. You do know, of course, but you were always taught to keep a stiff upper lip, carry on as best you could and never let the troops know anything is wrong — and that's precisely what you're doing now.

Notes: A morally indistinct figure, the Apparition officer mixes a perfect devotion to duty with a similar perfect devotion to the military ideals he spent his living days upholding. United in their goals without dissent or infighting, he and his kind keep the war machine of Oblivion grinding forward. Most of these bright young idealists are destroyed during the course of the Fourth Great Maelstrom, but the future Generals of Oblivion are among the survivors. Encountering Spectres like this one, who calmly explains why Oblivion is the right thing to do, can be a real challenge for characters who have simply demonized Oblivion.

Nephwrack Holy Warrior

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Enigmas 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 3, Investigation 1, Leadership 3, Meditation 1, Melee 3, Occult 1, Politics 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 1

Dark Arcanoi: Hive-mind 3, Leechcraft 2

Backgrounds: Artifacts 10, Relics 3

Dark Passions: 10, including one 5-point (Devotion)

Being: Devotion 5

Permanent Corpus: 9

Angst: 10

Quote: *"I have strayed from the True Faith, and been exiled for my heresy. This is the only explanation for why my mighty lord would turn his face away from me. I will do all in my power to redeem myself to my lord Tetrareptomin, that he might smile upon me, and once again bring me into commune with his holy radiance."*

Possessions: Maggot revolver, 10-point bloodfire pin, Stygian steel armor, Stygian steel broadsword.

Image: A knight without honor in a savage land. With his glittering sword, his armor and his trusty maggot revolver, the Nephwrack holy warrior roams the land in search of rights to wrong. Most Holy Warriors are penitents who swaddle themselves in the trappings of their faith, and drip with iconic atrocities.

Roleplaying Tips: Your worldview is based on the idea that your Malfean is the center of the universe. You simply cannot avoid the idea that the Maelstrom is a punishment visited on you and the rest of the Faithful by your master for some error of devotion.

Notes: Separated from their church and trying to make amends, many holy warriors are lone champions, roaming the countryside for the common woe. Many are suicidal, even for Spectres, and almost all of them enjoy brief but exciting careers. Some churches manage to hang together, however, and many operate as roving packs of bandits or mercenary units. Only the most desperate of the Generals of Oblivion generally hire such warriors; unwilling to take orders, eternally proselytizing and predicting doom, and totally unable to operate in even the general proximity of the followers of another Malfean without immediately coming to blows, these exiles of the Labyrinth are often more trouble than Shade shocktroops.

Plasmics

Only during Maelstroms do Plasmics normally occur outside the Tempest. Plasmics are usually as varied as snowflakes, each one a unique individual. Yet at the same time, "species" of them also arise, come and go. Some breeds become almost inescapable for a year or a decade, then vanish without a trace. Others persist for centuries, their numbers waxing and waning.

Lice and Other Vermin

Many locations in the Shadowlands, from battlefields and POW camps to slums and prisons, teem with vermin. These vile creatures, inescapable in the life of the inmates, are inescapable

in death as well. Most of these vermin are larger than they were in life, with many lice and ticks reaching over half an inch in length. Most burrow into the corpus and require either painful surgery or the application of specialized Arcanos arts to remove.

Individually, Plasmic ticks and lice have no statistics. Surprisingly resilient, they can still be easily crushed between any two hard surfaces. However, spending any real length of time in an area teeming with these disgusting creatures makes infestation a certainty.

Victims suffer burning pains and nearly unbearable itching, which subtract one from all dice pools as long as the infestation is allowed to persist. Depending on the severity of the infestation, the creatures drain between one and three points of Pathos from the victim per day. Victims drained of all Pathos begin to lose corpus instead at the same rate. Although even the worst infestations are rarely lethal (except over the long term), they can seriously weaken a wraith.

Removing an infestation of Plasmic lice requires the painful manual excision of the creatures. Excision inflicts roughly twice as much damage as the amount of Pathos that the infestation drains each day, and the procedure must be performed by another wraith. The process may be assisted by the attention of a specialist in either Moliate or Castigate. A Dexterity + Castigate or Moliate roll (difficulty 8) can reduce the amount of damage excision does to the host by one corpus level per success.

Shadow-eaten infested with Plasmic lice suffer the same level of drain (of Angst rather than Pathos, obviously) but do not suffer the loss to their dice pools. The agonies of Spectral existence are sufficient to make the infestation of a few parasites relatively insignificant. Lice that have fed on the Shadow-eaten often carry Angst and pass it along to Restless they later infest. A wraith with an infestation of Plasmic lice may, at the Storyteller's discretion, gain up to a point of temporary Angst per day, if the infestation is severe.

Tin Ants

Tin ants are a new phenomenon, at least to the Restless. Long-time denizens of the Labyrinth, these Plasmics adapt to life in the Shadowlands after the start of the Fourth Great Maelstrom.

Voracious and diligent scavengers and hunters, tin ants gather bits of soulsteel and corpus, as well as bloodfire and soulfire crystal fragments. Back in the nest, the ants use these components in a gardening process, much like that of Skinlands termites. The members of the hive gain sustenance from basking in the Pathos and Angst exuded by their gardens.

Tin ant hives in the Labyrinth are very difficult to measure, but some hives spotted in the Shadowlands measure 50 feet tall, with a base 30 feet in diameter. Much of this space is given over to wind traps. Similar to the systems used by Stygian detritus gatherers, tin ant wind traps feature a complex series of baffles that not only catch windblown debris, but also condense out Angst for use by the hive's warriors.

The average tin ant is less than an inch long, its glistening silver body propelled by eight to 16 legs. Although their mandibles can inflict nasty pinches, they are essentially harmless. Warriors, on the other hand, can grow as long as three inches, and the average hive can contain thousands of these steel-jawed monstrosities, which Slumber in pools of Angst-condensate deep within the nest. The Stygian steel mandibles of these brutes inflict lethal damage on any Restless unfortunate enough to be swarmed, and some of the largest nests have been reported to breed specialized warrior units, including fliers, gargantuas over six inches long, and spitting units that can expel a poison with an effect similar to the Spectre power Numbing The Will.

Queens can grow as long as five feet, and unlike queens of the Skinlands hymenopterans, they are far from helpless. During periods when they are not assembling new drones for the nest in their Artificer's forge of a reproductive system, most of them indulge in extensive self-modification. Highly intelligent and lightning-quick (with Stygian steel armor and fangs and dozens of bloodfire crystals imbedded in her carapace), one of these creatures can defend her nest from even the most dangerous threats. How hives reproduce is unknown, but the process is thought to involve the dispersal of winged young.

Whereas the Restless find tin ants a dangerous and sometimes lethal nuisance, Spectres go to incredible lengths to avoid them. Each queen has an almost Malfean-level command over the Hive-Mind, and Shadow-eaten who lack the Hive-mind art risk falling under such a creature's control. Even the largest Shades have been seen to kneel humbly before a nest of tin ants and permit themselves to be disassembled for the good of the hive.

Tin ants are first sighted in the Shadowlands in Greece, in 1917, near the Pindus Mountains. During the Maelstrom, they expand their range to include much of the Balkans, western Asia Minor and the Russian steppes. Tin ants thrive primarily in rural or suburban areas, but hives infest vacant buildings in several Necropoli, including one notable event in Constantinople, where three titanic hives form a symbiotic nest in a relic mosque. This nest protects the Necropolis from Spectral incursion for much of the 1920s, and Wolseley once calls its inhabitants "Our most valuable allies in the fight against the Generals of Oblivion."

Tin Ant Hive Queen

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5, Charisma 5*, Manipulation 5*, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 6, Brawl 5, Dodge 6, Enigmas 1, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Leadership 5, Soulforging 5, Stealth 1

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Fatalism 5, Moliate 5

Dark Arcanoi: Hive-mind 5, Leechcraft 3

Shade Powers: Armor (+4 dice, may soak aggravated damage), Shark's Teeth

Willpower: 9

Permanent Corpus: 12

Angst: 35**

(* The hive queen is actually quite unpleasant and not precisely intelligent as humans understand the term; her Social Attributes are only for determining Hive-mind effects. For all other purposes, treat her as Manipulation 0 and Charisma 0)

(** This rating includes 20 points of bloodfire crystals imbedded in the queen's carapace. These crystals effectively act as a soulfire mask with 20 rather than 10 points of Pathos. See **Buried Secrets** for details on this Artifact. In an emergency, the hive queen can tap this Angst, but she takes one corpus level of damage for every two points of it she draws).

Image: A centipede four-and-a-half feet long, with a hundred or more segments, and a dozen or more dragonfly-like wings. Hive queens have ten-inch-long razor-sharp Stygian steel mandibles, which they use to chop up their opponents. The eyes of a tin ant queen are treasured by Oracles, who work them into masks for use in soothsaying.

Roleplaying Tips: What has disrupted your brood so that you must rise from your eternal labors to deal with it? Kill it quickly, so that you may return to your quiescence.

Notes: This specimen is a medium-sized tin ant hive queen. The Shadow-eaten assiduously avoid tin ant hives, for obvious reasons. Clever Restless have been able to take advantage of this fact, but tin ants are dangerous and ill-tempered, and they snap up a wraith just as happily as they do a Spectre. Some very daring wraiths actually hunt tin ants for the huge amounts of liquid Pathos, soulsteel and Stygian steel in the hive. This practice is too dangerous to be widespread.

Fireflowers

Known in the Dark Kingdom of Jade since the 19th century, fireflowers arrive in Stygia on the winds of the Fourth Great Maelstrom. Called the Scarlet Peony Veils in the Yellow Springs, fireflowers are a strange sight in the Shadowlands. These gauzy phantoms often resemble vast infernos with silk veils for flames. They range in color from a dark, dusky rose to a brilliant scarlet, redder than the lips of Yu Huang's Immortal Guard. Wraiths who have survived encounters with a fireflower claim that beautiful images are visible inside such a creature: panoramas of magisterial castles, beckoning lovers and beautiful, unspoiled vistas. Many individuals touched by a fireflower later seek out another to experience again the visions they recall so vividly.

Fireflowers travel with incredible speed — far faster than might be expected, given their undulations at rest. They seek contact with the corpora of the Restless. When fireflowers achieve such contact, they drain away a victim's Pathos and corpus via Usury. As it feeds, the fireflower's hue grows increasingly more brilliant. Ones that are brownish-pink are almost at the point of starvation, whereas those that are a brilliant crimson actively avoid feeding.

There is an "aquatic" version of the fireflower called the redfish or the Resplendent Burning Lotus. These creatures dwell at or just below the wash of the Tempest, and their brilliant flickering often causes Restless sailors too young to know better to dive into the Tempest. Redfish often live in symbiosis with Spectres and other, more aggressive Plasmics. Most of those who dive in to find their dreams instead find only Harrowings.

Fireflower/ Redfish

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 6, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 5

Arcanoi: Argos 3, Intimation 3, Usury 2

Willpower: 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Pathos: 2-20 of a possible 20

Image: Fireflowers range from seven to nine feet in height, including the half-foot or so they generally float above whatever surface they're traversing. Their breadth is about four feet in diameter, though these Plasmics' billowing fronds move constantly and are diaphanous enough to make accurate measurement difficult. When destroyed, a fireflower disintegrates to a colorless, insubstantial film, which then vanishes. By the time these exotics are widely known in Stygia, there already exists a demand in the upper class for clothing made from moliated or soulforged fireflowers. Because of the dangers implicit in the addictive nature of fireflower exposure, this clothing is extraordinarily rare and valuable.

Roleplaying Tips: Once, you were whole and rooted, but now you are rootless and drifting, forever in danger of fading like a rainbow at sunset. You feed, and in return, you share yourself with those you feed on.

Notes: Fireflowers make strange threats or unusual interludes for a game, as well as a potential source of income for particularly adventurous characters. Fireflowers travel quickly using Flicker, and the Intimation they use on their victims draws them to all fireflowers, not just the original one. The clamor for fireflower clothing fades by the end of the Great War, when it becomes clear that the Plasmics' effects persist to some degree after the moliation and soulforging process. Thereafter, fireflowers are in demand only for the creation of particularly complex versions of Nhudri's Embrace.

The Mired

The Mired, also called the Buried, the Incomplete and (colloquially) wrigglers, are a gruesome part of any major battlefield. A particular hazard in the Shadowlands of the Western Front, these Dronelike manifestations are believed to have been spawned from soldiers who died by being buried alive or drowned in mud, but who remained in their Cauls until the Maelstrom brushed over them.

The Mired are creatures of the muck. Restless familiar with the battlefields of the War to End All Wars know to avoid quagmires and

mass graves. Even this measure is no sure protection, though — nests of wrigglers seem to appear almost anywhere. In some places, the Mired are constantly active, a forest of hands and arms grasping for some leverage to pull themselves from the mud, yet always failing.

In other places, the Buried wait, quiescent, for someone or something to move among them before they begin flailing. In either case, the result of being seized is the same. The victim is slowly dragged beneath the muck by dozens of iron-strong hands, only to awaken in a Harrowing. Although a spear or sword can make fairly short work of a single arm, the Mired seem to regrow. Even the use of Stygian steel blades to cut areas completely clear of hands fails to prevent the creatures' resurgence in a month or two. The only certain answer to the problem is to avoid infested areas.

When seriously injured, wrigglers withdraw below the surface and leave behind them only a sucking "smack" and a few spatters of red plasm. Even severed limbs sink back into the earth. No force applied has yet proved strong enough to uncover the body of one of the Incomplete, or to stop an injured limb from withdrawing beneath the soil (though severed pieces can be — and sometimes are — collected for the forge).

Mired Arm

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 0, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Stealth 4

Permanent Corpus: 5

Being: Desperation 4

Angst: 3

Image: A thicket of arms, protruding from the ground like strange fungi and clad in the remnants of various army uniforms. The limbs flail about for anything to help pull themselves from the earth. Some patches of Mired, especially at Passchendäle, are several hundred yards across, but most are no more than ten yards wide. The Incomplete seem to be able to spread slightly apart from one another, and they demonstrate a low and basic cunning, so standing at the edge of a patch and hacking away is not the best idea — wraiths attempting to do so are likely to be dragged beneath the mud to join the Buried.

Roleplaying Tips: You're drowning in the earth! Anything you can grab will do, as long as you can pull yourself up out of the ground!

Gas

Few things foster dread among the soldiers of the War to End All Wars the way poison gas does. A mad struggle to don protective gear is the response to shouts of "Gas! Gas!" for the effects of such weapons are terrible. The emetic and tear gases are often mixed with more lethal gases to cause irritation that forced the removal of soldiers' gas masks.

The deadly versions include suffocating chlorine and, later in the war, painless, slow-acting and persistent phosgene, called "mustard gas" by the Allies.

The first sightings of gas in the Shadowlands come shortly after the Maelstrom begins. Opinions split over whether it first blows in from the Labyrinth, or from some vile and alien zone of the Tempest. What is certain is that by the beginning of the Insurrection, gas is all too common, and much more dangerous than its Skinlands counterpart. The gas of the Shadowlands is both intelligent and highly mobile, creeping along level ground as fast as a wraith can run. Moving downhill, it can catch even an unburdened sprinter, but it creeps uphill only very slowly.

The effect of gas on the corpora of wraiths it touches is horrific. There is an immediate blistering and cracking, followed by a liquefaction of the underlying plasm, which runs out through the cracks in the ruined surface. Should the victim survive, the wounds are disfiguring until fully healed. Even then, the victim's corpus must be attended to by a cosmetic Masquer to remove the crosshatching of burns and pits the gas leaves.

Gas is a serious danger. Susceptible to damage only from barrow-flame or exposure to raw Pathos (as in a soulfire torch), the stuff sends wraiths without such means of protection literally running for the hills as fast as possible. Gas seems to delight in riding Maelstrom winds, withering in their tracks wraiths who'd felt themselves adequately protected against the storm. It also frequently blasts through any holes in a Citadel wall to choke and burn the unprotected Restless inside. Gas sometimes accompanies attacking Spectres, on whom it has no ill effect. It is believed that this immunity stems from the use of the Hive-mind Dark Arcanos to command the gas' obedience, but the exact mechanism is unknown.

Plasmic Gas

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 0, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2

Powers: Soulburn (three dice of aggravated damage per turn, which can be soaked with Maelstrom protection only), Immaterial (gas can be damaged only by corpus drain via Usury or contact with bloodfire, soulfire, barrow-flame or other forms of raw emotion)

Permanent Corpus: 12

Angst: 3

Being: Hate 4

Image: Like a film of oil on water, gas changes color from instant to instant. Occasionally, it is little more than a shimmering in the air it passes through. It seeps like quicksilver and moves like a blanket across any landscape. It has no "tendrils," though it does billow to envelop a target.

Roleplaying Tips: Cover them, strangle them and leave them for the Maelstrom. Like the lightning, you come, and then you're gone.

one on bone. Every day, every hour — sometimes it seems like every minute — I hear that rasp as the Skeletal Lord plays with his abacus. He's tallying up deaths, then re-tallying them and tallying them again. Each death is counted, weighed and considered. Alas, they still don't meet Milord's needs.

A staccato rap on the chamber door interrupts the dry, regulated meter of the accounting. My master gestures, and the door opens to reveal a page announcing the honorable Hugh of Somesuch, Emissary of the Penitent Legion. The page departs, leaving the messenger — a self-important man dressed like he's 500 years late for his own funeral — pasty-faced and trembling.

"And how fares the gracious Laughing Lady?"

My master's astonishingly mellifluous voice lilts from behind me. He glides across the room to welcome Hugh to his chambers personally. With swift strokes, I commit Milord's every word to the Annals of Pestilence. Whatever is said in this room will echo silently throughout the centuries. This Hugh makes a relatively smooth recovery, bows to my master and allows himself to be escorted inside.

"My most puissant and noble Lord," he begins. "My mistress bids you once again reconsider her offer, and she inquires if you might be so kind as to inform her as to when, precisely, you intend to move against the usurper?" His voice is breathless and rushed, the words tumbling over themselves as Hugh rushes to get them out. It is my humble opinion (and I annotate such in the margins of the Journal) that a better choice of messenger might have been made.

My master laughs. "Tell her no to the first, though we find her offer most tempting. As for the second, well...." He trails off into silence.

"I can tell you my mistress will be most displeased with your refusal—" the toady begins, but my master cuts him off with the wave of a skeletal hand.

"Your mistress will accept our decision and like it, messenger, and you have our permission to remind her to train her pages better." Hugh realizes he is being insulted — the man's not stupid, just rude and arrogant — and he opens his mouth. However, one glance at the wraith addressing him encourages him to fall promptly silent.

Meanwhile, the Skeletal Lord strides over to where I sit and takes up the abacus once more. The familiar sound of bone sliding on bone hisses around the room, even as I keep my eye turned to my work. "No... no... no," my master says. "Oh wise and excellent messenger, also tell her that the time is not yet right for us to deal with this ghost who would be king. That time will come, yes, and soon — but it has not come yet. To struggle now is to risk destruction."

Hugh stiffens and snorts. "And what proof do you have for this prophecy? I can't take this piffle back with me."

My master's response is cheerful. "Wait here a moment," he says to the huffy little messenger, "and we shall return with all the proof you require." I hear the click of bones on the polished floor and the creak of the doors leading to his private apartments. Then he returns, carrying a plain wooden scythe that bears the marks of much wear. "Is this sufficient?" he inquires mildly.

Hugh stammers, and I find myself likewise slack-jawed. What my master holds is Siklos, Charon's own blade. To possess it is to possess a mandate from the highest possible authority, the vanished imperator himself.

"Per—perfectly, sir." Hugh bows three or four times in rapid succession. My master continues to advance.

"We hold this token as earnest of Charon's esteem for our service. You will speak of this to no one save your mistress, little man. Tell her that we know what is coming and that strength will be ours again." Hugh nods and babbles, and he is nodding again when the blade comes down to separate his head from his trunk. The messenger collapses to the floor; his ornate chain of office rings as it slithers across the stone. I turn away out of respect, and when I turn back around, the remnants are gone. Only the chain remains, dangling from my master's bony finger.

"There now," he says in that soft, terrifying way of his. "Helen, it seems I need someone to take my message back to the Laughing Lady after all. Would you see that this is delivered," he drops the coils of chain in my trembling hands, "and that she's told I have my information on the very best authority? Thank you."

A Great War Appendix

Locales

Although wraiths do sometimes initiate mass combat in remote areas of the Shadowlands, such tactics usually result in all participants' destruction by the Maelstrom. More frequent during the War of the Dead are riots and other forms of street conflict, as wraithly factions fight one another within the safer confines of the Necropoli.

Of course, Oblivion's forces revel in the chaos of the storm, and many temporary alliances flourish among the Restless when a Necropolis' defenses crumble under Spectral siege. And until the Restless rise to the challenge of capping the numerous Nihils — most of them at the sites of major battles in the War to End All Wars — Spectres and the Maelstrom remain fixtures of the Underworld's landscape.

Necropoli

Amsterdam

Necropolis Amsterdam is full of tall, narrow buildings that loom at strange angles, as if the structures might topple anytime. The oldest ones are smaller, but built on timber rafts that swayed atop the marshy peat, a precariousness that continues across the Shroud. Many structures, built on pilings over the water, shifted and sank over time. Their relics create a sometimes-confusing juxtaposition of "structures" between the Skinlands and the Shadowlands, a bizarre situation compounded by steep staircases and cramped interiors. Many of the city's most desolate slums were demolished thanks to the Housing Act of 1901, and in these areas stylish new homes for the Quick stand just across the Shroud from dreary ruins in the Underworld.

Amsterdam has a long history as a center of commerce and a place of refuge for people fleeing war or persecution. Thus, its Shadowlands counterpart is home to a variety of wraiths, including Jews and Protestants, who often take up Heretical practices. The city is also known for its progressive merchant/artisan class, and its position as a neutral arbiter in politics. Wraiths in Necropolis Amsterdam belonged to powerful trade and craft consortiums in life. These Restless have created similar organizations in the Underworld. Their influence on the Necropolis' politics allows the Guilds to flourish quietly despite Charon's edict banning them.

Amsterdam's most respected Anacreon is William the Silent, of the Legion of Fate. Just as when he lived as William of Orange, he is well known for turning a blind eye to the less orthodox occurrences within his bailiwick. Prior to the Insurrection, Amsterdam runs quite efficiently — perhaps better than many Necropoli that adhere more strictly to Charon's Code.

The Smiling Lord's coup comes as a terrible surprise to wraiths here. The Netherlander wraiths cannot mount much military resistance, but neither do they side with the Insurrection. The Grim Legion quickly takes control of the entire city. Some residents hope that the Smiling Lord might reinstate the Guilds and inaugurate a new era of trade and prosperity. The strict military regime quickly disillusions them.

Once-powerful Amsterdam Guildmasters remain unable to thwart the Grim Legions overtly, but they do what they can behind the scenes. Artificers put flaws in their work, Masquers leave distinguishing marks on the wraiths they reshape, and Fatalists leave out important pieces of prophecy. Former Hierarchy members find shelter among wraiths who were refugees in life and remember well how to hide from soldiers. Rumor has it that William the Silent survives the Night of Short Chains and schemes in exile.

Barcelona

Spain, as a major European power, has been in decline for four centuries at the time the War to End All Wars reaches a conclusion. At its height of power, Spain controls a world-spanning empire, and its navy rules the oceans. Fantastic wealth streams into Iberian coffers from the New World. The Spanish Armada's destruction in 1588 signifies the end of Spain's glory days, though. By 1919, the nation's putative center cannot hold, and in the early 1920s the people overthrow the monarchy.

The Barcelona Necropolis declines during this time, as well. Many of the wraiths from the time of Spanish ascendancy have long since lost their Fetters or dissolved into Oblivion. Those few who remain do what they can to maintain at least the façade of the old empire. What bounty could be brought into the Shadowlands now gilds Hierarchy buildings and memorials to past accomplishments. The wraiths of

Barcelona are surrounded by what their lands once were, but will likely never be again.

This longing for "the good old days" leaves many wraiths in a pall of despair. A good number return to their Roman Catholic faith and secretly search for any signs of the Fishers or for rumors about the Far Shores. Woe comes to any wraiths who encounter the Heretics that revive the Spanish Inquisition and take out their afterlife suffering on nonbelievers. Moorish influence is still strong in the Necropolis. Heretics who cling to the Islamic faith still create exotic works of art, but because their medium is now soulforged corpora, such wraiths continue to search secretly for "volunteers." Wraiths working for the Hierarchy here tend to be listless bureaucrats, and the number of wraiths who go Renegade in the Necropolis is relatively low. Such is the consequence of apathy across the Shroud.

When the Grim Legion takes power in Barcelona, it does so practically without a struggle. Most wraiths just sigh and let the Insurrectionists have their way. Thus, the Grim Legion holds Barcelona most tightly. It is a stronghold that the usurpers know they can keep with little interference from the wraithly populace.

Barcelona's problem is the Fourth Great Maelstrom. Its Spectres seem to thrive on the despair and longing of the Spanish wraiths. The Restless populace doesn't seem to care enough to put up a good fight. Grim Legionnaires must make up the slack; so many of them fall defending the Necropolis that the phrase "sent to Barcelona" becomes a euphemism for execution.

The influenza pandemic has its European beginning in Spain. Thus, the Shadowlands countryside near Barcelona is among the places where the Skeletal Lord musters troops just out of sight of his foes.

Berlin

Otto von Bismarck dies in 1898 fearing the worst for his country. All of what he fears (and more) happens; in the Shadowlands, he decides to make sure that things go better. In 1910, the Iron Legion appoints him its Anacreon for Berlin, and he sets about consolidating his power. Much of his advice had already become policy, but once he takes office, there are no more suggestions, only orders.

Bismarck's regime enjoys tremendous popular support. As in life, the great statesman offers security and purpose in exchange for submission. It's a trade many wraiths take. Bismarck's forces protect their Fetters, help settle damage done by Shadows, make sure wraiths get access to Pardoners, provide training and fortify Haunts against the Maelstrom. All the Iron Anacreon demands is obedience. As the ranks of war Dead swell, Bismarck's Reapers come to hand, offering words of comfort: It was not the brave German souls who failed, but their cowardly and treacherous leaders. In death, however, German soldiers again have the honor of serving the cause of national glory, this time under a proper chief. And Bismarck will not allow them to face further disgrace.

No country in Europe has better defenses against the Maelstrom. Huge armies go into battle backed by carefully harvested and allocated relics and the most innovative products of the forges. The general staff in Necropolis Berlin draws on the tactical and strategic insights of the Skinlands (gathered by means that push heavily against the *Dictum Mortuum*, if they don't outright break it) as well as the experience of Stygian experts. Thus, Berlin is perhaps the safest place in the European Shadowlands, its own defenses dealing with whatever may slip through a protective perimeter that, thanks to Skinlands buildup, stretches toward the German borders.

The Day Corps

The division among Legions that reigns elsewhere in Stygia is absent in the Berlin Necropolis. Although the Anacreon Council here is targeted just like others across the empire, the coup simply never occurs. The morning after the Night of Short Chains, Grim Legionnaires send their regrets to the Smiling Lord and explain that Bismarck's solicitous attention to defense of the Necropolis and its residents make his ouster impractical.

Thereafter, the Necropolis becomes an island of intrigue, where the only strife among Legions occurs behind closed doors. Berlin's public façade couldn't be more harmonious, though. All wraiths dwelling in Berlin perform compulsory military service. Each Legion, apart from the Legion of Fate, oversees one-seventh of the population for defense purposes; each wraith spends one day in service when her Day Corps' day arrives. Because some Legions include many more wraiths than others, the larger ones allocate some of their members to other Day Corps. In calmer times, Day Corps service is perfunctory and ceremonial, but once the Fourth Great Maelstrom begins, it's crucial in giving wraiths a sense that every individual matters to the safety of the city. The Day Corps each maintain armories throughout the city; wraiths do not personally own the arms and armor they use.

Bismarck is, as ever, willing to provide the illusion of participation by the governed. The Day Corps operate with a chain of command like that developed in the Skinlands for the *Freikorps*. Each squad, company and battalion elects a representative who takes part in consultations at the next level up. Orders are orders, and the senior command can and does override the views of delegates on crucial matters, but wherever expressed wishes can be accommodated without too much difficulty, they are.

Iron Order

The Iron Anacreon makes overall policy for the Necropolis. Subject to his directives, the other Anacreons oversee their respective Legions. Within the guidelines the Anacreons lay down, the neighborhood unions handle many of the day-to-day affairs of the community. The unions send

delegates to a city chamber, a sort of parliament with a largely advisory role. The city chamber occupies the attention of most wraiths with an interest in politics. Though it cannot change the Anacreons' policy, it does oversee much of the civil administration in addition to resolving disputes between neighborhood unions.

In keeping with Stygian policy, Berlin tolerates no public manifestation by any of the Guilds. Because several of the Guilds provide necessary services, the city chamber's delegates work out a solution that meets with the Anacreons' approval. The chamber oversees a number of Special Offices, which are Guild outposts in practice.

The Song Wars

The authorities tolerate no civil violence whatsoever. Any wraith arrested in a brawl faces a perfunctory hearing and an immediate trip to the forges (which is one of the reasons the Day Corps are so well-equipped). An alternative means of settling disputes thus evolves in the Necropolis: Song Wars, which pit rival groups' Chanteurs against each other, achieve remarkable popularity among Berlin's Restless. Groups with disputes, whether political parties arguing about the assignment of delegates, adjacent neighborhood unions clashing over control of important resources, or the participants in a more private quarrel, gather their Keening experts. Groups that lack their own masters of the Arcanos hire champions referred by the Special Office of Music Affairs. As nihilistic Passions are sure to be dangerous during Maelstrom season, common target moods include joy, euphoria, hope and sense of destiny.

A Song War takes place in some public spot, at a time and place arranged through the city chamber. Unter Den Linden provides the best acoustics, with Alexanderplatz, Potsdamer Platz and the Tiergarten nearly as popular. News of a famous Chanteur's participation in a Song War can draw wraiths from all over the city and beyond. Some Song Wars have fixed durations, but others last until one side or the other meets victory conditions or concedes. Some Song Wars last days on end, filling the surrounding area with the distinctive music of the Dead. Just once, the Anacreons intervene in a Song War that had gone on for eight days between Emerald and Penitent Chanteurs over the rights to wraiths killed in a Fascist brawl. Emotions had run so high throughout the center of the city that it had become literally impossible for administrators to make rational decisions. Short of such a dire eventuality, however, the Anacreons let Song Wars play out. As with the Day Corps and the various delegate systems, it does wraiths good to feel that they're exercising some control over their own situation.

The Iron Champions

During the War to End All Wars, cities across Germany raise money by erecting wooden statues of General von Hindenburg. Citizens could and did pay for iron, silver or gold nails to pound into the statues. The archetype in Berlin raised 90,000 marks in its first week, in 1917, as the nation was already well on the road to collapse. Others generated equally remarkable amounts in cities throughout the German Empire.

As each statue is taken down and demolished (or destroyed in rioting after Germany's defeat), it enters the Shadowlands as a potent Artifact. Wraiths practicing a tempered art combining Kinesis and Alchemy bring the statues — ranging from six to 18 feet tall — to a sort of life. The Iron Champions lead Bismarck's troops when they clash with rebellious wraiths. The spectacle of these giant, animated statues opening the way for the Necropolitan militia demoralizes many opponents of the Iron Anacreon's regime.

Brussels

Necropolis Brussels' old Anacreons were generally good at managing their city by traditional Hierarchy law, and they tried to involve themselves as little as possible in disputes between Legions or in the politics of other Necropoli. Brussels' strategic position between France and Germany make it vital in the Skinlands, and correspondingly prominent in the Shadowlands as a way-station or safe haven when Maelstroms rage.

During the Night of Short Chains, Brussels falls quickly in a well-planned and successfully executed coup. Some defensive forces are secretly bribed in advance, troops are moved by stealth and attack simultaneously at crucial points, and the Anacreons are overwhelmed too quickly to mount any defense. Soon, Insurrectionist forces are everywhere, and resounding from the rooftops is an exhortation to the stunned wraiths of the Necropolis: "All Hail the Smiling Lord — our new imperator!"

Scattered and diminished, the Loyalists of Brussels begin to organize and plan later than their counterparts elsewhere. Most of the ousted Hierarchs are interned or destroyed, so new leaders must emerge. Fear of discovery or infiltration makes them distrustful, and most operate in anonymous cells, communicating cautiously with their fellows. The Loyalists must move slowly to maintain secrecy, but there are opportunities here for a young wraith to advance into a position of leadership — if she's willing to stick her neck out.

Resistance groups battling the Grim Legion often meet along the "Ghost of the Senne." In the Skinlands, this river had once been a major source of commerce and a thoroughfare for Belgium. When land became precious in the late 19th century, however, the river became a liability and engineers forced it underground around 1870. Tunnels leading to this subterranean waterway can be found throughout the city. Their darkness and solitude make them ideal Haunts for conspirators. In the Shadowlands, a journey along the Senne by relic boat passes wharves destroyed long ago in the living world; they now swarm with wraithly activity, much of it Renegade.

One Circle of wraiths that's sure to play a key role in the future of the Necropolis is the Belgian Martyrs Society. During the war, when the Germans could not ferret out the leaders of Belgian resistance, they often simply rounded up people at random and executed them. Most of these unfortunates are gathered across the Shroud by the Emerald Legion because, although they died by violence, their selection as victims had been random, happenstance. These wraiths find solace in the Shadowlands by forming an insular and extremist Circle. The Belgian Martyrs work together to hone their Arcanoi and exact revenge against the living. They regularly break Charon's laws to target the German soldiers who killed them. Just as often, when appropriate information comes their way, they attack an actual resistance member whose actions brought death their way. Both Loyalist and Insurrectionist forces vie for the favor of these formidable wraiths after the Emerald Legion changes sides in the Insurrection. Grim Legion ambassadors appeal to the Circle's sense of justice, whereas dispossessed Hierarchs tend to prey on the Martyrs' fears of future persecution.

Constantinople

Constantinople is the jewel of the Hierarchy's Shadowlands operations in Europe. Since the city's founding as Byzantium more than two millennia ago, this Necropolis has never fallen to the Shadow-eaten hosts. Constantly updated and refortified with the ebb and flow of its Quick population, Constantinople is the administrative center for Hierarchy operations in Russia and the Balkans, and it is the headquarters of several independent and semi-independent Legions operating in those areas.

The Necropolis' vast size, accommodating multiple Citadels and complex security arrangements, conspires to foil the Grim Legion's Night of Short Chains. When the sun rises, the Necropolis remains firmly under Loyalist control.

Constantinople is the hub for Stygian campaigns against the Shadow-eaten during the Maelstrom; the Necropolis provides a base of operations for both the Ten Thousand's campaigns in the Maghreb and Palestine, and the multi-Legionary force under Wolseley that combats Coldheart in Russia. Early in the war, the Necropolis becomes infested by several large hives of Plasmics known as tin ants. These creatures' ability to dominate the Shadow-eaten via Hivemind keeps the city safe from Spectre attack and Doppelganger infiltration.

Always at the world's crossroads, Constantinople prospers during the Twilight Era thanks to the safety net provided by tin ant infestation. The streets of this invulnerable Necropolis bustle with Maelstrom refugees from Europe, the Middle East, the steppes of Russia and the mountains of Asia Minor. Dissidents fleeing the grasp of the Insurrectionists, Grim Legion agents, daring (or suicidal) Spectral infiltrators and countless others all flock here.

Chicago

The war between the Legions matters very little to most Necropoli across the Atlantic from Europe. The Grim Legion has far fewer members in the Americas than in Europe, and it can mount effective revolt only in a few carefully chosen cities. Chicago is consumed by more local conflicts.

Since 1910, Anacreon Joseph P. Altgeld has tried to bring justice and reform to the thoroughly corrupt machinery of the Chicago Necropolis. In life, he was a law-and-order conservative who became notorious for pardoning the anarchists accused of the Haymarket bombing. His motives weren't entirely upright: He genuinely believed that they hadn't gotten a fair trial, but he also hated the judge who sentenced them. Since crossing the Shroud, he's brought the same tangle of concerns to his work as Anacreon for the Penitent Legion.

In neighborhoods where the local officials take his orders, conditions are relatively good even as the Maelstrom winds blow. Altgeld's rules lay down harsh but fair policy, with generous rewards for contributions to public order and safety. Uptown and South Shore wraiths enjoy substantial freedom to pursue their individual goals without too much fear of being destroyed by invading Spectres or sent to the forges capriciously. The Anacreons can and do draft wraiths for emergency duties like storm watch and battle against particularly determined invasions, but otherwise the administrators rely on a small corps of professional soldiers.

Many officials refuse to take Altgeld's orders, however. They might incline toward one of the other, more corrupt Anacreons, or they may simply treat their neighborhoods as their own territory. On the South Side and downtown, survival hinges completely on a wraith's position in webs of graft and corruption. Wraiths who can keep up their payments may do as they please; others serve as Thralls or worse. The only justice available is that for sale. Thrill-seeking wraiths from safer neighborhoods venture into these areas in pursuit of forbidden pleasures, from skinriding to bootlegged Pathos. For enough oboli, Pathos or other payment, almost anything's available from corrupt guardians.

Some parts of the city don't enjoy even that measure of peace. Around Wicker Park, for instance, the Skinlands' struggles between groups trying to exploit Prohibition spill over into the Shadowlands. Gangs of ruthless wraiths and Spectres jockey for influence among Skinlands mobs, and the *Dictum Mortuum* is laughed at if it's mentioned at all. Chinatown is the largest more-or-less permanent war zone, where only well-equipped groups of wraiths venture in search of gain.

Douala

Cameroon's largest city, Douala, stands at the mouth of the Wurl River, just where the Ivory Coast of Africa bends south toward the Congo. It's one of the rainiest and most unhealthful places on the continent; the German effort to build

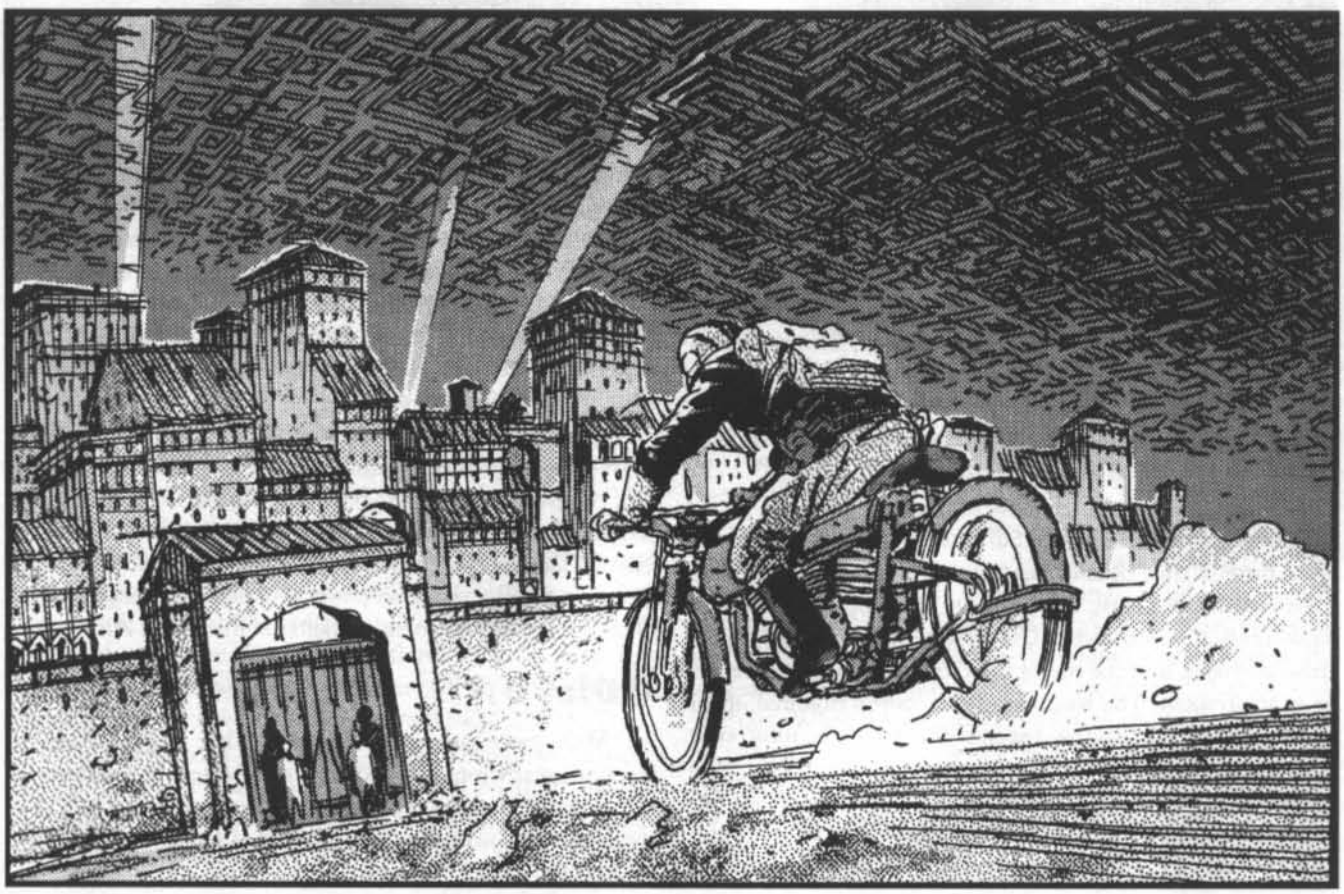
a habitable port town here takes decades. In 1914, the harbor hosts the only significant naval battle of the War to End All Wars along Africa's Atlantic coast, when a small British and French fleet defeats improvised mines and other defenses, then captures the town. For the next several years it is the base for campaigns into the German-held highlands.

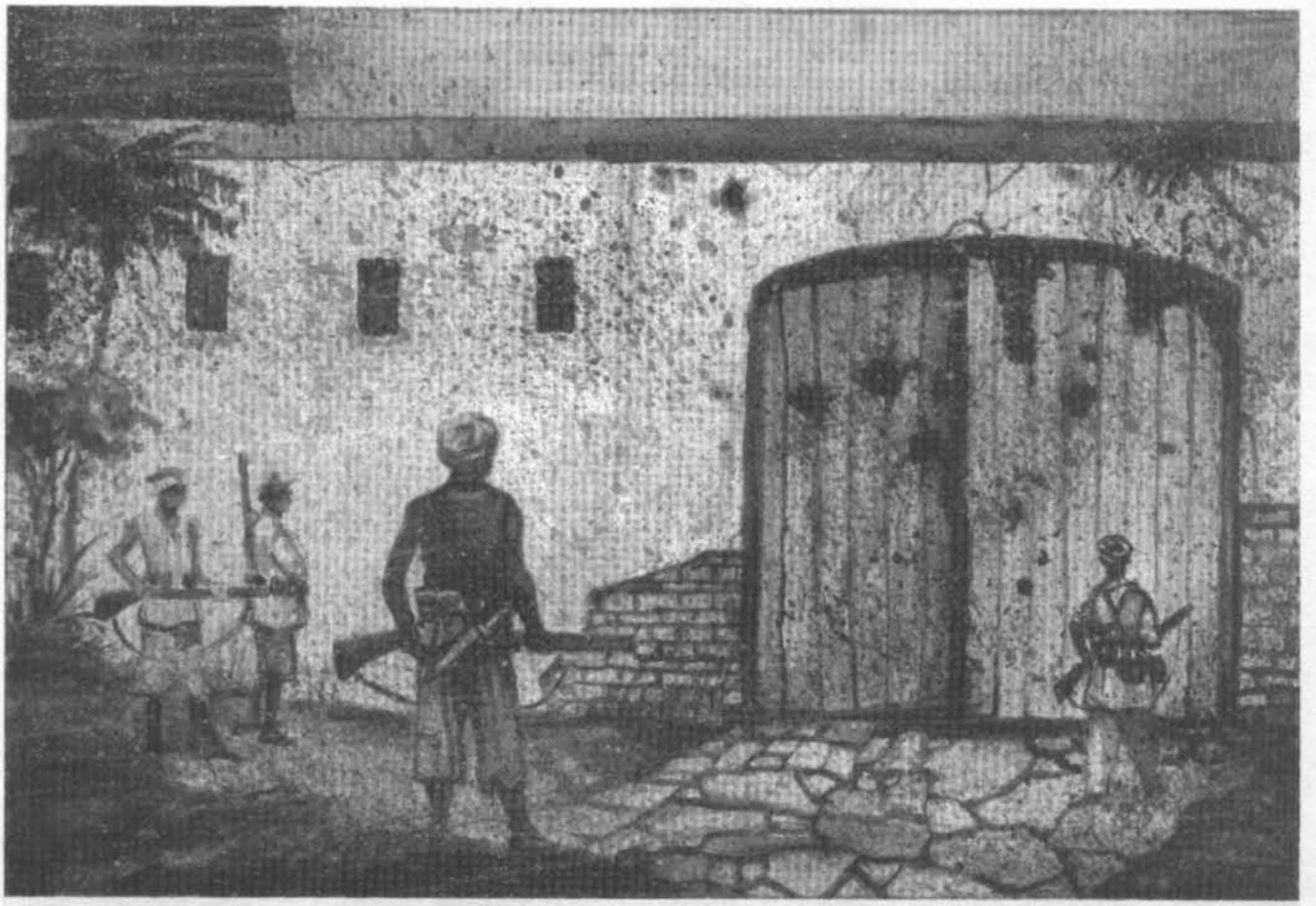
In the absence of other problems, the German, British and French wraiths who find themselves in this Necropolis would fight it out for control. But they're not alone. The wraiths of locals murdered since colonization began in the 1880s surround the Necropolis, and many (particularly those executed capriciously or killed by neglect) want vengeance. The Spectres who swarm up through Nihils in the area want destruction. So the European wraiths set aside enough of their grievances to work together for their mutual survival, though one ill-timed Catharsis among perimeter guards can lead to many Destruction Harrowings. The various national communities within Douala maintain very meticulous records so as to establish the chain of command. Then their leaders bicker constantly over how to reconcile their respective lists and set precedence.

The Spectral pirates of Lost Efik, spread across several islands off the western edge of the Bush of Ghosts, raid convoys of European wraiths trying to flee Douala. Tempest ships fall to ambush, whereas overland groups fall prey to Argos-assisted sneak attacks. The Efik pirates allow a handful of their targets to return to Douala, to spread the demoralizing word. Someday, a pirate fleet sailing up to the mouth of the Wurl is sure to put an end to the matter. (See **Doomslayers: Into the Labyrinth**, p. 146, for more information about Efik's Spectres.)

Lisbon

Lisbon, the city on seven hills, has a long and proud history. Legend has it that the Greek hero Ulysses founded the city during his long journey. Vandals, Visigoths, Phoenicians, Greeks and a long series of other cultures have left their mark here since then. Lisbon's age is reflected at the center of the Necropolis, where the relic ruins of ancient cities stand tall and proud. The successive eras can be seen radiating down the hills like the successive rings of an archery target: Greek and Roman structures stand on some hilltops, surrounded by mazelike walls of Moorish construction. Narrow twisting streets from the Middle ages lead down to wider 19th century avenues. Below them are the newer parks, plazas, and sprawling suburbs. Each is more modern than the last, and Lisbon's wraiths situate themselves that way as well. The few 1000-year-old wraiths with extant Fetters reside in the ancient center of the city, whereas Enfants find themselves forced into warehouse-style buildings miles from the center of town.





Portugal was a base for many of the Age of Exploration's brightest lights. Although most died in distant lands, a few managed to return to the Fetters that beckoned them home. These wraiths and their crews bring back tales of Underworlds far different from the Dark Kingdom of Iron. Such wanderers also have developed their skills in Argos far beyond what is commonly seen. (Of course, without such abilities their long journeys would certainly have been one-way.) In good times, Ferrymen could be seen in Lisbon's port, where they'd consult in low whispers with the fabled Gaunt Ferdinand Magellan. Anyone seeking to sail the seas of the Dead spends time in Lisbon if he means to survive his trip.

Lisbon mounts considerable resistance during the Night of Short Chains and does not fall immediately. Because of the great turmoil that characterizes the city throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, its people chafe under most forms of government. The afterlife does little to change these attitudes, and the rise of the Grim Legion merely serves as an incitement. The Insurrectionists have a nominal upper hand but Loyalists press hard against them. One turning point occurs when Lisbon's military dictator, Antonio Machado Santos, is assassinated in a train station. Santos, with his understanding of the city and people of Lisbon, becomes a valuable tool after he crosses the Shroud. His strong Memoriam and his infamy quickly give power to the Enfant. Also, many who followed him in life are willing to do likewise in the afterlife. Both sides seek to make him their pawn in the struggle for control of Stygia. The Insurrectionists get to him first, and he is indoctrinated by the Grim Legion. Loyalist forces begin to lose ground in the Necropolis as Santos and his resources are put to use. Ousted Hierarchs see Santos' elimination as a high priority if they are to regain and hold Lisbon. Rumors spread that Santos' murder was a scheme engineered by the Grim Legion to end the stalemate.

After Skeletal Legionnaires and throngs of Moriman take the Necropolis, Santos goes into hiding. He craves the power that he'd gotten to taste again so briefly among the Dead, though. As tensions escalate among the Necropolis' Loyalist conquerors, master Harbingers and stranded *abambo*, the former despot formulates a plan to restore his power — a plan involving Charon's blade, Siklos, and an unhappy master of the Behest Arcanos....

London

Many pragmatic governors know that one good way to forestall great wrongs is to tolerate small ones. The authorities of Necropolis London apply this principle during the War of the Dead, and save the city from the chaos and suffering inflicted elsewhere.

London enters the Great War with certain advantages. First among them is its leadership, composed of what a wit of the Victorian era called "talented nobodies." Dynastic changes over the centuries leave Shadowlands England teeming with royal contenders as well as would-be rulers from lesser noble ranks. The expansion of the United Kingdom brings more claims. Vicious war raged across the English Shadowlands for much of the 19th century, ending only with the defeat, surrender or disappearance of most of the prominent rivals. In their place emerged leaders from the middle classes, with the occasional working-class addition, skilled in Arcanoi and social abilities, to restore order. By the time a fresh round of conflict breaks out with the Insurrection, London is in competent hands.

London's Anacreons recognize, as the War to End All Wars drags on, that some form of reckoning would have to be exacted for the tremendous death and suffering inflicted by Skinlands leaders. The Anacreons do not condone violations of the *Dictum Mortuum*... but they also instruct their troops not to search too vigorously for evidence of violations. In addition, as high-ranking Skinlands officers and political officials die, they fall into the grip of a brutal, popular justice. Generals and under-secretaries who died full of confidence in their righteousness first face hostile wraith accusers, then torture and finally destruction. The bridges of the Necropolis glisten in the dim sunshine that comes through the Shroud with the viscera of bureaucrats who sent so many young men to death. Denied revenge in life, the masses seek it and get it in the afterlife.

Grim Legion observers had predicted that the spirit of the mob would play into their hands when the coup began; just the opposite happened. The mob recognizes that it had gotten what it wanted thanks to the existing order, and thus it feels no pressing need for change. The long-standing association of the Spooks' Guild and the Emerald Legion is nowhere stronger than in London: Spooks flock to London to exercise their arts on behalf of the mob, and the nature of the Industrial Revolution breeds a great crop of accidental and mysterious deaths. The Emerald Anacreon of London, a former tailor named Lincoln Wattston, is the first prominent member of his Legion to suggest that the Emerald Lord abandon the Insurrectionist cause. Despite the many factions working toward it, though, the Liberation of London is far from a *fait accompli*.

The Grim cause finds more support elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland. Throughout the Great War, London Loyalists battle with dissidents who, across the Shroud, had been allies and subjects in Wales and Scotland. Periodic forays into Ireland meet with bitter ends, and gradually the Anacreons of London concede the loss of the Emerald Isle.

The Tower of London acts as the Citadel for London during the Great War. Closed because of bombing damage during the War to End All Wars, it remains closed thanks to judicious efforts by Spooks and Haunters. Nearby features, such as Christopher Wren's monument to persons killed in the fire of 1667, also hold administrative and military offices. German aerial attacks also heavily damage the Underground stations at Aldwych and Barbican, and these terminals, like the Tower, also remain closed long after the Armistice. Loyalist Legions use the tube system to deploy their forces. Abandoned air raid shelters provide safe and relatively comfortable Haunts for troops; many of their commanders favor the closed wings of landmarks.

London's wraiths take a shared pride in their heritage. London, as they remind outsiders, was the *first* Necropolis, and it remains the greatest concentration of European Restless Dead. The enormous population of the Necropolis makes local government necessary. Beneath the central Anacreons, five borough Citadels attend to the affairs of the various portions of the city. The poverty-stricken East End generates the most trouble: more deaths, more Spectral activity and less interest in behaving like nice, quiet subjects. The rest of London is fairly quiet, coming together for moments of crisis — London has one of the most effective systems of anti-Maelstrom defense, rivaling that of Berlin — then dispersing. The Anacreons let their subjects go about the business of tending Fetters and exercising Passions as long as it doesn't create overly noticeable manifestations in the Skinlands.

New York City

As perhaps the most disordered and corrupt Necropolis in North America, New York is never dull. Maelstrom winnowing operations here are openly run by the Spooks' Guild. Politics grinds forward under a Grim Legion political dynasty spawned in the 1863 Draft Riots and perpetuated by the city's violent character. New York City, particularly the isle of Manhattan, is also the headquarters to a Legion of Fate cadre, and to the Fifth Legion, the one that brought the rule of the Hierarchy to North America. Both these organizations act as fire brigades for the American east coast. After the Night of Short Chains, the New York Necropolis is firmly in the hands of the Grim Legion, but the Fifth Legion enclave and the Legion of Fate warriors remain independent. However, these organizations are too preoccupied with the Maelstrom to take a significant interest in the Insurrection.

The rest of the city's populace fails to exhibit such forbearance. The already-simmering discontent with the Grim Legion's heavy-handed policies comes to a boil soon enough. Within weeks of the coup, the city's winnowing contracts are stripped from Spooks' Guild-related organizations, and attempts follow to purge the practitioners of Outrage from the city. What results are heavy losses among Insurrectionist patrols, and only after the Beast Corps is called in to help restore order are areas outside the Grim Legion's Citadel safe for Insurrectionists. Even these forces, however, are insufficient to dislodge the Spooks from their heavily fortified

Haunts. For the rest of the insurgency, Loyalists brave Grim Legion blockades to smuggle in weapons and supplies for the Spooks.

Throughout the Twilight Era, the Necropolis is rocked by sporadic fighting between factions, interspersed with long periods of uneasy peace as the Restless defend themselves from the Maelstrom and struggle to gather resources for the next skirmish. The wraithly Great War is especially hard on individuals not aligned with either "Stygian" faction. The Insurrection sees the population of Necropolis New York drop by almost 15 percent. Many flee, but others are sent to Oblivion in the internecine conflict, or they lose control to their Shadows from the stress of afterlife in the war zone.

Paris

Thanks to the many major battles that occur on French soil, destroying thousands of buildings and blasting miles of railroad track into the Shadowlands, the Paris Necropolis prospers during the War to End All Wars. Millions die, providing a huge population base, as well as raw material for the soulforges. Hierarchy Artificers quickly put both materials to good use, although they are hard-pressed to keep pace with the incoming throngs. Strong fortifications keep the city safe from the worst of the Great Maelstrom. Troops seasoned in combat keep the Spectres at bay. It is not the monsters outside that make Parisian wraiths tremble, though; it is the Renegades within the walls.

Paris is a city in love with revolution. It has been home to four republics, three monarchies and two empires. These bloody transitions filled the Shadowlands with rebels of every stripe, each ready to take up arms and foment unrest over some perceived injustice. Generally, the losers in the Skinlands died in greater numbers than the winners. Thus, losing sides among the Quick would have greater numbers of adherents in the Shadowlands. The Renegades profited from the Student Rebellion of 1830, wherein young idealists sought to topple the Monarchy but quickly met defeat. Paris' Hierarchy bolsters its numbers during the French Revolution as nobles inured to rigid class structures are beheaded. When Napoleon seizes power, the ranks of the Dead on all sides swell. At France's political heart, idealism is a powerful motivator for many wraiths, just as it had been an impetus toward death for many of these individuals. Renegade behavior often stems from such sentiments (and such Passions). Ending Charon's monolithic reign becomes the afterlife goal for many Parisian wraiths of the Twilight Era. The Grim Legion finds support for its efforts and heroes' welcomes following the Night of Short Chains. Charon's Anacreons and any who support the old ways are soulforged before cheering mobs.

The Smiling Lord establishes a major center of his new regime here and fully expects the city to fall in line with his forces. Unfortunately, the contrariness of Paris rears its head again. After only a few months, wraiths begin to complain

about the new government. Parisian Restless grumble that one dictator is gone but that the new dictator seems little different. Many claim that the new Stygia is even harsher and more oppressive than Charon's. Others stir up trouble for the sheer delight of it. Factions tear the city apart. The Smiling Lord is able to keep the city nominally under his control, but his forces suffer besiegement from all directions.

Heresies

The grand cathedrals of Paris hide several Heretic factions. Often, the cathedrals provide means to garner Pathos for the devout wraith. Many Pierrists (Fishers in all but name), made brazen by Charon's disappearance, openly proclaim their faith. Heretics who do their evangelizing outside the secure cathedrals sometimes end up as soulforge fodder, but the large numbers of fanatical wraiths haunting these churches make Insurrectionists wary even of picking fights near the structures.

Notre Dame is home to at least three extended Circles. One group of penitent Heretics lurks in the bell towers, and some of its members go so far as to moliate themselves into gargoyle lookalikes. A Circle of Gaunts hides in the crypts among the relics of dead saints and martyrs. Rumor has it that some of these wraiths are the saints themselves, guarding their last Fetters. A third group harks back to the time of the Great Schism of 1378, which split the Church. The French proclaimed that Rome had become corrupt and thus elected their own Pope. Although this schism was eventually healed in 1417, when the French Pope "resigned" and France "elected" the Roman Pope Martin V, wraiths of that time and of a certain bent never relinquish what they believe to be the true faith. Led by Robert of Geneva (the "anti-Pope" Clement VII), these Heretics accost anyone they believe to be adherents of corrupt political structures... such as the Hierarchy. "The Schismatics," as some wraiths call them, routinely torture or destroy their foes. As long as Insurrectionists and Loyalists avoid the cathedrals, however, these Heretics do not molest them. Some wraiths seek sanctuary in one church or another as they flee political enemies. Alas, such refugees often find a Parisian Heretic to be a host who is reluctant to say goodbye.

Into the Maze

Renegade strongholds can be found in the Parisian catacombs. These underground tunnels wind their way beneath all of Paris. They run through ossuaries and sepultures that the Dead find comforting. Throughout this maze are checkpoints, held by Renegades who demand elaborate passwords and sometimes bribes from wraiths who seek passage. Renegades also store many of the relics they collect in the catacombs, and a stealthy wraith can make quite a haul. Doing so is sure to make the Renegades unhappy, but if such relics were turned over to the Loyalists or Insurrectionists, a wraith could gain substantial favor with that faction.

Parisian Loyalists are in a peculiar position. After the Grim Legion captures the major Hierarchy strongholds during the Night of Short Chains, the Loyalists are without a major base of operations. By the time strife between the two factions reaches its height, many ousted Hierarchs expect to be destroyed to a wraith. Fortunately for the Loyalist cause, the fickle Parisians come to see the group's surviving members as martyrs making a brave stand against despots. Happy to accept aid from wraiths whose loyalties change with the wind, Loyalists set up a vast network of meeting places and code words to recognize their allies. Generally, Loyalists meet in busy cafés or jazz clubs, where large numbers of the Quick obscure their presence — though dodging mortals is tricky in such situations.

Loyalists never meet in the same place twice in succession, and they make selection of the next meeting locale as arcane and secretive a process as possible. A Circle that wants to join the Loyalists is likely find them distrustful in the extreme. New recruits face interrogations and tests of loyalty before they earn any Loyalist's faith. Both Insurrectionist and Renegade factions are ready to pay well for code words and future Loyalist meeting places. A Circle that seeks to harm the Loyalists might do so by delivering such information to the Grim Legion.

St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg is a newer Necropolis. Until Peter the Great decides to build his imperial capital there, the mouth of the Neva River supports only a small trading and fishing village. In the first 20 years of the 18th century, however, hundreds of thousands of people perish from starvation, disease, cold, industrial accidents and other causes; in his drive toward Western modernity, Czar Peter relies on all the tools of classic Russian despotism. Workers drain the swamps, haul stone and building supplies from hundreds of miles away to carve, cut and paint an amalgam of all the latest trends in European design. Only the workers' own families and a few radicals notice how many Russians die in the process. In a single generation, St. Petersburg's Shadowlands population grows to rival far older Necropoli. The Hierarchy never adequately deals with this situation.

Poor Necropolitan planning isn't the only problem here, either. Until February, 1918, Russia uses the Julian calendar, which runs 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere around Europe. The Soviet Union forces the change; it proves wildly unpopular, and in fact some conservative districts rely on the Julian calendar for decades to come. In the Shadowlands, only the most modern-minded wraiths use the Gregorian system. Russian Necropoli typically use Julian dates for almost all official purposes. Wraiths from outside Russia who don't pay close attention can find themselves amid embarrassing muddles in no time at all.

The press of events requires the Legions to select their first Anacreons hastily. After the initial capricious choices, most of the Legions use St. Petersburg as a place to send misfits and troublemakers. Because Russian Necropoli remain

largely isolated from the outside world, anyone posted there is out of the way. Thus, some of the best innovative thinkers end up working next to some of the worst tyrants and hidebound reactionaries. This pattern of extremes continues down through the ranks.

Until the 1870s, traditionalists dominate the affairs of the Citadel. Just as St. Petersburg is itself a place on the margin to send innovators, so within the Necropolis, innovators tend to get assigned to the periphery, to deal with defenses, negotiations with surrounding Haunts and other external matters. At the center, Orthodox religious zeal (largely unaffected by efforts to enforce Charon's official proclamations about religion) combines with nearly universal belief in a divinely instituted social hierarchy to keep things calm and fixed. But as the era of autocracy rolls toward its grave, more and more revolutionaries enter. From prison execution yards, fought-over streets and back alleys, the rivers where inconvenient corpses get dumped and from all the districts where poor, desperate people gather, a secret army emerges. By the time the Anacreons realize they face a serious challenge, it's too late. Through a combination of infiltration and outright rebellion, the Citadel falls under radical control in the 1880s.

Pyotr Tkachev secures his position as Grim Anacreon, first among a band of equals (or least a band of wraiths not prepared to acknowledge anyone else's superiority), by the simple expedient of lying through his teeth to the outside Hierarchy. He describes the coup as nothing more than a change of administration and presents elaborate false evidence as to the treachery and sins of his predecessors. Some Legions send observers to perform cursory inspections and give their blessing to whatever they see, whereas others simply assent from a distance. After mollifying the Hierarchy, Tkachev and his comrades set about remaking the Necropolis in their own image.

The New Humanity

To Tkachev and his associates, humanity carries certain fundamental flaws. The race is not rational, nor rationally organized. They propose to bring scientific discipline to society. And they begin with the human form.

By the 1920s, almost every wraith in the Necropolis has been moliated to some degree. Most laborers now have stronger frames, and often more legs for greater stability while carrying heavy loads. Overseers have longer necks, and some have eyes on stalks, the better to keep their assigned subjects under scrutiny. Administrators tend to have multiple arms and very fine fingers, the better to sort through reports and write orders. Wraiths of the rank and file tend to be shorter, slower and less perceptive than their superiors, to make rebellion more difficult. The Anacreons also make heavy use of soulforging, with some of the most original techniques found outside Nhudri's own furnaces. St. Petersburg justice is harsh and fast; the work of the New Humanity requires a lot of supporting resources, and any excuse suffices to feed the forges.

The Anacreons support these corporeal manipulations with spiritual ones. Loyal practitioners of Keening, for instance, occupy a privileged position that combines the status of musicians and secret police in the new Skinlands Soviet Union. Rumors fly that the forbidden Arcanoi flourish under the approving gaze of the Anacreons. These contentions go unproven, but their veracity might account for some of the more thorough brainwashing that occurs here.

A Fluid Fealty

Tkachev simply buys off the warring Legions, pointing out that the flow of unique weapons and other machinery from the Necropolis' forges might dry up if his forces were to become involved directly in combat. In return for internal freedom of action, he's willing to make whatever declarations of loyalty are required to appease the demands of the moment. Neither Loyalists nor Insurrectionists *like* this arrangement, but they put up with it in exchange for the "toys." To keep both factions happy, Tkachev's troops scour the surrounding Shadowlands. Rumors that they arrange slaughters among participants in the Skinlands Russian civil wars can't be confirmed, but most Russian wraiths believe the rumors implicitly.

Vienna

Before the War to End All Wars, Skinlands Vienna is the capital of a dual monarchy that rules over Hungary and Austria, as well as an ethnic hodgepodge. In the Shadowlands, however, Vienna has long been very much an *Austrian* city. Non-Austrians exist only at the sufferance of the Austrian Anacreons, and only in ghettoes at the outskirts of the Necropolis.

Political power in Vienna lies firmly in the hands of eight to 10 (depending on who's counting) aristocratic families. Their dead sons provide Anacreons and subordinate leaders, while their dead daughters oversee the Necropolis' social and artistic affairs. From time to time, rumors of the abuse of Lifeweb and other Arcanoi to ensure a steady flow of wraiths from the ruling families lead to an official investigation. Nobody important ever gets caught, though, let alone punished.

Unfortunately, this tidy arrangement has been messier ever since Bismarck's reorganization of the German Shadowlands. Vienna teems with refugees from the Iron Anacreon's regime. Some are noble souls, kin to Vienna's traditional leaders. Others are social dregs, or even worse: revolutionaries, decadents and the like. Traditional Viennese culture — refined and elegant — strains under the impact of new ideas and imported rivalries. At least, that's how the upper classes see it; to the mass of wraiths at large, there's little difference between one set of lords and another.

But everyone notices the impact of the Smiling Lord's grab for power. At first, Grim forces overwhelmingly outnumber any other Legion's, but through lack of coordination they fail to gain the early advantage. As the Great War wears on, Skel-

etal ranks swell, and finally triumph. But victory comes at a cost. The power of the noble families crumbles forever, and the city gradually divides into "the Seven Cities," with parallel Citadels and internal structures. Each of the Seven Cities claims to be the true authority for the region, but none can press its claim effectively.

For more than a century, the Vienna Prater, one of Europe's great urban parks, provides the space for the Necropolis' Citadel. Officials spread out through museums, libraries, manors turned into exhibits and the various small buildings supporting the park's operations. Within a year of the Smiling Lord's revolt, the Shadowlands Prater lies in ruins. Claimants for power come to fight over the debris, but they accomplish little more than occasionally disturbing Skinlands vacationers. The Seven Cities operate from relic quarters on the fringe of the Necropolis, most commonly in buildings demolished during the War to End All Wars' final year. The 65-meter-high Ferris wheel at the center of the park remains popular as a place from which to hang the battered corpora of one's enemies, however.

Battlefields

The battlefields of the War to End All Wars generate Angst and despair enough to cause the Fourth Great Maelstrom. Perforated by Nihils, these sites are incredibly dangerous focal points for storms and Spectre activity. Even during rare lulls in the Maelstrom, panoramas of illusion hold sway here, so wraiths here can seldom be sure whether a line of charging soldiers are Drones or mere "area memories." It seems that few Restless in their right minds would risk the dangers of approaching such a dangerous area, but there are several reasons a Circle might visit a battlefield.

One possibility is that the location features some Fetter a wraith needs to protect. If a wraith died on the battlefield, his remains may be there still, perhaps in a graveyard of "unknowns." Some wraiths may have Passions driving them to give their bodies proper burial. Others may have made a promise while living to get their companions' remains home.

In game terms, characters with certain Backgrounds gain advantages at major battlefields. Most of the living in postwar Europe have lost at least one relative or friend in the war. The fond memories of such loved ones infuse these sites, so a player whose character possesses the Memoriam Background can roll her Memoriam rating here (difficulty 7) to earn Pathos. Elsewhere, difficulty 8 applies as usual. Also, many battlefields have shrines and memorials erected within a year or two of the war's end. For characters who died as combatants in the War to End All Wars, these monuments satisfy the conditions of the Legacy Background, and allow visiting wraiths to heal accordingly (see p. 112-113). Finally, cemeteries, which fill acres of these former battlefields in the Skinlands, are often effective Haunts where a wraith can fulfill the aforementioned Backgrounds. There is, of course, a trade-off for these advantages. Storytellers should feel compelled to make battlefield Nihils the most confusing and terrifying places in the Underworld. Circles who visit should expect a reduction in personnel. Basically, the trick of negotiating battlefields is to race from one Haunt to the next — they resemble islands of light amid the chaotic moonscape of most battlefields — and to pray for the endurance of whatever Arcanoi are giving protection from the "elements."

Flanders

In the Shadowlands of southwestern Belgium, near the town of Arras, an elaborate tunnel system runs throughout the district. The space that billeted 25,000 British soldiers in 1916 and 1917 later provides Haunts for hundreds of wraiths, and shelter for thousands of Mortwights. Passages that once terminated in sewers now plunge down into endless depths, all the way to the Labyrinth in at least a few spots. Spectres tormented by the proximity of the Shroud and the Skinlands find some relief here, their Being decaying more slowly than usual. The wraiths who reside nearby devote themselves to monitoring Spectral activity; direct interference in inter-Spectre battles has proven ineffective.

A little to the north, around the town of Messines, minefields turn the countryside into an expansive trap. More than 1,000,000 pounds of explosives go off in a coordinated detonation on June 7, 1917, killing at least 10,000 Germans and opening a fresh British (and Canadian and Australian) offensive. A total of 21 mines had been laid during the preceding year. Not all the explosives detonate, but the whole network of mines enters the Shadowlands as a massive set of relics. Spectral and wraithly factions scrabble through the numberless craters in search of fresh relics with which to fight the Great War. When they do so clumsily, explosions echo across the black landscape of ash and rubble, and Oblivion gains that much more strength. Clever Spectres and wraiths reside in carefully mapped safe zones, preying on outsiders.

Throughout the Flanders battlefield, the Maelstrom manifests in an unusual way. It steadily rains eyes, their pupils dilated as if straining to see through darkness. Nobody in the Shadowlands is quite sure where the eyes come from. Some literal-minded observers attribute the eyes to the presence during the War to End All Wars of the belligerents' observer corps, but most wraiths dismiss this notion. Fresh explosions in the Messines minefields often trigger rains of eyes, as do tunnel collapses around Arras, but far more eyes fall than are lost from destroyed Spectres and wraiths. The fallen orbs decay over the course of a few days, first passing through a period of noisome decomposition, then ending as a fine, flaky dust. Wraiths with a magical bent harvest the eyes for use in rituals, but to no known effect.

Gallipoli

Harsh and barren even before the war's arrival here, the Gallipoli Peninsula supports only a few primitive villages. A narrow, twisting spine, which rises over 1,200 feet in some places, runs along its center, and steep escarpments overlook the sea. On the higher ground, a single dirt road connects four crumbling Turkish forts. Stunted pine trees and dense scrub dot treacherous slopes and the remnants of minefields.

In the Underworld, Gallipoli plays out layers of events simultaneously, as months of combat occur at once. In the waters surrounding the peninsula, the shadow-memories of British warships circle and fire toward the shore, while (mostly) nonexistent mines, U-boats and artillery fire menace the phantasmal attackers in turn. At the shore, small boats disgorge swarms of troops onto the few narrow beaches among the looming cliffs. Some of these Drones fall, again and again, to rifle fire from above as they crowd onto the open sand, others surge forward to dive for cover. A wraith in this area is sure to be jostled, perhaps even trampled, as the Drones swarm inland.

Further up the beachhead are the trenches. Intense heat, Plasmics that mimic biting flies, and the recollected stench of human waste assault the senses of wraiths who venture here. This area is deathly quiet compared to the chaos of troops near the shore. The air hangs still and stagnant. In the hills above, there are fewer Nihils, but some battle scenes still play out as shells from vanished ships blast apart long-gone Turkish fortifications over and over again.

A prominent memorial shines at the Anzac Cove inlet. It's dedicated to Australians and New Zealanders who died here and lent the place their *nom de guerre*.

The Marne

In September 1914, French soldiers clash here with Germans in one of the most confused battles of the war. The postwar terrain, once a fairly pastoral expanse alongside the Marne River, is one of shell-pocked hills and burned trees. So it remains in the Shadowlands, thanks to the Nihils opened at the Marne by the war.

Wraiths who approach the area become almost immediately disoriented (+1 difficulty to *all* Perception-related rolls). Clouds of dust swirl in the air to obscure vision and muffle sound. Shouts and murmurs mix with noises from vehicles and artillery fire. No visual hallucinations correspond to this cacophony, which therefore seems sourceless and even more disturbing.

Drones wearing the uniforms of both sides can be found moving in small groups without formation or any apparent purpose. They ferociously attack one another, until one side or the other prevails. Wraiths caught in their midst can only be losers, however, as the insensate warriors lash out with their bayonets and trench shovels.

Perhaps the most surreal images here are of Parisian taxicabs, from which pour French troops. These Drones seem eventually to overwhelm their German opponents — until these events cycle inexorably to their beginning, anyway. Proof that at least one of these taxis is no illusion comes from intrepid Emerald Legion Reapers, who use such a relic vehicle in gathering Drones at this site.

Passchendäle

Rain falls constantly at Passchendäle, also known as Ypres. No matter which direction wraiths face here, they find themselves buffeted by oncoming sheets of windborne water. During the worst Maelstrom conditions, the rain becomes blood, and visiblity becomes nearly impossible (+2 difficulty to all vision-based Perception rolls). The driving torrents slow any progress across the terrain. Amid the rain fall artillery shells, screaming suddenly out of the gray sky to explode with a spray of filthy debris. Cold, sticky mud sucks hungrily at anyone who trespasses here. Lightning flashes give stuttering illumination to this stretch of western Belgium, where three major battles were fought during the War to End All Wars. Frequently, these bolts are the black lightning characteristic of Maelstroms.

The fetid air smells of mud, mildew, blood and filth. Many of Passchendäle's Drones scurry about and tear at their own faces as a result of the poison gas that was used here so effectively. Others have the bloated appearance of men who, once wounded, drowned in the deep mud. The often blinding wind and rain can make it difficult to see these figures until they are only yards away.

Occasionally, a lone arm emerges from the morass to clutch at passersby. In some places, though, the so-called "Mired" are legion, with *dozens* of grasping, implacable limbs. The forms of the fallen moan or wail, and they reach out pleadingly. They are so covered in muck that it's seldom possible to tell which uniform they wore in life. Some Drones sink back and disappear at anyone's approach. Others, once again enacting their last living moments, attack with desperate strength and drag down any wraith unfortunate enough to be within reach. Some Restless believe that such unlucky individuals fall into one of the many Nihils that perforate the "landscape" here, but no one is sure.

The Somme

As the place blessed by the first touch of the Fourth Great Maelstrom, The Somme is Spectral holy ground. The Byway that once connected this area to points west ends in ruins amid the most horrifying environs of the European Shadowlands.

In the Skinlands, the Somme River flows through a small valley with steep hills. In the Shadowlands, the river stops flowing on July 1, 1916. Now, the valley slopes endlessly into the Labyrinth, widening as its banks collapse. The first wave of the Great Maelstrom blasts up into the dead sky in pitch-

black torrents. Anything caught in the wave immediately dissolves; Spectres seeking immediate Oblivion regard this passing as a mark of honor.

Knee-deep black sludge flows over the surrounding countryside, rising up over anything in its way. Beneath it, Spectres with Being in advanced stages of dissolution creep toward the great Nihil. Nothing in the Somme is entirely inanimate; even the dead trees worm their way along.

Doppelganger military bands patrol the perimeter of the battlefield to keep Oblivion's troops from wiping themselves out before Stygia falls. Inevitably, clever or desperate Spectres slip through to toss themselves into the Maelstrom with final glad cries. The more organized Spectres have left relic tanks stuck in various craters at the battlefield's perimeter. They hope the coveted weapons might entice foolish wraiths within the reach of Oblivion.

Verdun

Within a year of the Armistice, a memorial known as the Ossuary stands at Verdun. Although wraiths who visit this austere chapel find it produces a remarkable surge of well-being (characters who died as soldiers in the war can come here and use Legacy to regenerate aggravated damage *instantly*), few ever have the pleasure. The area around the chief Haunt at this battlefield is surrounded by a bewildering array of menaces. Semi-sentient clouds of plasmic gas lurk and dissolve wraiths they engulf. Icy gouts of barrow-flame billow from nowhere to consume anything in their path.

Memories of the bombardment here linger so strongly that the area is often quieter when the Maelstrom is blowing. When the hallucinatory battlescape is present, there barely seems to be terrain at all: Instead, earth, rocks and trees shower down as if just blasted into the sky by artillery detonations. Wraiths who venture onto the battlefield find themselves unable to communicate save by gesture and sign language. Even wraiths who've wandered harmlessly through this deluge find themselves shaken by the titanic din (+3 difficulty to *all* Perception rolls; one success is necessary on a Willpower roll, lest the character freeze in place or run in fear).

Shroud rating can vary over time. If the area that holds the destroyed object was long a war zone and only recently became peaceful, for instance, calculate the local Shroud rating for the roll as being a point or two lower to reflect the legacy of greater influence across the Shroud. Conversely, if sudden tragedy has only recently struck a previously peaceful locale, calculate the local Shroud rating a point or two higher.

In addition to the aforementioned gas and barrow-flame threats, Maelstrom-blown tumblewire — rolling clumps of relic barbwire that shred anything in their path — is another real danger to afterlife and limb. Note that unwalled cemetery Haunts offer no protection from these "physical" manifestations.

Relics

By definition, relics are objects from the living world invested with strong emotion, so that when they're destroyed, they emerge in the Shadowlands. But not every loved object survives as a relic. Whether an object becomes a relic should be a matter of Storyteller decision, taking account of the concerns of the chronicle. The following factors all influence the likelihood of an object becoming a relic:

• **The Shroud.** The lower the Shroud rating, the easier it is for an object to pass through intact.

• **Intense Attachment.** Objects that served as Fetters or Passion subjects rated at high levels become relics more easily than things that weren't particularly important to anyone.

• **Broad Attachment.** Objects that mattered to many people become relics more readily than those that mattered only to a few people.

• **Long Attachment.** Objects that lasted a long time and mattered to people across many years build up a reservoir of Pathos which eases the passage across the Shroud.

• **Assistance.** A variety of Arcanoi increase the odds of an object becoming a relic. See Chapter three for the listing of Great War Arcanoi.

None of these guidelines applies universally. Pathos flows peculiarly, like a river that sometimes loops back on itself and sometimes runs uphill, and "significance" is not a quality one can add or subtract by simple arithmetic.

For instance, a struggling writer's beloved pen, unknown to anyone but the one individual, is as likely to become a relic as a widely known newspaper, even one that stirred much emotion in its time. A brand-new battleship, a source of great national pride, may more readily become a relic than a long-respected old cruiser that's now fallen from favor, even though far more Pathos flowed into the cruiser over the years.

Relics By the Numbers

If the Storyteller would like to roll dice to reflect the randomness of relic formation, use the following system.

The Roll

Roll a number of dice equal to the highest rating the object had as a Passion subject or Fetter, with the local Shroud rating as difficulty. On a success, the object becomes a relic. On a failure, it becomes a powerless Artifact. On a botch, it disappears and never arrives in the Shadowlands at all.

Modifiers

Add dice to the pool for this roll as follows.

• **Breadth.** Add one die for each order of magnitude in the number of people who had the object as a Fetter or Passion subject: one die for 10 or more people, two dice for 100 or more, three dice for 1,000 or more and so on.

• **Length.** Add one die for each order of magnitude in the Skinlands existence of the object: one die for 10 years or more, two dice for 100 years or more, three dice for 1,000 years or more and so on.

The Storyteller should never roll more than one die for an object that didn't matter enough to anyone to become a Fetter or Passion subject.

Manifested Relics

The War to End All Wars creates a dark cornucopia of relics. This section describes the range of available ones. Storytellers and players should use the items listed here as starting points. Historical reference material can provide many more possibilities, and a chronicle gains in individual identity, depth and interest when it's filled with details from sources other than the rulebook.

Sea Vessels

Constant revolutionary upheaval characterizes warship design throughout the 19th century, and well beyond the War to End All Wars. The Stygian navy includes vessels that launched as national treasures, on the cutting edge of technology, only to meet their ends through sinking or decommissioning as obsolete nuisances a few decades later. Some remain strong symbols to the living, and therefore receive steady flows of Pathos and Memoriam, whereas others linger only in the memories of scholars, aficionados and individuals with personal connections. In the Shadowlands, substantial "class envy" exists among the sailors assigned to forgotten ships, which can never attain the clean sparkle or near-magical refittings granted to their more popular sister ships.

HMS Monarch

In 1869, the *Monarch* is the first battleship capable of sailing in deep ocean with a full iron hull. The vessel introduces the pattern of deck-mounted gun turrets to replace guns fired through portholes in the ship's sides. Unlike many of its successors, it supplements its steam turbines with auxiliary sails, but they seldom see use. The ship serves well for decades and provides distinctive images of British naval superiority; by the end of the century, though, it becomes obsolete and goes for scrap. The Iron Legion supervises its recovery, as numerous Iron veterans recall with satisfaction their tours aboard the *Monarch*.

The Office of Maelstrom Preparedness uses the *Monarch* for scientific study of the Tempest — its solid construction makes it relatively safe, its armament allows it to repel most threats and its hybrid propulsion gives it options to respond to rapidly changing conditions. During the Great Maelstrom, weather reports tend toward a certain monotony ("dangerously high winds, strange manifestations, many Spectres"). The *Monarch* serves during the Insurrection as an observation platform, making its way through treacherous seas on the trail of rebels who think themselves safe from all scrutiny.

Structural Integrity: 170

HMS Dreadnought

Dreadnought inaugurated the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany which was a major cause of continental war. The ship symbolizes technological prowess and military might as demonstrations of national prestige, with ever-rising costs carried by governments whose leaders rolled practical concerns and dreams of empire onto a single balance sheet. The *Dreadnought* sails for the first time in 1906. In 1915 it becomes the first and only battleship to ram and sink a submarine, a German U-boat. After the war ends, it moves to the reserve list, then gets sold for scrap in 1921. The accumulated passion vested in it ensures its easy transition across the Shroud as a relic. Thereafter, it sails under the Stygian flag.

Structural Integrity: 200

U-35 (5-point relic)

Under the command of Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière, U-35 and its crew sinks more than a third of a million tons of Allied shipping in the Mediterranean in 1916-17. Von Arnauld accumulates the national record for shipping sunk, some of it as commander of U-139, to which he was assigned after leaving U-35. He is among the more humane U-boat captains and one of the most efficient; his preference for shelling and boarding rather than using torpedoes leads to much more thorough documentation of the losses he inflicted, and it spared a great many lives. Von Arnauld remains haunted by the damage his U-boat did to the French cruiser *Gallia* in 1916. Hundreds died in confusion after a single torpedo strike caused the ship to sink rapidly. Von Arnauld's officers, taking turns at the periscope, shared his revulsion, and thereafter they demonstrated a sustained commitment to minimize lives lost because of their actions. At the end of the war, U-35 and its crew are interned along with other U-boats in Barcelona, and the Allies scuttle U-35 and the other German craft in the harbor the next year.

U-35's exploits garner publicity during the war, the ship as well as its captain enjoying attention as focal points for hopes that military prowess might remain compatible with old-fashioned chivalry. Throughout the 1920s, U-35 sails under the command of former first officer Max von Gunther, who dies of influenza the same month the Allies scuttle U-35. Still troubled by the *Gallia* incident, von Gunther resolves never to damn another soul. He and his crew gladly fight against Spectres, however, and their boat ranges widely in the seas around Europe and the Tempest beneath to protect Stygian vessels.

The relic U-35 is 212 feet long, with a top speed in calm condition of 22 mph. The boat is armed with four torpedo tubes and four four-inch guns. It needs 35 wraiths for a full crew; because wraiths don't need all the support facilities living people to, it can carry another 15 wraiths as passengers. Von Gunther and his crew frequently test out new weapons and assist in ferrying combat research teams deep into the Tempest.

Aircraft

German

Fokker DR. I

Entered Service: August 1917

Description: Made famous by Manfred Von Richthofen, this triplane is probably the most visually well-known German aircraft of the war. Not as fast as the biplanes of its period, but highly maneuverable, the DR. I is an excellent and durable dogfighter.

Structural Integrity: 12

Maneuverability: 9

Armament: 2 Synchronized Spandau (Damage 8, 20 shots)

Britain

Vickers F.B.5

Entered Service: July 1915

Description: A peculiar-looking "pusher" biplane, the F.B. 5 was the first purpose-built Allied fighter. With the prop to the rear and a tailgun-like turret on the nose, the underpowered F.B.5 was "Fokker fodder" to the German E.1's synchronized machine gun.

Structural Integrity: 8

Maneuverability: 4

Armament: Nose gunner with 2 Lewis guns (Damage 8, 5 shots per magazine, +1 difficulty to the Shot roll)

Sopwith Camel F.1

Entered Service: Late 1916

Description: The Camel was a deadly aircraft, both to opponents and to its pilots. An excellent dogfighter, the Camel was, like the SPAD, a tricky plane to fly. The aircraft's rotary engine torqued so hard to the right that pilots often tied the stick off to the left with a hank of rope for long flights, and were said to make 270 degree right turns rather than bank left, because it was faster.

Structural Integrity: 12

Maneuverability: 9 (a botch almost certainly means the pilot has lost control of the aircraft)

Armament: 2 Synchronized Vickers (Damage 8, 20 Shots)

Handley-Page V/1500

Entered Service: Late 1918

Description: Only three of these aircraft were made before the end of the war, providing a taste of things to come,. The V/1500 had a crew of 6, four engines and a 126-foot wingspan. Carrying a tremendous payload of bombs (for the time), the Handley Page was the first real heavy bomber to enter service.

Structural Integrity: 28

Maneuverability: Cannot engage in the turning fight. Automatically rolls 0 successes.

Armament: More than five guns in several positions. Treat all incoming aircraft as subject to a (damage 8) tailgun attack by a gunner of some arbitrary skill.

France

Nieuport 11

Entered Service: July 1915

Description: Affectionately known as the "Baby," the highly maneuverable Nieuport 11 was originally designed as a racing aircraft. With only a single Lewis Gun, the Nieuport 11 was underarmed and suffered from lower wings that often tore off in steep dives.

Structural Integrity: 10

Maneuverability: 7

Armament: 1 Lewis gun (Damage 5, 5 shots per magazine, +1 difficulty to the Shot roll)

Breguet Br. 14 (bomber)

Entered Service: July 1917

Description: A versatile light bomber manufactured in huge numbers during the war, the Br. 14 saw service as an air ambulance, bomber, scout and seaplane. With a crew of two (pilot and tail gunner) the Br. 14 had a 250 mile range, and almost three hours of endurance.

The Night Mail

The crew of LZ4 leads an informal alliance, comprising aviators of all kinds, that calls itself "the Night Mail." Its pilots pledge themselves to preserving the flow of information and essential goods throughout Stygia: When all else fails, the Night Mail gets through. The Hierarchy takes no note of the Night Mail. Officially, each Legion operates some relic aircraft (both lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air vehicles). In practice, the Anacreons of many Necropoli, particularly in remote and attack-prone borderlands of the Dark Kingdom of Iron, rely on the Night Mail in moments of crisis.

Structural Integrity: 18

Maneuverability: Cannot engage in the turning fight. Automatically rolls zero successes.

Armament: Tail gunner with 2 Vickers (Damage 8, 20 Shots)
300 kg of bombs

SPAD S.XIII

Entered Service: September 1917

Description: Also manufactured in large numbers, the S.XIII was flown by nearly all the major French aces. Like the Sopwith Camel, the S.XIII was a powerful plane, but very unstable and difficult for inexperienced pilots to fly.

Structural Integrity: 12

Maneuverability: 9 (a botch almost certainly means the pilot has lost control of the aircraft)

Armament: 2 Synchronized Vickers (Damage 8, 20 Shots)

United States of America

JN-4 "Jenny"

Entered Service: 1916

Description: While it never actually saw combat (American combat pilots flew planes from other nations), the JN-4 was used extensively as a trainer in the US. After the war, many were sold as surplus, and they became the trademark aircraft of barnstormers, daredevils and mail couriers.

Structural Integrity: 10

Maneuverability: 6

Armament: None

Zeppelin LZ4

On July 1, 1908, Count von Zeppelin demonstrates LZ4, his most recent airship, to the people of southern Germany and northern Switzerland in a 12-hour flight across the Alps. Thousands of people see the airship pass overhead, and news reports bring airships into the European popular consciousness. When a fire destroys the airship in August, donations from the German people total more than six million marks. In one fell swoop, Zeppelin recovers all the money he'd spent in a decade of previously unsuccessful efforts to win approval. He has enough left over to found Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH, the company that dominates German airship development thereafter.

The LZ4 flies up to 50 mph in clear conditions, minus five mph per level of Maelstrom force. Its keel glows with a soft light that becomes more intense as Maelstrom force rises, and the glow around the ship seems to repel Oblivion's forces. The pilot must make a Pilot + Argos roll each scene (difficulty 5 plus the current Maelstrom force); each success removes one die from the dice pool of all Spectral and Plasmic damage inflicted on the airship or its passengers. Maelstrom winds interfere with the LZ4's movements at half their normal strength, cut by the combination of good design and intense concentration of Pathos.

The airship requires a crew of 10 to operate, with primary and secondary pilots, a navigator, engineers and technicians to keep engines working, buoyancy neutral and so on. It can carry up to 25 passengers and 15 tons of cargo in holds inside the ship's main gas envelope. The ship doesn't require lighter-than-air gas to operate, but instead runs on a steady flow of Pathos, either from Artifacts that can store it or from the crew and passengers. Because the standard crew members are all airship enthusiasts, a full crew can supply much or all of the 10 Pathos per hour the LZ4 needs and still keep themselves invigorated, thanks to the exercise of their Passions.

As in life, the ship is 147 yards long and 14 yards wide amidships. It has 17 uniform-sized gas cells inside an aluminum framework, with a combined capacity of 15,000 cubic yards. In life, two 105 horsepower Daimler engines drove it; now a system of four custom-built Pathos-burning engines move the ship. It has no known upper range limit: as long as the Pathos flows, the LZ4 flies. The ship has a distinctive tail design, with a vertical rudder separating a double fin arrangement, like an extremely squashed X.

The Tools of War

Barbwire (1-point relic)

Although plentiful in the Skinlands, barbwire adorning Europe's Shadowlands battlefields is mostly illusory. What makes the trip across the Shroud is wire that traps soldiers who, unable to free themselves, then endure slow deaths or who watch helplessly as tanks or other forms of expedient demise approach. In the Underworld, Maelstrom winds often cause anchorless strands of barbwire to "snowball" together, producing the dangerous phenomenon dubbed "tumblewire" by dead Yanks (who liken it, obviously, to tumbleweeds). Tumblewire is prized as shot for muzzle loaders, but harvesting it is treacherous and grisly work: The stuff must be picked clean of whatever stray bits of wraiths or Plasmics it might have collected.

Boots (2-point relic)

These relics are always found on the corpora of the Drones that wander the Shadowlands. The footwear adjusts size to fit its current wearer, after he wears them once during Slumber. Once adjusted this way, the boots add two dice to the wearer's dice pool for Dodge. They also protect against all nonaggravated damage from caltrops, poisonous spines of ground-crawling creatures and the like, and they allow the wearer to soak such aggravated damage.

Canteen (2-point relic)

This battered metal container, of the sort available in every European army, holds a quart of water or other liquid in

life, and it comes with a strap for carriage over the shoulder or on the belt. As a relic, while its owner Slumbers, the canteen refills itself. The contents taste pleasant but not terribly exciting to its wraithly owner: Water's typical, but many relic canteens seem to contain tea, milk or some other common drink. The contents provide two points of Pathos, which the owner gets on consuming the canteen's contents. She can ration them out or get them both at once. Once the canteen takes two points of damage, it appears dented and thereafter generates only one point of Pathos per Slumber. Once the canteen takes four points of damage, it leaks; the owner must drink out the point of Pathos within an hour of waking and must use that Pathos within the same hour or lose it. Five points of damage destroys the canteen.

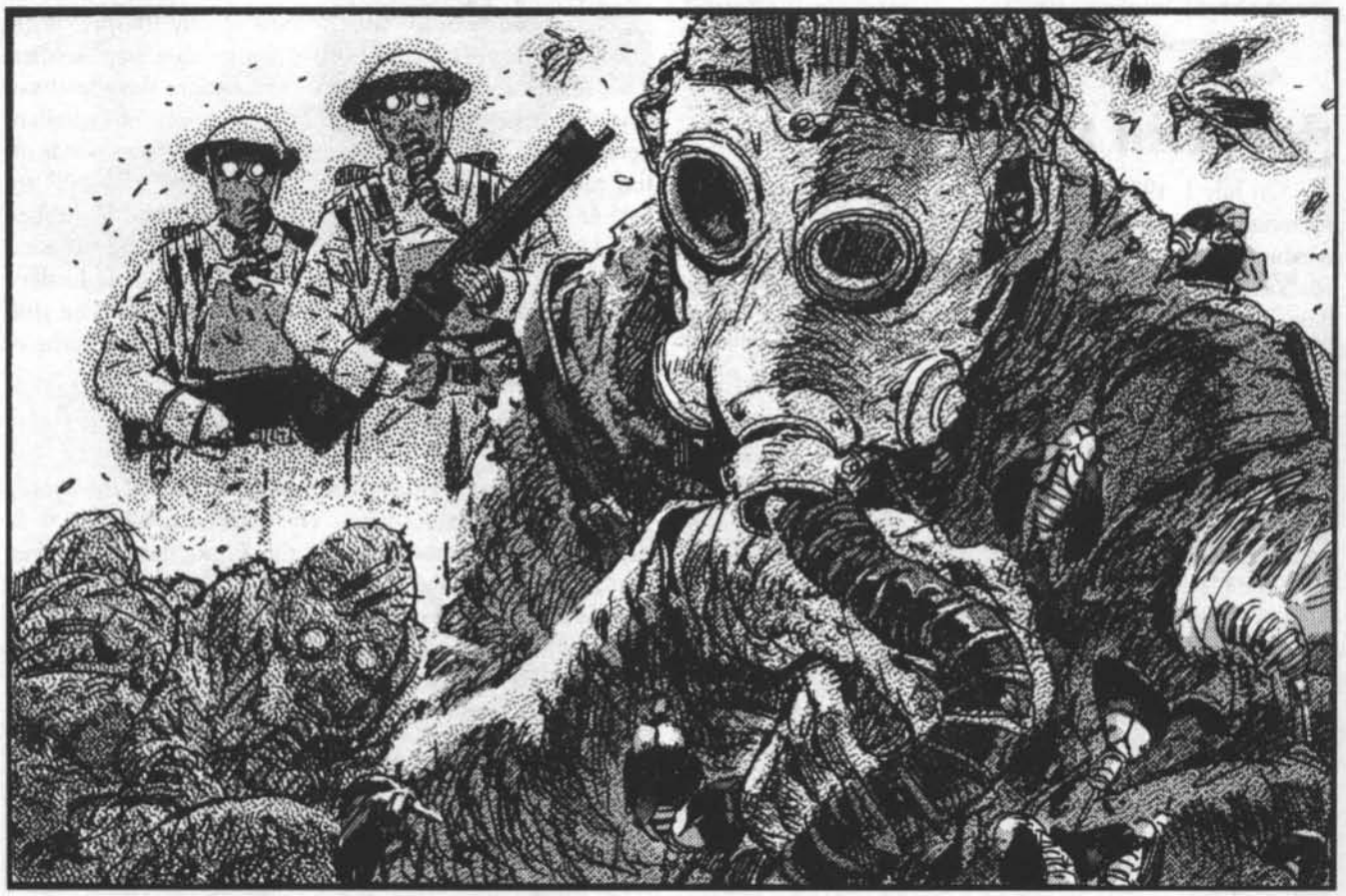
Entrenching Shovel (2-point relic)

In the Skinlands, this short-handled, wide-bladed tool was made to dig fast and deep. In the Shadowlands, there is no digging. The Tempest underlies ghostly "ground," or does when it's not boiling forth in the form of the Maelstrom. Across the Shroud, these shovels mainly see use as battle axes, just as they did in close-quarters trench warfare. For purposes of combat mechanics, treat it like a saber (difficulty 6, Strength + 4 damage, Conceal rating T). A wraith using it as a weapon takes no difficulty penalty for close quarters, as the shovel's handle is so short. If the damage roll produces a number of successes equal to or greater than the wraith's Strength + 3, the shovel gets stuck in the corpus of the target. The wraith must spend the next opportunity for action making a Strength roll (difficulty 5) to extract the instrument.

Gas Mask (2-point relic)

This gas mask is a typical British or French model, consisting of a heavy cloth hood reinforced by rubber or other insulating material. It has glass lenses for the eyes, multiple layers of fine porous filters to breathe through, and a weighted collar to keep the hood settled firmly. The hood obscures all senses: Add one to the difficulty to Perception rolls while wearing this relic, plus one more for each Maelstrom force rating above one.

What the gas mask provides in return for all this inconvenience is a great deal of protection. The wearer soaks with Stamina + 4 against airborne damage: corrosive mists, Plasmic spittle and the like. Arcanoi and Dark Arcanoi attacks that rely on the wearer's seeing or hearing something are at +2 difficulty.



Timeline

1820s Fetters of Deathlords Destroyed. Charon's also seemingly destroyed. Charon dispatches inquisitors to uncover the culprit.

1828 Charon retreats to Onyx Tower

1904 Russian Defeat at Port Arthur. Bleak Legionnaires begin covert Reaping of Japanese wraiths.

1905 Charon reported seen in the Labyrinth.

1914 Austrian Arch Duke Ferdinand and his wife assassinated in Sarajevo. The War to End All Wars begins. More than 600 Jade Kingdom wraiths sent west into Thralldom.

1916 First Zeppelin Raid on Paris. Gas masks and steel helmets introduced in German army. Rasputin killed. Cyrus Eburn dies in plane crash during training. Marcus Stavaston takes command of the Warriors of Lethe. Fourth Great Maelstrom begins during Battle of the Somme. Boston Necropolis sacked by Coldheart.

1917 The Night of Short Chains: European Anacreons imprisoned or soulforged. Smiling Lord claims Onyx Tower and declares himself Imperator of Stygia. Maelstrom prevents wraiths from manifesting at remote Fetters. Mary Mallon Club, a Skeletal Legion society comprising victims of Typhoid Mary, founded.

1918 Spanish Flu pandemic begins. Armistice Day. Czar Nicholas II and family executed. Women over 30 get the vote in Britain. Food shortage in Britain, rationing and food kitchens for the poor. Gavrilo Princip, Archduke Ferdinand's assassin, dies of tuberculosis in an Austrian prison. Marcus Stavaston assumes command of the Warriors of Lethe.

1919 Prohibition begins in United States. First League of Nations meeting. Hapsburg dynasty exiled from Austria. Kurt Eisner, Bavarian Premier, assassinated. New German Constitution at Weimar. Treaty of Versailles signed by Germany. Two-minute silence in Britain to remember Armistice day. Lady Astor becomes first female member of Parliament. Red Army aggression in eastern Europe. First transatlantic flight from Newfoundland to Ireland.

1920 Thompson submachine gun patented. League of Nations comes into being. Red Army takes more eastern European territory. Short-lived monarchist coup in Berlin. Women gain vote in United States. Joan of Arc canonized. Earthquake in China kills 200,000. Olympic games held at Antwerp, Belgium; US claims most medals. Gandhi becomes leader of Indian Independence movement. Bomb explosion on Wall Street kills 35 people. Site of original baseball field in Cooperstown, New York, made permanent memorial; numerous dead guys maffick. Gangland violence in Chicago incited by Spectres and Puppeteers. Emerald Legion joins the Loyalist cause.

1921 Revolution in Lisbon; dictator Antonio Machado Santos murdered. Premier of Japan assassinated. Hirohito named prince-regent of Japan. Unknown soldier interred at Arlington National Cemetery. The Ku Klux Klan resurges into violent action in the southern United States.

1922 Raymond Poincare New Prime Minister in France. Pope Benedict XV dies, replaced by Pope Pius XI. Gandhi sentenced to six years imprisonment. Hunger march to London by unemployed Glasgow workers. Mussolini founds Fascist government in Italy. Irish free state proclaimed. USSR formed. Sir Henry Wilson, British field marshal and politician, assassinated. Alexander Graham Bell dies. Stock market boom begins. The cocktail becomes popular in Europe.

1923 Tokyo and Yokohama destroyed by earthquake; 120,000 killed. Miguel Primo de Rivera becomes dictator of Spain. Value of German mark drops to 4,000,000 to 1 US dollar. Pancho Villa, Mexican hero, dies. US President Warren G. Harding dies, replaced by Calvin Coolidge. First birth control clinic opens in New York.

1924 V. I. Lenin dies. Woodrow Wilson dies. Ancient Monument Society founded in London. US excludes Japanese immigration. Calvin Coolidge becomes US President. J. Edgar Hoover appointed director of the Bureau of Investigation (pre-FBI). First use of insecticide. Olympic games in Paris. First Winter Olympics held at Chamonix. Infamous murderers Leopold and Loeb convicted in America.

1925 Hindenburg elected president of Germany. Solar eclipse occurs in New York. "Scopes Monkey Trial" begins. Aerial assault on Spectres proves great success.

1926 General strike called in Britain. Poincare becomes premier of France. Germany admitted to League of Nations. Hirohito becomes emperor of Japan. Socialist Eugene V. Debs dies.

1927 German economy collapses. Al Jolson stars in the first feature-length talkie, *The Jazz Singer*. Airplanes first used to dust crops. Great flood disaster in Lower Mississippi Valley. Lizzie Borden accused of murdering parents. Iron lung invented.

1928 Sixty-five nations sign Kellogg-Briand Pact in Paris outlawing war. First five-year plan established in USSR Herbert Hoover elected US president. Penicillin discovered by Alexander Fleming. Olympic games held in Amsterdam. Thames River overflows in England. Amelia Earhart crosses the Atlantic by plane.

1929 King Alexander I of Yugoslavia becomes dictator. Lateran Treaty establishes Vatican City as a sovereign nation. St. Valentines Day massacre occurs in Chicago. The term "apartheid" used for the first time. Stock market crashes in New York. Fourth Great Maelstrom quelled. Smiling Lord toppled. Charon purges all records of the Insurrection from Imperial histories, and even memories of the events begin to fade.

Afterword

As I write these words, the 80th anniversary of Armistice Day, the official end of World War I, is only two weeks away. Although still observed in the United States, the date is likely to pass with minimal recognition and limited remembrance here. Most veterans of the Great War are long dead, and the conflict is thus too easily depersonalized. Worse, remembrance is far from the favorite pastime of United States citizens (I do not say "American," for attitudes about the war differ in Canada); thus, WWI often becomes, historically, a mere precursor to WWII — the *Good* War, the one with clear and righteous purpose.

Something one of my coworkers said remtnded me that 80 years is only an eyeflash, and that we forget an event such as the First World War at our peril. He said that his grandfather had died, years after the armistice, as a consequence of poison-gas exposure during the war.

His words underlined what I had come to feel in the course of researching this book: Even for US soldiers, who entered the conflict only near its end, WWI was a terrible and scarring struggle. For Europeans, it was nigh-apocalyptic. It introduced weapons that changed not simply the ways of waging war, but also the way humanity thinks about war. In its wake, notions of dying nobly for one's country seemed antiquated and absurd. Equally undermined were the already-shaky faith in monarchy and, by association, belief in God. Could kings, queens, kaisers and czars *truly* be exercising divine right as they changed whole continents into abattoirs? What kind of supreme being could preside over that order? Innocence died in the war, and from its ashes came the modern world.

But it's not enough to consider the war's consequences in merely political or philosophical terms. The First World War killed *millions* in horrible fashion, and not just soldiers. Civilians, like their uniformed counterparts, were starved, burned, blasted apart and shot. To forget the suffering and loss of those millions is to risk replaying their tragedy.

On its face, a game that derives from such misery appears wrongheaded, a trivialization. I don't believe that's what **Wraith: The Great War** is, however. Yes, it is unquestionably an entertainment, but like **Wraith: The Oblivion**, W:TGW is about ghosts, and for many (including me), ghosts signify memories. The ghosts in this game are not refighting the war, they are dealing with its tremendous consequences. And, to some extent, they are fighting to be remembered. If players portraying the ghosts in this game enjoy themselves as they do so, this book will have fulfilled its commercial purpose. If, in the course of roleplaying, someone learns something they didn't know about the war, its combatants or its victims, this book will have fulfilled its artistic purpose. And if a roleplayer finds herself pondering the lives of real people who died in the war, memory takes on a life of its own, and somewhere, "real" ghosts are placated.

This book is dedicated to the memory of all who died in the First World War.

Ed Hall

Name: **Nature:** **Life:**

Player: **Demeanor:** **Death:**

Chronicle: **Shadow:** **Regret:**

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●OOOO
Dexterity ●OOOO
Stamina ●OOOO

Social

Charisma ●OOOO
Manipulation ●OOOO
Appearance ●OOOO

Mental

Perception ●OOOO
Intelligence ●OOOO
Wits ●OOOO

Abilities

Talents

Alertness OOOOO
Athletics OOOOO
Awareness OOOOO
Brawl OOOOO
Dodge OOOOO
Empathy OOOOO
Expression OOOOO
Intimidation OOOOO
Subterfuge OOOOO
Urbanism OOOOO

Skills

Crafts OOOOO
Etiquette OOOOO
Firearms OOOOO
Leadership OOOOO
Meditation OOOOO
Melee OOOOO
Performance OOOOO
Pilot OOOOO
Stealth OOOOO

Knowledge

Bureaucracy OOOOO
Enigmas OOOOO
Heavy Weaponry OOOOO
Investigation OOOOO
Law OOOOO
Linguistics OOOOO
Medicine OOOOO
Occult OOOOO
Politics OOOOO
Science OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds

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Passions

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Fetters

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Corpus

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Willpower

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Pathos

❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

Arcanoi

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