

UNWELCOME GUESTS



PRESCOTT - ARTIST, MARYLOND - WRITER



TWO KINGS.

BEATS ME. DAMN RAGABASH.



HEH-HEH.



THE FOUR OF US AREN'T HERE TO CAUSE TROUBLE. WE'RE JUST HERE TO GET SOME ANSWERS.



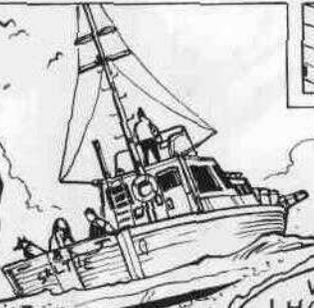
WE'VE ALL HAD SOME EXPERIENCE WITH ONE OF THE CHANGING BREEDS NOBODY EVER TALKS ABOUT.

PLAY AGAIN?

HELL, NO.

THE ROKEA.

THIS IS NOT A BOAT OF HUMANS. THEIR SCENT IS STRONGER - URGENT, RICH.



THEY ARE WOLF-CHANGERS.

WAVE-CREST, I HAVE SEEN THEM BEFORE. THEY CAPTURE SHARKS BUT ALWAYS RELEASE THEM UNHARMED.

ALL-SEAS, THE YOUNGEST OF OUR SLEW, URGES MAKING CONTACT WITH THEM.

WOULD THEY BE FORGIVING, I WONDER, IF WE PULLED DINGOES INTO SEA AND RELEASED THEM?



NORMALLY, DIRTWALKER CHANGERS AVOID US. I DO NOT LIKE THEIR SUDDEN INTEREST.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, HUNTER?



I'M CALLED MARTIN ONE-NAME BECAUSE I TRY TO CLASSIFY THINGS. SURE, IT'S WEAVER-LIKE, BUT IT MAKES LIFE A BIT EASIER.

HEY, JOSEPH, THIS ABOUT WHERE YOU SAW IT?

PRETTY CLOSE. THE REEF I GOT STUCK ON IS ABOUT TWO KILOMETERS NORTH OF HERE.



OK, WE'LL HEAD THAT WAY AND TAKE A LOOK AROUND.

WHAT'S THE PLAN, ANYWAY?

WE'RE GOING TO LET AUSTIN DIVE IN AND TAKE A LOOK AROUND.

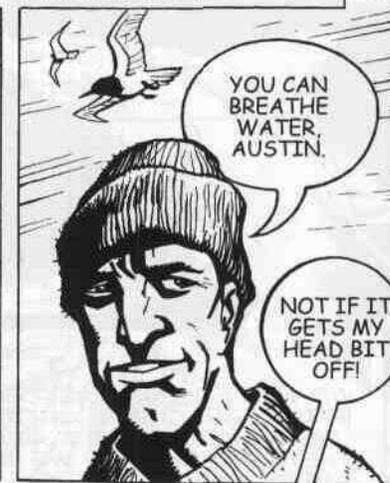
YEAH, RIGHT!



WITHOUT MUCH FANCY GEAR, WE HAVE TO RELY ON THE GIFTS OF GAIA, NAMELY AUSTIN'S USEFUL ABILITY.

YOU CAN BREATHE WATER, AUSTIN.

NOT IF IT GETS MY HEAD BIT OFF!



WE HAVE A SPEAR GUN OR SOMETHING I COULD TAKE?

NO.



SEA KNOWS WE'RE HERE. SEA'S WAITING FOR US TO DO SOMETHING STUPID.

HOW ABOUT TORPEDOES?

SEA SPIRITS ARE RESTLESS. SAILORS TAKE WARNING.

NOT NOW, SEA-DOG. NO, WE HAVEN'T GOT ANY WEAPONS. WE'VE SEEN ROKEA BEFORE AND THEY'VE HELPED US.

NO REASON TO ASSUME THE WORST NOW.

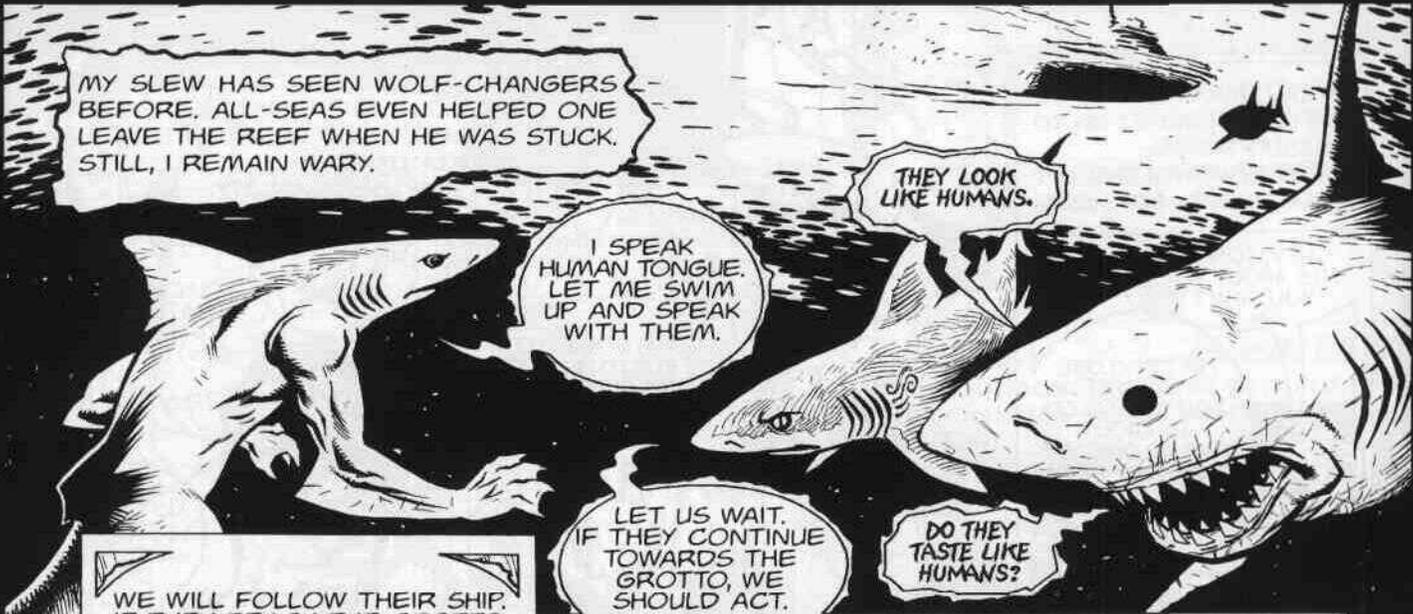
THE ONE I SAW WASN'T TRYING TO HELP - IT WAS JUST HUNGRY. ANYWAY, WHAT ABOUT NORMAL SHARKS?



YOU'VE FACED WORSE THAN SHARKS, BEARS-THE-STORM-FOR-THE-DYING-MOTHER.

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M JUST BEING PARANOID.





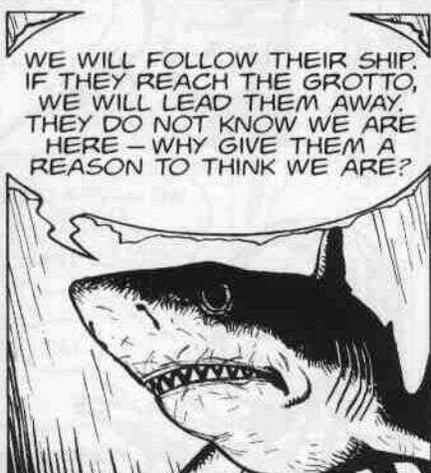
MY SLEW HAS SEEN WOLF-CHANGERS BEFORE. ALL-SEAS EVEN HELPED ONE LEAVE THE REEF WHEN HE WAS STUCK. STILL, I REMAIN WARY.

THEY LOOK LIKE HUMANS.

I SPEAK HUMAN TONGUE. LET ME SWIM UP AND SPEAK WITH THEM.

LET US WAIT. IF THEY CONTINUE TOWARDS THE GROTTO, WE SHOULD ACT.

DO THEY TASTE LIKE HUMANS?



WE WILL FOLLOW THEIR SHIP. IF THEY REACH THE GROTTO, WE WILL LEAD THEM AWAY. THEY DO NOT KNOW WE ARE HERE - WHY GIVE THEM A REASON TO THINK WE ARE?



To the Grotto... to wait.



VERY WELL. WHERE ARE YOU GOING, NO-PREY-REMAINS?



GLUTTON... ONE OF US SHOULD SWIM CLOSE AND WATCH THEIR ACTIVITY.

I WILL.



NO, I WILL. I DO NOT WISH FOR YOU TO BE OVERCOME WITH CURIOSITY. KEEP PACE BUT STAY BACK.



I DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR OBSESSION WITH DIRTWALKERS.

NOT WISHING TO HIDE FROM THEM OR EAT THEM DOES NOT MAKE ME OBSESSED.

WHAT'S TO FEAR FROM THEM?

NOT THEM...



WHAT THEY BRING WITH THEM.

I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.
WATER'S PRETTY CLEAR —
LOOKS DEEP BUT
I CAN SEE THE REEF.

JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T
SEE ANY SHARKS
DOESN'T MEAN
THEY AREN'T THERE.

DON'T BLEED
OR THRASH
AND YOU'LL BE
FINE.



WISH ME
LUCK, GUYS.

WHAT
THE FU-

AAAARRRGH!!!

ARE YOU
INJURED? HOW
CAN YOU
BREATHE?

DON'T
BOTHER, HE
CAN'T FEEL
THE SENDING.

ALL-SEAS!
NOT SO
CLOSE!

YEAAAARRR!!





AAARGH!

M...MUST...
GET TO THE
SURFACE...

WAVE-
CREST! OUT OF
THE WAY!

KRA-
B



DIE
WOLF-
CHANGER!

B
M



ALL-SEAS MUST
BE ON BOARD
THE SHIP.

I'LL GET
HER
BACK.

I WILL FIND
NO-PREY-
REMAINS.



MY GOD!

WHERE'S
AUSTIN?

M...M...MIS...
MISTAKE....

WHO ARE
YOU?

PLEASE...
CALL OFF...
ATTACK...
BEFORE NO-
PREY-
REMAINS....



NO PREY REMAINS?
WHAT THE HELL
DOES THAT MEAN?

PROBABLY
MEANS THEY
ATE AUSTIN!
GODDAMNIT!



WELL, THIS
IS AN ACT OF
VIOLENCE.

THEY THINK
WE'RE HERE TO
DAMAGE THEIR
REEF!



...WE'RE HERE TO
DAMAGE THEIR
REEF!

I HAVE
HEARD
ENOUGH!

HYUURRK!

MARTIN!

MARTIN,
DON'T!

I... I THINK IT'S
ALL RIGHT,
JOSEPH!

I'LL BE
RIGHT
BACK!



GRRRRRR



WHAT IS
IT SEA-D...



WE WILL SINK THE SHIP FOR
SEA TO DIGEST.

AND THE WOLF-
CHANGERS WILL DIE...



...PAINFULLY...



...AND IN MANY PIECES.



EXTRAORDINARY!

THEY'VE GIVEN ME GILLS.
PERHAPS THEY WISH TO TALK.



IF SO...
MAYBE,

JUST MAYBE...



...THIS CAN ALL
STILL END WELL.

By Matthew McFarland



POKÉA
TM

Credits

Author: Matthew McFarland

Developer: Ethan Skemp

Editor: Aileen E. Miles

Art Director: Aileen E. Miles

Art: Brian LeBlanc, Steve Prescott, Jeff Rebner, Ron Spencer, Greg Williams

Back Cover Art: Steve Prescott

Layout & Typesetting: Aileen E. Miles



735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, GA 30021
USA

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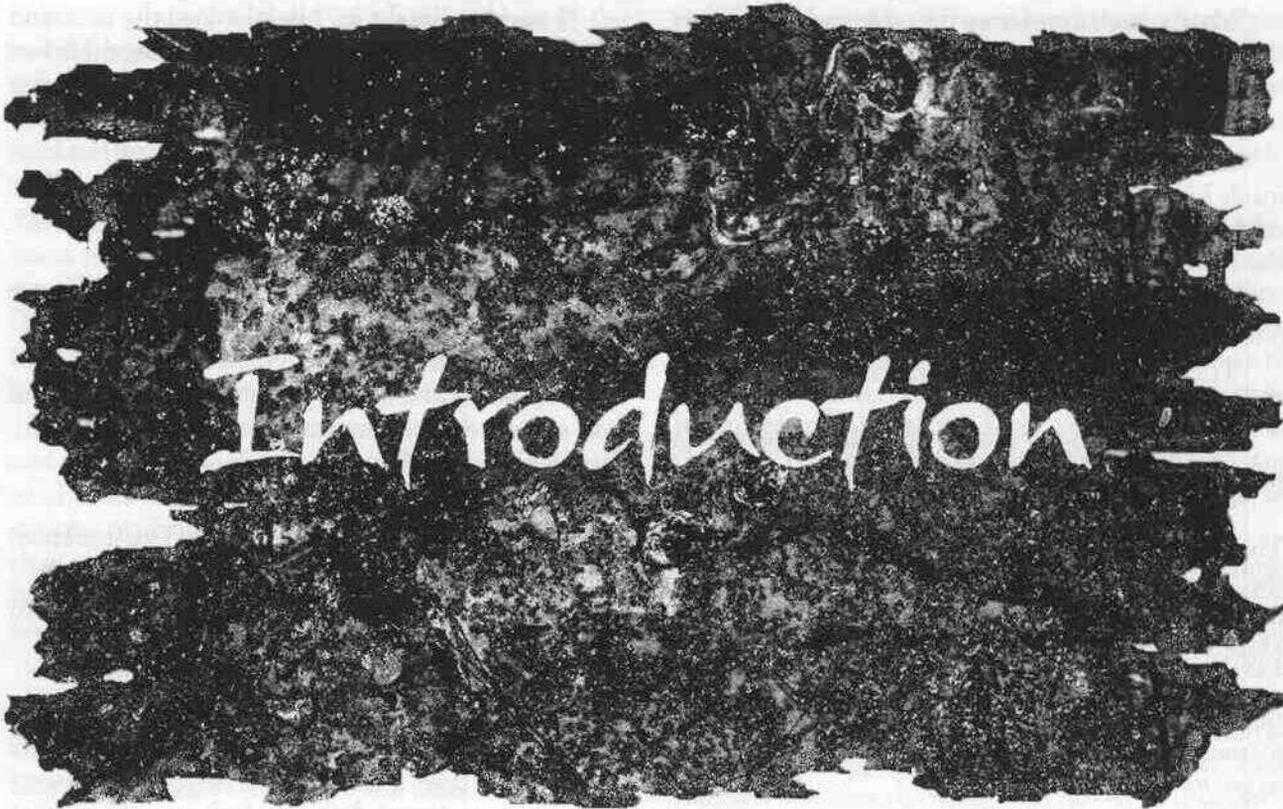
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ROKEA™

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Introduction

"We're not just afraid of predators, we're transfixed by them, prone to weave stories and fables and chatter endlessly about them, because fascination creates preparedness, and preparedness, survival. In a deeply tribal sense, we love our monsters."

— E. O. Wilson, sociobiologist, as quoted in *Monsters of the Sea* by Richard Ellis

Mateo fires the last remaining shell in his shotgun at the sharkman. Its left shoulder explodes into a pulpy, bloody mess and it slumps back against the wall. It's already missing its right foot and a wound in its thigh has already stained its leg crimson. As Mateo watches, the grotesque on the floor begins to heal, the muscles rejoining, flesh realigning, blood slowly clotting and scabbing before his eyes.

Unfortunately for the sharkman, Mateo expected that. He loads his 12-gauge with four more shells — and these, unlike the conventional lead shot that he used for the first three shots, Mateo had filled with the remnants of his silver rings.

The sharkman's foot heals and he lurches to a standing position, still eerily silent, but the hatred and rage pulsing from him speaks to Mateo clearly enough. Mateo climbs onto a table; the little seaside

restaurant went bankrupt a year ago, but the furniture is still here. The height advantage gives Mateo a clear shot. The shell promptly shears the sharkman's still-tender foot away. The beast collapses, and Mateo hears it for the first time — not with words, but with a... *current* between them. Even then, the message isn't of words, it is a scream of pain, and Mateo can't help yelling in triumph.

"Got it, fucker!" he screams. "I know how to kill you! I know how to fucking kill you! Want some more, bitch?" He pumps the shotgun and aims at the sharkman's head.

The sharkman pushes itself back until it leans on an overturned table, and then slowly shrinks into a human body. The body is ugly and walleyed, and the hammerhead's features are still visible to Mateo. "What do you want of me?" it rasps.

Mateo jumps down from the table and approaches the thing slowly. "What am I?" he asks, as calmly as he can.

"How in hell should I know, dirtwalker?"

Mateo feels anger like he's never known churn inside him. He feels like blood on asphalt. He feels he could eat glass. His skin itches and he fires a shot into the table, not three inches from the sharkman.

"What am I?" he shrieks, not even trying to remain calm.

The sharkman sighs. "Dead. Fish food. Just not quite yet."

Mateo's breathing slows a bit. "No reason not to tell me then."

"All right. Just know I'll eat you myself someday." The sharkman does not speak as though he relishes the idea, nor does he seem afraid or disgusted. He makes the statement matter-of-factly, and that chills Mateo's blood.

It sits up a bit straighter. "Now then, you do not run when you see Standing Jaws, and have the courage to stand and fight. What's more, you are clever enough to use moon's blood against us."

"Moon's blood?"

"Silver."

Mateo scoffs. "That's gay. Why not just say silver?"

The sharkman frowns. "*Por que no dice 'plata'?*"

Mateo flushes angrily. "Yeah. Well, I figured, it burnt me when I touched it..." The sharkman lunges forward, still in human form and grabs Mateo's leg. Mateo jams the barrel of the gun into one of its eyes. "Let go now, fucker, or it's your brains on that table."

The sharkman releases him, but the amused air is gone. "You are a Changer, I assume. What happened? Did you awaken among the bloodied corpses of friends, longing to howl at the moon? Have you dreamed of dragons lately — or felt a special empathy with that alligator-skin belt you wear?"

"No." Mateo suddenly realizes he has no way to explain this. "I haven't been dreaming at all lately. And the sea..." he gazes out the window at it. "I get sad. Like lonely, when I see the ocean. But I feel like I should stay here, on land, and then last night..." The sharkman looks angry. Not just angry, he looks like he just might change back that that half-shark thing and take Mateo's head off, silver or no. Mateo retreats to his perch on the table.

"What happened last night?" The thing's voice, never melodious to begin with, drops to a gravelly rumble.

"I work on the docks. I help unload the nets, and cut out anything that we can't use. Some big shark had fouled in the net, and as I was cutting it out, I just felt pissed. I don't know, more pissed than I ever did. Like I never really wanted to kill anybody before, but I felt like finding the captain and eating his face for killing the shark. I wasn't thinking. I just jumped in the water, just to stop feeling so pissed."

The sharkman is silent, but the look on his face is utter rage and disbelief.

"Yeah, I changed. But I changed into a shark. I came up out of the ocean this afternoon, naked and just..." he searches for a word and looks to his groin. The sharkman nods.

"You wanted to mate."

"To mate. Christ. Yeah." A pause. The sharkman doesn't blink, doesn't move, only stares at the gun.

"You lie," he says. "There are no human-born among true Rokea."

"What the fuck is Rokea?"

The sharkman laughs. It sounds as though laughter is foreign to the thing's throat. The sound is more a wet choke than a laugh. Nonetheless, it reassures Mateo to some degree. At least it feels something other than rage. "Rokea, dirtwalker, is me. And, if you are telling the truth, which I doubt, you. You, however, will never know the beauty of the reefs, the strange song of the deep, nor the thrill and power of hunting with your slew. You won't because, as I said, you are destined for my gullet."

"Yeah, whatever, gill-man. Suppose you've got a story for all this."

The sharkman smiles. "My name, or a close guess in your tongue, is Guards-the-Shoals. And indeed I do have a story. Is the gun heavy? I do hope so, Mateo."

Did I tell it my name? thinks Mateo desperately. The gun is heavy, and Mateo rests it, still pointed at the thing, on his lap.

"Our history is older than any on earth, and I know it all. Your arms will tire, land-dweller. You cannot hope to escape your fate, but at least you will understand it. So listen well, and ignore the fatigue that sets in. It will catch up with you soon enough. And I hunger."

•••

Sharks predate every other large predator on the planet. They have remained virtually unchanged for millions of years. They are apex predators, which means that the only animals that naturally prey on them are in the same taxonomic class (that is, other sharks). They possess an undeniable mystique and

nobility — every islander or coastal culture in the world has deified them in some way. Some cultures regard them as demons, some as benevolent gods or the reincarnations of loved ones. All, however, have respected the shark's power and ferocity.

Only recently has popular opinion turned in favor of the shark. Peter Benchley's novel, *Jaws*, and the subsequent movies portrayed the shark as a relentless man-eater. Even the more recent films like *Deep Blue Sea* cast the shark as a villain, and asked a terrifying question — what if the shark, the oldest predator on earth, the swift and efficient killing machine, what if it could reason?

In fact, there are sharks that swim the sea that can reason. These sharks can walk as humans if they so choose. These sharks can sink ships, call down storms, or drown humans where they stand. And they will do these things if humans overstep their bounds, acting outside of the role that Sea and Unsea intended for them.

These sharks are the Rokea.

Sharks That Reason

"Man goes into the cage. Cage goes into the water. Shark's in the water. Farewell, and adieu, dear Spanish ladies...."

— Captain Quint, *Jaws*

The Rokea believe themselves to be the first of the Changing Breeds. After all, the Mokolé may remember the time of the dinosaurs, but sharks predate even them. However, the Rokea do not see their status as a point to be argued or disputed. It is simply the truth, and they don't care if anyone else knows it.

This sort of mentality is typical of the weresharks. They do what they do — survive — and don't need anyone to tell them how or instruct them. Their First Changes aren't the dramatic, carnage-ridden affairs of the Garou; they are quiet awakenings to the voice of Sea around them. They carry Rage within them, true, but instead of calling it a "Curse," they accept it as who they are. They do not blame any creature for acting in its nature, and don't try to fix the rest of the world, as long as they are left in peace.

As admirable as this attitude may seem, times have changed and left the Rokea badly behind. Humans slaughter the Rokea's shark-kin faster than they can breed. A nuclear test in 1955 cut the world's wereshark population in half, and they are still trying to regain their numbers while simultaneously dealing with the sludge and waste that humans insist on throwing into Sea. If that weren't enough, the race is split down the middle over



whether or not to venture on land. The point isn't argued with words, however, but with blood.

How to Use this Book

In this book, you will find everything you need to flesh out the Rokea, either for use as Storyteller characters or to play in a Rokea chronicle. You will need a copy of **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**. In addition, the **Werewolf Players Guide** and **World of Darkness: Blood-Dimmed Tides** also offer helpful information on the Rokea and their world.

This book is arranged as follows:

Introduction: The part you're reading now. This contains the beginning of the story of the first homid Rokea, a bibliography, and the lexicon of Rokea terms.

Chapter One: The Long Swim gives the history of the Rokea as told by Guards-the-Shoals, a very annoyed Dimwater.

Chapter Two: Sunlit Waters explains the Rokea's place in the modern world, their auspices, the Long Swim, and their opinions and knowledge of the other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness.

Chapter Three: Breach provides all the information you need to create Rokea characters, including Gifts, rites, fetishes, Merits and Flaws.

Chapter Four: Secrets of the Deep is intended for the Storyteller only. It explains Qyrl's machinations in the modern world and gives some information on the spiritual allies and enemies of the weresharks. It also contains **The Great Barrier**, a complete story for starting Rokea characters.

Chapter Five: The School gives five ready-to-play templates and details some notable Rokea.

Finally, the **Appendix** supplies information on real-world sharks, their physiology and behavior, and how they are surviving in the modern world.

Sources of Inspiration

Books

The Shark Almanac by Thomas B. Allen. Hands-down, the best and most easily digestible source of information about sharks I've come across. If you plan on using Rokea extensively, give it a look.

Jaws, by Peter Benchley. The novel that started it all? Not really, but it did make the great white shark the most feared predator in the world for quite some time.

There are a number of books available about shark attacks, such as *Shark Attack* and *Shark! Shark!* These books give vivid descriptions of what a shark can do to a human being, which is good for visceral impact, but they don't tend to portray the shark very accurately.

Movies

Jaws. For quite obvious reasons.

Deep Blue Sea. Not nearly as well-scripted or as well-acted as *Jaws*, but it does give some interesting ideas about how sharks might behave if they were suddenly granted human-like intelligence.

There are plenty of other films set underwater or at sea: *Deep Star Six*, *Abyss*, *Virus*, and so forth. Some of them are eye candy at best and pure crap at worst, but can probably provide inspiration for Qyrl-infested waters.

Internet Sites

Fiona's Shark Links (<http://www.oceanstar.com/shark>). Lots of good information about shark biology and conservation efforts.

The International Shark Attack File (<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/research/ISAF/shark.htm>). The ISAF is the home of every documented shark attack since the 1500s. Certainly worth a look.

Television

The Discovery Channel runs an annual program called "Shark Week." It contains fascinating studies and footage of sharks of all types. Watch for it.

Lexicon

Betweener: A Rokea who chooses to live mainly on land, returning to Sea to regain Gnosis and retain her shapeshifting powers.

Breakers: Strange sea-spirits that represent the meeting between force and water (i.e. waves, the shock from an underwater explosion, even the force of a swimming fish).

Brightwater: The auspice of Rokea born during the day or on the full moon, considered fearless warriors.

C'et: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of stasis and permanence, analogous to the Weaver.

Darkwater: The auspice of Rokea born under a total eclipse or on the new moon, considered mystics and seers. Sometimes called the "mad ones."

Dimwater: The auspice of Rokea born when the sun is clouded over or during any phase of the moon between the new and full, considered lawmakers and explorers.

Dirtwalker: Derogatory term for a land-dweller.

Grotto: An undersea caern. Some have specific totem spirits; some are overseen by Sea or Undersea.

Kadugo: Human Rokea Kinfolk, the offspring of a normal human and a Rokea. A Rokea mating with a *kadugo* may produce a homid-breed Rokea.

Kopa Loei: A group of shamanistic mages from the Hawaiian Islands. There are rumors of *kadugo* among their number.

Kraken: Another name for Qyrl, the one that most land-dwellers know her by.

Kun: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of creation and fecundity, analogous to the Wyld.

Kunspawn: Another name for the Rokea.

Lamprey: A vampire; commonly used by betweeners.

Moon's Blood: Silver, believed to be the discarded remnants of the Oversea's Balm mixed with his blood.

New Wound: The Red Star, what the Garou call Anthelios.

Oversea: The sky; the term is used to describe both the physical sky and the Celestine who rules the sky.

Oversea's Balm: The moon, sometimes simply called the Balm. The Rokea do not recognize the moon as an Incarna as such; to them it is simply part of Oversea.

Okeans: Spirit-servants of Sea.

Pelageans: Fish spirits in service to Kun.

Qyrl: One of the undersea Triat, the incarnation of destruction, ambition, and entropy, analogous to the Wyrn.

Qyrlings: Spirit-servants of Qyrl, these Banes usually take the form of cephalopods.

Rorqual: A dolphin or whale in service to Sea. Rorqual supply Gnosis to Rokea, and sometimes act as mentors to the weresharks.

Same-Bito: Asian weresharks considered traitors and heretics by most Rokea.

Scuttlers: Spirit-servants of C'et. They usually take the form of crabs or hard-shelled mollusks.

Sea: The oceans and seas of the world; the term is used to describe both the physical ocean and the Celestine who rules it.

Sea's Soul: The Umbra (on land, referred to as Unsea's Soul).

Small Seas: Lakes and rivers.

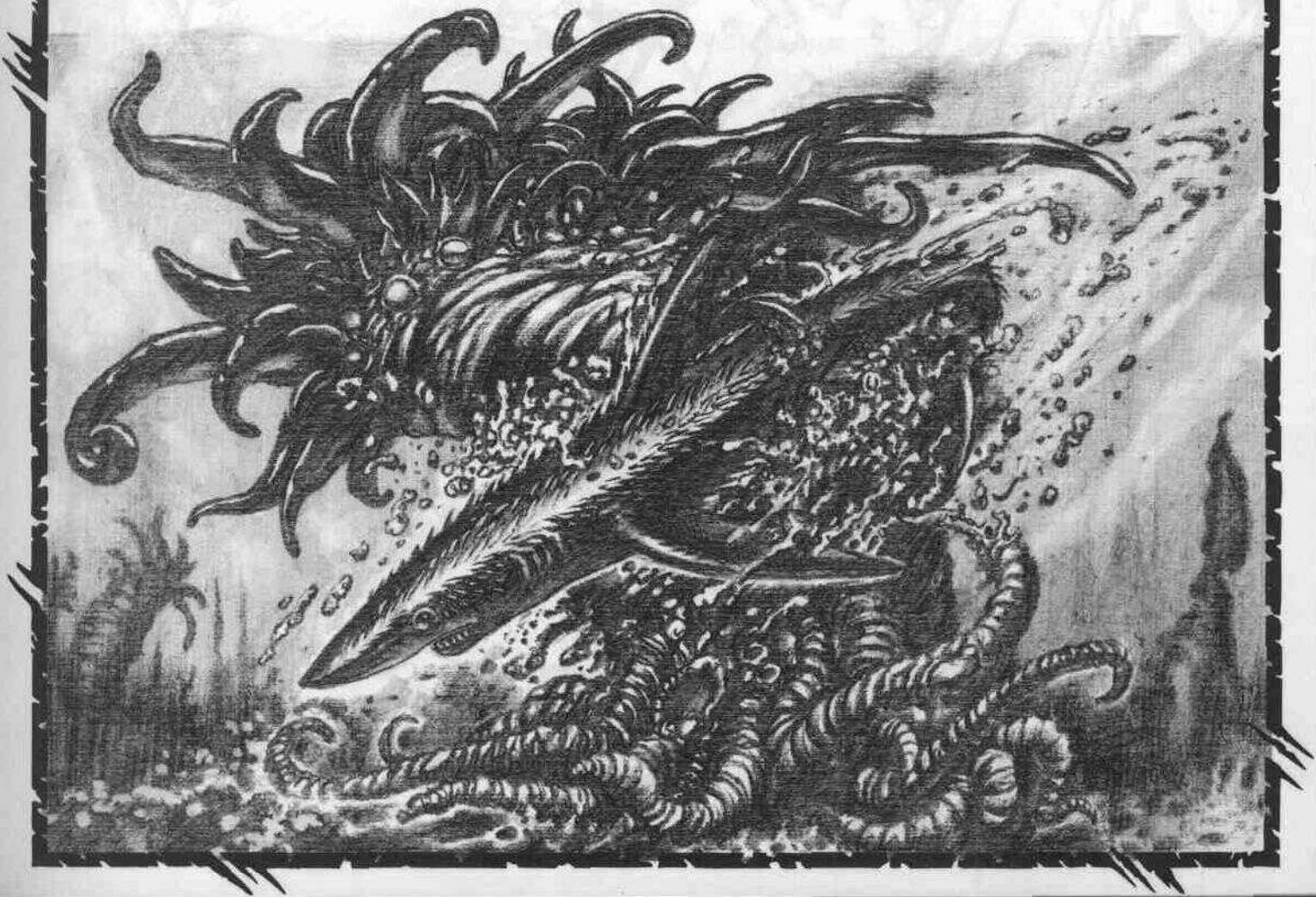
Small Wounds: In the past, this term was used to describe stars. Now more commonly used to describe nuclear explosions.

Three Daughters: The undersea Triat: Kun, C'et, and Qyrl.

Undersea: The sea floor.

Unsea: Any land; the term is used to describe both physical land (both the sea bottom and dry land) as well as the Celestine who rules the solid earth.

Wound, the: The sun. Sometimes called the Great Wound.





Chapter One: The Long Swim

*"Before there were dinosaurs, before there were trees,
there were sharks."*

— Thomas B. Allen, *The Shark Almanac*

Beginnings

Your history is flawed, dirtwalker. Even knowing what little I do of what your kind believes "true," I can say that for certain. Why? Because none of you were there, and so none of you can appreciate the past. Your lives are short. In one generation of Rokea, we see five or more generations of your spawn live and die — if we care to watch.

Think about that during this history, Mateo. I know these tales not from hearing them passed on by a teacher. I heard them *firsthand*, or saw them myself. There is no "distant past" for the Rokea. There is only the Sea, years and decades, spawning and dying, our mother, the Sea.

I'm sure you have been told that in the beginning, there was nothing. Nonsense. In the beginning, there was Sea. The formless, swirling masses of the universe shift and churn just as our planet — then all water — did, with tides and currents and eddies. Everything that existed was in constant motion, never staying still, yet everything was static, because all was Sea.

There's a certain perfection in total homogeneity, dirtwalker, not that I'd expect you to understand it. For better or worse, though, that perfection is gone. It disappeared the day (for lack of a better term) that Sea decided she wanted children.

Sea was and is the progenitor of all life, so she needed no mate to spawn. She simply pressed and churned her waters and brought forth three daughters: Kun, C'et, and Qyrl.

Kun is true creation, plenty, and sustenance. She is the mother of all the fishes, which includes us. Most Rokea, even the traitorous betweeners, follow Kun as their patroness. In return, she grants wisdom and guidance, and provides us with food and mates, and that is all we need.

C'et is the mother of the hard-shelled clams and crabs that scuttle and lie dormant on the ocean's bed. She is also, however, the patroness of the Unsea. Whether Undersea or true Unsea (that is, the sea floor or the earth upon which you live your life), C'et longs to bring such solidity to Sea. Sea, of course, will have

none of it, and so C'et waits, insignificant and ignored, her children eaten, attached to ships, patient.

Qyrl is the Tentacled One, the mother of octopi, squids, and other such spineless beasts. Some Rokea have chosen to worship Qyrl, and she grants them endless food, mystical power, and her skills in stealth. Following Qyrl is also a death sentence, for no true Rokea allows her minions to live. Qyrl is ambitious, and it was she who wounded Oversea.

Yes, I know. I'm getting ahead of myself. Is the gun uncomfortable? Am I boring you?

No need to be rude. When the three daughters were spawned, they were the only life in Sea, and so they fought. Their battles pushed up great peaks in Undersea, so much so that some of this Unsea now reached above Sea's surface, creating the first True Unsea — what you know as land.

The land was empty. No bearded God came forward to create you and yours. No one formed you from clay. You are the youngest race on the planet. We — the fishes, the Sea-dwellers, were the first. But each of the three daughters now saw there was something above Sea, beyond Sea, and each was curious. So each traveled to Unsea.

Kun Swims to Unsea

Kun, the first of the first, asked Sea for permission to swim on Unsea, and Sea granted her that. She found it not to her liking — dry, lifeless, sterile, unchanging, and so wished to return to Sea. But Unsea called to her — as even then, before Kun had learned to spawn, Unsea could see the life brimming inside her, and begged her to stay.

Kun said to Unsea, "How could I stay? I cannot breathe or truly swim here. I would perish, dry and alone. I cannot stay."

And Unsea asked, "But is there no way? I am so lonely and long for any company!"

Kun answered, "I will ask my mother the Sea when I return." And Kun swam back to Sea and told her what Unsea asked. And Sea thought and thought, and then called to Oversea, then a seamless black void, and said, "Draw some of my waters into yourself, and let them fall upon Unsea, that my daughter Kun can go there to visit without drying out or holding her breath."

And Oversea, glad to be of service to Sea, his creator (for Oversea is really only the absence of Sea and Unsea), drew up some of Sea's waters and let them fall upon Unsea, which you know as rain. And Kun stretched her fins again and went to visit Unsea often, and they became friends.

C'et Swims to Unsea

C'et was jealous and wished to experience the stability of Unsea, so she too asked permission to swim there. And Sea granted her this, and C'et, the Shelled One, crawled onto Unsea but was too heavy to move. And she wept and lamented, and Unsea, glad for more company and not wishing to see her guest in pain, asked what could be done.

C'et answered, "I wish to swim on Unsea the way my sister Kun does, but I have no fins to stretch!"

And Unsea and Kun thought, and suddenly Kun hit upon the answer. "You must change yourself, Unsea," she said, "and when the waters fall from Oversea, let them collect in some places more than others, and then my sister C'et may swim in these Small Seas and visit other places." And Unsea did so, and when the waters fell they collected in the spaces Unsea had made in herself, and you know these as rivers and lakes.

So C'et swam in these Small Seas, and from time to time pulled herself up to Unsea to look around and to speak with Unsea. And although this was not quite what she wanted, she didn't want to seem ungrateful, and so stayed close to where Sea meets Unsea, torn between the two worlds.

Qyrl Swims to Unsea

Qyrl, the Tentacled One, also wished to swim to Unsea, but she was willful and proud and did not ask permission. She slithered through the Small Seas and when the rains fell, she, like Kun, swam on Unsea. And Unsea, always glad to have more company, asked Qyrl's name.

Qyrl, afraid that her mother would be angry with her for not asking permission to swim on Unsea, lied. Instead of using her true name, she called herself "Kraken." And Unsea, who had no way of seeing through this lie, welcomed Qyrl and asked if there was anything she could do to make her more comfortable.

And Qyrl thought and said, "Yes, there is one thing. I am shy and wish to have places to hide, close to you and to my mother. Is there any such place?"

Unsea thought, and then said, "I shall change myself again. In places where I touch Sea, I shall stir the land and water until they are murky, and you can swim through them, feeling your way with your many arms." And Unsea did so, and created what you know as marshes and swamps, and Qyrl hid in these places and watched her sisters swim between Sea and Unsea.

This continued, all were pleased: Kun brought word between Sea and Unsea, C'et sat quietly on the banks of the Small Seas, and Qyrl watched them all,



silent and unnoticed. Finally, however, Qyrl grew restless again, and wished to visit Oversea, to ask how it was possible for Oversea to gather waters up into himself. And this curiosity was to bring great change to the world, and ultimately, the beginning of life.

Qyrl Wounds Oversea

Qyrl, still unwilling to ask for her mother's permission to swim beyond Sea or her help in reaching Oversea, stretched out her many arms and gripped the black void. Her grip punctured and wounded Oversea in many places and Oversea cried out to Sea for aid. Sea churned below and demanded that Qyrl release her grip on Oversea, but Qyrl was afraid of her mother's wrath. Instead of letting go, she sank her mighty jaws into Oversea to gain better purchase. Oversea howled in pain, Unsea watched in horror, and Kun and C'et looked on, all of them terrified of Sea's wrath. The waters of all the world erupted in geysers and spouts, Oversea's winds churned these into hurricanes and tsunamis, but still Qyrl held fast. Unsea forced great mountains from her body, hoping that Qyrl would step down instead of falling, but still Qyrl held fast.

Sea washed over Unsea in her fury, and Unsea told Sea of Qyrl's hiding places. And Sea's fury grew, until a great fog rose and covered all of Oversea and Unsea, and loosened Qyrl's grip on Oversea.

And Qyrl fell, but her jaws tore a huge, gaping wound in Oversea. And while each of the smaller puncture wounds bled in small trickles, the blazing blood of the Great Wound — what you call the sun — eclipsed the smaller wounds and stuck Unsea and Sea, boiling the water and scorching the land. And Qyrl, knowing that she was no longer safe in her hiding places between Sea and Unsea, fled to the deepest trench in Undersea, and there hid.

The Wound changed things for Sea, Unsea, and Oversea alike. Where before all was dark and cold, now Sea and Unsea began to turn themselves so that no one place would be boiled away. But that was no help to poor, wounded Oversea, who cried and begged for solace.

Sea and Unsea spoke with C'et and Kun and finally thought of a way to help Oversea. In much the same way as she had created the great fog that loosened Qyrl's grip, Sea churned and whirled and called up another fog, and Oversea called it to him and clustered it about the Wound. But it was weak and boiled away too quickly, and Oversea was left in pain again. And Unsea agreed to help, and gave up part of her body to help Oversea. From Unsea's body and Sea's waters, a salve was formed to ease Oversea's pain. And to this day, Sea and Unsea help him with his ache. Unsea and Sea create the salve and Oversea lifts it up to himself

on the winds. Sometimes, the glowing salve is visible even as the Wound shines brightly, other times we do not see the medicine before Oversea applies it.

When Oversea has much of the salve, his ache subsides, and the Wound disappears. When this happens, the small wounds — what you call stars — can be clearly seen. As his supply of the salve diminishes, the Wound becomes more visible, even at night, and is seen as the soft glow you call the moon. We refer to it as the Balm.

When we are born within Oversea's cycle determines much about our lives. Those who are born when Oversea's supply of medicine is low (the full moon) are born feeling the pain of the Wound. We call them Brightwater, and they are our greatest warriors. Those who are born when he has much of the salve are born quietly, and are scholars and innovators. We call them Darkwater. Those born in between, when the Wound is painful but sated, go their own way, and usually choose to travel. These are called Dimwater, and I am one of these.

You wanted to know about us, yes? I'm telling you. Don't rush me. What happened next is important, for it was the beginning of life as you understand it.

The Great Making

When the Wound was bandaged and the boiling waters began to subside, Kun and C'et first noticed tiny creatures resembling Qyrl in the waters. These creatures claimed to be the spawn of Qyrl, yet Sea had never granted the power to spawn to any other being. Sea questioned Qyrl, and she admitted that by watching Kun and C'et interact with Unsea, and by taking with her the blood of Oversea, she had created beings like herself. These tiny Qyrlings hid in the marshes and reeds, and in the trenches of Undersea, like their mother had done.

Kun and C'et also wished to spawn, and now knew that it could only be done by conjunction of Sea, Unsea, and Oversea. They asked for help from all three, and all agreed — if they would create life that could swim in Unsea and Oversea as well as Sea. And Sea agreed, somewhat reluctantly, and all life on earth began.

Kun created all the fishes of the sea, fishes of color and life, and fishes that you might think quite hideous. She created fishes that hunt in the darkest depths, and fishes to live in the Small Seas. On land, she brought forth the Great Kings, what you call dinosaurs, and they built and lived and died and all that goes with those things.

Yes, they built. I don't care what it says in your films and books. Those are lies and assumptions. But believe what you wish, dirtwalker.

C'et spawned the hard-shelled Scuttlers, resembling what you know as crabs. Many of her kin can survive on land for short periods, but must eventually

return to the water. But she was the first to send her children far into the Unsea, in the form of spiders and insects. What ultimately became of these children, only C'et knows. C'et was taciturn, and few of us consider her significant.

Qyrl, having already learned how to spawn, continued to do so. Her children were the squid and octopus, the slug and snail and all of the slime-ridden worms that creep through the muck. Qyrl was furious at Sea for forcing her out of Oversea, and mourned the loss of her disguise as "Kraken." When she saw C'et and Kun creating flying creatures, she wished to do so as well, but Oversea threatened to open his wound on her fully if she ever came near him again. She knew she would not survive that, so she burrowed deep into the Undersea floor, and found that Unsea's blood was similar to, if a bit thicker than, the blood of Oversea. And Qyrl discovered how to cause Unsea to bleed, and you call such places volcanoes. The chunks of Unsea that such wounds cause to fly about can and have blotted out the Wound, and at such times, Qyrl desperately hopes the Wound will close.

Of course it never does. Qyrl's greatest folly was also her undoing. She could not close the Wound, and so had to wait.

Qyrl Wars with Her Sisters

She did not wait patiently. She brought forth hideous beasts which warred with the children of Kun and C'et. In response, Kun called the great Kings, many of whom could swim, to help. Whole races of beings died, and Qyrl grew ever more angry. She began to make her children larger, and stronger, and then, knowing as she did so many secrets of hiding, gave them the power to change their shape. Kun's children could not fight foes that could hide among them, and many of her armies died.

Kun began to believe that Qyrl might one day succeed in closing the Wound, and created special children just in case. Those children had strange, soft scales to help withstand the cold. They carried their young inside them, to keep them safe and warm until birth. Have you guessed, dirtwalker? Yes. Mammals.

What's that? What of us, you ask? If sharks have been alive for so much longer than mammals — and we have — where were the Rokea? Well, the Rokea are sharks that can wear the shape of humans. At this time, millions of years before the apes that spawned your kin existed, there was no need for sharks to swim as anything but sharks. We were the greatest fish in the sea, yes, and ruled over the rest of Kun's creations while she fought her sister, but were no more. No more was required of us.

To continue: Kun spoke with Sea, Unsea, and Oversea and asked if it were possible for Qyrl to close the Wound. They all agreed that since the opening of the Wound had begun the Great Making, closing it would Unmake all of creation. C'et was troubled by this; she could not fathom the idea of nothing. She was fixated on the ideas of permanence and stability, mostly traits of Unsea, and so the idea that all of this could be destroyed terrified her. She vowed to make Qyrl listen to her and stop trying to close the Wound. To this day, she tries. She has not succeeded.

Kun realized that her new creations, mammals, stood the best chance of survival on land. Within Sea's endless depths, however, she searched for race of beings that would endure even the Great Unmaking. She looked through all of her children, and even tried merging mammals and fishes, but although these beings were promising, she finally decided upon the sharks.

Why? Consider, dirtwalker, what we are. We hunt, swim, and spawn. That is all we ever needed to do. And because of this, because we, unlike your race, did not try to do everything, we were the rulers of the deep and Sea's greatest survivors. So Kun graced some of us with the power to change, and told us that our job, above all else we might do, was to endure. We were permitted anything, as long as it helped us survive. We were the Rokea.

Our first choice was to ignore the gift of change. We had survived for so many years without change, we felt it would only confuse us and get in our way. It wasn't until the Great Flood that we decided to change into anything except larger sharks.

The Great Flood

Oh, yes, the Great Flood did occur, but not because of your bearded God. The Great Flood was in response to Qyrl's most vicious gambit, the attack that came the closest to succeeding in closing the Wound. You see, after the Wound opened, Qyrl fled to a deep trench. She hid there, deeper than any creature had every gone, deep into the mind of Sea.

Yes, dirtwalker, her mind. The place where she hid the secrets of death and creation, secrets so basic yet so unknowable that even Sea herself couldn't look upon them. Qyrl, naturally, could not learn these secrets, but she swam about in the depths of Sea's mind, a heartbeat away from her Soul, in total darkness and complete silence. And after some time, she spoke. Perhaps she had begun to grow mad in the total solitude of the deep, perhaps the silence finally became overwhelming, and she wished to hear any sound. For whatever reason, she called out. And something answered.

I don't know what manner of being answered Qyrl. It was not a being of this place, but must have been something that Sea dreamt, because it was there, trapped in her mind. It did not have a name, but we have to come call it Nightmare, because it sprang from Sea's horrid dreams. It told Qyrl that it needed form to reach this world, it said, and Qyrl asked what it would do if it did have form. It replied that it did not know, and asked Qyrl what she thought.

Qyrl slyly told the thing of Oversea's Wound and the terrible pain he suffered. She wished to heal him, she told Nightmare, but could not reach him. Perhaps it could help?

Nightmare told Qyrl to imagine a shape for it, and it would take on that shape and try to heal Oversea. Qyrl imagined a creature with many arms, as she had, but a scaly, muscular body, like the dragon-kings had. Finally, she imagined wings, like a manta ray or a dragon, to allow Nightmare to fly to the Wound. When Qyrl had the image firmly set in her mind, Nightmare took the image for its own and burst into the world.

Sea knew immediately that something horrible had happened. She sensed the disturbance that Nightmare's immense body caused, and sent Kun and the Rokea to investigate. What they saw defies any explanation. The Rokea had seen leviathans before, beings as big as the Undersea mountains, but Nightmare's body was so massive that none of the Rokea could tell what part they were looking at. As they watched, Nightmare beat its wings once, and all the Rokea present were thrown into Oversea and flung miles, crashing down into Sea far away. Nightmare stood, and though its feet touched Undersea, it stood only waist-deep in Sea. It beat its wings again, and Sea was blown back and a stretch of dry land connected two points on Unsea. This path stayed open for years, blasted into a dry trench by the force of Nightmare's wings.

It beat its wings a third time, and launched itself toward the Wound. Oversea worried, and rained down fire upon the beast, but all Oversea managed to do was kill many of Unsea's inhabitants. Nightmare shrugged off the fiery assault and flew straight to the Wound, grasped Oversea's mantle, and tried to pull the Wound closed.

Oversea howled in pain, even louder than he had when Qyrl bit him. Sea rumbled in fury, Unsea quaked in fear, but Qyrl laughed in triumph. The battle raged in the skies above, as Nightmare, heedless of the heat and flames around him, tried to pull the Wound shut.

This struggle lasted for years, and, because Nightmare blocked the Wound's light from reaching Sea, the world grew very cold. The creatures who lived on Unsea

walked the path that Nightmare had blasted open for them, hoping to find a more hospitable place to live. They did, for a time, because the path led to a place where Kun had not placed any creatures like them, and so it was still pure and the Small Seas there still teemed with life. But as time went on and Oversea weakened from the combined pain of the Wound and the battle (for of course, he could not pause in the battle to apply his healing salve), he could not longer send rain onto Unsea. And Kun's creatures, who were grandchildren of Sea and needed water to live, began to weaken and die.

Finally, Sea could stand no more. She reached out and seized Qyrl in a great whirlpool, and told her to undo what she had done. She was defiant at first, but as Sea spun her faster and faster, she knew that she would be shaken to pieces if she did not comply. So, Qyrl imagined Nightmare's form changing, becoming smaller and weaker.

And up above, it lost his grip on Oversea and began to burn from his blood. Qyrl imagined Nightmare's form without its massive wings, and Nightmare plummeted towards the Sea.

Qyrl imagined Nightmare as a creature not much larger than a human, but with the worst aspects of her form and temper. And Nightmare took on this shape. Qyrl could not wish it out of existence entirely, you see — not even Sea could do that. But Qyrl did imagine Nightmare as being completely loyal to her, and so it was. So Nightmare's descendants still swim the world's oceans, horribly warped, worshipping Qyrl (though they call her Dagon), and inflicting pain and misery on anyone they can.

Some Darkwaters speak of a similar being called forth by Kun. Kun, however, never made the mistake of giving the being too much power. Instead, she used it to bridge a gap between man and fish. The result was a race your kind calls merfolk — noble, eerily beautiful (in their way) and almost completely useless. I have nothing to say regarding them, other than to tell you that our races avoid each other.

Meanwhile, on land, most of the races had grown frail and were dying. Some, the strongest, held on to life tenaciously, but Oversea was still too weak to help. Sea, still angry from the ordeal, made a decision. She leapt her banks and flooded Unsea, without warning. There was no man in a ship to save the creatures of land. They were all left to their own devices.

Most of Kun's children were killed in the deluge, but the strongest species survived. While the world was flooded, we swam over the Unsea, and were astonished to find places where large numbers of a strange mammal had lived. This mammal, we discovered, spawned at every opportunity, paying no heed to how much its children

would eat. It destroyed the Unsea's fertility, slaughtered their beasts, and yet created weapons and other objects that seemed to have no use. When the waters subsided, the Rokea decided that this creature might one day pose a threat to us, so we took its form. The Rokea had become sharks that could swim as humans.

We watched the humans who lived by the Sea, usually from the waters, but sometimes by taking human shape and walking among them. We never bred with them, because we believed it would thin our blood and thus impede our survival. We believed also, foolishly, as it turns out, that humans would never have a great impact on the Sea. After all, the humans could not swim well, they could breathe only air, and had no teeth or claws to speak of. The ones who lived by the Sea caught and ate many of Kun's children, but never ventured far from their homes. Those that did often died, with or without our intervention.

We made a mistake in underestimating the humans. Had we stepped in then, when human society was finding its feet, had we destroyed any ship that went out too far or took too many fish, then humans might have retained their respect for Sea. But we had

Ka'ahu — Homid Rokea?

On the island of Oahu, there is a story about a young woman called Ka'ahu and her brother, who were changed into sharks by a shark god who admired them while swimming. The two shark children returned to their parents for food by way of a stream, and when they grew too big for the stream, the locals carried food to Pu'uloa (modern-day Pearl Harbor) for the shark children.

The legend goes on to state that Ka'ahu became queen of the sharks and her brother, called Striking Tail also had an honored place among the sharks. In fact, when the U.S. Navy decided to build in Pearl Harbor, the natives realized that Ka'ahu's son lived in a cave beneath the spot chosen for a dry dock. They warned the Navy against building there, but the Americans did not listen, and when the dock was nearly finished, it collapsed. No one was killed, but then, it is said that Ka'ahu loved people.

No living Rokea will confirm that Ka'ahu was indeed Rokea, but Striking Tail certainly was. He was a Dimwater of some renown, but has not been seen since the early 1940s. Is it possible that a line of Rokea Kinfolk exists on Oahu, just waiting for a Rokea to sire a child? Or is the story only that — a story, possibly the product of Oahu *kahunas'* contact with the weresharks?

other things to keep our attention. Qyrl's armies still attacked Kun's children, and we were her soldiers. The Rorqual needed our help to remain safe —

Rorqual. A whale or dolphin that carries the love of Sea inside it. Never mind them; perhaps I'll tell you later on. First, you must know of the other Changers.

What the Changers have become is far different than what they started as. In some cases, we do not know what they have become or what they do in modern times. We do know how each of them started, however.

Unsea realized that Sea's decision to create us — the race that would survive the *Unmaking* — meant that few or none of her children would. With growing horror, she grasped that when the *Unmaking* occurred, she would be destroyed along with everything except Sea, since Sea was the progenitor of all else. She therefore decided to create races of her own, to prevent the *Unmaking*.

She turned her attention to the remnants of the Dragon Kings, who had always possessed the secret of changing. She bade them remember all that happened, in case there was a mistake made somewhere that could be fixed by backing up a few steps. The Kings, who are now called the Mokolé, were not entirely certain of Unsea's motives, but agreed to be her memory, since that was what they were best at.

Then, with her memory in place, Unsea proceeded to create many more races of Changers. The order is not important, just know the surviving races. She created Changers from cats, and asked that they watch and be ready to fight if asked. They promptly perched as high above Unsea as they could and ignored her.

She created Changers from rats, and bade them keep the human populations under control, which they did for a time. It is clear that they have failed, however.

She created Changers from great lumbering things with sharp teeth and claws, and gave them great gifts of healing and power over life and death.

She created Changers from creatures of Oversea, and asked that they observe all that happened and report it to her and the other Changers, much as the remora do for the Rokea.

She created Changers from wolves, and dogs, and other four-legged creatures of that ilk, and told them to do everything else.

No, dirtwalker, I do not exaggerate. Some she told to make her laugh, some she told to sing songs, but most she told to fight. One race, the most famous (among your kind) race of Changers, she created to be her army against the *Unmaking*. They would fight against the *Unmaking* as long as they all lived, and they would turn back the tides of destruction.

Naïve. Foolish. Arrogant. Impossible.

The *Unmaking* can no more be turned back with an army than can a tsunami. But her army was there, nonetheless, and they needed something to fight. And in the absence of some great creature that would bring on the end of all things, they fought the other Changers.

The Changers warred for years and years, and still war to this day. And meanwhile, we swam beneath the waters, and continue to swim, waiting, hunting, spawning, and surviving. The Changers never brought their war to us because none of them can find us. Besides, we heard from the children of C'et, many of whom stayed on land as much as possible, what was happening. We laughed when we heard. We found it terribly funny that these creatures, who lived on such a small part of the world, felt they could turn back the *Unmaking*, no matter how great their fury or how sharp their claws. We went on with our business, living among humans sometimes, but usually beneath the waves.

The Impergium

The other Changers also instituted a method of control on the humans that was doomed to failure. For many years, they would regulate the number of humans in a village, or city, or whatever they may have been called then. If too many were born, they would kill a few. This was meant to teach humans their place.

Now, I admit that humans do not know and never have known their place, but this was a mistake. Our kind, after all, did then and do now occasionally kill and eat humans, but very seldom (more seldom than we should, some say, but humans are not nourishing and taste foul) and we never seem as though we target humans specifically. This only serves to make them angry and afraid, and these things bring about invention and adaptation in humans. The Changers killed humans for so long, and without being subtle enough, that humans now fear Changers of any kind and panic when they see a Changer's true form. This is a strange line of defense, indeed — to avoid a predator by denying its existence? A fish that denied our existence would find itself swallowed in seconds. I do not pretend to understand it. Perhaps this denial makes a statement not only about the prey but also about the predator. Perhaps not, though — after all, though we had no part in this purge, our war form sends humans running.

Another oddity about the *Impergium* was that many Changers chose groups of humans as breeding stock and asked that they be spared. This is a failure of land-dwellers — that a law be instituted and then not evenly applied. If all humans were to be kept in check, why the exception? It was especially confusing, I imagine, to the humans who must have heard that nearby villages were victims of monstrous depredations, but who found themselves oddly sacrosanct.

The Rokea never participated in the Impergium. If humans overstepped their boundaries, we would act, but our mandate was to survive, not try to control the human's growth. We also never took humans as breeding stock. After all, humans live short lives, have no natural weapons (and despoil Unsea by crafting unnatural ones) and must be very careful what they eat, lest their fragile systems fail them. We felt that breeding with these feeble beings would only enfeeble our race, and that was unthinkable. The Rokea believed that humans would freeze or die out, or that the wolf Changers would one day run amok and kill them all.

Of course, as you doubtless have guessed, the human's growth is indeed what threatens our survival now. But for many years, the humans knew nothing of what lived in Sea. They traveled on Sea, ate of her bounty, and sang of her beauty, but could not change her.

That all changed when Qyrl returned to Unsea.

Qyrl Steals C'et's Pearl

C'et had a pearl inside her, that she had jealously guarded through the Impergium and the Changers' wars. This pearl wasn't simply a grain of sand at its heart. This pearl contained the secret of the coral, how it grows and branches out, how it encases whatever sits in it, given time. C'et kept this secret, content to use it only to let the coral grow, and she granted her earthbound children enough of this knowledge to build their own nests and hives and webs. Humans, mimicking such things, built their own dwellings, but nothing matching the purity and beauty of C'et's pearl.

Unfriendly Seas

"Everything out there is death."

— Stephen King, *Bag of Bones*

Sometimes they walk on land. Sometimes they walk as men. Often they wait until we venture out into the bay, and then they strike. When I was a child, the wise men of the village said that they would attack only if we took too many fish, but I saw one kill a man once. He was in knee-deep water, and had speared only one fish for his dinner. He turned around to walk out of the sea, and then he screamed. I saw the water around him grow murky and red, and he fell backwards. The beast tore him to pieces, right there, not two minutes walk from his home. He was my brother.

You and your people are very stupid to come here. They will tear you apart. The waters belong to them, and they must truly despise the land, for if they wanted to take it from us, they could.

— From the personal memoirs of Sir Alexander Drake, explorer, (translated by same), 1639.

Qyrl had taken an interest in humanity, of course, and wished them to grow stronger. They were the only race on Unsea that crafted weapons, now that the Kings were gone. She considered using the other Changers to further her goals, but she knew that the other Changers would distrust her, as Unsea had surely told them of her first lie. She was sure she could use the humans to change the world the way she wanted, but first she needed the secret of growth and building, and for that she needed the pearl.

C'et, as you may remember, wanted to talk Qyrl out of her plan to close the Wound and bring on the Unmaking. So, Qyrl pretended to listen to her sister, convincing her that she was sorry for the wars she'd caused and the fear she put into C'et. Finally, Qyrl said, "I know, sister, that you have always wished to swim far into Unsea, but you have no fins to stretch. I, too, wish to do so, but I fear that I would dry out. So let us work together that we may both visit your children on Unsea."

C'et, believing her sister had repented and relieved that the Unmaking wouldn't come early, asked how they could best work together.

Qyrl smiled and said, "You gather up water into your shell. I shall carry you across Unsea. When I feel myself begin to dry out, open your shell and let some water out to replenish me."

C'et agreed, and filled her shell with water, and Qyrl carried her onto the land. They had not even traveled beyond sight of Sea when Qyrl said, "Oh, sister! I feel myself beginning to dry out!" And C'et opened her shell, and the waters tumbled over Qyrl, who thanked her sister and continued on.

The two managed to get to a settlement of humans, who ignored the sisters, thanks to Qyrl's skill at hiding. And Qyrl called out, "Sister! More water, quickly!" And C'et opened her shell a bit wider, and the waters tumbled over Qyrl. And the two traveled on.

Finally, the pair reached a place where two of the Small Seas met and C'et declared, "Good! Now I can gather more water, and we can continue ever further on!" And Qyrl, too impatient to wait for the waters to run out again, cried out, "Oh, but give me more water first, or I shall never be able to carry you to the Small Sea!" And C'et opened her shell wide, and the last of the water spilled out, and Qyrl reached her tentacles inside and stole C'et's pearl.

C'et screamed with horror and rage, and closed her shell, lopping off one of Qyrl's tentacles, but Qyrl did not care. She had the pearl, and slithered away to the Small Sea, leaving her sister dry and alone in Unsea. But C'et's children heard her cries, and they came to help. And the skies above the two Small Seas were darkened as insects of all kinds came to their mother's



aid. They lifted C'et up and carried her to the Small Sea, and she thanked them for their help, and disappeared. She had already begun working on a new pearl, but instead of a secret or even a grain of sand, the center of this pearl was to be Qyrl's severed tentacle.

Humans Learn the Secret of the Coral

Qyrl wasted no time in giving the secret to the humans. She changed herself so that she looked like a human, and walked among them, unnoticed, but telling the secret to the cleverest of them. Soon, the humans began to build. They built massive structures from the flesh of Unsea, they lived together in large schools — yes, which you call cities — and some of them decided to be hunters, and some warriors, and some harvesters. And some of them — usually those with whom Qyrl spoke — became leaders and priests, and they began to talk among themselves, and have ideas, and like a growing storm, their ideas became beliefs. This was the birth of worship among humans, and Qyrl was there, guiding it along.

You scoff? Raised to believe in your bearded God, I presume. I don't mean to offend you, dirtwalker, but what possible purpose do such legends have? Do they help you find food, or keep you safe at night? Has your

God ever reached down and protected you when you face storms at sea? No, of course not. He does not do so now, and did not do so when Qyrl started these legends. Belief in such things will not help a race survive, but it will aid the survival of those who speak directly with the gods. Consider, dirtwalker, that for every "holy man" who gives his life for his god, there are dozens more who eat and sleep very comfortably. Qyrl may have given your race a great gift in C'et's pearl, but in return, she took away the ability to think practically from most of you.

This is further confirmed by the humans' behavior after they gained the pearl. They continued to build, farther and farther out, and when two or more of their schools touched, they fought viciously. For although they had learned how to build with beauty and perfection, they had not learned then, nor have they yet, how to build patiently. They were a race growing too fast, and with each passing year, fewer and fewer Rokea chose to visit them at all.

The Last Times

We do not use or completely understand human time, based as it is on the passing of clumps of seasons from arbitrary points. However, we do know that for

several centuries, only a handful of us visited the land, and in very specific places: Japan, Australia, Hawai'i, California, South Africa and so on. Islander and coastal people usually knew us by one name or another, or at the very least understood that the Sea and shark were things to be respected, not mocked. And so, human time passed onward, quickly, violently, foolishly, and though the Dimwaters brought back news of the surface, we didn't pay much attention.

Again, our mistake was in not watching the humans more closely. The next time that the Rokea as a whole took an interest in human life was when the humans began dumping poisons into Sea.

The Humans War on Sea

I have never been able to find words to express the senselessness, the sheer ignorance, of dumping toxins into the oceans. Humans had shown lack of foresight before, true, but nothing like this. Fish began to die in great numbers, and then the humans wondered why their meat was tainted! And still, they did not stop!

Clearly, it was time for action. We sank ships, calling on Oversea to send storms against them. We made our way into their rivers, hoping to find the source the pollution, but the humans had built huge structures dedicated to poisoning the waters. We asked the children of C'et about these buildings, for they seemed like something she would create, but they said that if the humans had to dispose of such waste, there were many better ways

The Betrayal of the Same-Bito

An important occurrence sticks in the mind — and the throat — of all right-thinking Rokea. Eons ago, a Rokea called Mizuchi was approached by a Mokolé, near the Unsea called Japan. This Mokolé told Mizuchi that the way of the Rokea was wrong, and that the Rokea should venture on land and join some asinine court of Changers. Any true Rokea would have responded that our way is the way of Sea, and therefore beyond the concern of the other Changers, if he bothered with a response at all. But Mizuchi swam back to his people and told them of the Mokolé's word, and some Rokea actually joined the Beast Courts.

Most of the world's Rokea do not venture to these lands. We avoid the Same-Bito, as these courtier sharks call themselves, for they have weakened their blood by breeding with humans. The fact that human-born Rokea do exist is not something that many of our people know. Only a handful of the Dimwaters has heard this distressing fact.

— Bitter Tide, Dimwater in the Cold Sea

to do it. And then we realized that the humans were using C'et's knowledge to do Qyrl's bidding.

The first thing we did was to send more of our kind onto land, to try and see if there was anything to be done. We found that it took so much time to learn the human's mores and languages that such endeavors were not usually worth the trouble. The humans were winning the war against Sea, simply because we had no way to know where to strike. In addition, the wolf-changers wished to fight us, accusing us of serving an entity they called the "Wyrn."

The Rorqual

Don't be so irritable. I mentioned earlier that Kun, while searching for her chosen race, had tried to merge mammals and fishes. The results yielded animals that could swim as gracefully as fish, but that still carried their children until birth instead of laying eggs and, unfortunately, needed to breathe air.

These creatures were special, Kun realized, but they were not warriors and could not endure the end times efficiently. However, she had created them, and rather than destroy them all, she gave some of them a special task. She enabled them to absorb the love of the great mother, Sea, into their bodies and share that love with deserving creatures. Those creatures include the Rokea, the merfolk, and some other, stranger Sea-dwellers.

The Rorqual are important, for we need Sea's love and power to go about our own tasks. However, humans showed an interest in the Rorqual almost as soon as they saw them. That interest was in slaughtering them, of course, hunting them down, spearing them with harpoons, catching them in nets, cutting the fat from their bodies, and so on. This gave us another reason to sink your ships, which, by the time the war on Sea began in earnest, was getting more and more difficult.

Mankind Wars on Itself

Humans have been killing each other since they developed the notion that one school of them was somehow different than another, but the sheer scale of what you call the First World War got our attention. We encouraged it, silently, of course, applauded your kind's ingenuity in developing new and better methods of slaughter. After all, we'd watched sea battles with interest (and hunger, of course — do you turn down free food?) but we were aware that the real damage was done on Unsea. Don't think that we have any special grudge against humans that we'd want them all dead, but with more dead, perhaps there would be fewer to poison Sea. As you can guess, it doesn't work that way.

Eventually, we figured out that when your kind wars, you produce more waste and poisons as more time

The Story of First-to-Fall — A Rokean Legend

First-to-Fall was once called First-to-Kill, because he could smell blood from even farther away than most Rokea, and he would swim at top speed when he did. He was a Brightwater, and a warrior without peer, and he ventured on land to find and kill a man who was polluting the Small Sea that touched the Sea near his hunting ground.

First-to-Kill did not find the man. Instead, he found a wolf-changer that attacked him without cause. First-to-Kill fought back, but on land, the wolf-changer had the advantage. First-to-Kill still managed to do grievous harm to the wolf, and finally the wolf used a weapon made from moon's blood.

The great blade was a fetish, and First-to-Kill learned, to his dismay, that we and the Mokolé were not alone in creating such things. A spirit of War strengthened the blade, and First-to-Kill found that he could not stand against such a weapon. Although it is not in our nature to retreat, he ran for water, and dove into the Small Sea, hoping to reach others and warn them.

He succeeded in that, and with his last gasps, told us of a strange metal that burned us like the Wound many times over. Our Darkwaters learned that this metal — what you call silver — is simply residue of the medicine that Oversea applies to his

Wound. This residue falls to Unsea, but contains enough of the heat of the Wound to burn us terribly.

First-to-Kill was the first of the Rokea to meet his end this way, and so we remember him as First-to-Fall.

We are not meant to make peace. If we are attacked by something we cannot kill, we swim away. We are predators, not vigilantes. So, when the wolves made it clear to the few of us that they found that we were enemies, we left. We don't blame the wolves for their actions; after all, we *were* on their territory. Should they ever find a way to visit us, however, we will show them similar hospitality.

I digress. I was speaking about man's war with Sea, and what we did about it. Well, when we learned that Unsea's protectors — humans and most of the Changers — did not want us there, we returned to the sea to plot. We ultimately decided to avoid human contact as much as possible, and do our best to stop them from poisoning Sea. We could not war with the humans directly, so we had to make do with reaction instead of action. For years it continued like this for the Rokea: shunning the traitorous Same-Bito, preserving the oceans, guarding the Rorqual —

Oh, yes. I did say I'd come back to the Rorqual. Very well, dirtwalker. I notice you yawn — are you tired? Am I boring you?

and energy goes into building weapons. That makes sense, really. But we never had any real interest in the so-called "Great War" other than what it did to your population. After all, any war that takes place on such a small part of the world is hardly a "World War," no matter how many humans die.

When the epidemic — influenza, I think you called it — exploded after the war, we thought that Oversea had grown tired of smoke and blood filling his lungs and wished to kill you all. Again, we didn't mind — after all, if you were going to poison us, we hardly felt it necessary to help you, even if we could. When all the dust cleared, we stopped worrying and relaxed our guard on the shores. Surely, we thought, your numbers had been thinned.

Imagine, then, how surprised we were when a few scant years later, a war of even greater proportions broke out! And worse, in this war, you constructed huge, iron beasts, some as large as whales, to fight and hide underwater. These crafts — submarines, U-boats, or whatever they were called — vexed us to no end. Sailing on the water was one thing, traveling within it was another.

But destroying these vessels was a difficult task. While several of us, working together, could rip one to pieces, the weapons the submarines used were painful and deadly, even to us. In the end, we decided to let the humans have their petty squabbles, let even more of them die, and we would intervene only if the danger to our kind was great.

The appellation "World War" was somewhat more accurate this time, at least. The submarines made short work of ship after ship, the flying machines crashed into the sea on occasion, and we and our brethren were there to sample the bounty. You may have heard a famous story about a ship called the *Indianapolis*. A submarine — belonging to the Japanese, I believe — torpedoed it and it sank, taking nearly 800 men into the sea. I was there to see it, dirtwalker. I did not partake of the feast, but many of my brothers did. Oil coated the water, and the men bound themselves together so as not to float away. As days passed, the men began to lose their minds, and drank seawater. They fought each other, murdered each other for the strange vests that kept them afloat. The sharks ate the dead, sometimes a still-living sailor, but the Rokea

A Sub Called "Shark"

There have been three United States submarines called *Shark*. The first sank in World War II due to unknown causes. There were no survivors. The second sank in October of 1944 with all souls aboard; again, the cause of the sinking remains a mystery. The most recent *Shark*, a nuclear attack sub, was decommissioned in 1990 after serving for nearly 30 years.

Rokea are not the sorts to give up, so if they sank the first two *Sharks*, why ignore the third? Perhaps there was nothing supernatural about the sinkings at all, or perhaps the first two *Sharks* simply got too close to the wrong Grotto. Or perhaps there was something special about the third *Shark* that warded off the being(s) that scuttled the first two. If any living Rokea knows the answer, she has not offered it.

simply watched. It wasn't until several days after the sinking that Lightless-Tides arrived.

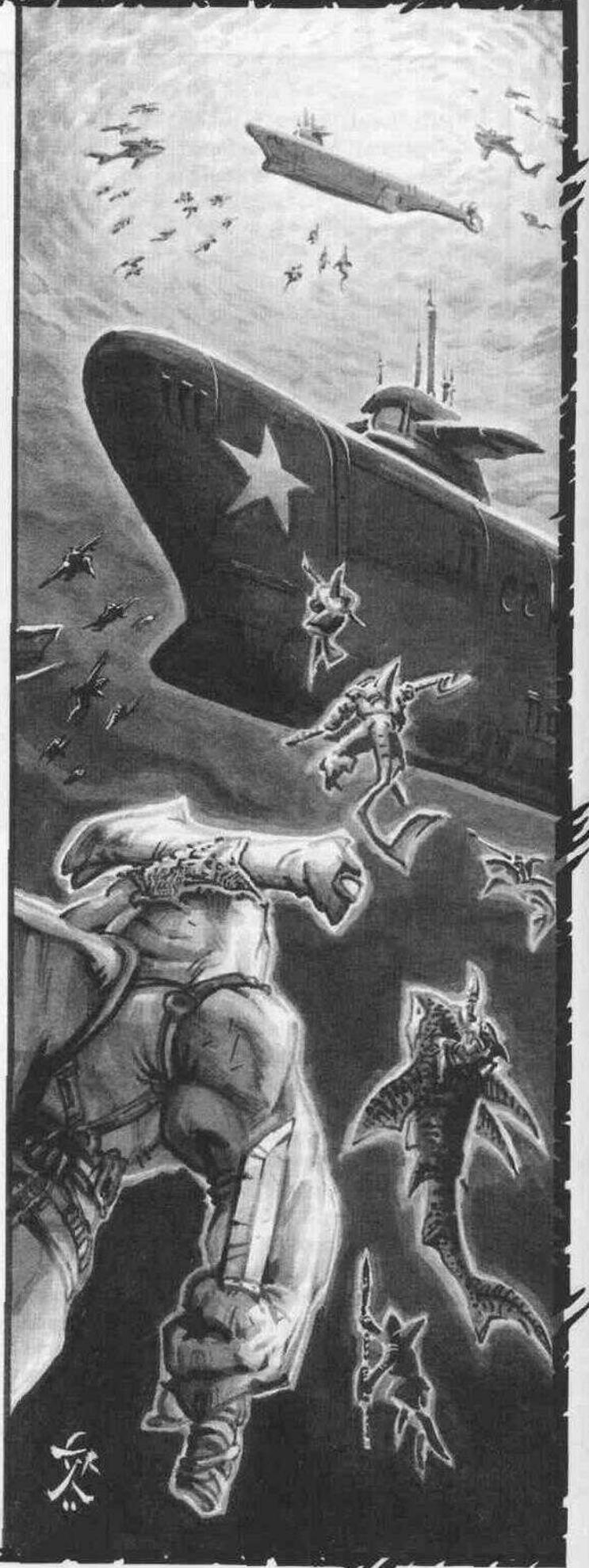
Lightless-Tides is a Darkwater, and a great seer. He arrived, furious, nearly in frenzy, and bit a man in half before we could even greet him. He swam around in quick, vicious circles, repeating only one phrase "They will open a new Wound, they will open a new Wound." We did not know then what he meant, but it was clear that these humans had done something unforgivable, and so we joined him in attacking them. When they were finally pulled from the water, only 316 men remained alive. Had Lightless-Tides arrived sooner, there might not have been any.

You see, dirtwalker, the *Indianapolis* had delivered essential parts of the latest human weapon only days before. By the time the ship went down, it was much too late. The bomb was already built, and plans to use it were being formed.

C'et's New Pearl

Lightless-Tides was right, of course. It was barely one moon before we discovered what he meant. The city was called Hiroshima, and when it was obliterated, we felt Sea, Unsea, and Oversea scream in pain and fury. But there were some of us — Darkwaters — who heard Qyrl howl with laughter.

C'et created a new pearl after Qyrl stole her first, you'll remember. But the center of this pearl was a chunk of Qyrl's missing tentacle, one of the very same tentacles that tore Oversea so many seasons ago. A small amount of Oversea's blood lingered on that tentacle, and when C'et finished her pearl, she spat it out onto Unsea.



Unsea, fearful of what this pearl could do, buried it. It was the humans, of course, who dug it up.

It should be mentioned here that C'et did not and does not wish for destruction. She is terrified of it, in fact, because she loves the stability of Unsea. She created that pearl not because it could be used as a weapon, but because it could be used for energy in place of coal and oil. As usual, however, your kind misinterpreted what the world was telling you, and immediately set about making the most destructive device the world had ever seen.

When C'et saw what had become of her gift, something changed about her. She withdrew almost completely from Sea, and, using methods we do not understand, left tracks across Unsea. Some of her children are still present in Sea, but we feel her influence lightly, if at all. We believe that she went mad, and pursues some ominous purpose on Unsea. The events following the first Small Wounds certainly confirmed that guess.

Far from satisfied with destroying their own cities, the humans decided they should destroy Sea with these Small Wounds. Over the next several seasons, more of these Small Wounds appeared all over the world. Many of them were opened inside Unsea's body, and she wailed and howled and called on her children to save her. But the bear-changers, who might have been able to aid Unsea, were dead, and the wolf-changers could not help. They are killers, not healers. Nor could we be of assistance, for we are meant to endure, and getting close to the site of a Small Wound is suicide for anyone.

We did strike back in one way, actually, though ultimately, it didn't do much good. A Darkwater called Deepest Trench created a great ritual that would bind ten Rokea into the Black Shark, a monster capable of destroying any ship that man could create. After humans opened Small Wounds on the tiny Unseas you call the Marshall Islands, the Black Shark broke the waves and sank many ships: submarines, destroyers, whatever it could find. The dark one has not been seen since before Turna'a, however, and some believe that it finally got too close to a Small Wound and was destroyed.

Turna'a? Turna'a was a turning point, a terrible crossroads in the history of the Rokea. Understand, we are not fearful creatures. We are pragmatic, more so than your suicidal race ever could be. Consider: we do not die naturally. Therefore, we have no need to reproduce in great number. We have no need to fight if retreat is an option.

The Turna'a Massacre

But the Small Wounds terrified us. So, we met, en masse, to discuss it. We decided to meet in a Grotto called Turna'a, in what you refer to as the Pacific

Ocean, not far off the coast of California. While many of us do not understand human time-keeping, I know that the meeting took place in May of 1955, nearly a full decade after the first Small Wound opened.

The number of Rokea in attendance was staggering. So many of us attended that we could not communicate by the Sending. Instead, remora-spirits carried information among us. To see so many Kunspawn together was inspiring, and some of us felt excited to be doing something, rather than simply waiting and enduring.

Oh, yes, dirtwalker. A few of us have passion and even emotion. It would seem that your disease of feeling is indeed infectious. Now hush. Even you should find this story enlightening.

As I was saying, the diversity of Rokea was vast. Some had swum as men, some had never left the oceans. The normally reticent Darkwaters circled, above the rest of us, nervously. The Brightwaters advocated attack, while most of the Dimwaters, myself included, encouraged retreating to the depths and letting mankind destroy itself. Even the Same-Bito attended, and we allowed them, because they brought news of the devastating effects the Small Wounds had on Sea even when opened on Unsea. They were shocked to hear our news as well: Several atolls in the South Pacific had already been destroyed, many of our shark brethren killed or sickened. The debates raged for days, as we are an obstinate race. Finally, a decision was made. The leaders — a slew comprised of two Darkwaters, two Brightwaters, and two Dimwaters, whispered the plan of action to the remora spirits who would carry the news to the rest of us.

The decision never reached us. A Small Wound opened, in the water, so close above us that we could taste the metal of the Wound's shell before it exploded. The blast killed many of us, the heat many more, and those that were left sickened and wasted away.

Obviously, dirtwalker, some of us did escape. Those of us closest to the Undersea slipped into Sea's Soul seconds before the blast. Of all the Rokea present, barely a score lived. None of the leaders escaped, and only one Darkwater. Most of the survivors were Dimwaters.

We scattered. We fled, separating from each other, so as not to pose an obvious target to whatever wished us dead. For, make no mistake, dirtwalker, something tried to kill us all. How am I sure? Can it truly be coincidence that when, for the first time *since humans have existed* that so many Rokea were in the same place at once, the humans chose to open a Small Wound on top of us? And how is it possible that, with more than 30 ships in attendance above us, none of us sensed anything? The Darkwaters were skittish, true, but they usually are. No, something tried to assassinate the only

race that would survive the Unmaking. And understand, dirtwalker, that if the Rokea die, there will be *nothing* left when the End comes.

The survivors had no idea what the leaders had decided. Each Rokea, then, chose his own way. The Brightwaters went to war, sinking ships and attacking humans on coastlines. The Darkwaters retreated, only resurfacing to share new rituals and secrets. As for we Dimwaters, we also retreated, but among ourselves, decided that Rokea and man should henceforth be entirely separate species. We sent out remora-spirits with this news, urging the others to avoid humans and not to walk on land.

Strangely, the responses we received were angry. Many Rokea, especially the Brightwaters, were furious

Operation: Wigwam

In May of 1955, the United States Navy did indeed detonate a nuclear weapon in the Pacific Ocean, roughly 500 miles southwest of San Diego. This was by no means the first underwater nuclear weapons test; the Marshall Islands had by this point been the site of several such tests. The test site seems poorly chosen — after all, it isn't far from U. S. soil, and even at this stage, scientists understood that radioactive material contaminated the waters, spread quickly, and could potentially poison fish that would later be scooped into American nets.

The only good explanation for the test site is that someone in power knew that the Rokea were meeting there and wished to destroy them. That isn't so difficult to believe — after all, it would only take a bit of effort for Qyrl to sink her tentacles into a scientist or technician and argue for using the area as a test site. At the time, the government was very interested in the effects of the bomb (although studying it by setting off more of them was perhaps a bad idea). It might have only taken someone with a Ph.D. and an otherwise impeccable record saying, "Our data up to now shows that the American coast and fishing industries will be in no danger" to convince them.

The question, then, is how Qyrl, if indeed she was responsible, masked the presence of 30 U. S. vessels from one of the most sensitive races on the planet, and any entity that might have warned them?

The Rokea don't know the answer, although the Darkwaters continue to speculate to this day. For more information, see Chapter Four, but be aware that the information given there is meant for the Storyteller only.

that we had tried to restrict them in any way. They answered our messages with threats and curses, saying that they would swim with humans if they so chose, and that Sea had never crowned anyone lords of the Rokea. They also said that some spirits had come to them and said that, moments before the Turna's Massacre, the leaders had decided to instruct some Rokea to venture onto Unsea and try to find a way to keep the humans away from Sea. Others agreed with us, saying that any Rokea who ventured onto land would be hunted down and dragged back to Sea.

In a very short time, everything was badly out of hand. Rokea were swimming among humans, killing indiscriminately, while others followed them, hoping to capture these "betweeners." From time to time, they succeeded, but we have no prisons in Sea, so the betweeners would invariably return. Finally, the decision was made by a high-ranking Rokea — no one is

The First Betweeners

Exclusively terrestrial Rokea don't have a common nickname — not returning to the ocean at all effectively means abandoning one's life as a wereshark. The term "betweeners" refers to a wereshark that lives on the coastline, spending much of its time on land, but returning to the ocean to regain Gnosis and assume Squamus form. Over the years, some betweeners have become quite infamous among the other Rokea. The first such Rokea were Bloodscent, Half-Tail, and Sees-Leagues, all Brightwaters.

This vicious trio ventured onto Unsea to track a terrestrial wereshark and never returned. For a time, it was felt that their quarry had killed them, perhaps by using moon's blood or obtaining help from other Changers. Ocean-dwelling Rokea decided that since all three were Brightwaters, they had not possessed the diversity necessary to combat the strange threats of Unsea. Henceforth, the Rokea decided, hunting parties would be comprised of Rokea from all three auspices.

But the three Brightwaters are not dead. From time to time, a trio of rough seadogs arrives in a coastal town. The two men protect the woman violently, for she is nearly always pregnant. Likewise, at least two marine biologists have noted three sharks of dissimilar breeds swimming together as if schooling, never getting too far from the coast. Which coast these betweeners frequent is left in the Storyteller's hands, as is the result of any of Bloodscent's pregnancies (see Chapter Five for more information on this trio).

sure exactly who — that the betweeners would be hunted and killed, and that this stalking should be part of young Rokea's first hunt.

And that is what brought me here, dirtwalker, to this pitiful little settlement in which you reside: the hunt for a Darkwater called Bleeds-Night. No, I do not wish him dead. Although he is a betweener, there is concern beneath the waves regarding the New Wound.

Some time ago, a mighty storm ravaged Unsea in a place far from here. The Darkwaters believed that the storm was not natural in origin, but rather was some form of human foolishness, like a Small Wound. I was not in that part of the Sea when it happened, and would not have cared, except that the spirits of the Sea have grown restless since then. They speak of a New Wound, a red star that glares down from Oversea's Soul as though wishing doom upon this world. A decision was made to question every Darkwater available, including the traitorous betweeners. If Bleeds-Night can provide answers, we shall spare him. If not, he will join the other Darkwaters who have failed to help us.

My hunt must continue, dirtwalker, and I weary of swimming on Unsea. You have delayed me long enough.

• • •

The sharkman — Rokea — locks eyes with Mateo, and Mateo grows cold. He feels as though he is falling, feels unrelated to anything around him, as though lost in a thick haze. They only things he can see are the Rokea's eyes, as it stands, painfully, and hobbles toward him. The eyes are black, completely black, and look cold and lifeless. The gun tumbles from his fingers and clatters against the floor.

Mateo's mind screams Pick up the gun, estupido! Pick it up! He's going to kill you! But he can't move his hands. He feels a crushing weight around him, as though he is...

...underwater.

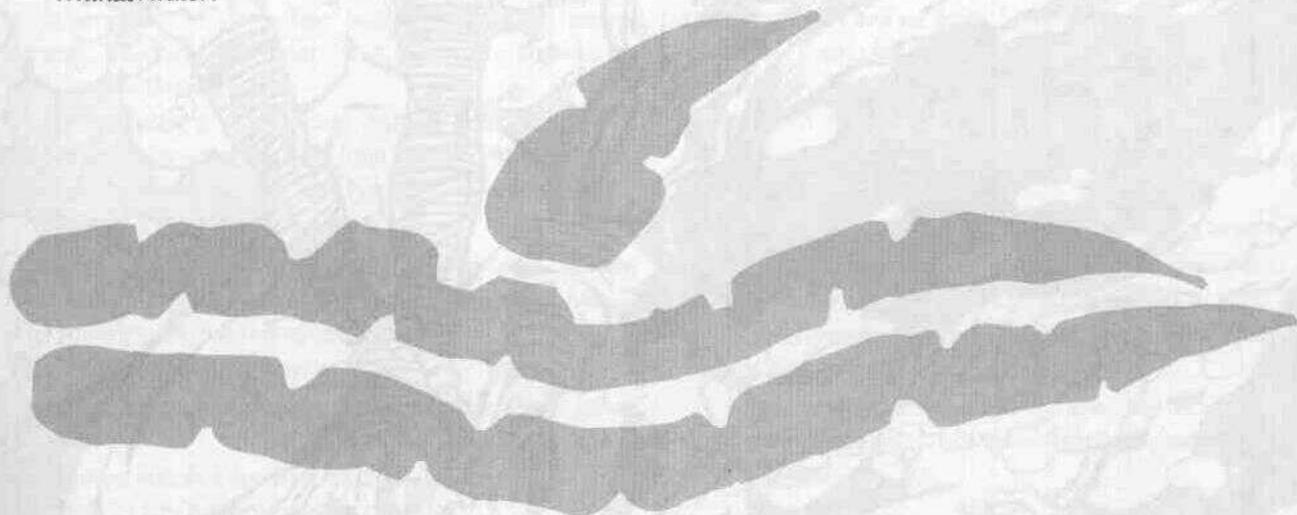
He reaches inward, tries to find the raw, bloody rage that he felt last night. And seconds before the Rokea reaches him, he finds it.

Mateo's body explodes from his clothing into a half-shark. He has no time to marvel. He must survive. He rakes his nails — nails? No, claws! — across Guards-the-Shoals' face. The Rokea falls backwards, screaming in pain, and Mateo leaps on him. Guards is already changing to his own war-form, however, and a painful bite tears Mateo's shoulder open. The two Rokea roll, biting, slashing, bleeding, both in a mindless frenzy, smashing tables and chairs, until finally Guards-the-Shoals pins the young Rokea to the floor and opens his mouth to bite Mateo's face off.

A shrill, keening whine fills the air, and Guards-the-Shoals stumbles back, shaking. Mateo tries to get up, but finds himself unable to move — he, too, is rendered helpless by the sound. A rough pair of hands seizes Mateo and drags him to his feet. The noise continues, but somehow, through it all, Mateo feels a tingle of electricity. And with the jolt is an introduction: "My name is Bleeds-Night. I know it's hard to walk, but you have to come with me."

Somehow, Mateo manages. Once outside, the ringing stops. Mateo slides into human form so fast he doesn't even notice. Bleeds-Night, also in human form — and much better looking than Guards-the-Shoals, Mateo notices — drops Mateo's naked body into the passenger side of an old convertible.

As they drive off, Mateo passes out. He barely registers Bleeds-Night's disapproving comments about him bleeding on the seat, and does not notice at all the screams from the marina behind them. Bleeds-Night does, however, and knows that Guards-the-Shoals has gone for help. For a race with infinite lives, he thinks, we certainly are being rushed.





Chapter Two: Sunlit Waters

Mateo wakes to a terrible pain in his shoulder. His eyes snap open, and he looks around desperately. He is sitting at a kitchen table. Ugly yellow wallpaper. Lots of water damage. Roaches on the floor. Shit, I could be anywhere in town, he thinks.

His shoulder is still bleeding, but not badly. There's a black man sitting across the table from him, watching him with a detached smile on his face. He says, "You know who I am?"

Mateo does. "Bleeds-Night?"

"Yeah. I'm the idiot who saved your sorry ass. Guards-the-Shoals is a cocky bastard. I'm sure I surprised him." The smile grows to a momentary chuckle.

"How long have I been out?"

"Not long. Few hours. We'll be okay here for a while longer."

Mateo slouches down in his chair, wincing at the pain it brings. "They'll be coming for me?"

Bleeds-Night laughs out loud this time. "For you? Hell, yes. They'll send a whole slew for you. Me, I'm just a betweenner. They've been hunting me for years; few more ain't gonna kill 'em. You, on the other hand, are a new thing. You aren't supposed to exist at all. You're a human-born shark."

Mateo suddenly realizes that he's naked. "You got some—"

"Yeah," his host answers. "On the floor next to you."

Mateo yanks on a pair of Florida State sweatpants. "So, if I'm not possible, how come I'm... well... here?"

"Good question. Guess you didn't get a chance to ask Guards about that?"

Mateo snorts. "No, all he did was tell me how the world got made and shit." Bleeds-Night nods, and begins to roll a cigarette.

...

The Rokea Life Cycle

Want one? No? Okay, but fair warning, this isn't normal tobacco, and it'll help calm you down. No, don't think that way, it is tobacco. Just not normal.

Well, it's all very well to know the beginnings, the creation stories, and all that. I imagine he told you about the Turna'a Massacre and the other Changers and all that? Ha! He's getting soft. Ten years ago he would have just eaten you.

Oh, you had a gun to his head? With silver shot, yet! Oh, I could kiss you.

Ahem. Anyway, you wanted to know how you were possible at all. All right, let's back up a bit, and I'll tell you what it's like to be born Rokea, the usual way.

See, Rokea don't have life spans the way humans do. We don't die naturally; we just keep on and keep on, unless something kills us. And that does happen, mind you: Qyrl's got children everywhere, and some of them are tough enough to do us in. Plus, we hunt each other down, too, so that's how a lot of us go. So the response should be, breed more Rokea, right?

Except it isn't that simple. Because old age isn't a concern, and because having too many predators in the ocean gets unpleasant, we breed very slowly. In olden times, there would only be three or four Rokea born a

century. Now, with the dirtwalkers massacring hundreds of millions of sharks, we try to keep pace a bit more, but old habits die hard. Not that I ran a survey or anything, but my guess is that in a single year, you'd be lucky to see the birth of one Rokea. Of course, I can't speak for the Same-Bito, who kind of have their own way of doing things, but as a race, overpopulation isn't a big problem.

As far as the actual facts of life for Rokea go, we breed with sharks. If you saw me in Swimming Jaws (that's "normal shark form," just so you know) I'd look like a blacktip shark. Guards-the-Shoals, as you know, is a hammerhead. You, I only got to see you in Standing Jaws for a second, but your coloring suggested tiger shark to me. Ever get a craving for license plates? Never mind, kid.

Anyway, we breed with the shark whose form we take. Now, I don't know how familiar with shark reproduction you are, but different breeds work differently. Some sharks lay eggs, some give birth to live young, and in some species, while numerous eggs get fertilized, the embryonic sharks eat one another until only one is left to be born. Survival of the fittest, huh? Well, in a shark/Rokea coupling, only one Rokea will be born. If the shark gives birth to one pup, obviously that's the Rokea. If she births more than one, then usually it's the largest of the pups. It never "skips a generation" the way I'm led to



understand it does for other Changers. One Rokea from a mating, never more, never less. So that's simple, right?

But it doesn't explain you, since you were clearly born human. Well, I'll let you in on some knowledge that very, very few of our kind have. If a Rokea has a child with a human being, the child is *never* Rokea. The result is what some of our kind call *kadugo*. It's an islander word with mystic connotations; not sure of the exact translation. Anyway, it just sort of stuck. When a Rokea breeds with a *kadugo*, then you get a chance for a Rokea. How much of a chance? Damned if I know; you're probably the first, or at least the first to survive.

What happens if a Rokea breeds with another Rokea? Hmm... hell, I don't know. In the ocean, we mate as the urge takes us, but we don't mate with our own kind. It's just kind of instinctive. Good question... never heard of it happening, though.

Anyway, a shark-born Rokea lives the first few years of its life as a normal shark pup, and when it reaches that all-important sexually mature stage, it "wakes up." It isn't like the traumatic First Changes of the werewolves (yeah, I do know something about them. Remind me later, I'll tell you), it's more like... shit, never tried explaining this before. The smells in the sea mean more. They don't just mean "food," they mean "something died to feed you." They don't just mean "strangeness," they mean "enemy." It's very strange. Typically, we start sending out these electrical impulses — which is how we communicate underwater — that basically say, "What the hell is going on?" And either another Rokea shows up, and explains things, or a remora finds us and takes us to a Rokea. That trip, our journey on the way to find out about ourselves, is a big deal for Rokea. We call it the Long Swim.

Basically, it's your first big adventure. I mean, a shark's life isn't exactly predictable, but you aren't really aware of it before the Long Swim. When the smells start coming back to you with implications as well as literal meanings, it changes everything. You are literally re-discovering the world. What happens to you on your long swim determines a lot about your attitude and beliefs as a Rokea. If you don't see anybody, and the seas are calm and peaceful, it's gonna make your disposition a little sweeter than if you'd just missed getting fouled in some fishing net.

Me? Actually, I got really lucky. A Rorqual found me during my Long Swim. She explained who the Rokea were and that our purpose was survival, and she didn't muck my head up with all the "betweenner" stuff. She reminded me about the harmony that existed before belief, which is probably why I'm not as touchy about getting to know new people as a lot of us are. She also told me about being a Darkwater and what that meant....

Which I really should explain to you. Okay, here goes.

Rokea Auspices

Each Rokea belongs to one of three societal roles; we call them auspices. By "we," I mean betweeners; the ocean-dwellers don't really have a term for it. They just understand who's a Darkwater or a Dimwater or whatever and leave it at that.

Which auspice you follow has to do with when you were born. In that way, it's sort of like an astrological sign, except more accurate.

Brightwater

The Brightwaters are born on the full moon. Legend goes that this is when the sun — the Wound — is running low on the medicine. That's why the moon's so bright: because his "blood" is seeping through. Rokea born during the day when the sun's shining are also considered Brightwaters.

We're all warriors, but Brightwaters give the word new meaning. They win battles consistently, not always through skill as much as ferocity. They're tenacious, bloodthirsty, but brutally honest and loyal to friends and slew-mates. They also tend to enjoy the surface more — supposedly because of their proximity to the Wound, I don't know — and therefore the greatest number of betweeners is drawn from the Brightwaters.

And incidentally, the way you went after Guards-the-Shoals, I wouldn't be too surprised to find out that you're a Brightwater.

Dimwaters

The bulk of the Rokea population, such as it is, is composed of Dimwaters. Any Rokea born at night between the new and full moons, or any Rokea born at twilight or when the sun's clouded over is considered Dimwater. As such, it's actually pretty hard to form stereotypes about them.

One thing that a lot of them have in common is that they don't like the betweeners. There are some Dimwater betweeners, sure, but for the most part, they're the ones who come a-hunting. Another thing is that they aren't territorial; they like to swim from ocean to ocean, bringing news and checking up on Grottoes and Rorqual. As he might have told you, Guards-the-Shoals is a Dimwater.

Darkwaters

By far the rarest of the Rokea are the Darkwaters, like myself. We're born during the new moon, and during total eclipses, and that's really about it. We're the calmest of the Rokea, not that it makes us Zen masters or anything, but we're not as likely to fly into a blood-frenzy when we see a

kid with a skinned knee. Also, we're hands-down the greatest innovators and mystics of the race. It was a Darkwater who created the Rite of the Black Shark, a Darkwater who foresaw the first Small Wound, and, although this gets contested sometimes, Mizuchi was a Darkwater.

I'm not exactly up on how things work over East, by the way, but I can tell you that most Rokea think of Mizuchi and the Asian weresharks as traitors. Ah, well. A prophet is never welcome in his own country, right?

Anyway, while Brightwaters are the most likely to swim between, Darkwaters enjoy it more. There are mysteries aplenty in the ocean, but let's face it, we've been down there an awfully long time. Up here, aside from the fact that we're hunted by bloodthirsty and relentless members of our own kind, we can have a lot of fun — and we've got a lot to learn. To a Darkwater, "a lot to learn" is great bait, pardon the expression.

How do we know which auspice to follow? Good question. Well, after our Long Swim, we hook up with another Rokea. They explain all the facts to us, like I'm doing now, and then they take us to a Grotto. There, we get to enter Sea's Soul. Hopefully, I can get you to a Grotto, because if you can get to Sea's Soul, there's no telling what will happen. See, basically, you get to have a one-on-one with Sea. What is said in that conversation varies from shark to shark, and even if I could find the words in this language, I wouldn't spoil the surprise. She tells you about yourself, gives you some suggestions, teaches you some Gifts — I'll get to that, don't worry — and tells you your auspice. Now, in your case, we might actually be able to check without her... if you were born at night, it would be easy to check an almanac for the phase of the moon....

Sorry. That really isn't so important right now. Where was I? Sea's Soul, right. Picture it this way. You dive into a pool of water so clear that you can see the reflection of everything around it, but instead of getting wet, you find yourself inside the reflection. It's another world, a world of spirits, and it's nigh impossible to get there on land, though some of us have figured it out. In the ocean, though... wow. You can chat with Sea, with the currents and the tides, with the fish and even the Qyrlings, if you're feeling daring. Everything that's vibrant and alive about Sea gets increased exponentially in Sea's Soul. You feel like you're really home.

Except you can't stay long. We can only enter Sea's Soul in the ocean with Kun's protection, because *everything* is amplified, which includes little things like pressure. Rokea enter Sea's Soul with very specific purposes in mind, the most obvious is meeting with Sea after the Long Swim. After that, you might never enter again, unless Kun or Sea asks something specific of you. Of course, there's another way.

I mentioned that it's almost impossible to enter Sea's Soul on land, right? The Darkwaters figured out a way around that. Turns out that most other Changers can step into Unsea's Soul (which they call the Umbra) without too much fuss. So, a few of us — all betweeners — learned to emulate them (some Darkwaters have learned to step into Sea's Soul as well, but like I said, it's dangerous). I can teach you, yeah, but not just yet. Well, because you aren't ready.

Rokean Renown

We're not storytellers or gossip mongers and we aren't real social, but there is a ranking system among the Rokea. Basically, it works like this. If a Rokea is higher in rank than you, it means he's either been around longer, in which case he's worthy of respect, or he's proven himself to Kun, Sea and the Rokea in general, in which case he's worthy of respect. You do not have to blindly follow someone's orders because they outrank you. You should never do anything blindly; blind faith is a human invention, and we don't put any stock in it. No Rokea is required to do anything but survive. Survival is, in fact, one way to gain rank. If you survive for ten years or so, and don't do anything to hurt the race, you go up in rank. Survive another twenty, you go up again. And so on. That's the slow way. It can get *real* slow, too, because Rokea don't measure time as precisely as humans do. If you choose the slow way, Sea basically decides when you go up in rank. And remember that Sea's still pretty much on geological time. Of course, there is the fast way.

The fast way is to *do* stuff. Save a Rorqual from getting harpooned? Kun sees that, and recognizes it as aiding the survival of the race. Sinking a fishing boat? Ditto. Learn a new Gift and spread it around so it does some good for the race? Hey, that's great. Carry word from island to island, or swim the loneliest, coldest parts of Sea to act as a kind of checkpoint for Rorqual or remora? *That helps the Rokea in general*, and it's worth a pat on the dorsal fin.

We're judged on this sort of thing from three sides: by Sea, by Kun, and by each other. Sea values Harmony; that is, are we making sure that we don't overstep our boundaries and that nobody else in the water does either? Kun prizes Innovation; sure, we just have to survive, but adaptation and creativity is a part of that. Races take thousands of years to evolve in *reaction* to some sudden shift in their world, but by taking *action*, we should be able to change right along with the world. Finally, the Rokean race looks for Valor. It's a tricky concept for us to grasp, because we don't see the point in being honest if it'll get you killed, but we don't see the point in lying if the truth isn't fatal. We're meant to uphold our place in the world without shame or compromise, and lying about it seems shameful to us.

Now, for betweeners, things run a bit differently. We still have to behave as Kun and Sea expect, but since other Rokea seem to want to eat us, the rules of Valor are a little different. We're allowed to lie a bit more without losing face, although the truth is still the best policy, if possible. On the other hand, we can't meet threats with a head-on attack the way ocean dwellers can, because it isn't brave to do so, it's stupid. I don't have any idea where you'll fit into the Valor argument, though.

How do Sea and Kun know about what happens here? Good question. All water is Sea, sooner or later. And Kun has children of Unsea and Oversea as well as Sea. So, if we feel we're due for some recognition for our deeds, there's a little ritual the betweeners know that sends our story back to our creators. If you don't know the ritual, you have to swim out into Sea and find a remora, and that can get rather dangerous.

Ocean dwelling Rokea recognize the hunt for betweeners as Valorous, and betweeners see evading the hunt the same way. And you want to know something strange? Kun and Sea recognize Innovation and Harmony from ocean dwellers and betweeners equally, be it from fugitives like us, or the good Kun-fearing population of the oceans. You'll never get any prestige at all from them for playing any role in the betweener war, but as long as what we do helps the race in general, we can expect recognition from Kun or Sea for it.

How do we know what helps the race? We do have a code of conduct to follow. It's just that it's very brief and to the point, like everything the Rokea do.

Rokean Law

Survive

This is the easy one. It means that *no matter what*, the race must survive. If that means you swim away from a fight, there's no one who'll call you a coward. After all, you're still around.

However, there are times when self-sacrifice is necessary. The Black Shark was a good example. Back during the height of the nuclear tests, a very clever Darkwater came up with a way to combine ten Rokea into a 120 foot black monster. They sank subs, destroyed battleships, and generally scared the bejeezus out of anyone who got near it. To my knowledge, there's no way to reverse the rite, which means that those Rokea effectively ceased to exist as individuals, giving up their lives to become the Black Shark, but no Rokea would call the transformation a breach of the Law. The other thing is, if something gets too near a Grotto or threatens a Rorqual, we've got to kill it. Grottoes are sacred to Kun and Sea, and Rorqual have a niche in the world that no other creature can fill. We need both for our survival.



Hunt

We may have duties as Rokea, but that doesn't exempt us from our duties as sharks. We're apex predators, which means that what we do affects the whole ecosystem. It also means that if humans kill all the sharks, they're in for a world of trouble a few years down the road.

Hunting means finding food, stopping threats, and remembering that you're a warrior and predator, no matter what.

Spawn

No Rokea is exempt from breeding. We do it slowly, yeah, but we all have to breed at least once during our lives. Kun is the mother of fishes and the true spirit of fecundity and creation, and we don't call ourselves Kunspawn just because we like the sound of it.

But there's more to this Law than just procreation. We also have to teach those we spawn. The Long Swim gives you a base, the meeting with Kun in Sea's Soul gives you a primer and a true welcome, but the rest of the Rokea are your people and the only peer group you're likely to have.

Except that really doesn't apply to you, does it? You know, you put a new spin on the whole thing. If you live, we may have re-think the Law a bit.

Swim

Sharks die if they stop swimming. There are a few breeds that can lie still and keep water going over their gills, but I've never heard of Rokea being born of those breeds. We have to keep swimming, keep exploring, keep moving.

Now, I can hear you thinking, "But if we're meant to survive, doesn't it make more sense to stick to the places we know are safe?" Well, that's logical, but that's why we're in such a state now. We didn't swim on land, we didn't watch the humans, and now here they are setting off nuclear bombs on the shores, finning our brethren, and dumping toxic sludge into our homes. Nope, swimming is part of survival. We may not have any reaction to a new sight but to bite it or swim away, but we have to know it's there, just in case.

That's it. Like I said, simple and blunt. Keep all that in mind and you'll be okay. Huh? Yeah, I know. The Law doesn't seem to say anything about the whole between situation. Are you clear on that? All right, let's nail that bad boy down.

Those Who Swim Between

For the Rokea, taking to human form and walking among locals is nothing new. We've been watching island and coastal peoples for centuries, sometimes among them. Hell, some of us would even steal onto passenger ships for a few days, just for fun. What we

didn't do, though, is breed, or anyway, no one admitted to doing it. So, there were never any human-born Rokea. That had its good points — no human blood means no human mindsets, no human politics, no worrying about the dogma over the faith, that kind of thing. We kept our Laws simple, and we didn't need to muck about with keeping track of human *kadugo*.

But there are problems, too. Like, the fact that since we didn't like to go too far inland, it was hard to keep track of what was happening away from the coast. A lot of Rokea felt that since Unsea is such a small part of the world, what happens there couldn't have a big effect on Sea. Ha. As you have no doubt guessed, the Industrial Revolution, the atomic age, both World Wars, toxic dumping, industrialized fishing, and now this asinine idea that eating pills made from shark's cartilage will cure cancer — all this is cause for worry. But we let ourselves get out of the loop, all because of Turna'a.

You said Guards explained what happened there, so I'll explain the aftershocks. Remember that an awful lot of us died that day. Only one Darkwater made it out alive, and that's really bad news, because we're the closest things to mediators that exist among Rokea (remember we're the creative ones, and anybody who says that mediation isn't a creative art form is a friggin' idiot). I wasn't there for Turna'a — hell, I wasn't even born yet — but I've done some asking around and it's not a pretty picture.

After Turna'a, the Dimwaters decided that Rokea should just stay in the water where they belong. They sent remora out with messages to the effect of, "Stay off Unsea or die." Well, as you may have heard, Rokea are pretty stubborn, and Brightwaters especially. Brightwaters are also the weresharks most likely to swim on Unsea. So when they got this imperious bullshit from the Dimwaters, they sent their own messages back, basically to the tune of, "The Law says 'swim', so we'll swim. Fuck off." The Dimwaters replied with, "Just try it, buster." And so on.

Yeah, sounds really childish, doesn't it? I mean, for a race that puts so much stock in living in harmony and surviving, we really went nuts over this issue. But we were scared, don't forget. We lost something like sixty percent of our entire population at Turna'a. If three-and-a-half billion humans died suddenly, you can bet the rest would get a little strange, too. Anyway, for a few years, nothing happened. The Dimwaters and the Brightwaters exchanged hate mail via remora for a while, but then it died down and we thought it would pass. We were trying to breed and bring the population back up, and keeping away from humans at the same time.

The first Hunt happened in 1968, about 13 years after Turna'a. Some very high-ranking Brightwater sent word to a lot of other Rokea that there was a rogue

living in defiance of the Law, swimming on Unsea, the bastard. In response, three Rokea, two Dimwaters and a Brightwater, charged into Unsea, found the rogue, dragged him back to Sea, and...

Realized they could not do shit to keep him there.

Thus began about the most ridiculous saga in Rokea history. Word would come down about somebody swimming on Unsea, a hunting party would be arranged, they'd drag the offender home, and the culprit would say, "Yeah, whatever" and be back on Unsea in time for dinner. As silly as it was, it got worse. That same high-ranked Brightwater, whoever the hell he was, said, "All right, then kill the heathens when you find them." And the Brightwaters who weren't interested in swimming on land agreed, probably because one of their own had made the declaration. So instead of the Hunt being a big game of hide-and-seek (which acted as a good exercise for all involved), now it was actively depleting the species. *That's* a breach of the Law, but this seems to have escaped everybody.

So anyway, since it was getting really dangerous to be brash about going to Unsea, a lot of us did it subtly.

We'd live for a while on an island or in a coastal city, and return to Sea every few days to say "Hi" to some remora or any nearby Rokea. This worked out pretty well for a while, until Qyrl stepped in.

We revere Kun. Not Qyrl, not C'et, but Kun. That's why we're "Kunspawn," not "Qyrl-kids" or "C'etites." But Qyrl, always the watchful little sneak, started threatening to reveal the betweeners' secrets to the ocean-dwellers unless we swore fealty to her. Which, disgustingly enough, some of us did. I'm led to understand that taking Qyrl as a patron grants some nice benefits, but it isn't worth betraying our creator. Most of us told Qyrl to shove it, and, true to her word, she ratted us out to the fascists beneath the waves. And they came for us.

Qyrl pulled her little blackmail deal long about the beginning of the 1980s. Therefore, we've had about 20 years of the ocean-dwellers hunting down the betweeners. In fact, it's even become a rite of passage for young Rokea. And the worst thing is, I have no idea what, if anything, Kun is telling these kids when they visit her after the Long Swim, because my meeting with her predates all this nonsense.

Betweener Law

The Rokean Law is great for the Rokea who stay in the ocean. For those of us who swim between, however, there are some expansions and revisions.

Survive

Okay, this doesn't change. This is our job, our purpose in life. Do you know how many human texts have been written and agonized over trying to find purpose? Well, we know ours, and it's pretty liberating. We've got to endure, period.

Humans Are Not Prey

Humans are predators, and they prey on each other. Sharks do the same thing, so it really isn't culture shock that you guys kill each other so much, except that you don't normally eat the carcasses. That in mind, those of us who stay on land don't mind killing humans — sorry, that's just the way we are — but we don't eat you. Look, the whole "man-eating shark" thing gets blown way out of proportion. Even the ocean-dwellers don't do it much; we betweeners just avoid it entirely because it raises too many questions.

Stay Near Sea

A real no-brainer, and I'll tell you why. We need sustenance of the soul as well as the body, and the only way we get that is by swimming in Sea and visiting a Grotto or a Rorqual. Without such suste-

nance, we can't use many of our Gifts, and even those of us who have learned how to reach Sea's Soul can't do it. Also, if we go too long without swimming in salt water (doesn't have to be Sea, but name me one other naturally-occurring body of salt water not infested with Mormons) we lose our shape-shifting powers *permanently*. How long? Who wants to find out?

F.E.A.R.

Humans are big into over-thinking all their problems, usually with aid from talk-show hosts. F.E.A.R. is a little self-help word game meaning Face Everything And Recover. Not to the betweeners. Nope, to us it means Fuck Everything And Run. Sometimes, we take that literally.

Look, we're obviously supposed to be mating while we're here. So we do. But we're also being chased by our own kind. So when confronted by a Rokea Hunt — or any other totally hopeless situation — we act like a predator. We leave. Predators are not noble, and they aren't suicidal. They want to stay alive, so we're not into meaningful relationships, child support, or any shit like that. Ten seconds after it's over, we're looking for the exit. We remain mobile and (hopefully) unfound.

Since a lot of human men behave this way anyway, we've got some good camouflage.

So that's where the betweeners stand now. Hunted by our own kind, caught by geography (because we can't get too far from Sea, for reasons I've mentioned), and no idea what Kun or Sea or Unsea thinks about all this. We betweeners still get advice from Sea, if she feels we need it. *We still learn Gifts. We don't feel cut off from her in any way. And yet, the others still hunt us. So why hasn't she stopped them? We don't know. I've heard a few theories on the matter, and none of them thrill me much.*

The number one theory is that she figures we need to work this out ourselves. Perhaps Sea is feeling that this "betweenner war" shit is our mess, so we should clean it up. Now remember, I said that Sea thinks on a geological time scale. That means that if it takes a hundred centuries for us to clear it up, that's okay by her. That's possible, but it doesn't fill me with hope for the future.

The second theory is that she approves of the Hunt, seeing it as an exercise in survival. I have a hard time believing that, mainly because, like I said, we still learn from Sea even if we do go coastal.

The final theory, adopted mainly by cynical Dimwaters, is that she's disgusted. Sea feels that we've failed in our duties, the humans are destroying her right and left, and here's the Rokea, the most powerful aquatic race in the world, not doing diddly about it. So, when we started killing each other, she just decided to sit back and watch, and not lift a finger to stop the carnage. I really hope this isn't the case, but it makes a certain degree of sense.

Anyway, philosophy aside, there are a few other things about living on land you should know. First of all there's this crazy need to breed all the time. I don't know where the hell that came from, either. It started... a couple of summers ago, I think. About the same time as that freak hurricane in Bangladesh, remember that? All of a sudden, any wereshark who comes on land, betweenner or no, walks around horny the entire time. It's a real pain, because it's distracting, but I wonder more about what it means. By the way, the urge only draws us to humans. No matter how hot we think another wereshark is, in water or on land, the feelings just aren't there. That's why I think it's more an urge to breed than an *urge for sex*. A shark wouldn't understand the difference anyway, and it took me some time to get used to the idea of mating for mating's sake.

Of course, you must have been born before the mating urge came about. What are you, seventeen? You were born a good decade and a half before this urge to bone everything in sight took the betweeners. Stranger and stranger.

OK, anyway, what else? How about, "A Day in the Life of a Betweenner?" Sure, sounds good. Well, under-

stand that setting oneself up as a betweenner takes some work. We have to get a legal identity, which can be a pain in the ass. After all, without a birth certificate or a Social Security number, the "Land of the Free" becomes "Land of Immigration and Naturalization Services." You've already got that covered, being born human and all, but I had to learn to swim within the polluted cesspool that is the American bureaucracy, and that took some time.

Nowadays, though, I have a human name, and a human job, and it sucks, just like everybody's job. You got a job? *Dockworker, huh? That's cool* — I unloaded trucks at a warehouse. The trick is to minimize human contact. See, when Joe Office gets pissed at his boss, he can smile and suck it up, and then punch his pillow later. When I get pissed off at my boss, though, I have to keep control and resist the very real temptation to eat his face. You've fallen victim to that rage, I'm sure. I saw it when you fought Guards-the-Shoals. If you're going to live on land, you've got to find outlets.

Mine? Music. I thought that your music sounded like random noise for the first few years I was up here. Then I went to a concert. Don't remember who — some thrash band. I couldn't believe it. People were all over the place, screaming, singing (sort of), crashing into each other. It was pure feeling, a lot of anger, but everybody still having a good time. I jumped right in. I never once caught myself about to change, even though I was pumped up the whole time. I woke up the next morning, badly hung over and ears ringing, next to some girl, both of us covered in bruises. Best night of my life. Now, I catch any thrash concert I can. If my boss gets on me or I'm just feeling out of sorts for whatever reason, I go home, crank up the stereo and put holes in the walls.

Yeah, sounds simple, right? Well, "Rokea" is an old Polynesian word for "simple." No, I'm just fucking with you. Really, though, we are a very simple race. Our highest law is "Survive," after all. Can't get much more basic than that.

So, a good method for coping with anger is a tool of survival. As is a sexual outlet. I know a few Rokea who have turned to rape for that outlet, and that's just not cool. I know, we're not terribly sympathetic towards humans or their weird hang-ups about sex, but think about it for a minute. For one thing, that shit can get cops on you real quick, depending on circumstances. And also, there's a moral issue here. Sharks reproduce slowly. They only mate at certain times, and only when they're good and ready. So if humans are the same way, we can get behind that. Problem is, we're up here wanting sex *all the time*, and not a lot of us are good-looking enough to do the nightclub thing. There's two ways to cope (three, if you count prostitutes, but who has the money?): the slow way and the quick way.

The slow way is that if we work at it, we can change the way we look in human form. Now, I have no idea if this will work for you, but betweeners can make themselves better looking. You've seen how Rokea look as humans — butt-ugly, right? I looked pretty gruesome when I first crawled out of Sea, too, but I'm okay now. It's like building a muscle. You spend a few hours each day concentrating on your face and how you want to look. It can take months, but it's well worth it, because it also acts like a disguise: the ocean-dwellers don't know about this little perk, and aren't very good at judging humans by descriptors like "ugly" or "good-looking" anyway.

The fast way is by awakening a human's mating instinct. This takes some doing, too, but you can learn to stare at a woman and make her want you. It's not really an override of free will, you're just tapping into a place in her that wants to mate. It doesn't make her fall in love, make her loyal, or even make her pick up the dinner check. She just wants to get it on, then and there, and the spell ends about 30 seconds after it's over. Now, if you've taken my earlier piece of advice, you should have been gone 20 seconds by that point.

So, besides dealing with anger and sexual frustration, and staying close to the ocean, what else? Well, knowledge is power. I recommend you learn all you can. Any betweener who can drive a car has a leg up on the hunting parties, and you've got a *huge* leg up because you've been up here all your life. Don't ever count on ocean-dweller ignorance to save you — some of them were among the Rokea who visited Unsea for years before Turna'a (yeah, that's why Guards-the-Shoals speaks Spanish) — but any human invention that you can use to your advantage, go for it. Know your city. Know its quirks, its back streets, and the quickest way to the ocean. Make friends, but I warn you that's hard. People react badly to us, even those of us who aren't scary-looking. Too much predator in us, I guess.

Bottom line is, kid, we're playing a waiting game here on land. We're waiting for the Great Unmaking, or a hunting party to kill us, or Kun to step in and make a declaration on the betweener issue, whichever comes first. And while we wait, we hunt, swim, spawn and survive, like sharks; but we also work, play, learn, and fight, like humans.

Well, so now you know enough about living on land as a Rokea, for a start, anyhow. So how about living as a shark? I've got a friend who lives in the ocean full-time and doesn't buy into the war on the betweeners. That assumes we find her instead of Guards-the-Shoals, but I figure Guards will be searching us out up here for a while.

So, what do you say? Wanna go swimming with sharks?

• • •

Mateo nods, a twinge of fear swirling through him. The two Rokea make their way to the car, and ride, silently, to

the beach. Mateo doesn't know what's going through Bleeds-Night's mind, but he's glad for the quiet. He needs some time to think.

Survive, he thinks. I can handle that. But this war between the Rokea! Mateo has been treated unfairly before, by parents, teachers, cops, and so forth, and it always makes him want to scream. And now, a bunch of shark-men want to kill him for being born on the wrong side of beach. How much of that is really concern about the race, Mateo wonders, and how much of it is just plain arrogance? He feels his skin thicken as the hairs on his arm begin changing to denticles. Bleeds-Night shoots him a look, and Mateo relaxes.

They arrive at the beach close to sundown. The day people are trickling back home, dragging their toddlers away from sandcastles and their teens away from sunbathers. The night people — college students, mostly — are dragging their coolers from their cars, beginning to build fires, arguing over what CD to play.

As the two weresharks trek across the sand from the car — parked a good distance away from any revelers — Mateo hears dissonant guitar chord from over a rise. The harsh music stands out against the soft whispers of the sea on the shore, and Mateo hears the purity in both.

Bleeds-Night smiles. "If they're still around later," he murmurs, "we should drop in." Then he turns to his pupil. "OK, strip."

"Huh?" Not very articulate, but Mateo feels distracted. "Can't go swimming all dressed like that. Your clothes will shred themselves. Can't have that."

Mateo shucks his clothes and Bleeds-Night stuffs them into a cloth pack, followed by his own. "So what about the pack?"

Bleeds-Night grins. "I'll show you." His skin ripples and he changes into the half-shark form — Standing Jaws, Mateo remembers. He's much leaner in this form than Guards-the-Shoals, and the fins along his arms and legs are tipped in black. Bleeds-Night lifts the bag and swallows it whole. Mateo gapes.

"What the fuck, man?" Bleeds-Night does not answer, verbally, but Mateo feels a current pass between them.

"Gifts, Mateo. I mentioned this before. When we're ready to re-surface, I'll cough the pack back up, good as new." Mateo understands the thought, though no words are used. Bleeds-Night turns and walks into the sea. Mateo hesitates, but Bleeds-Night sends back to him, "Come on! Instinct will take over before you drown!"

Great, thinks Mateo, and cautiously follows the Rokea into the ocean.

• • •

What'd I tell you, kid? Instinct kicks in right away. So, here we are off the coast of southern Florida. Nice, huh? Take a second to get acclimated to the

scents, the motions, the currents... it can all be a bit overwhelming at first. Give me a second, I'm going to try and find my friend.

OK, let's go. Quick, wasn't it? We can pick up on the Sending from over a mile away, and it travels very quickly. Anyhow, she's this way.

Smell that? Human blood. Back on the beach. Oh, don't get excited, probably some kid cut his foot on a rock. If there were a fight going on, or a shark attack, you'd not only smell much more blood but feel the water churning. Yeah, it is a lot of sensory input to get used to, I guess. Well, when you swim on land again, you'll feel like you're wearing blinders, I assure you. Which is another advantage betweeners have — usually the hunters have to take some time to get used to the difference before they can get serious about finding us. Well, think about it. Down here, you can feel from every direction. But air doesn't work the same way as water, so on land, we have to rely on sight and hearing much more.

We've got a bit of a swim ahead of us. We're going to Andros Island, or the waters nearby, anyway. So, what else do you want to know?

Gifts, huh? Good choice. Well, Sea's Soul isn't empty. Every fish, every current, they all have spirits. Just like on land, animals, trees, even cars and buildings have spirits inside 'em, and spirits to represent them. Mostly, we learn Gifts from aquatic spirits — makes sense, huh? — but the betweeners who have learned to chat with the more land-locked spirits have learned from them, too. As a result, we have tricks up our sleeves that no ocean-dweller will recognize, which is big plus.

About the only spirits we talk to when we aren't trying to learn a Gift are remora. I've mentioned them before, I think. You know what a remora is; it's a little scavenger fish that attaches itself to a shark or another large fish, and eats the leavings when we've eaten. Humans can't figure out what the shark gets out of the deal — it isn't like the remoras clean us or anything. But there's a story behind that.

Leaps-to-the-Wound and the Remora

Millions of years ago, the remora were just normal little fish that swam around in schools like all the rest. But they had one very special quality to them: they remembered everything. If they saw a shark or an eel lurking around the mouth of a cave, they'd never enter that cave. If they got caught in a storm one year, they'd remember when, so that next year they could avoid it. They had one little problem, though. They were weak and slow, and their incredible memory did no good against a predator they couldn't avoid.

Well, Qyrl, as you might have heard, had her own races of flunkies beneath the waves. Some of them were leviathans bigger than cities, while some were

shapechangers like us. In particular, there was one race of Changers that made her very proud.

You know what an anemone is, right? There was a time when anemones were not rooted to one spot the way they are now. Instead, they had a snail-like foot under them, and they oozed across the ocean floor. They were also much bigger than they are now, and their arms were strong enough to hold and poison a Rokea, if we got that close. These creatures — called the Qyrall, after their mother — used sand and their own ooze to build up fortresses underwater, using knowledge that Qyrl stole from C'et. They would ride the leviathans and use Qyrl's gifts of stealth to block out the massive brutes' presence until they were right on top of a slew, then change into an almost-humanoid shape to do battle.

As you can imagine, this strategy didn't sit well with the Rokea. But one thing we're not good with is deception. We're a very honest race, with each other and the world, and seeing through Qyrl's tricks has always been difficult. So, we did what we did best — fought viciously when necessary, and avoided the beasts when possible, until finally somebody came up with a solution. Of course, it was a Darkwater.

Her name was Leaps-to-the-Wound, because she could jump so far above Sea's surface she looked like she might just fly away. She was leaping into the air one day, when she noticed that something had attached itself to her tail. She leaped and crashed, thrashing her tail back and forth trying to shake it loose, and finally, in frustration, used the Sending to call another Rokea to help her get the damned thing off. As soon as she did, it let go, and she saw it was a remora.

"Excuse me," said the remora, and Leaps realized that it was using the Sending. "I only wanted to see what Oversea was like. I didn't mean to frighten you."

"That is quite all right," replied Leaps-to-the-Wound, a bit overwhelmed, "you only startled me a bit. How do you know the Sending?"

"The remora hide and watch, for we cannot swim fast, and we feel your Sendings often. It took time, but we learned your language."

Leaps felt an idea forming, and asked, "And can you attach yourself to other creatures as well as sharks?"

"Certainly," answered the remora, probably wondering why the shark hadn't eaten him yet.

"In that case, I should like to make a deal with your people," said Leaps, already planning her people's revenge against the Qyrall.

The deal was this: the remora would ride on larger creatures — sharks, whales, and even leviathans — and would remember all they saw. They would use the Sending to foil the Qyrall's powers of invisibility, and that would give slews of Rokea time to prepare. In



return, the Rokea would allow the remora to hitch rides on them and carry them to new places, not to mention provide the occasional free lunch.

Good deal for all involved, I think. Except perhaps the Qyrall, who you don't see around much nowadays. Just their lonely descendants, the anemones, waving their little arms at us as we swim by.

Good story, huh? Passes the time, anyway. We should be seeing her pretty soon.

• • •

Mateo feels the water churning gently from below. He feels a brief tingle, similar to the Sending, but not carrying a message. He feels the attack coming split seconds before it lands, and moves just as a massive white shark flies past him from below. The white turns and barrels toward him, all teeth and Rage. Mateo feels fear—he smells new blood on the white's teeth, and remembers what Bleeds-Night said about survival above all else. But I can't hope to outrun it, he thinks. I'll have to fight.

The rage overtakes him and he changes, but not into Standing Jaws. Instead, he feels his body elongate and grow even stronger. He is the primitive killing machine, the shark from untold eons ago. He opens his jaws as the white speeds toward him.

The white pulls up at the last possible second, and swims next to Bleeds-Night. Mateo feels the Sending in his head from both sharks... laughing.

"Not bad," says the newcomer. While the Sending doesn't convey pitch, since it isn't really a sound, Mateo still realizes the white shark is female.

"No, he's got good reflexes," agrees Bleeds-Night. "Let's get up on land so that we can talk properly."

The three Rokea swim to the shallows, and wade from the ocean in human form. Bleeds-Night is carrying the pack; he must have regurgitated it when I wasn't looking, thinks Mateo. Thank God for that.

They sit on the cold beach: a young Cuban man, still reeling from the day's events; a jovial black man, scanning the waters and trying not to appear nervous; and a white woman in her mid-thirties, whose face looks human, but whose eyes are cold and brutal.

She introduces herself as Storm-Jaws, a Dimwater. She and Bleeds-Night talk like old friends, Mateo notices. He wonders how long she's been swimming the Florida waters, watching, waiting, surviving.

• • •

Incredible, that's all I can say. You survived a fight with Guards-the-Shoals during your Long Swim—more a Long Walk for you, I guess—and managed to meet up with this mad one.

Well, apart from just being curious about what kind of shark you are, Mateo, I'd guess that he brought you to

me because he wants me to tell you about the world. I'm not a betweener, and I've never cared much for the surface. This is all right, sitting here near the water, but even getting out of sight of Sea makes me uncomfortable. Still, I've picked up quite a bit in my years, and you should know how things stand in the world these days.

Slews

Before I tell you about the world from Rokean eyes, I first should tell you about *our society*. It might seem strange that, since we reject so much of humanity's lifestyle, based as it is on groundless beliefs, that we should have any sort of society ourselves.

Sharks aren't loners by nature. We usually hunt alone, but travel in schools. A "school" of Rokea is called a slew, and consists of anywhere from three to seven of us. Darkwaters tell stories of the days before Turna'a, when *ten or more* of us would travel together as a force from the deeps that could sink any human ship. I was never part of such a slew, but then I've always been a more solitary shark myself.

A slew acts as a fighting unit, true, but it is also all the social support we need, which isn't much. We don't suffer from the anxieties of humanity; doubt and need for assurance don't hamper us. This is just one more reason we never bred with humans before — we didn't need those traits in our slews. Now, however, our ignorance of human ways costs us dearly when a slew must venture to Unsea.

Why does this happen, you may ask? Well, many problems that end in the ocean begin on land. While a great deal of toxic dumping occurs at sea, just as much happens in Small Seas, and all water is Sea at one time or another. We don't want our mother poisoned at any

Betweener Slews

As the only betweener here, I feel I should interject and explain a few things about how it works on Unsea. Yeah, we band together in slews, too, but it's pretty rare. For one thing, there just aren't enough of us living in one area to form slews, normally. Plus, the formation of a slew stirs up Unsea's Soul a bit, and word would assuredly get back to the hunters via remora or Qyrlings or some other spirit.

Not that all this stops us from helping each other out. A betweener will almost always aid another, just like I saved you, Mateo. But normally it's just a one-time thing: no totem spirits, no ceremony, we just do what needs doing, swap some stories (and perhaps some Gifts) and go our separate ways. There are "official" betweener slews, but they tend to move around a lot.

time, so a slew will sometimes venture inland to stop these vicious acts.

Leadership in a slew is determined by the oldest or highest ranking Rokea. By that I mean that the ranking Rokea chooses the leader. If a young Rokea happens to know more about the surface world, and Kun demands that we go to the surface, the young Rokea will probably lead the mission. It matters not who the leader was unless the mission fails, in which case the leader is reviled and possibly killed. If the mission succeeds, all are equally lauded.

A slew will sometimes choose a spirit to act as their patron or totem. Often, Shark guides our slews, for obvious reasons, but there are others. A slew in service to a totem spirit understands that survival is still their highest goal, and if survival necessitates the breaking of the spirit's taboos or even the dissolution of the slew, so be it. Firm adherence to law, even in the face of mortal danger, is a human belief.

Humans who have been to every continent consider themselves world-travelers. Ha! Even if you walked every inch of Unsea, you'd still be a far cry from traveling the world. I'll talk you through a brief tour of the world, with special emphasis on the oceans, since that's where the action is anyway.

Antarctica

Let's begin with the continent we have the least contact with. It may come as a surprise to you that there are sharks capable of survival in frigid waters, but we do indeed have family in the cold deeps. The Greenland shark, as your people call it, lives in polar waters year round and there are a handful of Rokea who are born of this species.

From them, we have learned that seas surrounding both ice caps are normally quiet. Very little can survive there, and thus far, nothing has been able to pose a threat to those few of us who can stand the cold. However, on land, things are different. Both the Arctic and Antarctic circles hold secrets that even we do not remember. Sea's Soul surrounding the Antarctic ice cap has seen a drastic increase in activity in the last few years, as countless Qyrlings flock to some new banner. Facts are few, and as of yet, no Rokea has ventured onto the Unsea there to investigate. However, one rather disturbing rumor is that C'et's second pearl, the one she constructed from Qyrl's severed tentacle, rests under the ice, developing a malevolent mind of its own. Another rumor states that Qyrlings are not the only worshippers of Kraken who have arrived in the wastes. We will need to watch these places carefully in days to come, a necessity complicated by the fact that so few Rokea are capable of doing so.

Australia

Moving north, we reach one of the most important chunks of Unsea for the Rokea. Australia is probably the most dangerous place to be a betweener, because the hunters move here with such fearsome accuracy. In order to stay alive, some betweeners have made contact with other Changers, with varying degrees of success. In particular, the Mokolé — were-crocodiles — have aided us on occasion, and we have been by turns assaulted by and assisted by the wolves.

The waters surrounding Australia are even more vital to us, as they house no fewer than five Grottoes. One is the Great Barrier Reef — we call it the Long Grotto, as it is the largest in the world. Another Grotto, Chill Water Bites, is a short swim from Shark's Bay in western Australia. The others are not easily found on human maps; if you so choose, swim to Australia and you will be able to sense them, if the hunters don't catch you first, of course.

Pacific Islands

The people of these islands, like island and coastal people the world over, worshipped us long ago. In fact, they even sent us sacrifices, sometimes of live humans, sometimes after cutting a human to pieces. We didn't take all of these gifts — there are other predators in the Sea, of course, and some of them have uses for live humans — but it's not in our nature to refuse free food.

I'll let you in on a little secret, though. This sort of ritual sacrifice is still done in some places.

The Marshall Islands

Not heavily populated by man, these islands, including the Bikini and Enewetak atolls, were common testing grounds for Small Wounds for many years. Few Rokea were injured or killed as a result of the blasts, for we had learned to stay away, but we lost at least two Grottoes. The repeated assaults took their toll on the islands, however, finally culminating in the creation of the Unseen.

No one is sure exactly when it happened, but finally the area's Soul, both Sea and Unsea, could withstand no more. They caught fire and continued burning for months. Both Sea and Unsea screamed in pain, and Qyrl answered. The Undersea cracked and the Unseen came forth. It soaked up all of the spirits created by the Small Wound, but then refused to leave. It still haunts the waters of the Central Pacific, as well as the Marshall Islands, soaking up the poison fires left behind by the Small Wounds. No Rokea has faced it and survived. We do not even know what it looks like, hence the name. It does not seem to be actively hunting us, thus far. If it decides to do so, however, it could well be the greatest threat we have ever faced.

Except for mankind, of course.

The Hawaiian Islands

Sharks and humans both frequent the beaches near these islands, which is bound to have complications. Every few years, a careless shark (or Rokea) kills and devours a human or two, and then the entire population gets anxious and goes hunting. This is detrimental to us, of course, as more sharks die, but also to the humans, as it angers the spirits of the islands.

If there is anywhere on Earth that might harbor human Kin to Rokea — *kadugo* — it is here. The native people worshipped us for centuries, regarded us as gods, and even spoke with Rokea from time to time. Some humans, called Kopa Loei, still revere the old ways, and Sea and Unsea reward them with strange Gifts. If only there were more of them.

Asia

Moving east from the Marshall Islands, we enter the territory of the Same-Bito. I know little of their ways, only that most Rokea, myself included, feel that they abandoned the tasks set before us by Sea and Kun to mingle with other Changers and indulge in human philosophy. In deference to my friend, Bleeds-Night, however, I admit that since I have never met a Same-Bito, I am unqualified to make such a statement.

What I have heard, however, is that the waters of China and Japan are deadly places to be a shark. The practice of finning — lopping off a shark's dorsal fins and then cruelly throwing them back into the water to die — is carried out vigorously. These people still hunt whales, which means that the occasional Rorqual is killed, and we cannot afford to allow these vital allies to be destroyed. What are the Same-Bito doing, I wonder, that they cannot be bothered to end these atrocities?

The Rokea are not welcome among our Asian cousins, be they Same-Bito or Mokolé. We have heretofore chosen to stay clear of these waters and let the Same-Bito make their own way. Interference is not our way, but endurance.

The Mariana Trench

The place in Sea where Unsea is furthest below, the trench is home to great power. The world's greatest Grotto lies far beneath the surface, where no light ever touches. It was here that the Rorqual were spawned, and quite possibly the Rokean race itself. But we will never know, for it seems the Trench has been stolen from us.

Humans have built a great metal fortress here, near the edge of the Trench. An entire city of merfolk fell before it, and while we have no special love for the mer, we could not abide such a blight. The Rokea attacked en masse, and barely managed to make dent. Many of us died or were grievously wounded, and Sea spoke to us. She instructed us to break off the attack, that the inhabitants of the fortress were not mere

humans, but servants of Qyrl who had called up forces well beyond their comprehension. She promised us that retribution would come, but not that day.

When our mother speaks, we listen. We had no desire for another Turna'a. And yes, Mateo, the scars along my stomach are from that day, from a beast with claws like moon's blood.

The Middle East

The Bay of Bengal holds one of our strongest Grottoes, and a great number of our people thrive here, breeding with the Ganges River sharks. Swimming this river does bring them into the occasional conflict with the Same-Bito, but the Rokea are strong enough here to repel any hostilities. Better yet, the local pilgrims cast their dead into the waters of the river, and as such, the sharks — and Rokea — of the Ganges and the Bay are well used to feeding on humans.

It also bears noting that the storm that hammered Bangladesh unmercifully threw the Darkwaters in the area into a panic. Some even raved about another Small Wound opening, but if this did indeed happen, the usual poisons did not find us. Or perhaps they have simply grown subtler. In any case, the Bay and its shores are no place for a betweenner, as the local Rokea are strong and numerous enough to send out nearly unstoppable hunting slews.

While the Bay of Bengal is a Rokea stronghold, the nearby Persian Gulf is not. The water is still polluted by oils and contaminants from the conflict there (you people have forgotten how to make war so that the surrounding land — and Sea — is not destroyed) and few of our people will brave it. Servants of Qyrl abound here, though the Rokea who swim in the nearby Arabian Sea have kept them contained thus far.

A few betweenners make their homes the Middle East, living in coastal cities in Pakistan and Oman. On the whole, though, we find the region's strange religious laws too stifling. The attitude shown towards women in these places is, in general, appalling, and people kill each other for no discernible reason. We can only assume it has something to do with belief, as does most human folly, and attempt to stay clear of it.

Africa

And speaking of the folly of human beliefs....

The way I understand it, a minority group of humans, who, like me, had pale skin, declared themselves superior to the majority, who, like Bleeds-Night, had dark skin, and systematically raped, murdered, and oppressed them for years.

Can you tell me why the dark-skinned ones allowed this? I know it happened in your country, too, but I cannot understand why any living being would permit

this sort of treatment, even if the alternative were death. Rokea do not understand many things that humans value, but we do understand freedom; after all, confinement is fatal to us. So why were such things permitted?

You don't know either, eh? I wonder if anyone could answer that. Oh, well.

Africa is a mysterious place. We know that many other Changers inhabit the interior of the continent, but as we don't like to go too far inland, we haven't had any trouble with them. We have more to worry about on the Southern coast. It seems that the local human rulers, or authorities, or whatever, didn't like the idea of sharks using the coastal waters. Never mind that the reason that so many of our brethren were drawn there was the garbage that the humans dumped into the water! So the humans set up huge nets, which snare and kill hundreds of sharks — not mention other creatures, like turtles and seals — each year. To their credit, the locals have stopped killing trapped sharks outright, and are instead releasing any that they find alive in the nets. I don't feel that's nearly good enough; my inclination is to start sinking ships and tell them that we fear for our people's safety, but any humans we find alive after a sinking we will allow to swim home. That might not be good for our survival in the long term, but it would be so satisfying for a time.

Europe

Europe holds the second greatest number of betweenners in the world, right after the United States. Because so many countries border Sea, we can move among them, taking care to stay near the water. The Mediterranean Sea in particular interests us, as some sort of conflict involving mobile dead humans — vampires, thank you, Bleeds-Night — sees them throwing each other into the waters. They apparently wish us to kill these castaways, so we oblige them, though we find the taste foul.

The Aegean Sea holds a Grotto that extends up into Unsea, on an island called Miria. The Unsea's Grotto is tended by wolf-changers, all female, and they seem to have done an admirable job of keeping the spirits content. In turn, we use the Grotto beneath the island, and make sure that no threat from Sea menaces it. The wolves are unaware of this arrangement, but in recent years, some have considered approaching them.

The Baltic Sea is worse than the Persian Gulf. Poisons from Small Wounds and other equally foul things drip into the Sea, and until recently, we were nearly powerless to stop it. A strange barrier extended outward from the Unsea to the east, cutting off part of the Baltic Sea and the entire Gulf of Finland. No Rokea who entered ever returned, but I have heard that this barrier has fallen. Praise whatever manner of being brought down this Curtain, for now it may be possible to find and aid our missing brothers.

The Bermuda Triangle

We understand that human beings fear this place, and that ships, both of Sea and Oversea, have been lost inside the Triangle. I do wish I could clear this up for you, but if those humans are still inside the Triangle, no Rokea has ever reported seeing them.

I believe that Sea decided to make this place inhospitable for humans, and that humans have simply never gotten the message. After all, no creature of Sea, be it mer, Rokea, or even a servant of Qyrl, has ever been lost in the Triangle, at least to my knowledge.

The Triangle does include much of the Sargasso Sea, however, and that is a place that few Rokea will venture. It feels... wrong. Not poisoned, not inhabited by Qyrl's minions, but simply empty. We avoid it, not out of fear, but simply because the seaweed which grows there makes a good hiding place for enemies, and there is precious little to eat. Except of course for the eels, but I have never cared for the taste.

South America

Spirits from the Small Sea called the Amazon talk of a great war between Changers and men. We would not care, but for the fact that the Mokolé have a stake in the war. We sometimes strike at ships that we know to be carrying troops for this war, but since we are rarely well informed, we do not act often. Occasionally, a Rokea goes inland to investigate, but this is rare. The jungles have protectors, and they do not need us.

As for the rest of the continent, there are betweeners along the coasts, as you might expect. Ocean-dwellers swim the shores with their shark kin. I have heard reports that vampires infest the cities here and assist the humans in selling their poisons. I haven't had any reason to venture on land here, however, so any effect on Sea from these "narcotics" is unknown to me.

The Caribbean

This portion of Sea is home to several Grottos, and is always busy. Between the human ships, the vampire pirates, the festivals on land and on boats, the Rokea, and the merfolk, swimming the Caribbean Sea is a good way to meet new people. However, you must be careful whom you meet. The merfolk have built a coral city here, which they have thus far protected from detection. They make use of the Bright Sands Grotto, as do we, and so our paths cross here fairly often. They seem to know quite a bit about us, and those of us that understand human speech claim that the mer speak of the Three Daughters occasionally.

North America

Your home. Sharks swim around all of the coasts, my kind in the west, yours in the east, and many others

besides. The United States holds the greatest number of betweeners in the world, simply because travel is unrestricted and the land so vast. A betweener in America can escape his hunters simply by traveling inland. Very few Rokea will follow their quarry too far from Sea, and once a betweener loses his pursuers, he can double back and reach Sea again quickly. Apparently, some *kadugo* must live here as well, since you were born here.

Oh? You weren't born here, but in Cuba? How interesting....

There are other Changers here, of course. The wolf-changers are most numerous here, or perhaps just more overt, which is more likely. The Mokolé also dwell in the marshes of Louisiana, and maintain an Unsea Grotto on Marsh Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, which we sometimes visit. But we know little about the vast interior of the country, as venturing from Sea for too long is suicide for us. There is much we wish to learn, *must* learn, if we are to survive.

That's right, Mateo. Bleeds-Night and I are of the opinion that the Unmaking is at hand, and between the Unseen, the residue of the Small Wounds, the theft of the Trench, and the continued mass destruction of our brethren, the time has come to see if Unsea can offer any aid at all. If not, we have lost nothing. If so, we may yet survive.

•••

Mateo stares out at the waters, silent. His two tutors rest, waiting for the next question. Mateo knows what he wants to ask, but the Rokea would have no answers for him. He wants to know which of his parents, who he has always believed dead, is a shark.

Finally, he asks a question they can answer. "You said before that you knew something about werewolves, Bleeds-Night. And then you mentioned vampires, and mermaids, and —"

Bleeds-Night laughs. "Yeah. I know. Must seem weird, I guess. For you, all these things exist in movies. It's things like cars and airplanes that give us the creeps, though. Well, I'm hardly an authority on all the other spirit-folk in the world, but I'll tell you what I do know."

•••

The Changers

Caron

The most populous of all the Changers, except maybe for us. And remember, even we don't have really good numbers these days. The advantage that the wolves have is that wolves give birth to more than one pup at a time, so probably whole litters of wolf-changers can be born at once.

They breed with humans, too, but I've heard that sometimes the Changer part of them skips a

generation and turns up farther down in the family tree, perhaps years later. That's got to make things inconvenient, I'd imagine.

I keep saying "I've heard" about all this. Here's where I heard it. I've been hunted by the Rokea for the past few years. Once, they came pretty close to catching me, and I tried to flee farther inland. I wound up running through Cabbage Swamp and eventually coming to the St. John's River. I didn't really want to dive in — being outnumbered by sharks in the water is far worse than on land, as you can guess — but I wasn't sure what else to do. The hunting party came charging after me, when suddenly there were howls coming from the trees. A pack of wolf-changers appeared apparently from nowhere (from Unsea's Soul, it turned out) and attacked. The hunting party, which included our mutual friend Guards-the-Shoals, decided to retreat, as they were outnumbered and out of their element.

I wouldn't exactly say I made friends with the wolves, but I learned a few things about them. For one thing, they're just as capable as warriors as we are, maybe more so. They divide themselves up into tribes, apparently by where their human Kin are from, which seems a bit strange to me. Either way, they can be noble and brutal and compassionate and conniving all at once, and it's usually best to avoid them altogether.

To give a really good reason why, consider that they made war on the other Changers years ago, and are only now wondering what feels so incomplete about the world. And they don't learn very well at all.

Mokolé

The oldest of the Changers are good neighbors, if not friends. There are some in Florida, you know, and in Louisiana, as Storm-Jaws mentioned. Wherever you find large lizards, you'll probably find the Mokolé. The place we most often have regular contact with them is in Australia, probably because the crocodiles out there can swim the Sea. Also, the crocs down under — "salties," they're called — use humans as a food source! That's gutsy, I'll admit. And the humans still go swimming....

Ratkin

These little scamps worry me. They like cities more than we do, and much more than the wolves do. I've heard stories — one firsthand — about them helping betweeners. If that's the case, they can't be all bad, but the Rokea I heard that from said that they expect their kindness to be repaid. He also said they wish to wipe humanity out, so it doesn't take a lot of imagination to figure what they'd want from us.

Corax

To my knowledge, the bird-changers are the only surviving Changers created from creatures of Oversea.



I believe they act like remora — carrying messages, acting as sentries and giving warnings. If that's the case, revealing ourselves to them — should an opportunity present itself to do so — might be a very good or very bad idea. I'll leave that to your judgment.

Nuwisha

I do know that one group of wolves seems to have split off and focused solely on practical jokes. This isn't so new to us — in the Pacific Islands, people told stories of shark-men called *mano-kanaka* who played pranks on fishermen, and I've heard tell of some Brightwater wriggling into a dolphin skin to mess with humans' minds. What these "coyotes" are trying to accomplish by playing jokes on the bad-tempered wolves, however, is quite beyond me.

Other Changers

There are more, you know, but I don't know which ones are still around. After all, the wolves have only recently started to wake up to the fact that their little war was a big mistake, so the bear-changers, the bat-changers, and so forth may have fallen a long time ago. I really don't know.

Vampires

I mentioned vampires earlier. Now, since I've been on land, I've enjoyed the cinema, and vampires figure prominently into a lot of films, as you know. I don't know how much of what's portrayed is accurate. All I do know is that they remind me of lampreys — only not as wholesome. Lampreys on land, sucking their way into everything, until there's nothing left to eat.

But there are vampires in the oceans, too. Not many, mind you, and I'm sure the ocean-dwellers kill any they find. I've heard stories from remora, though, of humans with webbed feet and scales who feed on the blood of whatever they find... including Rorqual.

Steer clear of vampires. You might never see one — more likely you'll see one but never know — but lampreys don't make good traveling companions.

Mages

I mentioned the Kopa Loei earlier. Humans who can use Gifts. Except they don't really use Gifts, they use some kind of magic that comes from the land. They seem decent enough.

Problem is, everything has a spirit and therefore everything has magic. So what kind of magic comes from death, or computers, or drugs, or whatever? Humans long ago proved themselves to be resourceful little monkeys, so whatever power they could get, I'm betting they have.

Bottom line here: if someone who seems completely human starts giving you problems and doing well, you might be dealing with a mage. You've got two choices — either get lost or bite his head off. The former is not necessarily a permanent fix to the problem, but it isn't as messy.

Ghosts

Like I said, everything has a spirit, and people obsess way too much about death for ghosts not to be real. But I can't tell you a thing about them, and I've never seen one hanging around in Unsea's Soul, so I've always assumed them to be harmless.

Changelings

Again, the islanders are our friends. The spirits of the land live on in the Menehune, and they respect us. You'd think with all the potential allies we have on the islands, we could have stopped the invasions and the destruction of the land and now the overcrowding of tourists... oh, well.

Anyway, there are spirit-people here in America, too. They don't seem to know much about us though, and frankly, that's not a big deal.

In the oceans, though, you'll find the merfolk. They're decent enough, I guess, and they recognize the Three Daughters, though they call them by different names. They've had worse luck in recent years than us, and as Storm-Jaws mentioned, they had their own Turna'a recently. An entire city, gone! I feel bad for the mer, and I wish that there were some way to help them, but honestly, until the betweener issue gets resolved, an alliance isn't likely.

The Five Forms

Hey, it occurs to me that we should really teach you how to change form properly. Can't always rely on instinct to do it, you know? We have five forms, each of which has different uses. Let's start with the most basic — for most Rokea, anyway.

Swimming Jaws (Squamous)

The form we're all born in — except you. Our shark forms vary pretty widely. I'm a blacktip, for example, and that means I'll never be as massive as Storm-Jaws, here. On the other hand, people are less likely to speargun me as a precaution. We all have our advantages here: makos are fast, whites are big and vicious, hammerheads are ugly — sorry, had to say it — and tigers are, well, garbage disposals. No kidding, they'll eat anything.

Oh, by the way, remember I mentioned the uterine cannibalism that goes on in some sharks? Guess what, Mateo. Be glad you were born human.

Fighting Jaws (Chasmus)

As a shark, I'd guess you're about 17 feet long. Pretty big, although Rokea do tend towards the larger end of average for our species. Now, when you take the Fighting Jaws form, you may lose a little maneuverability, but you do grow to over *twenty-five feet long*. Fighting Jaws is meant for exactly that. Fighting Jaws combines the strength and speed of a shark with jaws of a really huge shark.

Something else about it, too. Humans who see us in this form lose their minds for a while. There's something in them that recognizes us from millennia ago, and it throws them into a mindless panic. That helps, especially if they're trying to aim a harpoon gun when it happens.

Standing Jaws (Alabus)

My personal favorite. On average, ten feet tall, wickedly sharp talons (don't ask me; sharks don't have hands, much less claws), a strong bite — on the whole, much like Fighting Jaws but bipedal. One important difference, though. When in Swimming or Fighting Jaws, our eyes roll back when we bite, so we can't see what we're biting. That isn't usually a problem, but when fighting minions of Qyrl, who are so adept at vanishing suddenly, it can get annoying. In Standing Jaws, though, our eyes are positioned just close enough that we can judge distance to our prey and keep them in line of sight until the bite.

Did you notice, by the way, that Guards-the-Shoals retained his tail in this form, while I didn't? One of the things that happens if you do the "fish out of water" thing for too long is that your Standing Jaws loses its tail. In the water, we need it for propulsion and to act as a rudder; on land, it just tends to get in the way. You can grow it at will, though, if you concentrate a bit.

Also, our skin is a weapon. Striking a shark barehanded is a bad move, because we're covered in shagreen... OK, you knew that. Well, in Standing Jaws, it gets tougher. If you can get an enemy into a headlock in this form, you might well be able to cut his throat. That's a tip.

People freak out when they see us in this form, but not as much. It isn't as recognizable to them, I think.

Round Back (Alabus)

I'll amend what I said earlier. Ocean-dwellers, even my friend Storm-Jaws, only have four forms. Betweeners like you and me, well, we have access to one more.

Once a Rokea's been on land a while, he might notice himself changing from Long Fins to Standing Jaws more slowly. That's the Round Back form coming

out. It's called that because the area on the back where the dorsal fin pops through swells, giving you a slight hunch. You lose all body hair, your irises darken and swell, and your teeth get sharper. No claws, though. You also gain close to double your body weight in muscle, which means Round Back is a great form for a bar fight. It doesn't cause people to go crazy (though they certainly will give you stares).

I'll give you a warning about this form, though. It drives wolf-changers nuts. Apparently they have enemies that resemble us in Round Back form, I don't know. If you ever get yourself into a position where you have to talk with them, stick to Long Fins. It's the only one they're used to, and the only one they'll understand.

Long Fins (Homid)

Human form. Plain and simple, right? Maybe for you.

One of your parents must have been Rokea and the other *kadugo*, and I'm guessing the *kadugo* was Cuban. But me, well, one parent was a Rokea and the other a blacktip shark. Likewise, Storm-Jaws had a great white for a father. So why am I black in Long Fins, while she's white?

Well, it has to do with where and when we first see humans. I went through my Long Swim near the Florida coast. After my visit with Kun in Sea's Soul, I swam close to the docks. I saw a bunch of dockworkers on a break, having a smoke. Thing is, they were all black. When I changed, that's what I looked like. Storm-Jaws' first glimpse of a human was a blond surfer dude in California, so she's white and blond in Long Fins form. It doesn't make a lot of difference to the Rokea what you look like in human form, because most of us don't use it much. As a result, however, we tend to look pretty ugly — hulking, top-heavy, hunched over, and so on. Hammerheads are worse — they get horribly walleyed and their foreheads look like big blocks of wood. Those of us who care can improve our looks, and it helps, because people remember really ugly folks.

The one big disadvantage of Long Fins and Round Back is that we can't use the Sending. You can receive, but not broadcast. And that fouls up a lot of hunting parties, since not a lot of us know how to speak human languages — any human languages — and our native tongue doesn't work in Long Fins. I'm not really sure how they get around that.

Well, that's really all I can tell you. The only thing left is for you to visit Sea's Soul, and there's no time like the present. Storm-Jaws?

•••

The Dimwater wades into the water and changes to Standing Jaws. She turns, and sends "No Rokea in the area. We should be able to make it to Waves Whisper."



Bleeds-Night turns to Mateo. "Waves Whisper is the nearest Grotto. It's in the Caribbean Sea. It's a bit of a swim, but we'll chance it."

Mateo nods, feeling more frightened now than he did when Guards-the-Shoals hypnotized him. "What do I do when I get there?" His tutor smiles. "You'll know, man. You'll just know."

They stand, and Mateo strips again, this time not watching when Bleeds-Night changes to Standing Jaws and swallows the pack. The three of them change to Swimming Jaws and set out for Waves Whisper. The journey is quiet, the waters are still. To Mateo this is welcome — the more quiet the waters, the less input he has inundating him. To Storm-Jaws, this is cause for caution, for in still waters their movements will carry farther. To Bleeds-Night, this is an omen. The outcome of this unique Rokea's meeting with Sea's Soul will be a turning point in Rokean history....
If the sharks reach the Grotto.



Chapter Three: Breach

Swimming Towards the Wound

You came into the world either hatched from an egg at the end of a strand of seaweed, or born with your siblings either around you or already in your belly. You had no childhood; you had no nurturing from either parent. You were born with all the knowledge you needed — how to catch food, escape from predators, and sense the waters around you.

You lived the first two or three years of your life swimming the coast, preying on seals, or fish, or perhaps stingrays. When the time came for you to mate, however, something even more wondrous happened. The waters around you told you stories, and instead of simply swimming and eating, you knew there was purpose to your life. With this elusive bit of knowledge gnawing at your mind, you sent out electrical pulses, hoping that somehow, someone would answer.

And answer they did. You found — or were found by — a Rokea. This shark, which you once might have simply eaten, explained that the Sea around you was alive, and responsible for all life. Further, you were to speak with her, to hear her advice and gain her blessing. You followed this Rokea through the waters, but now each wave, each fish, each creature you passed had a name. You learned as much as possible on your way to meet with Sea, your Long Swim.

What happened in that meeting, only you know. Certainly, however, she told you under what auspice you were born, and what your tasks in guarding Sea might entail. She also told you the laws that govern Rokean life. Finally, she told you that no matter what else, *you must survive*.

This last bit of information, far from being ominous, was comforting. You'd been doing that all your life, after all.

Playing a Rokea

Let us first dispel some unpleasant myths about Rokea. They include:

- **Rokea are mindless brutes.** Rokea have been surviving in a hostile environment for eons, and have continued to do so despite attempts by humans and the spawn of Qyrl to destroy them. They prize Innovation as a form of Renown, and while they are simplistic in outlook, they are not at all mindless.

- **Rokea are cold and unfeeling.** No creature that possesses Rage is cold and unfeeling. Rokea do not take pleasure or sadness in their kills, *normally*, because such things do not come naturally to them. They are more than capable, however, of making friends and enemies. Therefore, they may feel love, hate, fear, anger or

whatever else the player feels appropriate. A Rokea experiencing these things may not be able to recognize them and therefore not deal with such feelings well, but that's half the fun.

- **Rokea hate the Garou.** Actually, the Rokea couldn't care less about the Garou. The War of Rage never touched them, and while those weresharks who converse with the Mokolé might distrust werewolves, the Rokea as a race have little reason to hate them. They understand that Rokea on land are treated as outsiders (which they are) and intruders (which they are also). They don't blame the werewolves for that. However, this also means that they treat Garou the same way if the werewolves come looking for them.

- **Rokea are unplayable as characters.** Simply not true; they're not great crossover characters, but that's different. If you're trying to play in a chronicle with a Ratkin, two Garou, a Verbena mage, and a Rokea, then the Rokea will have problems. (The whole bunch of them will probably have problems, actually). Rokea are meant to be played with other Rokea, although adding a Rokea to a group of Mokolé, or vice versa, might also work. Which brings us to the next myth....

- **Rokea are loners and don't gather in groups.** Ever since Turna'a, the Rokea have been careful not to present an obvious target. However, they still travel in groups — called "slews" — that function much as a Garou pack does. While "lone sharks" certainly exist among the Rokea, they don't fit into troupes well.

- **An all-Rokea game would just be one big frenzy.** Not any more than a "pure" Werewolf game would be one big fight. You can play that way, but it gets old real fast. Chapter Four offers some ideas for Rokea-only stories, along with ideas for having Rokea guest-star with other sorts of characters.

While there certainly are Rokea who fit the "stony-violent-dumb-loner-always-in-frenzy" stereotype, nothing says that your character has to fit into that. In fact, those sorts of Rokea are the ones that cruise the seas, avoiding any kind of trouble, just trying to survive and not bother anyone. That's fine for them, but plenty of other Rokea want to be *doing* something. That's the kind of character you probably want to play.

The appeal of playing a wereshark varies from person to person. Some players might be attracted to the alien nature of the Rokea, their animalistic, primitive outlook that has served them well for so long. It's like playing a lupus Garou, only instead of just getting used to human customs, a Rokea has to get used to the immense sensory differences at the same time. Plus, while a lupus can change to wolf form in a park and feel somewhat at home, the Rokea has no such option unless she stays along a beach.

Other players might be excited to play a member of a race that is undergoing so much upheaval. While not every Rokea plays a part in the war on the betweeners, every Rokea has an opinion on the topic. Are the betweeners traitors, or simply following a natural curiosity? What about the Same-Bito? And looking outside Rokean politics, even greater threats loom: Deepwater, the Unseen, Hallahan Fishing, Endron Oil, nuclear tests, and so forth. It's a dangerous time to be a wereshark, and that atmosphere makes for great stories.

Finally, the players may just like sharks. There's an unmistakable mystique to them. Humans really know very little about them, and it's only very recently that popular opinion has turned from the *Jaws* image of fear and revulsion to one of respect. The chance to play one of these beautifully simple creatures, with as much or as little complexity of personality as the player wishes, might be very attractive.

Rokea Preludes

Rokea don't tend to have the traumatic First Changes of other shapeshifters. Instead, when the Rokea reaches sexual maturity (two to three years in most breeds), they become self-aware and become capable of using the Sending. They typically send out questing impulses until another Rokea, a remora, or a Rorqual finds them. Given the vastness of the ocean, this can take a great deal of time, depending on when and where the Rokea began her Long Swim.

Most Rokea don't change shape until their Long Swim is over and another wereshark can teach them. However, if the Long Swim is marred by an attack from an enemy, the young Rokea might well change instinctively to Fighting Jaws. There are even stories of curious weresharks who approached boats and found themselves suddenly treading water as naked humans.

When the Long Swim ends, the Rokea is taken to a Grotto, where she swims into Sea's Soul (the Umbra) and meets with Kun and Sea. There she learns about her auspice, is taught Gifts, and so forth. When she emerges, she knows enough about Rokean society to continue on her own. Normally, the Rokea who brought her to the Grotto stays around and explains a few other things to her. For example, not once has a Rokea come from her meeting with Sea with any knowledge of the betweener war. Likewise, Sea never seems to mention the Same-Bito. These ideological divisions are facets of Rokean society that each wereshark must judge individually.

The new Rokea typically travels with the slew of her "mentor," but sometimes she strikes off on her own and joins a different slew entirely. While slews can have totems, losing and adding members is much more common than it is with packs of Garou. Slews often include normal sharks as well as Rokea.

Breeds

Homid

The only place that homid Rokea are accepted is the Middle Kingdom, among the Same-Bito. (And even there, they are remarkably rare.) In the rest of the world, no homids have grown to maturity. As the betweener war continues, however, such an occurrence becomes more likely with each passing year. If the Storyteller wishes, she can allow a player to create a non-Same-Bito of the homid breed. Information for such characters is provided below; allowing these characters is by no means required, however.

Homid Rokea do not suffer the same problems with Appearance as their shark-born cousins. They begin their lives as normal human beings, usually in coastal cities or on islands, of course. Homid Rokea undergo their First Change sometime after they reach puberty. While this Change can be the result of Rage, it may also be a natural response to the ocean. A homid Rokea who swims out a bit too far might suddenly find the Change overtake him.

Of course, after the First Change, the Rokea's problems have only begun. If he somehow manages to avoid any of the ocean-dwelling Rokea that might want to eat him, he *might* happen upon a Grotto and stumble into his meeting with Sea. Even then, he isn't safe from the other Rokea, but at least he'll have an idea of what's going on.

Beginning Gnosis: 1

Squamus

Obviously, most Rokea are born as sharks. This carries with it some distinct advantages, as well as some serious drawbacks.

On the plus side, squamus Rokea live and mature in the ocean. They are accustomed to the harsh Darwinism of Sea by the time the Long Swim begins, so their great task in life — survival — isn't so much of shock. They don't suffer even as much upheaval as other animal-born Changers do; after all, they can go back to their lives and never change shape if they so desire. The Rokea are not commanded to do anything that doesn't already come naturally to sharks.

It's rarely so easy, however, especially in modern times. Sharks are hunted in many places, and many other threats menace the Kunspawn. Furthermore, with the gift of self-awareness comes the curse of curiosity, and many Rokea wish to know more about the world which surrounds them. The ability to become human allows the Rokea to travel to land, but they quickly find themselves handicapped.



Species/Tribe

An important part of playing a wereshark is choosing what specific type of shark your character can become. There are nearly 400 species of shark to choose from; the vast majority, however, are harmless to humans.

A player wishing to play a Rokea should do some light research and choose a breed of shark that appeals. The Storyteller should give some bonus for each breed; some of the more famous species of shark and possible bonuses are listed here.

It also bears noting that Rokea don't have "tribes," at least not as werewolves understand them. However, the same Glass Walker who developed the Latin names for the Rokean forms (Martin One-Name; see Chapter Four for more information on the late Martin) also documented various "subspecies" of Rokea, and theorized (incorrectly) that they might arrange tribes along those lines. Only four species (white, tiger, hammerhead, and mako) have been positively identified, though Martin postulated that other species might exist and named them just in case. These names are given along with a species' description.

- **Great White (Karkha):** Officially called "white sharks" nowadays, these famous and fearsome sharks can reach over 20 feet in length. Found worldwide, the white feeds mostly on seals and sea lions, and normally attacks humans by mistake. Whites also have the most acute sense of smell of any shark.

Possible Bonuses: Begin with +1 Rage, -1 difficulty to scent-based rolls.

- **Hammerhead (Splynha):** There are 5 species of hammerhead sharks. Of these, three — the scalloped hammerhead, the great hammerhead, and the smooth hammerhead — are commonly chosen as mates by Rokea. These sharks range in size between 13 and 15 feet (although great hammerheads have reported up to 20 feet) and favor tropical waters. Hammerheads are often seen schooling, especially in the deeper waters; as such, hammerhead Rokea tend to be somewhat more sociable than other breeds.

Possible Bonuses: -1 difficulty to sight-based/peripheral vision rolls, -1 to Social rolls involving other Rokea.

- **Bull Shark (Lexcha):** Also known as the Ganges shark, the Zambezi shark, the cub shark, and the requiem shark, this relatively small (rarely larger than 10 feet) shark is very dangerous. It favors the same areas as humans — shorelines, in rivers as well as the oceans. The bull shark can survive in fresh as well as salt water, and as such, Rokea born of bull sharks tend to be more well-versed in human behavior than their marine cousins.

Possible Bonuses: Can survive in fresh water (automatic), -1 difficulty when dealing with humans.

- **Tiger Shark (Galchurva):** Possibly the most dangerous shark in the world, tiger sharks will eat anything. Items as diverse as human body parts, a horse's head, a black cat, license plates, unopened cans of tuna, and a suit of armor have been found in the stomachs of these carnivores. But its strange diet is not the most dangerous trait of the tiger shark. The tiger shark attacks with a rolling bite meant to tear prey into bite-sized pieces. A tiger shark can bite through a sea turtle's shell — as such, tiger shark Rokea make impressive warriors. Tiger sharks are comparable in size to white sharks (20 feet or so), although reports exist of a tiger shark more than 30 feet in length. Tigers are the most common large shark in tropical waters, and are found worldwide.

Possible Bonuses: +1 die to bite attacks, -1 difficulty to resist poison.

- **Mako (Ixya):** The two species of mako shark — shortfin and longfin — are not commonly blamed in attacks on humans. The Rokea, however, sometimes breed with the shortfin. It is easily the swiftest shark in the seas, reaching a recorded top speed of twenty miles per hour (*you* try swimming that fast). Also, the mako can make incredible leaps out of the water and has been known to leap into boats (by accident, obviously). The shortfin mako is endangered by commercial and sport fishing, and male Rokea who mate with a mako female will sometimes stay in her area to guard her during her pregnancy; this is because the mako will abort young if captured. The shortfin mako is usually between 10 and 13 feet in length and is found in tropical and temperate seas worldwide.

Possible Bonuses: -1 difficulty on rolls involving speed or pursuit, -1 difficulty on rolls to leap.

- **Goblin Shark (none):** The odd-looking goblin shark frequents very deep waters off the coasts of Japan, India, Portugal and Australia. The only Rokea that breed with this shark, however, are the Same-Bito. While the goblin shark's (called *kagesame* in the Middle Kingdom) battle form is small and weak, they are more in tune with Sea's Soul than any other Rokea. They may step sideways in the same manner that Garou do, and often lead their larger brethren on journeys into the Yang Worlds of the Middle Kingdom's seas. The goblin shark is rarely over ten feet long.

Possible Bonuses: Can "swim sideways" with a Gnosis roll (automatic), -2 difficulty on Social rolls with *hengeyokai*.

There are many other breeds of shark that would make suitable Rokea, including the Greenland shark, the thresher shark, the blacktip shark, the blue shark and the oceanic whitetip. Space precludes listing all the possible breeds, but see the bibliography in the Introduction for where to find information on them.

First of all, with no human blood to temper their appearance, squamus Rokea are ugly in Homid form. No squamus-born wereshark may begin play with an Appearance rating greater than 2. Also, unless the player spends freebie points on the Linguistics Ability (and gives a good reason why her character would understand a human language), the Rokea can only communicate through the Sending — which is useless in Homid form. Finally, squamus Rokea have the same limitations on Abilities as lupus Garou: they may not begin play with Etiquette, Seafaring, Firearms, Computer, Law, Linguistics, Medicine, Politics, or Science without spending freebies and providing a good reason. However, they do receive a free dot in Primal-Urge and Survival, due to the experience of growing up as a shark.

Beginning Gnosis: 5

There are no metis Rokea. While their law doesn't specifically forbid two Rokea to mate, all weresharks know that mating with a normal shark will produce a new Rokea. Since the heated throes of passion rarely descend on the shark-folk in such a way as to precipitate a Rokea/Rokea coupling, the metis question has never been raised.

Auspices

The weresharks believe that the sun is a wound in the sky (Oversea), torn open when Qyrl bit into Oversea. They refer to light as the blood of darkness. They also believe that the moon's cycle comes from Oversea applying medicine to the Wound. Each night, he applies medicine and Wound grows dim, but the blood burns through the medicine until the Wound burns brightly again during the day. As the moon's cycle progresses, Oversea has less and less medicine, with the result that the Wound is imperfectly covered, until finally only a thin layer of medicine is left and the full moon shines down. Then Unsea and Sea replenish the medicine and it all begins again. (The moon and the sun do sometimes appear in the sky simultaneously, but the Rokea believe that Oversea is simply calling his medicine up to him.)

The Rokea recognize three auspices, based on when in this cycle they are born.

Brightwater

I feel the pain of the Wound. Each morning, when Oversea's anguish begins anew, I hear his cries, and I long only to fill the waters with blood. In those moments of pure Rage, I no longer feel his pain, and neither, perhaps, does he.

The Brightwaters are born during the day, or on the full moon. They are far and away the most vicious of the Rokea, attacking foes with a tenacity that puts most Ahroun to shame. They feel their Rage is an unadulterated expression of Oversea's pain, and as such is limit-



less. Brightwaters are the first to enter frenzy, feeding or otherwise, and do not stop until everything around them has stopped moving. As such, when a slew of Rokea attacks a foe, the Brightwaters are sent in first. They wouldn't have it any other way, of course.

Most betweeners are Brightwaters, for two reasons. First, their connection with the Wound and Oversea makes them curious about the creatures who need the Wound's light to live. They wonder about animals that live in such large schools and yet seem to hate one another, and they wonder about the lampreys that disintegrate when placed in the Wound's light. They feel that exploring the Unsea is their birthright, even if they don't go any further inland than the beach's parking lot.

The second reason is that some years ago, an unknown Rokea of high rank forbade the inland travel. Rokea in general are headstrong and unaccustomed to rules, and to the fierce Brightwaters, the admonition that the surface world was too dangerous sounded like a challenge. Ever since, there have been Brightwaters lurking in many coastal cities, hiding from hunters and seeking out new battles. They are rarely disappointed when it comes to the latter.

Beginning Rage: 5

Dimwater

Kun gave us a duty: Survive. She did not say, "Survive on land" or "Make friends with dirtwalkers." If the Brightwaters

are blinded by rage and the Darkwaters by curiosity, it is the Dimwaters who must see clearly enough to lead.

Dimwater Rokea are born during the day when the sun is clouded over, at twilight, or at night between the new and full moon phases. Obviously, then, most Rokea are Dimwaters.

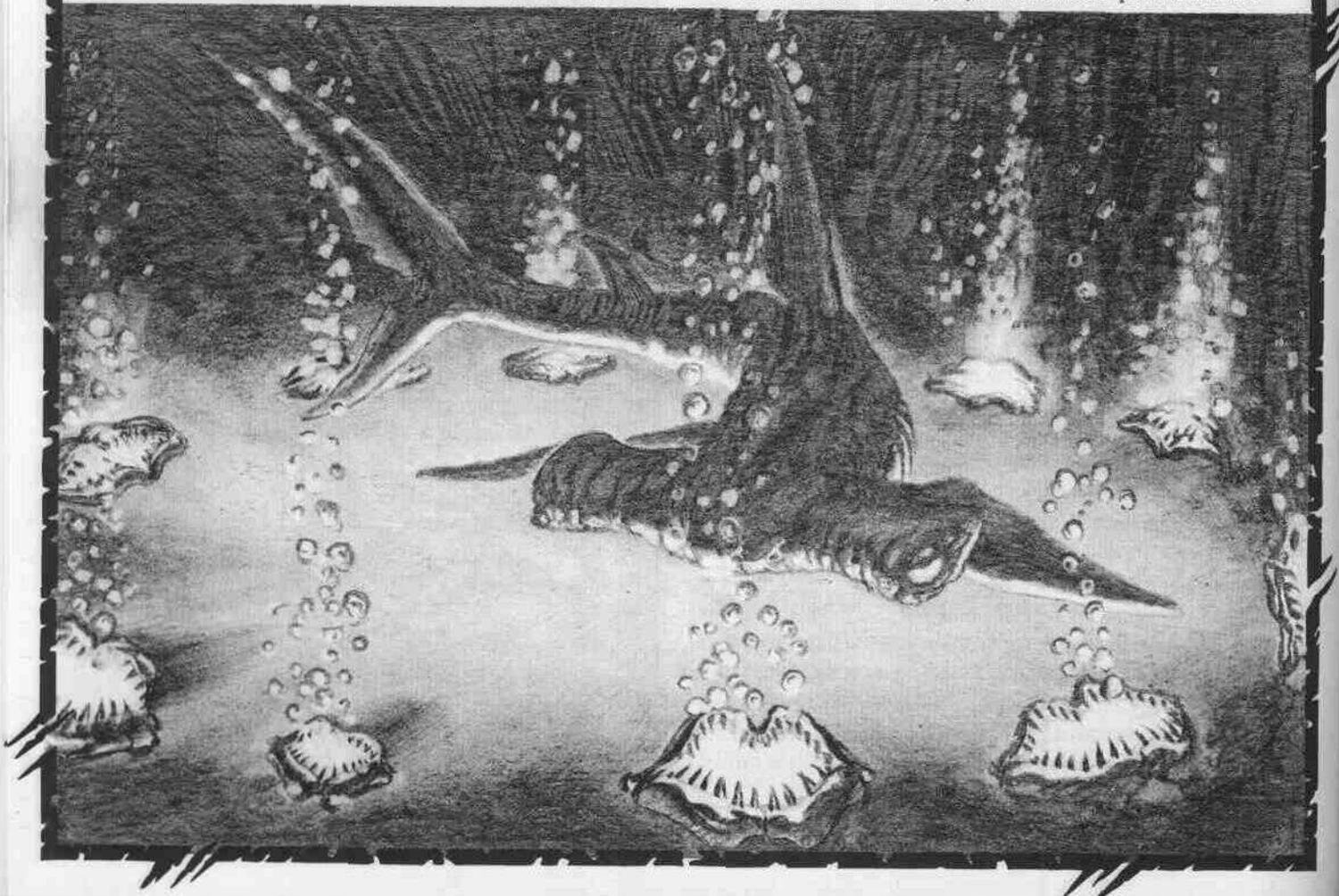
Although the Dimwaters are born "in between" many things — light and darkness, the seabed and dry land, the ferocity of the Brightwaters and the wisdom of the Darkwaters, they themselves are rarely betweeners. The Dimwaters act as the only stabilizing force in Rokean society. They take it upon themselves to enforce the Rokean Law — a difficult task, given how much the law relies on personal interpretation. Dimwaters are most often the Rokea who venture on land to hunt down betweeners, though they always bring along a member of at least one of the other two auspices.

Dimwaters are responsible for making what few fetishes the Rokea use. While Darkwaters come up with the ideas, Dimwaters implement them, often with impressive results. What few Dimwater betweeners exist have discovered that city life, with its predictability and routine, isn't so bad once you get used to it.

Beginning Rage: 4

Darkwater

So... by simply entering a "password," one becomes connected to a "web" of information that spans the entire



world. And this "web" allows communication that moves faster and farther than the Sending. Amazing. Who says sharks never evolve?

On the new moon, or during total eclipses, Darkwater Rokea enter the world. Darkwaters are innovative, discerning, curious, and resourceful. Other Rokea occasionally affix one more adjective — mad.

The Darkwaters are anything but mad, however. True, they draw the wrath of the Dimwaters by becoming or aiding betweeners often. Granted, their mystical experiments have, at times, opened gates for creatures from Sea's Soul that should never swim the Sea. However, that same madness, if madness it is, created the Rite of the Black Shark and uncovered many of the Gifts that the Rokea at large now enjoy.

Easily the rarest of the Rokea, Darkwaters tend toward the deeper waters, conversing with spirits and remora and learning all they can about the history of the Rokea, the mer, and whatever else strikes their fancy. While not as many Darkwaters as Brightwaters swim between, this is only due to the extreme rarity of the Darkwaters by comparison. Indeed, it is almost unheard of for a Darkwater not to make a sojourn to the surface at least once in her life.

Beginning Rage: 3

Shark Facts

Kun blesses the shark-folk with many advantages in order to facilitate their continued survival. These are described below.

Animal Attraction

In general, Rokea use the same methods for inducing the desire to mate as Garou do. Rokea (even homids) use this ability at +1 difficulty, however, due to the inherent strangeness of a mammal/fish mating.

Appearance

As stated above, a squamus-born Rokea character cannot begin play with an Appearance score greater than two (homid Rokea, should the Storyteller allow them, are not subject to this restriction, but shouldn't exactly be beautiful, either). However, as some betweeners have discovered, it is possible to get around this limitation simply by willing the body to change. Some Darkwaters

assume that Kun intended for Rokea to swim on Unsea, and therefore made the Rokea's human bodies malleable enough to blend in. Others posit that this strange power comes from the same source as the burning urge to mate while on land. Whatever the truth, a squamus-breed Rokea's player need only pay (current rating x 3) to raise her character's Appearance score. This benefit ends when the character reaches an Appearance score of three.

Aside from the obvious bonus in attracting a mate that comes with looking more human than piscine, betweeners find that ocean dwellers have a hard time telling normal-looking humans apart, so it pays to blend in as much as possible.

Compulsion to Move

Most breeds of shark must continue swimming constantly in order to breathe (there are exceptions: the nurse shark sits quietly on the sea floor and breathes by opening and closing its mouth. Rokea don't tend to breed with them, though). As a result, the Rokea equate forward motion with life; confinement is intolerable, and the idea of "backing up" or "backing down" is a strange one to them. Even on land, Rokea like to keep moving. This motion doesn't have to be under their own power; riding in a vehicle is acceptable, but staying stationary makes weresharks edgy and ultimately dangerous.

Rokea will pace unless the player succeeds in a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) each scene. A Rokea who is confined must immediately check for frenzy. If the Rokea enters frenzy, she will do everything in her power (including gnaw through bars) to free herself.

Delirium

Rokea inflict partial Delirium in Gladius (Standing Jaws) form (a human viewer will react as though his Willpower rating was two points higher on the Delirium chart; Werewolf, pg. 192). In Chasmus (Fighting Jaws) form, however, the Rokea triggers full Delirium, unless the viewer is a safe distance away (say, in a helicopter).

Forms

All Rokea have four forms; betweeners have access to one more. These forms are explained in Chapter Two (see page 51). The form modifiers are listed below.

Gladius (Round Back)	Gladius (Standing Jaws)	Chasmus (Fighting Jaws)	Squamus (Swimming Jaws)
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +4	Str: +2
Dex: +0(+1)*	Dex: -1(+2)*	Dex: N/A(+1)*	Dex: N/A(+3)*
Sta: +2	Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -2	Man: -4	Man: -4	Man: -4
App: -2	App: 0		
Diff: 9	Diff: 6	Diff: 7	Diff: 6

*The numbers in parentheses apply in the water, where the Rokea are obviously more maneuverable.

In Glabrus form, a Rokea may use a bite attack to inflict damage equal to her Strength (this damage is considered lethal). In Gladius form, her bite inflicts Strength +1 aggravated damage, and she has claws which inflict damage equal to her Strength (aggravated). In Chasmus form, the Rokea has no claws (obviously) but inflicts Strength +2 aggravated damage with a bite. Finally, in Squamus form, the Rokea's bite inflicts Strength damage (lethal).

Gnosis

Rokea use Gnosis chiefly to activate Gifts. Most Rokea cannot step sideways without a special Gift or permission from Sea.

Weresharks regain Gnosis in different ways than Garou. Grottoes function in much the same way as caerns, but their depth makes them hard to reach for many weresharks. Instead, Rokea regain Gnosis from Rorqual. To do this, a Rokea must approach the Rorqual and roll Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty varies by the Rokea's auspice and the species of the Rorqual; see Chapter Four). For each success, the Rokea regains one point of Gnosis.

A Rokea can regain Gnosis at a Grotto, if the Grotto is close enough to the surface (some Darkwaters have Gifts that let them dive further, of course). This works in the same manner as meditating to regain Gnosis does for Garou.

Rage

Rokea use Rage in the same ways that Garou do: for extra actions, to change forms, and to ignore wounds. Players roll Rage to check for frenzy, except that while Garou need four successes to enter frenzy, Rokea need only two. Four or more successes send the Rokea into a state called Kunmind. According to the shark-folk, everything washes away in the flood of Rage, leaving the Rokea privy to mind of Kun herself. Since mortal beings are not capable of knowing Kun's mind, however, the Rokea flies into a feeding frenzy and will not emerge until everything around her is dead. This is analogous to entering the Thrall of the Wyrms for lupus Garou, and while weresharks respect the power and ferocity of Kunmind, they also recognize that it isn't conducive to survival (this is reflected by a loss of Harmony Renown).

Rokea do not enter fox frenzy. This is not to say that they never flee from battle, they simply don't do it in frenzy. Like most predators, they will leave a fight they don't think they can win... unless the Rage takes over first.

Weresharks regenerate in the same manner as Garou, and can roll Rage to remain active in the same way. They do not usually award Valor Renown for battle scars, unless the scar was obtained doing a great service for Sea (scars tend to impede function, and this makes survival more difficult).

Regeneration

Rokea heal bashing and lethal damage just as Garou do: one health level of bashing damage per turn (or lethal, if the player makes a Stamina roll (difficulty 8)). Rokea, however, may regenerate this damage in breed form, provided they are immersed in salt water. Since most Rokea cannot assume breed form outside of salt water, this is rarely a problem. Rokea heal aggravated damage at the rate of one health level per day, subject to the same restriction.

The Sending

The Rokea's natural means of communication in the ocean is the Sending. This consists of electrical pulses sent out between Rokea. The player rolls Wits + Primal-Urge. The difficulty varies based on the complexity of the message; "Rorqual in danger!" or some similarly simple communication would only be difficulty 6, whereas a question with several qualifiers ("What does it mean when a human is lowered into the water surrounded by metal bars and holds a long stick?") would be difficulty 8. The message carries for a quarter mile for each success; after that, it gets garbled and a receiving Rokea's player must roll Intelligence + Primal-Urge to decipher the Sending. When two Rokea are within line of sight, the Sending can be used for normal conversation with no roll required. However, unless the Darkwater Gift: Silent Sending is used, any Rokea in the area will perceive all Sendings.

On land, the Sending has a range of only 50 feet and is only usable in Gladius form. This presents a problem to ocean dwelling Rokea who speak no human language, yet cannot use their natural "tongue" in homid form.

Senses

Sharks use a fearsome combination of senses to locate, identify, and attack their prey. First, their sense of smell can locate a fish's odor within a mile (contrary to rumor, human blood does not drive sharks into frenzy). A shark's sense of vibration helps identify the size of a potential meal, and its electrical senses determine direction. As the shark closes in, its vision comes into play to chase the prey, if necessary. Finally, the shark bites, and its sense of taste determines if the prey is something the shark really wants to eat. (More information about a shark's senses is provided in the Appendix).

Rokea have access to all of a normal shark's sensory prowess. Scent difficulties in Squamus form are reduced by 3, and by 2 in Chasmus and Gladius forms (-1 in Gladius on land).

A shark's sense of sight is fairly keen for discerning contrast, such as the dark shadow made by a seal — or a surfer — swimming on the surface. They are not entirely colorblind, in that they seem to recognize some

shades as meaning "food" (the bright yellow of life jackets and rafts is one such shade, unfortunately, and has been nicknamed "yum-yum yellow" by shark researchers). However, sharks (and Rokea) lack the visual acuity necessary to pick out details. Therefore, Rokea in Squamus, Chasmus, or Gladius form are at +2 difficulty to judge detail by sight (rolls to determine general shape or size by sight receive no modifier). This penalty also applies to weresharks on land in Gladius form.

To use vibrations to judge an object's size and shape, the player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty varies based on the distance to the target and how much water it is displacing; a thrashing fish caught in a net will seem larger than it actually is).

Rokea can use electrical currents to sense direction to prey, or simply to navigate in general. The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6 for the wereshark to orient herself; difficulty varies based on size of target, electrical interference, and so forth for finding prey). Rokea in Gladius form can use this ability on land, but difficulties are raised by one.

Silver

Rokea believe that silver is the result of Oversea's blood (sunlight) saturating the medicine he applies to the Wound. This residue falls to earth, or so Rokea legend goes, and becomes hard and metallic. It still carries Oversea's fiery blood within it, however, and so burns the Rokea and other supernatural beings.

Rokea take unsoakable, aggravated wounds from silver, just as Garou do. They rarely, if ever, create fetishes out of silver, believing it to be disrespectful to Oversea to do so.

Skin

A shark's skin is covered with thousands of tooth-like scales called denticles. In Squamus form, it's possible for an unprotected human to get a severe scrape by "rubbing a shark the wrong way" but not to be seriously hurt. A Rokea in Chasmus or Gladius form, however, can use the denticles as a weapon.

Any opponent who strikes barehanded a Rokea in Chasmus or Gladius form must soak 2 levels of lethal damage (if he is capable of soaking such damage). The denticles also allow the Rokea to use a special combat maneuver (see below).

Spirits

Rokea can converse with pelagic spirits naturally, even across the Gauntlet; they require no Gift to do so. The ocean's thin Gauntlet makes this communication very easy. Speaking with terrestrial spirits usually requires the Gift: Spirit Speech, but few Rokea bother to learn it. A Rokea can naturally sense the presence of

remora-spirits even on the other side of the Gauntlet, due to the helpful little spirits' tendencies to make themselves known to their larger allies.

Umbral Travel

Rokea cannot step sideways without using the Gift: Enter Sea's Soul, unless aided by Kun, Sea, or another powerful spirit. The only exceptions are the *kagesame*, or goblin sharks, of the Same-Bito. They can step sideways in the same manner as Garou.

Abilities

Rokea have access to same abilities as Garou. One change has been made, however; the Rokea sheet replaces the Drive Skill with Seafaring.

Seafaring

This skill covers the ability to rig, pilot, and perform light repair on various kinds of seagoing vessels. Although Rokea have no more reason to know this skill at character creation than the Drive Skill, they are more likely to learn to use a boat than a car later on. Seafaring is a restricted Trait for squamus Rokea.

- Novice: You don't get seasick, at least not easily.
- Practiced: You can tie a good sheepshank.
- Competent: You could serve in nearly any position in a crew, so long as advanced technical skill isn't required.
- You could serve as a first mate or executive officer.
- You could captain a vessel of any size... in a hurricane.

Possessed By: Sailors, dockworkers, pleasure boaters.

Specialties: Motorboats, Sailboats, Seamanship, Kayaks

Backgrounds

Rokea characters have access to many of the same Backgrounds as Garou. There are some differences in the forms these Backgrounds take, however.

Allies and Contacts may be other Rokea, spirits, or perhaps even merfolk. They may also be land-based (i.e., humans) if the Rokea is homid or swims between Sea and Unsea.

Totem works in much the same way for Rokea slews as for werewolf packs. Some sample Totems are listed below. Note, however, that slews change membership much more easily than packs do; a Rokea who wishes to leave a slew to pursue her own business is not penalized in Renown, provided she performs the Swimming Alone rite for the slew's totem.

New Background: Remora

Remora, the odd little messengers for the shark-folk, soon learn which Rokea are polite to them. They naturally tend to gravitate to these weresharks to give them a "first look" at what news they have found. This

Character Creation

- **Step One: Concept**

Choose concept, breed, auspice, and shark species.

- **Step Two: Select Attributes**

Prioritize Physical, Social, and Mental Attributes (7/5/3). If the character is squamus breed, Appearance may not be higher than 2.

- **Step Three: Select Abilities**

Prioritize Talents, Skills, and Knowledges (13/9/5).

- **Step Four: Select Advantages**

Choose Backgrounds (5 dots) and Gifts (2, one auspice, one Rokea).

- **Step Five: Finishing Touches**

Record Rage (by auspice), Gnosis (by breed), Willpower (4) and Rank (1). Record Renown (by auspice).

Spend freebie points (15) and choose Merits and Flaws (optional).

Breed

- **Homid:** If your Storyteller even allows homid Rokea, you are one of perhaps half a dozen in the world (Same-Bito notwithstanding, of course). Your life was irrevocably changed when you discovered you were really an unstoppable marine predator — and one of your parents was, as well.

Initial Gnosis: 1

- **Squamus:** Like most Rokea, you were born a shark, quietly going about the business of eating and swimming, endlessly. You one day realized that the Sea and all her children could speak to you, and since then you have listened.

Initial Gnosis: 5

Auspice

- **Brightwater:** Born during the day or on a full moon, Brightwaters are the quintessential killing machines. There is never any hesitation, fear, or revulsion when they attack, only Rage, teeth, and blood.

Initial Rage: 5

- **Dimwater:** Dimwaters enter the world at dusk, between the new and full moons, or when the sun is clouded. They understand the Harmony that

Sea intends, and strive to maintain that. Sometimes that means hunting down and killing other Rokea, but if doing so makes the race strong and keeps Sea pure, they have no qualms about it.

Initial Rage: 4

- **Darkwater:** The mystics and seers of the weresharks, the Darkwaters are born on the new moon or during total eclipses. They stay beneath the waves, learning all they can from the stranger inhabitants of the deeps, or else venture onto Unsea, where they encounter marvels upon marvels, just waiting to be explored.

Initial Rage: 3

Backgrounds

The following Backgrounds are available to Rokea.

Allies: Friends who will come to your aid.

Contacts: Sources of information at your disposal.

Fetish: A gift from a mentor, a fallen comrade (or foe), or perhaps Kun herself.

Mentor: The Rokea who found you after your Long Swim, in all probability, but perhaps a different wereshark — or even a Rorqual — looks after you.

Remora: A number of remora-spirits know you and frequently visit you with information.

Resources: The wealth and property you have acquired (homid only).

Rites: Ceremonies to show respect to Kun and Sea.

Totem: The patron spirit your slew follows.

Gifts

Rokea begin with two Gifts, one chosen from the appropriate auspice and one chosen from the general Rokea Gifts.

Renown

All Rokea begin with three dots of permanent Renown, as dictated by their auspice (see the Renown chart on page 86).

Rank

All Rokea characters begin at Rank One.

Background indicates that the character has made friends with a number of remora and that they will reliably deliver his messages and return with answers quickly.

The other advantage to staying friendly with remora is that it speeds up the process of Renown gathering. Whenever the Rokea dispatches her remora to deliver a message, the Storyteller may choose to allow

the player roll her Remora rating. The difficulty varies by how significant the Rokea's actions have been — the more impressively the Rokea behaves, the more closely she follows the Rokean Law and the precepts of Renown, the lower the difficulty. For each success, the character receives one point of temporary Renown (Storyteller's discretion as to which type). This Renown

gain is not "extra" Renown; it's merely an advance payment of sorts against what the Rokea will eventually formally receive. Remora will *not* deliver false messages designed to inflate the Rokea's status artificially, and a Rokea who tries to use the remora this way will surely lose both Valor and Harmony Renown.

Technically speaking, remora are like Rorqual or Kami — Gaian spirits in animal shells. It's possible (Storyteller's option) that the Rite of Spirit Awakening might awaken an ordinary remora into the supernatural version, although the Rokea must work to educate the remora to its new role as well as gain its trust. (A Rokea with said rite can't just jack up his Background Trait that easily!) Note, by the way, that remora act *only* as messengers. They have no ability to fight, distract, or run interference for Rokea, and asking them to do so violates the agreement that the remora made with the shark-folk.

None If you find a remora, they will probably carry word for you, but Sea is vast.

- One remora who visits you before taking care of other business.
- 2-3 remora who visit you often.
- 4-7 remora, all loyal to you.
- As many as 10 remora, at least one of whom remains by your side.
- With a nod, you could send a full school of remora to deliver word, warning, or a cry for help to any Rokea in the area.

Ciffs

Rokea begin with two Gifts: one chosen from the general Rokea Gifts and one chosen from the appropriate auspice.

Rokea Gifts

• **Breach (Level One)** — Some breeds of shark are better at leaping from the water than others, but this Gift helps. The Rokea propels herself towards the surface and leaps a fantastic distance out. Weresharks use this Gift to see for miles across the sea, and sometimes to board ships. A shark- or marlin-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: As the lupus Gift: Hare's Leap. This Gift does work on land, but Sea-born Rokea don't always think to try it, as it feels strange to leap in a bipedal form.

• **Fast (Level One)** — Sharks can survive for long periods of time by living off their internal store of oil. Rokea can use this ability on land, as well, to survive without food or water, by consuming their own Gnosis. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The character need not eat or drink for one week after

activating the Gift. If the character wishes to fast for longer than a week, she must reactivate the Gift (which of course costs another point of Gnosis) before the first use of the Gift ends. If she does not, the Gift will not function again until she has eaten.

• **Killing Bite (Level One)** — Fighting Jaws is the preferred form for combat beneath the waves, but sometimes the need to attack swiftly or fighting in a confined area (a Grotto, perhaps), disallows this form. This Gift, taught by a shark-spirit, allows the Rokea to use a powerful bite in any form.

System: The player spends one Rage point to activate the Gift. The character's next bite attack, if successful, inflicts 2 additional health levels (not dice) of damage.

• **Sense Threat (Level One)** — A race charged only with survival needs to know how to recognize danger, preferably early in life. The Rokea with this Gift can discern whether she is swimming into a dangerous situation, or to know if a being is a threat to her. This Gift, taught by an avatar of Sea, does not reveal a being's intentions, only whether or not said being is dangerous. (For example, a raging Brightwater might have no real desire to hurt the user, but is dangerous nonetheless.)

System: The Rokea focuses for a turn; the player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge. The difficulty varies — lower (6) for immediate and palpable threats and higher (8) for subtle, more roundabout threats.

• **Teeth of the Skin (Level One)** — As the Level Four metis Gift: Gift of the Porcupine. This Gift comes easily to Rokea, as their skin normally inflicts damage similar to the Garou Gift. The Gift may be used in any form except Homid or Glabrus.

• **Gulp (Level Two)** — The Rokea can swallow any object she can fit through her jaws, and regurgitate it later, completely unharmed. Many Rokea use this Gift to transport clothing (so they don't have to steal clothing every time they go ashore). Living beings are not protected by this Gift. This Gift is taught by a tiger shark-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis to activate the Gift. Items can be stored in the Rokea's gullet indefinitely; the item is considered part of the Rokea's body like a dedicated item. When the Rokea swallows her "cargo," she must, of course, be in a form large enough to do so, and she must assume the same form to reclaim the items.

• **Poisoned Flesh (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Get of Fenris Gift: Venom Blood. This Gift affects anyone making a successful bite attack against the Rokea.

• **Restless Waters (Level Two)** — As the lupus Gift: Scent of Sight.

• **Shagreen Shield (Level Two)** — The hide of some sharks is strong enough to repel a harpoon. Rokea with this Gift can strengthen their skin to the point of repelling nearly any attack.



System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). The Gift lasts for one turn per success. During this time, attacks that score less than three successes on the damage roll do not penetrate the Rokea's skin at all. The player's difficulty to soak all other attacks is 5; although she receives all damage rolled; for example, if an attack inflicts five health levels of damage, the player rolls to soak all five, not just two. Bashing damage is halved before soak is rolled, rounding up (which means that an attacker must score more than six levels of bashing damage to have any chance of damaging the Rokea).

- **Strange Waters (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Red Talon Gift: Trackless Waste, but Strange Waters affects the target's sense of direction at sea or under water.

- **Unsea's Blessing (Level Two)** — Unsea considers the Rokea to be her nieces and nephews, created as they were by her sister, Sea. As such, she does them the favor of healing their wounds if they but ask. The spirit of a stingray or other fish that burrows into the earth teaches this Gift.

System: The Rokea must touch Unsea directly, be it the sea bottom or dry land. The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 5). For every success, the Rokea heals one health level, regardless of the type of damage. The Rokea can take no other actions in the turn he uses this Gift.

- **Consume Taint (Level Three)**

— Marine garbage dumps often attract sharks looking for easy meals, but they also attract angry Rokea. With this Gift, the wereshark can eat refuse, be it waste oil, garbage, or even barrels full of chemicals, thus rendering them harmless to Sea. This Gift is taught by a tiger shark-spirit.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 7). Each success allows the wereshark to eat one pound of waste without harm. It is possible to consume nuclear waste or even Wurm toxins with this Gift, but the difficulty is increased by two. A botch on this roll inflicts three levels of unsoakable aggravated damage.

- **Fathom Sight (Level Three)** — The vast expanse of the ocean taxes even the sensory powers of the Rokea. With this Gift, a Rokea can project all of her senses, not just sight, for great distances. This Gift works in any direction, including straight up (meaning that it is possible to see and hear events above the surface). Fathom Sight does not translate speech for the Rokea, however, so eavesdropping on a conversation on board a boat deck does no good unless the Rokea understands whatever language the humans are using. The spirit of any swift-moving fish teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7). The Rokea

can send her senses out for 1 mile per success in water, and 100' per success on land (this difference is due to the far greater concentration of distractions on land). The Gift lasts for one scene.

• **Kun's Warning (Level Three)** — Some islander legends speak of a person born with a shark's mouth between his shoulder blades, who later became a shark and killed and ate other islanders. Likely as not, these tales are garbled stories of the Kun's Warning Gift. Used in modern times mainly by betweeners and their hunters, this Gift causes a shark's maw to appear on the Rokea's back. This allows some early warning for the Rokea, as well as an extra line of defense against multiple opponents. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). This Gift is active for one day per success, unless the Rokea decides to cancel it earlier. The mouth appears between the Rokea's shoulder blades and protrudes only slightly; not enough to give the Rokea a "humped" look. While this Gift is active, the teeth will begin to gnash should anyone try to creep up behind the wereshark. If the stalker is using a supernatural power to remain hidden (such as the Gift: Blur of the Milky Eye), the Storyteller should roll the Rokea's Gnosis (difficulty 8). If the roll succeeds, the mouth "notices" the stalker and reacts accordingly. The jaws can be used to inflict normal bite damage, provided the Rokea can position herself in such a way as to allow this.

• **Shark's Bones (Level Three)** — Sharks' bones are made of cartilage, and as such sharks are extremely flexible. This Gift allows a Rokea in human form to change her bones into the same substance, allowing her to resist damage from blunt objects and squeeze through openings as small as eight inches square. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The Gift's effects last for one scene. While the Gift is active, halve the damage of any bashing attack made on the wereshark *before* soak is rolled. This Gift is usable in Homid or Glabrus form only.

• **Inundate (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Red Talon Gift: Avalanche, but Inundate concentrates moisture from the air to surround a target. This Gift is taught by an air-spirit and is usable only on land.

System: As Avalanche. The difficulty is determined by the amount of moisture in the air; i.e., this Gift is much easier to use near the ocean (difficulty 4) than in a parking lot on a sunny day (difficulty 9).

• **Kun's Maw (Level Four)** — As the Level Five Get of Fenris Gift: Fenris' Bite.

• **Patient Hunter (Level Four)** — The Rokea can sink into any solid matter, be it wall, floor or open

ground, and watch what happens around her. At any time, she may spring forward and attack. This Gift is taught by an angel shark-spirit.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Stealth (difficulty 8). Success indicates the Rokea merges with a wall or floor, which must be thick enough to cover her (i.e., she can't merge with a normal wooden door). She may remain inside the structure as long as she wishes, subject to normal natural requirements (food, for example). While thus concealed, she cannot be detected by casual searches and most supernatural powers (Storyteller's discretion). If she chooses to use this Gift as an ambush, any opponents she attacks receive a -3 to their initiative ratings for the first turn.

• **Relentless Hunt (Level Four)** — Sharks are amazingly simple beings, crafted by evolution (or Sea?) to hunt, swim, and spawn. The Rokea, of course, are slightly more complicated beings. Even so, a Rokea with this Gift can choose a course of action and then not be dissuaded from it, come what may. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: When the Rokea learns this Gift, she chooses a goal or a course of action ("Protect the Warm Currents Grotto," or "Hunt down Bleeds-Night"). Once set upon her course, nothing can force her to leave it. No form of mind or emotion control will cause her to abandon or act in a manner counter to that goal. The player receives one automatic success on any roll directly involved in accomplishing the goal or following the action. If the Rokea ever wishes to change the focus of this Gift, the player must spend a *permanent* Willpower point. If she accomplishes her goal, she may choose another without expenditure. The goal chosen cannot be too vague (for instance, "Fight all enemies of the Rokea" or "Survive"); the Storyteller determines what goals are acceptable.

• **Salmon's Return (Level Four)** — The Rokea blessed with this Gift is never lost. She can always trace her route, in the ocean or on land, and darkness, weather, or deliberate tampering with her trail are insufficient to throw her off course. This Gift is taught by a salmon-spirit.

System: Once learned, this Gift is always active. The Rokea can always retrace her steps on land, and can always find her way back to a familiar place in water. Gifts such as Trackless Waste must score more successes than the Rokea's Willpower to be effective, and even then they only work for a matter of minutes. The Rokea will always recognize a place she has seen before, even if it has changed dramatically. Needless to say, the Rokea's sense of direction is also perfect (i.e., she can always find true north).

• **Set the Mind Adrift (Level Four)** — Occasionally, a Rokea chooses to incapacitate an enemy (or a

frenzied ally) without harming him. This Gift allows the Rokea to force a target into a vivid hallucination, in which he is drifting in the ocean with nothing around for miles. The Rokea may also use this Gift as a terror or interrogation technique by making subtle changes in the vision. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Oversea.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Success places the target into the hallucination. The target simply sits down or swims in circles, all the while believing that he is lost in the ocean. If the player makes a successful Manipulation + Expression roll (difficulty 6), the Rokea can add other details to the vision — threatening storm clouds, shark's fins in the water, etc. The target can hear the Rokea's voice, and so can answer any questions directed at him. If the target has reason to believe the hallucination false, he may roll Willpower (difficulty 7) to resist. He must accumulate at least as many successes on this roll as the Rokea's player did on the Manipulation + Intimidation roll to break free. This Gift lasts for one scene otherwise.

• **Mindless Fight (Level Five)** — A brutal frenzy is often an asset in a fight, but the eldest of the Rokea have honed their frenzies until they reap all of the benefits and few of the drawbacks. The Rokea can channel her Rage into not only speed, but endurance and power as well. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: Once the Rokea learns this Gift, her use of Rage becomes diversified. First of all, the limits on how much Rage may be spent in a turn are lifted. The player may spend as much of the character's Rage for extra actions as she wishes. Second, in any turn in which Rage is spent, the character ignores wound penalties. Finally, the player receives two extra dice to soak in any turn in which she spends Rage.

• **Great Summons (Level Five)** — As the lupus Gift: Song of the Great Beast. Obviously, the Rokean version of the Gift calls up aquatic Beasts. Favorites include prehistoric sharks and marine dinosaurs.

• **Ocean's Peace (Level Five)** — The Rokea's place is the Sea. They are at home there, and if not at peace, then at least secure in the knowledge that they belong there. An elder Rokea carries this self-assurance with her wherever she swims, Sea or Unsea. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The Rokea with this Gift always adds 30 to her initiative rolls. In addition, if the player succeeds on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7), the Rokea may exert her confidence more forcefully for the remainder of the scene. In game terms, the player may spend a Willpower point to add a success to any roll, but as long as one other success

is scored, she does not lose the point. The Willpower point is actually lost only if none of the dice show successes after any ones have subtracted other successes).

• **Whirlpool's Maw (Level Five)** — The Rokea opens her mouth, and anything not firmly fixed to the ground is swept into it. She does not actually consume the materials (or beings) thus captured, but they are never seen again. It is believed that Sea takes them, and they are forever lost in the pelagic depths. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift only works in Gladius or Chasmus forms. The player spends a Rage point and rolls Rage (difficulty 7). The Gift functions for one turn per success. During that time, anything that the Rokea could lift is sucked toward and into her gullet. For example, if the Rokea has a Strength rating of 6 in Gladius form, anything (or anyone) weighing up to 800 pounds that isn't securely fastened down flies toward her mouth and is swallowed. Even objects too large to fit into the Rokea's maw disappear into the gaping pit. A living being attempting to resist this suction must grab something sturdy and roll Strength (difficulty 8). This Gift functions only in the water.

Brightwater Gifts

• **Eyes of the Wound (Level One)** — All sharks' eyes reflect light in much the same way as a cat's, allowing them to see in dim water. A Rokea with this Gift, however, can see in much darker areas. Also, the Rokea's eyes are protected from glaring light and sudden flashes of light. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: Once learned, this Gift is always active. The character can see in the dark subject to normal rules for Rokea sight as long as some light is present, no matter how dim. Also, his eyes immediately compensate for bright light and sudden glare: walking from a dark room into the sunlight, for example. He receives no penalty on initiative and the like from such occurrences.

• **Restraint (Level One)** — A common problem among the Rokea (and especially the fierce Brightwaters) is attacking one's allies in frenzy, particularly when in Kunmind. This Gift allows the Rokea to be selective, even when lost in Rage. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The Rokea must activate this Gift *before* entering frenzy. To do so, the player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 6). For each success, the player chooses one character present. If the Rokea frenzies during the scene, she will ignore the characters so named, not attacking or even acknowledging them (which means that slew tactics cannot be used, either). Keep in mind, however, that Rokea cannot use Rage and Gnosis in the same turn. That,

plus the fact that the Gift must be activated before the Rokea enters frenzy, means that a wereshark wishing to reap the benefits of the this Gift must think ahead.

• **Unseen Attack (Level One)** — If the Brightwater can approach her target without being seen, she may attack without fear of retaliation. All her victim will feel is a stirring in the waters behind him... and then teeth. This Gift is taught by a shark-spirit.

System: The Rokea must approach her prey undetected — this requires the player to succeed in a Wits + Stealth roll (difficulty varies by how perceptive the target is; Storyteller's discretion). She then attacks first, no matter how high her opponent's initiative. The opponent cannot attempt to dodge this attack. Once the Rokea has attacked with this Gift, she may not normally do so again in the same scene (unless she can somehow get out of sight and sneak up on the target again).

• **First Feeling (Level Two)** — The ocean may be majestic and beautiful when humans see it from the shore, but when they actually set foot in the water, most humans know fear. The Brightwaters can turn that primeval dread of drowning (or being swept away, or being eaten, etc.) to their advantage, causing an air-breather to run in fear from any body of water, even a puddle. A servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation. The difficulty varies based on how large a body of water the target can see (difficulty 4 for the ocean, 5 for a large lake, 7 for a pond, 8 for a swimming pool, 10 for a puddle). If the target cannot see a body of water, this Gift has no effect. If the roll is successful, the target is overcome with fear and runs in terror for the highest ground he can find. This terror lasts for one turn per success. First Feeling has no effect on Rokea or any other creature that can naturally breathe water (including shapeshifters who know Gifts that allow them to do so).

• **Narke's Gift (Level Two)** — The electric ray — called *narke* by the Greeks — is capable of producing a powerful electric shock that can stun a human being. The Brightwaters long ago learned this secret, though their jolt can do much more than stun a target. This Gift is, obviously, taught by an electric ray-spirit.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Rage (difficulty 6). Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage to anyone within 20' (in the water) or to one target (on land). Using this Gift on land requires that the target be grounded somehow, unless the Rokea touches the target directly. Damage from this Gift may be soaked as per lethal damage. After using this Gift, the Rokea must wait three turns to use it again, as she builds up enough energy for another charge.

• **Undertow (Level Two)** — The Brightwater calls up a vicious current that sweeps a target in a direction of the Rokea's choice. This Gift can be used to drag a human out to sea, to force a (small) ship to run aground, or even to sweep a foe — or meal — towards the Brightwater's waiting maw. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Strength + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the strength of the undertow; anyone caught in the current must roll Strength + Athletics (difficulty 8) and exceed the Rokea's successes to escape it.

• **Bends (Level Three)** — Air-breathing creatures have, in recent years, been able to reach great depths. Some Rokea have noticed that if they surface too quickly, Sea becomes angry and causes them great pain and possibly death (humans know this phenomenon as "decompression sickness" or "the bends"). This Gift allows the Brightwater to inflict such agony on a target, whether or not she normally breathes air, or whether she is currently in the water. A servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Strength + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success inflicts one level of lethal damage. On land, any target may attempt to soak this damage. Underwater, however, only water-breathers may do so. The wounds caused by this Gift are extremely painful; as such, all wound penalties are increased by one (for example, a character dropped to the Hurt level by this Gift subtracts 2 dice from all actions, not one).

• **School's Fear (Level Three)** — The Brightwater can cause a group of beings — be it a school of fish, a crowd of people, or even a pack of Garou — to be seized with the fear that something is coming to eat them. Those gripped with the fear will panic and run (or swim) for their lives. This Gift is taught by the spirit of any small, schooling fish.

System: The targets need not actually see the Rokea for the Gift to work. The player simply rolls Charisma + Intimidation. The difficulty depends on the targets. Used against a school of normal fish or a group of humans, the difficulty is 6. Against active predators — a school of sharks or a pack of wolves, or even a group of soldiers or policemen — the difficulty rises to 8. Used against any group that includes supernatural beings, the difficulty is 9. If the roll succeeds, the group panics and runs for one turn per success (humans and fish usually keep fleeing until they reach safety).

• **Wriggling Teeth (Level Three)** — Sharks have many rows of teeth, and commonly lose several in a single bite. A Brightwater blessed with this Gift, how-

ever, can cause his teeth to burrow into his victim's flesh even after he releases the bite. The teeth continue to drive themselves deeper until removed, at which point they become inert. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The Rokea must first successfully bite a target. Then, the player spends a Willpower point and rolls Strength (difficulty 8). One tooth detaches for each success and continues driving itself into the victim's body. This has several effects. First, the victim adds a die to wound penalties for every two teeth (a Wounded victim with two teeth stuck in him would lose 3 dice from his dice pools, not two). Second, the wounds from the bite cannot be healed, naturally or magically, until the teeth are removed (a bloody process which will likely inflict further wounds). Finally, the teeth continue to injure the target. One tooth will inflict an unsoakable aggravated health level of damage every five turns. Two teeth inflict the same damage once every four turns, and so on, to a maximum of one health level per turn (with five or more teeth).

• **Best Policy (Level Four)** — "Honesty is the best policy," or so the human proverb goes. Rokea are not known for duplicity, but even Brightwater betweeners, who lead double lives of sorts, are not well suited to lies of any kind. With this Gift, an honest comment, no matter how inflammatory, is taken in stride and accepted. This Gift is taught by a remora-spirit.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Expression (difficulty 6). The Gift lasts for one scene. Listeners take anything the Rokea says at face value, as long as it is true. Also, if the truth requires the Rokea to reveal herself to a human being, the Veil covers her words later. For example, the Brightwater might explain to a security guard at a Pentex facility that she and her slew need to get by the gate to stop a load of toxic chemicals from being dumped into the Sea, because they live there and don't wish to be poisoned. The security guard agrees (he wouldn't want his living space poisoned, either) and lets them pass. Later, he might remember that someone came through the gates, and even what they looked like, but he'll be certain they had the proper clearance.

• **No Walls (Level Four)** — In Sea, nothing is confined. There are no walls or doors, and for the ever-moving Rokea, this is perfect. On land, however, things are different. With this Gift, the Brightwater can batter his way through any wall or door, no matter what the material. This Gift does not prevent alarms or traps from being triggered, however. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Kun.

System: The player rolls Strength + Athletics (difficulty 7). The Rokea can smash through any man-made barrier in a number of turns equal to (8 - the number of

successes on the roll). This Gift does not function on barriers that do not impede the Rokea. For example, the Rokea could not use No Walls to batter his way through a ship's hull, as he could simply swim around the ship.

• **Oversea's Cycle (Level Four)** — The Brightwaters are born in the time of Oversea's greatest pain. As such, they enjoy a strange connection to him, and can use this connection in several ways. When the moon is full or the sun is shining, they may draw upon his anger. When the Wound is covered — the sun is clouded over or the new moon rises — the Brightwater may heal his own pain. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Oversea.

System: When the sun or the full or gibbous moon shines, the player may roll Willpower (difficulty 6). The Rokea regains a point of Rage for each success, with no danger of frenzy. If the Wound is not visible, the Rokea may regain lost health levels or Willpower points in the same way.

• **Blood of Darkness (Level Five)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Halo of the Sun. (To Rokea, the blood of darkness is light.)

• **Pain of the Wound (Level Five)** — The Brightwater can inflict the blood of Oversea in its most damaging form — fire — on her foes. With but a wave of the hand (or tail) the wereshark conjures up a mystical flame that burns even in the sunless depths, and doesn't end until its target is consumed. A spirit servant of Helios teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Rage points and rolls Strength + Rituals (difficulty of the opponent's Stamina). Success means that the wereshark's target bursts into flames, and receives three health levels of aggravated damage per turn until dead, until the fire is somehow mystically negated or until the Rokea chooses to terminate the Gift. This flame burns underwater, or in the absence of oxygen. The target may choose to spend a permanent Willpower point to avoid the damage for one turn.

• **Scuttle (Level Five)** — The mightiest of the Brightwaters can sink any vessel afloat, simply by biting a chunk from the hull. The few Rokea who do know this Gift use it sparingly, as it exhausts the user. Even so, not all of the ships sunk in the world's naval battles were sunk by enemy fire. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Kun herself.

System: The player spends one permanent Rage point and rolls Strength + Brawl. The difficulty varies on the size and durability of the craft. A wooden sailboat would be difficulty 5, while a cruise liner or battleship would be difficulty 9. A single success is enough to cause the ship to begin taking on water, and the vessel will sink unless she can reach port in a few scant hours. After using this Gift, the Brightwater

automatically shifts to breed form and is too weak to do anything but swim very slowly for one hour.

- **Sea's Winds (Level Five)** — The Rokea surrounds herself with a blazing nimbus of light and battering winds (or violent waters, if used in the ocean). No one may approach her unbidden, and any that do risk being tossed aside or — in the case of Qyrl's minions — burnt by the light.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). For the remainder of the scene, anyone wishing to approach the Rokea unbidden must accumulate 15 successes on an extended Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 8). Anyone attempting this must also attempt to soak 3 levels of bashing damage per turn; against Qyrl-tainted intruders, this damage becomes aggravated as the light burns their flesh. If the intruder manages to reach the Rokea, they have only one action to attack or reason with the Rokea before they are swept away again.

Dimwater Gifts

- **King Fish (Level One)** — Almost all coastal and island cultures have developed myths about sharks, referring to them as gods of some kind. Sharks are indeed at the top of their food chain, and this Gift — taught by a shark-spirit — allows them to command respect.

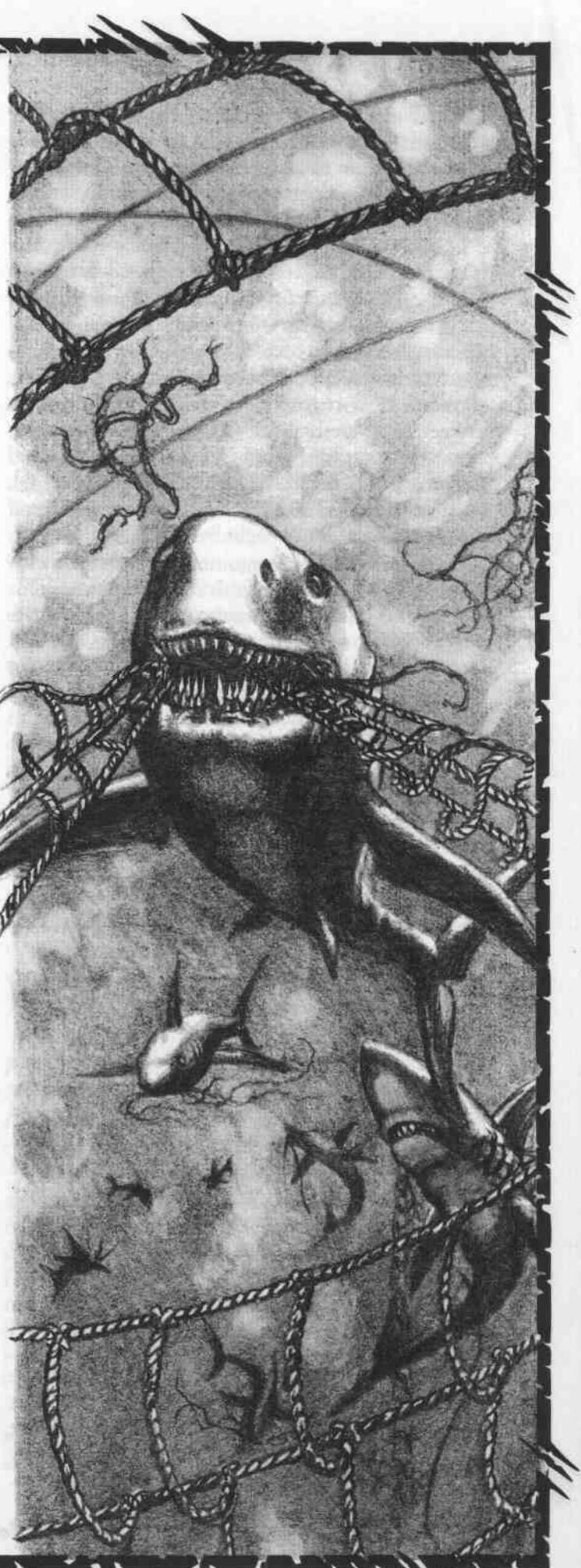
System: The player rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Success subtracts one from the difficulties of any rolls the player must make in that scene involving Leadership or Intimidation. This Gift does not inspire fear or loyalty so much as respect for a powerful being.

- **Sea's Voice (Level One)** — As the Level One Galliard Gift: Beast Speech.

- **Strange Blood (Level One)** — The Rokea can smell the blood of a target and identify them as a supernatural being. Rokea often use this Gift to identify other Rokea at a distance, which helps to prevent embarrassing mishaps (like eating a fellow wereshark). A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Success identifies the target as either a Rokea, a mundane being (be it fish, human, or whatever) or a supernatural being. The Rokea doesn't automatically know what the being is — that is, the Storyteller should not say "He's a vampire," rather, she should describe what the Rokea smells ("His blood smells thick and clotted, as though all clumped together instead of flowing"). The Rokea can learn to recognize different beings by their scents.

- **True Intentions (Level One)** — Similar to the Philodox Gift: Truth of Gaia, this Gift allows the Dimwater to determine a target's goal during any given



action. For example, if used on a human wading after young sharks in the shallows, the Gift shows the Rokea what the human plans to do with them. True Intentions does not work on spoken words, only on actions, and is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Empathy (difficulty of the target's Manipulation + Subterfuge). Multiple successes grant slightly greater understanding of the target's motivations behind his actions (e.g., whether he is being coerced).

• **Crushing Depths (Level Two)** — This Gift allows the Rokea to inflict the pressure of the deeps on a target. The wereshark must lock eyes with this target, after which the target cannot move and can only stand still and fight to breathe. The wereshark, meanwhile, usually slowly closes the distance between herself and the target. This Gift is taught by a deep-sea fish spirit.

System: The Rokea must make eye contact with her victim. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The player must make this roll each turn, and can take no other action except moving slowly (usually towards her victim). The target, on the other hand, can do nothing at all. The only way to escape the effects of this Gift is to frenzy, if the target is capable of doing so.

• **Know Oversea's Mind (Level Two)** — By surfacing and conversing with air-spirits, the Rokea may predict the weather for the region with near-perfect accuracy. This Gift is taught by an air-spirit.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). The Rokea knows the weather of the area for a number of days equal to the successes rolled. For example, if the player rolls three successes, the Rokea knows what to expect for the next three days.

• **Spit Teeth (Level Two)** — The Rokea can, as the Gift's name suggests, spit teeth at an opponent from a distance. This Gift is typically used on land, as it can be used in any form (Homid included) but can also be used in the water. A shark-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6) to loosen the teeth (one tooth per success), and Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to strike with them collectively. The Rokea may fire the teeth up to 25 feet away. Each tooth inflicts one health level of damage, provided that the roll to hit is successful. This damage is aggravated, and may be soaked, provided that the target is normally capable of soaking aggravated damage.

• **Drown (Level Three)** — The Rokea can cause an air-breather to grow gills to breathe, so that she must take oxygen from the water like a fish. While this Gift can be used to allow air-breathers to more comfortably visit Sea, the Dimwaters rarely use it for this purpose.

Rather, they use it — as the name implies — to drown enemies, or, worse yet, force them to seal their own fates by leaping into the waters with the waiting Rokea. Rokea may learn this Gift from any fish-spirit.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Willpower (difficulty of the opponent's Stamina + 4). Success forces the target to breathe water (salt and fresh are both viable) to survive, but in no other way protects him from the ocean (temperature and pressure still have their normal effects). The effects last for one hour.

• **Lure (Level Three)** — The Dimwater creates an illusory replica of herself, which can act somewhat autonomously. It can perform simple, repetitive actions (swimming or walking, commonly). The illusion looks, sounds, and smells exactly like the Rokea. It has no tactile component, but by the time an attacker realizes this, she has already revealed herself to the lurking wereshark. Angler fish-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. The duplicate can appear anywhere within the Rokea's line of sight and lasts until the Rokea breaks concentration or wills the duplicate to vanish. The duplicate may take any action the Rokea wishes, but as it has no physical form, it cannot pick up objects or attack.

• **Sea's Wisdom (Level Three)** — The Dimwater swims in frenzied circles, creating a small whirlpool. In the swiftly moving water, she can hear the voice of her spiritual mother, Sea, and ask her advice. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Rituals (difficulty 7). The more successes the player achieves, the more useful and direct the advice Sea grants will be. Sea has not, as of yet, given an opinion on betweeners to any Dimwater using this Gift.

• **Living Sea (Level Four)** — The Rokea causes the sea (or any body of water) to come to life around a target. The water becomes semi-solid, and can hold a target in place, propel the Rokea along at great speeds, or even strangle a victim. If the Rokea is on land, she may cause a nearby body of water (a fountain, for example) to extend a tendril of living water to accomplish the same effects. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 6). The Rokea may command a body of water equal to 5 cubic feet per success. If the Rokea wishes the water to inflict damage on a living target (by strangling a water breather or drowning an air-breather), the water inflicts the Rokea's Gnosis in lethal damage dice each turn.

• **Oversea's Wrath (Level Four)** — The Dimwater can call down violent storms upon his foes, capsizing small vessels and churning the waters. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Oversea.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Charisma + Rituals. This difficulty varies based on existing weather conditions; summoning a storm on clear, still day obviously carries a much higher difficulty than doing so when the skies are already dark. Using the Gift: Know Oversea's Mind ahead of time obviously allows the Rokea to plan for the best time to call a storm. Successful use of this Gift summons a thunderstorm and churns the waters into huge waves. One success will topple small crafts, three successes will capsize mid-sized fishing vessels, and five or more successes are needed to sink ocean liners or oil rigs (Rokea don't usually target oil rigs, anyway — the oil has to go somewhere, after all).

• **Swim Undersea's Bloodstream (Level Four)** — The Rokea can enter Undersea's bloodstream — the series of mystical tunnels that connects Grottoes — at any Grotto and emerge at another nearly anywhere else in the world. The Rokea must obtain permission from the spirits of both Grottoes, or else she will be shunted off to a totally random and possibly dangerous place somewhere in between the two Grottoes. This Gift is taught by any Grotto-spirit.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 4 + the Grotto's level). The player must make this roll twice; once when the Rokea enters Undersea's bloodstream and once when she reaches her destination. The Rokea can normally only travel to Grottoes she has visited before, but the Grottoes can be anywhere in the world.

• **Common Foe (Level Five)** — When battle lines are drawn, Dimwaters see two sides: theirs and the enemy. The eldest Dimwaters remember when the most common enemies were the servants and children of Qyrl, and can call other beings into service against such creatures, no matter their usual allegiance. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Kun.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 6). The character emits either a Sending or a low growl. For the remainder of the scene, any non-corrupted supernatural beings (Changing Breeds, most mages, even changelings) cannot attack one another so long as a common threat is present (usually a monstrous Wyrms-beast of some kind). Anyone who tries such an attack immediately suffers wound and movement penalties as though Crippled. The Gift: Resist Pain provides no relief against this agony. Common Foe lasts until the end of the scene or until the threat is vanquished. It only works to rally non-Wyrmish beings against minions of the Wyrms. It does not work to force a betweenner's non-Rokea allies (should any exist) to attack him.

• **Leviathan (Level Five)** — Any elder wereshark can learn the Gift: Great Summons and call forth aid from the deep. Dimwaters, however, are often wary of summoning up something that can't be put down later. Instead of calling forth these massive beasts, a Dimwater may choose to become one. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Kun.

System: The player spends two Willpower and two Rage points. The Rokea changes into a monstrous shark nearly 80' long (+5 to all physical Attributes after the Fighting Jaws modifiers). Also, the Rokea regains at least one Rage point each turn. The transformation lasts for one scene.

• **Wound Undersea (Level Five)** — This very dangerous Gift is used only in times of truly dire need. The Dimwaters boast that theirs is the only auspice responsible enough to hold the knowledge. With this Gift, the wereshark can open a vent in the sea floor, calling lava from it. This boils the water in the immediate area, as well as causing small earthquakes throughout the region. This Gift is taught, albeit very rarely, by an avatar of Unsea herself.

System: The Rokea slashes herself with her own claws and bleeds near the sea floor (in the process enduring at least one health level of aggravated damage). The player spends one Rage point and one Willpower point, and then rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 8). Success opens a crack in the sea floor. The lava will boil up in three turns, which is how long the Rokea has to get to a safe distance. The lava boils the water in the area, inflicting at least three health levels of damage (aggravated) each turn. Any additional effects — earthquakes, whirlpools at the surface, and so forth — are up to the Storyteller.

Darkwater Gifts

• **Blood of the Deeps (Level One)** — Darkwater Rokea are known for braving the crushing pressures and frigid waters of the deep ocean in the search for mystic knowledge. Thus, many of them learn this Gift early on. This Gift is taught by any deep-sea fish spirit.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 6). The Rokea takes no damage from pressure or cold for 3 hours per success. Note that this includes travel time, i.e., the Rokea must reach a safe depth before the Gift wears off to avoid taking damage. This Gift protects the Rokea from environmental harm only; direct attacks using pressure (like bear hugs) or cold (like the Wendigo Gift: Chill of the Early Frost) still have their normal effect.

• **Chill (Level One)** — The Darkwater may summon up a brief moment of the numbing depths and saturate his immediate area with it. This has the effect

of not only chilling the water (or air) around him but also of *unnerving anyone in the area*. A servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty 6). The temperature in her immediate area drops significantly (as though under heavy air-conditioning on land, or just past the sunlit zone in water) for one turn per success. Also, if the player scores more successes than a character's Willpower rating, that character suffers a +1 to all non-physical difficulties for the next scene as the mystical chill distracts him.

• **Silent Sending (Level One)** — Secrecy is not a priority for most Rokea, but the Darkwaters dabble in things that make the Dimwaters nervous. This Gift allows the Darkwater to use the Sending selectively, communicating her messages only to those she wishes to hear them. Remora-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6) to activate the Gift. If the player succeeds, the Rokea may choose who hears her Sendings for the duration of the scene.

• **Qyrl's Blood (Level One)** — As the Level One Uktena Gift: Shroud. Like Breach, while this Gift works on land, many Rokea don't think to try. Squid-spirits may teach this Gift.

• **Enter Sea's Soul (Level Two)** — Normally, Rokea only enter the Umbra with the permission and assistance of Sea. However, trust the Darkwaters to find their own methods of ingress. This Gift allows the Rokea to enter the Umbra in the same manner as the Garou do. Rokea may learn this Gift from any spirit servant of Sea.

System: Upon learning this Gift, the Rokea may step sideways if the player succeeds in a Gnosis roll. This Gift does not provide protection from the increased pressures of the oceanic Umbra, so most Darkwaters use the Gift: Blood of the Deepes before entering Sea's Soul.

• **Piercing Shriek (Level Two)** — The Darkwater emits a horrible wail that paralyzes all that can hear it. The Gift affects the character's allies as well as enemies, but the Rokea can use the Sending to cushion the effects, should she choose to do so. This Gift is taught by a dolphin-spirit.

System: The player spends one Rage point and rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6). Anyone within 15 feet (on land) or 30 feet (in the water) of the Rokea must roll Willpower (difficulty 8), opposing the player's roll. Anyone not matching or exceeding the player's successes collapses in agony for a number of turns equal to the difference in successes (for example, if the Rokea's player scores four successes and a victim scores two, the victim will be immobilized for two turns). Characters

with enhanced hearing (such as Garou using the Gift: Heightened Senses) do not get the benefit of the Willpower roll: they are automatically incapacitated for a number of turns equal to the Rokea's successes. The Rokea may choose to Send to allies in the area to help them resist; this requires use of the Silent Sending Gift and reduces their difficulty on the Willpower roll to 6.

• **Voice of the Depths (Level Two)** — In the deep oceans, there are spirits who have lain quietly since before the dawn of man. For the Rokea brave enough to find them, the knowledge to be gained is great. Using this Gift, the Darkwaters can converse with their eyes and ears — *the sea anemones and polyps* that line the ocean floor — and gain insight. Their advice is always cryptic and usually incomplete, but the Darkwaters love a challenge. Anemone-spirits can teach this Gift, but usually the Darkwater must travel to the lightless deeps to learn it directly from a primordial spirit.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Rituals (difficulty 6) to make the proper overtures to the primordial spirits. The Rokea is then rewarded with advice and visions concerning the topic in question. Over the years, the Darkwaters have found that these beings know more about human affairs than might be expected, which only makes them more interested in these beings' knowledge. The Storyteller decides what the Rokea learns, how mysterious the words are, and the roll (if any) that the player can make to interpret the information.

• **No Blood (Level Three)** — Most sharks use vibrations and electrical pulses as well as smell to track food. The Darkwater using this Gift renders herself completely invisible to these senses. Even if she bleeds, she still emits no smell at all. Also, her coloration changes so that any attempts to see her coming are stifled as well. In short, as long as the wereshark remains silent, she likely remains undetected. A stingray spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Wits + Stealth (difficulty 6). Success indicates that the Rokea is completely undetectable by scent, vibration, or electric pulse, and any attempts to detect by sight are at +3 difficulty. While this Gift is most useful underwater, it does thwart Gifts like Scent of Sight as well. The Gift's effects last for one hour per success, though attacking or otherwise drawing attention to oneself cancels them.

• **Summon Scuttlers (Level Three)** — Darkwaters are intrigued by different kinds of foes, and find it useful to study their enemies for information and new ideas. This is hard to do, however, when one's enemy has been consumed. This Gift allows the Rokea to summon scores of tiny Scuttlers — spirit minions of C'et — who swarm over the Rokea's foe, paralyzing him. In the Realm, there

is no visible effect, although the victim feels the tiny legs on him. In the Umbra, the crab-like spirits are visible to any observer. This Gift can be used on land, but Darkwaters have found this risky — on land, it summons tiny spider-like spirits who don't always release the target when asked. This Gift is taught by a Scuttler.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Charisma + Enigmas (difficulty 8, 6 on land). The target is held immobile for one turn per success. The pattern spiders who answer the call on land may or may not choose to release the target (Storyteller's discretion).

• **Swim Through the School (Level Three)** — In the ocean, Darkwaters keep to themselves, swimming the lightless depths, rarely encountering others. On land, however, this is often impossible, as so many humans occupy such small spaces. This Gift allows the Darkwater to move through crowds with ease, as well as to avoid the worst effects of the Curse. This Gift is taught by an eel-spirit.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point to activate the Gift. For the remainder of the scene, the Rokea may move through a crowd as fast as she can normally walk or run; people simply move out of her way without noticing it. Also, her Rage is considered to be half its actual rating for purposes of the Curse.

• **Waves' Passage (Level Four)** — The Darkwater can focus her attention on an object and cause it to age in the way it would if it sat underwater for several years. Wood becomes brittle and easily broken, silver tarnishes, metal rusts, and chemicals dilute. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: This Gift takes a full turn to invoke. The player rolls Wits + Enigmas (difficulty 7). Every success indicates a year spent underwater. One success is usually enough to erode wood to the point that it crumbles, while metal requires three or more, depending on the strength of the material. This Gift can be used as an extended action, however, allowing the Rokea to slowly eat away at very durable material.

• **Sea's Breath (Level Four)** — In water, Rokea can glide smoothly around opponents, using their internal oil reserves to float, weighing only a small fraction of what they would on land. By using this Gift, the Darkwater can float, hover, or glide through air just as she would in the water. She cannot gain a great deal of altitude with this Gift, but can float over tripwires or other traps, lie in wait for enemies, or execute graceful combat maneuvers normally impossible when gravity is a concern. A spirit-servant of Sea teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Gnosis (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). The Gift stays in effect for one scene. The character can float, hover, and "swim" through the air, but cannot get more than 10 to 15 feet off of the ground.

Another curious effect of this Gift is that the character may assume any form while the Gift's effects last, even those forms normally limited to breathing water.

• **Shock Wave (Level Four)** — Shock, like sound, carries much farther underwater. Darkwaters studying underwater explosions were fascinated by their power, and tried to understand the principle behind them. At length, through communication with the odd spirits called Breakers (see page 95), they learned to create a small explosion to stun or kill their enemies.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Rage (difficulty 6 in water, 7 on land). Success creates a concussion wave that travels out in a cone from the Rokea. Any living being caught in the wave suffers a number of health levels of lethal damage equal to the successes on the Rage roll. On land, targets must also roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8) or be knocked to the ground. The Gift affects everyone within (the Rokea's Stamina in yards) on land, and (the Rokea's Stamina x 2 in yards) in the water.

• **Hunger of the Trench (Level Five)** — In the black depths, the Sea's presence is far from the nurturing soul that teems with life, the way it seems closer to the surface. The deep ocean hungers, and the Darkwaters have learned to feed it with the soul and will of others. This Gift is taught by a spirit-servant of Sea.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Intelligence + Intimidation (difficulty 6). This roll is opposed by the victim's Willpower (difficulty 9). If the victim scores more successes, there is no effect. If the Rokea wins, however, the victim loses one temporary Willpower point for each success in excess of the victim's roll. If the player scores more successes than the victim's permanent Willpower, the victim loses a permanent point of Willpower. If the player botches, however, the victim is unharmed and a permanent point of the Rokea's Willpower is lost to feed the Trench.

• **Oversea's Gift (Level Five)** — If the Rokea are jealous of anything, it is the ability some creatures have to swim through Oversea. For some years, land-dwelling Rokea have tried to learn the secret of flight, never suspecting that the Darkwaters discovered the trick years ago. By using this Gift, the Rokea's body becomes lighter, and a thin membrane connects her extremities, giving her a silhouette like a butterfly. She can then fly both through Sea and Oversea, for as long as she wishes. A spirit-servant of Oversea teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift can only be used in Gladius form. To activate it, the player spends two Gnosis points. The Rokea can fly, slowly (maximum speed of 30 mph), but can swim much faster (maximum speed of 70 mph for short bursts). The Rokea's Attributes do not change, nor does her natural weaponry, so she may

execute dive-bomb attacks with ease. This Gift remains active until the Rokea wills it to end. While the Gift is active, a Delirium-like effect masks the Darkwater: normal humans ignore her entirely, and supernatural beings must roll Willpower (difficulty 8) to see her unless they use some special power.

• **Pall (Level Five)** — The Rokea calls forth a mass of inky blackness, that traps anyone caught within it. The Rokea knows all that occurs within the shroud, in the *Realm* or the *Umbra*, and can choose to be anywhere she wishes within the pall. While Qyrlings are rumored to teach this Gift (and can indeed do so), most Darkwaters learn it from the spirits of deep-sea fish.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points and rolls Gnosis (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). The blackness seeps from the Rokea's eyes and mouth and fills a spherical area 25' in diameter. *Anyone* caught within the sphere must make a Willpower roll (difficulty of the Rokea's Gnosis) and achieve more successes than the player did on the Gnosis roll in order to escape. While the sphere is up, the Rokea can transport herself to any point within it instantly, on either side of the Gauntlet. She can hear and see everything within the sphere, even if silent communication methods like the Gifts: Silent Sending or Mindspeak are used. Likewise, she understands anything said in the sphere, regardless of language. The sphere lasts for one turn per success on the Gnosis roll, although the player may

choose to spend additional Gnosis points to keep the sphere active longer (1 turn/Gnosis spent).

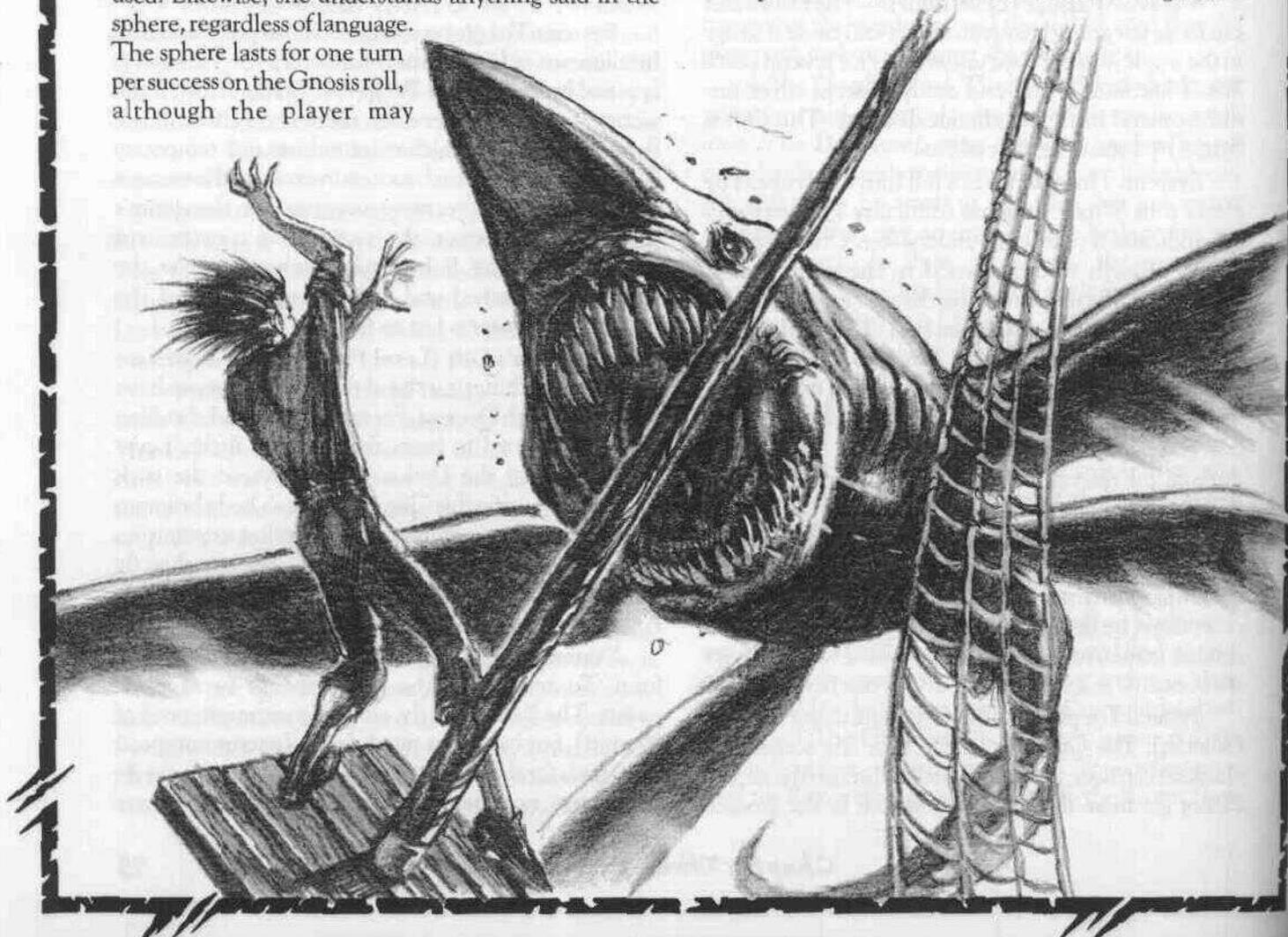
• **C'et's Shell (Level Five)** — Some particularly daring Darkwaters have made deals with C'et's minions. What they give up is unknown, but what they receive is immunity from one type of technology. Perhaps no net can hold the Rokea, or no gun can wound her. A powerful spirit servant of C'et teaches this Gift.

System: When the character learns this Gift, the player spends one permanent point of Gnosis and chooses the form of technology to which the character becomes immune. The Storyteller should determine exactly what falls under the province of this Gift and what doesn't. However, two limitations apply.

First of all, even if the technology chosen produces a natural form of damage, the character is immune only to the damage that weapon produces. For example, if the player chooses flame-throwers, natural fire still harms the Rokea. Second, though they have tried, Darkwaters have not been able to use this Gift to survive Small Wounds.

Betweenner Gifts

After a Rokea has lived on land for some time, she may, if innovative enough, begin to converse with terrestrial spirits and learn Gifts that ocean-dwelling Rokea



cannot. She may also learn them from another betweener, should she be fortunate enough to stumble across one.

• **Find Sea (Level One)** — The Rokea with this Gift can always find the fastest route to the ocean, regardless of how far inland she is. The fastest route might not be the most direct, of course, especially if the Rokea is in a vehicle of some kind. Any bird-spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6). Success means the character knows how far and in which direction the sea lies.

• **Spirit Speech (Level One)** — As the Level One Theurge Gift. While all Rokea can speak with pelagic spirits naturally, terrestrial spirits present a bit of a challenge, and this Gift is often one of the first a betweener learns.

• **Enter Unsea's Soul (Level Two)** — As the Level Two Darkwater Gift: Enter Sea's Soul. Betweeners find that Unsea's Soul isn't always quite as dangerous as Sea's Soul, and since few ocean-dwellers can follow them into the Umbra, this Gift makes a superb escape method.

• **C'et's Mysteries (Level Three)** — The betweener can call on land-dwelling Scuttlers to aid her in using human technology. The Rokea can make good use of such oddities as cars, guns, computers, and so forth, even if she has had no prior contact with them. This Gift is taught by a Pattern Spider.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point and rolls Intelligence + Science (difficulty 6). One success gives the Rokea passing familiarity with a form of technology (she'll know how to turn a computer on, for instance). Two successes grants one dot of an appropriate Ability. Extra successes bestow one dot of the ability for every two successes, rounding up (so five successes on the roll would grant 3 dots in an Ability). These effects last for only one scene.

• **Form of Sea (Level Four)** — The betweener can change her body into liquid, and flow through pipes, under doors, or into any other space that will admit water. She may retain cohesion in this form, and "walk" as a humanoid shape made of water. She can even drown an opponent by forcing herself down his throat. A freshwater-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points. The character can stay in liquid form for one hour for each dot of permanent Gnosis she possesses. The Rokea's liquid body will not evaporate, nor will it freeze unless the temperature drops to Arctic levels. If the character's body is split into two or more parts, she cannot assume solid form until the parts are combined. The character cannot bite or claw, but can drown air-breathing opponents by making a successful grapple attack and holding the opponent until he runs out of

breath. If the liquid body is immersed in salt water, the Gift is immediately cancelled.

• **Wall of Granite (Level Five)** — As the level five Philodox Gift. Rokea are used to their surroundings flowing and rising up suddenly, so this Gift comes fairly easily, provided they can find an elemental willing to teach it.

Rites

Rokea make use of very few rites. Their lot is simple: anything they can't kill, mate with, or outrun is normally avoided all together. However, the ocean-dwellers do make use of rituals on occasion, and the betweeners even more so.

Some rites may be taken from **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** with few changes. These include: Cleansing, Summoning, Spirit Awakening, Opened Caern (Grotto), Fetish (though this is rarely used), and Wounding. The Rokea do not use Seasonal rites, trusting Sea, Oversea, and Unsea to tend to themselves for such things. They also do not make use of Punishment rites — the only punishment worth mentioning to the Rokea is death.

Rite of Rokea Blood

Level One

This rite has uses for both the ocean-dwelling and betweener Rokea. Pelagic weresharks use it to search out members of their own breed for mating (a Rokea born of tiger shark stock would use it to find tiger sharks, for example). Betweeners use it to find Rokea Kinfolk, the direct offspring of a Rokea/human mating. However, either type of Rokea can use the rite to find either type of partner, allowing betweeners to breed with sharks, should they so desire, and ocean-dwellers to find human *kadugo* — usually to devour them.

System: In shark form, the Rokea leaps from the water towards the sky. On land, the Rokea need only stretch her arms heavenward. The player rolls Perception + Rituals (difficulty 8). Success allows the Rokea to sense the direction of any suitable partners within 10 miles (in the ocean) and 5 miles (on land).

Rite of the Hunt

Level One

The Rokea Rite of Passage is fairly simple: the young Rokea, having completed her Long Swim, is taken to a Grotto to meet with Kun and Sea. For many years, there were no further trials. Since the beginning of the war on the betweeners, however, the Rite of Passage has had a brutal element added to it. A slew takes the young Rokea into Unsea to hunt down a betweener. Since betweeners are not always conveniently available, any other supernatural being is ac-

Same-Bito

Same-Bito, the Asian weresharks, differ in many ways from their cousins. Troupes wishing to play Same-Bito are encouraged to check out **Hengeyokai: Shapeshifters of the East** for more information, but the most important differences are covered here.

- **Behavior:** Rather than living by the simple Rokean Law, Same-Bito follow the Code of Sensei Mizuchi:

- Attend the elders; you owe them all.
- Respect tribe members; and they honor you in return.
- Dishonor is a mark of lower beings.
- Battle is always honorable.
- If you are alive, you are still learning.
- Protect territory that Tiandi and the Dragon Kings have given to you.

- **Auspices:** Same-Bito have the same three auspices that Rokea do. They refer to these as Karui (Brightwater), Koshoku (Dimwater), and Irono (Darkwater). They learn the same general and auspice Gifts that Rokea do, along with some that are unique to the Same-Bito.

- **Rage:** The Same-Bito do not follow the same primal, bestial path that the Rokea do. As a result, they do not begin with the same amount of Rage. Starting Rage is one lower for Same-Bito (4 for Karui, 3 for Koskoku, 2 for Irono).

- **Kagesame:** This is the strange goblin shark breed (see the Shark Species sidebar). Only Same-Bito weresharks are born to this species.

- **Slews:** Same-Bito gather in slews just as Rokea do, but Same-Bito also join with other Changing Breeds into groups called *sentai*. A *sentai* that includes a Same-Bito will almost certainly dwell close to the ocean, and may include Zhong Lung (Asian Mokolé) as well.

- **Homid Breed:** Perhaps the most important distinction, the Same-Bito have two breeds: tangaroa (squamus) and rongo (homid). While homids are still rare in the extreme (fewer than 1% of Same-Bito), they exist and are allowed to take part in Same-Bito society. Asian weresharks may begin with the Kinfolk Background, although it costs twice as much to buy (two Background points or freebie points are needed to buy one dot of Kinfolk).

Information on the current state of the Same-Bito can be found in Chapter Four.

ceptable. Some Rokea are loathe to attack other shapeshifters and instead search out lampreys and other Qyrl servants. Others feel that since the shapeshifters have let the humans ride roughshod over Unsea and Sea, maybe they need a bit of culling anyway.

Not all Rokea undergo the Rite of the Hunt. If a Rorqual or remora finds a Rokea pup, the pup may be taken to a Grotto and sent on her way without participating in this bloody practice with no penalty.

System: When the hunt is completed successfully (i.e., the quarry is dead and the pup isn't), the player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 5). Success means that pup gains 2 points of temporary Valor Renown (in addition to any she might have gained during the hunt), while all Rokea who accompanied her gain 1 point of Valor Renown.

Rite of Swimming Alone

Level One

Sometimes, a member of a slew wishes to swim on her own for a time, either to mate, or simply to commune with Sea. Rokea totems are, on the whole, much more accepting of this than Garou packs, provided that the Rokea perform this rite first.

During the rite, the Rokea simply swims away from her slew, comes to rest on the sea floor (meaning that this rite must be performed in Gladius form) and asks the totem for permission to swim alone. The Rokea may swim alone for as long as she wishes, and may usually rejoin without a problem. However, while she swims alone she does not gain her totem's granted Traits. Although she is not as directly bound to follow her totem's Ban while swimming alone, reports of particularly gross violations will probably find their way back to her totem's ears, making any reunion rather less than comfortable.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 6). Only one success is required.

Rite of Passing the Net

Level Two

Some Rokea refer to the Gauntlet as the Net. Normally, Rokea cannot enter the Umbra, mostly for their own safety. However, if a Rokea feels the need is great enough, he may petition Sea for passage into the spirit worlds.

To perform this rite, the Rokea must swim to a Grotto and ask Sea for permission to swim sideways. If she grants it, the Rokea may enter Sea's Soul for up to one cycle of the moon (28 days). At the end of this time, if the Rokea is still in the Umbra, she finds herself outside the Grotto where she made the petition.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7). Only one success is necessary.

Rite of Talker Dedication

Level Two

This rite functions in exactly the same way as the Garou version. It is simply harder to learn for Rokea, who don't put as much stock in materials (and normally don't care about walking around naked). The only way for a Rokea to learn this rite (other than re-creating it herself, which takes weeks of effort and a Rituals score of at least 4) is to find a betweenner who can teach it.

Rite of Sea's Distant Voice

Level Two

This rite is used only by betweenners and other Rokea who, for whatever reason, have to spend a great deal of time on land. The Rokea enters a mental communion with Sea, and sends word of her deeds and her whereabouts. Typically, this rite is used to gain Harmony and Innovation Renown.

To perform this rite, the Rokea must be at least partially immersed in salt water (a full bathtub sprinkled with table salt works; the symbolism is what counts). She then mentally reports any significant doings to Sea.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 5, +1 for every ten miles from Sea). Success indicates that the Rokea receives (or loses) Harmony and Innovation Renown as her deeds dictate.

Rite of the School's Wisdom

Level Three

Sharks are sometimes seen herding schools of small fish into a "meatball", a tight, spherical school. This allows them to take one bite and polish off many of the fish, rather than chase them. Rokea, however, also herd schools into "meatballs" to gather wisdom from them. This rite allows the Rokea to learn whatever the school knows about a certain topic. The information is usually shared freely, because the school knows that if the Rokea isn't told anything useful, at least it can have a free meal.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6) to compress the school and then Wits + Rituals (difficulty 7) to activate the rite. If the roll succeeds, the school will answer the Rokea's questions about a given topic, honestly and to the best of their knowledge. The schools tend to be most knowledgeable about their immediate area, but some carry information from far-off places. It is considered in poor taste to eat a school that has provided useful information.

Rite of the Black Shark

Level Four

This rite has only been used once since its creation. A Darkwater called Mad-With-Pain conceived it to try and end the practice of opening Small Wounds

in the ocean. The rite requires ten weresharks: one Rank Four, two of Rank three, three of Rank Two, and four of Rank One. The rite binds them together into a 120-foot, night-black monster shark with blazing red eyes and a mouth of fire.

The first (and so far, only) Black Shark attacked and sunk over a dozen monitoring vessels during the post World War II nuclear tests. While no official documents mention the shark, some aging survivors deliriously blather about a "sea monster" destroying the ships.

There is no known way to reverse the rite, but Mad-With-Pain and his companions have not been seen in over twenty years. It is possible that the Black Shark slipped into Sea's Soul, or perhaps it swam too close to one of the Small Wounds and was killed. Regardless, some Rokea still live who claim to know the secret of the Black Shark, so perhaps another may appear someday....

System: The ritemaster must be at least Rank Four to attempt this rite, and must succeed in a Charisma + Rituals roll (difficulty 9). As stated, at least ten Rokea must agree to give up their lives to become the Black Shark. Statistics for this monster are best left to the Storyteller; they are sure to make even the powerful shark-monster created by the Gift: Leviathan look like a guppy.

Rite of the Man-Form

Level Four

This uncommon rite is sometimes performed on Rokea venturing onto Unsea. Rokea can "lose the shark" just as Garou can lose the wolf — if a Rokea loses all her Rage and Willpower, she shifts into breed form and remains there until she can regain a point of Willpower. The problem is that a Rokea's breed form is almost always Squamus, which means that if the Rokea "loses the shark" on land, the consequences can be fatal.

By performing this rite, the Rokea can choose another form as her "default" form, in effect replacing her breed form. The choice is either Homid or Gladius, unless the Rokea happens to know about Glabrus form. Either form has its advantages; after all, if the Rokea assumes breed form after being Incapacitated in combat, Gladius would seem the better choice. If the Rokea were forced to assume breed form in public, Homid would be more appropriate. In any event, the effects of this rite last for one week and cannot be cancelled early.

System: The player rolls Wits + Rituals (difficulty 8). This rite can be performed on other Rokea. Success indicates that the Rokea chooses a bipedal form (normally Homid or Gladius) as his breed form. The Rokea can instantly assume the new form and will change to the new form if she is knocked unconscious, loses the shark, or is subjected to a power like the Philodox Gift: Take the True Form. Use of this rite without good reason costs the Rokea a point of Harmony Renown.

Rite of the Gathering

Level Five

This rite, which hasn't been used since Turna'a, is meant to be used only in circumstances that threaten immediate and long-lasting consequences to all Rokea. Use of the Rite of the Gathering alerts every Rokea in the *entire world* that a Gathering is going to take place. The ritemaster chooses the time and location of the Gathering, and then performs the rite, with the aid of at least two other Rokea. One member of each auspice must be represented, and the rite takes 24 hours to perform. The three (or more) weresharks must circle the area that will serve as the site of the Gathering, purifying it and driving away any baneful influences, both in Sea and in Sea's Soul (which means that at least one of the participants must either know the Rite of Passing the Net or possess the Gift: Enter Sea's Soul). If the rite is successfully performed, every wereshark in the world, whether betweener, Same-Bito, ocean-dweller, or even follower of Qyrl will know the plans for the Gathering. The Darkwater who called the Gathering at Turna'a died in the nuclear blast, and whether or not any living Rokea knows this rite is a matter of debate.

System: The ritemaster must roll Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 10). She may roll once every 8 hours (and therefore receives 3 rolls during the rite). She must accumulate 5 successes for the rite to function, otherwise Rokea within a few miles get a strange tingling sensation, but nothing else.

Totems

Slews of Rokea follow totems in much the same way as Garou packs do. Usually, no rite is performed to bind the totem to the slew; the totem either chooses the slew or the slew finds a servant of the desired totem and pledges service. Shark and Dolphin are common choices for slews. Some others are listed here.

A slew's totem loses power if the slew ventures on land. Since Rokean totems are aquatic, their totem spirits are as out of place on land as Rokea themselves. For a Rokean totem to serve the slew properly while on land, the totem spirit must be "fed" a point of Gnosis each day. If the slew ventures too far inland, more sustenance may be required at the Storyteller's discretion. When the slew chooses its totem, the players may choose to spend 3 extra Background points on the totem to alleviate this drawback.

Angler

Background Cost: 5

Angler is a deep-sea fish that lures its prey into its mouth by a false light. Angler is crafty and inventive, and prefers slews of Rokea who use their minds as often as, if not more often than their teeth.

Qyrl As a Totem

Some individual Rokea petition Qyrl as their totem, reasoning that her skill in hiding will serve them well (such Rokea are nearly always betweeners). This is true, but Qyrl's patronage changes the Rokea, tainting him. Qyrl's child smells faintly of the Wym to anyone who uses the Gift: Sense Wym on him, and other Rokea immediately distrust him, even if they don't know why.

Qyrl uses Rokea in her service to lead other Rokea into traps, to carry out missions of destruction on land, and to send out misleading messages via remora to other weresharks. The Storyteller is perfectly within her rights to disallow Qyrl as a totem.

Background Cost: 6 for a slew, 8 for an individual

Traits: Qyrl grants her followers +3 Stealth, +1 Linguistics (whatever the dominant human language in the area is), +2 Occult, +2 Survival, and 1 dot of Wits. She also provides food and shelter for her charges, in the form of large, tasty squid in the ocean, or in the form of lucky finds on land (e.g., the Rokea happens upon a bagged lunch that someone "forgot"). She will also whisper hints to her children about how to survive on Unsea. Needless to say, Qyrl does not require Gnosis to provide her children with assistance on land.

Ban: The Rokea must obey Qyrl's commands without question. These commands are prone to materialize at some of the least convenient times, and lead to some not-so-palatable activities.

Traits: Angler's children gain +2 Stealth, and may add 1 die to Stamina for purposes of enduring cold waters. Additionally, once per day each slew member may spend a Gnosis point to cause her gums to glow with a faint, yellow, bioluminescence, illuminating about a five-foot area in front of the shark. Each member of a slew receives 2 temporary Innovation when Angler becomes the slew's totem.

Ban: Angler's children must never attack a foe without knowing something about it (beyond its dimensions).

Crab

Background Cost: 4

Crab is a servant of C'et, the Shelled One. As such, very few slews even consider taking this totem as their patron. Crab doesn't mind this; she is grateful when the Kunspawn do choose to recognize her. Crab is private and tends to be grumpy, and gets preachy about the dangers of never leaving the ocean.

Traits: Crab's children gain +2 Science and +1 Seafaring. If confronted with human technology, they receive a -1 difficulty on rolls to understand it. Crab's children get one "free" day on land without having to spend Gnosis for the totem.

Ban: Once per week, Crab asks that her children venture on Unsea, even if they don't leave the beach.

Dolphin

Background Cost: 4

Graceful and playful in the ocean, but lethal when necessary, Dolphin watches the seas and acts as their guardian and watchdog. Marine disasters sadden and frighten her. She expects Rokea who follow her to be observant and discerning, but also to stop any environmental destruction they can.

[Note: Maritime lore has it that dolphins and sharks are mortal enemies, and that if one sees dolphins swimming, one is safe from shark attacks. This is a great exaggeration. Natural dolphins protect their young (and themselves) from natural sharks, but there is no special antipathy between Dolphin (or dolphin Rorqual; see below) and the Kunspawn.]

Traits: Dolphin grants her slews +3 Empathy and 2 points of Charisma, realizing that action above the waves is often required to stop ongoing damage to Sea. Each member of a slew serving Dolphin gains one temporary point of Harmony Renown when Dolphin is chosen as their totem.

Ban: Dolphin's children must actively seek to prevent the hunting of marine mammals and work to stop water pollution. Most Rokea do this sort of thing anyway, but Dolphin insists on a bit more zeal from her children, and will often call whaling vessels to their attention.

Hurricane

Background Cost: 5

Hurricane is a terrifying force of nature, yet within the outer turmoil and destruction is the peace of the eye. Hurricane appreciates the frenzy of the Rokea, but tries to teach them to keep their focus despite their vicious Rage.

Traits: Hurricane grants its followers +2 Intimidation, one additional dot of Strength, and the Brightwater Gift: Restraint.

Ban: Hurricane asks that a slew in his service sink a vessel (of any size) once per month.

Manta Ray

Background Cost: 7

Manta Ray, sometimes called Devil Ray, is a mighty warrior and fierce survivor. He cannot abide fisherman and his children will sometimes tow fishing boats towards slews of Rokea or other dangers. While few totems take sides in the betweenwar, Manta is

firmly set against the Rokea leaving the ocean, and slews who choose him as their totem can expect to spend their days far out to sea. Manta is especially popular with Dimwaters.

Traits: Manta grants each of his children a permanent dot of Stamina. They may also draw on 3 points of Willpower per story, and receive 2 temporary points of Harmony Renown for choosing him.

Ban: Manta asks that his children disrupt fishing operations, by fouling nets, leaping aboard and killing the crew, or by simply sinking the ships.

Moray

Background Cost: 6

Moray is a patient hunter. He strikes from his hiding place in the coral, and recoils quickly. Moray is territorial and ill tempered, and Rokea who follow him are among the most aggressive defenders of the coral reefs.

Traits: Moray grants his children +3 Stealth and the ability to find a hiding place anywhere. He also teaches the Gift: Unseen Attack, and grants an extra Brawl die to bite attacks.

Ban: Moray asks that his children protect the coral reefs where he makes his home.

Shark

Background Cost: 6

Easily the most common totem for Rokea slews, Shark is the spiritual father of all Rokea and embodies their best (and worst) qualities. He is swift, silent, and deadly, and asks no emotional tie from his children. He asks only that they act in their nature as predators, and that means following the Rokean Law religiously.

Traits: Shark grants each of his children one point of Strength, and grants the slew +2 Stealth and two additional dice of bite damage. Additionally, each member of the slew gains 2 temporary points of Harmony Renown.

Ban: Shark's children may never take pleasure or sadness in killing, and they are expected not to hold grudges.

Fetishes

Rokea do not use fetishes often. For one thing, the process of crafting a tool or object is difficult for them; even the task of finding strap of leather to suspend a charm from a fin requires killing a seal or whale and saving some of the skin. Plus, the weresharks' "everything-in-its-place" mentality doesn't usually drive them to ask a spirit to give up its free existence to inhabit a fetish.

With that in mind, there are a few fetishes that the Rokea see as useful enough to merit creation and re-creation. Some examples are given here.

Sea's Garb

Level 1, Gnosis 5

One of the Rokea's biggest problems when venturing into Unsea is that they swim ashore naked. Even if nude swimming is acceptable locally, getting off the beach can be difficult. To that end, a resourceful Dimwater developed the Sea's Garb fetish some years ago.

Sea's Garb looks like a normal piece of human clothing (which means that to create the fetish, the Rokea must "obtain" an article of clothing). However, when activated, it dresses the Rokea in whatever is appropriate for the area and season. For example, a Rokea might swim ashore in California wearing only a shirt, but once the fetish is activated, he will be wearing a pair of denim shorts, sandals, and perhaps even sunglasses (if the player rolls well) in addition to the shirt. The clothes generated by this fetish are considered dedicated. The user cannot use this fetish to create an entire wardrobe; the clothes remain the same until she swims out to sea and comes back towards land. The Rokea has no control over what kind of clothes are created.

To create a Sea's Garb, the Rokea must bind a stingray or eel-spirit into the clothing.

Marlin's Tail

Level 2, Gnosis 6

Not actually a marlin's tail, this fetish normally takes the form of several marlin bones, strung together and worn around the waist (this fetish is visible in Chasmus and Squamus forms as a row of protrusions around the shark's tail). The Rokea can activate the fetish to access the great speed and might of the fish, allowing her to double her swimming speed and the distance which she can leap from the water.

Despite the name, this fetish can be created with the spirit of a swordfish or a mako shark as well as a marlin.

Barnacle Necklace

Level 3, Gnosis 6

This fetish is exactly what the name implies, a barnacle strung on a piece of skin or leather and worn around the neck. The fetish, when activated, allows the Rokea to home in on any whaling or sharking vessels within (10 miles x activation successes).

A barnacle-spirit must be bound into the necklace.

Net of Vengeance

Level 4, Gnosis 7

Creating a Net of Vengeance requires the Rokea to steal a section of net from a fishing vessel. When imbued with the proper spirit, the net drowns anyone caught within it, no matter what medium they usually breathe.

The Rokea must first entangle the target within the net (which requires a Dexterity + Melee roll, difficulty 7). The player must then roll to activate the fetish. If successful, anyone caught in the net begins to drown, as described in *Werewolf*, pg. 188. If they can free themselves before they lose consciousness (this requires an extended Strength + Athletics roll to tear free, or an Intelligence + Enigmas roll to work the net loose, both difficulty 8, 10 successes required), they can begin to breathe normally.

To create this fetish, the Rokea must bind both an air-spirit and a sea-spirit into the net.

Fragment of Oversea

Level 5, Gnosis 8

Rokea interpret meteorites as pieces of Oversea's body which were burned so badly by the Wound that he cast them down. These make amazing fetishes, and so are highly coveted items. No more than a dozen are known to exist, and all have different powers.

One can heal its user completely upon being successfully activated. Another releases a brilliant burst of sunlight, blinding any who look on it and burning vampires in the same manner as true daylight. Another, known as Woundbringer, acts something like a hand grenade. When thrown, it causes a fiery explosion. The fragment always survives to be recovered later, however.

If a Storyteller chooses to allow a character to own a Fragment of Oversea, the player and the Storyteller should decide what the effects are, what sort of spirit is bound into it, and how the character came into possession of such a marvelous item.

Merits and Flaws

The Merits and Flaws listed in the *Werewolf Player's Guide*, will, for the most part, work for Rokea characters as well. See the sidebar for a list of disallowed Merits and Flaws, as well as some that are appropriate for weresharks.

Constant Sending (1 point Merit)

Your Lorenzini's ampullae (see the Appendix) remain in all forms, allowing you to use the Sending even in Homid form. Of course, other Rokea won't be able to receive it in Homid form, but it does allow at least one member of a slew to step out from the shadows and speak with humans.

Good-Looking (2 point Merit)

Unlike most Rokea, who are (politely put) rough-looking in Homid form, you look completely human. This is a real plus if you hunt betweeners (or if you are one). The character's Appearance score may start out at whatever level the player chooses.

Disallowed Merits and Flaws

Psychological

Nightmares

Awareness

Deaf, Blind (a shark so severely limited would quickly be eaten)

Supernatural

Ancestor Ally, Moon-Bound, Foe From the Past, Insane Past Life, Slip Sideways, Sign of the Wolf, Natural Channel

Human Society

All, unless the Storyteller allows you to play a homid character.

Physical

Fair Glabro, Longevity, Wolf Years

In addition, some Merits, such as Mechanical Aptitude or Expert Driver, are obviously only available to homid characters or long-time betweeners. Some Merits and Flaws are extremely appropriate for Rokea characters. These include:

Berserker, Overconfident, Uneducated, Unskilled, Bad Taste, Animal Musk, Disfigured, Monstrous, Mute, and Strict Carnivore.

Venerable (2 point Merit)

You've been swimming the seas for a long time. You haven't garnered any Renown because you haven't really done much, but for whatever reason, you've decided to take a more active role in Rokea society. You may begin play with dots in Linguistics, Occult, Seafaring, Etiquette, or Politics (no more than 2 dots in any one of these Abilities, and probably not all five). While you begin with the same amount of Renown as other Rokea, your age gives you some respect (-1 Social difficulties with younger Rokea).

Fin Blades (3 point Merit)

In Standing Jaws form, the fins on your arms, legs, and back are just as sharp as your talons. You may attack with these blades for Strength +1 aggravated damage.

Swim Sideways (6 point Merit)

Unlike most Rokea, who cannot enter the Umbra without a Gift or aid from Sea, you can do so at will. The character can reach the Umbra, in the sea or on land, in the same way as Garou. Note that this does not protect the character from the harsh rigors of Sea's Soul, so swimming sideways is safer closer to the surface.

Betweener Sympathizer (1 point Flaw)

You may still live in the ocean, but you don't have any problems with those who don't wish to do so. You

probably won't participate in a hunt for a betweener and may very well warn betweeners of impending hunts. While this sort of behavior won't get you killed by itself, it will certainly make you a few enemies if it comes to light. Betweeners, obviously, cannot take this Flaw, and a Rokea with this Flaw who later "goes betweener" must immediately buy it off with experience.

Shark Teeth (1 point Flaw)

Even in Homid form, your teeth remain mildly pointed. While they aren't sharp or strong enough to do any real damage, they are very noticeable and loose — like a shark's teeth, they come out if you bite into something tough and sinewy, like steak. (They do regenerate, however.)

Short-Lived (1 point Flaw)

For whatever reason — perhaps Sea is angry with you, perhaps you have human blood somehow — you continued to age after your Long Swim. You age at roughly the same rate as a human. Your finite lifespan will certainly affect your behavior. Maybe you shun taking risks, as you want to hold on to all the life you can. Or perhaps you are at the forefront of any challenge; after all, since you don't have an eternal life to protect, what difference do a few decades make?

Garou Enemy (2 or 4 point Flaw)

You have run afoul of a pack of werewolves, who have decided you are a creature of the Wyrms and wish to kill you. They don't necessarily hunt you relentlessly, but they might show up at the worst possible times. Although they probably don't understand what you are, they might have the presence of mind to route you toward dry land, making escape all but impossible. This Flaw is worth 2 points to ocean-dwelling Rokea and 4 to betweeners.

Honest to a Fault (2 point Flaw)

This "deception" thing confuses you mightily. You believe that any situation that would necessitate a lie really stems from ignorance on someone's part, and a good explanation would suffice. This can lead to some interesting role-playing, as human laws don't take sacred missions from Sea into account, to say nothing of betweener hunts. You receive a +2 to any difficulty involving lying or deception, and your inclination is to be honest when questioned. Note that this Flaw in no way forces the character to be loquacious, only that the character is honest when she *does* speak.

Known Betweener (3 point Flaw)

You are known to the Rokea populace at large as a betweener. You can expect hunting parties to come for you eventually, and you should keep moving, lest a slew find and devour you. Also, any human (particu-

larly of the opposite sex) to whom you become attached is fair game as well, just in case you revealed anything about the Kunspawn to them.

Tonic Immobility (3 point Flaw)

Many sharks become immobile when turned on their backs. Rokea do not — normally. You, however, sink into catatonia when flipped over, and even in homid form, lying on your back puts you to sleep almost immediately.

If you find yourself on your back in Squamus, Chasmus, or Gladius forms, you immediately fall asleep and cannot move until you are upright again.

Unsure Footing (3 point Flaw)

You just can't get the hang of walking on two legs. You stumble and trip easily, and suffer from vertigo just by looking up. Your fine motor skills are unaffected, so writing and so forth isn't a problem, but dodging, firing a gun, using a weapon, hand-to-hand combat, or even walking is a chore for you.

Add 2 to all Dexterity difficulties on land involving balance or body coordination, including combat.

Uncontrolled Lust (4 point Flaw)

All Rokea feel the need to mate on land, but you can't take two steps onto a beach without being overcome with hormones. While on land, you are distracted and agitated in the presence of eligible mates (that is, anyone of the opposite sex who is not prepubescent or geriatric). You add 2 to the difficulty of any roll involving concentration and 1 to the difficulty of any extended action while under such conditions. Also, if you enter Kunmind, your urge to mate runs out of control and your companions had best restrain you.

New Combat Maneuvers

The Rokea have access to most of the same maneuvers that Garou do. The maneuvers given here are usable in water only, or as a result of the Rokea's unique war form.

- **Dash:** The Rokea darts forward, covering a hundred feet or more in seconds, and bites or rams her target. This maneuver is only usable in the water. The attack is resolved as usual, but if the player states that her character is employing this tactic before the attack is made, she adds 1 to her character's initiative score. The character must be at least 20 feet away from the target to use this maneuver.

Usable By: Chasmus – Squamus

Roll: None for the Dash, standard for the attack
Difficulty: 6

Damage: Standard **Actions:** 1

- **Shred:** The Rokea bites her foe, and shakes her head viciously, grinding down. Only heavily armored

foes can withstand this sort of punishment for long, and armor will eventually give way. The Rokea attacks as usual, and then holds on (rolls to keep the hold on the target should be made based on what the target does to escape — Storyteller's discretion, but typically Strength as though maintaining a grapple). Each turn (not each action), the target's soak pool decreases by one die. If the target's soak pool is reduced to zero, the Rokea's teeth meet and the victim loses whatever portion of his body was in the wereshark's mouth. The loss of soak dice affects attacks from the Rokea using Shred only, not attacks from other sources. Add a +2 difficulty modifier to dodge rolls for Rokea engaged in this maneuver (the Storyteller may want to make it even more difficult to dodge attacks from the victim of this maneuver, if not impossible, should the victim be in a position to reach the Rokea).

Usable By: Gladius – Squamus

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl for the bite, Strength for the hold
Difficulty: 5

Damage: Standard **Actions:** 1 each turn

- **Great Bite:** The Rokea seizes her foe by the shoulders, opens her jaws, and bites down across the victim's neck or abdomen (depending on the size of the victim; a large shark can bite a human being in half, so a Rokea will certainly have no problems doing it. A Garou in Crinos form, however, is too large to bisect this way, though the Rokea could probably bite off the hapless werewolf's head). Grabbing the victim and holding him steady requires a standard Grapple roll; the bite is administered on the same turn.

Usable by: Gladius only

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7

Damage: Strength + 3 **Actions:** 2

- **Ram:** The Rokea slams into her target, headfirst. While this attack does little damage, it can be used to propel an enemy away from help — or towards another Rokea. A botch on this attack means that the character takes her own strength as damage, and is stunned for the rest of the turn as she damages the sensory organs in her head (nose and lateral line; see the Appendix). This attack is only usable in the water, and inflicts bashing damage.

Usable by: Gladius – Squamus

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 6

Damage: Strength **Actions:** 1

- **Tail Strike:** This maneuver is only usable underwater. The Rokea smacks her foe with her tail. This attack is commonly used as part of a slew maneuver (see Tail Buffet, below) or on an opponent who attacks from behind. All damage done by this attack is considered bashing.

Usable by: Chasmus – Squamus

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 7

Damage: Strength **Actions:** 1

• **Throat Scrape:** The Rokea drags his forearm across his foe's throat, relying on the denticles to tear it open. This maneuver works best if the Rokea can place the victim in a headlock first, which requires a standard grapple attack. Normally, any damage done in this attack is lethal, not aggravated, but if more than three health levels are inflicted, the victim's throat has been cut open. The victim is unable to breathe until he regenerates the damage (if possible) and must roll Stamina (difficulty 9) or collapse to the ground while his body heals itself. Creatures who are unable to heal themselves supernaturally continue taking one health level per turn until dead.

Usable by: Gladius only

Roll: Dexterity + Brawl **Difficulty:** 5 in a headlock, 7 otherwise

Damage: Strength +1 **Actions:** 1

Slew Maneuvers

These maneuvers, like the pack maneuvers given in *Werewolf*, can be used only by a slew bonded by a totem.

• **Circle:** The slew swims in a tight circle around their target. If the target attempts to break free, the Rokea nearest him bites — not necessarily to seriously injure

him, but to dissuade him from trying to escape. This maneuver is used mainly to intimidate or interrogate a target — from their positions around him, the slew can easily execute other maneuvers such as *Dismember* or *Tail Buffet*, should the decision to attack be made. No roll is required unless the slew is circling another shark or a similarly fast-moving target (like a squid), in which case each Rokea must succeed in a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) to keep the circle tight enough to prevent escape. A circle can be used on land, but always requires a roll, and the difficulty rises to 8.

Rokea Required: 3 (at minimum) **Performable Alone?:** No

• **Dismember:** This maneuver only works in the water. One shark strikes a target from one side, another from the opposite side. Then they both tear in opposite directions. If the maneuver works, the victim is torn in two. Using this maneuver with more than two sharks is possible, but it requires a large target. All Rokea involved must be in either Squamus or Chasmus form to build up the speed necessary. They must also act at the same time (see the rules for pack initiative, *Werewolf*, pg. 194). If this maneuver is successful, the victim must soak the damage from all attacks at once. For example, if two Rokea use this maneuver and roll 5 successes and 4 successes for their damage rolls, the target gets only



one soak roll to absorb the nine health levels of damage. All damage is, needless to say, considered aggravated.

Rokea Required: 2 Performable Alone?: No

• **Tail Buffet:** Some sharks, such as the thresher, stun fish with a blow from their tails and then eat at their leisure. This maneuver allows a slew to do just that. The slew must act simultaneously for the maneuver to be fully effective. Each Rokea swims by the target and smacks it soundly with her tail. This requires a Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 6). The target must soak damage from this attack as usual, however, regardless of how much damage is actually inflicted, he is considered stunned for the rest of the turn and the following turn, losing all actions. Most shapeshifters may spend Rage to ignore the effects of the stun. Even if the target does this, however, he still loses his actions on the turn that the tail buffet occurs because of sheer disorientation.

Rokea Required: 3 Performable Alone?: See Tail Strike, above.

Rokean Renown

As stated in Chapter Two, Rokea acknowledge three forms of Renown: Valor, Harmony, and Innovation. Each auspice has one type that they follow primarily.

Rokean attitudes on Renown vary widely. Some Rokea couldn't care less about making the seas safe for others; they simply eat, swim, and breed, like the Law says. Others are fastidious in pursuit of their auspice's Renown, and chastise others who "don't do enough for Sea." However, on the whole, Rokea take action to gain Renown because they feel it's a duty, not because they wish to become famous among their kind.

One unique fact about the Rokea Renown system is that the Rokea themselves are only responsible for one-third of it (Valor). Sea judges Harmony Renown, and Kun judges Innovation. As such, gaining either of these two types of Renown is simply a matter of swimming the seas and being acknowledged by the spirits who acts as messengers for Sea and Kun (accomplished by a Wits + Rituals rolls, difficulty 6).

Gaining Valor is a bit trickier. Since Rokea judge the bravery and justness of each other's actions, a wereshark who aspires to gain Valor must find another wereshark and petition to be recognized for her deeds. This communication is usually done via remora, as Rokea have little reason to lie (especially since remora are notoriously good at spotting a false, Renown-grubbing story and distorting it to make the liar look like a total fool). If the aspirant wishes to gain a permanent dot of Valor, however, she must seek out another Rokea in person and ask to be recognized. The Rokea so petitioned is within her rights to challenge

Rank Titles

Rokea refer to their ranks not by specific titles but by levels of the ocean. For example, a rank one Rokea would call herself "a Brightwater on the surface," while an Elder Rokea would say "a Brightwater in the Deeps."

These appellations are, from rank one to rank five: Surface, Shallows, Open Sea, Cold Sea, and Deeps.

Renown Chart

Brightwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	2	*	*
2	4	2	1
3	7	4	2
4	9	6	4
5	10	8	5

Dimwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	*	2	*
2	3	5	0
3	5	7	1
4	7	9	2
5	8	10	3

Darkwater

Rank	Valor	Harmony	Innovation
1	*	*	2
2	1	2	3
3	2	4	6
4	3	6	8
5	4	8	10

*A Rokea begins with two dots in her primary category and one other, placed in one of the other two. She must have three dots total, however, to be considered a true Rokea.

the aspirant in some way before acknowledging her claim, should she so desire.

For ocean-dwelling Rokea, gaining Valor is as easy or as difficult as finding a remora. For betweeners, it's next to impossible. Sending word to other Rokea through a remora reveals the betweener's location and her recent deeds (which can be used to track her), and many ocean dwellers refuse to acknowledge the deeds of a betweener. Therefore, the wereshark must either find another betweener to recognize her actions, or find an ocean-dweller that won't judge her based on her living preferences.

Valor

Bravery and valor are two different things. To be “brave,” that is, to be strong in the face of fear, doesn’t impress the Rokea. They don’t believe in feeling afraid to begin with. Valor means taking on a challenge, be it a fight, a hunt, a mate, and so forth secure in the knowledge that you are doing what you are meant to do. Valorous Rokea also don’t lie if they can help it—they feel it implies insecurity in who and what they are, and insecurity is unthinkable among the Rokea.

Valor’s Principles

- Lie to others, you lie to yourself.
- Do not take on a challenge you cannot complete.
- If someone wrongs you, do not seek him out.

Simply remember him.

Harmony

The Rokean Law is deceptively simple, and abuses are possible. For example, humans have a right to sail the seas and even to eat of the bounty found there, but slaughtering hundreds of millions of fish each year is unacceptable. Likewise, a Rokea has the right to eat what he chooses, but consuming humans is unwise in that it frightens them and spurs them to kill more sharks.

Sea views the Rokea as her watchdogs and police force. Anything in the oceans that threatens the delicate balance of life — an oil spill, a diver group upsetting a coral reef, and especially abominations like Deepwater — needs rectifying. Doing so gains the Rokea Harmony.

Harmony’s Laws

- Everything has a place — including you. Stay in it.

- What happens in one part of Sea affects it all. There are no isolated occurrences. Remember this when you decide whether or not to act.

- If Sea makes a request of you, it is disharmonious to refuse.

Innovation

Each new Gift, rite, fetish, and idea that the Rokea have dreamt up over the years is recognized by Kun. Kun, the mother of fishes and spirit of creativity, takes great pride in the fact that her favored children are not automatons. Kun does not create drones—she leaves that to her sister, C’et. Ridding sea of a threat by tearing it to pieces is fine, perfectly within the parameters set by Sea and Valorous by any Rokea’s standards — but it won’t impress Kun too much.

Innovation is the easiest form of Renown to understand, but can be difficult to obtain. Most Rokea accept the predictability of their lives, and this attitude doesn’t allow for creativity. However, the Rokea who strive to reach places never before seen, who bargain with spirits for new Gifts, and who venture on land to stop threats *before* they reach Sea are the Rokea who receive Innovation.

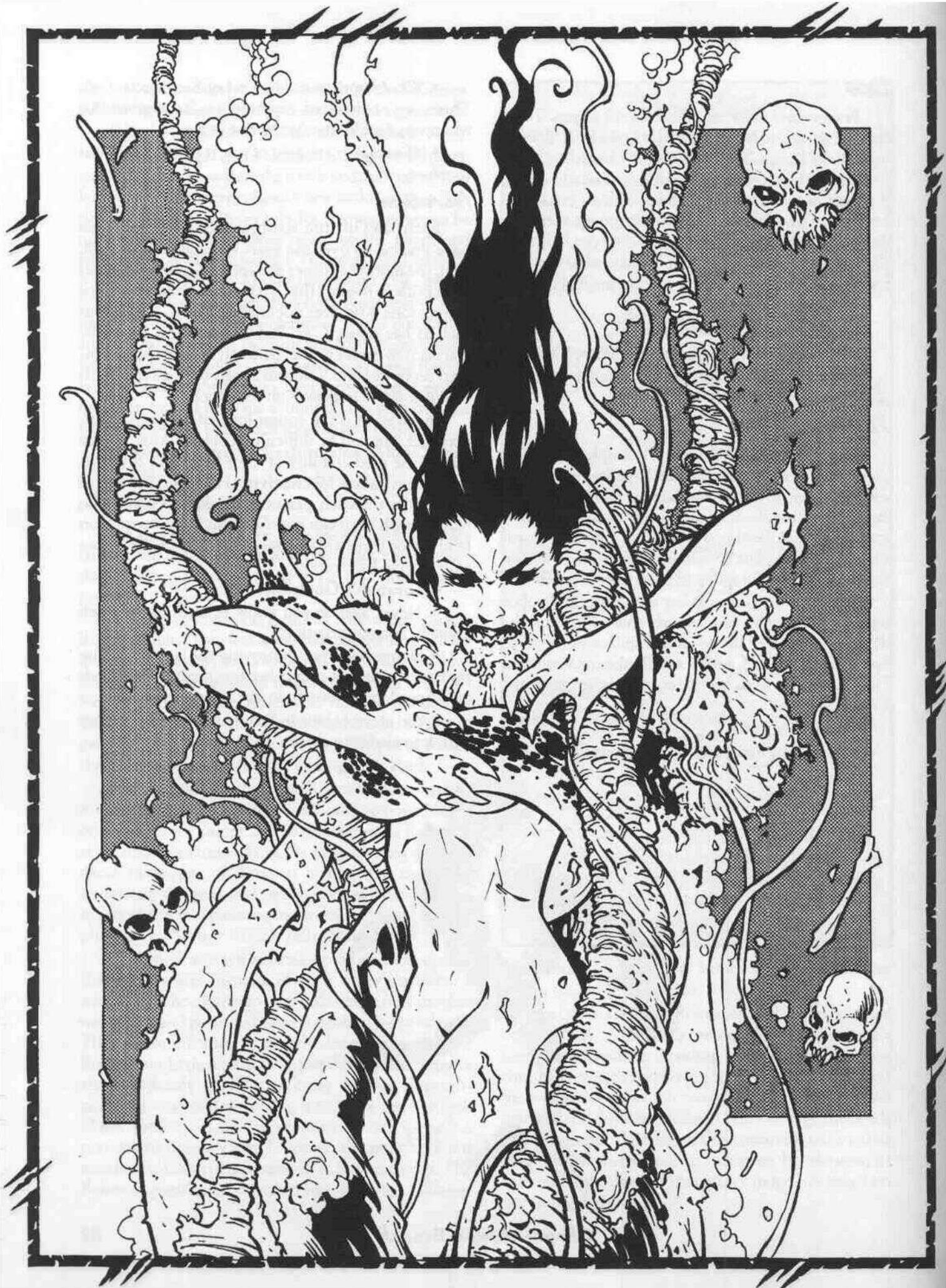
Innovation’s Guidelines

- Never assume you know everything, or even enough, about a situation.

- Humans are not destroying the world because they are strong, but simply because *they put their minds to it*. Speed and strength do not always win battles.

- You are not alone in Sea. There are other beings with knowledge to share.





Chapter Four: Secrets of the Deep

"The reservoir will soon be built now, and all those elder secrets will be safe forever under watery fathoms. But even then I do not believe I would like to visit that country by night... and nothing could bribe me to drink the new city water of Arkham."

— H. P. Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space"

Warning: This chapter is meant for Storytellers only. If you read the material in this chapter, you are learning secrets that no Rokea in the world knows, which may well spoil some surprises. Be warned.

The Undersea Triat

A Garou hearing the story of creation from a Rokea might well assume that Kun is simply the Rokea's version of the Wyld, C'et the Weaver, and Qyrl the Wyld. This is about as correct as saying that Jesus is the Christian version of Mohammed, which is to say, not correct at all.

To the Rokea, the Three Daughters are not cosmic, nigh-unknowable forces of the universe. These three beings can interact (and have in the past, if the legends are true) with living beings like the Rokea. While no Rokea presumes to know the mind of one of the Three Daughters, and wise Rokea respect them all (if not equally), the weresharks believe that each of the Daughters is very much a driving force in the Seas today.

And, for better or worse, belief in a thing tends to enforce its reality. Kun and Sea teach many of the Gifts that the Rokea learn. When a wereshark enters a Grotto following her Long Swim, she speaks directly with Kun and Sea. The Rokea understand that most of the time, they are speaking with avatars and spirit-servants, not directly with these Celestines, but to them there is little difference; they are still communing with divinity.

Unfortunately, Qyrl is also an active force in the world. Unlike the Wyrms, hiding behind its minions, Qyrl actively plots and plans and swims in the Sea, trying to close the Wound and end the world.

With all this in mind, it would appear that the Three Daughters are, in actuality, very powerful servants of the Triat — but servants nonetheless. Perhaps the true Triat sits above them, and these three beings merely enforce their respective Triat member's will beneath the waves. This may be the case, and there is no way at all to verify it, since beings of this power do not give answers about themselves.

One thing that is certain, however, is that the Rokea believe in the divinity and power of the Three Daughters, Kun in particular. And again, Rokea are not fanatics. They *know* they are right, just as they know that they can tear to pieces nearly any organic being on the planet. They are not prone to theological discussion about their beliefs, not because it makes them touchy, but because they consider it a waste of time. (Darkwaters, of course, are sometimes the exception to this).

So, while the "Wyrn," "Weaver," and "Wyld" battle metaphorical battles on planes of existence that no Garou can seemingly ever reach, Kun, C'et, and Qyrl fight real battles in the cold depths of the oceans. Taking the battle to Qyrl herself is possible for the Rokea (or so they believe), but no wereshark has ever tried. Why not? Because the Kunspawn are meant to survive.

Qyrl's Plots

As you may have guessed from the first two chapters, Qyrl is far from inactive in the modern world. While she does not create, she has masterfully steered the Rokean race away from doing anything that might enable them to preserve their homelands.

Qyrl kept a fairly low profile among the Rokea during the 20th century. Since the Rokea don't see battling Qyrl as their mission in life (as Garou see battling the Wyrn), she was able to operate in almost complete secrecy. She watched carefully as mankind shredded, burned, detonated, shot, and poisoned itself in new and ever more efficient ways. When the atom bomb was created, she knew she had found the way to close the Wound.

She recognized atomic spirits; she had seen them before, up close, when she bit into Oversea and opened the Wound to begin with. An atomic blast tears open a smaller wound, releasing these spirits, but the Wound quickly closes. Qyrl believes that she can enter a Small Wound and close the Great Wound from the inside. To that end, she used all the influence she could muster to push the governments of the world toward more expansive nuclear tests.

To date, however, she has not been able to enter a Small Wound. This is because of the massive spiritual turbulence created during a nuclear blast. When the first Small Wounds opened in 1945, even the darkest reaches of Sea's Soul (where Qyrl usually dwells) felt the shock. Even during the many tests that followed, she was never able to get close enough to the Small Wounds to enter them. The experience was not totally wasted, however—the turbulence allowed her to engineer Turna'a.

Each time a nuclear bomb is detonated, the reverberations startle horrid beasts similar to Nightmare into awakening. Qyrl learned from her experience with

Nightmare; she doesn't try to do anything so flamboyant nowadays. Instead, when she realized that the U. S. Government was testing nuclear devices in the ocean, she followed the tests closely. Each time a device was detonated, Sea's Soul was jarred and another ancient, formless consciousness awoke. Rather than imagine forms for these beings, she gave them names. Three such beings awakened during nuclear tests, and Qyrl named them Silence, Stillness, and Darkness.

When the Rokea decided to meet *en masse* at Turna'a, Qyrl extended her influence to the surface, temporarily weakening herself in the process. The United States chose the waters over Turna'a as a test site, and the three beings that Qyrl had awakened used their powers to stifle the noise, motion, and even sight of the ships and the danger they presented from every Rokea and remora present.

After the Turna'a Massacre, Qyrl rested to regain her power. During her rest, she noticed that some Rokea were going ashore, while others advocated total disconnection from Unsea. Assuming various guises, both remora and Rokea, she has fed the debate ever since.

Indeed, some Rokea (mostly betweeners or betweener sympathizers) contend that she engineered the war from the start. Those Rokea that hunt betweeners disagree; some even claim to be among the original instigators of the conflict, saying that it was their persuasive leadership that began the hunt for the traitors. And then some Rokea, commonly Dimwaters, believe that blaming Qyrl for this crisis among the Kunspawn (for crisis it is, regardless of allegiance) is simply a way to dodge responsibility. The Rokea themselves, they assert, must end this conflict (either by acceptance or total decimation of the betweeners, depending, again, on to whom one speaks), and not adopt such a human-ish "Devil made me do it" attitude.

Regardless of her actual role in the war, Qyrl couldn't be more pleased that the Rokea are killing each other.

Kraken in the Modern World

Kraken, Qyrl's one-time alter ego, is known to humans as a sea-monster, often a giant squid. Some Garou even believe that the Rokea worship Kraken (which is not true). In truth, Kraken is an avatar of Qyrl, one that looks after her interests on Unsea.

Kraken's minions can be found in reservoirs and swimming holes, mingling with the Banes in service to Lady Yul. In the backwoods, where families drink from tainted wells and become twisted fomori, Kraken winds her tentacles into their minds. In some seaside towns and cities, cults have arisen, cults dedicated to this strange creature. These cultists perform sacrifices, but feed their victims to the hungry Sea. Kraken does not

The Kraken-Born

World of Darkness: Blood-Dimmed Tides includes information on a force called the Chulorviah. This spiritual disease infects human beings and cephalopods (normally octopi and squids), changing their forms slightly but steadily. Over the course of centuries, it becomes impossible to tell whether the tentacled horror began life as a human or a squid.

The motives of the Chulorviah are not detailed in **Blood-Dimmed Tides**. Instead, its true nature and goals are left to the Storyteller. The following is a suggestion for how the Chulorviah might fit into a **Werewolf** game and should not be considered an official ruling on the matter.

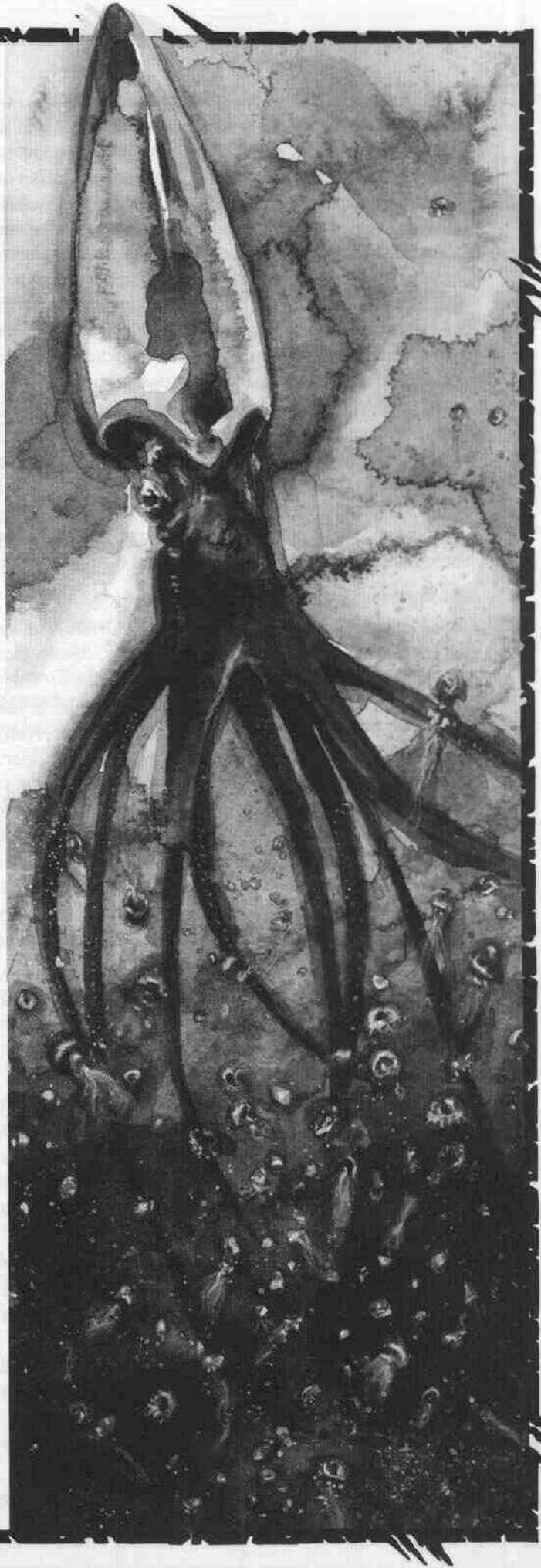
The Chulorviah is similar to Nightmare, but more intelligent. Whereas Nightmare needed a form to cross into the Realm, the Chulorviah realized that a defined shape would be a hindrance. Therefore, it chose not to have a shape at all, but to enter Sea as a disease, powerless until it found something to contaminate. It found Qyrl's children easy to infect, and slowly reached its coils into them.

The Chulorviah is patient, however. It has waited centuries, allowing its first minions to gain almost god-like power, and has only begun infecting humans in recent decades. Now, the Chulorviah may succeed where Qyrl has always failed. Project: Deepwater is corrupting and enfolding scientists, who are then sent to the surface. In addition, the greatest Grotto in the world, the Mariana Trench, is almost completely cut off from the Rorqual who once used it to refuel. The Rokea have staged attacks against Deepwater before, but have always met with defeat. In the last assault, two Rokea were dragged off into the Trench by huge tentacles. It would seem that the Chulorviah wishes to find a way to infect the Kunspawn...

So, is the Chulorviah a minion of Qyrl? Not really. They work toward similar goals, at least superficially, but while the Chulorviah seems to want to colonize the surface, Qyrl just wants to destroy it. Occasionally, then, Qyrlings may arrive to aid Rokea who are losing to the Enfolded — or vice versa.

leave her follower powerless, either. Some gain the ability to breathe water for a short time, some can poison their foes like jellyfish. But the power comes with a price — often, the elders of the cult will walk into the Sea one night, to become one with their mistress.

Kraken does not seem interested in gaining temporal power. After all, such power in the surface world



is fleeting and ultimately meaningless. However, occult knowledge, especially where it concerns the sea, is highly prized, and Kraken will go to great lengths to seduce human sorcerers of any stripe, be they alive or undead. This can lead to nasty surprises for Rokea hunting parties or betweeners, who find themselves facing foes that know entirely too much about them.

The Homid Problem

There are, at present, no homid Rokea (other than a few Same-Bito). Mateo Cordova, the young Cuban-American appearing in the previous sections of this book, is presumed the first of his kind to reach maturity. (For purposes of your own chronicle, you may well substitute someone else, even a player character; that's fine. The role the first homid plays can be easily shifted.) What happens when the first homid reaches the Grotto is the Storyteller's prerogative, of course, but there are three main options: change, stasis, and distortion.

Change

A shipwreck looms before them. "The Grotto is under the ship," Mateo feels Bleeds-Night sending. "Swim into the hole in the side and head down. You'll feel it."

He does. Fish dart away from him, but he is not hungry. He feels the pull of the Sea, and of his maker, Kun, mother of fishes. He swims through a crevice in Sea's floor, and feels the waters grow warmer, and he knows he is home. He hears a voice, a voice he knows yet has never heard, and he waits for her proclamation.

Outside, the two Rokea responsible for bringing Mateo on his Long Swim circle restlessly. He is gone not two minutes when both feel sharks coming towards them. They Send, and receive a reply — Guards-the-Shoals and his hunting party are approaching.

Storm-Jaws changes to Fighting Jaws, her already massive form growing to more than thirty feet. Bleeds-Night waits, and when the party is within range, he Sends.

"Wait! The boy has gone to meet with the Mother!"

The hunting party does not stop, but it does not attack. An observer would no doubt be terrified to watch as five large sharks — and one prehistoric monster — circle the grave of a ship.

Bleeds-Night continues. "He has gone into the Grotto and into Sea's Soul. If Kun accepts him and you kill him, what then, Guards-the-Shoals? What mercy will Kun show you?"

No response. The hunters know very well what would happen if Kun became angry. They might lose their shapechanging powers, or might never be able to find food again. It is a chance none of them will take.

"We will wait here," sends Guards-the-Shoals, "until he emerges, alive or dead. And if he is alive, we shall hear his words. If his is dead, you both shall follow him."

Bleeds-Night calls on a Gift, and sends, quietly, to several remora. They detach themselves from his belly and swim away to find others. A change will be announced tonight, he thinks, and I want as many Rokea as possible to hear it. By the time Mateo emerges from the ship's wrecked hull, over a dozen more weresharks circle anxiously.

"The Hunt is over," he sends to the school of sharks. "Sea has accepted me as her child, and I am one of you. Call me Joining Stream, the first human-born."

Guards-the-Shoals circles angrily. Bleeds-Night can see he is on the brink of entering Kunmind. He sends to Storm-Jaws and they flank him, quietly, waiting for his attack.

The attack does not come. Guards-the-Shoals turns and darts away. Bleeds-Night watches him go, and feels Sendings from several other Rokea, asking why the Dimwater left. "His life has just been changed," sends Bleeds-Night, "And I believe that frightens him."

Change is good. But change is also terrifying, especially for the ever-living Rokea. Ironic as it may seem, the weresharks have grown very comfortable with the notion that humankind and Kunspawn don't breed, and they won't respond well to anyone — Kun included — telling them differently.

Ending the betweener war will not happen simply because one homid Rokea is accepted, either. It will take time for the world's Rokea to hear the news, and even then they may not believe it — or they may insist that even if Sea has accepted Rokea born of human stock, those Rokea should still live their lives below the waves. Acceptance of the homid breed will raise more questions than it answers, for all Rokea. This, of course, would make for some very exciting stories.

Stasis

Bleeds-Nights sees the shipwreck ahead of them. A burst of speed and they would make it. As the three sharks streak towards the derelict ship, the waters around them come to life.

Storm-Jaws thrashes as though caught in a net. Even as she assumes Fighting Jaws, she seems to make no headway. Bleeds-Night calls on Standing Jaws, so that he can turn more easily. He sees what he feared he would — Guards-the-Shoals and his hunting party.

Mateo launches himself at Guards-the-Shoals, his already impressive tiger shark body exploding into Fighting Jaws. Guards-the-Shoals, hovering in Standing Jaws, does not move. Bleeds-Night sends a warning — "Watch the sides!" — but too late. Two of the hunters reach Mateo seconds before his jaws clamp home. One — a Brightwater, but Bleeds-Night cannot remember the name — snaps his maw around Mateo's tail, the other around his head. Mateo, for all his strength, is torn in two. The water around him turns muddy brown, then scarlet as the blood thins out. Bleeds-

Night watches Mateo's corpse sink to the bottom, and notices with grim fascination that he has reverted to his human form.

Kummind eats at Bleeds-Night's vision. He resists, knowing that if he attacks, both he and Storm-Jaws will die. Guards-the-Shoals changes to Swimming Jaws and swoops down into the murk. When he reappears, he is swallowing a large chunk of flesh. Bleeds-Night hopes it was a fish, but knows otherwise.

"I told the boy," sends Guards-the-Shoals, still gulping, "that I'd eat him one day."

"Did it ever once cross your mind that Sea might have had a purpose for him?" Bleeds-Night knows this question is a waste of time, but asks anyway.

"No. What crossed my mind was that he shot me with moon's blood and admitted to killing sharks." Above them, Storm-Jaws' thrashings grow weaker.

"Release her. She has done nothing wrong, even according to your warped law."

Guards-the-Shoals considers, and then turns to face the imprisoned Dimwater. She swims free, and Bleeds-Night quietly sends to her to stay calm. To Guards-the-Shoals, he sends "Why have you not attacked me?"

"We need your knowledge, Darkwater."

"Only on certain subjects, it would seem." He sends to Storm-Jaws to go, he is in no danger for now. She swims off in disgust. "A new threat emerges from Oversea, yet you still insist on slaughtering Kumspawn here."

"The war on the betweeners will end when they are all dead. That is the end of it. Now surface with me, and tell me what you can of the New Wound."

In this scenario, the war simply continues. Betweeners and ocean-dwellers go about their business. Any homid Rokea are considered betweeners or worse and are killed if discovered. This is a rather bleak scenario, but it does hold some possibility. Perhaps a story — or a chronicle — could be formed around a group of betweeners and one or two homid Rokea trying to get the human-born to a Grotto. If the nearest Grotto is miles away, perhaps the sharks will need to do some island hopping to get there. Or, perhaps the troupe might find a story about a slew of Rokea dedicated to searching out rumors of *kadugo* and possible homid Rokea occurrences interesting.

Either way, remember that homid Rokea require a long time to be born and reach their first change, as there must first be a *kadugo* in order to conceive a homid.

Distortion

Mateo swoops downward into the shipwreck. As he does, he feels Sea calling to him, just as Bleeds-Night said she would. I'm going to make it, he thinks, I'm really —

He feels the waters being disturbed. He rounds a corner and sees a hammerhead shark cruising the hallways

of the ship. A shark? he wonders, or perhaps Guards-the-Shoals? He changes to Fighting Jaws and attacks. His jaws close on... nothing.

From behind him, he feels a Sending — "No one to help you now, boy!" — and Mateo realizes to his horror that he can't turn around in the narrow hallway. Instead, he swims forward, trying to shrink down to Swimming Jaws but failing. He rounds a corner and sees a hole in the floor, just big enough to admit him. Perhaps in this room, there will be room to change! He swims downward, wheels, looks up... to see Guards-the-Shoals pass over him.

"The ruse won't last," comes a Sending. The Sending isn't from a shark, Mateo realizes. The feeling he gets isn't a slight, electric jolt. It's more like a mental caress. Mateo finds it pleasing. He looks about for the being responsible.

A squid nestles in the middle of an overturned chair. Its tentacles wave lazily and it sends again. "He'll find you soon. He'll use his Gifts to kill you, for you could beat him in a fair fight."

"Who are you?" sends Mateo, sure of the answer already.

"A squid," it answers. "Not much more. A messenger, really. Oh, and possibly a life preserver of sorts." Mateo feels the vibrations as Guards-the-Shoals swims towards the opening. "Oh, not much time. Do you wish me to help? Myself, and my mistress, naturally."

"What's in it for you?" sends Mateo.

"You are, my friend. If we help you, you belong to her. But she's a kind mistress. All the food you want, freedom from the bloody rage of your people, freedom from this silly war...."

Above them, Guards-the-Shoals begins smashing through the ceiling.

"Uh-oh. Better decide," the squid sends teasingly.

Mateo considers: life in the waters, with horrible shark-people trying to eat him. Life as a human, hungry, poor, angry. Or food whenever he wishes? Friends? Power? And, in the bargain, not being eaten by Guards-the-Shoals right now? "All right," he sends.

"Good!" sends the squid. "Now, eat me."

"What?"

"Eat me! No way to sign a contract, is there? This is the next best thing. You take my mistress into yourself, that's how this deal works." The ceiling caves in and the shark begins forcing its way through. "Better hurry."

Mateo snaps forward and bites the squid in half. Its tentacles caress his head, his gums, his throat as he swallows. He feels knowledge, hatred, and the burning desire to plunge the world into cool, quiet darkness forever.

Guards-the-Shoals enters the room and sees Mateo in Standing Jaws. He has time to realize that something is different about the boy before the squid arrive.

Thousands of tiny tentacles cling to the Dimwater's body. They slide into his mouth and are devoured, into his

gills where they begin to choke him. Suckers stick to his eyes and begin to pull them out. He tears at his gill slits and blood fills the room. One of his eyes is pulled free, and with the other, he sees Mateo advance.

"You'll eat me someday, Guards-the-Shoals?" Sends the young Rokea in a voice that is assuredly not his own. "I think not."

Qyrl would love to get her tentacles, literally or figuratively, into any Rokea. The homids, what few exist, are good choices. They still cling to their freedom to choose their lot in life, which means they don't have the same respect for Harmony and keeping in their place as Sea-born Rokea do. They are hunted, persecuted, and frightened. They are often outcast from their people due to their Rage, and not welcome among Rokea due to their heritage.

In short, they have little to lose and worlds to gain.

In telling stories about the corruption of homid Rokea, the Storyteller could allow the players to play homids who have or are considering selling out to Qyrl. She could have the choice already made for a group of homids and have the players control ocean-dwelling (or even betweener) characters dedicated to hunting the Qyrl-spawn down. Or, she could mix the group, having some players control homid characters being tempted, and others playing "clean" Rokea who must convince the homids not to join Qyrl — or kill them.

Same-Bito

The hengeyokai counterparts to the Kunspawn have long been at odds with their more primal cousins. The Rokea regard the Same-Bito as fools for falling into the trappings of the so-called "Beast Courts." To the Rokea, the Same-Bito have missed a critical point: they are sharks and therefore water-breathers, and have no place on land. Many Dimwaters also view all Same-Bito as betweeners, since they live partially on land, but since the Middle Kingdom is far too well-guarded by the native *shen* to ever think about a Hunt, this view is academic.

The Same-Bito, however, are by no means unified in their adherence to the Code of Sensei Mizuchi. Many of them find the complex rituals and laws governing "auspicious" and "inauspicious" behavior to be stifling, unnecessary, and ridiculously human. Same-Bito are taught that Westerners are barbarians, but where does the East/West boundary fall in Sea? Some Brightwaters also point out that countries in the West — including the United States — have passed laws prohibiting finning and protecting some species of shark, while the Japanese fin sharks and slaughter whales without a care. Indeed, it would seem that the only thing holding the Same-Bito to the traditional Beast Courts is tradition.

Lately, an Irono of the *kagesame* species has been quietly advocating leaving the Beast Courts and rejoining the Kunspawn. This Same-Bito, called Sun-Shines-Black, believes that the Rokean Law and the Code of Mizuchi do not have to be mutually exclusive — it is possible to follow both. He does, however, believe that the weresharks should be Rokea first and hengeyokai second, if at all. Sun-Shines-Black also claims that Teanoi, the great shark Incarna that many Same-Bito worship, wishes the Same-Bito to stop their feud with the Rokea and to pool their knowledge. Some other *kagesame* agree with this assertion, some disagree. Both sides claim that Tako, a great octopus-like spirit, feeds the other side false information. Both sides have convincing claims to their arguments, so for now, the debate is a standstill.

Other Inhabitants of the Ocean

The spirits who inhabit Sea's Soul fall into one of four categories, based upon which Celestine they serve.

Scuttlers

Scuttlers — hard-shelled spirits who take the forms of crabs, lobsters, and shellfish — serve the will of C'et. Barnacle-spirits act as her spies, living on ships and reporting to C'et where the vessel is bound and its condition.

Sample Scuttler

Pearl Keepers

Rage 3, Gnosis 8, Willpower 5, Essence 16

Charms: Reform, Realm Sense, Armor

Image: These spirits resemble giant oysters or clams. They hide on the ocean floor or in reefs and rock formations, guarding their sacred treasures. Each of these guardian spirits holds a pearl, similar to the pearls that C'et herself is supposed to have created so many years ago. Anyone who takes such a pearl can learn a great deal (in game terms, possession of a pearl bestows knowledge of Science, Crafts, or even Linguistics). This knowledge can be accessed via a Gnosis roll (difficulty 7); each success grants a dot of the appropriate trait for one scene. However, using the pearl too often (Storyteller's discretion) tends to make the user more inclined towards serving C'et. For instance, the user might find shapeshifting more difficult, or become uncomfortable destroying technology.

Pelageans

Pelageans serve Kun, and are by far the most numerous spirits in the Sea. They take the form of the every fish, from shark to eel to tuna, as well as sea-dwelling mammals like whales and seals. Remoras fall into this category.

Sample Pelagean

Angler-spirit

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6, Essence 17

Charms: Reform, Airt Sense, Lure*

Image: Anglers are deep-sea fish that use bioluminescence to lure prey to them. Angler-spirits, like their physical cousins, live in the cold, dark reaches of Sea's Soul. The only Rokea they typically encounter are Darkwaters, but they are glad for the company, and teach the mad ones many of their Gifts.

***Lure:** As the Galliard Gift: Eye of the Cobra. The roll is simply the spirit's Gnosis. Angler-spirits may also summon the light without use the Charm's hypnotic effects.

Qyrlings

Qyrlings, as their name implies, serve Qyrl. They take the form of squids, octopi, and jellyfish, and other nasty, slimy creatures that no scientist has ever named.

Sample Qyrling

Rider

Rage 7, Gnosis 4, Willpower 7, Essence 18 (+ any Gnosis drained)

Charms: Materialize, Drain Gnosis*, Blighted Touch

Image: These noxious creatures resemble huge lampreys, some as long as 8 feet. Although true lampreys are fish, and therefore their spiritual counterparts are Pelageans, Riders are Qyrlings through and through. A close look at a Rider would reveal tiny, tentacle-like appendages, almost resembling hair, covering the spirit's body.

Riders, like true lampreys, are parasites. However, instead of draining blood, they drain Gnosis. A Rider will attach itself to a Rorqual — or sometimes even a Rokea — and use its special Drain Gnosis Charm. The Rider can also choose to inflict damage on its target with its Rage rating, just like any other spirit.

***Drain Gnosis:** Roll the Rider's Willpower in an opposed roll against the victim's permanent Gnosis scores (difficulty 6 for both rolls). If the Rider wins, it drains one point of Gnosis away, which it then adds to its Essence. If the target wins or in the event of a tie, the Rider stays attached but drains no Gnosis that turn.

Okeans

Finally, there are the Okeans. These strange spirits serve Sea directly. Wave spirits, tide spirits, and the bizarre beings called Breakers (see below) are examples.

Sample Okean

Breaker

Rage 2-8, Gnosis 3-9, Willpower 2-9, Essence (varies)

Charms: Reform, Airt Sense, and others, which may include Flood, Updraft, Umbraquake, Break Reality, Cleanse the Blight, Healing, or Freeze

Image: Breakers are normally invisible, even in the Umbra. Like wind-spirits, they only speak if addressed properly (Intelligence + Rituals, difficulty 6, to detect a Breaker and get its attention). If they do choose to appear, they typically form a representation of the being they are speaking to out of water. Therefore, a Rokea in Squamus form would see a shark made of water, but the same size and shape as she herself.

Breakers are spirits of force in water. Therefore, anything in the water that moves forms Breakers. Most Breakers are weak and short-lived; they spin off of their creator and dissipate. Others, such as those formed from underwater explosions, are powerful enough to sink ships on their own, should they be so inclined.

Some Rokea believe that Breakers are the children of Sea and Oversea, but neither Sea nor the enigmatic Breakers will confirm this. For the most part, the Breakers are friendly towards Rokea — their battles churn the water quite well.

Rorqual

The Rorqual are Kami — living creatures with Gaian spirits bound to them. Rorqual always take the forms of whales or dolphins, and are charged with the responsibility of carrying Gnosis to the Rorqual. In effect, they act as living caerns. Likewise, they carry Sea's love to the merfolk, providing them with the spiritual energy they require.

However, there are many different kinds of cetaceans in the seas, and precious few Rorqual. The form that the Kami takes dictates the sort of energy it collects, and its general temperament. In game terms, this means that while a Rokea can draw Gnosis from any Rorqual, it is much more difficult to do so from a whale accustomed to providing Glamour to the merfolk. Below is a short list of some of the Rorqual a Rokea might encounter, along with a description of the creature's attitude toward the Rokea and what sort of marine denizen it prefers to supply with Gnosis. Also included is the difficulty on the Charisma + Primal-Urge roll that the player must make in order for her character to absorb Gnosis from the Rorqual.

Blue Whale: The largest living creature ever, larger even than the Dragon Kings, the gentle blue whale fears nothing. It can carry enough Steep within it to provide Gnosis to an entire slew of Rokea for months (or to provide Glamour to an entire city of mer — possibly both). Blue whales must be approached respectfully, but show no other preference as far as which beings receive Gnosis from them.

Difficulty: 7 for all Rokea **Maximum Gnosis:** Unknown

Narwhal: The beautiful narwhal is part of Unicorn's spiritual brood, but the Rokea know nothing of this. They rarely see narwhals, in fact, because the long-tusked cetaceans favor colder waters than the Rokea are accustomed to. Narwhal Rorqual rarely carry Glamour. They prefer the clever Darkwater Rokea, probably because these are the weresharks they are most likely to meet.

Difficulty: 6 for Darkwaters, 7 for others
Maximum Gnosis: 20

Humpback Whale: These whales are among those known for their songs. Humpback Rorqual usually carry energy for the fae merfolk, not Gnosis, but if passing through an area populated heavily by Rokea, they may make exceptions. A Rokea trying to obtain Gnosis from a humpback Rorqual had best be prepared to share an exciting story with it.

Difficulty: 7, or 6 if the Rokea tells a good story
Maximum Gnosis: 50

White Whale: Like the humpback, white whale Rorqual usually service the merfolk, not the Kunspawn. However, these creatures also possess a unique ability: they can act as interpreters between mer and Rokea, so the weresharks don't discount them completely. While the two species typically avoid each other, the recent troubles in the oceans have made the white whale's powers of translation more and more necessary.

Difficulty: 8, if the Rorqual is even carrying Gnosis
Maximum Gnosis: Unknown; probably comparable to a narwhal

Killer Whale: The orca is the only creature in the ocean that preys on sharks (besides other sharks, of course). As such, the Rokea are wary and respectful of killer whale Rorqual. They will provide Gnosis, but often request proof of the Rokea's might, usually by chasing down a swift-moving fish or by a quick game of "tag." Orca Rorqual favor Brightwaters most of all.

Difficulty: 6 for Brightwaters, 7 for others
Maximum Gnosis: 40

Sperm Whale: A favorite source of Gnosis for Rokea, the sperm whale is known chiefly for its diet — giant squid. As might be expected, sperm whale Rorqual are staunch enemies of Qyrl, and feel that she has overstepped her boundaries much too often. Their attention to the Sea and their place within it makes sperm whale Rorqual identify with Dimwaters more readily than other Rokea.

Difficulty: 6 for Dimwaters, 7 for others
Maximum Gnosis: 70

Dolphins and Porpoises: There are many different dolphin and porpoise species in the world, and any of them can be Rorqual. Dolphins can carry Glamour or Gnosis, or both, but their small bodies restrict them

from carrying much. However, they are much more likely than whales to form attachments to individual slews and/or Rokea (in game terms, a player could take a dolphin Rorqual as an Ally or Contact). As stated in the previous chapter, while sharks and dolphins are natural enemies, Rokea and dolphin Rorqual are both self-aware servants of Sea, and to suggest otherwise would be highly anthropomorphic.

Difficulty: 5 **Maximum Gnosis:** 5 — 10, depending on the size of the Rorqual

Fish Stories

It can be quite a challenge to run a story involving Rokea without resorting to "A Qyrl-beast! Kill it!" However, the Kunspawn are worth more consideration than this. Below are some ideas for aquatic stories, betweener stories, and some interesting mixes.

Far From Shore

- The slew encounters a sharking or whaling vessel that seems completely deserted. The cargo lies in rotting piles in the ship's hold, and the nets have long tangled themselves. The crew is gone, with only splashes of blood to mark their passing. The Rokea may well assume that someone — another slew, perhaps — has been here first, but in fact the ship has been infested by *something*. (This sort of plot can be seen at work in *Alien* and *Virus*). The infestation can take any form the Storyteller chooses, from Bane Lampreys (see **Blood-Dimmed Tides** for these horrors) to materialized Qyrlings, or even some sort of fungus lining the walls. The Rokea are faced with two challenges — destroying the infestation, and what to do with the ship. After all, if they just sink it, what happens to whatever is infecting it? Can the "creature" (or whatever it is) survive in water? Might it even grow stronger? And what if the Rokea decide to direct the ship towards a harbor, in hopes that more humans will fall victim?

This story can also provide a look at human life on the seas. Be sure to stress how alien the inside of a ship would look to a Rokea — she may never have seen a mirror or photograph before, after all.

- The slew is chasing a dangerous enemy and pursues it right into the Yellow Sea. Immediately, they are beset by a Same-Bito war party (possibly accompanied by a Zhong Lung) who order them to leave. The slew has the option of fighting (in which case they still have the enemy that brought them here in the first place to deal with, assuming they win the fight), talking (while the enemy flees) or leaving (which means leaving the job unfinished). Remember that most Rokea see Same-Bito as fools at best and heretics or traitors at worst.

Strange Lands

- A group of young Rokea is escorted onto Unsea as part of their Rite of the Hunt. However, only one older Rokea accompanies them. Their quarry, a clever and high-ranked Brightwater, attacks and slays their chaperone. He has no interest in killing the young slew, however, and instead stays close to them to try to talk them onto his side of the betweenner war.

This is just one possibility for stories about the Hunt. The Hunt sometimes targets other shapechangers — including Garou, who rarely travel alone. Sometimes Rokea even pursue vampires during this rite — in the absence of a betweenner, any supernatural being will do. Since Rokea know little of life above the waves, this can be a great opportunity for the Storyteller to use a completely new supernatural being of his own design. This ensures that the players know exactly as much as the characters do about it.

- If the characters are betweenners, the hunt is a sad fact of life to them. Simply existing as a betweenner, even with friends, is supremely trying. Between the hunt, the constant urge to mate, the temptation to side with Qyrl, and the little matter of adjusting to life above the waves, there is enough conflict to make for a very interesting story.

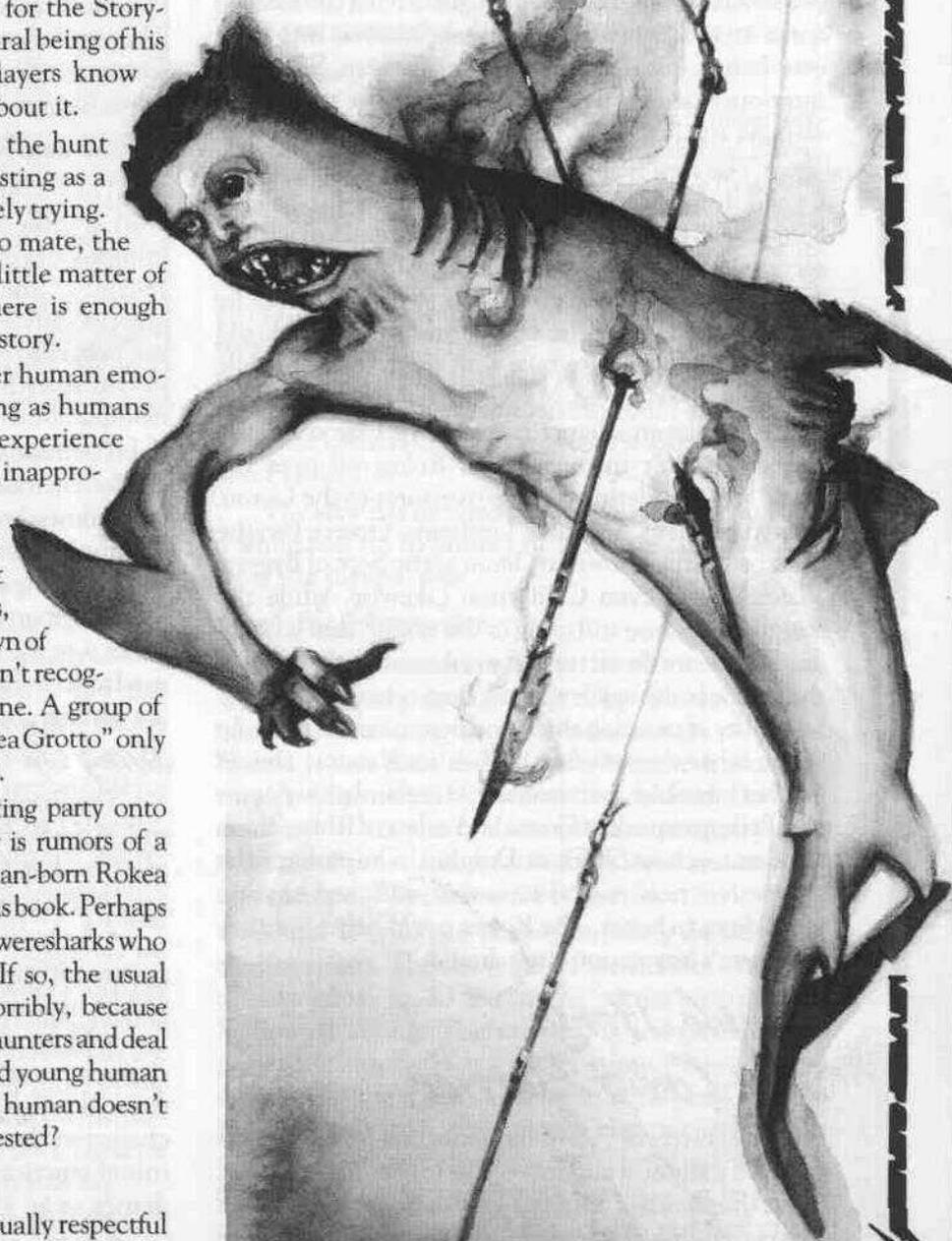
And what if the characters discover human emotions? Rokea are quite capable of feeling as humans do — they just aren't used to it. This inexperience can cause them to express emotion in inappropriate ways, or even to try to ignore it.

On the other hand, humans and hunters aren't the only beings to interact with on land. Like most shapechangers, Rokea can sense when they enter the bawn of a caern, but unlike Garou, weresharks don't recognize these places as "belonging" to anyone. A group of betweenners might seek refuge in an "Unsea Grotto" only to find that they are not welcome at all.

- The only thing that gets a hunting party onto Unsea faster than news of a betweenner is rumors of a homid Rokea. The story of the first human-born Rokea doesn't have to be the one presented in this book. Perhaps the slew is a group of progressive-minded weresharks who want to protect the frightened homid. If so, the usual betweenner troubles are compounded horribly, because not only do the characters have to avoid hunters and deal with surface life, they have to find a scared young human and get him to a Grotto. And what if the human doesn't believe them? What if he's just been arrested?

Mixed Schools

- The Mokolé and the Rokea are usually respectful of each other, and have even come to one another's aid



in the past. Suppose, then, that a clutch of Mokolé needs help fending off a threat from the sea. They might well turn to the Kunspawn for aid. Likewise, if a Grotto starts to die, a Rorqual might well ask the slew to search out a Mokolé for advice. While the Rokea believe themselves to be older than the Mokolé as a race, they recognize that the dragon-folk carry more knowledge in their Memory than the Kunspawn ever could.

- Recently, people have started diving with sharks for fun. The leader of the group opens a chest of dead fish, and feeds the sharks in front of tourist divers (sharks won't attack strange, healthy prey if such easy meals are available — however, this sort of thing is done around relatively small sharks, of course!). Suppose that one of these groups begins diving too close to a mer city. The merfolk could take matters into their own hands, but this is dangerous for them. Since the interlopers seem interested in sharks, the mer might well ask the Rokea to handle the matter.

- The slew is approached by a slew of Same-Bito, a good distance away from the waters of the Middle Kingdom. They are told that many Same-Bito wish to reconcile with the Rokea, but are unsure who the “eldest Rokea” is. The characters (who are decidedly not the eldest) have the task of finding a suitable old and powerful Rokea to take with them to the Middle Kingdom — assuming, of course, that this isn't a trap.

- Finally, an alliance between the Garou and the Kunspawn isn't inconceivable. Rokea all over the world are considering making overtures to the Garou, in such places as Australia, Louisiana, Greece (on the island of Miria, known to Garou as the Sept of Bygone Visions), and even California. Likewise, while the majority of Garou still cling to the notion that Changing Breeds are dead, untrustworthy, or both, some of the younger werewolves have begun to question the feasibility of winning the Apocalypse without the help of the other shapeshifters. While such a story should not be embarked upon casually, it certainly has potential. Perhaps a pack of Garou and a slew of Rokea share a totem, such as Shark or Dolphin? Or, perhaps the werewolves need to find a narwhal-spirit and have no idea where to begin. The Rokea could help — if they feel there's any reason they should.

Sample Story: *The Great Barrier*

The waters of Australia house one of the world's greatest natural wonders — the Great Barrier Reef. Here, thousands of different forms of marine life live in a never-ending chain of being. The Rokea know the Reef as the Long Grotto, for its entire length is sacred

to them. While Australia's waters house other Grottoes, the Reef is most powerful and the most important.

Pollution, human traffic, and foreign species have threatened the Reef for years. The weresharks have done what they can, but as the dirtwalkers war on Sea, the Rokea are left with few options. Some advocate sinking any ship that gets too close to the reef. Other, more optimistic Rokea speak of entering human society and ordering them to stop destroying the Reef. And then there is a quiet minority that believes that help could be found with the Garou.

The Great Barrier is a story designed for a slew of young (Rank One) Rokea. In the story, the slew will visit several key points in Australia, and have the opportunity to meet with some important weresharks. They will also be the deciding factor in whether the Kunspawn and the Garou remain ignorant of each other, form an alliance (even a shaky one), or go to war.

Theme and Mood

The theme of **The Great Barrier** is manipulation. Oorl is using the Rokea the way that Qyrl and her minions have been for years. It is playing on their distrust of the surface and the fact that they rarely question advice from remora or each other to begin a war between the Kunspawn and the Garou. The Rokea in this story have the chance to break this cycle of manipulation — provided that they see it.

The mood is extremes. From the overwhelming damage done to the Great Barrier Reef to the complete silence and darkness brought on by the Mind Worm's possession, nothing in this story should feel half-done. If the humans begin hunting sharks, a boat should always be lurking in the background, ready to harpoon or shoot a character. Make sure the characters have all the motivation they need to act — Rokea are not deliberators, and if the players are waffling about what to do next, turn up the heat.

Setting Up

The characters in this story should be a slew of Rokea still on the Surface (Rank One). Ideally, they should be a true slew, bonded by a totem, but this isn't strictly necessary. A few points to consider when creating characters:

- At least one character should speak English, as communication with the Garou and perhaps humans will be necessary.

- Make sure all of the players know how their characters feel about the betweener war and about dirtwalkers in general. One of the main Storyteller characters that the slew meets is a betweener, and their initial reactions will determine whether he is a hindrance or an ally.

- None of the characters should be betweeners, Same-Bito, or homid-breed Rokea. If you wish to allow

But What If I Don't Want To Run Rokea?

Short answer: Then don't.

Long answer: This story could, with a minimum of fuss, be altered to present the Garou as the central characters. After all, the event that starts everything in motion is the slaughter of the pack near the Reef, and Joseph Blows-with-the-Wind, the lone survivor, certainly won't paint the Rokea with a flattering brush. The story might take on a different tone, but certainly the events depicted herein and the characters introduced could easily be used in a more conventional Werewolf story.

Also, nothing says the story has to take place in Australia. However, since the local Garou and Mokolé have taken the first steps towards communication, and the Rokea and the Mokolé regard each other with respect, Australia seems the logical backdrop for the normally reticent Rokea to break their long silence.

The best use of the story is probably as a one-shot, a departure from a Werewolf troupe's usual game. It might be fun to see the world — and the Garou — through the eyes of a species that doesn't have preconceptions about that. After all, the Rokea were never victimized by the War of Rage. They have little idea of what to expect from the noble Garou.

any of these character types, you may have to modify the events in this story in order to do so.

Background

Joseph's Hunt

The Garou know very little about the Rokea as a race. Apart from accidental meetings — which usually result in bloodshed — the Kunspawn and the werewolves never meet. However, there is one Garou whom the Rokea fascinate, to the point that he studied them all over the globe. He was responsible for the Latinate names of the Rokean forms (Gladius, Gladius, etc.). This fascination cost him his life recently, as he attempted to approach the Long Grotto to contact the weresharks. The Garou — a Glass Walker Philodox called Martin One-Name — assembled a pack of Garou who had experiences with the Rokea and took them out to sea on a modified fishing rig, the *Saltie*. The fate of this pack can be seen in the introductory comic. However, although three of the Garou on board were killed, Joseph Blows-with-the-Wind survived (see Joseph's write-up in the Character section for his prior experience with the Rokea).

Joseph returned to the Jindabyne council (a multi-tribal body that governs Australia's Garou) and stated that the Rokea attacked the pack without provocation

(which isn't quite true) and killed and ate three of them (which is true). The council deliberates and decides that the Garou should avoid the seas for the time being — there are many other concerns on land that require their attention, and clearly the Rokea are not interested in an alliance.

While this is certainly one of the Garou's more prudent rulings as far as their relations with the Fera are concerned, it does not sit well with Joseph. He seeks out the three remaining members of Austin's pack and tells them of Austin's brutal murder at the jaws of the weresharks. They agree that his death cannot go unavenged and join with Joseph to track down the weresharks responsible. At the start of this story, they are meeting in Robe, South Australia (in Heart-of-Impala's home protectorate) to decide upon a course of action.

The Dim Shallows Slew

The slaughter of Martin's pack was a misunderstanding, of course, but neither side knows that. Wave-Crest and Dreamtime's Hunter both believe that more wolf-changers may be coming, and they plan to warn as many Rokea as possible. To that end, almost immediately after the battle, they begin sending remora to all of the Grottoes around Australia and to any Rokea they might meet. The message is simple: be wary of these wolf-changers that can somehow breathe water (of course, the only reason Austin could do so was by using the Uktena Gift: Spirit of the Fish, but the Rokea don't know that).

The slew has decided to swim close to the Reef for a while and try to protect it. It is here that they will meet the players' slew.

Oorl, the Progenitor

Austin's possession was not the whim of a passing Qyrling. A very powerful Qyrling called Oorl has taken up residence in the murky waters of Broad Sound. It is called the Progenitor because it produces tiny Qyrlings called Mind Worms quickly and in large numbers. It was one of these creatures that possessed Austin and drove him to attack the slew, and another one currently has possession of Joseph.

Mind Worms can possess anything sentient, including spirits. They can retain possession for a number of days equal to 10 minus the victim's permanent Willpower rating. The one riding Joseph has been possessing him for 3 days, which means it has only one more day before it will die. Unfortunately for Oorl, the Mind Worms grow weak outside of water and cannot take full control of their victims. The Mind Worm is trying to get Joseph back to the water so that he can be re-possessed (so to speak) but Joseph, terrified of the Rokea, is resisting this prompt.

However, Oorl knows the location of all of its children, and it knows that Joseph and his collection of avengers are in the seaside town of Robe. It also knows that Roar-of-the-Sea, a betweeneer, lives in the same city. It plans to lure a slew of Rokea onto Unsea and trick them into killing Joseph's would-be warriors, but leave Joseph alive and replace the Mind Worm possessing him. Oorl hopes to goad the Garou into assaulting the Rokea, since a battle in the water would damage the Reef irreparably.

Scene One: The Reef

The story begins with the players' slew near the Great Barrier Reef. They can be in the area for whatever reason; visiting the Reef, making contact with allies, and so forth. It is late morning when the slew reaches the Grotto.

Long Grotto

Grotto: The Great Barrier Reef

Level: 5

Type: Life (the Long Grotto is unique, and combines aspects of caerns of Plenty, Fertility, and Wyld)

Totem: Coral

The Great Barrier Reef is stunning enough to human eyes, but to the Rokea, the place simply exudes power. The coral is a living entity, and its spirit welcomes the Rokea. Although the coral is still cheerful, the Rokea will immediately notice that many sections of the coral are bleached and dying. If the Rokea have been here before, they may notice that Coral's "voice" is weak and she seems in pain. Worst of all, the Rokea can do very little about it. They can swim about eating crown-of-thorns starfish, but millions of these creatures infest the Reef, and even a dedicated slew won't be able to make much of a dent.

Let the slew assess the damage for a short time. In addition to the starfish, they find sections of the Reef damaged by pollutants, divers, and boats. Again, precious little can be done, especially by a slew on the Surface. Once the slew has had the chance to speak with Coral and swim part of the Reef, they feel a Sending. The Dim Shallows slew has arrived.

The Dim Shallows slew consists of Dreamtime's Hunter, a Darkwater; Wave-Crest, a Dimwater and the slew's leader; and All-Seas and No-Prey-Remains, both Brightwaters. Wave-Crest introduces his slew and (if the characters are not local) welcomes them to these waters. No-Prey-Remains then asks one of the characters (a Brightwater, preferably) to recognize his Valor. In game terms, this is done when a character is trying to trade ten temporary points of Valor Renown for one permanent dot. Any Rokea can recognize another unless they are part of the same slew; no special rite is required.



The character is within his rights to challenge No-Prey-Remains to some form of contest to prove his worthiness. Common sense should preclude this; not only is No-Prey-Remains two ranks above the characters, but he is large enough to intimidate killer whales. However, if the character wishes to challenge him, he will meet the demands of the challenge.

Once the challenge, if any, is resolved, Wave-Crest warns the characters about the wolf-changers. He tells the story of the battle, from his perspective. Note that none of the Rokea saw the Mind Worm possess Austin, and Wave-Crest did hear Martin say, "We are here to damage the reef." The Dimwater also mentions that one wolf-changer "escaped to Oversea." Wave-Crest offers to show the slew the wreck of the wolf-changer's ship.

Scene Two: The Wreck of the Saltie

The *Saltie* currently sits on the sea floor, about 50 miles southeast of MacKay. Glass-bottomed boats and other tours are common in this area. Therefore, the time of day that the slew reaches the wreck makes a difference in what they see.

If they wait until dark to visit the wreck, the wreck is empty. All of Martin's books, his notes and everything else of value have been removed from the wreckage, as has Austin's body. The cause is determined to be a shark of unprecedented size, and the hunt begins for this animal (see *The Hunt* sidebar, below).

If they go directly to the wreck from the Reef, they arrive at midday. The water is still and clear and the sun is shining brightly, which means a viewer looking into the water from above (such as through a glass-bottomed boat) could see the wreck clearly. Austin's corpse has come to rest in the sand near the boat, and is already being picked clean by crabs and fish. A monstrous hole, No-Prey-Remains' doing, gapes in the side of the boat. No one remained on board when he sunk the ship, and apparently, no humans have noticed the wreck. If the characters think of it (and they think it's important) they can probably mask the method by which the boat was sunk. Doing so will alleviate a great deal of suspicion, at least for the moment.

The slew can swim into the ship, if they are small enough to do so. Inside, they find books, notes, a computer, and other research-related paraphernalia. Unless the characters can read English, these items don't tell them anything. If one of the characters can, she discovers that the books are about sharks and shark-related mythology, and the notes, though badly smeared, describe sharks changing into humans.

This may or may not interest the slew, but as they search, or before they leave the area, they feel a disturbance in the water from above. A boat is passing over the wreck. As it does, the Rokea smell something foul in the

The Hunt

If the human authorities discover that a "monster shark" swims the waters near the Reef, all hell will break loose. The hunt begins for such an animal, and with talk of "Jaws" and "Barnacle Lil," the local fisherman load up their boats and head for the Reef. The Reef, of course, is a protected environment, but the hunters still disturb the already fragile ecosystem and damage the Reef even further. Also, the Australian police cannot patrol the waters every minute. A lot of normal sharks die in the hunt, even if the hunters never catch the "monster."

Any one of a number of events can start the shark-hunt in motion. If the slew does not somehow alter the wreck of the *Saltie* (that is, there's still a big hole in the side that was obviously made by an impossibly large shark), the hunt begins. If the slew sinks the leaky boat in Scene Two in some obvious way — like shifting to *Fighting Jaws* and capsizing it — the hunt begins. In general, if a larger-than-average shark takes any visible aggressive action against humans, the fishermen reach for their bang-sticks.

If the hunt commences, feel free to throw a boat of hunters at the slew whenever one of them surfaces. The hunters will chum the waters, which has the effect of dropping the difficulties of all frenzy-related *Rage* rolls by one. Dozens of normal sharks will also be in the water and hungry, so the slew might find itself fighting off sharks. Also, some of the boatmen carry rifles or bang-sticks (*Dexterity* + *Melee* to hit, difficulty 6; a successful hit inflicts 10 dice of lethal damage). Some of the boats also have underwater radar devices, which means that anyone shifting to *Fighting Jaws* will draw boats and even more chum in the waters above her. And, needless to say, any underwater fight will bring the hunters running.

water — the boat is leaking a black, viscous substance from its rear. The boat tour, of course, is not deliberately spilling oil into the water, but the Rokea don't have any way to know that. Some of them might advocate sinking it then and there. Doing so, however, would reveal that the weresharks are something other than normal fish (no shark will attack a large boat, especially if it's trailing oil). The Dim Shallows slew is open to suggestions, but the boat is heading for the Reef. If it gets too close, No-Prey-Remains will destroy it regardless of the consequences.

Other options exist, of course. A character could tear the propeller off (probably damaging his mouth in the process), which would leave the boat stranded until help arrives. Likewise, a small leak in the hull would force the

boat back to shore. Let the characters deal with the boat as they see fit. Dealing with the boat in too blatant a fashion will cause the events in the Hunt sidebar to begin.

In any event, the captain of the boat has already radioed to the mainland that a ship has sunk. Soon, the police will arrive with divers and will remove the books and notes from the *Saltie*, as well as Austin's body. If the slew is still around, the divers will wait (not wishing to dive in when such large sharks are about).

This scene ends when the tour boat has been disabled and/or the slew decides to leave. The Dim Shallows slew swims back towards the Reef. They will make conversation with the characters as they swim, which should draw the characters towards the Grotto as well.

Scene Three: The Remora

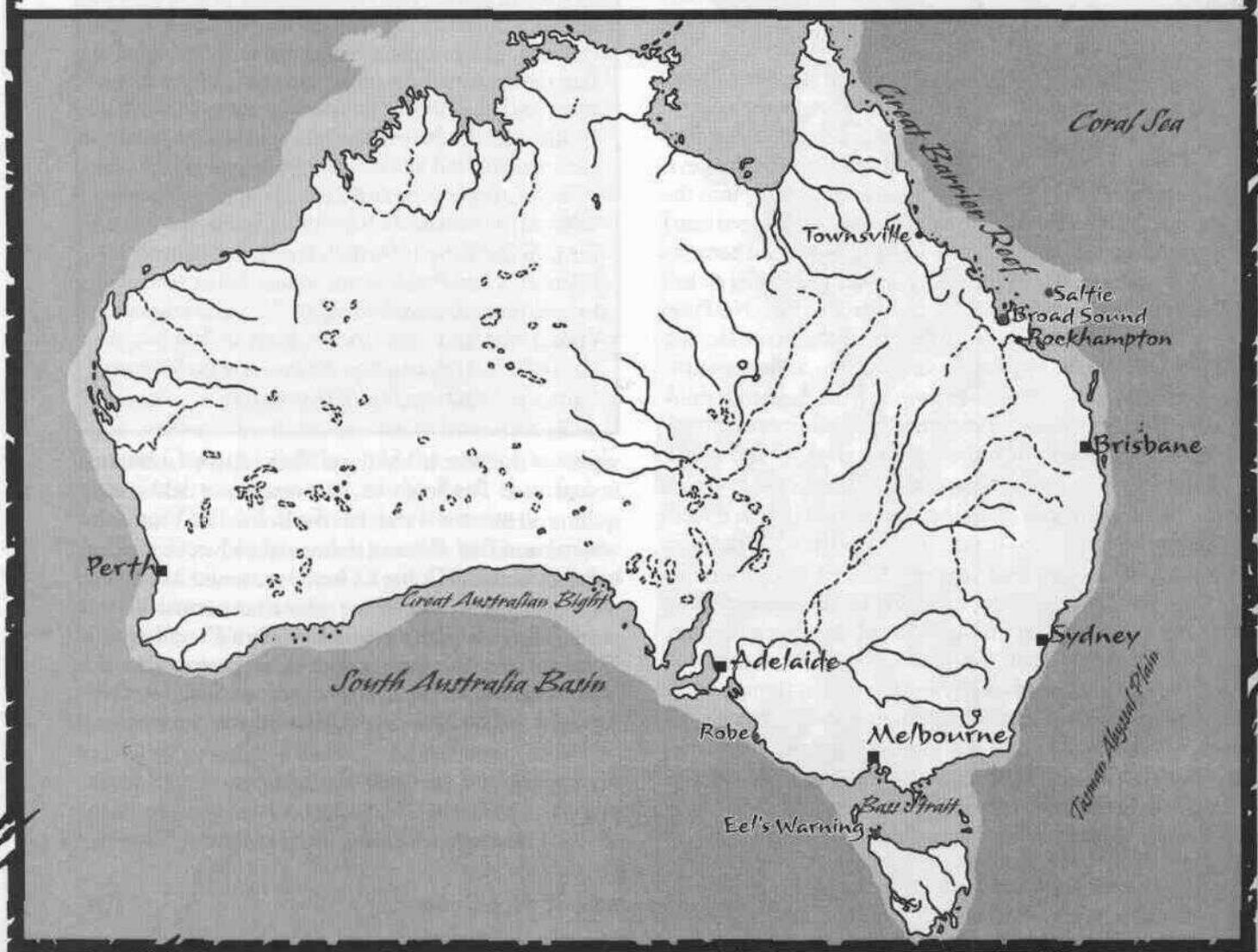
As the Rokea reach the Grotto, Coral speaks to them again. She is trying to mask her pain, but it isn't working. She pleads with the Rokea to help her in any way they can.

Dreamtime's Hunter says that part of the problem originates in Sea's Soul. He offers to perform the Rite of Passing the Net to take his slew there to see what can

be done. Meanwhile, he says, the younger slew should try to help Coral in the Realm.

Let the players get creative. If the slew wants to swim around eating starfish, let them. They won't make much of a dent, but they will ease the pain of at least part of the Reef. Since the Reef provides a breeding ground for humpback whales, a character might try to find a Rorqual. (Some Rorqual have special powers that let them "heal" the Sea or her inhabitants — you can let the player roll Intelligence + Rituals (difficulty 8) to realize this if none of the players think of it). If the characters do find a Rorqual (Storyteller's discretion; if they do, make it memorable — these creatures are rare) it can heal only a small part of the Reef before it tires and returns to the deeper ocean. The characters may even try to perform a Rite of Cleansing around a polluted area of the Reef. This helps the spirit of the Reef, but doesn't heal the physical damage. Whatever the players do, it should be painfully obvious that it isn't enough. Coral will thank them anyway (and they will probably gain some Harmony Renown for their trouble), but the task is bigger than any one slew.

After the slew has exhausted their ideas, they feel a Sending. A remora swims up and attaches itself to one



of the Rokea (if any of the characters have the Remora Background, this remora can be one of the Rokea's "regulars"). The remora brings word of a betweenner, living in the human city called Robe. The remora tells the slew the city's location (see map) and explains that the betweenner is a rogue called Roar-of-the-Sea, a Darkwater. The remora does not know his rank. It does, however, offer to direct the slew to the city.

If the characters ask where the remora got this information, it claims that another remora passed the information along. If the players are feeling paranoid and use Gifts such as True Intentions or Strange Blood on the remora, they will find that it is, in fact, a remora and it intends to inform them of the betweenner in hopes that they will venture onto Unsea to find him.

The remora is what it seems — almost. It is possessed by a Mind Worm. Oorl is trying to lure the characters onto Unsea. Hopefully, they will agree. Regardless of their attitude towards betweenners, the Hunt is tempting for many Rokea. Some characters may be curious about Unsea, some might wish to find and aid the betweenner, and some might just be after the Valor for killing him. In any event, the slew swims off, guided by the remora, towards Robe.

Scene Four: The Betweenner

The remora guides the slew south, through the Tasman Sea, across the Bass Strait, into the Southern Ocean, and to Coorong National Park. When they arrive, the remora leaves, telling them to hurry — the betweenner might disappear farther inland soon.

Coorong Park includes 78 miles of unspoiled beach and huge sand dunes, some of which separate salt-water lagoons from the sea. Quick-thinking characters will realize the significance of this to a betweenner — it allows him to bathe and keep his Gnosis and shapechanging ability (since the water is, in effect, seawater) without risking the true Sea.

The characters can devise any sort of plan they wish. Some possibilities are listed below.

- **Stake out the lakes:** The characters might choose to wait for the betweenner, thinking that he might come here to bathe soon. If they do this, you might choose to have Roar-of-the-Sea arrive — but keep in mind that Garou (commonly Fianna) from the Tower Hill caern patrol this National Park intermittently as well. Other possibilities for encounters here include tourists or park rangers (remember that need to mate?) or beings from the Dreamtime (see *Rage Across Australia* for some ideas). Whether or not Rory needs to come to these lagoons is up to the Storyteller — he often swims in the sea from a ship, but if the story needs to be hurried along, he could show up here.

- **Check nearby towns:** The closest city is Robe, a seaside town of about 8000 people. Rory makes his home

here. As it happens, Joseph and his makeshift pack are here as well, planning their attack. If the slew chooses this approach, however, they need to make an effort to blend in before they can hunt anyone down. They need clothes, for one thing, and they'll need to find a way to communicate (unless they all have a common human language, which is unlikely). This takes time, and the remora did tell them that time was a factor.

- **The Rite of Rokea Blood:** The slew might surmise that Rory has mated with a nearby human (which he has) and they might therefore be able to track his offspring. It so happens that Marla Louis, a prostitute in Robe, is carrying Rory's child. She doesn't even know it yet, however. The rite will work, but the difficulty is raised to 10. The characters must be within five miles of Marla for the rite to work at all, so hopefully they will head towards the city before trying it.

If you choose to let the characters encounter Rory in a location other than the city of Robe, you will need to modify the next scene to fit that locale. When the characters enter the city, and have hammered out the clothing and language issues, run the next scene.

Scene Five: Robe

The city of Robe is a small community that makes most of its revenue from fishing and renting boats. A number of bed-and-breakfasts line the streets, and most of the citizens ride bicycles or walk — cars are uncommon. Close to the wharves, a few prostitutes work the hotels — a number of these hotels provide semi-permanent residence for the many men that work the docks and ships. Roar-of-the-Sea, or Rory Smith to his friends and intimates, lives in one such hotel.

The slew can track down Rory by whatever means they can concoct. They don't have a picture or a description of his Homid form, and the only name they know is Roar-of-the-Sea ("Rory" chose his human name by sheer luck — he started to say his Rokean name in English and someone heard it as "Rory"). If they corner Marla (who lives in the same hotel Rory does) and can overcome their urge to take her up on her offers, they might get her talking — Rory has confided that someday some people might come looking for him. She'll tell them that he lives upstairs, if they pay her or intimidate her.

Another tactic, should the characters think of it, is the Curse. Rory makes people uncomfortable, and if this is used as a reference point, sooner or later someone thinks of "that weird old sailor upstairs." The biggest problem with this strategy is that the characters engender the Curse as well.

Rory

The characters should eventually find Rory, but he'll probably find them first. As lazy as Rory is, he is careful

about watching for hunting parties, and any odd-looking group of strangers (and what else is the slew?) will trip his interest. He will immediately use his Sense Threat Gift on the slew. If the slew is there to kill him, he panics and, after trying to step sideways and failing (the Gauntlet is too high here), he runs. Allow the players to roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6, maybe higher in a crowded area) to notice the sailor running away from them. They may choose to attack him directly, or trying to pursue him. Use the Pursuit rules from *Werewolf*, pg. 197. If the slew catches up, Rory fights, but attempts to escape. He uses his Gifts (especially Swim Through the School and Sea's Breath) to distance himself from the slew.

If they don't see him, let them continue searching. Rory runs to Whitey's Pub (see below) and asks to hide out. This is not the best choice, since it's a common sailor hangout, but he figures the crowds of people might dissuade the slew from entering. If this happens, the Garou still arrive as described below, but see the slew first. When the Garou attack, have Rory help them out. He reasons that the hunters can't very well attack him if he saves their lives.

If the slew is there to question Rory, he will call their attention to him by using the Gift: Chill, and then try to lure them to Whitey's Pub. This small bar is several blocks from the sea, by the time the characters get there it will be loud and raucous. Rory is well known here, and he leads the characters to a back table to talk. While they might not think of it, this also has the effect of creating a bottleneck. In case of trouble, Rory can shout to his mates and step sideways (via the Gift: Enter Unsea's Soul), which he hopes will trap the hunters for at least a short while.

He will then reveal himself, but stays wary of the group. He answers their questions, but asks a few of his own. He doesn't seem surprised to find that a remora told them about him, but claims he has never met a wolf-changer. If pressed, he tells them that he was approached recently by a Brightwater called Chakara Teeth-in-the-Enemy. She wishes to find the wolf-changers and solicit their help to save the Barrier Reef. If the characters wish to meet her, he asks their intentions.

Presumably, if the characters are meeting with Rory instead of fighting him, their intentions for wishing to meet Chakara will be similarly peaceful. Rory can contact her, but it will take some time, he says. He needs to get to Sea and send a remora after her. He offers to do so as soon as he finishes his drink.

The Garou

At this point, four people enter the bar. The sailors yell and whistle at the two women (Emma and Elasia), which should draw the character's attention. The Garou sit down at the bar and order drinks. One of

them (Joseph) starts talking to the nearby sailors about the Reef and about sharks.

This makes Rory nervous, and might worry the characters, too. If they get up to leave, or even to walk to the bar, Joseph sees them. The Mind Worm in his head recognizes the characters as Rokea (even though Joseph has no way to do so) and Joseph quickly alerts the pack. They get up and walk out. Any character using Sense Threat on the Garou will detect a very strong and immediate menace about them.

Rory will still go to the water to send a message to Chakara, if the characters wish, but he asks that they accompany him. When they leave, the Garou (who have retreated to their jeep) follow the slew cautiously. Rory takes the slew to the side of a ramshackle pier and wades into the water.

The crack of a rifle rings through the night air. Emma's shot knocks Rory into the water. He is not seriously hurt, but is stunned for the first turn of combat. The Garou will not charge towards the water, but wait for the Rokea to attack them.

The smartest thing to do would be to retreat into the water. The slew is under attack by several high-ranked Garou who are used to fighting as a pack. If the Rokea do attack, Emma stays perched in the jeep, taking shots at the slew. Gabriel also uses a gun for the first two turns, then shifts to Crinos and attacks with tooth and claw. The Garou use their Gifts to best advantage. If the fight turns against them, they step sideways to escape, leaving the jeep behind. If things go really badly for the Garou, Joseph will use Sky-Running to escape, taking Emma (the smallest of the pack) with him.

After the Fight

Roar-of-the-Sea's wound quickly heals and he swims out into the bay and calls for a remora. Eventually, one responds and he tells it to find Chakara Teeth-in-the-Enemy. Then, using the Silent Sending

The Mind Worm

The Qyrling possessing Joseph wishes to get him into the water. During the fight, roll Joseph's Willpower against a difficulty of 7. If Joseph succeeds, he resists the impulse and continues the fight as described. If he fails, he charges past the Rokea and dives into the water, and is immediately possessed anew by another Mind Worm. He then attempts to get out of the water before the Rokea attack him on their home turf.

While this eccentric behavior might not make the slew wonder too much (who can tell about wolf Changers?) it will certainly baffle the Dreamtime's Cry pack.

Gift, he instructs the remora to tell her that some ocean-dwellers are looking for her, and that they seem to have enemies among the wolf-changers.

The Rokea are left to make their own judgments on the situation. Rory tells them that the remora will ask Chakara to come to this general location to meet them, and that they shouldn't go too far away.

The slew can hunt, rest, and plan for what they will do when Chakara arrives. They do not have long to wait.

If this fight takes place before the characters meet Rory (i.e., they have come to kill him), Rory helps them to fight off the Garou and then rants a bit, mentioning that he "can't fathom why Chakara wants to befriend those lunatics." That should be enough impetus for the characters to wish to meet with Chakara.

Scene Six: Sunrise on the Bay

Chakara reaches the bay within a few hours of daylight. She introduces herself curtly, and asks the slew what happened. She seems dismayed that the Garou attacked the slew outright, and demands to know if they somehow provoked the werewolves.

If the characters act hostile towards her, she asks if they've seen the Reef. Since they have, she asks how they can honestly think that they are doing any kind of good for Sea by hunting down betweeners while the Reef dies. If they bring up that chasing werewolves isn't helping either, she retorts that the wolves might know something they don't about the pollution or the boats, even if they can't heal the Reef.

Let them argue as long as they like. If, at any time, the characters move to attack Chakara, she uses her Best Policy Gift and convinces them to let her leave. Chakara's arguments make a lot of sense. However, the slew's best rebuttal for the moment is that a pack of wolves attacked them without provocation. Chakara concedes that point; she doesn't want to go wandering into an ambush, if these Garou are hostile. She still maintains that either the slew provoked them, or that something else is out of joint.

The slew should come up with some course of action. Some possibilities include:

- **Swim away and forget about it:** Fighting Garou isn't good for survival, after all. The slew would be perfectly within their rights to leave it alone and protect the Reef as best they can from the water. If they choose this option, they will be alone when it comes time to defend the Reef against Oorl.

- **Find the Garou:** Chakara would be perfectly willing to accompany them to look for the pack of Garou. Rory is less enthused, but goes along as well. The second meeting between the weresharks and the werewolves is detailed below, in Scene Seven.

- **Hunt the Garou:** If the Dim Shallows slew learns that the werewolf who escaped them is now hunting Rokea, they are willing to join the slew in a hunt for these beasts. Of course, Chakara will oppose them every step of the way, and All-Seas isn't really interested in killing them either. How this scenario ends is up to you, but again, the characters will be seriously outgunned when Oorl attacks.

Scene Seven: The Garou

This scene assumes that the Rokea have gone to find the Garou or are close to shore at the next sunrise.

Whether or not the Mind Worm forced Joseph into the water, it's gone now. If the Worm did not force him into the water, it died in the wee hours of the morning. This clears Joseph's head enough to make him wonder why on earth he's leading a cry for revenge against the Rokea, and the voices of his Ancestors (previously silenced by the Worm) start asking the same thing. If it did, Emma noticed Joseph's odd behavior and informed her packmates. After some investigation, they removed the worm from his head. Either way, the pack now has a clearer understanding of what happened to Austin (though they assume that the Rokea were possessed) and they set out to find the sharks that they attacked to clear things up.

Emma, fortunately, knows the Sense of the Prey Gift. She can track the Rokea unerringly, but can only get close to them if they are near the shore. If the Rokea venture onto Unsea (to find the Garou for whatever reason), the pack quickly finds them and declares truce. Doing so might be difficult if the Dim Shallows slew is with them, of course.

Joseph explains what happened from his perspective. He stresses that the crew of the *Saltie* was not going to damage the Reef in any way, that they were going to try to make contact with the Rokea and ask about helping to save the Reef (any character with the True Intentions Gift can verify this). He does not know precisely what started the fight, all he does know is the a terrible shock wave shook the boat, and then a woman, bleeding from a claw wound, leapt onto the deck and asked them to break off the attack. He then explains about the Mind Worm and asserts that a similar creature might have possessed Austin or the Rokea (or both).

Chakara believes what Joseph says, but there is no reason for the characters to do so without proof. After all, the last time the Garou saw the slew they attacked. The characters may well demand some evidence of what Joseph says. If the characters believe Joseph, skip the next scene.

Scene Eight: Seas Part

Joseph says that he will prove that what he says is true, in any way the slew will accept. Let the players

come up with something interesting, but remember that the Rokea don't have a "Sense Qyrl" Gift, or even a real lie-detector Gift (like *Truth of Gaia*). They need a way to truly know Joseph's heart, and they only way to do that is to send him to Sea.

(Note: If the players come up with something clever that will test Joseph's veracity, run with it. If at all possible, use it to reveal his ancestors' communion with the Rokea, but don't force it).

To take Joseph to visit with Sea, he must have some way to breathe water. One possibility is the Drown Gift; Joseph will mention that Martin grew gills towards the end of the battle. Wave-Crest knows this Gift, but requires some effective convincing to use it to lead a Garou to a Grotto! (Then again, if he's told that No-Prey-Remains can eat the Garou if he damages the Grotto....) Another possibility is for Elasia to create a talen allowing Joseph to survive underwater for a short time; again, let the players get creative before letting the Storyteller characters handle it.

No fewer than five Grottoes lie in Australia's waters. If the characters are still in or near Robe, the closest Grotto is Eel's Warning, in Cape Grim off the coast of Tasmania.

Eel's Warning

Grotto: An underwater chamber accessible only through a narrow tunnel, at the bottom of Cape Grim.

Level: 1

Type: Stealth

Totem: Eel

The Grotto is a short swim across the Bass Strait for the Rokea. Joseph can barely keep up, of course, unless he hangs onto someone's fin.

Eels infest the rock formations near the Grotto's entrance. One of the characters needs to convince them that this "intruder" should not be attacked; this requires a Charisma + Animal-Ken (difficulty 8) or use of the Sea's Voice Gift. Once Joseph disappears into the hole, all the slew can do is wait.

After a few moments, a ripple of energy washes over the characters. Sea speaks, and beckons them down into the Grotto (really large sharks may need to shift to Homid form and hold their breaths). The cavern is large enough inside to accommodate the slew, although they must swim in tight circles to breathe. Joseph stands in the center of the Grotto, looking overwhelmed.

As the sharks swim, the waters around Joseph grow murky and Sea shows them a coastline, but one unspoiled by litter or human refuse. In fact, the coast has a purity that the Rokea have never seen before. Sea gently informs them that the coast they are looking at is a thing of the past, when Joseph's ancestors walked the earth.

As the Rokea look on, people walk over a rise and down to the ocean. The people wade into the shallows and begin harvesting shellfish. They take enough to fill their baskets, and then begin to walk away. One — who bears a striking resemblance to Joseph — stays, and sits on the beach. Rocking back and forth, he chants. The Rokea do not understand his words, but they know what he is doing — he is thanking Sea for her bounty.

Eventually, the man leaves, and night falls. The waters grow dark and the focus shifts to a Grotto, not far off the coast. Three Rokea circle the Grotto, and the slew recognizes that they are born of shark breeds that can survive in cold waters (Porbeagle sharks, Greenland sharks, etc.). The Rokea send to one another, speaking of a creature called a Progenitor. The creature can spawn any Qyrling that it consumes, even those Qyrlings that normally thrive in Unsea's Soul. The Rokea wish to destroy it, but they are the only Kunspawn in the area who can survive the frigid waters long enough to fight the beast, and three Kunspawn are not enough to battle it. One of them decides that when the chanting man returns, they should approach him for help, for he is a wolf-changer.

The scene fades, and Sea's voice fills the characters minds again. "These three Rokea met with that wolf-changer, a spirit-speaker called *Stands-Against-the-Cold-Night*. He rallied his people against the Progenitor, and, calling upon the spirits of the Sea to aid them, battled the creature in Sea, alongside the Kunspawn. His family and the Rokea agreed that while they were of two different worlds, neither world could exist without the other. For years, the Rokea watched over his family, until they were forced south by the men from another Unsea.

"Joseph carries these memories with him, and he speaks the truth about his intentions. He means no harm to the Reef or to the Kunspawn." The voice fades, as does the vision.

The characters should now have all the proof they need that Joseph's motives are genuine. They should probably now return to wherever they left the Dreamtime's Cry pack.

Scene Ten: Ambush

On the way back, have each player roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 9). Success indicates that they feel a disturbance in the water to their left; very slight, almost like a sea snake. Turning, they see a materialized Mind Worm swimming towards them. It will try to reach the closest character and possess her. If no one succeeds on the roll, the Worm possesses one of the characters automatically.

If the characters notice the Worm in time, they can attempt to kill or capture it. It flees, trying to lead the Rokea into the nest of Kluru nearby. If the Rokea

do catch the worm, remember that Rokea can automatically speak with aquatic spirits, so if they grab hold of it, they can try to intimidate information out of it. The King Fish Gift will help with this endeavor. If the slew can get back to land, Elasia knows the Command Spirit Gift, but the Worm will retreat into the Umbra as soon as possible if the slew starts to head for land.

If one of the characters is possessed without anyone noticing, pull that player aside and explain that while she is still free to act normally, her mind is not her own. Encourage the player to act different, but very subtly. Hopefully the other characters will pick up on her cues. One important difference is that no matter the character's normal predisposition toward swimming on Unsea, the Mind Worm fears land and will not let the character leave Sea. For the moment, however, tell the player to try "sense something strange" to the west and ask the slew to follow her.

A swarm of materialized Kluru waits nearby, roughly half again the number of the slew. Oorl has decided that its plan to start the Garou and Rokea warring is not working as planned, and now wishes to kill these Kunspawn before they cause some real trouble. The possessed character (or the Mind Worm) leads the slew into the shallows, where the Kluru burst from the mud and attack.

The fight shouldn't damage the characters too much; Joseph, Chakara, and whoever else is with the characters will help the slew to defeat the Qyrlings. The possessed character, however, will fight alongside the Kluru, which may present a problem. The characters must find a way to incapacitate their slew-mate without injuring her seriously, something the Rokea are not well suited to do. When the fight turns against the Kluru, the possessed Rokea will flee, trying to outswim her slew. The slew must chase her down and capture her in order to free her from the Mind Worm.

Whenever the characters discover the Worm, between the Rokea and the Garou they should be able to get some information out of it. It can tell them that Oorl created it and that it was to possess one of the sharks and spy on the slew. It was not expecting the Garou to be with them. It does know, however, that Oorl is planning to release a horde of Mind Worms after dark tonight and send them towards the Reef. It will not reveal Oorl's location.

Scene Eleven: Plans

Once the slew rejoins with the Dreamtime's Cry pack, they can discuss matters. The pack will be willing to help the slew in any way they can, but it is clear to the Garou that since the menace is from Sea, the

Rokea know best how to fight it. By this time, hopefully the characters have learned that Oorl is planning an attack soon, and that they should attack first. This, of course, requires finding Oorl, and minions of Qyrl are notoriously good at hiding.

Possible tactics the slew might consider:

- **Get help:** The only Rokea who could get to the Reef in time are the Dim Shallows slew. They will be more than happy to help in the assault against Oorl. They will grudgingly accept Sea's verdict that the Garou are trustworthy. Wave-Crest and his slew also admit that since the players' slew seems to know more about this menace than they do, the players' slew is in charge of this battle.

- **Get advice:** If one of the characters has a spirit mentor or Ally, they might be able to help the characters find Oorl's nesting place, depending on what sort of spirit it is. Likewise, Coral, although she can't move, knows the mind of any creature that lives in the Reef. Perhaps the characters could seek out a Rorqual or ask Dreamtime's Hunter to commune with the deep-sea spirits (via the Darkwater Gift: Voice of the Depths).

One of the best sources of information is Joseph, as his Ancestors helped to destroy a Progenitor once before. If the characters ask him if he remembers, he meditates and contacts his forbears, and comes up with the information that Oorl's back is soft and easy to damage.

Don't push the players towards asking any specific being for advice, but color the information by who gives it to them.

- **Guard the Reef:** The characters may decide it's wiser to guard the reef and let Oorl come to them. If they do this, they should find a way around the Mind Worm's powers (the Mindspeak Gift is a possibility, but Gabriel is the only one who knows it). If they don't, they find themselves swarmed by Mind Worms and then attacked by the spirits and creatures of the Reef as the Worms possess them.

- **Search for Oorl:** Oorl is nesting on the continental shelf in Broad Sound. The characters know that it must be somewhere near the Reef, but the Reef is huge. They may also assume (correctly) that since the *Saltie* was attacked due to Oorl's interference, the creature must not be too far away from the shipwreck. If the characters take the Garou searching along with them, either in a boat or by convincing Wave-Crest to use Drown on them, either Emma or Elasia can use Sense Wyrms to home in on Oorl. If the characters enter Sea's Soul, they find that they can track Oorl fairly easily; fish spirits swim away from it.

Once the characters have found Oorl and have some sort of plan of attack, proceed to Scene Twelve.

*Scene Twelve:
The Battle for the Long Crotto*

When the attack begins, the characters might have as many as six Rokea and four Garou aiding them, or they might be on their own, depending on how they have handled the other characters in the story. As they swim towards Oorl, stress the immense size of the thing — the Progenitor is over 100 feet long and nearly 60 feet wide. It appears to be a long mound of flesh, almost like a slug, but with dozen of tentacles waving about. Somewhere towards the sea bottom is Oorl's mouth, a great squid-like beak. Its underside is buried in the earth behind it. As soon as it sees the Rokea coming, it extends its tentacles to fight. It needs more Gnosis to fuel the spawning ahead, and wishes to consume the Rokea and the Garou.

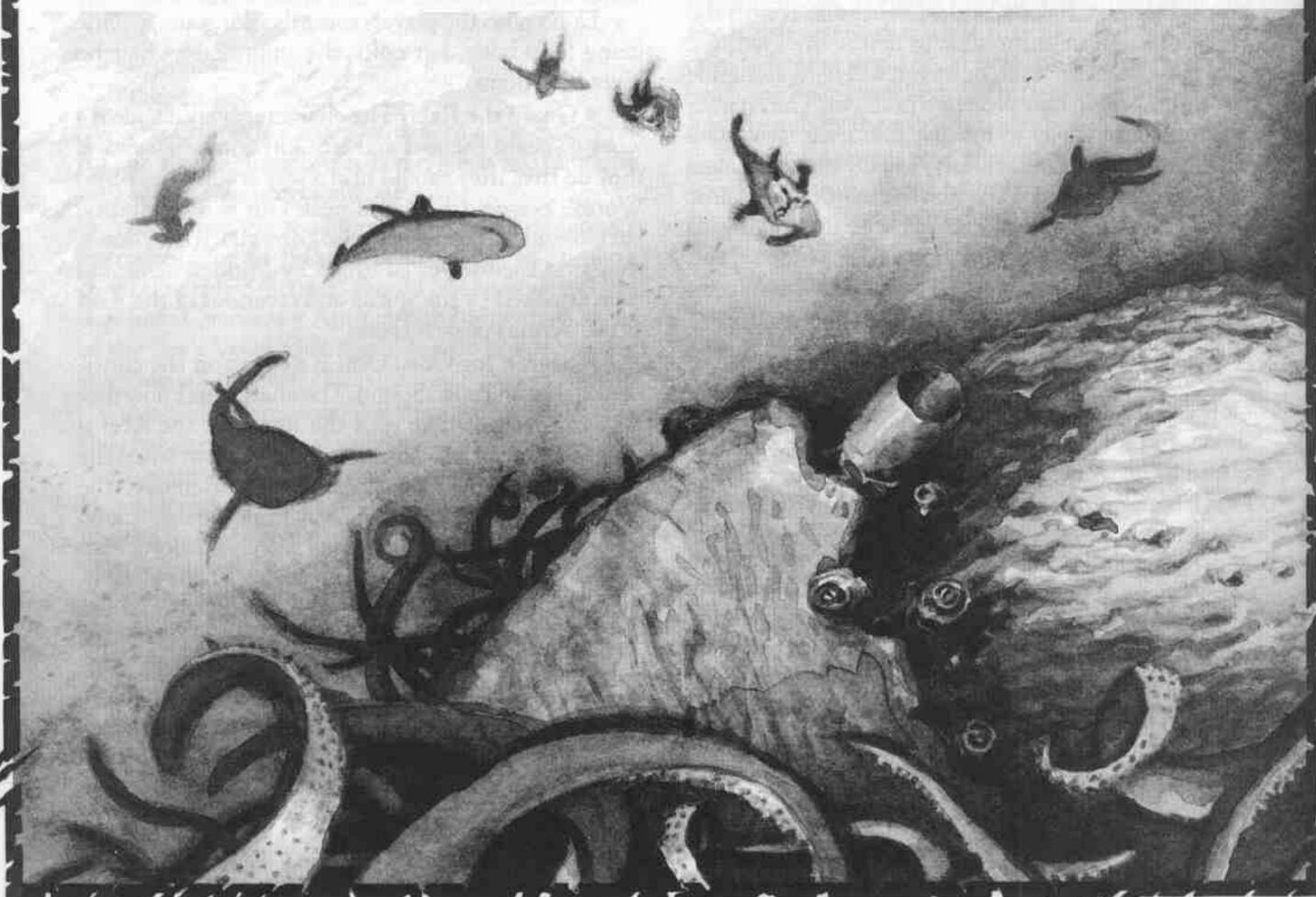
During the fight, don't forget about the shark hunt, if it began. The hunters chum the waters of Broad Sound, which attracts normal sharks to the battle. Some of these attack Oorl (only to be dragged down and eaten) while some attack the characters. Also, Oorl might reach up and sink a ship to eat the crew, if it feels desperate enough.

Oorl is tightly dug into the Undersea. Getting to its soft underside requires digging through the muck.

A Rokea making a tunnel needs 10 successes on an extended Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). Each roll represents two turns of digging. The tentacles attack the digging character each turn, so a digger should have some backup to protect her. Alternately, she can begin digging from out of the tentacles' reach, but this increases the number of successes required to 20.

The Storyteller characters follow whatever battle plan the slew concocted. Don't feel pressed to roll dice for every character present (it would take all night). Instead, just describe how the Dim Shallows slew and the Dreamtime's Cry pack fare against the monstrous Qyrling. If the players are up to it, you might even wish to allow them to play these higher-ranked characters for the battle.

Oorl attempts to grab characters in its tentacles and pass them off, tentacle to tentacle, towards its mouth. It does not pull itself free of the seabed unless a character succeeds in reaching its underside, but at that point, the battle is won. Once the underside is exposed, Oorl has no protection left and can only try to flee as the Rokea tear it apart. Its body sinks to the bottom of Broad Sound, leaving the characters free to tear it to pieces and scatter its body to the currents.



Aftermath

The Great Barrier can end any number of ways, depending on how the slew treats the other characters. If everyone survives the battle, the Dim Shallows slew apologizes to Joseph for the misunderstanding and swims off (they have decided to “agree to disagree” with Chakara). Rory returns to his hotel and his hookers, but his zeal for life is rekindled and he promises to visit the sea more often, if the slew will leave him in peace. Joseph and the other Garou, after deliberating a bit, decide to join together as a pack, perhaps taking Dolphin as their totem (Dolphin asks that her children help protect the marine environment from despoliation, and the pack wishes to focus on the Reef). Chakara plans to continue her search for sympathetic Garou, since these Garou have certainly proven helpful. Perhaps the Garou even teach the Sense Wyrms Gift to a member of the slew (maybe at a slightly increased experience cost).

If, however, the characters attacked or killed Rory, Chakara, or the Garou, they find themselves outgunned when attacking Oorl. The fight might well go badly, and even a victory proves costly. The Reef is still endangered, and now has even fewer beings to fight for it. Though it might not seem so during the story, the slew has the chance to change things, to make a real difference for the second most powerful Grotto in the world. They, like the Rokean race as a whole, must choose: change, stasis, or corruption.

Characters

The Rokea

Some of the Rokea given here have statistics listed for three other forms, not four. In this case, the wereshark in questions has not been on land enough to develop the Glabrus form and will skip directly from Homid to Gladius when shapechanging. Note that the statistics provided are for Rokea in the water; refer to page 61 for the modifier on land.

The Dim Shallows Slew

Wave-Crest

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Dimwater

Species: Great White

Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Alpha

Physical: Strength 4 (7/8/6), Dexterity 3 (5/4/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/5)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (0/0/0), Appearance 2 (0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Leadership 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Occult 1, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Allies (other Rokea) 3, Remora 2

Gifts: (1) Fast, King Fish, Sea's Voice, Sense Threat, Strange Blood; (2) Know Oversea's Mind, Poisoned Flesh, Strange Waters; (3) Drown, Fathom Sight, Shark's Bones (4) Patient Hunter, Swim Undersea's Blood

Rank: 4 (Cold Sea)

Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Willpower 6

Rites: The Rite of Wounding

Fetishes: None

Image: In Squamus form, Wave-Crest is a good-sized white shark, about 16 feet in length. He has some scar tissue on his dorsal fin that resembles a wave, hence his name. In Homid form, he is short — about 5'5" — and very stocky. He has brown hair that looks almost blue in sunlight, and has a habit of sniffing incessantly.

Roleplaying Notes: Leading this slew was much easier before All-Seas joined. You sympathize with her — you once thought humans were worthy of consideration, too. Now, however, you see them as despoilers and idiots, best avoided. Dreamtime's Hunter and you see eye-to-eye on most subjects, and although you don't shun Unsea as much as he does, it would suit you fine to stay in the water forever.

History: The scar tissue on Wave-Crest's fin came from a speargun. A diver in a cage shot him for no real reason. His Long Swim began at that moment and he tore open the cage, only to find that the diver was dead — apparently of fright. Wave-Crest met up with Dreamtime's Hunter soon afterwards, and the two traveled together until meeting No-Prey-Remains. The three of them took Shark as their totem and began swimming the shallow waters, hunting for threats to Sea.

No-Prey-Remains

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Brightwater

Species: Great White

Nature/Demeanor: Predator/Hedonist

Physical: Strength 5 (8/9/7), Dexterity 2 (4/3/5), Stamina 5 (7/8/7)

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2 (0/0/0), Appearance 1 (0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urge 5

Skills: None.

Knowledges: Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Remora 1

Gifts: (1) Eyes of the Wound, Killing Bite, Restraint, Sense Threat; (2) Gulp, Undertow; (3) Consume Taint, School's Fear, Wriggling Teeth

Rank: 3 (Open Sea)

Rage 8, Gnosis 5, Willpower 4

Rites: The Rite of the Opened Grotto

Fetishes: None.

Image: Imagine the shark in *Jaws*. Now imagine it bigger. No-Prey-Remains is over 30 feet long in Squamus form, and close to 5000 pounds. In Homid form, he is more than seven feet tall and is wider than most doorways, to the point that he would have to crouch, turn sideways and bend to get through them. He has only been to Unsea twice, and avoids it not because of any personal distaste, but because finding something to wear is more trouble than it's worth.

Roleplaying Notes: You are the biggest predator in the sea. If something challenges or attacks you, eat it. If a boat is making trouble, sink it. You may present a slow-witted glutton to the world, but in truth, you are sick and tired of letting the dirtwalkers have their way with Sea. You have little patience for All-Seas and her talk of "understanding" the humans — the only way they seem to understand sharks is by killing them! Of course, that sort of "understanding" you could easily appreciate....

History: How No-Prey-Remains kept himself from being caught by fishermen before the Long Swim is beyond him. Even as a young shark, he would have been a record-breaker and he was (and is) easily tempted by bait and chum. Somehow, though, his luck held out and he completed his Long Swim without so much as a nick. He swam the waters of the South Pacific for a few years, battling and eating any threat he came across, until he drifted down to Australia and met Dreamtime's Hunter and Wave-Crest. Flattered by their request for him to join, he banded together with them and has traveled with the slew ever since.

All-Seas

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Brightwater

Species: Blue shark

Nature/Demeanor: Deviant/Visionary

Physical: Strength 2 (5/6/4), Dexterity 4 (6/5/7), Stamina 3 (5/6/5)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3 (0/0/0), Appearance 1 (0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Leadership 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Rituals 1

Backgrounds: None.

Gifts: (1) Breach, Killing Bite, Restraint; (2) First Feeling, Restless Waters

Rank: 2 (Shallows)

Rage 5, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Rites: The Rite of Swimming Alone

Fetishes: None.

Image: All-Seas is a young blue shark, not quite 12 feet long. In Homid form, she is a woman of about 19, tall, tanned, and athletic. She is not at all attractive, however; her eyes are set strangely in her face and her forehead is boxy and wide.

Roleplaying Notes: Survival does not mean stagnation. You embrace any chance to change the Rokean race, or at least try, and their biggest fear seems to be the surface world. Well, then, you'll just have to show them that the surface world has merit, and can even live in peace with the Kunspawn. Yes, it'll take time, but what else have the Rokea got? You're not sure how you got yourself into such a tradition-bound slew, but you're about a second away from performing the Rite of Swimming Alone and getting the hell onto Unsea for a while.

History: All-Seas entered her Long Swim while witnessing a waterspout. The storm tossed and churned the water, and she was fascinated by the power of the storm, the power to change even the Sea. After she met with Kun, she wondered about a Law that required so little change, and decided that things had been the same for the Rokea for too long. One of her first acts of rebellion was to return a surfboard to a young man stranded on a coral reef. Oddly enough, he didn't panic — he just seemed fascinated. All-Seas took this to mean that there was hope for the dirtwalkers, and set out to learn about them. She joined the Dim Shallows slew when she stopped No-Prey-Remains from eating a group of divers that was feeding sharks in Shark Bay. Wave-Crest approved — these humans weren't hurting anything and it certainly would have attracted shark hunters if No-Prey-Remains had killed them — so he invited her to join the slew. She accepted, but just lately she's come to regret it.

Dreamtime's Hunter

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Darkwater

Species: Galapagos shark

Nature/Demeanor: Traditionalist/Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 3 (6/7/5), Dexterity 3 (5/4/6), Stamina 2 (4/5/4)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (0/0/0), Appearance 1 (0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 1, Primal-Urge 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Rituals 4, Rokea Lore 4

Backgrounds: Remora 3

Gifts: (1) Breach, Blood of the Deeps, Chill, Fast, Sense Threat; (2) Enter Unsea's Soul, Shagreen Shield, Unsea's Blessing; (3) Fathom Sight, No Blood; (4) Shock Wave

Rank: 4 (Cold Sea)

Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Willpower 6

Rites: The Rite of School's Wisdom, The Rite of the Man-Form, The Rite of the Hunt, The Rite of Passing the Net, The Rite of Rokea Blood, The Rite of Cleansing

Fetishes: None.

Image: Dreamtime's Hunter is a Galapagos shark, nearly 10 feet in length. His fins are tipped in black and his underbelly is gray. In homid form, which he assumed exactly twice since his long swim, he is a slim black man with an upturned nose, bulging eyes, and a hare lip.

Roleplaying Notes: You know that many of your auspice venture onto Unsea to sample the wonders there. You, however, know that wonders aplenty exist below the waves, and that the Kunspawn are better equipped to handle these wonders than those of the surface world. You cordially distrust dirtwalkers, and while you have only participated in one Hunt for a betweenner, you gladly provide information and guidance to hunting parties whenever you can.

History: Dreamtime's Hunter has been swimming the waters of Australia for nearly five decades. He listens to remora and Rorqual whenever possible, and with each horror story about Small Wounds and human foolishness, he grows more secure in the knowledge that the Rokea should stay in the water. He belongs to the slew only with the understanding that they do not swim on Unsea for any reason. All-Seas wears on his patience, as she has occasionally found causes that would require the slew to go ashore, and Wave-Crest has even entertained some of them.

Other Rokea

Chakara Teeth-in-the-Enemy

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Brightwater

Species: Mako

Nature/Demeanor: Director/Alpha

Physical: Strength 4 (6/7/8/6), Dexterity 3 (4/5/4/6), Stamina 3 (5/5/6/2)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Leadership 3, Survival 4

Knowledges: Linguistics 1 (English), Rituals 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (other Rokea), Remora 2

Gifts: (1) Breach, Eyes of the Wound, Killing Bite, Unseen Attack; (2) Gulp, Narke's Gift, Shagreen Shield; (3) Consume Taint, Wriggling Teeth (4) Best Policy, Relentless Hunt

Rank: 4

Rage 7, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6

Rites: Rite of the Hunt

Fetishes: Sea's Garb (a gray bandanna, bleached to a sick bone color by the sun).

Image: Chakara is a lean, 12-foot mako shark. She bears scars around her head from battles past. In Homid form, she is a tall white woman with an odd body shape: she looks like a long distance runner with a slight hunchback.

Roleplaying Notes: Staying away from the dirtwalkers would be your first choice — were it possible. The dirtwalkers continue their invasions, year after year, and the stubbornness of your fellow Rokea might doom the Sea! You consider yourself a great innovator and warrior for Sea, and you plan to make the dirtwalkers understand, one way or another, that the Sea must be respected. You believe that humans don't intend to hurt Sea, they are simply ignorant of what ramifications their actions have. You have no special love or even fascination about the Garou, but as they are the most numerous of the Breeds (after the Rokea, that is) and the Breed best acclimated to human society, they are the best choice for an alliance.

History: Born in the waters of Shark's Bay, Chakara entered her Long Swim while being baited by a research vessel. She has observed humanity from afar for most of her life as a Rokea, in between hunting down Qyrlings and other abominations.

Chakara has never been part of a slew. Other Rokea consider her radical and a loose cannon — after all, she wants to visit Unsea to talk with other Changers, not to hunt betweenners. Chakara, for her part, does not care what the other Rokea think of her.

Note: Chakara has activated her Relentless Hunt Gift and focused it on allying with the Garou.

She therefore receives one automatic success on any roll that would lead her to accomplishing that goal (see page 67).

Roar of the Sea

Breed: Squamus

Auspice: Darkwater

Species: Hammerhead

Nature/Demeanor: Conniver/Builder

Physical: Strength 3 (5/6/7/5), Dexterity 2 (3/4/3/5), Stamina 4 (6/6/7/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (3/1/1/1), Appearance 3 (1/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Seafaring 2

Knowledges: Computer 1, Linguistics 1 (English), Politics 2, Rituals 2, Science 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Resources 2

Gifts: (1) Chill, Fast, Sense Threat, Silent Sending, Spirit Speech; (2) Enter Unsea's Soul, Gulp, Piercing Shriek, Restless Waters, Unsea's Blessing (3) C'et's Mysteries, Swim Through the School; (4) Sea's Breath

Rank: 4

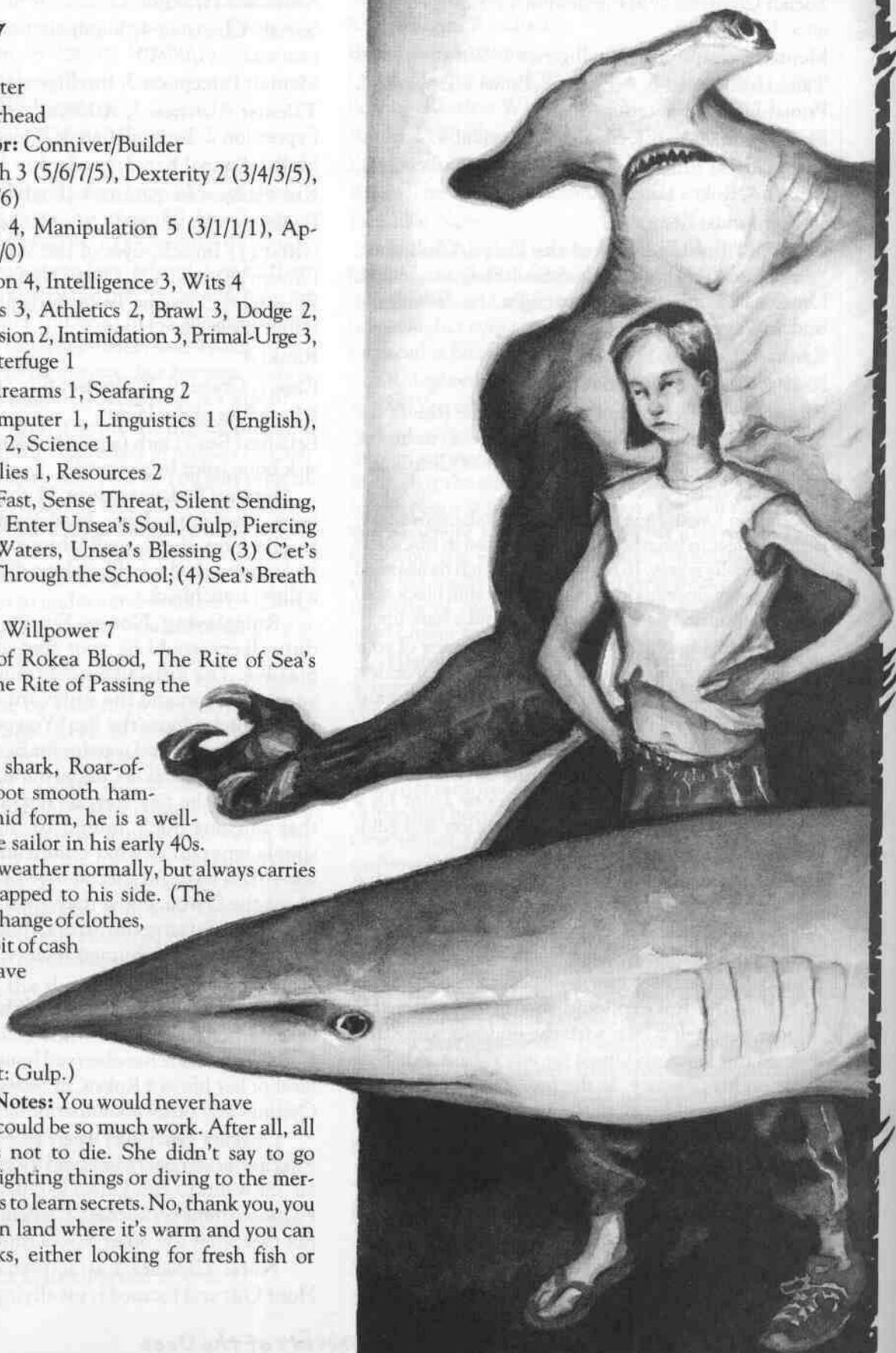
Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Willpower 7

Rites: The Rite of Rokea Blood, The Rite of Sea's Distant Voice, The Rite of Passing the Net

Fetishes: None.

Image: As a shark, Roar-of-the-Sea is a 10-foot smooth hammerhead. In Homid form, he is a well-tanned, handsome sailor in his early 40s. He dresses for the weather normally, but always carries a small pouch strapped to his side. (The pouch contains a change of clothes, his passport, and bit of cash should he ever have to flee the area quickly. It's designed to be swallowed via the Gift: Gulp.)

Roleplaying Notes: You would never have believed survival could be so much work. After all, all Sea told you was not to die. She didn't say to go swimming about fighting things or diving to the mercilessly cold depths to learn secrets. No, thank you, you prefer it up here on land where it's warm and you can frequent the docks, either looking for fresh fish or



hookers. If the hunting parties find you, you are ready to leave and find work elsewhere.

History: Roar-of-the-Sea, or Rory to his mates on the docks, is a lazy shark. His old slew used to say that if not for the telltale shape of his head, they'd guess he was born of the nurse sharks that lie on the sea floor. Roar-of-the-Sea just didn't feel that chasing after trouble was a great idea, so he said that he preferred searching for the answers to mysteries. This gained him quite a bit of renown as an innovator, but he was not happy. Finally, he swam ashore and discovered that, ironically, he could avoid his responsibilities by getting a job. Rory was a betweenner before the betweenner war started, and therefore some slews have tried chasing him down. He has avoided them so far, mostly through luck.

The Garou

The Garou that figure into **The Great Barrier** most prominently are the Dreamtime's Cry pack and Joseph Blows-with-the-Wind. These four Garou are hunting for the Dim Shallows slew; it will unfortunately be the player's slew that they find first. While Emma, Elasia, and Gabriel still refer to themselves as a pack, they have disbanded and do not gain any benefits from Impala, their former totem. Likewise, they use all pack tactics at +2 difficulty.

Emma Sharptongue

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Shadow Lords

Nature/Demeanor: Curmudgeon/Jester

Physical: Strength 1 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 2 (4/5/4/4)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (3/1/1/1), Appearance 2 (1/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 4 (putdowns), Primal-Urge 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Knowledges: Computer 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Occult 1, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Ancestors 2, Pure Breed 1, Resources 3

Gifts: (1) Blur of the Milky Eye, Fatal Flaw, Open Seal, Sense Wyrn; (2) Cold Voice of Reason, Luna's Armor, Sense of the Prey; (3) Direct the Storm

Rank: 3

Rage 3, Gnosis 5, Willpower 6

Metis Deformity: Puny

Rites: None.

Fetishes: None.

Image: Emma is not quite five feet tall in Homid form. She has hard, gray eyes and shoulder-length black hair, which she always keeps tied back. When dressed for work among humans, she wears conservative, stylish business clothes. When dressed for work among Garou, she wears a dedicated gray jumpsuit and carries an immense duffel bag — the bag contains her rifle, which is also dedicated.

Roleplaying Notes: You are weak, and after you underwent your Rite of Passage, you agreed with the rest of your tribe's assessment of you: worthless. As the years have passed and you have risen in rank, you have begun to see that you have a place in Garou society, and even among humans. You have an acid tongue and anyone putting down your metis heritage had better be ready to receive criticism in kind.

History: Emma was born to an unknown pair of Shadow Lords and raised by a sept in Tasmania. She was told flat out that the only reason she was allowed a Rite of Passage was to get her out of the sept and into a pack, where at least she had a chance of dying in battle. She did, in fact, join with 3 other Garou and form a pack, and they accomplished some impressive victories in their time. The pack had recently broken up after an epic battle at the Poisoned Lungs Hive — they felt that their task as a pack had been completed. Emma returned to Tasmania and took up residence in Hobart, settling into a job at an ad agency owned by Shadow Lord Kinfolk.

Austin was her rival, and her arguments with him were legendary. There were times Emma thought he would lose control and kill her — in fact, she suspects it was his Rage that finally got him killed. But no matter how he died, she feels she can't let a packmate's death go unanswered.

Heart-of-Impala

Position: Caller of the Wyld, Tower Hill Caern (the Gariwerd Protectorate, near Victoria)

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Fianna

Nature/Demeanor: Survivor/Explorer

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Melee 3, Performance 1, Survival 4 (Outback)

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Ancestors 1, Kinfolk 2

Gifts: (1) Mother's Touch, Resist Toxin, Sense Wyrms, Smell of Man, Spirit Speech; (2) Command Spirit, Howl of the Banshee; (3) Reshape Object

Rank: 3

Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Willpower 7

Rites: (Accord) Rite of Cleansing; (Caern) Rite of the Opened Caern; (Mystic) Rite of Binding, Rite of Talisman Dedication, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of the Spirit Brew, Rite of Summoning

Fetishes: Baneskin, Impala's Horn (Level 2, Gnosis 6. This spear is tipped with an impala's horn, a Gift from the pack's former totem. Upon activation, the spear causes an extra die in wound penalties to any Wyrmtainted being it strikes).

Image: Heart-of-Impala, or Elasia to her friends, is a rugged, athletic Australian woman in her mid 20s. Her mussed brown hair falls past her shoulders and is cut unevenly. She wears jeans and perpetually wrinkled shirts, and always carries a canteen enchanted by the Rite of the Spirit Brew (anyone drinking the entire canteen can regain 2 points of Gnosis).

Roleplaying Notes: Men call you a "rugged Jill" and that suits you fine. You have been romping through the outback since you were a little kid, and you aren't going to stop now. You love the freedom that being Garou gives you — you never would have survived life cooped up in a classroom! You make jokes, drink beer, and punch shoulders with your sept mates and any visiting Garou, but as much as you love your job as *Caller of the Wyld*, you miss being in a pack and seeing new sights. Children or mentions of children make you sad and wistful, as you are unable to bear children of your own.

History: Elasia O'Reilly went through her First Change at age 14. Her Change was not traumatic; she was exploring the Outback, drinking in the sights and the dim light of the crescent moon, and she suddenly felt the ground under her change as she walked on four legs. She joined with Emma, Austin, and Gabriel to form the Dreamtime's Cry pack, and although the battle at the Poisoned Lungs Hive cost her the ability to have children, she counts the years with the pack as the best of her life.

Heart-of-Impala has not taken up her spear in some time, and isn't sure that revenge is what she is looking for on this mission. She does, however, wish to

protect Emma and Gabriel, and so has agreed to accompany them on their quest to find the Rokea.

Gabriel Starsmore

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Glass Walkers

Nature/Demeanor: Gallant/Confidant

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 4 (3/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 4 (dance), Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Expression 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 3, Melee 1, Performance 3, Repair 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Computer 2, Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1 (some Aboriginal dialects), Medicine 1, Occult 3, Rituals 1, Science 1

Backgrounds: Resources 3

Gifts: (1) Call of the Wyld, Control Simple Machine, Diagnostics, Mindspeak, Persuasion, Trick Shot; (2) Cybersenses, Dreamspeak, Power Surge

Rank: 2

Rage 5, Gnosis 3, Willpower 6

Rites: Rite of the Questing Stone

Fetishes: None.

Image: Gabriel is a professional dancer, and his build shows it. He is slender, dresses in clothing he can easily move in (all of his outfits will allow him to change to Glabro without bursting a seam) and he moves with a fluid grace. He has soulful blue eyes and sandy hair, and has a quiet, but commanding voice.

Roleplaying Notes: You feel irritated that soon after you returned to the pack, it disbanded. You are approaching the rank of Adren — you can feel it — and as soon as you do, you're going to challenge the Glass Walker representative on the Jindabyne Council for his seat. You feel you could do some good for the council — for the Garou in general, but you got left behind for a while. Well, now you're back, and you're ready to be a warrior for Gaia, dammit!

History: Gabriel was born in Sydney and took up ballet at an age when most boys are practicing for Little League. The other boys teased him, but found that dance kept him in better shape than they thought, to their eventual dismay. Gabriel Changed at age 13, and was taken away to a "private school" by the Glass

Walkers of Sydney. He was placed into the Dreamtime's Cry pack because it was felt that they needed someone who knew the cities well, in case a mission should call the pack to one.

Gabriel had hardly been in the pack a year when tragedy struck. The pack was investigating a caern in the Northern Territory that seemed to be weakening and found that a human sorcerer was stealing the caern's energy for his own uses. The pack confronted him, and he used his magic to lock Gabriel in Homid form. Rather than risking his life, Gabriel returned to Sydney and resumed dancing, at the same time visiting the Glass Walkers occasionally to learn Gifts or dance at moots. Just before the assault on the Poisoned Lungs Hive, Martin One-Name discovered an ancient rite that countered the mage's spell, and Gabriel rejoined the pack for their final mission.

Austin and Gabriel were closer to each other than the rest of the pack, and Gabriel is mad with grief for his friend, although he covers it well. He is aware that he may well frenzy if confronted with Austin's murderers.

Joseph Blows-with-the-Wind

Position: Jindabyne Council Member

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Wendigo

Nature/Demeanor: Reveler/Cub

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance X (3/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Brawl 2, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 4, Etiquette 3, Performance 3, Repair 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Garou Lore 2, Medicine 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Ancestors 5, Resources 1

Gifts: (1) Call the Breeze, Camouflage, Open Seal, Persuasion, Resist Pain; (2) Blissful Ignorance, Speak with Wind-spirits; (3) Sky-Running

Rank: 3

Rage 3, **Gnosis** 3, **Willpower** 6

Rites: None.

Fetishes: None.

Image: Joseph is a short, bronze-skinned Native American in his late 20s. He has long, loose black hair and typically wears cut-off jeans and T-shirts. He wears

a bone choker that he claims is a family heirloom. His Lupus form, a large timber wolf, is always impeccably preened and looks almost blow-dried.

Roleplaying Notes: Over the years, you have learned to curb your vanity a bit, but you still preen and primp compulsively. You are normally very slow to anger, but this affair with the Rokea has infuriated you. First they helped you, then they killed and ate a pack that was only there to help! Ordinarily, you would have accepted the Council decision to leave the Rokea alone, but something is telling you that they are wrong this time.

History: Joseph, a Blackfoot Indian from Montana, was awarded a scholarship to study abroad. He liked Australia so much that he chose not to leave and has been hiding from the Immigration Department for some time now. For years, he was content to drive his van up and down the coasts, looking for the ultimate wave. Then one day, a current pulled him out to sea and stranded him on a coral reef. A school of sharks approached, and as Joseph prepared for death, one of them assumed Homid form and brought him his surfboard. It was at that moment that his Ancestors, which had previously talked incessantly, ceased to speak to him. Joseph decided to find out more about the weresharks, and approached the Jindabyne Council for help. He accepted their offer of a seat on the Council (being the only Wendigo in the country, there wasn't much choice otherwise) and eventually met up with Martin One-Name. He went with Martin, Sea-Dog, and Austin to try to contact the Rokea, and only escaped the resulting blood-bath by using his Sky-Running Gift to reach land.

Note: Joseph is possessed by a Mind Worm, the same type of Qyrling that infected Austin in the comic. Since he has not entered the sea since the incident, the Bane has incomplete control over him. He sometimes speaks in poorly phrased sentences or lashes out in anger as the Bane fights to possess him. If he is ever immersed in salt water, the Bane will take control completely. However, at the start of the game, the Bane only has one more day of any kind of control before it weakens and dies.

The Qyrlings Oorb, the Progenitor

Qyrl stirred the muck with her tentacle, and pondered the miracle of Spawning. She gathered the squid and worms close by, and then forced them together, using the muck to hold them fast. "You," she said, "shall be the Progenitor, and you shall spawn and spawn forever."

Description: The Progenitors were created by Qyrl to spawn Qyrlings, or so the story goes. A Progenitor is able to create various kinds of Qyrl-spirits, provided it consumes one first. Progenitors could even create terrestrial Banes if they could first sample one. This particular Progenitor can create Mind Worms and Kluru (see below), but nothing else. It is still young and small for its kind. Most Progenitors live in the deep recesses of the ocean and rarely come to the surface. Oorl, however, is rather ambitious, has attached itself to the continental shelf in Broad Sound

Image: The creature is not a spirit; it exists in the Realm and has a fully corporeal (and therefore woundable) body. It resembles a nautilus without the shell, and usually burrows its soft backside into the Undersea for protection. It is over 100 feet long and has dozens of arms and tentacles, all of which can attack independently (i.e., without taking penalties for multiple actions).

Roleplaying Hints: Though your appearance may belie it, you do think, and are actually capable of planning things far in advance. You believe your plan — to turn the Rokea and the Garou against one another — to be brilliant. When the war party arrives, you panic and lash out at anything that moves.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 2 (3 for individual tentacles), Stamina 6, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 3

Rage: 6 **Gnosis:** 9 **Willpower:** 8

Armor: 6 on the front from its rubbery, tough hide. On the back, however, it has no armor and in fact loses 4 soak dice.

Attacks: Each tentacle can grapple for 7 dice of bashing damage. Some tentacles have spines (7 dice aggravated damage) and some are close enough to its mouth to shove a victim in (11 dice aggravated damage from the bite, plus the victim can be swallowed, which inflicts 5 dice of lethal damage each turn).

Powers: Spawn (no roll required, but costs a point of Gnosis for each Qyrling created); Consume Spirit (Oorl may refill its Gnosis pool by consuming any being with Gnosis, spirit or otherwise).

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -3, -3, -5, -5, Incapacitated.

Kluru

Rage 6, Gnosis 4, Willpower 7, Essence 17

Charms: Realm Sense, Materialize, Blighted Touch

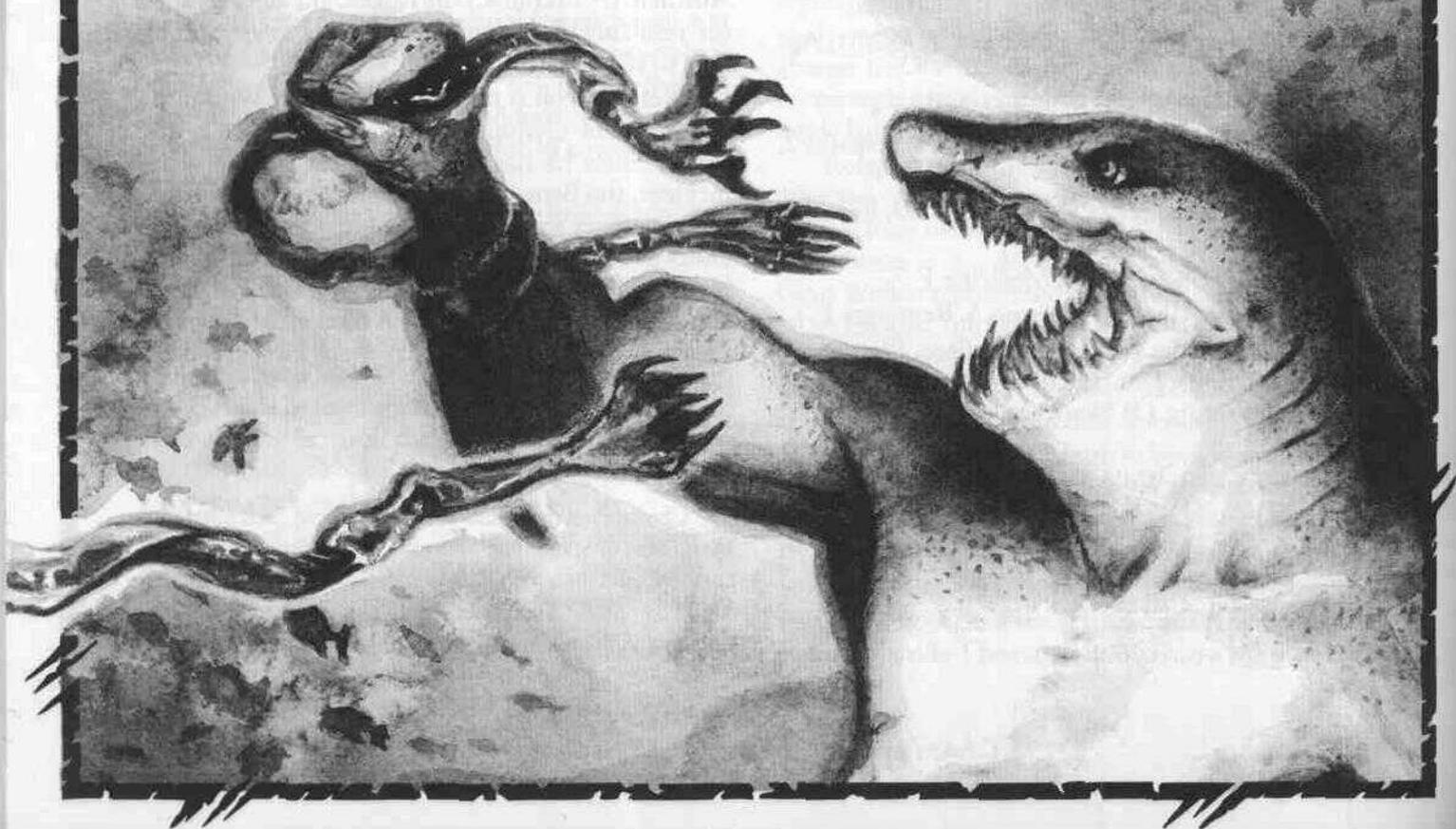


Image: These Qyrlings look like large jellyfish, but have an odd sheen on their skin, much like a puddle of oil in the sun. Multiple tentacles droop from their balloon-like bodies, with which they can deliver a powerful sting.

Description: Kluru are jellyfish-Banes, almost ubiquitous in places where pollution and corruption are rife. They aren't particularly dangerous unless encountered *en masse*, and normally flee from a Rokea (often to lead it to a swarm of Kluru).

Mind Worms

Rage 2, Gnosis 7, Willpower 5, Essence 12

Charms: Realm Sense, Materialize, Possession

Image: These creatures resemble two-foot worms, with mouths at each end and horrible spikes protruding from their bodies. They possess targets by burrowing into their ears, either in the Umbra or the Realm.

Description: Thankfully rare, these creatures have the unique ability to possess any sentient creature, spirits included. They may only possess spirits with lower Gnosis scores than theirs, but that allows them to possess remora. Only Progenitors and Qyrl can spawn Mind Worms, which means the most Rokea never encounter the horrors. They seem to have an aversion to possessing Rokea, preferring instead to take over spirits and other sea-creatures, but they are capable of doing so.





Chapter Five: The School

"Sleep warmly under columns of light, sleep with the fishes tonight."

— Machines of Loving Grace, "Albert Speer"

If the Rokea so chose, they could increase their numbers quite dramatically. After all, they (unlike the Garou and most other Changing Breeds) have the luxury of knowing that a particular mating will always result in a new wereshark. However, years of breeding carefully so as not to overpopulate the seas die hard, and even in modern times, when a population boom for both sharks and Rokea would be helpful, only a few are born each year.

The youngest Rokea — those with only a decade or so of life to their credit — are often the most aggressive and assertive of their kind. The older ones,

for the most part, grew up in a time where man feared and hated the shark, but kept his distance. Now, humans only seem interested in slaughtering the Rokea's kin. While the older weresharks may react like predators — fleeing from a threat until cornered — the younger ones are fighting back.

The following five templates can be played as written, modified as necessary, used for inspiration, or ignored entirely. Astute readers will note that no homid-breed templates have been included. The fate of homid Rokea — should any exist — is best left up to individual Storytellers.

Turna'a Survivor

Quote: *The humans did it once; they could do it again. Don't make an easy target for them.*

Prelude: Born under the full moon, your Long Swim took you under a fleet of warships while you swam to a Grotto. During your meeting with Sea, she warned you that trouble was on the way. You assumed that since your job was to fight, the trouble would be of a kind that you could kill.

That assumption proved horribly false as the humans began detonating their Small Wounds in Sea and the Unsea that borders her. You realized that this was the "trouble" that Sea mentioned, but you couldn't figure out what you were to do about it. You swam away, staying alive, avoiding this trouble — until Turna'a.

When you received word that all Rokea were invited to the meeting at the Turna'a Grotto, you rejoiced. Surely someone there would have a way to stop the atomic blasts before all of Sea was poisoned. The sheer number of Kunspawn overwhelmed you, and you stayed close to the bottom with many of the other young Rokea.

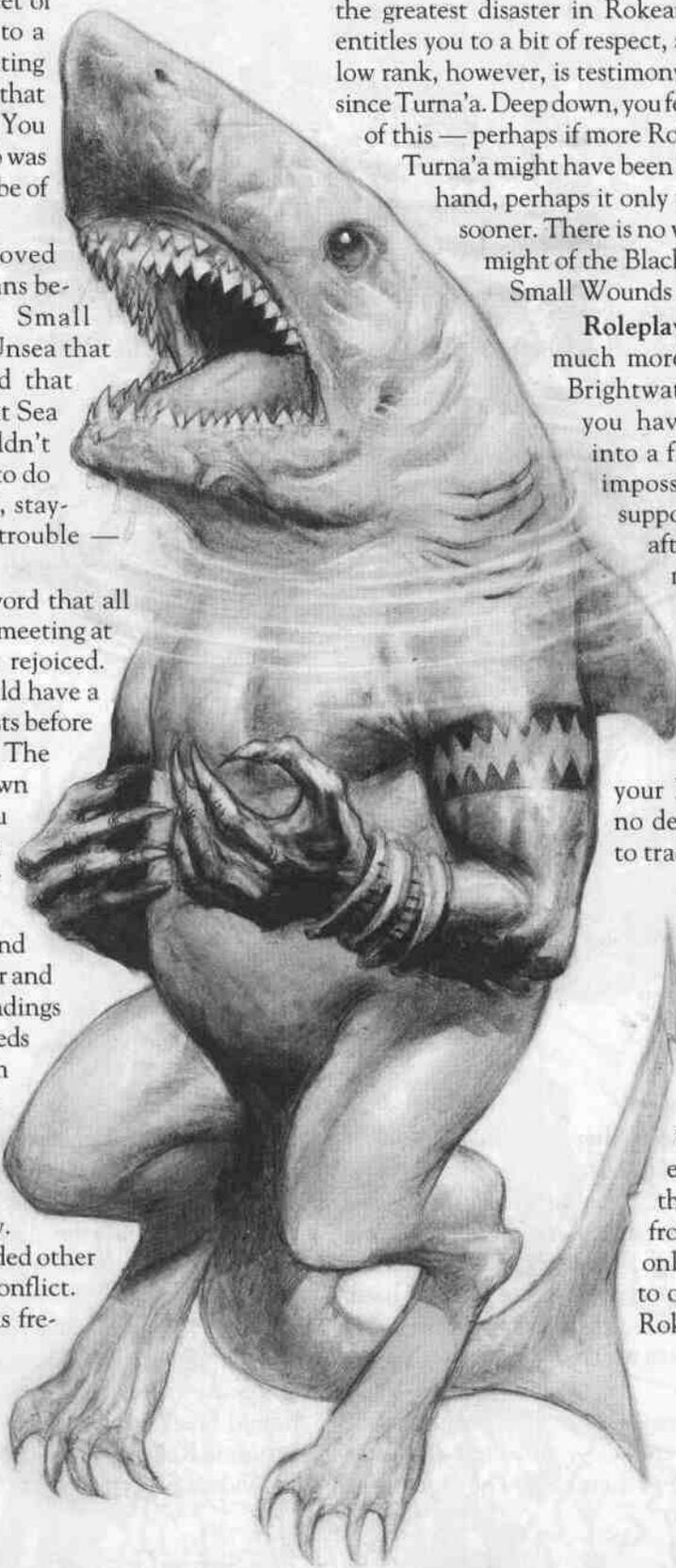
When the Small Wound opened, you felt their terror and pain. You felt the final Sendings of dozens — possibly hundreds — of Rokea. You saw them swim in drunken circles as the fires ate their bodies. When the rift into Sea's Soul opened, you and a few others swam to safety. Since then, you have avoided other Rokea, and any kind of conflict. The blasts haven't been as fre-

quent in the last few years, and only now would you consider joining a small slew. For although you most assuredly fear whatever force instigated Turna'a, you also have much to avenge.

Concept: You are one of the very few survivors of the greatest disaster in Rokean history. This alone entitles you to a bit of respect, as does your age. Your low rank, however, is testimony to what you've done since Turna'a. Deep down, you feel somewhat ashamed of this — perhaps if more Rokea had acted sooner, Turna'a might have been avoided. On the other hand, perhaps it only would have happened sooner. There is no way to know. Even the might of the Black Shark didn't end the Small Wounds — can anything?

Roleplaying Hints: You are much more patient than other Brightwaters, simply because you have no desire to rush into a fight and find it to be impossible. You staunchly support the betweener war; after all, the betweeners might be alerting the surface world to the existence of the Rokea! However, participating in the Hunt is another matter. The Sea is your home, and you have no desire to leave it, even to track down some foolish sharks that don't know their places.

Equipment: Fetish (Fragment of Oversea; successful activation allows the user to summon an elemental, as the Uktena Gift: Call Elemental). You found this fetish several miles from Turna'a, and can only assume it belonged to one of the unfortunate Rokea present.



ROK&A™

Name: Breed: Squamus Nature: Survivor
 Player: Auspice: Brightwater Demeanor: Visionary
 Chronicle: Species: White Shark Concept: Turna'a Survivor

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Danger	●●●●○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●●○
				Wits	●●●●○

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	●●●●○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●●○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●●○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●●○	Seafaring	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>		<i>Gifts</i>		<i>Merits & Flaws</i>	
Fetish	●●●●○	Breach	_____	Venerable (2 pt. Merit)	_____
Totem	●●○○○	Killing Bite	_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____

Renown

Valor
 ●●○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Harmony
 ●○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Innovation
 ○○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Rank

□□□□□□□□□□

Rage

●●●●●○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Cranks

●●●●●○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Experience

Harsh Judge

Quote: Sink it.

Prelude: Your Long Swim began when you saw a shark hooked by a sport fisherman. You swam up, thinking of tearing a chunk of flesh from the helpless shark, when you felt it ask for your help. Without truly

understanding
why, you
bit



through the line and you and the other shark swam away from the boat.

The shark explained that he was a Rokea who had been hooked while in Kunmind and hadn't been able to get free. He showed you to a nearby Grotto, where Sea told you that you were a Dimwater — a judge. The notion of “judgment” intrigued you — did one race have a claim to pass judgment over others? After thinking about it, you decided that the Rokea did indeed have that right, and set out to find those in need of judgment.

And find them you did. You were taken ashore by a hunting party, and with them you tracked down a rogue betweenner. Your inexperience on land proved little hindrance. After all, you *knew* him to be guilty and therefore you knew you'd win the fight. You threw his body back into Sea for the carrion fishes and left Unsea.

You cruise the oceans, searching out lampreys, Qyrlings, even other Rokea that need judgment. And your judgments are harsh. You are deaf to pleading or excuses — after all, ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it, especially when the law is simply to act in one's nature. Of late, your focus has been on humans and ships, such as the small craft that hooked and nearly killed the Rokea who sparked your Long Swim. You have begun passing judgment on humans, and have yet to find one afloat on the seas that deserves to be there.

Concept: You are probably the leader of your slew, just through force of personality. In battle you are tenacious and utterly merciless. If a foe beats you, obviously your judgment was wrong. If not, you were right.

You learned English to help you find betweenners. You understand enough of human society to track a Rokea through it, but that is all you need to know. If you could just keep down the urge to mate when on land, you would track betweenners exclusively. Although you certainly feel this urge, you do not show it. A few days of this repression can put you so close to frenzy that you have trouble focusing on the Hunt, proper judgment, or indeed anything but the men around you.

Roleplaying Hints: The concept of “judgment” came easily to you, but “mercy” and “forgiveness” or even “tolerance” are unknown. You have complete confidence in your ability to decide other beings' fates — you are, after all, the top of the food chain, even above other sharks. You are disgusted by betweenners and even moreso by Rokea who choose to follow Qyrl. They will never know what they have lost, that simply by being Rokea and following the law they were doing the *right thing*.

You don't have moments of doubt often, and even when they come, you drive them out. After all, if you doubt your ability to judge, you obviously can't be doing it reliably. So you keep judging, keep moving, never letting yourself rest or reflect, lest you begin to doubt.

Equipment: None.

ROKEA™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Squamus
Auspice: Dimwater
Species: Mako

Nature: Judge
Demeanor: Bravo
Concept: Harsh Judge

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	●●●●●	Animal Ken	●●●●●	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●●●	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●●●	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge <i>Hunting</i>	●●●●●	Seafaring	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>		<i>Gifts</i>		<i>Gifts</i>	
Rites	●●●●●	Fast	_____		_____
Totem	●●●●●	Strange Blood	_____		_____
	○○○○○	True Intentions	_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____

Renown

Valor

●●●○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Harmony

●●●○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Innovation

○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Rank

○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Rage

●●●○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Cinosis

●●●●●○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

Experience

○○○○○○○○○○	○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□

Runt of the Litter

Quote: *I could be as brash as you if I were 30 feet long, too.*

Prelude: You were born one of almost forty hammerhead pups, and the smallest of the litter. Only by Sea's grace were you able escape the many predators around (including your newly-born siblings) and live to see the Long Swim. You hid in seaweed, hunted at night, and gradually began to grow. You steered well clear of other sharks, knowing that they would look at you as a tasty snack.

Finally, you got careless. A blue shark spotted and dashed after you, and you had no choice but to swim for your life. As you swam, you realized that blue would catch and eat you if you merely tried to outpace him. You swam straight for the surface, banking sharply just before the waiting net. The blue, sadly, did not. As you watched your would-be attacker being hauled aboard the ship, you realized that you had *won*. The concept of winning or losing came easily to you, and your Long Swim was punctuated by meetings and contests with a variety of Rokea. Your garrulous conduct amused some and annoyed many, but you never let any of them get away with pushing you around or pitying you because of your size.

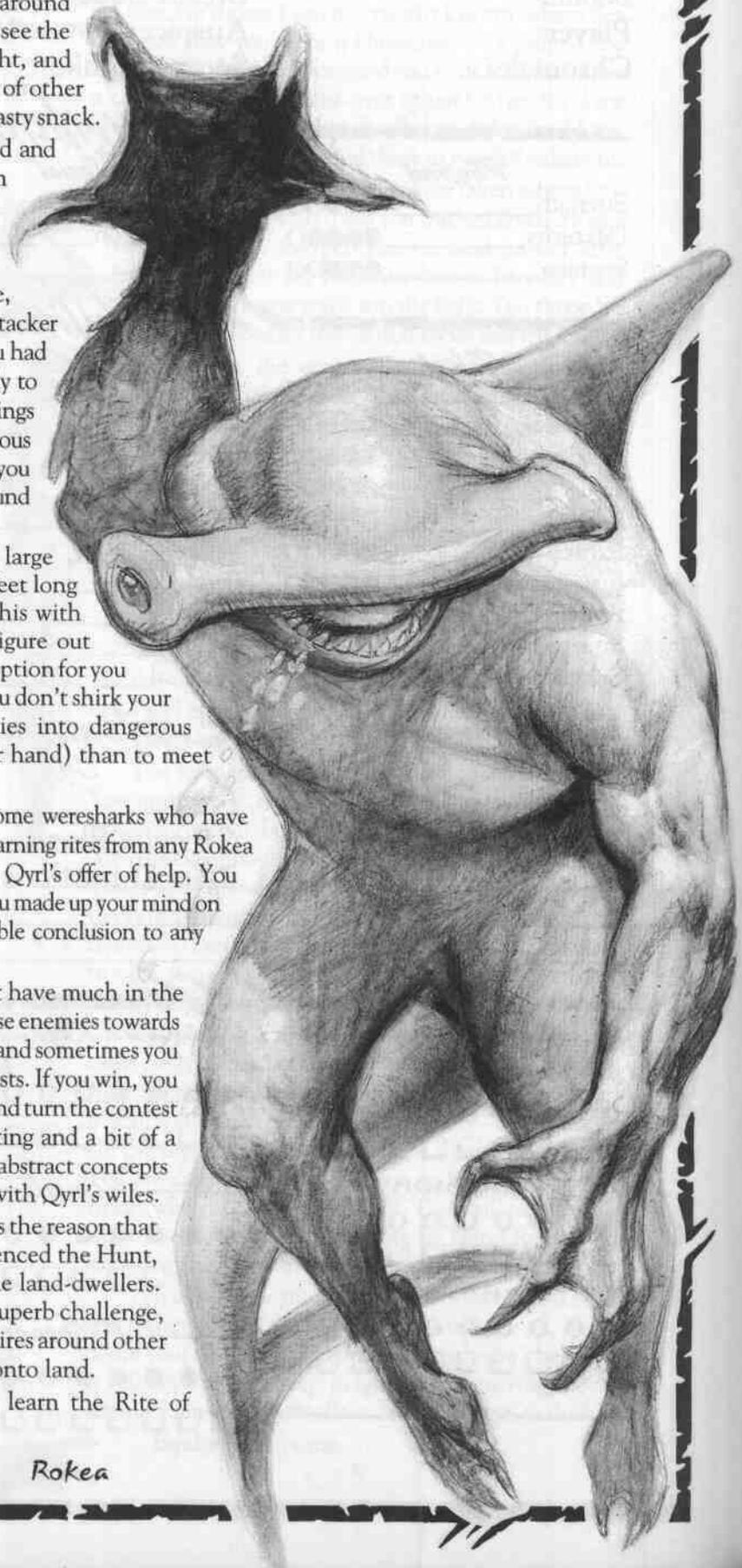
Concept: While most Rokea tend to be large examples of their species, you are just under 10 feet long — small for a hammerhead. You make up for this with your voracious wit and remarkable ability to figure out puzzles and mysteries. Violence is never the first option for you — it can't be — but if the waters must run red, you don't shirk your duties. You would simply prefer to lure enemies into dangerous situations (preferably where you have the upper hand) than to meet them on even ground (or water).

You know more about Rokea legends than some weresharks who have existed decades longer than you. You have begun learning rites from any Rokea who will teach you. You have consistently refused Qyrl's offer of help. You would consider selling out to Qyrl to be a loss, and you made up your mind on your Long Swim that winning is the only acceptable conclusion to any contest.

Roleplaying Hints: While most Rokea don't have much in the way of a sense of humor, you try your best. You chase enemies towards your slew if you feel they are growing complacent, and sometimes you will challenge other Rokea to races or other contests. If you win, you gloat shamelessly. If you lose, you blame your size and turn the contest towards something more cerebral. You are irritating and a bit of a whiner, but you are incredibly adept at grasping abstract concepts quickly, which makes you invaluable for dealing with Qyrl's wiles.

Your feeling that the betweener war is futile is the reason that you have yet to choose a side. You never experienced the Hunt, and have received little indoctrination about the land-dwellers. You think that swimming on Unsea might be a superb challenge, and wish to try it, but you are quiet about such desires around other Rokea. Someday, you'll find a way to get them onto land.

Equipment: Nothing yet, but if you ever learn the Rite of Talisman Dedication....



ROK&A™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Squamus
Auspice: Darkwater
Species: Hammerhead

Nature: Competitor
Demeanor: Jester
Concept: Runt of the Litter

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●○○○○	Seafaring	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Rituals	●○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>		<i>Gifts</i>		<i>Gifts</i>	
Remora	●○○○○	Sense Threat	_____		_____
Rites	●○○○○	Silent Sending	_____		_____
Totem	●○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____

Renown

Valor

●○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Harmony

○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Innovation

●●○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Rank

Rage

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Cranks

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Experience

Shark Wrangler (Betweenner)

Quote: *No, I don't worry about getting eaten. I think they're more afraid of me than I am of them.*

Prelude: You were born in captivity — your mother was captured by researchers, and they were delighted to learn that she was pregnant. When you reached breeding age, the scientists tagged you and set you off into the ocean, hoping that you would be recaptured later for further study.

You hadn't gotten a mile from the boat when the pain began. It wasn't like hunger or a bite from another fish. It was the tag, you realized, and the next second, you were marveling in the knowledge that you *knew* you were tagged. You started sending out frantic messages, and it wasn't long before a slew arrived.

The slew taught you all about being a Rokea, but the ocean was vast and frightening, and, although you admitted it to no one, you longed for the comfort of the glass tank around you. There, **n o t h i n g** would attack you or threaten you. You couldn't go back there, but you were unhappy in the open sea as well. Then, one night, you swam close to shore and saw night bathers enjoying the shallows and it all fell into place.

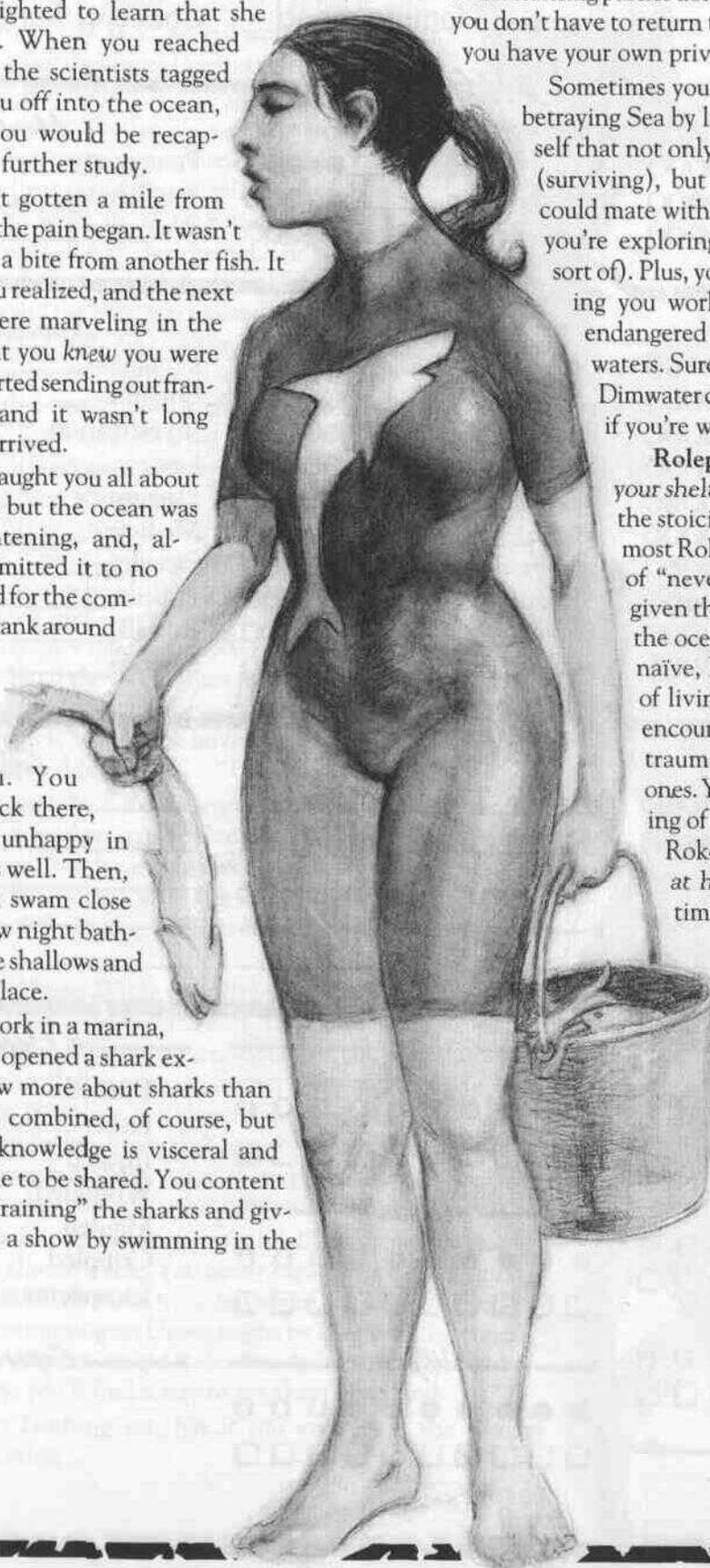
You now work in a marina, which recently opened a shark exhibit. You know more about sharks than everyone there combined, of course, but much of your knowledge is visceral and therefore unable to be shared. You content yourself with "training" the sharks and giving the tourists a show by swimming in the shark tank.

Concept: The prospect of being eaten terrifies you. You know that this seems a ridiculous concern for a shark, but your particular breed often practices cannibalism and someday, some shark might get lucky and catch you off guard. It's safer on land — at least, as long as the hunting parties don't find out where you are. But you don't have to return to the open sea for a while — you have your own private Sea.

Sometimes you feel guilty, as though you're betraying Sea by living on land. You tell yourself that not only are you staying safe up here (surviving), but you've got sharks that you could mate with if necessary (spawning) and you're exploring new territory (swimming, sort of). Plus, you and the company employing you work very hard to protect the endangered sharks species in the local waters. Surely even the most hidebound Dimwater can't damn you as a betweenner if you're working to save sharks!

Roleplaying Hints: Because of *your sheltered youth*, you do not have the stoicism about life and death that most Rokea have. Indeed, the notion of "never dying" seems impossible, given the number of ways to die that the ocean holds. You are somewhat naïve, however, about the "safety" of living on land, and have yet to encounter any of Unsea's mundane traumas, let alone supernatural ones. You have a better understanding of the surface world than most Rokea, but you're still pretty new at *human behavior*, and sometimes you laugh at things that aren't really funny, or ask questions that have no meaning. A lot of what you know comes from movies and the science staff at the marina, so your idea of conversation is rather skewed.

Equipment: Money, wet clothes.



ROKEA™

Name: Breed: Squamus Nature: Hedonist
 Player: Auspice: Darkwater Demeanor: Child
 Chronicle: Species: Blue Shark Concept: Shark Wrangler

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	Sharks ●●●●○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Performance	●○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●○○○	Seafaring	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Science	●○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>		<i>Gifts</i>		<i>Gifts</i>	
Allies	●●○○○	Spirit Speech	_____	_____	_____
Resources	●●○○○	Blood of the Deeps	_____	_____	_____
Rites	●●○○○	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____	_____	_____

Renown

Valor
 ○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Harmony
 ●○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Innovation
 ●●○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Rank

Rage

●●●○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Conscience

●●●●●○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

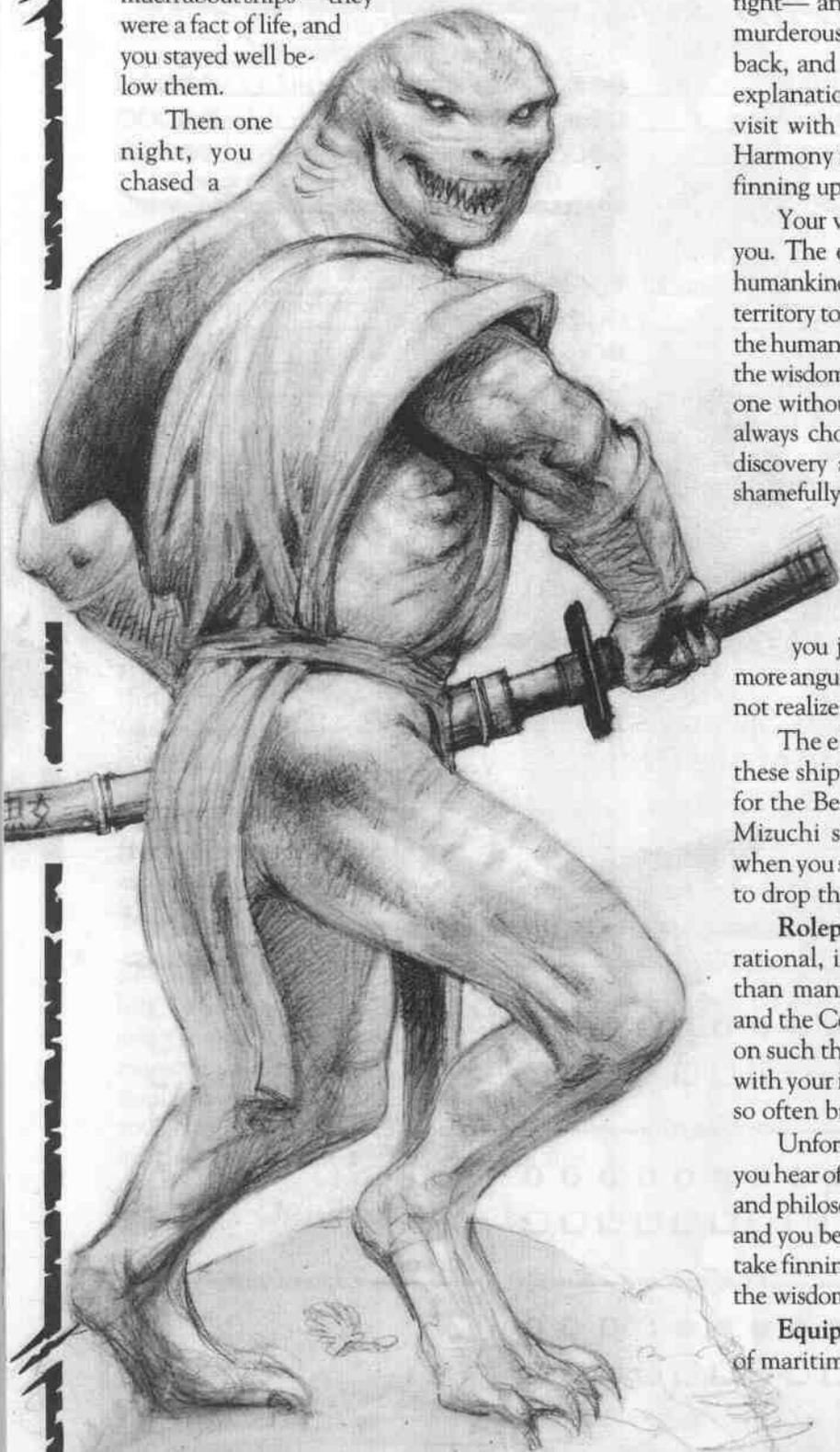
Experience

Finning Survivor (Same-Bito)

Quote: *Your love of a certain food is so great you would mutilate us for it? Perhaps I should bite off your legs and see if you can crawl to a hospital?*

Prelude: You were born in the Sea of Japan. You grew to maturity eating squid and fish, keeping to the temperate waters just below the sunlit zone. You never cared much about ships—they were a fact of life, and you stayed well below them.

Then one night, you chased a



squid right into a net. You were pulled onto the boat, thrashing, snapping your jaws, but to no avail. The strange creatures on the ship held you down and you felt a pain like nothing you'd ever known, first on your back, then your sides. They dropped you back into the ocean, and you thought you would live, until you tried to swim and found you could not. Your blood in the water attracted another shark, and you instinctively tried to fight—and instead grew until you were as big as the murderous ship still floating above you. Your fins grew back, and the shark that found you made some quick explanations—after you finished with the crew. Your visit with Sea told you that your job was to enforce Harmony in the oceans. You didn't need to be told that finning upset that Harmony.

Your visit with the Beast Courts, however, confused you. The elders told you that you were not to war on humankind, but also to protect sacred territory. Sacred territory to you is the ocean, and protection means killing the humans who would dismember your brethren. You see the wisdom in both edicts, yet you do not see how to fulfill one without breaking the other. Given the choice, you always choose to protect your home. If the elders fear discovery and retribution from the humans, that, you shamefully feel, is their own dilemma.

Concept: Since your Long Swim, you have made special efforts to target (and sink) finning vessels. You don't care if the people who crew them are servants of Qyrl or not, you just want them dead. In your heart, you feel more anguish than anger against these humans—do they not realize the agony they put their victims through?

The elders have told you that sinking too many of these ships will draw attention and will be dangerous for the Beast Courts. You are aware that the Code of Mizuchi says that you must respect the elders, but when you see ships pulling sharks out of the water, only to drop their bloody carcasses back...

Roleplaying Hints: You are capable of having rational, intelligent conversations—much more so than many weresharks. You are interested in honor and the Code of Mizuchi and different interpretations on such things. Other hengeyokai are often impressed with your imaginative questions, especially from a race so often branded as primitive and stupid.

Unfortunately, you shock them horribly the instant you hear of or see a finning vessel. All of your intelligence and philosophy goes straight out the proverbial window, and you become a bloody avenger, the Sea's justice. You take finning as a personal injury and though you may see the wisdom in restraint, it just doesn't sink in.

Equipment: Cheap (but dedicated) clothes, book of maritime and fishing law.

ROK&A™

Name: Breed: Squamus (Tangaroo) Nature: Fanatic
 Player: Auspice: Dimwater (Koshoku) Demeanor: Curmudgeon
 Chronicle: Species: Tiger Shark Concept: Finning Survivor

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	●●●●●	Animal Ken	●●●●●	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●●●●	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●	Etiquette	●●●●●	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●●●	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●●●●	Seafaring	●○○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Rituals	●●●●●
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●●●●	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>		<i>Gifts</i>		<i>Gifts</i>	
Allies	●●●●●	Sense Threat	_____		_____
Mentor	●●●●●	King Fish	_____		_____
Remora	●○○○○	Killing Bite	_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____
	○○○○○		_____		_____

Reputation

Valor
 ●○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Harmony
 ●●○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Innovation
 ○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Rank

□□□□□□□□□□□□

Rage

●●●●●○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Anaesthesia

●●●●●○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised
 Hurt -1
 Injured -1
 Wounded -2
 Mauled -2
 Crippled -5
 Incapacitated

Experience

Notable Rokea *Barnacle Lil*

Fishermen in Australia tell stories of a famous shark fisherman called Alf Dean, who broke the record for the largest shark ever brought on board by rod and reel — four times. The shark he could never catch, however, was nicknamed Barnacle Lil.

Barnacle Lil is a Brightwater, and in 1959, before her Long Swim, she was baited into biting Dean's hook. They fought for over five hours, Dean wrestling with the line, Lil trying to break away. Finally, as she was tiring, a new sensation came to her — death was imminent. Desperate to survive and identify this new sensation, she dove, pulling with her Dean's line, rod, reel, and seven feet of the boat's railing.

Barnacle Lil — or Hunted-By-All-Men, as she is known to the Rokea — survived to become a great warrior for the Kunspawn. She never joined a slew, preferring to swim alone. She cruises the waters of Australia and New Zealand — and sometimes the docks and ports — to this day. No fisherman has succeeded in catching her (as a shark or a woman) since Alf Dean. They have tried, of course. As a woman, she is oddly attractive, especially for a Rokea. She has a direct, blunt manner and a love of the sea that any fisherman or surfer can feel. As a shark, she is over 25 feet long and weighs close to 4500 pounds — a sure record for the fisherman who lands her.

Lil is notable chiefly for her fame among the humans. Darkwaters of her acquaintance are quick to remind her that the dirtwalkers wish to show their respect for her by dragging her from the water and slaughtering her, but she is still flattered by the attention. If she hears a fisherman call her by name while cruising the Bight, she leaves his ship in peace. If a fisherman aims a harpoon or bang stick at her, she leaves his ship in pieces.

Bleeds-Night

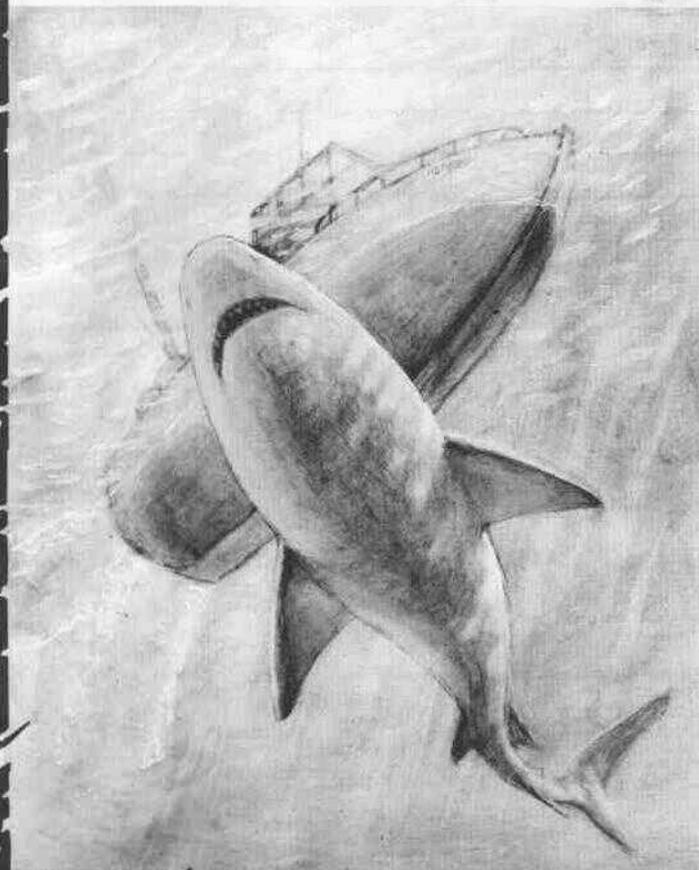
The betweener known as Bleeds-Night is young for his rank. A Darkwater in the Cold Sea, he has only swum the seas as a Rokea for three decades, and has spent the last ten years living on Unsea. He first ventured inland as part of a Hunt — already a Darkwater in the Shallows, he assisted in the search for a rogue Rokea called Bloody Stripes, a Brightwater who had embraced Qyrl as his totem. The slew, which included Bleeds-Night, two Brightwaters still on the Surface, and a rather hidebound Dimwater called Guards-the-Shoals, found Bloody Stripes hiding out in Tampa. They attacked, certain of victory in their numbers.

The result was tragic. Bloody Stripes fought them not with tooth and claw, but with silver. He slew both Brightwaters before either of them realized what was happening. Bleeds-Night fought back, injuring the rogue, but Guards-the-Shoals fled for his life. Bleeds-Night, alone and wounded, managed to turn Bloody Stripes' silver weapon on him. Bloody Stripes fell dead, changing back into Swimming Jaws, just as the police arrived. What they found was a naked black man, bleeding from a bite wound, surrounded by the corpses of three sharks — and to crown it all, Bleeds-Night spoke exactly three words of English ("I don't understand").

Escaping the police required Bleeds-Night to venture to Unsea's Soul. He found it fascinating, strange, and even a bit frightening, but certainly not the pit of certain doom that he'd been warned about. He decided to return to Sea to tell the Rokea that Unsea's Soul might hold some answers to the modern world and its trials. When he did return, however, he found himself marked for death.

Guards-the-Shoals arrogantly believed that since he couldn't defeat Bloody Stripes, there was no way Bleeds-Night could have done so. When he found that his slew-mate was still alive, he decided that Bleeds-Night must have sided with Qyrl rather than face death. Enough Rokea believed him that the Darkwater had to flee again — back to Unsea.

Since then, Bleeds-Night has learned more about the surface world than any single Rokea in the Sea. He holds down a job, pays his taxes, and still manages to





fulfill his duties as one of the Kunspawn. Over the years, he has made contact with many betweeners, and teaches them about the surface world and how best to avoid the Hunts. He has also ventured into Unsea's Soul many times, and is probably the most knowledgeable Rokea alive with respect to the Umbra.

Guards-the-Shoals has been hunting him during all of this, of course. Most recently, the Dimwater's priorities changed. The New Wound — the ominous Red Star — promises some ill tides for the Rokea, and no Darkwater in the Sea can offer any explanation or hope. Guards-the-Shoals, as much as he hates Bleeds-Night, believes that the betweener may just hold the answer. Bleeds-Night, however, has no idea why the Hunts for him have grown so vigorous lately. He just makes his way through life as a simple man in Southern Florida, surviving.

Mizuchi

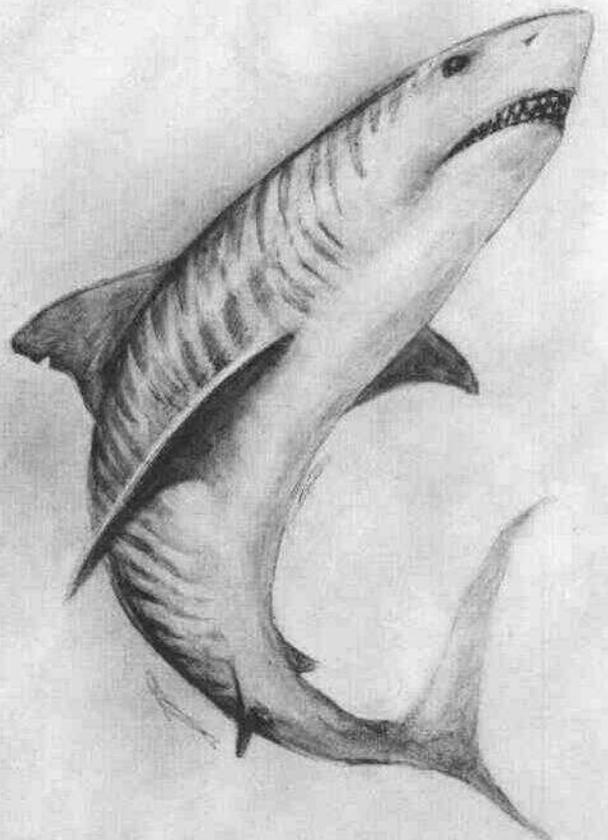
By turns lauded as a hero and teacher or reviled as a traitor, Sensei Mizuchi does indeed swim the seas today. A Darkwater by birth (or Irono, as his kind are called among the Same-Bito), Mizuchi was approached in the distant past by Meiyung, a Zhong Lung. She spoke with him and found him to be curious about the surface and about other Changers, and told him to

invite his elders to meet with the Zhong Lung and to learn from them.

Mizuchi returned to the Sea and gathered as many Rokea as he could, and told them of Meiyung's offer. Most scoffed, and some accused him of lying. The more dogmatic of the Rokea asked why the Zhong Lung needed to teach them anything; the Kunspawn were doing well, and the Dragons should mind their own business. Mizuchi, unable to respond to this logic, called upon Meiyung. She appeared and asked the Rokea to join the Beast Courts of the hengeyokai personally.

A great many Rokea refused, but some chose to stay. These weresharks prospered and became the Same-Bito, and Sensei Mizuchi became their leader and teacher. He created the Code by which the Same-Bito live, and guided them for many years. He disappeared before the First World War, and has not been seen since.

The truth is that Mizuchi is confused and ashamed. The Beast Courts are no better than the Sunset People — they, too, staged a war against each other. The difference is that the Rokea were intelligent enough to *stay out of it and stick to the Sea*, while the Same-Bito took part in the slaughter. The youthful curiosity and the pride that a powerful being such as Meiyung wished to teach him has given way to the nagging feeling that perpetrating a split in the Kunspawn was horribly wrong. He has slowly begun to nudge Same-Bito into



leaving the Beast Courts and rejoining the Rokea proper, but centuries of tradition die hard.

For the moment, Sensei Mizuchi swims Sea's Soul, searching for a way to reunite the Same-Bito and the Rokea before the Great Unmaking occurs.

The Betweenner Trio

Blood-Scent, Half-Tail, and Sees-Leagues are all Brightwaters in the Open Sea. They are believed dead by most Rokea, save for the hunting parties that know the truth. They are the first betweenners.

The three of them ventured onto Unsea in 1981 to track down a wereshark who had decided to live on land exclusively. They did indeed find this Rokea, who gave himself up (knowing that he couldn't fight three Brightwaters). He offered to return to Sea with them, but asked if they wouldn't like to explore Unsea a bit first. The trio, curious and excited to be on land, agreed. The land-dweller introduced them to human foods, cultures, language, music — and sex.

By the time they were ready to leave, Bloodscent (the only female in the group) was with child. Their guide explained that if she changed shape, she would lose the baby. She would have to remain on land for the full gestation period if she wished the child to be born. The three Brightwaters discussed the matter, and

decided that Bloodscent had only been following the Rokean imperative to Spawn when she conceived the child. The land-dweller returned to the Sea (or so he said) and the trio remained on Unsea until Bloodscent was ready to deliver.

During their time on Unsea, the three Rokea grew to enjoy living above the waves. They visited Sea regularly, even Bloodscent (in Homid form, of course) and spent their days learning about humanity. When it was time for Bloodscent to give birth, her son was born without complications, and the three Rokea left Unsea soon after, leaving the child as a ward of the state.

When they returned to Sea, however, they found themselves longing for Unsea. They had made friends, and while the notion of staying in one place for the rest of their lives wasn't appealing, the idea of exploring Unsea's vastness certainly was. They made the choice to swim between Sea and Unsea, thus became the first true betweenners.

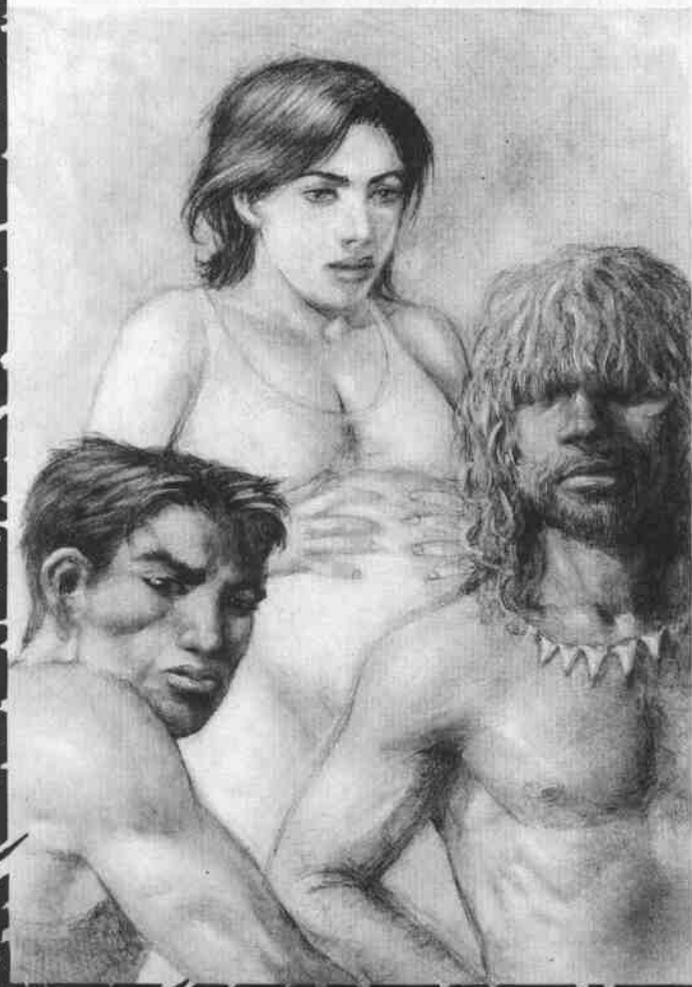
Bloodscent has had an indeterminate number of children over the years, and Half-Tail and Sees-Leagues have also sired their share of *kadugo*. Some hunting parties pursue the trio and their offspring, but while one of their children occasionally falls prey to the Hunt, no hunter has faced the betweenner trio and returned to Sea.

Swims-the-Small-Seas, the "Coff-Man"

Swims-the-Small-Seas is a cub shark, capable of swimming in fresh and salt water. An especially aggressive Dimwater, he would often swim upriver in many continents, looking for Qyrlings that might escape the notice of the Rokea.

One day, he followed a small cargo ship into South America along the Amazon river. The ship was crawling with Qyrlings, and he realized that the ship's cargo was probably tainted as well. When the ship docked, Swims-the-Small-Seas found himself in a war camp, full of humans dressed identically, carrying odd, foul-smelling weapons. He didn't know quite what was happening, but he understood some Spanish and caught the words *guerra* (war) and *lobo* (wolf). Investigating further, he discovered that these men were tearing apart the jungles and that their efforts were tainting the river, slowly but steadily.

Swims-the-Small-Seas decided he couldn't allow this, and, staying in the jungle, he attacked and killed many of the men. But there were always more, arriving by boat, and eventually they began sending deformed, disgusting monsters as well. And Swims-the-Small-





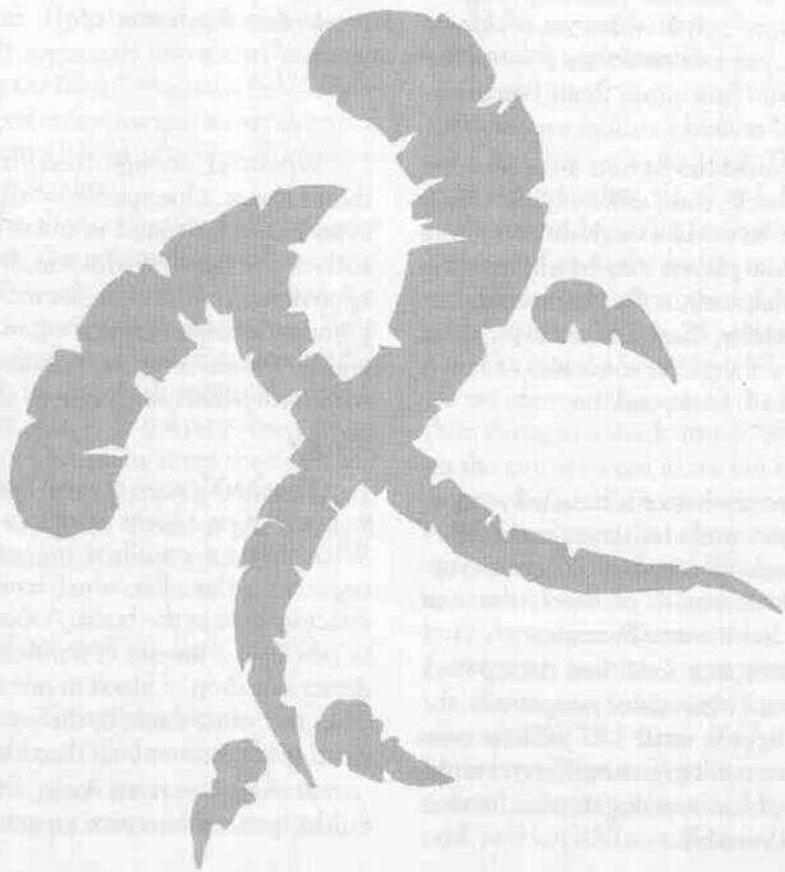
Sea kept meaning to go back to Sea, but there was always more work to do in the jungle....

Time went by, and one day, months after he had arrived, Swims-the-Small-Sea changed to Gladius form again to battle the despoilers. After tearing them apart, he heard people coming. He knew from their language that they were natives, not soldiers, so he tried to change to Homid form so as not to frighten them unduly...

...and found he could not.

The Rokea had lost his shapeshifting powers forever, having stayed away from Sea for too long. His ability to survive in fresh water allowed him to keep his Gnosis, but he could not longer assume Swimming Jaws, his natural form. Terrified and a little unhinged, he crashed into the jungle, vowing that if Sea wished him to stay here, he would, and he would kill any human who dared despoil the Small Sea.

The war rages on in the Amazon, and sometimes the Garou come upon bodies torn apart by a shapeshifter with jaws like they have never seen. Most Garou blame the Mokolé, but some tell stories of a monster come from the river to take revenge upon Pentex... and they don't know how right they are.





Appendix

"I couldn't possibly write Jaws today. We know so much more about sharks— and just as important, about our position as the single most careless, voracious, omnivorous destroyer of life on earth — that the notion of demonizing a fish strikes me as insane."

— Peter Benchley

The shark, as the reader has by now ascertained, is one of the most remarkable, most efficient, and oldest predators on the planet. Its world is vastly different from our own, such that, while players may be interested in playing a wolf-born character, a fish-born character seems impossible. Hopefully, the information provided in this chapter will give the player some idea of how a normal shark lives, breeds, feeds, and dies.

The Basics

Sharks belong to a subclass of fish called elasmobranchs. This group also includes skates and rays — fish with skeletons made of cartilage. There are approximately 390 known species of shark, the vast majority of which are harmless to humans.

Sharks have an unbroken fossil line dating back nearly 400 million years. To give some perspective, the first dinosaurs didn't appear until 150 million years later, and the human race isn't even a million years old. The great hunters have been roaming the seas for time out of mind, and still do today.

Wherever enough food to sustain them exists, sharks thrive. One species — the Greenland shark — even lives year round in polar waters. Some species, such as the oceanic whitetip, lives exclusively in the open ocean (and as such, is rarely blamed in attacks on humans, except perhaps when ships sink or planes crash). Others migrate hundreds of miles to breed, while still others stay close to shorelines year round.

Senses

The shark's sense of smell is legendary. Sharks trying to home in on a scent swim in a strange zigzag pattern. What they are actually doing is moving the water over organs called lamellae, which transmit information to the olfactory bulb in the brain. A shark can detect the scent of prey over a quarter of a mile away. Some sharks can detect one drop of blood in one million drops of water. The great white shark, by the way, has a larger and better developed olfactory bulb than any other shark.

A shark's eyes are keen, as well. Sharks can see colors, but see contrast especially well. This is why

experts avoid wearing jewelry when swimming in the ocean; if it catches the light, it can look like a fish's scales. Likewise, the light-colored palms of a diver, and the soles of his feet, flashing against the rest of his body, can resemble a school of fish. As has been stated before, sharks rarely attack human beings deliberately, but mistakes are occasionally made.

Sharks also hear very well, but a shark's ears detect more than just sound. Their inner ears work in much the same way as other vertebrates, designed to aid balance. Therefore, in addition to picking up sound, a shark's auditory system also measures gravity and acceleration.

There are two other senses that sharks use in perceiving the world. One is called the *lateral line*. This is a series of fluid-filled channels that run the length of the shark's body, fanning out on the head. These channels open into a system of pores that allows the shark to feel vibrations in the water, sometimes at more than a mile away. Such vibrations travel at about 5,000 feet per second, and sharks seem to be able to discern between the motions of something rapidly sinking and something splashing around in the water. This, coupled with their phenomenal sense of smell, helps determine if the moving object is worth swimming after.

The final sensory organs of the shark are the ampullae of Lorenzini (so named for the man who first described them in 1678). These organs, appearing as a number of pores scattered about the head, allow the shark to perceive electrical impulses. This allows the shark to detect prey hidden in sand. It apparently also allows sharks to navigate the seas using the Earth's magnetic field. There is also evidence to suggest that some species use electrical impulses to communicate (Rokea, of course, *do* communicate this way, via the Sending).

When hunting, the shark typically detects its prey first by sound. Tracking the potential meal, when the shark is within about 100 yards, it uses the lateral line, the ampullae, and its sense of smell to evaluate the prey. If the decision is "Food," the shark attacks, rushing toward the unfortunate creature and biting. At this point, the shark's sense of taste comes into play — if the prey doesn't taste like what the shark expected, many times the shark will spit it out. This is often what happens when a shark mistakes a human for a school of fish or a seal (small consolation to the human in question, usually).

Shark Attacks

"When the shark bites with his teeth, dear/Scarlet billows start to spread..."

— Bertolt Brecht, *Threepenny Opera*

For the most part, sharks will eat any living thing in the sea. Some sharks show preferences; hammerheads, for instance, hunt stingrays, while great whites

prefer pinnipeds. Tiger sharks are notorious for eating anything in their path, whether it is edible or not. Some sharks scavenge, but most hunt live prey.

A shark has several rows of teeth, and thousands of "reserve" teeth are ready to drop into place should any of the active teeth be lost. A shark may shed and replace 30,000 teeth during a lifetime. The exact shape of the teeth varies by species and even by gender (male sharks have sharper teeth than female).

Some sharks have joints on their upper and lower jaws. The result of this is that the shark can open its mouth wide enough to swallow truly improbably prey, and that it can deliver a powerful bite. The tiger shark is one such species. Such a shark could quite easily bite a human being in half.

A shark attacks from whatever angle is most convenient (not by rolling on its side, as was once believed). Sharks can extend their jaws past their snouts to attack prey from the front. Most sharks roll their eyes back in their heads at the moment of attack, to protect their eyes from the flailing of their prey. Some sharks have also been known to attack large prey (such as sea lions) and then leave them to bleed to death so as not to risk being bitten.

Sharks do attack human beings occasionally, but do not target them as a food source. In the United States, surfers and windsurfers are the most common victims, probably because they resemble seals when viewed from below. Most unprovoked shark attacks are cases of mistaken identity, or else they fall into a category called "bump and bite" attacks. That is, the shark bumps against a human being and, not knowing what it is, bites it to find out. This makes perfect sense to the shark; after all, they lack hands, and so can't reach out and feel this unfamiliar beast. Again, this is little comfort to the bitten swimmer.

The estimated number of shark attacks on humans each year is between 75 and one hundred. Of these, between 5 and 15 are fatal. The chances of dying in a car accident on the way to the beach are much higher than dying in a shark attack. Shark attacks have been on the rise in recent years, but this is attributed simply to growing numbers of swimmers and warmer waters. Additionally, studies show that shark attacks occur year round in equatorial climes, but in summer months in seasonal waters. This means that there is no particularly dangerous "shark-attack season." The attacks occur when humans are in the water.

Survivors of ship sinkings and plane crashes are also at risk. The story of U.S.S. *Indianapolis*, mentioned in Chapter One, is true (minus the Rokea, of course). The ship, torpedoed by a Japanese submarine, sank and left 850 men floating in the sea. By the time

they were rescued, only 318 sailors were left alive. Some drowned, some were murdered by other sailors for their life jackets, but most were dragged under by sharks. In situations like this, with blood in the water and a large area of the ocean being churned by thrashing bodies, sharks are likely to enter feeding frenzy, a state in which even small sharks will attack anything moving and tear off chunks.

Shark Reproduction and Maturity

Sharks, unlike many bony fishes (like tuna), reproduce very slowly. Many species mate only every two years. Gestation varies widely by species; the dogfish has a gestation period of 24 months, while the blue shark's is only nine. The method of embryonic development also depends on species, but there are three main forms: *oviparity* (in which the mother lays eggs after they have been fertilized internally), *ovoviviparity* (in which the embryos develop in a yolk sac inside the mother, but with no placental connection to her; fetuses sometimes feed on each other, with only one or two being born from a litter) and *viviparity* (in which the shark embryos begin a yolk sac, but develop a placenta-like connection with the mother).

Regardless of the method of gestation or the length, sharks receive no parental care at all. They are born with all the knowledge they need to survive, and the mother ignores them after birth.

Sharks live up to 50 years, depending on the breed. Possibly they live much longer — studying any one particular shark is difficult for any length of time. Sharks' longevity, coupled with the fact that they rarely suffer from infections and don't suffer from tumors, is one of the reasons that the shark has been regarded as a source of medicine long before the recent "squalamine" foolishness (see below).

Sharks mature slowly — some species don't reach sexual maturity until after a decade of life. As stated above, they also breed slowly. While some species give birth to litters of ten or more, it is much more common to give birth to a single pup. Maturing for the young sharks can be difficult. Sharks are cannibals, and there are other species in the sea (such as killer whales) that will feed on young sharks. Once they reach maturity, however, they have only one real enemy.

The War on Sharks

Human beings eat far more sharks than vice versa. Sharks only kill about 10 human beings a year. On the other hand, reports suggest that the worldwide catch of elasmobranchs has quadrupled in the last 5 decades (from 200,000 metric tons to 800,000). Some guesses place that figure much higher; after all, sharks caught illegally or by accident aren't reported.



The market for sharks is very high. Shark's fins (for soup) can sell for as much as \$100 a pound in California, more than twice that in Hong Kong. The practice of "finning" — catching a shark, slicing off the fins, and dropping it back in the ocean to die — although illegal in many countries, is still legal in Japan, and of course there is a vigorous poaching business. Plus, fishermen who find sharks caught in their nets now fin or kill them, when they might have once released them.

And the shark's fins are not the only useful piece, as far as humans are concerned. Shark's teeth and skin are made into jewelry. Shark's liver is used in lubricants, vitamins, and cosmetics. And, perhaps worst of all, shark's cartilage is used to prevent cancer.

Sharks do not get cancer. Why this is true is still a mystery (though it may simply be that, lacking a bony skeletal system, a lymph system, or bone marrow, that they are just not susceptible), and certainly demands some investigation — very possibly, a discovery to help human cancer victims could stem from sharks. However, some years ago, books began appearing claiming since sharks don't get cancer, making pills from their bodies would help prevent it. This is about the same as saying that powdered cat skeleton in pill form would bestow the cat's ability to land on its feet, but people buy the pills — called "squalamine" anyway. The National Cancer Institute has discovered no real evidence to support the claim that squalamine prevents cancer, but that doesn't stop fisherman from catching sharks for their cartilage, nor does it stop merchants for selling squalamine for \$100 a bottle.

The shark may be useful to humans, but it also has an important place in the oceans. The shark is an apex predator. It lives at the top of its food chain (the only animals that normally eat sharks are other sharks, if we leave humanity out of the mix, of course). And, it breeds very slowly. Kill off too many white sharks, for example, and the seal population begins to boom. This means that the fish that seals eat suffer a decline in population, and so forth.

Shark Mythology

The shark plays the roles of both benevolent guardian and vicious man-eater in coastal and islander mythologies. In Vietnam, the shark is known as Ca Ong, or "Sir Fish" and fishermen pray for his protection. In

ancient Hawaii, men were hurled to sharks to fight them with only a stick with a shark's tooth attached to the end.

In the Solomon Islands, sharks were seen as the reincarnations of honored ancestors. These sharks would appear to aid their living families and would sometimes guide lost sailors or swimmers to shore. The natives would try to gain the sharks' favor by erecting temples and praying to the shark gods.

On Samoa, the shark was seen as a servant of Moso, the god of the land. If a man wanted to keep his coconut tree safe from thieves, he would fashion a shark from the fibers and hang it from the tree. Anyone stealing coconuts from the tree risked being attacked by a great white shark when next he went to the ocean. A story exists about a Samoan convert to Christianity who mocked this legend by sticking his hands into the mouth of a shark-idol. He then went on a fishing boat and lost both arms to a great white shark.

Sharks appear in Native American legends, as well. The constellation Orion is known to some tribes of South America as the missing leg of Nohi-Abassi. Nohi-Abassi murdered his mother-in-law by feeding her to a shark, and then had his own leg cut off by his sister-in-law. Even tribes that lived far inland heard legends of sharks — some Native American tribes referred to rattlesnakes as "little sharks of the woods."

The Pacific Islanders tell stories of shark-men. One, the story of Pu'uloa, is related in Chapter One. Another famous story is of a shark that fell in love with a human woman, and so assumed human form to marry her (or at least father her child) after which he returned to the sea. Their son, Nanaue, looked human, except that he had a shark's mouth between his shoulder blades. The family was warned never to feed Nanaue the flesh of any animal, but the family broke this taboo and Nanaue learned to become a shark like his father. He was responsible for many deaths on several islands. Finally, he was caught and burned on a hill in Kain-alu, which is to this day known as Puumano, the Shark Hill. They used bamboo to burn him (sometimes the legend says they fashioned knives from the bamboo and cut him to pieces), but his death angered the gods. Ever since then, the bamboo on that hill does not burn (or is soft and useless for cutting, depending).



ROK&A™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed:
Auspice:
Species:

Slew Name:
Slew Totem:
Concept:

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Seafaring	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>	<i>Gifts</i>	<i>Gifts</i>
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____

Renown

Valor

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Harmony

○○○○○○○○○○○○
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Innovation

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Rank

Rage

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Cinasts

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Mauled -2
Crippled -5
Incapacitated

Experience

