

D E M O N C O D E X

Spectralis



Racial Sourcebook for Apocalypse Prevention, Inc.



A Racial Sourcebook for Apocalypse Prevention, Inc.



Prologue: Dreams That End and Those That Don't

She walked down the same hall she had seen for years, each step putting her one step closer to change. Christa has already made her decision, but her feet seemed to be at odds with her brain. A spiny blue demon walked by and she wondered what it was like to look so horrible (not that her appearance was any better). Another demon passed her, this one squat in stature. "Maybe like that?" she thought with a shrug.

Christa grazed critically into one of the many mirrors that lined the hallway. Her long, lank, blonde hair was a curse to her. The Sixties had doomed her to the no make-up, tight blouse, devil-might-care mini skirt, and the sexiest white leather boots that money could buy. Running her fingers through her limp hair only seemed to make it more listless. It had no life anymore and, unfortunately, neither did she. But today was the day that she might be able to put all that behind her.

"Christa Lockheart?" the voice behind her sounded. It was Chip, the lab tech she'd had her eye on for weeks. Of course, she'd never been too forward with guys so she had never done more than watch from afar.

"Um, yeah. Sorry, am I a little late?" She tried to play it cool.

The scientist smiled, completely used to dealing with nervous subjects. His bedside manner was impeccable. "Yes, but it's okay. Right this way and we can begin." He motioned to the door to her left.

She was trapped and there wasn't any getting around it now. Biting her lip as she went, Christa walked through the door to the high-tech lab. The walls were sterile white and all the equipment smelled of... well, nothing. That was a little unnerving to say the least.

"My name's Chip and I'm here to make the transition easy for you." She knew that already, but she let him continue with his introduction. "I'm here to make you as comfortable as possible and get you anything you need. If nothing comes to mind right now, though, we can go ahead and get started."

Christa wanted to ask for the world. A cheeseburger, what time it was in France, or maybe even the tail of a lobotomized duck. Anything to stall would be useful, but her mind was blank devoid of anything that wouldn't just point out how scared she was. She decided on, "Oh, nothing now, thanks."

"Could you please step onto the pedestals over there then, and we can get this puppy powered up?" He said in his kindest, gentlest manner.

She up stepped onto the platform. It seemed innocent enough, even though Christa could see the energy coursing through its base though and started to feel scared.

"Don't worry. This shouldn't hurt too much, Christa." Chip said through the loud speakersystem, causing the room to vibrate.

She hadn't noticed before that he was now speaking to her through a window to an adjoining room, quickly adjusting the volume for future communication. If it was so safe, why wasn't he staying in there with her? "Okay, I'll try," she gulped.

"Now, I need you to close your eyes and think back to your last moments before your death." She heard Chip say as she sank into her dreams.

* * *

Christa joined her usual social circle that starry night in going back to someone's lavishly decorated apartment. The silk and satin décor of the place immediately made her feel more comfortable. Her new friend Marla brought her along and it all seemed fairly innocent. The Beatles sang loudly over old speakers: "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", "Strawberry Fields Forever", "Revolution 9", and others filled the air. People tired of the Vietnam War and squaresville came together for the umpteenth time to yammer incessantly about what could be done to fix the planet. They seemed to be repeating ideas they'd already had, but it was all new to Christa. She listened to the movers and shakers of tomorrow, dancing in place to the tunes that filled the air.

One young, blonde guy talked about the inevitable paradise awaiting humankind in soothing, musical tones. Another with an afro and a dark purple dashiki declared this all a bunch of nonsense, in the most polite way possible. Paradise was such a far cry from what the people on the streets experienced every day. Paradise would only come with a revolution, one they all hoped would come never truly wanted. Some agreed, some disagreed, but the drinking and smoking made everyone mellow enough that it didn't really matter.

At what seemed like a predetermined time, the blonde guy (Emmett or John or something) brought out the paper tabs for everyone. Christa had never been sure about these things. Why did parties always have to lead to using drugs? Marla smiled lovingly as she ravenously took her hit

from him. One lick and she was swaying from side to side as if listening to the music, even though it had ended long ago and the record hadn't been swapped out yet. The blonde guy kissed all the girls on the lips as he passed out the LSD. Christa turned her cheek to him with a shy grin. She just wasn't that type of girl. He smiled brilliantly at her, as if to say, "It's okay, sister." Christa took the tab anyway and examined it. It looked like a scrap of a young girl's coloring book. Amazing how something so small could do so much.

Marla moved closer to her in the circle they sat in. "Go on, it's okay. I've done them before."

"Okay, I'll try it," Christa nodded and reluctantly licked the little square.

Marla smiled. "Emmett always has good stuff."

Christa noticed her vision getting blurry almost immediately. With the help of some random strong hands, she at least made it to the couch before completely collapsing. A girl cackled in the background, and Christa began to sweat. Attempts to move her limbs seemed to prove that she was definitely weakened and vulnerable. Her stomach felt upset, rumbling with a pain she'd never felt before.

"Don't worry, Christa. Everyone has a bad trip sometimes," Marla whispered as Christa lay almost motionless on the couch. She had no idea that this would be the final trip of her life.

Christa wrapped her arms around herself to get warmer, as the apartment seemed to get colder all of the sudden. Later, she was just curled up on the floor near a sofa. The others had all apparently left, leaving her alone with herself, her thoughts, and with the figure of a girl lying in a pool of her own vomit on the floor. How gross. She hoped the girl was still alive.

Christa got to her feet and rushed over to the lady on the floor. She tried to turn the lady over, but her hands passed right through her shoulders. This drug trip was worse than she could have imagined. Still, she worried about the

woman at her feet.

Christa jumped back, obviously startled when she saw the woman's face. It couldn't be! That face looked just like hers, like looking into a mirror. Although vomit still stuck to the woman's face, Christa knew her own face well enough to see that it was definitely her! What a dream!

The woman lay lifeless, her dull eyes staring past Christa at nothing. She paused a moment to see if the lady was breathing. She wasn't. Everyone at the party had left her lying next to a corpse! Who were these people? Certainly not her friends. A clock ticked somewhere in the apartment.

It dawned on her that if this were "real life" that, perhaps, the police might choose this moment to show up. She would get arrested, and there wouldn't be much she could tell them about the corpse or what had actually happened. They'd test her for illegal substances and book her on the spot.

Of course, this was just a nightmare. She'd soon wake up. She just had to.

If she wasn't going to wake up though, Christa had to get out of there. She sprinted for the door, but her hand went right through the doorknob as well.

"Just a dream, just a dream, just a dream," she repeated to herself. If that was the case, maybe she could just slip through the door. Christa phased through the door as if nothing were there. She didn't run into anyone while she made her way down the stair at this odd hour.

This dream was becoming very real. As the day passed on, Christa was greatly surprised at the number of people who acted like they didn't see her. In fact, she even passed right through them all, just like the door. Christa noticed that they even shuddered as she violated their space.

* * *

"Very good," Chip's voice entered her mind.

"We're getting some good readings and there's not much more to go".

Christa could hear the technicians behind Chip clicking away at switches and levers, the sounds of devices powering up and down all around her. The crackle of electricity was already coursing through her ectoplasm. It didn't quite hurt, but it was certainly unpleasant.

She didn't dare peek. Chip hadn't said to open her eyes yet, and she didn't want to mess up the process, even though she wouldn't mind looking at him again. Christa knew that her crush on the scientist was unhealthy, but she'd heard of Spectrals that could give and receive pleasure by passing through the living. She couldn't stand the idea of another relationship with someone without a heartbeat.

"Okay, Christa. We're gonna go on the next step. I need you to go back to your first run-ins with the company." Chip said. The amount of concern in Chip's voice gave her a faint glimmer of hope that perhaps he had feelings for her.

* * *

After a while, Christa began taking it for granted that no one could see or hear or feel her. Time had passed to the point that Christa was pretty sure this was no longer a dream. It seemed instead to be a new way of life, cut off from the rest of humanity. It was like the old Twilight Zone show with Rod Serling, except that she missed Rod's monolog and the opening music at the very beginning of the show. Yes, friends and neighbors, she had entered the Twilight Zone, despite her best efforts.

Deciding to make the best of a bad situation, lemonade if you will, Christa began to walk toward the nearest theatre. At least she could get in free, presumably. That was when she first laid eyes on him. He seemed to have been pursuing her for some undetermined time, but she hadn't noticed until just now.

He wore dark sunglasses, had dark, spiky hair, sharpened teeth and deep red skin. The man

dressed all in white from head to toe. He was undeniably staring at her, but no one had noticed her since she had awoken at the apartment. Christa got up and walked out of the theater. Her pursuer chose to speed up, walking through people as if they were not there. There was no doubt about it: he was making a b-line straight for her. Something about his crooked smile made Christa very uneasy.

The man called out to her, keeping his same pace, "Come to Papa, little girl. I've got something for you!" The raspiness in his voice sent shivers down her ectoplasmic spine.

Christa was afraid to speed up too much, but she wasn't sure if she could outrun "Papa" in a fair race anyway. Christa made her way through the walls of buildings. It was odd to walk through other people's apartments, having used doors all of her life. The stranger still followed her, appearing to take some sick pleasure from pursuing her. Christa was running out of places to go and Papa seemed to notice this too.

"C'mon, girlie, I'm just gonna make it worse when I finally do catch up to you," he sneered.

Christa tried not to think about what he was suggesting. She increased her speed yet again, trying to avoid slipping into a dead out run. He kept laughing, as though he were an abusive parent about to whip his already child, enjoying it entirely too much.

He gloated, "Keep it up, missy, I'm gonna take yer birthday away!" He laughed out loud at his own words.

On and on they traveled through the city. Christa would think she had lost the brute just to have him appear around the next corner like he had some kind of homing device on her. Finally, she could take it no more. She broke into a full out sprint. He-who-was-not-her-Papa laughed hysterically and spared very little energy in running after her.

Christa found herself in a very run down part of town. She gasped a little as she ran through

an old stone wall and through some rather old seeming tombstones. Something about the situation made her stop, so that she could avoid stepping on the tombstones as she had always been taught not to do as a child.

Papa stopped just outside of the cemetery and howled in anger, "You'll never get out of there alive. I'll see to that!"

Christa jumped behind a tombstone, trying to get some kind of cover against her assailant, but she didn't actually need to. Papa kept yelling horrible things at poor Christa from the edge of the cemetery, but she noticed he wasn't coming any closer. The man began picking up stones and throwing them her way. They didn't even come close to her, but she found herself ducking out of reflex anyway. It was a Mexican stand off. Neither combatant moved for some time.

Maybe an hour later (Christa cursed that she had not bothered to wear a watch to the party), she found herself still watching the man who tauntingly paced back and forth in, waiting. He had tried many different plans, but none of them had allowed him access to the cemetery. Though that didn't stop his constant shouting. Papa had a filthy potty mouth. Christa, out of necessity, learned to ignore it for the most part, but she kept her eyes trained on him.

As twilight approached, the man wandered a little closer. "You belong to me, bitch!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. Christa shuddered from all that noise after all that quiet. She wanted to say something to him, but she was not sure what. Then the tide turned.

She heard Papa scream, "Noooooooo!" to an unseen entity. He immediately did an about face and marched off back the way he had come, confusing poor Christa in the process. It was apparent that the man was not in control of himself anymore, as he walked like a goose-stepping marionette.

Christa thanked her lucky stars and started to flee as fast as her feet would carry her, but was stopped in her tracks when she saw who was

manipulating the man.

About a hundred feet away, there was another man dressed in all black in front of a high-tech van with the acronym "API" on it. He stood out from the other men in black suits behind him due to his Tom Petty top hat and groovy glasses... just her style. She started to approach the man, but hesitated slightly, only to feel her own movements being controlled as well. Her body was floating above the ground against her will, being dragged toward the man who was smiling like a spider that had caught his next meal.

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone!" Christa screamed, but to no effect. Then everything went black.

** * **

"I remember him," she heard Chip's voice coming into focus again to say. "He was the same agent that went rogue a few months later."

Christa sighed and then smiled, "Yeah. I was the one to end up stopping him and it wasn't easy."

Chip's voice smiled as well, "You have truly proven yourself as a competent and well-versed

agent, Spectral or not. That's why you've earned this treatment, and I'm happy to be the one to administer the ectoplasmic reorganization."

"Doesn't hurt that you're cute either," Christa finally got the courage to say, even though it came off like a joke. Her fear quickly reared its head again, so she moved on. "Um, when is this going to be done already?"

"Open your eyes." Chip said.

Christa opened her eyes to see Chip standing before her with a full-length mirror. She usually abhorred looking at herself, always the same face, clothes and hair since the 60s. Now, however, she saw an agent standing in the reflection. She wore a suave black suit, equal in style and quality to any of her living counterparts. Her long tie even had peace-signs on it so that she didn't forget who she truly was under her corporate makeover.

A glowing green ectoplasmic tear ran down her cheek. After all she'd been through, she had finally been accepted.

Christa was finally the agent she'd always wanted. Her dreams had been fulfilled.

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Written and Designed by

Eloy Lasanta, Josh Hilden, Stacy Gossett, Justin Bankston
and Brennan Bishop

Edited by

Lyndsey Holder and Eloy Lasanta

Artwork:

Amy Ashbaugh (pg. 23, 33, 68), Kat Burress (Cover, pg. 71, 73, 75),
Jann Galino (pg. 49), Melissa Gay (pg. 13, 36), Matthew Howerter (pg.),
Bradley McDevitt (pg. 16, 30, 41, 58), Jason McLellan (pg. 21, 27, 51, 62),
Mike Mumah (pg. 65), Jim Scanlin (pg. 44), Derek Stevens (pg. 55)

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Disclaimer: This book contains supernatural and magical themes, characters, and places. This is purely a fictional work and is for entertainment purposes only. Not recommended for those with closed minds or poor critical thinking skills.

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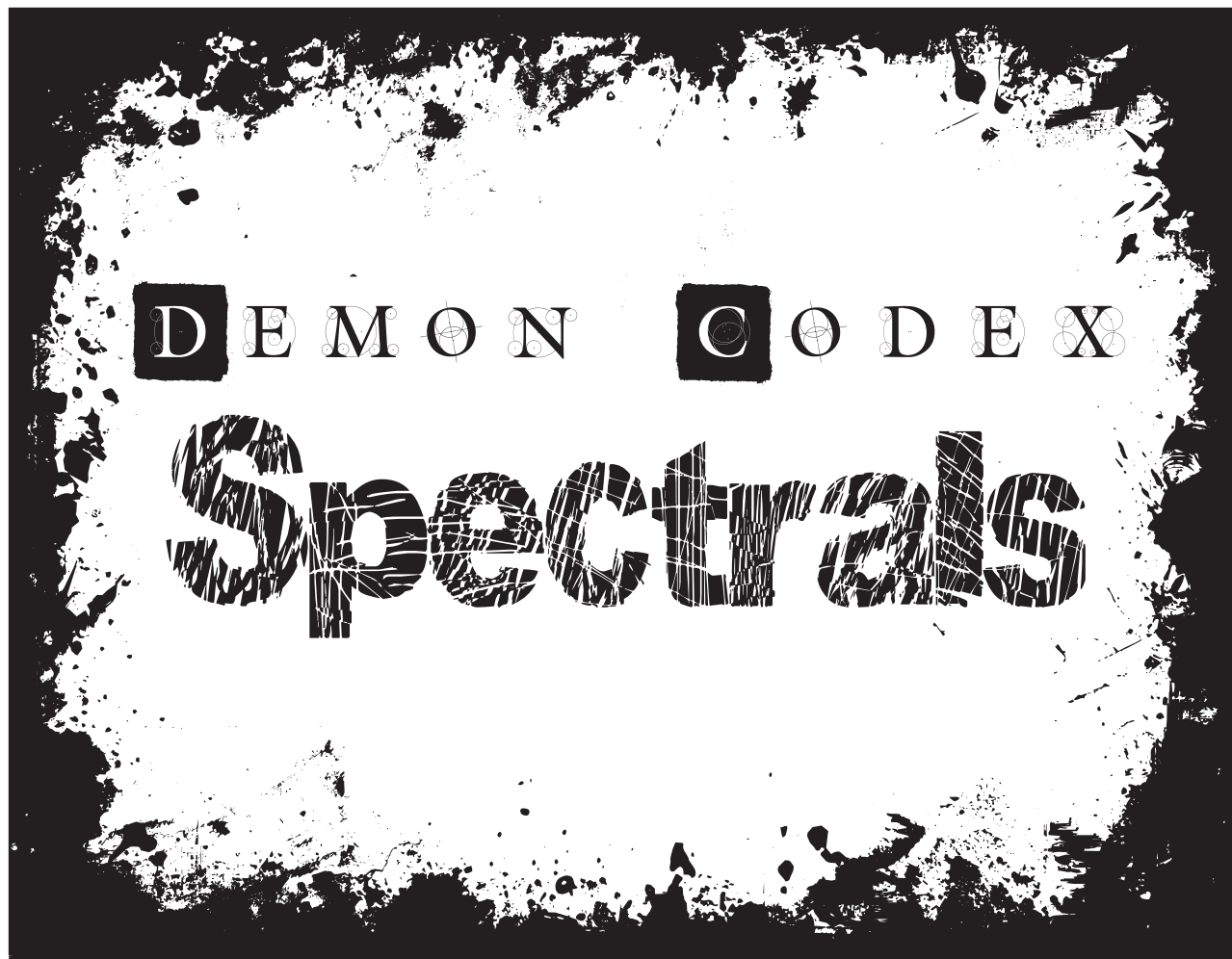


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chapter One: Life After Death

"What is death?"

"This is a question that has fascinated and terrified humanity since the very beginning of our species. Many modern philosophies and religions tell us that death is but a doorway to the next plane of existence, that what we do in the here and now is merely the audition for the next stage. The question that you should, no must, ask yourself before you continue your research and explorations into the mysteries of the afterlife is,

"If our actions in life determine the reality of our afterlife, then why do the members of the ghost community seem to be as diverse as the living?"

Quoted from "The Next Great Step: The API beginner's guide to Agent/Ghost relations"

A Brief Refresher

In the world of Apocalypse Prevention Incorporated (API), Ghosts are an everyday fact of life. From the CEO of the organization itself, to the janitor who died in the Detroit field office and has decided that he would rather continue to hang out with his still living friends and co-workers, most members of API have some form of working relationship with individuals who have passed on. But the reality of the situation is that most people have a very narrow view of the Ghost Community, and therefore ignore the fact that the dead are as varied and distinct as the living. Ghosts that are encountered on a daily basis are just as likely terrify or hurt us as they are to try and help us.

It is well known that when a human being dies they are almost always confronted by the Bright Lights that presumably will lead them on to the afterlife. This is not to say that all people see the lights as they move from a physical to a ghost existence: a significant percentage (API researchers estimate as many as 15%) never see the Bright Lights. Some of these individuals have experienced such a traumatic and horrific death (torture, rape, murder, etc) that they may actually have Bright Lights appear before them, but never see them. Others have committed acts so heinous that it is believed that they have been barred from moving on, although there are legends and rumors among the Ghost community that many of these miscreant or diabolic souls go on to become the dreaded Spirit Eaters (page 68)

Another group of people see the Bright Lights and make a conscious decision not to pass over because they feel that there is still work that they must do and goals they must accomplish before they move on. A very small number, less than one percent, of these individuals manage to hold on to their physical form and become the almost mythical Walkers (page 70).

Finally, there are the poor souls who see the Bright Lights, go to enter them, and then either have another ghost steal their doorway or are ripped away from the Bright Lights and bound to the physical world by the actions of a necromancer.

Living as the Dead

Anyone that has any dealings with the ghost community needs to remember that no matter how rational and normal a ghost may seem, they are slaves to their passions and that slavery colors all things they say or do. To be a ghost is a state that no living individual can truly grasp or even hope to understand on anything more than an academic level. To the living, the dead seem to be static and unchanging because most of the time that is the only side that the dead present to the living. If it were up to the vast majority of the

ghosts that choose to continue their existence on our plane of reality, the living would have a tighter grasp on the fact that they are unique, dynamic, and distinctive. Most of the living, however, see ghosts that surround them as one (or maybe two) dimensional creatures that are at best caricatures of the individuals they were when they were still alive.

If a ghost was in love with or felt a deep hatred toward an individual while they were still alive, these feelings are usually carried over to their new existence as one of the dead. In fact, many times these feelings will develop into overriding passion and motivation in their afterlife, and will have a significant influence on the evolutionary path that the ghost ultimately travels down. The desire to remain near and protect a former loved one or, conversely, the need to “haunt” or torment and punish the individuals that hate, becomes the bedrock upon which all other decisions are based in the future.

Ghosts need leisure activities to occupy their copious amounts of free time. It has been observed that a substantial amount of a ghost’s

Can Animals See Spirits?

Cats, dogs, and most other animals can view or at least sense the dead with no problem at all. Most animals don’t see much point in interacting with Spectrals aside from avoiding them or snarling when they get too close to their masters or offspring. Ghosts with massively disfiguring death-wounds may cause animals to flee or take up defensive positions, but beasts learn quickly that attacking a ghost is pointless. They can see them, but not smell them. To some animals, anything without a scent doesn’t exist.

Animals can reliably be used as ghost detectors even though they have a lot of false starts. Cats and dogs perk up and stare at ghosts while they are around, because they sense things on many different levels. To investigate every upturned head would be straining, but a sudden chill and a startled dog is a good start to a ghost hunt.

time, which is not dedicated to wallowing in their passions, is spent at the movies, concerts, sporting events, and other public gatherings where they can be around large numbers of living people and enjoy the collective glow of the living world. It is safe to say that one of the greatest enemies of the ghost lifestyle is loneliness and boredom.

Ghosts also love to congregate with one another. If it wasn't for the ever-lurking fear of necromancers and Spirit Eaters it would be an

Summoning the Annoyed

It is a strange feeling to be summoned. In some cases, the ghost is sitting around and minding their own business when they are suddenly pulled from their seat, and literally dragged toward their summoner. No measure of Stir to stop themselves or any attempts to possess a stationary object work can help them. They are simply drawn in a direction with no idea where they are going, whether they truly want to go or not.

Others are less lucky and are instead vaporized from their current location only to be reintegrated in the center of a circle of monks, sorcerers or stupid college kids who just don't know any better. The living may see this as a simple transfer of ectoplasmic energy from one place to another. To a ghost, however, their soul, their body, their very being is ripped apart and they feel every bit of it in excruciating detail. Even though it seems like minutes, they feel as though they are being dragged into a hell dimension for hours, only to find that they have been summoned a mere mile away.

With good reason, ghosts hate being summoned and are very ticked off when they arrive. Helpful ghosts are only acting with such benevolence because they hope that they can kill the summoner's need to call them with kindness. Wise adepts know to have a Tesla Sphere (page 59) or warding magic ready to keep them at bay the moment they arrive, since they rarely arrive happy.

easy leap to assume that whole cities of ghosts might develop. There is a legend within the ghost community that such a city actually does exist: a city made from the ectoplasm of the spirit world that functions as a safe haven from the predators and villains that stalk the ghosts in their solitary existence. There are several elder ghosts (including Steven Livias a former Roman centurion who passed on in the second century AD) that claim to have visited this ethereal Shangri-La but are now unable to find it again. Whether these tales are indeed true or a fabrication is unknown even to the members of API who have studied the subject for centuries. If the reality of such a place could indeed be confirmed, the consequences would be far reaching and explosive for both the living and the dead.

Ghosts frequently suffer from severe bouts of both manic frenzy and an entropic depression that would, in all likelihood, crush any living being and drag them down the road to suicide. Being creatures composed of almost pure thought and emotion, ghosts feel to a greater magnitude than all but the most emotionally unbalanced of living people. Consider the following scenario:

It is storming outside with a temperature hovering somewhere just above the freezing mark, and a young man is trying to drive home from work after being fired because of someone else's incompetence. Traveling down the highway a woman isn't paying attention and runs him off the road while trying to change the song on her MP3 player. His car flies off the road and slams into the ditch, causing him to smash his head on the steering wheel and leaving him with a concussion and repair bills tallying over \$5000.

It's safe to assume that the man would be extremely pissed off. He might scream and rant and rave at the unfairness of everything that happened to him. He might also look around for something heavy or really sharp to attack the other cars and drivers on the road. The average person may try to calm down, find their cell phone or walk to a pay phone and call for help. A ghost confronted with such a frustrating situation would be much more likely to attack the environment (people, places, and things) around them

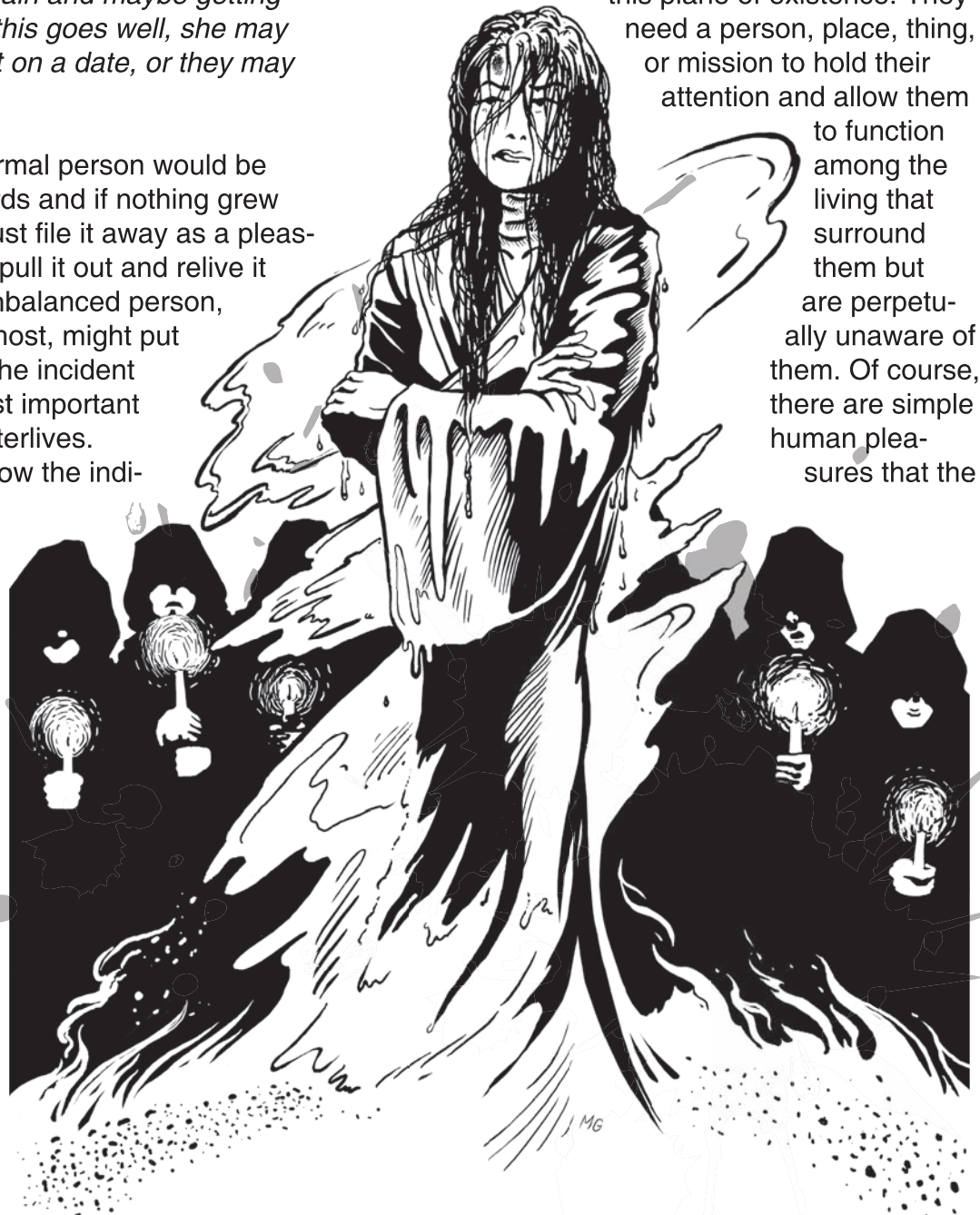
in an effort to vent and express what they are feeling, illustrating that the emotion and passion of the situation is everything to the ghost. Conversely, consider the following situation:

A young woman is walking through the park on her lunch hour. The sky is clear and a warm breeze brings to her the smell of fresh roses. As she passes a bench, a very attractive young lady (or gentleman) sitting there compliments her on some aspect of her appearance. This gesture makes her feel like a million bucks for days. She may purposely walk through that same section of the park on her lunch hour on the hopes of seeing the individual again and maybe getting to know them better. If this goes well, she may eventually ask them out on a date, or they may ask her out.

In this scenario, a normal person would be happy with the kind words and if nothing grew from them they would just file it away as a pleasant experience. Maybe pull it out and relive it from time to time. An unbalanced person, and to some extent a ghost, might put so much meaning into the incident that it becomes the most important thing in their lives, or afterlives. They might begin to follow the individual, leave them gifts, or constantly find a reason to bump into them on the streets. A living person who did this would most likely be reported to the police and may even be jailed or institutionalized. However, a ghost in this same situation would almost certainly never, or rarely, be seen by the target of their affection (or obsession). The ghost would devote all of their time and energy into the act of being with the person that

they loved. The ghost would most likely become similar to a guardian angel to the person and in extension that person's family and friends, as long as the ghost maintained only positive feeling towards them. A ghost that felt slighted and unappreciated could easily turn on them and attempt to terrorize and harm them. Such a ghost would become the ultimate stalker and it would take the services of a paranormal professional to remove them from the lives of those they have targeted.

All of this is a demonstrative way of saying that ghosts need a reason to hang around on this plane of existence. They need a person, place, thing, or mission to hold their attention and allow them to function among the living that surround them but are perpetually unaware of them. Of course, there are simple human pleasures that the



Stealing Bliss

Jack felt the crushing weight on his chest. He tried to draw in a breath, but all that came was a harsh, sucking feeling as whips of air made into his lungs. The stiffness in his arm had proceeded to crawl up into his shoulders and settled on top of his heart. He knew he was dying: his grandfather had passed on from a heart attack twelve years ago and Jack was intimately aware of the signs and symptoms. If only he could have seen Kelly one more time, if only he could have told her how much he loved her. If only he could have told her to watch out for that son of a bitch neighbor, Anderson. He knew that as soon as he was dead that asshole would try and get into Kelly's pants!

The light was fading and the other commuters on the subway were crowding around his shuddering form as he writhed on the floor of the car. He felt his bladder and bowels begin to loosen and had a moment of involuntary shame as he imagined the doctors trying to explain this to his wife. As the people in front of him became indistinct and shadowy, a very bright light was beginning to gain in intensity right behind them.

The pain began to recede and Jack suddenly felt very light and full of energy. How could he have just been feeling shame and worry? Everything was going to be alright - he knew it. Jack was suddenly reminded of the June day that he and Kelly had taken their daughter, Tina, to the circus. The doctors had told them that their beautiful six year-old daughter would never see the age of seven - the cancer was just too all encompassing. It was the last family outing they had taken before she died seventeen years ago. Tina loved it all: the elephants, the clowns, and especially the food (cotton candy and funnel cake being her absolute favorites).

Jack got up and walked toward the lovely pillar of Bright Light in front of him. Was that music he was hearing? Far in the distance he could swear he heard the sounds of a Nickelodeon and smelled... was that cotton candy? Jack didn't even look back at the crumpled and foul smelling shell that had once housed his essence. His only concern was the growing sounds and smells coming from the pillar of light.

"Daddy, are you coming?" A small and enchanting voice he had not heard since he had burned all of the home movies one drunken night eleven years ago called out to him.

"Tina?" Jack called out toward the pillar of light.

As he stopped in front of the light, a small hand emerged and took his. "Come on daddy, I want to see

the elephants," a voice said, and Jack Clark stepped into the light and out of this world.

In the corner of the subway car, a young man dressed in motorcycle leathers sporting hideous rips and gashes up the entire right side of his body that bled but always looked wet, watched the translucent form of the dead business man rise from his shell and walk into the light. He heard the man call out to somebody that wasn't there, then reached out to take hold of empty air before walking into the light.

Patrick O'Reilly had died thirty-two years ago in Chicago. He and his motorcycle run off the road by a drunk driver. The lights had appeared to him, but a feeling at the back of his head had told him that he needed to stay where he was - that there was work for him to do. For many years following his denial of the Bright Lights, he thought he had made a tragic mistake. Twenty-seven years later when his first grandchild was being born, he stopped a nurse from injecting his daughter with a medication that she was allergic to. He was sure that his purpose had been fulfilled.

Patrick began traveling the world to see all of the things that he had never seen in life, but quickly became very bored. Three years ago he met another Spectral, Steven Livias, in New York City, and the two struck up a fast friendship. Patrick's six years in the United States Marine Corp and tour in Vietnam resonated with the former Centurion. Steven immediately knew that Patrick would make an excellent addition at API.

He decided just last year to answer the constant nagging of Steven and joined up with API as a field agent. Previously, he felt that the decision had been a colossal mistake, as all he had been doing was watching his surrounding and waiting for something to report. Now he felt that he may have something to tell his handlers about. Few and far between were the first hand stories about individual Spectrals passing on into the Bright Lights.

"Now that was one lucky guy," Patrick said to himself. He had heard that it was possible to steal somebody else's lights, had met other Spectrals that it had happened to, but felt that kind of punishment just wasn't right. Still that was one lucky guy; he looked so happy. This was the first time Patrick had been right by someone as they crossed over, and the experience could be put into any words he had at his command.

One thing was bothering him: why did he smell cotton candy too? And why did he now want to make the trek out to Chicago and check on his family so badly?

ghosts can still experience to one degree or another.

Simple Pleasures

The simple pleasures that can help to fuel, or even ignite, the passions of the individual ghosts and more fully anchor them to the earthly plane are really nothing more than the things that humans and their demon cousins take for granted every day. This is not to say that ghosts experience these pleasures in a fashion that mirrors the way that living humans do, but the intensity of the experience can be comparable if not superior. While simple pleasures might not be enough to fuel long term passions, they can be enough to not move on to the next plane of existence.

The senses of taste and smell definitely help to anchor a ghost to the mortal plane of existence. All ghosts seem to revel in the simple joys that are eating and drinking. It doesn't have to be fine cuisine or expensive wines to hold the attentions of the ghost either. In fact, the stronger the flavor and odor, the more a ghost can enjoy the dish. Ghosts don't need to eat or drink, and they receive NO benefits from doing so, but the ghosts ectoplasmic form can imbibe solids and liquids and absorb them into their form. To a mortal observing the eating habits of a ghost, it would seem that the ghost is swallowing the food whole - like a duck - and drinking without swallowing - simply pouring the liquid down their throats. Oddly enough, even though the mass is incorporated into the ghost's ectoplasm, there is no perceivable increase in the ghost's mass and lost ectoplasm is not replaced.

A ghost's ability to taste and smell food is severely limited. A well prepared meal may make a living person's mouth fill with saliva at the first whiff and satiate the taste buds with the first bite but not so with a ghost. To a ghost the smell and taste of fresh food are fleeting and transitory. In order to really enjoy what they are experiencing, the food and drink need to be thoroughly spoiled and nearly rotted. The more intense the odor, the better the ghost likes it. Though it still may take a new ghost some time to become comfortable with the idea of consuming what they once would have considered fetid trash.

Sight and sound are the only two senses that ghosts seem to have retained with the same intensity that they had when they were still alive. Some feel that the senses are actually heightened beyond the normal human level although this has never been proven or disproven. Ghosts love to experience movies, music, and television even more than the living population, if such a thing is possible. Whole communities of transient ghosts have come together with the sole purpose of following various musicians and traveling stage productions all across the globe. It is said that, at the height of the Deadhead movement, more than two hundred ghosts were following the Grateful Dead around the United States of America. A small research initiative jointly conducted between API and the Marquette Institute found that many within the ghost community has a strong affection for the Star Wars movie franchise and that the premiere of the final instalment had as many as one hundred ghosts in attendance. This could have ended in tragedy due to the presence of a dozen Sprit Eaters all working independently, but agents of API were also in attendance and managed to protect the ghosts present.

The Bright Lights

As far back as researchers have delved into the mists of human mythology and oral traditions, there are stories of the "Bright Lights" that appear when a person dies. Many scientists at API and allied institutions still claim that the Bright Lights are nothing more than the final firing of neurons and synapses in the human brain as it shuts down during the death process. On the theological side of the debate is the belief that the Bright Lights are the doorway to the afterlife that so many of the world's religions and belief structures promise their devotees. The problem with both of these schools of thought is that most of the circumstantial and anecdotal evidence used in reaching these conclusions come from living people that were brought back from the brink of death and not from those who have actually died and stayed dead.

While most ghosts see the Bright Lights upon their deaths, some do not. For those who don't see the lights when they die, it is an experience that they are never comfortable discussing. This type seems to be the least common, making up less than 5% of the overall population, but they are the most strongly disinclined to seek out companionship. The few that have been willing to discuss the fact that their lights decided not to show (in return for potentially finding a way for the living to see the lights in the future) have revealed a few facts about their circumstances both before and after they died. They were very

depressed or angry individuals while they were alive, and usually still are. They were loners when they were alive and have remained loners in their afterlives. They do not feel that they have earned the right to go to heaven, nor do they feel they need to be sent to hell. They feel no strong connections to anybody who has died in their lives. Many are people that have lived through horrible traumas (rape, attempted murder, mental breakdown, etc) but have never made any real progress toward recovering from these tragedies. What one must remember about these poor souls is that though they never saw the lights. Al-

though, this doesn't necessarily mean that the lights never appeared to them. They may just have been incapable of seeing what was right in front of them. In many ways they are some of the saddest and most pitiful beings on the face of the Earth.

Those who have seen the lights and wanted to move on but were robbed of that reward are the second most common type of ghost, making up perhaps 25% of the ghost population across the world. In the moral framework that exists for the members of the ghost community, this is the most hideous and unforgivable of acts that one ghost can commit against another, and yet many of the ghosts that wander the world completely understand the desire to cross over by any means necessary. They would just never do it regardless of how much they wanted to.



While it is impossible for API researchers to interview ghosts that have stolen another's access to the Bright Lights for obvious reasons, extensive interviews have been conducted with those who knew them before their crime. After reading through this information, a few things can be taken with a fair degree of certainty to be generally true. Most feel that they have accomplished the tasks that have kept them bound to the mortal plane after their deaths. This is perhaps the most common belief held by ghosts that steal the light. They might be angry at a universe that has seen fit to keep them imprisoned on this level of reality, a feeling that seems to be more common among elder ghosts. For others, their desire to see others that have passed on before them has become more important to them than any other passion. This feeling is especially true of parents that have stayed behind just to watch over their children pass through their own Bright Lights and leave them behind.

Far and away the bulk of the Ghost community is made up of ghosts that have decided that it was just not the right time for them to pass into the Bright Lights. When asked directly as to why they decided to stay behind, there are generally only two different replies that they will give. The most common is that they simply were not ready to move on, still so much in this world that they wanted to see and do. Besides, they usually say, most believe that they could conjure up the lights again and move on whenever and wherever they wanted to.

The other response is a bit more cryptic and hard to explain: they just knew that they had a task that they had to accomplish. Whether this task is protecting a person or place or to deliver information that only they have in their possession, the ghost considered it the most important thing in the universe. More often than not, these ghosts gave up all desire to move on and now follow a path that leads to them eternally performing some version of their initially-perceived duty.

Others are driven by love. API researchers have hammered out a fairly consistent profile of a Ghost that chooses to remain behind. They more

often than not have a family or circle of loved ones that they care for and do not want to leave behind. Often these individuals feel that they never really accomplished anything of substance in their lives. Josh Sanford is perfect example of this.

Josh Sanford, head of Custodial Services at the API Detroit Field office, died in the 1940's. Although he never considered he was anything more than a cog in the machine, he loved working for the company (even if it was only in a support capacity). When he died, he decided to stay behind and continue to do what he loved. In December of 1987, when a still unidentified group of enemies invaded the Detroit field office in order to attempt a core dump of the office's mainframe, Josh found himself acting as the last hope of his friends and coworkers. With most of the security agents dead, Josh had to use his skills as a ghost and the long buried training he received in World War I & II to lead the support staff in a devastating counter attack. When help arrived 16 hours later, they found the enemy agents subdued and the mainframe secured.

As Josh's story illustrates, ghosts often feel duty bound to responsibilities they embraced in life and are the most likely to work with organizations such as API.

Important Places

Ghosts are drawn to and repelled by many places across the world. It has been established by paranormal researchers that places where large groups of the living congregate tend to draw a disproportionately large number of ghosts. It is believed that the "energy" given off by such groups and the intensity of the emotions of those gathered tend to attract Ghosts like insects to a bright light. Places that tend to be shunned and avoided by the living act as a natural repellent to the ghosts as a whole. Conversely, Spirit Eaters frequently haunt these areas and use them as points to gather and rest.

Places of Attraction

There are places in the world where ghosts choose to stay - places that are considered haunted by the living. While it's fair to say that some ghosts' passions force them to make the areas they occupy unpleasant, the majority try to adhere to a live and let live policy. Misunderstandings, unfortunately, occur with terrible regularity. These misunderstandings are more often than not caused by of intervention by API or affiliated organizations.

Stadiums and arenas are like magnesium flares to ghosts. Concerts and sporting events generate large crowds well into the thousands and emotional intensities of such a magnitude that a ghost can almost feel almost alive again. The average event at a stadium can draw in up to 50 ghosts, but an event like the World Series or Super Bowl can bring in hundreds of ghosts. It was estimated by a group of API researchers that the final game of the 2004 World Series was attended by more than a thousand ghosts as they cheered the Red Sox on to victory. Some of which felt they could truly move on to the Bright Lights afterward. It has been said by some of the older ghosts that sports and music make them all equal in their deaths. As may already be apparent though, Stadiums tend to draw more than a few Spirit Eaters and necromancers who are hoping to bag their limit of unwise ghosts.

Schools and all types of learning institutions also attract large numbers of ghosts. Young people, especially elementary age children, seem to fascinate ghosts. Youthful energy brings simple joy to those that choose to stay near children and attempt to shepherd them through their development. Unlike other places where ghosts tend to come and go, schools tend to become permanent abodes. Once a ghost as taken up residence, they become very territorial and rarely allow more than three or four other ghosts to call the same campus home. A high percentage of parents that have lost their children before they passed on call schools home. These Ghosts devote all of their passion to protecting their now surrogate children. The fact that young children have a much easier time perceiving the dead has only helped to fuel the fires of this passion.

Hospitals also tend to have a high degree of ghost activity. One would think that, with the number of people who die in hospitals every day, ghosts would avoid hospitals like the proverbial plague. However, this is far from the case. Whether people are there for good or bad reasons is irrelevant - tens of millions of living, breathing people go to the hospital every day, and only a tiny percentage actually pass on. For all the sickness and sadness associated with hospitals, the average American municipal/county/university hospital will have anywhere from a dozen to fifty ghosts roaming the corridors at any given time. This draws the odd Spirit Eater as well, but oddly enough very few necromancers choose to enter and prowl the public portions of hospitals. These despicable individuals instead choose to break into morgues in hopes of picking up a few "spare parts". Facilities maintained by API and related organizations as well as those of certain secret government agencies use lifemages and ghosts themselves to maintain security against Spirit Eaters, necromancers and the occasional rogue ghost.

It would be more difficult to find a park that isn't overseen and protected by at least one ghost than one that is not. Historically, many people believed, and rightly so, that parks and protected wilderness areas were homes for benevolent or merciless beings from another plane of existence. It was thought that these beings were the legendary elves, dwarves, and faeries of myth and song. In many cases, these "spirits of nature" were actually ghosts that chose to make the care and protection of a specific land their own personal responsibility. After holy places (see below), parks and nature preserves are easily the safest places for lone or small groups of ghosts to dwell. The average size and density of these areas make it harder for Spirit Eaters to hunt. API researchers believe that Yellowstone National Park has the highest permanent concentration of ghosts in the nation. Indeed, there are so many hauntings that a great number of agents have been employed to work solely on them.

One might make the assumption that amusement parks and carnivals would be treated the

Near-Death Experiences

The crazy thing about life is that it can be extinguished so easily. Too many people die every day, but even more come very close to dying or, with the introduction of modern medicine's pharmaceuticals and healing methods, are brought back from their near-death state. Straddlers (page 63) have spoken to the voices on the other side and have already confirmed what scientists have been trying to surmise since humanity's beginning. Can a human truly get a glimpse of what lies beyond the Bright Lights?

In short, the answer is a solid no in most cases. However, near-death experiences seem to be the loophole. It is said that one sees their life pass before their eyes when they die and this is very much true. Indeed, it is believed that these visions are sent directly from their loved ones that have already passed through the Bright Lights, in an attempt to get the person close to death to fight for their lives. Those that see no visions as they die are said to be truly unloved by anyone, living or dead.

An additional affect that comes with near-death is the out-of-body experience. This is a very real thing caused by the extreme feeling that one is going to die or even a momentary death that one is eventually brought back from. For even just a few moments, they become ghosts and see themselves. However, the Bright Lights only call to the ready when the grim reaper has finally crossed them off his long, long list. Of course, Apocalypse Prevention, Inc is never one to leave a new discovery without further experimentation. An array of prototypes for machines to turn a living agent into a temporary Spectral have been built and dismantled. The latest of these scientific wonders is the Dream Machine (page 57).

same as stadiums and arenas when it come to the level of ghost activity, but that would be wrong. The transitory and seasonal nature of carnivals means they are always moving from place to place or they are closed for part of the year. The ghosts that consider the carnival home either move with the operation or are starved for contact for part of the year. This can lead to massive bouts of depression or mood swings and has been the center of many a legend regarding closed amusement parks being haunted.

When it comes to holy places (i.e. churches, temples, mosques, shrines), the average ghost tends to be of two minds. On one hand there are usually quite a few living humans present at these facilities and therefore the ghosts can enjoy the collected feelings they generate. However, holy places are a symbol of all that has been denied to them. Many a ghost decides to camp out in a place of worship, hoping the Bright Lights suddenly reappear and bring them to the afterlife. So far as anyone knows, though, this has never happened.

In the end, the most common place to encounter a ghost is in the home where they once lived. Homes are bought and sold again and again, especially in the face of recessions. A ghost could return to find their once beloved home turned into a crack house. They could choose to take up the cause of running out the drug dealers, but they might just as easily begin to feed off the despair that such places are typically filled with. More often, they find brand new families attempting to take hold of the home. Their passion consumes them and could turn them into protectors of this surrogate family or could create a classic haunting scenario. Stories of friendly ghosts can come from this, with the ghost making sure the kids don't oversleep and miss school, or attacking burglars and driving them away. In a more sinister vein, it could even turn into outright murder of anyone who enters the home.

Places of Repellence

While there are very few places in the world where ghosts actually fear to tread, there are some that they avoid if at all possible. Everyone's heard this story at one time or another:

Loops

Simple ghosts often get caught in their Passion until they lose all ability to do anything else. This occurs primarily in those ghosts that refused their Bright Lights but lack the perseverance or willpower to keep their personalities intact. They instead find their best memory linked to their Passion and repeat it indefinitely. In an abandoned building or remote location, this is totally acceptable. However, API can be called to what they think is a full-fledged haunting only to find a looped ghost that just needs to be put out of its misery. Spectrals look at these unfortunate souls as a reminder that their Passion is both a gift and curse, capable of extending their existence to further their goals or trapping their hopes and dreams into a single repeated moment.

There are times that a ghost's influence on an area is so great, even without their deliberate desire, that anyone who steps on the grounds could get caught in their looped existence. A group of agents that go to investigate the scene of a school shooting may find themselves as actors in the reenactment... complete with their updated, company weaponry. It can get even worse if investigating ghosts who committed suicide or took others with them before dying. Getting sucked into a loop has led to more agent deaths and is more common than the company lets leak out. Experienced agents know to keep an Undulating Field Generator with them at all times. Possible victims need to make a Moderate (20) INS + Discipline check when entering the area (or Tough (30) if it is a particularly strong spirit caught in the loop). A success keeps their faculties as their own. A failure means the ghosts take them over and they become actors in whatever memory the ghost is repeating.

two teenagers head to the local cemetery for a little romance and encounter the ghosts of dead lovers that want to experience that same passion through them. This is complete hogwash. If any one place on the face of the planet could be thought of as a negative zone for ghost activity it is the local bone yard. They have no desire to

remain near the physical shell that they left behind, aside from the occasional ghost who wants to observe their own burial or watch over their grieving loved ones. But they tend to leave as soon as the services are over. The one exception to this is the Mexican Day of the Dead, where it is believed, although it has never been proven, that even vile necromancers and Spirit Eaters honor the traditions of the Day of the Dead. It is a day of celebration where the devouring of lesser ghosts is frowned upon and the dead dance on their own graves. It is as close as some ghosts can get to a feeling of true happiness.

Nobody knows where Spirit Eaters hang their cloaks after a long day of hunting ghosts, but they can frequently be found in the vicinity of morgues and mortuaries. These repositories of the flesh seem to be the places where necromancers and Spirit Eaters get together for reasons that are only known to them (and perhaps some of their victims). It really goes without saying that the average ghost avoids these places like the plague.

Battlefields also emit a strong repelling force that even the average living human can feel. There has never been a definitive study as to what causes this phenomenon, but there can be little doubt that it is very real. After truly terrifying wars, the area becomes tainted with the ghosts of those that were killed in combat, sometimes even forcing the war into a perpetual loop. Here, they fight again and again until they die a thousand deaths or until their war is forgotten. This type of atrocity means that some soldiers, no matter how vigilant or honorable, will never see their Bright Lights.

Even the Dead Feel Fear

No matter how invincible a ghost may feel (being, as they are, incorporeal and dead already), there are a few things which every ghost fears. There are threats to everyone in existence, even the dead.

Exorcists

In less-modern times, tribal shaman were often tasked with expelling spirits of the already departed from the mortal plane. Even today, modern exorcists still perform the same duties, but their methods and reasons have changed. Most surprisingly, exorcists are just regular people with a gift of expelling ghosts and spirits. Nowadays, they look like regular people, and only don their ceremonial garb if absolutely necessary.

Ghosts hate exorcists. It's really as simple as that. Most ghosts, however, are frustrated by their inability to do anything to stop an exorcist from doing his or her job. The power that they have to banish a ghost means that very few ghosts have encountered an exorcist and lived to tell the tale. Those few that have escaped with their ectoplasm intact almost never learn the true identity of their would-be destroyer. Ghosts have a near-instinctual compulsion to attack everyone that they identify as an exorcist with very few exceptions, which can lead to many problems. The aura of an exorcists is similar to that of other adepts, leading to several "look-alike" attacks. Even though exorcists expel only the most dangerous ghosts, most ghosts feel that exorcists have no right to judge which ghosts deserve to be exorcised and which do not.

Necromancers

After exorcists come the often feared and always hated necromancers - adepts that actively practice the darker side of the Path of Death. This magic gives them the power to harm, affect and control all manner of ghosts and spirits. There is very little a ghost or spirit can do to defend against a necromancer's power. The most dangerous power of the necromancers is their ability to enslave ghosts. They are able to turn a ghost into a sort of marionette and will them to perform tasks the

ghosts normally would never consider. They use ghosts to increase their own power base and to play out their twisted fantasies and schemes. Necromancers seem to revel in the thrill of the hunt and the subjugation of new ghosts. There are thousands of ghosts worldwide that are under the dominion of a necromancer at any given time.

The deadliest of necromancers are those that create zombies by forcing a ghost into an unnaturally animated body. Necromancers are grave-diggers - tirelessly sifting through body parts and collecting the most promising - and have an unyielding passion for their work. Some necromancers began with good intentions, like the desire to bring a loved one back from the dead. This, unfortunately, tends to lead to a horrible end for both the ghost who is summoned away from his or her task and the amateur necroman-



cer who isn't ready for the reality of reanimation. Sometimes, these scenarios have even lead to the creation of Walkers (page 70).

Spirit Eaters

The horrible creatures known as Spirit Eaters are ghosts that have evolved past their simple ectoplasmic form into a demonic version of themselves. Their eyes glow red and their passion becomes only to feed. Their food of choice is other ghosts. Their horrible and Stygian path has turned them into cannibals and they are quite mad from it, but they often still possess some semblance of a soul beneath the corruption. If what is left of their soul ever comes to the surface, ghosts may sympathize with the amount of loss and anguish one must feel to become a full Spirit Eater. Of course, that then leaves them open to an ambush from the demon within.

Spirit Eaters are hideous monsters and bogeymen to ghosts, but they are also objects of pity to those with some time under their belt. Regardless of their origins, Spirit Eaters exist for only one purpose - the consumption of other ghosts. The terror that the sight of a Spirit Eater creates for ghosts is without a doubt what keeps communities of ghosts from organizing themselves in any meaningful manner. They choose not to serve themselves to a Spirit Eater like an all-you-can-eat buffet.

The Radiant

Almost a century ago, a new race of demons arrived on Earth. They sought neither refuge nor permission to live in the human dimension. Instead, they sought only a regular meal, and ghosts were on the menu.

They come from a rich culture in their own dimension, but will speak little of it to anyone. The Radiant skulk in the shadows, waiting for unsuspecting ghosts to drop their guard. As long as they receive a steady supply of souls, they are happy to continue hiding. When backed into a corner, however, they will unleash their true form, which is similar to a giant spider. Some relate the Radiant to the Wolf People, but other than the animal-form similarities, they have little else in common.

Technology

For eons, older ghosts have treated technology with an amused disdain. In the last hundred and fifty years, however, something happened that has caused some to truly fear the advances of the human race... ghosts were caught on film. The appearance of the first ghost photographs in the mid nineteenth century shook the ghost community to its very foundation. Being simple servants to their passions, many panicked and lashed out. The reports of haunting and weird occurrences around the world spiked sharply as the nearly hysterical ghosts attempted to terrify the human race into leaving them alone. Things may have gotten really ugly, but API Spectral agents made the rounds and managed to calm the frightening ghosts down.

In the end, no matter what evidence was displayed, most humans would never believe in the existence of real ghosts, and those that did would be treated like crackpots and weirdos. Recent advances in science and technology, especially the creation of several tech objects from API (page 57) that can truly affect their ectoplasmic bodies, have begun to worry everyone as the days go by.

The Soul Key

While a superstitious lot in general, ghosts try to ignore stories of mythic threats to their existence and pretend they simply aren't real; however if there is one myth that scares the hell out of ghosts, it's the story of the Soul Key. The key is said to have the power to unlock the soul from a living person, basically creating a ghost on the spot. Because it is not natural, ghosts don't get a chance to enter the Bright Lights.

While that is certainly a reason for the living to fear it, ghosts are scared of its other purpose... to remove the soul from the ectoplasmic shell and trap it. It is believed to have been lost centuries ago, but it could turn up at any time, probably in the wrong hands. This is a nightmare story that older ghosts tell the "newbs" to frighten them, but it may be true. There are unconfirmed stories that Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS, had possession of this Soul Key during the dark-

est days of World War II and used it to perform a series of paranormal experiments. Though, who knows where it is now?

Dying Young & the Long Afterlife

There are subjects that the average and relatively well adjusted tend to avoid talking about with anyone, including fellow ghosts. Children that die and don't move on through the Bright Lights and ghosts that have been around for what feels like forever are two of the biggest taboo subjects in the ghost community.

Children

Generally, when children die, they immediately travel through the Bright Lights, as though they are pulled through by an unseen force, regardless of any desire they may have to stay. It's believed to be more a function of their innate innocence than anything else, but very few children who die actually remain behind as ghosts. By and large, this only happens as a result of some other unscrupulous ghost stealing a child's access to the Bright Lights. On a very rare occasion, a "bad seed" never sees the lights.

They are forever trapped as a child and this tends to super charge their passions to a degree that most adult ghosts never match. Even

as time goes on and they acquire more wisdom and knowledge, they are still very much a child in their mannerisms. Child ghosts want what they want when they want it. If they want a ball, they take it. If they are annoyed, they might drop a very heavy object on a person's head. While there are many stories of child ghosts who become the playmates of living children and stay by them throughout their entire lives, there are many more stories of child ghosts who designate a specific person for a lifetime of torture. Most of these ghosts have a heavily skewed perception of right and wrong. Child ghosts are much more likely to be consumed by their depression, boredom, and loneliness and evolve into Poltergeists and Conceptual spirits of malice. Although theoretically possible, there are no known instances of child ghosts becoming Spirit Eaters.

Child ghosts, more than any other type of ghosts, tend to congregate with one another in order to play. While this may seem sweet and innocent, much of their play involves pranks and vandalism. It's dangerous for too many child ghosts to be in one place at one time due to the fact that many Spirit Eaters consider Child ghosts



to be a prime catch, tasting like sweet, rich nougat to these corrupt entities. Many API field offices have established special play grounds where child ghost can both play together and be monitored by agents. These safe areas also allow agents to keep an eye out for Spirit Eaters and necromancers.

Kids and Ghosts

Interestingly enough, living children are born with a keen sense that allows them to see ghosts everywhere they go. Of course, when one becomes older, one learns to dismiss the images of dead people playing peek-a-boo with them in their cribs or their imaginary friend that they just couldn't live without. Their rational mind takes over eventually, but while they are children, full of wonder and dreams, they can see and interact with ghosts and spirits like they were regular people.

Ancients

Perhaps the strangest creatures that live on this world are the ghosts that have grown so old that they have become nothing but passion. These are Ancients that have surrendered themselves completely to their passions. This is not to say that the person they were isn't there anymore - they are just so overshadowed and consumed by their passions that it would take a miracle to bring any part of them back. King James' Court is a great example of an Ancient that has gone beyond the normal station of a ghost.

Many Ancients have evolved to a point where they no longer appear to be human at all. They may be a tree, an animal, or anything else that properly fits into the framework of their personal passion. It has been theorized that many of the ancient gods of mythology were nothing more than ghosts that "evolved" in this fashion. The powers and gifts that these ghosts have access to should never be underestimated, as they have the ability to do plenty of good and even greater harm.

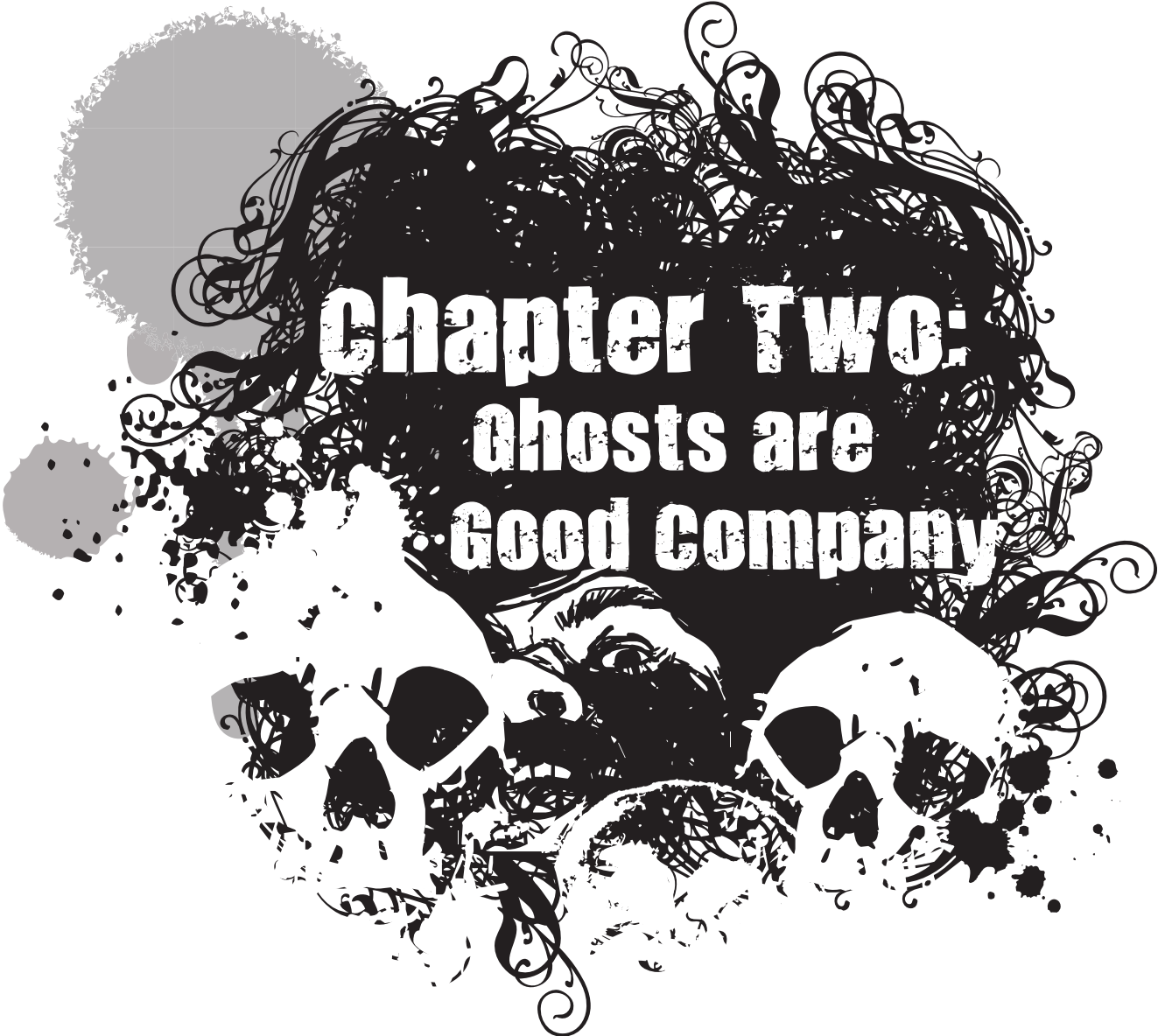
The Fading

Easily the biggest fear in any Spectral's mind is the thought that they might one day vanish from reality. They wouldn't simply die (they've already done that before, anyway...) and few of them bat an eye at being killed by another being. To die in the name of one's passion would be to go out in a blaze of glory, after all. No, they fear the act of purely ceasing to be: gone in the blink of an eye.

The Fading, as it is called, hides in the back of every ghost's mind. It is a whisper of doubt that they ever deserved to stay on Earth, the voices of all those they ever wronged damning them and the sound of all those they love calling for them to just give up. Only their true passion can keep them from succumbing to the contentment of the Fading. Even a single doubt, just that one time that they look away from what drives them to continue existing, and it can all be over. The forgetful have no chance to survive the urge to finally die.

Achieving the goal of their passion isn't their desire. It is the act of having the passion at all that keeps them going. Putting their final wishes into action can actually be seen as a bad omen. A feeling of completeness can give way to actual, pure happiness, which then leads to the Fading as well.

This is why the dead claw at life, almost attacking their need to exist. This is why they try so hard and develop often unhealthy attachments to the living. This is why they are one of the most powerful demons to ever exist.



Chapter Two: Ghosts are Good Company

"Tell me about your employment history," barked the black suit sitting across the table.

"Well, I was the Senior VP in charge of acquisition and investments at Scarborough Financial between 1982 and '88. Had a pretty good run," Greg replied. He'd been sitting in the dark interview room for what seemed like an eternity, answering a barrage of mind-numbingly mundane questions. If he hadn't already been dead, he would have feared being done-in by boredom.

"And why did you leave the company?"

"Well, the higher-ups weren't too keen on keeping a corpse on the payroll, y'know?" Greg delivered the line coldly at his captor. What was

going on here anyway? He'd been leading a fun life-after-death: floating through walls into changing rooms, haunting old nemeses - standard spook fare. During a recent visit to an old friend, though, he'd felt an otherworldly pull at his chest. He began to lose himself, like he was slowly dissolving. He thought at first that he was finally truly dying, that he'd had his run in purgatory and was finally being shipped off to... well, to wherever he was destined. Soon after the feeling began, he became completely discorporate and, from his perspective at least, reformed hours later in this uninviting cell, face-to-face with a man in black robes chanting gibberish and some 3-piece G-man staring at him through sunglasses. Not exactly a normal day in the unlife of Greg Masterson.

"Yes, I know how that can be," Greg's keeper said, unfazed, "many of our employees here at the company have been on the receiving end of life-based discrimination. You'll be happy to hear we have regulations preventing that sort of thing in our offices."

"What the hell are you talking about? Offices? Why aren't you bothered at all by talking to a dead man? What the hell is this, the X-Files?"

"Something like that," the man flashed a smirk of pomp and superiority. "I represent an intelligence and counter-insurgency corporation that has use for people in your-- how should I put it?-- state of being. We employ a great deal of people in your situation, Mr. Masterson, and I've been instructed to offer you a position." Greg had to shake the cobwebs out of his nonexistent brain.

"A position? I don't know if you noticed, but I don't exactly need food or shelter anymore. Why would I possibly need a job?"

The suit moved forward, leaning on its elbows and letting the sunglasses slide down its long slender nose. The vessels in its eyes seemed to burst as they turned a deep red. Blood began to trail down its face, shifting about like mercury before hardening in place. The suit flashed the widest grin Greg had ever seen, revealing two pointed fangs that looked as though they belonged in the mouth of some prehistoric cat.

"Mr. Masterson, we had the power to summon you here, to keep you in this room, to speak and talk with you, and we did it all without blinking. We could easily-- in fact we're trained and paid glorious amounts of money to-- make you do whatever we want then destroy you with a snap of our fingers. Believe me when I tell you that whether or not you need the compensation, it is very much in your best interests to accept the offer on the table. Understand?"

Greg Masterson nodded silently, dumbstruck for the first time in his existence. His only reassuring thought was that his lack of glands prevented him from showing his fear in a damper manner.

"Very good," the suit returned to its relaxed, seated position. "Then welcome, sir, to your new home. I hope you enjoy your tenure here at Apocalypse Prevention, Inc."

Institutionalizing the Dead

As long as there have been human beings, there have been Spectrals. The development of human language about a million years ago let humanity further share their ideas with each other. Most ghosts enter the Bright Lights and disappear into whatever awaits them, but the dead have been missing the Bright Lights for millennia. Interestingly enough, there have been no accounts of Neanderthal Spectrals. This leads to the counter-belief that the existence of ghosts began at a certain point in history, or that the Spirit Eaters of the past were much better at their jobs.

Every culture has its own legends and mythology that revolve around the dead. Egyptians built pyramids for the Spectrals of their dead pharaohs, making sure that their bodies were preserved so horrible curses could not be placed on their spirits. In return, these mighty ghosts cared for and protected their followers who, in turn, revered them as gods. Of course, these ideas have been skewed through time from godlike images to demons and scary beings. In modern days, ideas of Hell or Heaven are what go through the average person's mind when faced with death - even if these are a moot point to most Spectrals. One cannot have an idea of what the afterlife is like without first stepping through the Bright Lights and ending one's existence. Those who have done so aren't around to talk about it.

After the Moon Catastrophe of the 1930s (page 121 of API Corebook), Spectrals and other demons were required to register with Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. This, of course, was met with mixed opinion by Spectrals at large. Never before had they been demanded to do something en masse, treated as a single group instead of individuals, and they weren't sure they agreed

with this order. While world-wide wars and epidemics have bolstered the company's ranks with many Spectrals, the Spectrals who work for API are fiercely individual, rather than a cohesive group. Ghosts have their own passions and agendas, unless they work for API (and even then they don't give up, and continue to follow them clandestinely). It seems a bit ironic that the present Global CEO and head of the US branch of API is Annabelle Priscilla Ilsley (a Spectral of some fifteen years).

The CEO is Dead

Ilsley grew up within the company and learned everything she could from her father, the former CEO. She had her loves and heartbreaks just like any other person, but API was her life in the end. When she died, her loss was not conducive to the company continuing its upward swing in profit and global influence. She refused her Bright Lights and chose to continue her leadership, wanting to give her legacy to her own children. Her children were to be groomed to take over for her, but this didn't go as planned. She got used to the idea of carrying on her father's ideals even in death and wanted to set her children up as a trio of governing persons with different ideas, lifestyles, and beliefs. When they disappeared, all three of them, she had to re-think her strategy.

She is a brilliant leader and most of the demons on Earth would either be dead or working against API in all capacities if she had passed the leadership role onto another still living human. Ilsley misses the weight of a sword in her hand and the feeling of rain

in her hair, but she misses her children most of all. She has dropped all but the most imperative cases immediately to follow up on rumors of their whereabouts, but no matter how dedicated her search efforts, their locations remain a mystery. Several members of the Board of Directors are aware of this and are attempting to wrest control of the company from her, pointing to wasted time on false reports.

Ilsley is no fool. She has the Board figured out rather well and has changed her focus to only chasing reports of her missing kids if they are from a credible source. Mind you, if such a report came up, Ilsley would possess the nearest person and run into the ground whoever and whatever it took to get them back. She loves her children, but she also desperately needs to get



Ghosts vs. Spectrals

Ghosts have been around almost from the time the first human kicked the bucket, although the first signs of them didn't appear until humans gained the cognitive reasoning to wonder what lay beyond the valley of death. Ancient stories, legends, and traditions all point to showing the dead some semblance of respect or one could be harmed in some form or another. This dates back to long before any other sort of demonic appearance and is found in practically every culture unearthed by whip-wielding archaeologists named after states. Different names exist for people who are not quite done with the living: Shades, who live in the Underworld; spirits, who can be called forth; and ghosts, who bump in the night – these are just a few of the more popular ones.

The term "Spectral" is actually a rather recent company development. Apocalypse Prevention, Inc, wanting to swell their ranks with the living dead (not usually zombies, but there have been talks with HR about their discrimination policies regarding Walkers), but having a number of different "ectoplasmic beings" reported to the company made it hard to distinguish between the separate groups. They decided to call them Spectrals - ghosts that could fight back, think for themselves, develop strategies, help their living teammates with unique skill sets, and (preferably) type at 60 word per minute. The name change tightened up hiring practices and other spirits that didn't fit the mold were generally ignored. The rejects proved perfect for brushing up the Elite's special brand of ghost-harming kung-fu.

These days, ghosts, Spectrals and spirits share so much overlap that if someone yells, "Behind you! A ghost," one hardly frets about whether or not it has enough consciousness to know to pull out your firearm and use it on you. So all variety of names for ectoplasmic beings fit all the different types, but in the field no one really cares except for the pushy academic types who only look forward to their next promotion. Of course, on paper and in official reports they all are deemed Spectrals.

Before the API Registration Act and the volunteering of many ghosts, most were employed by using the Path of Death. Being bound into servitude is a far-cry from being a paid and willing partner, so modern Spectrals are happy to live in the 21st century.

to her final rest. She's more than earned that right. Once her children are back in their rightful places at the top, she would have one of the many reprehensible people held below API in a cell shot and would take their door into whatever awaits her.

Ilsey came from a loving but stern upbringing. Her father was kept busy running the company while her mother trained in surveillance and subterfuge. Her father arranged for Ilsey to receive the very best training money and magic could buy - briefing her at an incredibly early age about the presence of the supernatural. She quickly took to the life of hunting demons and negotiating treaties with them like a fish to water. Soon

it would become her life. She became a sword master and her incredibly high intelligence soon surpassed that of her tutors.

Her father died of old age and stories say that he winked at her before slipping away. She conducted no magical inquiries because she knew her father well enough to know the truth... that he had gone to be with her mother (who had died years before) in the mystery behind the Bright Lights. Ilsey took over the company soon after and burned every book and notepad belonging to her parents, locking them in her memory first - the last trick taught to her by her father.

Years flew by and Ilsey had done much for

the company. Demons came out of the woodwork to sign up with the Registration Act that her father had left behind. They did it out of fear or willingness to trade secrets. Agents crisscrossed the globe like never before, information flowed between different branches, new magical paths were discovered on a weekly basis, and several large apocalypses were bloodily averted. It wasn't until a bizarre car accident that Ilsley realized that her death would leave no one to run the company - the future left in the hands of the feuding board of directors.

Little is known about the father of her three children. They all have traits that mirror their mother's, but have distinctive features that could suggest different fathers. Information has not left her lips or anyone else's, and her children know only of their mother, being raised mostly by API nannies (yet another service they provide). Ilsley's role in their upbringing was to prepare them to receive family secrets and the responsibility of heading up Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. She was supposed to retire in 5 years' time, her wrinkles growing more numerous and her hands shaking to hold a fencing foil. After hearing the news, they all disappeared. She trained them well, which makes finding them quite difficult if they don't want to be found. She didn't know them as well as her father knew her, making the search that much harder.

Ilsley eventually died in her bed scowling at a cold pot of tea. Not even 20 seconds later, she had organized a meeting with the Board of Directors to inform them that she would be continuing in her position and they could put to bed any of their dreams of ascension. Three hours later, she had to have a few of them secretly killed.

She will do this forever if she has to and she'll adapt to anything this or any other dimension throws at her. Ilsley's got the most well-funded, future sensing, technologically advanced, organized, fantastically trained, and determined army in the history of mankind and still cannot find her children. She can sense a lie before it is spoken, the gift of her bloodline, and has instant access to many detailed reports on events that haven't occurred and how to avoid them, if possible. In

the end, she has the power because she signs the paychecks. Many wonder if this much power should be in the hands of someone that is dead.

Bringing Out the Dead

In many ways, life as a Spectral agent is far more open than living in flesh. Though they can no longer "feel" the world, and often go unseen even by the people they care most for, the dead are presented with unique opportunities and freedoms not available to those bound to the mortal coil. There is no government for ghosts, no overarching Spectral bureaucracy, nothing limiting the courses of action they may embark upon. Why, then, would a Spectral choose to shackle himself to a job? Surely there are better, more fulfilling things to do with one's eternal existence.

The most common answers are laziness and lack of ingenuity. Today's industrial society, especially in capitalist economies, has bred a population of alienated workers little different from automatons. People are creatures of habit, and an adult life spent wasting away from 9:00-5:00 at a dead-end job can easily produce a Spectral with the same tendencies. When presented with a limitless mercurial existence beyond the physical, many fall into the old routine out of fear and an overbearing desire for stability. If you feel you may dissipate at any moment, it's enormously comforting to have a repeating pattern to serve as an anchor for your consciousness. API takes advantage of these feelings by pouncing upon its recently-dead employees, offering them their old jobs or similar positions for drastically reduced compensation. The company saves millions of dollars every year by keeping positions filled with employees who don't eat or pay rent and who have no need for health, dental, or liability insurance.

Other Spectrals take the job at Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. for purely self-serving reasons. Most ghosts have unfinished business to take care of and leap at the chance to use the corporation's vast resources to further their own ambitions. A ghost searching for his family's killer

would be quite enticed by API's identity databases, expendable personnel, and advanced technology. Since Spectrals are so driven by their passions, what better way to chase their bliss could there be than the action-packed life of a demon-fighting secret agent?

The recruitment of non-company Spectrals can be seen as a less-than-ethical undertaking. API employs numerous necromancers, many of which are instructed to report to Personnel Resources during hiring periods. The adepts of the Path of Death then summon ghosts in the areas surrounding the company's recruiting offices. Most of these conjured ghosts are low-level, unintelligent beings who are promptly snatched up and sent to Research and Development for

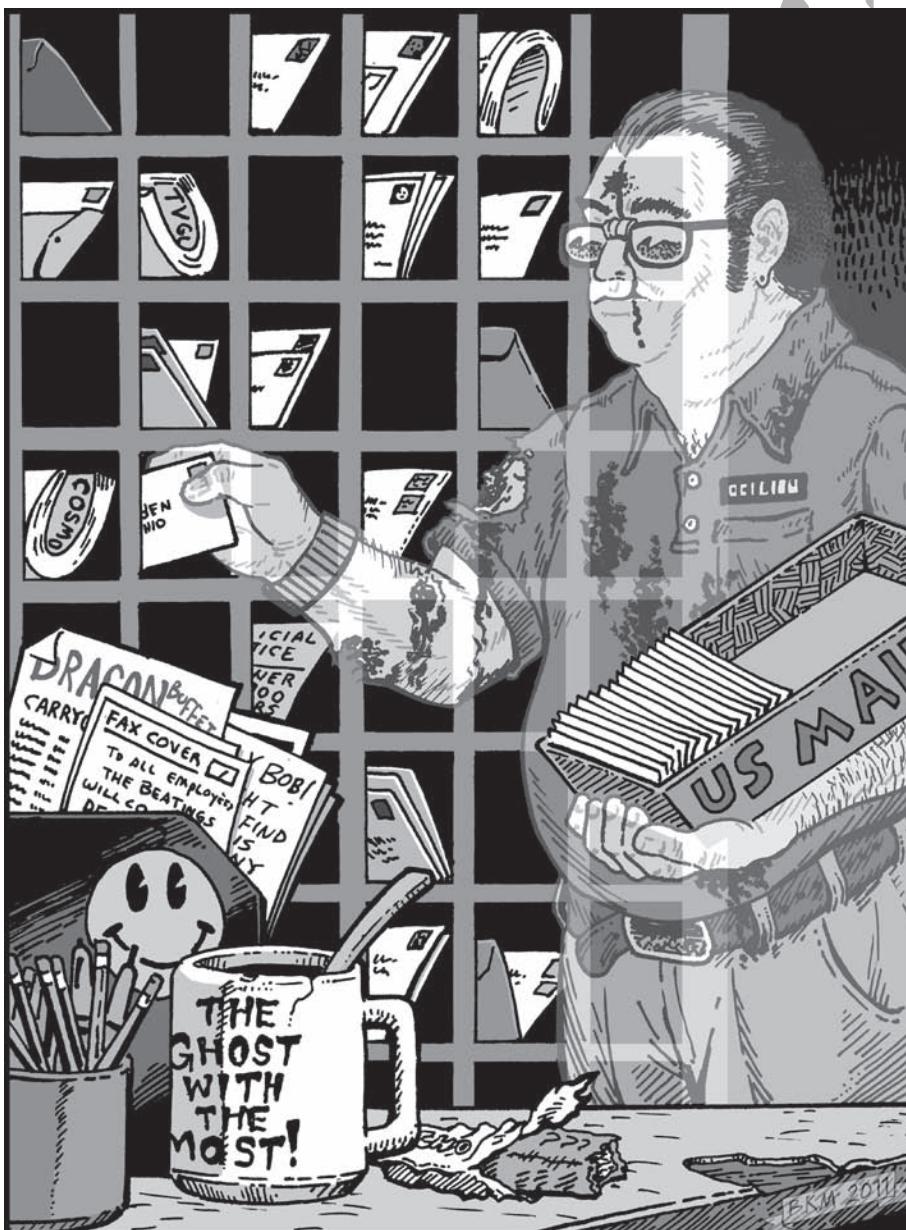
use in Electro-Spectral and anti-haunting experiments. The sapient Spectrals, though, are corralled into "interview rooms" which resemble federal interrogation chambers more than corporate meeting rooms. Once in the interview room, a field agent (usually a necromancer themselves or an Elite trained in Spectral combat) informs the captured ghost of their choices. This often involves veiled threats, colorful temptation, or outright extortion to convince the Spectral that its unlife would be better spent working for API than wandering aimlessly between haunts. Those who "see the light" agree to tenured positions within the company, and the unfortunate souls who refuse are either destroyed or sent to R&D with their non-sentient counterparts.

So I'm an Employee, Now What?

After accepting employment from Apocalypse Prevention Incorporated, a Spectral agent is sent to one of the company's departments for processing and orientation. This step is skipped by the ghosts of former employees, as they usually just return to the positions they held in life. The rest, though, must go through bureaucratic protocols inherent in the inner workings of any corporation. Almost every division of API utilizes a Spectral workforce in one manner or another, depending on its needs.

The Mailroom

As any corporate entity does, API must process and deliver massive amounts of inter-office communications throughout its various departments and branches. Operating the mailroom is often a monotonous, unsophisticated, ultimately thankless job and, as such, nobody really



wants to do it. To keep the morale of the living staff manageable, the mailroom can be found mostly tended to by Spectrals deemed unfit for field work. These workers are given a nominal amount of training in the ability to touch items in the physical world and are then sent to the paper dungeons to sort through and pass along packages, memos, and so on.

The dead don't perceive time the same as the living do, so they have a somewhat greater resistance to the mind-numbing dullness that is the mailroom and are less likely to... ahem... go postal on their fellow employees. The more politically-minded Spectrals are actually able to spin mailroom positions into appointments of greater power when they discover that they can read everyone's messages without leaving physical evidence of the act, and can thus make blackmail-oriented and otherwise manipulative power-plays within the company.

Maintenance

Most would assume that there is absolutely no reason to employ Spectrals as maintenance workers. How could immaterial beings fix the mechanical constructs that make life more comfortable, and why would they even care to (beyond being forced)? The simple answer is that gear heads keep their interests beyond death. Combine this tinkerer's itch with the ability to access any point in a building almost instantly and the worth of a Spectral repair staff becomes more apparent.

Ghostly repairmen are usually the first sent in to any situation. They can get through any cramped air-duct or crawlspace with ease and can even possess the malfunctioning machinery in order to perform an accurate diagnosis. Spectrals trained to touch the physical world are then free to manipulate the objects to fix any problems. A common joke is that the only reason The Radiant don't devour all of API's Spectral employees is because they need them to keep the air-conditioners running.

Management

Any type of rebellion, revolution, civil war, or uprising can also be helped through the inspira-

tion and aid provided by Spectrals. Spectrals make perfect spies with their invisibility and intangibility. They can also be sent to check on certain areas, scouting to find out the number or quality of a situation in order to construct the best strategy. This is rarely impeded, except in places where there are Spirit Eaters or users of necromantic magic. As Spectrals must keep up their passions to live, there is also good reason for them to develop tasks for themselves to do and allies that they can help. If they can keep up their passion, their will to continue their existence, and avoid hungry Spirit Eaters and enslaving necromancers, the Spectrals can thrive in this world as leaders to others quite easily.

Training

Some Spectrals were so good at their jobs that they either spent part or all of their time training others to follow in their footsteps. For more mundane jobs, it's all about training someone to replace them. Of course, the company always claim that they need only train one more person before they can move on, but with a Spectral's obscured sense of time, they may be talked into training dozens of living employees over decades of time before the company lives up to their promises.

Spectrals also help for field training. Lethal combat training is much less deadly when the opponent is animating weapons one must deflect. Elites learn how to break bones and puncture lungs on Spectral-possessed corpses. Bodies borrowed by Spectrals are also used in gruesome live fire exercises. There's no better way to spend a Saturday night than blowing the limbs off of dead bodies who goad you on at 100 yards. Some find it better for Spectrals to actively possess them and perform acrobatic feats with their bodies to build muscle memory. This same exercise is helpful for building up an immunity or resistance to ectoplasmic effects.

Demolitions

Extremists have found that the best way to garner large amounts of attention to something is to blow it up. Demons are no exception and sometimes are far better at setting crafty devices not easily foiled by human hands. Spectrals,

not having human hands, are great at defusing bombs with no real threat to their well being. They try to minimize the structural damage and piles of dead civilians, but if they fail, they can always try again next time with the lessons they have learned, unlike their living coworkers.

Field Agents

Ghosts have all sorts of built-in talents for gathering intelligence unnoticed, but that doesn't mean they are all cut out for fieldwork. Things scare and surprise them just as much as the living. This means that if a ghost was an agent in life, they could most likely carry on this responsibility in death; however, a ghost who had never been trained in espionage would not be any more reliable in the field than an untrained human. There are always exceptions and API loves being proven wrong by an especially gusto ghost, but the ex-living agents perform much better with experience behind them.

Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. also has one of the most dangerous team of wet-works specialists ever known to mankind. The four-person spectral team possesses individuals who have outlived their usefulness or are simply too dangerous for API to keep around, and forces those people to kill themselves. They are ruthlessly effective and have an amazing track record. The fact that no one but Ilsley knows about them helps keep their low profile. She has only had to use the team on a director of the board once and no one has found out about it. Even if someone were to deduce the truth, she had a very good reason for it. Really. She did.

Compensation is typically a favor that the Spectral would have to devote all of its time to or tasks that would be impossible for the Spectral to complete on its own. Taking care of old debts, watching over one's family, avenging their death, solving the one mystery they couldn't, or even catching that elusive fish at the bottom of a local lake are all things API have been tasked with in the past. Some ghosts yearn for familiar things that they once had in life and for this purpose, API pays them a nominal amount and keeps a couple of bodies who have ended up in comas who have no real immediate family on standby.

These bodies are allowed to be possessed as long as one keeps a low profile (most bodies are flown in from a different country than the one they are being used in just in case) and doesn't try to fly the coop with it. Ghosts can then do all the things they wanted to do in life and now cannot. Many of them just go to sleep, eat ice cream, and or any number of things we living folks take for granted every single day. Still others want to pass on, but cannot bring themselves to rob another being of their reward. API often employs them for such a time until they both agree to terminate their service by extinguishing the life of a nobody so the employee can take their door.

The Evolved

Attempting research of what lies behind the white door is akin to a species of balloon animals trying to get past a wall of spikes. It's not happening. Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. hasn't stopped trying though, since seizing control over the afterlife could easily be the goal to winning the current stalemate with several of the demonic species at large. A force composed of the world's dead would crush everything in its path, and if API isn't the first to initiate contact, the results could be disastrous.

The difficulty with analyzing something that doesn't reliably show up on any readings and is invisible and intangible is obvious. API continues to monitor Spectrals in various states of existence. Some, they have found, manifest when their loved ones are present, others only in certain places, some that only manifest when threatened – the list goes on and on.

API has found that those most likely to return as ghosts are mostly determined individuals with vast amounts of willpower. Those lacking willpower can still die horrific deaths and come back to haunt earth anyways. Of course, a Spectral's creation only needs a person's soul to not step through the white door to the Bright Lights. All the willpower in the world couldn't pull someone back through there.

Of all the things API has encountered, Spec-

tral evolution is one of the most fascinating. Not only can regular humans die and return as ghosts - they can also become embodiments of very ideals and vague concepts. Actual research into these phenomena is incredibly rare, since the process itself can't be replicated, but API has been on hand to witness several of these events. In the past, little to no scientific equipment useable for studying this phenomenon was available besides recording devices. Most of their information is based on field reports, interviews with Elementals or other willing spirits, and simple rumors.

API has seen spirits of death, love, practical jokes, woe, lawn bowling, angry teachers, children who died too young, lost keys, and almost everything else. What prompts the change from a ghost to a full-blown conceptual embodiment? API has no idea. However, they know a few key facts: the being has to have been a Spectral first for at least a short time. Also, once set in their concept, there's no changing to a different embodiment (those that try to go against their nature inevitably become resentful Spirit-Eaters). Their choice must be something that the spirit believes is needed with all their being. The final thing they've found is that... the spirit cannot evolve on their own.

When a Spectral begins to evolve into a conceptual, the local power grid dims and everyone in a 50-foot radius gets very sleepy (equal to a loss of around 5 stamina). The change in their very soul is so dramatic and powerful that it draws any available energy (be it spiritual power, electrical, or even kinetic). In one occurrence, traffic in downtown Manhattan slowed to a standstill to power the evolutionary process when a Spectral became a spirit of sloth. API has observed the evolutionary process knocking out flocks of birds, wilting plants, and causing animals to pass out or explode when no people are around. Some changes in the environment pertain to whatever the Spectral has transformed into. These changes happen without the Spectral's control or even conscious effort. A spirit of disease (like the Plague Queen of the Black Plague) can cause spontaneous outbreaks of the sickness or someone could find their room spon-



taneously tidied up if around a spirit of fastidiousness.

API has tried many times to coax a Spectral into evolving under extreme stress and magical influences, but the subject instantly turns into a Spirit Eater each time. This has caused untold havoc within the research labs, and the experiments were eventually closed down. Forced evolution has been banned and the company's science teams have to now find new ways to unlock the secrets of death.

Modern implementations of research have led to some amazing discoveries. Not only have they used more than sound recorders to document the spiritual changes going on with Spectrals - the most common being Conceptuals and Elementals - but they have actually found new evolutions. With the company's help, some Spectrals have learned to inhabit suits of bionic armor, control an entire computer network, and even change their physical appearance to mimic others. Spectrals didn't just happen upon these new evolved states. They were guided by modern equipment created by API's best scientists and necromancers who combined magic and technology to make an improved Spectral agent.

Getting Around the Threat

Out of all the dangers API faces on a constant basis, the Spectrals are one of the most lethal and hard to catch. The living have become fairly blasé about ghosts and rarely report them unless they have actual proof of their existence or they are particularly vicious. It's just easier to move. Also, a Spectral who wants to kill a lot of people (for whatever reason) only has to wander into a nuclear reactor, possess its mechanism and cause it to explode. After all, they have the time to invest into learning how to do so and they won't be affected by the blast. This makes spectral antagonists a true danger to the world if not handled correctly.

API was relieved to learn that most extremist groups bent on genocide (religious or otherwise)

generally run toward the Bright Lights after death in hopes that their reward for serving the cause waits on the other side. Those that choose to stay behind are truly frightening indeed. The company usually lets the police, government agencies, and internet hobbyists do the tough and time-consuming leg-work while API researchers scan reports for fancy words like "cultists", "magic", "mad-men", "demons", "monsters", and even "unexplainable". They weigh the facts, try to dismiss the hearsay, and move on to the cases that sound, well, like an apocalypse. This is a good time for blossoming agents sent to investigate possible paranormal activity. Elites are, of course, saved for the truly catastrophic evidence that could threaten thousands of people.

The company finds itself with a lot of Spectrals with nothing to do after their reasons for hanging around dry up. Spectrals have to develop hobbies or they run afoul of Spirit-Eaters and other entities who prey on weak-willed ghosts. Hanging around undercover with demon groups that mundane authorities have no idea exist is one such pastime that API suggests to some of its employees. This is a good way to keep tabs on these demons, since Spectrals are usually invisible and intangible. They become API's eyes and ears and, more importantly, can ensure that recently-dead offenders enter their Bright Lights if API decides they would rather not see them again.

The Science of Death

This premiere science team is led by Doctor Seymour Adams and is the most results-driven division in API research laboratories... Spectral research. Dr. Adams' team has been dubbed "The Igors" after Dr. Frankenstein's infamous assistant who dared to help the good doctor delve into the secrets of life and death. Less prevalent results and a breakthrough only every few years has led to countless layoffs and enormous pressure to deliver new facts. Dr. Adams has long outgrown his ability to find solace at the bottom of a bottle, especially after his daughter's passing at a young age. His passions changed often,

until he became laser-focused on getting API the results they want.

Every member of Dr. Adams' team wants to achieve success not only for the furthering of their careers, but also so that they can make an informed decision of what to do when they themselves die. After all, everyone will eventually die and every second lost is a second towards an inevitable death. In this regard, history has proven that some Igors snap under the pressure of questioning life itself and coming up with practically zero answers.

While controversial in nature, there is one scientist who has stuck with Dr. Adams since the beginning of his research: his daughter, Janice. Having drowned in a horrible accident at the age of 13, she has followed her father in his life and trained in science after learning to use Spectral abilities at an accelerated rate as part of some of her father's best experiments. Janice acts as her father's loyal assistant, fellow scientist, and never-ending inspiration. Even though he is pushing 70 and has served the company for over forty years, he has vowed to never rest until he has answers for his daughter.

Certain influential discoveries that have led to the company's entire understanding of the dead actually can be attributed to the Igors. The group has existed for quite some time and has uncovered secrets for interacting with ectoplasm. Scientific options for detecting ghosts were their first breakthrough - from divining rods in the past and leading up to Spectral Specs (page 58) that are used by modern agents.

Then came the next step that comes naturally to humanity: learning how to harm the ectoplasmic forms of ghosts. From samples taken and analyzed, the Igors were able to ascertain the inherent properties and the best ways (from lasers to anti-matter) to destroy their makeup. The next logical destination after harming is controlling and actually understanding what ectoplasm is. Many an advancement has come about based on this research, from the ectoplasmic reorganizer to breakthroughs in the nature of spirit evolutions (which, they have found, actually have

Spectrals: An Interaction Report

By Dr. Seymour Adams

Humans

"I have found Spectrals to be both standoffish and slightly jealous of humanity. They see only what they have lost and it is a pity that they cannot get over this without changing absolutely or fading away."

Burners

"Spectrals bear no ill will toward Burners, but stand in awe of the fire demons' attempts to be as human as possible. Oh if they only knew that being human means not knowing what truly lies for you on the other side of life."

Changelings

"Some consider Changelings to be a creepy race of demons, always changing and always alone. While they can identify with Changelings on the solitude that is existence, as some Spectrals spent years without another person even acknowledging them - changing is not their thing."

Lochs

"The Lochs look at Spectrals with disgust, as lost remnants of a soul that are clinging too long to something they've lost. I can't say they are wrong, but this is only one view. Spectrals rarely have any opinion on Lochs beyond the fact that they are big and fishy."

Taylari

"I have found the Taylari to be particularly fascinated by Spectrals - the Macabre family specifically. They represent death itself, something the Taylari claim to have as part of their heritage. The two groups work well together."

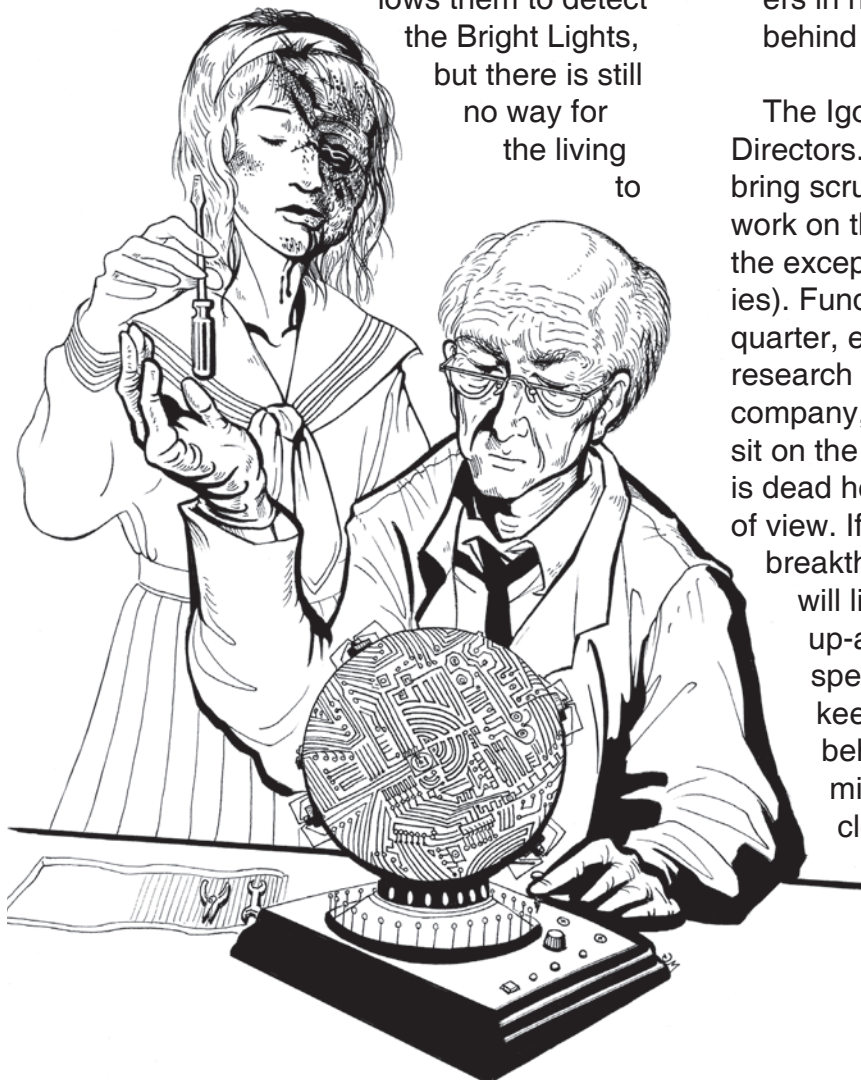
Wolf People

"The two groups rarely interact, but there is no inherent animosity when they do. Wolf People, however, have been found helping Spectrals fulfill their passions more than any other demon. Does this make them more humane than humans?"

a much different ectoplasmic discharge).

The team often finds itself hoping for miracles or finding a fat chunk of magic in the next dimensional portal to help with their frequently flaccid results. Their most popular method to research the same questions to no avail is to get an unhelpful ghost, mess about with its ectoplasm until it screams, attempt to conjure up the Bright Lights using an on-site, terminally ill patient (no one ever claimed the Igors were ethical), and experiment away. There are tons of theories that need to be proven and so little time to do it in before the higher-ups start breathing down their necks. The Igors basically run the same set of experiments ad nauseum waiting for a special soul that will give them a different result, but they are mostly at a loss when it comes to new tests.

- Can Bright Lights be seen? The Igors have very experimental equipment that allows them to detect the Bright Lights, but there is still no way for the living to



see or directly interact with the Bright Lights.

- Can two ghosts enter the same white portal to the other side? From current research, that is a resounding no.

- Can one stick their hand through and bring it back out again? Once the Bright Lights are touched by even a Spectral fingertip, they are immediately sucked through without warning or prejudice. This confirms the “first come first serve” theory behind the Bright Lights.

- Can a ghost be forced through the white portal? Indeed, and in some cases the company deems it the best case for dealing with the more monstrous ghosts. Yes, from information gathered from Igor research, it is justifiable for an agent to use the death of an innocent to defeat a Spectral enemy.

- Do the Bright Lights stay open indefinitely? No, the portal appears to close in random intervals, some in seconds and others in hours. Evidence to prove the reasons behind this has been elusive thus far.

The Igors' greatest enemy is the Board of Directors. Having no major results in years can bring scrutiny to so-called scientists whose work on the afterlife has proven little result (with the exception of a few of the above discoveries). Funding has been shrinking a little bit each quarter, even though Ilsley maintains that their research will be the ultimate salvation of the company, and humanity as a whole. Not all who sit on the Board see eye to eye with her, as she is dead herself and obviously has a slanted point of view. If they do not bring some substantial breakthrough to the Board and soon, the Igors will likely be disbanded and replaced with up-and-coming scientists with a fresh perspective on the topic. Dr. Adams is trying to keep this from happening and, with Janice behind him, has begun hiring the brightest minds from around the world into his circle. The experiments will likely escalate in severity as the individual members of the Igors start fighting for credit for any discoveries in order to keep their positions (or elevate themselves to new ones). The games have begun and Dr. Adams is the ringmaster.

Optional: Demon Spectrals

Those that study Spectrals have found, with only a few exceptions, that demons don't become Spectrals when they die. This is a subject hotly debated among the living and the dead, even though there are no documented cases of a demon Spectral manifesting on Earth. Most of the demon races (with the exception of the Lochs who refuse to talk about it) have spoken of Spectrals on their home worlds and dimensions.

The only known Demon races to produce Spectrals are Wolf People, Changelings, and Burners born on Earth. Nobody is sure as to why these demons can become Spectrals while others cannot, but it has been theorized that the similarities between these races and humans allow their continued existence on Earth.

Generally speaking, when a demon dies, it disappears. They head on to whatever after-life they have, and that's the end of them. This keeps the focus on humans as a species (we do love ourselves) and allows new characters to come and go instead of hanging around in the ether. Of course, there may be a Burner that really wants that last gasp of life or a dying Loch who cannot give up until their people have returned home. In such situations, the GM has the discretion to allow or disallow players to continue playing their demon character as a Spectral. Below are some examples of how to apply these ideas.

Burners

When they die on Earth, most Burners are at least glad their bodies are not ground into paste to lubricate the joints of the lesser Chromatics that stalk Caulon. They do not see bright lights. Their ancestors and past loved ones do not call to them. However, as they are incredibly social with a tightly knit community, Burners who are beyond the pale will typically come forth when a group of their people come together in a ritual to either honor their fallen kin or throw a huge

party to celebrate their life. When they come into being, they are almost always an Elemental Fire Spirit right out of the gate. Also, instead of a chill when a Spectral is in the area, the temperature raises slightly and anyone nearby starts to sweat profusely.

Carriers

The death of a Carrier is a touchy subject for many demonologists. When they die, their bodies release a vicious cloud of disease and sickness capable of causing the death of thousands of living creatures. In their own dimension, this helps them keep their people alive as their families attending their death happily eat the viruses spread by the dead. Little do experts know, the carrier literally becomes the disease it spreads when they die, carrying enough sentience to hold a conversation with if you can find someone able to speak Bubonic. If this form is dissipated or devoured, they are left no different than your average Spectral. If they stay around long enough to evolve, however, they often become Spirits of Disease... similar to the Plague Queen killed by the Circle of Ten.

Changelings

The first thing one figures out when encountering a Changeling Spectral is that they are able to modify what they look like in death as they did in life (automatically starting as a Mockingbird spirit, page 62). No Changeling Spectrals are seen with their death wounds, unless they choose to, and they can impersonate other ghosts with ease. The bad part of becoming a Spectral is that the isolation of death mixed with their own natural-born seclusion can drive them slightly crazy. More often than not, this combination creates a Spirit-Eater that is capable of turning into any shape they wish - a truly terrifying thought.

Lochs

Instead of swimming up into the Dark Horizon, some Lochs feel the need to stick around

Optional: Demon Spectrals (Continued)

to keep their friends safe, extract revenge for their death or even just the urge to conquer other ghosts. Those that take this path less traveled often find it hard to connect to anyone not near or enveloped in water, which is the only time they can use their Manifestation skill. Bathtubs, oceans, or even swimming pools are able to show the Loch Spectral as a reflection to all those nearby, brief glimpses in order to communicate directly. Their souls usually become of the Elemental Water variety at first, but they are as limited to water as they were in life. Which is to say not at all.

Oracles

When Oracles die, they exist much like other Spectrals. They never truly lose their ability to view the future, but are unable to leave the Earth dimension to follow their visions to their completion. Also, they are known for leaving a spot of supernatural magnetism that attracts portals, demons, maniacs, and other oddities to the site. The size of the area depends on how they were killed (violent deaths cause larger effected regions) and the sheer amount of force behind their personality. Some areas may be fairly harmless to the average person, but can be filled with all manner of strangeness (compasses twirling around aimlessly, weird noises in the night, twisted trees, etc), while others are downright deadly (packs of roving demons, sporadically opening portals, ferocious shadow-beasts, etc).

Tarks

Once dead, a Tark is no longer a slave to Grem. They could, in theory, learn to communicate with humans better and become valuable allies if it wasn't for the screaming voices in their heads. The Tark's strange genetic makeup creates a multiple personality disorder with each voice fighting for control of this very large ectoplasmic body. In the end, however, they are nothing more than children (see Child Ghosts on page 23).

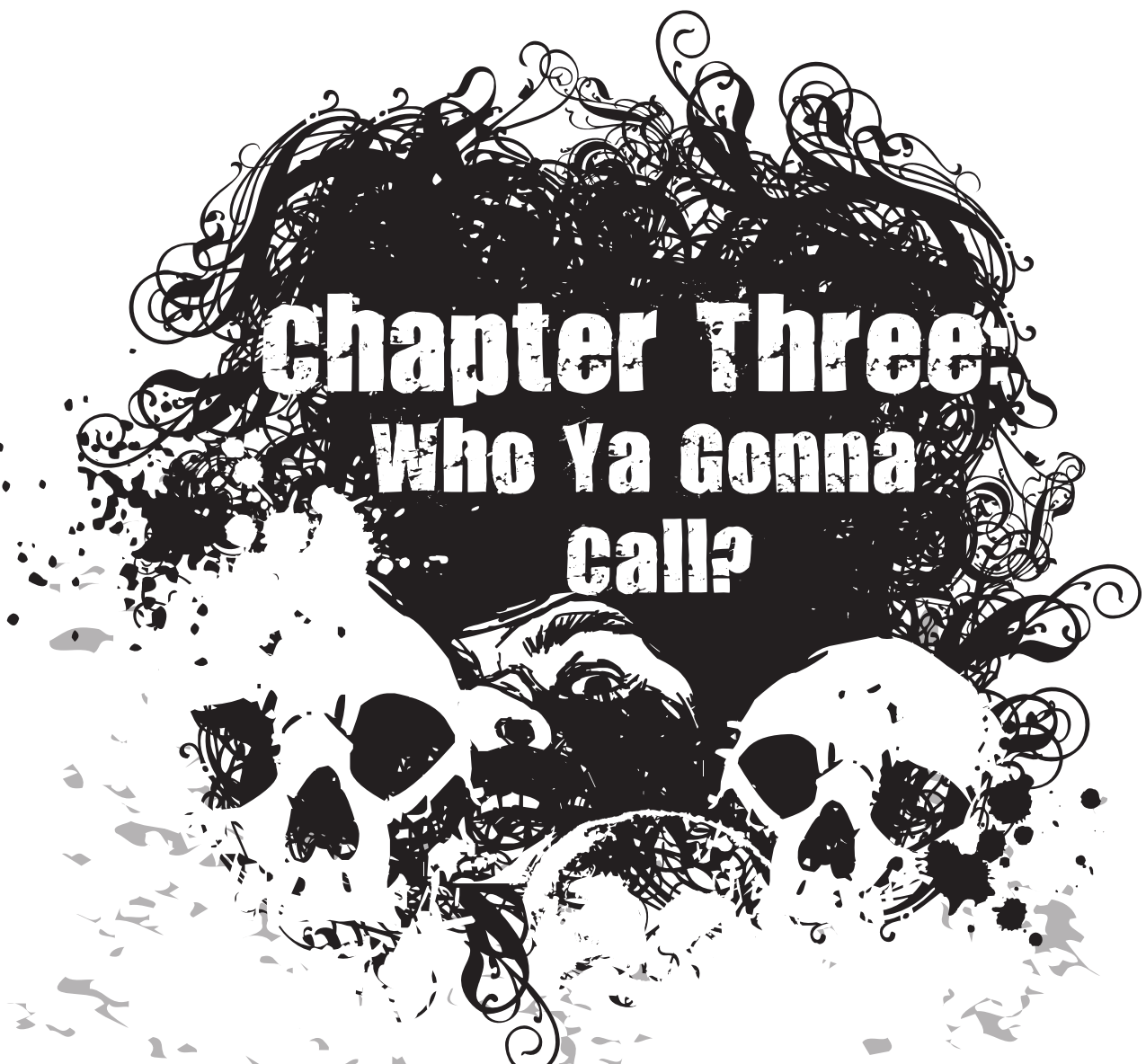
Taylari

When a Taylari dies a final death, typically they disappear to never again walk the earth. They've already had their chance to live a special, longer life (or a second life in the case of created). Taylari are big on their final rest, but there are a few things that even experts don't know. After death, it takes a lot for them to gather their senses, but they can come back as a ghost just as easily as any human. However, they are actively tethered to their Taylari Mortus body, forced to stand by and watch as their monstrous side destroys lives and wreaks havoc all over the city. When their Mortus form is destroyed, they should dissipate into nothing, but some don't. Once manifested, Taylari Spectrals can still use their Blood Magic as long as they are possessing a body that bleeds.

Wolf-people

These chaotic demons are a mixed lot. Depending on how much they embraced their wolf-like life ties in directly to when they can manifest. If they relished the lunacy and destruction of their condition, then their spirits can only manifest during a full moon, remaining inactive the rest of the time. Even their ghostly form is ferocious and nearly feral, very close to that of a Spirit-Eater, but without the urge to eat other ghosts. Talking to them can prove to be difficult.

If they clung to their humanity during life, they are much like other Spectrals, except that they cannot manifest at all during a full moon. Their ghostly form is still effected by silver weapons, even though it remains intangible at all other times. Many become Conceptual spirits of the hunt or Wolf Spirits.



Chapter Three: Who Ya Gonna Call?

The Caballistas

Juan Guillaume was born the son of a local voodoo priest in Port au Prince, Haiti. As he grew up, Juan developed a particular hatred for poverty and corrupt governments, having been surrounded by such things on a daily basis. He also found a talent for the family trade of necromancy through spells and lessons his father had taught him. He had always admired his father, a proud revolutionary. Unfortunately, Juan's father was gunned down under mysterious circumstances after a particularly vicious local election. Soon afterwards, members of local drug rings came to tell him of his father's secret dealings with their organizations. With the help of his

father's "business partners," he hunted down his father's killers, gunning them down in an act of street justice. The streets turned a blind eye to the violence due to the influence his new friends wielded in society.

Juan later became involved with the top local drug runners and united several voodoo priests in the area under his banner. Juan discovered that the two groups already had ties, sometimes working together to deal with local supernatural business and especially with Spectrals. By turning in some overdue favors, Juan developed an organization called the Caballistas (the Riders of the Dead). He then developed a special spell that allowed their adepts to possess the dead (instead of the other way around). Rumors abound

regarding this incredible and unique spell, the calling card of the Caballistas.

For many years, the drug trafficking and civil wars became business as usual in the Caribbean Sea as well as parts of Central and South America. A steady growth in this trade has led to the appearance of more and more Spectrals in these areas. Several deaths occur and they are seldom accidental, even if they are caused by random civil wars, family disputes, or shootings from the Drug Enforcement Agency. The steady influx of ghosts is integral to the success of the group and they have learned even more special ways to

keep them in check (see Merge Souls below). In short, a very chaotic array of Spectrals is created in this region with many different motives and many different users of the Path of Death in very close proximity.

Spreading the Influence

From the outside, the juxtaposition of the Caballistas' members seems unlikely. The group consists of several priests from both the Catholic and voodoo religions in addition to drug runners. With this amalgamation of interests, the group is able to expel any unwanted Spectrals and control

Joining the Order

Most members of the Caballistas should possess some knowledge of the Path of Death, although Juan is not likely to turn down any adept. Magic users do retain a higher importance to the group than other members and they are not against accepting demons (though they are rare). Joining the organization demands becoming a full-time member and working under Juan. Members can purchase Upgrades for spells from the Path of Death for half price (rounded up) and have access to Ride the Dead and Merge Souls.

(2nd) – Ride the Dead

Mana: 16

Casting time: 9 / 0

Duration: 10 minutes

Range: Line of Sight

Resistance: Yes

Description: This spell is used by Caballistas to experience the nature of Spectrals first hand. After using the Command the Dead spell to take over a Spectral, the caster makes their body dissolve into intangibility, allowing them to possess a ghost. In this condition, the adept can spend XP to learn Spectral Skills, heightening their power.

During the time of concentration, the Caballista is able to see through the Spectral's eyes like he is there, operate the Spectral's limbs, in effect - become a Spectral. When the duration ends, the spell snaps off abruptly, solidifying the Caballista where he stands and putting the Spectral back in control of his actions.

All Upgrades purchased for the Command the Dead spell apply here for the adept's Control Actions and Duration.

Sacrifice: The strain on the spirit to assert command over a soul leaves the adept drained. Any Stamina spent on this spell is recovered at half the normal rate (1 per 10 min. of rest)

Upgrades: Reduce Mana (Min: 10), Reduce Casting, Duration Bonus (30 min > 1 hr > +1 hr, Max: 6 hrs), Range Bonus (+25 ft, Max: 150 ft.), Effect Bonus (+1 ghost, Max: 10 ghosts), Effect Bonus (-1 Speed to Control Action, Min: 3), Effect Bonus (-1 Stamina cost for Control Action, Min: 1)

(3rd) - Merge Souls

Mana: 22

Casting Time: 12 / 1 Round

Duration: Permanent

Range: Line of Sight

Resistance: Yes

Description: This spell was coauthored by the Brotherhood of the Iron Skull and the Caballistas for different reasons. It has the power to combine the souls of two ghosts into a single entity. The created being is simply insane - gone mad from the breakdown of its mental faculties merging with those of another.

The Caballistas have learned that this is an easy way to incapacitate even the worst Spirit Eater or Spectral. The Brotherhood of the Iron Skull uses it to store even more ghosts in their already-imbued skulls.

The caster must have control of the ghosts through use of magic and can undo its effects at a whim, but must cast the spell again to merge the souls again.

Sacrifice: The adept loses all natural bonuses to Magic Resistance checks for the next day. This doesn't affect bonuses gained from other spells or magic items/gadgets.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana (Min: 14), Reduce Casting, Effect Bonus (+1 Merged Souls, Max: 5), Effect Bonus* (Ghost has -2 penalty to resist effect, Max: -10)

others in search of power and money. With much success, the group has grown tremendously and spread its influence throughout large areas of the world.

The Catholic priests are in it to make their followers happy. From their numbers come some of the most powerful exorcists and spirit banishers. Getting rid of angry ghosts (whether real or simply controlled by other members) brings solace to the flock and supplies their churches with the much-needed cash flow to continue operating.

Unscrupulous voodoo priests use the group's influence to gain control of Spectrals for their own needs. They are masters of the Path of Death, reflected in the creation of two different special spells that this group alone wields (with a few exceptions). The Caballistas look for every opportunity to exact control of the dead for experiments and profit.

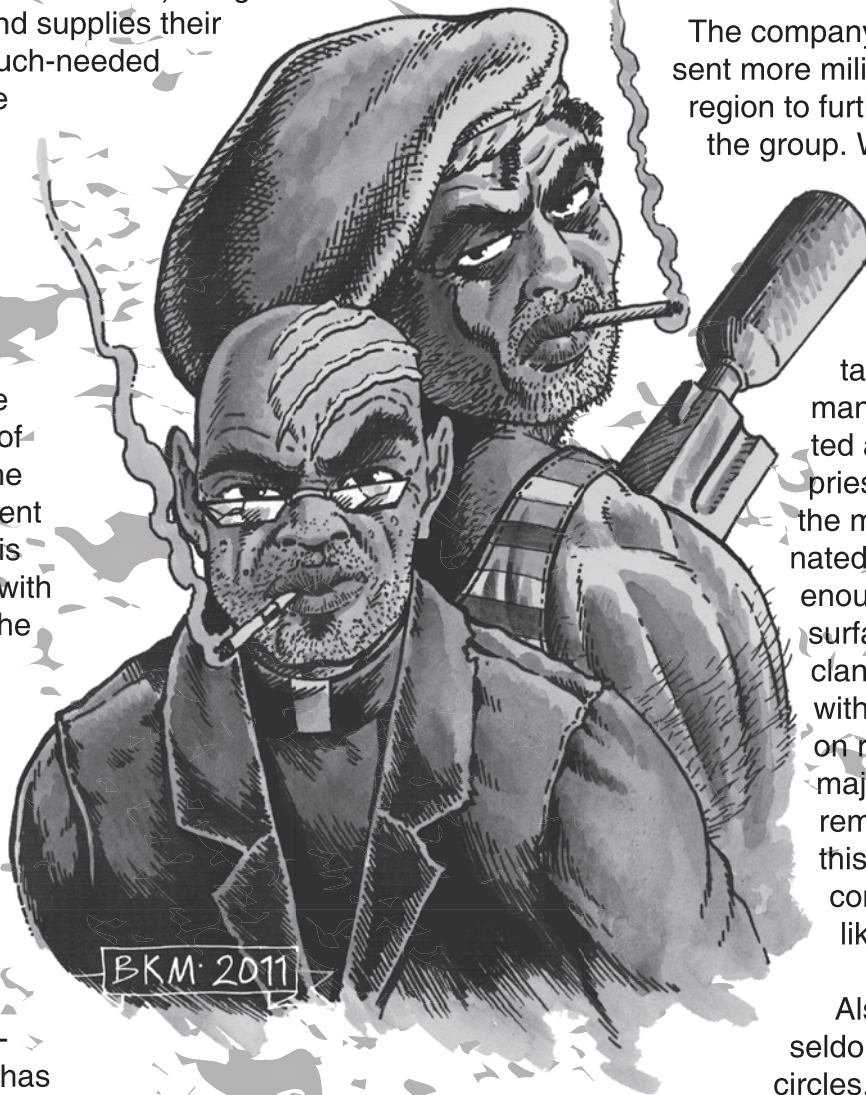
The large volume of drugs that are distributed has given the drug traffickers a strong foundation of power that has almost reached worldwide influence. Their members have traveled to many different places, each time capturing Spectrals of different ethnicities to bring back and learn secrets from. The dead speak quickly when they are threatened with losing control of themselves or losing their own identities. With the help of the priests, they can also keep the populace in check more easily.

Outside Dealings

Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. has not ignored the Caballistas' actions. The company has sent several envoys to the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America only to have them threatened, brutally killed, gone missing, or defected to the Caballistas. API knows them as only the "Horsemen" (apparently because of their ability to "ride" local Spectrals).

The company has recently sent more military squads to the region to further investigate the group. What has occurred has become a nightly war of guns and spirits. The company's most talented necromancers are pitted against voodoo priests that many of the magical arts originated with. Strangely enough, rumors have surfaced about API clandestinely working with the Caballistas on rare occasions of major hauntings. It remains to be seen if this kind of thing will continue... but it isn't likely.

Also, while they seldom run in the same circles, the Brotherhood of the Iron Skull has encountered the Caballistas once or twice. These meetings ended in bloodshed at first, but led to a steady alliance between the two groups. This understanding allows the Caballistas' members access to the life of socialites and the Brotherhood a way into the drug trade. They have also swapped spell knowledge, giving the Caballistas access to the Imbue the Iron Skull spell and the Brotherhood access to Ride the Dead and Merge Souls as well.



King James Court

There exists a strange phenomenon among Spectrals. In general cases, a large group of the dead in a single place spells bad omens and calls Spirit Eaters to the scene ready for a feast. However, within the heart of Europe is the longest lasting gathering of Spectrals ever seen on Earth: King James Court.

The power it wields in the world of the dead is immense, as it is run by dead royalty of the past. Yes, unlike other areas of the world, most of Europe's dead are assembled into a court that resembles those of medieval times, ruled by a king, a queen and the lords and ladies or dukes and duchesses under them. They have ruled this establishment and handed out judgments to their lessers for centuries – mostly made up of newer, more modern Spectrals.

What is it that they rule exactly? Why, all the dead of Europe, of course. They rule the shadows, police all of the graveyards, and keep other Spectrals in check. There is no real reason for this. Most Spectrals, if left to their own devices, would deal with their personal demons and simply fade away afterward (or perhaps join API if the chance came up). Others would gladly walk into the Bright Lights without a second thought and leave nothing for the Court of King James to govern. They can't have that, now can they?

Unfortunately for some, participation in King James Court is non-voluntary. More Spectrals in Europe than in any other continent miss the calling of their Bright Lights. Not because they were horrible people when they lived or because another Spectral jumped through their gate to the afterlife, but due to the representatives of the Court of King James. They are stationed all over the continent, awaiting deaths large and small (the smaller the number the better). When a victim's ghost rises and attempts to leave this plane, they are suddenly captured by the court's representatives and incarcerated against their will until their Bright Lights close (which doesn't take long). Distraught and without anywhere else to go, their existence becomes a never-ending service to the presiding royalty. In exchange, the

ghost is trained to become a full Spectral and even to evolve if possible. They are also taught that only King James can one day reopen their Bright Lights when their service to his highness is complete.

Some Spectrals have served for hundreds, if not thousands, of years with no sign of their wishes being granted other than their sovereign's promise. They are often allowed short, yearly periods where they can pursue personal goals, but they must always return or risk fading away. It seems that their precious existence is linked to King James Court for better or for worse.

To people who have died in recent years, this can be a huge shock to the system. First, they are dead. Second, they are thrust into a system of medieval worship to a long-dead king and reduced to the role of an indentured servant with little hope to ever pay off their debts. Some try to find their ways to the nearest ghost hunter or Spirit Eater to be put out of their misery, but few are bold enough to attempt suicide from death, because this can also lead to eternal imprisonment or service to a different ruler if they meet up with a wily necromancer.

No Fear

The strangest thing is that King James Court has no fear of the living or dead worlds. The biggest threat to large gatherings of Spectrals is detection, either by a hungry Spirit Eater or necromancer mad with power. These fiendish creatures wouldn't think twice to either devour or enslave all of the ruling members in a heartbeat. However, something about the King's eminence instantly banishes Spirit Eaters from any land the King claim as his. It also dulls the effects of even the most powerful necromancer. These are temporary effects, however, so King James Court is known to move from country to country, from city to city. Apocalypse Prevention, Inc, has studied Spirit Eater movements (since they migrate to places with ample food) in Europe and found that they differ from the movements of Spirit Eaters everywhere else in the world. The patterns reveal that they are unable to move through certain regions on a seasonal basis - essentially while the lords and ladies are on holiday.

Court Servant (0 BP)

Unlike other Spirit types, this kind of evolution is actually forced upon a Spectral by King James himself instead of it being a sign of personal growth. With its power comes a heavy price: allegiance to the King. It costs zero (0) BP to apply to a character due to this price.

Gift – Sanctuary: When inside the King's current territory (comprising hundreds of acres at a time), the Spectral is safe from all attacks by Spirit Eaters. None can enter the area, as Spirit Eaters are banned by invisible force fields that protect the members of King James Court. They also receive a +5 bonus to Magic Resistance check against spells from the Path of Death while within the Sanctuary.

Drawback – Eternal Allegiance: The Spectral is forever in the debt of the King. The King or Queen or any Lord of Lady of the court can command the character to any perform task (except self-destruction). They must obey and do not receive a chance to resist. Also, if given leave from court, they must return within the time allotted or they simply cease to exist - a strange side effect of their allegiance and their strong dependency on King James Court.

Though the company has certainly investigated, the court fears little retribution from Apocalypse Prevention, Inc, no matter how barbaric their measures of acquiring new subjects may be. API obviously has their qualms with the court's actions, but the company has little time to settle differences between the dead when so many living souls hang in the balance every day. On the other hand, agents (both Spectral and otherwise) continue to watch and investigate King James Court just in case they attempt some sort of coup on the living - if such a thing exists.

King James Court is actually an equalizing force as well. Much like the deal struck with the Taylari for self-policing, this group of Spectrals is very interested in dealing personally with any of its members that step out of bounds. The public learning that ghosts are real would only hurt the

grip that King James Court holds over the dead throughout their country. The guilty are often handed to API on a silver platter for disassembling. The court has stopped several hauntings from occurring and has sent many Spectrals from its numbers to aid API in investigations that deal directly with their territory. Even so, the company is very interested in learning the secrets of shielding against Spirit Eaters - creatures that can eat the soul of anyone, living or dead. This type of ability would help to shield their agents from these dreaded creatures for good.

A Look From the Top

King James' Court sessions are a marvel to behold. Usually with coliseum seating for attendees, one can see the king (an old and very powerful spirit) at the center balcony, with similar balconies seating his most loyal and trusted comrades. Former royalty and all of their descendants' souls sit here with their extended families. The next level down is made up of ancient and influential Spectrals from history, from Spartan warriors to generals of the British Army wearing their brightest red coats. It is literally a place where some of the first scientists can converse with the newest astrophysicists, where witches co-exist with agents of the Inquisition. It is a place of learning and togetherness for most, if you know or are descended from the right ghosts. The bottom level, the lowest of the areas to sit and the hardest to project one's voice from, is reserved for the average Spectrals, the modern ghosts or those with no link to their past.

The leader of the court is a known figure from history. King James Scott was the Duke of Monmouth, and illegitimate son of Charles II, who was denied his crown centuries ago. Upon his death in 1685, he established his very own court and has ruled ever since. Though his queen - and his lords and ladies - have changed repeatedly, King James has continued his just reign. He has kept his grasp on his kingdom by inventing new Spectral Skills and evolving into an amalgamation of several different spirit types. None of his living heirs ever went on to become Spectrals, meaning his non-existence would result in the collapse of his court. This leads those in power to fight hard to preserve the court and those

on the bottom rung to seek its destruction. Many a necromancer would love to capture this influential Spectral, but none has even gotten close.

Few know if King James' promise to open up the Bright Lights is truth or a pile of lies he spews to new ghosts. Stories state that he's granted this gift to very few and no one has heard from these Spectrals afterward, though most believe that he just as likely fed them to a Spirit Eater or sold them to API for research. His closest allies have affirmed that his promises are true, but are sworn to never divulge secrets - one more thing for API to look into.

His current bride is Queen Christine II (his second wife named Christine). She died little more than a decade ago, having been heavily sought by King James as his new queen. His soldiers watched Christine for years before her death, as she was a computer analyst, intellectual and the perfect candidate to bring King James up to speed with the modern day (as so many of his

queens had done). It's obvious that she doesn't love the King nor wish to be queen, but Queen Christine, just as her subjects, is stuck in the system with little recourse.

Council of Paracelus

According to the Council of Paracelus, in the time before humanity there was only spirit stuff and matter stuff. It shifted about until something abruptly changed... four beings sprung from the nothing. Each of them was made of spirit stuff, but governed over an aspect of the matter stuff. Thus, were born the Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphaël.

The four spirits were different in almost every imaginable way and each of them had ideas about how the rest of the universe should be governed (or not governed, as the case may be). Their followers were lesser spirits, faeries and other beings that existed long before humanity.

Soon, there commenced a war fought on four sides. The war could have gone on forever, as spirits are immortal, but they eventually brokered a truce after many of their followers died by the others' hands.

Spirits were to take turns manning Earth and all its creations. The four sides went on to multiply greatly in numbers



and eventually drew lots to see which order they were to govern. The winners got to visit earth for a lifetime to observe humanity and learn how to further stave off any future wars and what had precipitated the first war. If the "visitor" didn't learn their lesson in a lifetime, they were forced to continue on for further life cycles. Those who were successfully returned to Heaven (believed to be the Bright Lights itself) to either begin the cycle again or retire from the game. Some spirits volunteered to visit Earth several times so other more anti-social beings could abstain.

Now, life continues in its merry way and a few spirits on Earth actually do remember information of Heaven and why they are here. They have gathered together in a loose organization of spirits across the dimension, called the Council of Paracelsus after the Greek philosopher of the four elements. Four sects currently make up the modern Council of Paracelsus, each representing an element and the spiritual paragon to which it relates. The elements of wood and metal were never part of the original conception of the Council, perceived to simply be other versions of Earth.

Membership

The Council of Paracelus is split into four different sects. Joining one of the sects requires that a Spectral be both Evolved and be willing to perform tasks for the Council of Paracelus every season. Each task performed allows the character to call on the resources or members of the group on one occasion at a future time. These "favors" are considered sacred and are always upheld once per year, except in cases where the death of another is requested. The Council will not directly kill another and will not ask one of their members to do so. Members can refuse to perform a task for the group, but their next chance to earn a favor may be a long time coming, as will any aid they may ask for.

It is rumored that humans once had a sect within the Council of Paracelus as well. Apparently, anyone involved with such an enterprise has forgotten everything about it.

Joining the Council (BP 2)

Characters that join the Council of Paracelus receive a bonus to specific Spectral Skill checks related to their sect. They need to already have Evolved, most commonly into an Elemental Spirit type. Some Conceptuals and other types also join just to get their once-a-year wish granted.

Michael's Brigade of the Burning Sword

They are also known as the "Leadership of the Great Adventure", being the first of the sects to grow to great size. Their members are always ready to travel to Earth and discover new things that humanity has created in each lifetime. Brilliant military strategists and talented visionaries tend to gravitate toward the Burning Sword. Few wish to cross this stalwart sect - their hot tempers and belief in swift action is a painful combination for their opponents to handle.

"Control is like a great wine, growing more potent with time."

Their element is Fire, able to destroy anything in its path. Their common tasks include destruction of property or inciting battles. Some of the worst wars on Earth are thought to have been started by a member of the Burning Sword. Members of Michael's Brigade can ask for a major conflagration to be unleashed upon a certain location (as a sign of the group's once-vaunted "omnipotence"). Spirits that join this sect receive a +2 bonus to their Possess Element and Stir checks.

Children of Gabriel

This sect has been derided as little more than a country club for spirits. Entertainment and friendship are celebrated - maybe too much. Members tend to embellish their stories, making it difficult to find out exactly what the real truth is in certain situations. The sect is more of a loose association of Spirits even at the best of times. Their gatherings are talked about years after they occur, since they also find it hard to stop talking. Their members seldom wish to go to Earth, but when they finally do, they end up staying much longer than other sects in the end.

"Welcome to the party! Did you bring wine?"

Members of this sect are devoted to protecting waterways and oceans. Typical tasks they need to perform can include humiliation, humor, and appearing at exactly the right time to stop those who would harm the world's water supplies. The Children of Gabriel can ask for secret information of some type to be revealed to them (as a sign of their group's once-vaunted "omnipresence"). Members receive a +2 bonus to Possess Element and Affect Senses checks.

Healing Hand of Raphael

This sect devotes itself to healing and the defense of nature in general. Not so strangely, the sect promotes the development of better medical technology by humans and demons alike. Members tend to be patient, live-and-let-live types, for the most part, but lumberjacks beware! These tree huggers have teeth.

"How would you like that axe used on you?"

The Healing Hand represents the element of Earth and hopes to defend all its aspects. Members gather favors by protecting the natural world. The Healing Hand can ask for some kind of resurrection or reincarnation. Spirits of this sect receive a +2 bonus to Possess Element and Possess Object checks.

The Rational Sword of Uriel's Mind

This sect is also a great supporter of human technology (such as it is) - often seen as cold and pessimistic, but brilliant. The Rational Sword believes in freedom for all, as long as another's freedom doesn't jeopardize their own. The slightest insinuation that someone would try to control them is met with the greatest seriousness. In many cases, they exhibit sociopathic tendencies that can lead them to perform horrible actions in the name of being rational.

"Leave me alone. Now!"

This sect represents Air and the consciousness of what it is to be a cognizant being. Members are commonly asked to "borrow" technology

from those who are undeserving of its benefits and re-distribute it to the more worthy for their tasks. Uriel's Sword can offer members information by scrying into the past or the future. Spirits of this sect receive a +2 bonus to Possess Element and Possess Being checks.

The Upward Spiral

You know that guy you knew in high school who now is barely on any social networking site and just plays massively multiplayer online role-playing games while living alone in a tiny apartment? Well, so do the Upward Spiral, a group of Spectrals that have invented a sinister organization. They watch the habits of this type of person for a few days and then horribly murder them in the worst ways possible. As unsuspecting victims rise from their bodies, the ghost who has been waiting the longest jumps through the poor bastard's white door and disappears forever. The remaining ghosts become the newest recruits in the Upward Spiral.

This group of Spectrals travels the land, finding people who contribute nothing to society (much like they presumably did in life as well) to kill them and steal their ticket to the afterlife for one of their members. This honor goes to the member that has been waiting for it the longest; sometimes as long as an entire century. Even the victim of this ploy eventually goes on through the Bright Lights, but only after they've waited their turn. Most of the recently dead (and understandably overwhelmed) sign up with them right away. By the time they figure out the whole afterlife thing, they're almost at the front of the line anyways.

The one hard rule is: when it's your turn, you do the deed. Some balk, but most are so eager to get to their existence over with that it almost always works out in the end. No one ever meets the ghost that actually killed them, which is standard protocol for the group.

The Pyramid

What's the problem you say? Well, besides being an obvious pyramid scheme from Hell, the Upward Spiral is constantly killing people, stealing their eternal reward, and actively recruiting even more Spectrals that also want in. Other Spectrals have noticed how the group is little more than a rotating roster of afterlife seeking ghosts, which is at least a way out of this existence. No one really loses since everyone eventually gets their reward, right? Hooray!

For a long time these guys barely registered as a blip on API's radar, as even though they were killing people every few weeks, there was no real rhyme or reason to it. Not only did they pick their targets decently well, but they also made it look as natural as possible given the circumstances. A suicide here, a bookcase falling on one there, and other mundane, everyday occurrences and you've got a fairly solid alibi when killing people. No one really needed to rise to the top to become a leader until right after Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. first encountered the group.

At one point, a Spectral agent was shadowing a suspect in a Wolf Person case when they noticed a large group of Spectrals. Seems the Upward Spiral was trailing one of their initiates at the all-you-can-eat midnight buffet. She looked into the man's death afterward and found that he had died by falling and bumping his head. Suspicious, she looked further and found a number of "lonely" deaths in the area in the past few weeks.

She prowled around with a bit of backup until she saw the group again. When the agents sprang on the Spectrals to interrogate and possibly incarcerate them, all hell broke loose. Ghosts ran all different directions. API agents struggled to keep them contained. One poor bastard had his living room turned into an ectoplasmic wrestling match for the better part of half an hour. The Upward Spiral lost four members to the API team, but the majority of them fled successfully.

Tangents

Some of the Upward Spiral's members met up later to continue their work, but a small number left to start their own group loosely based around

the same concept. The main group was frightened, but simply believed that API had caught this rogue group. They still wanted to transcend, but were too worried to try the usual tactics.

Well, all but one of them was frightened. Harold Carvini owned an adult video store until the Upward Spiral made him into one of them and stole his afterlife in his apartment above his store. He patiently waited until his turn came up, but API showed up and he missed his chance. He quickly convinced the Spirals that stuck with him that they could continue their work as long as they switched their focus. It was obvious that the only way to get into the coveted Bright Lights and not get caught along the way was to hunt those who clearly wanted to ruin all their plans. Sure, API had the knowledge, the supernatural power, the muscle, and every other upper hand available, but the Upward Spiral has a secret weapon... the element of surprise. The company has no clue what they are planning on doing or that they have suddenly switched targets. So, the motley band of losers, loners, and socially awkward middle-aged dudes and dudettes began hunting the API agents who fell into their criteria.

Harold and his band of Spirals have learned a lot about the world beyond ghosts. They know about nearly every race that API has in their employ from stalking their agents' every move. Through trial and error, they've also figured out that dead demons don't open Bright Lights nearly as often when they die and that they need to kill the human agents to get what they want.

Of course, as they hunt down agents, their numbers dwindle when API either captures or destroys their members. This has led to the phenomenon known as "recruiting runs". When they bump into any other ghosts, the Upward Spiral lies to them about the afterlife and tells them about the mysterious government agency that preys upon the dead. They obtain many new recruits by spreading this false philosophy. If a moment of truth is gained from a friendly agent, most Spirals will gladly turn on their former friends to help API out. Until they learn better, however, these confused souls are sadly just as bad as the original Spiral members themselves.

Continued Hauntings

The Upward Spiral has many, many chapters, always calling the largest cemeteries in the area their base of operations. Whenever they are not hunting API agents, they hang out amongst the mausoleums and tomb markers, resting up for the next kill. They sharpen their skills on Spirit Eaters that tend to be attracted to large groups of ghosts, though they don't always survive these training sessions.

To date, they have killed over a dozen API agents since Harold came into power. He has vowed to only go through the Bright Lights when he can also lead all of his brothers and sisters into the most beautiful afterlife. Actually, Harold has developed a taste for murder and has begun to really enjoy himself while he does other people in. It's expected for him to evolve into a Spirit Eater at some point. The other members fear for his future if he continues along this road.

If Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. takes another swing at the Upward Spiral and don't manage to destroy them all at once, they can expect pay-back. Members of the Upward Spiral are not beyond trailing the agents: either by possessing them or by finding out the location of the local API office through espionage and then launching unstoppable raids at it. A full frontal attack would be mostly composed of homemade explosives attached to people they are possessing and throwing random explosives at the base using Stir. No one likes an angry ghost.

Kellwood Forest

Years ago, a young man named Craig Henning ended up drunk and passed out in Kellwood Forest, a small wooded area in a rather large federal park just outside the city limits. He died from exposure to the elements and missed his chance at an afterlife when another ghost stole it from him. Craig spent most of his life in forests, having been an accomplished scout from childhood to maturity. The night he died, he sought shelter from the harsh winter weather in the forest after he got off at the wrong bus stop and

tried to walk home in the freezing cold. His faith in the forest may have gotten him killed in the end, but it didn't deter him from becoming a forest spirit.

Craig became a self-proclaimed guardian of the small, wooded area (complete with a park bench and flower garden), but soon realized it didn't need much attention and grew bored with his existence. Eventually, Craig became completely fed up with how little happened in the small glen. Then he encountered Heather. The teenaged girl accidentally dropped and broke a bottle, but left it behind instead of attempting to clean it up. Craig, in a fit of over-reacting, managed to put her in the hospital by throwing her 30 feet into the air. He felt little remorse, actually feeling justified in his actions.

Another year went by and Craig finally stepped up to his defender title again to defend a rape victim by breaking her attacker's neck with a well-placed branch. He was unable to stop his aggression and unfortunately killed the woman as well. When their ghosts rose out of their bodies, Craig attacked the rapist again, bent on killing him as many times as he could. Craig figured out his usual violent tactics didn't work, but one thing certainly did: Craig ate him. He liked the taste so much that he confronted the girl before she went into the Bright Lights and ate her as well.

Soon enough, Craig was transformed into a Spirit Eater through boredom and aggression. However, he was still bound to Kellwood Forest, a mental tether crafted by his quickly-growing insanity. Craving the taste of other ghosts but not being able to leave the forest to hunt drove Craig even more insane. As the death rate rose, people rapidly avoided the forest, claiming to be able to hear the sound of wooden teeth gnashing in anticipation as they approached and howls when they turned away in fear. Animal control has been called several times, but has not yet found anyone brave enough to step foot inside after the last inspector to investigate the forest was found skinned.

One After Another

It took Craig the better part of a year to control his appetite, allowing him to pace his eating habits more effectively. Killing and eating once every few weeks kept his thrill level up, but people still kept coming back. He learned how to mimic the sound of voices calling out for help in the forest to draw lone humans in to feast upon, and Craig was content being a forest with the mind of a monster inside. That is, he was until he received a strange visitor.

A fellow Spirit Eater came to Kellwood Forest seeking refuge from an API ghost hunting squad and, after their initial throw down, Craig decided to help it hide until the coast was clear. The two developed a strange friendship and stuck together, eventually calling to other Spirit Eaters to join them in the forest to form a small pack. The mobile Spirit Eaters began the tradition of venturing out to drag screaming victims back. They enjoyed their new existence, as Craig would provide a safe haven for his followers and the others would provide screaming nutrients. This arrangement carried on without a hitch until their numbers began to grow too large.

A fair number of Spirit Eaters showed up over the next few months as API commenced with a citywide crackdown that forced them to flee the surrounding cityscape. Craig accepted the first few refugees happily, as he knew that safety lay truly lies in numbers. However, the introduction of so many different appetites and tempers soon created strife within the group. Several Spirit Eaters ate each other in merciless attacks to determine a hierarchy. Strangely, although Craig himself was the ruler of Kellwood Forest, he didn't wish for this type of conflict. He quickly dealt with the outsiders' anarchist ideas, deciding to keep the

numbers small enough to retain simple control. It wasn't long until all of the Spirit Eaters would hunt in well-synchronized packs and share their meals with the rest of their companions.

API and Kellwood

The Spectrals soon realized that a fixed location would lead API to track them down and wipe them out. Whatever was left of the person Craig used to be realized he would eventually have to move. And so, inch by inch, Craig began to figure out how to move his trees by pulling their roots



out of the ground one by one and making them take 'steps' in the right direction. After months of practice, Craig has discovered that he can get one tree going at a decent walking pace for a normal human or all of the trees at a snail's pace. Thus, the forest walks.

Craig walks ahead of the other Spirit Eaters accompanied by one single tree, to scout what lies ahead. This way, he can make sure that there aren't too many human structures around that would cause people to notice a walking tree or a slowly encroaching forest. His trees are withered, worn, and mostly dead, giving him a very menacing appearance. Despite the way they look, however, he is still able to completely control them.

As the forest slowly expands, the Spirit Eaters within the two dozen or so trees hunt for food, recuperate, and bicker among themselves for the top dog position. The current dominant Spirit Eater is an elderly woman known as Michelle Flint, who died in a horrifying car crash only six months ago. She evolved quickly, feeding mostly on younger people as she's convinced that this is the key to living forever. Her ragged face clings to her skull, and she is so ferocious and feared by all the others that she generally doesn't hunt anymore. Instead, Michelle just sits and eats whatever the others offer up to her. Craig, a powerful Elemental Spirit as well, is terrified of her and will do whatever she asks. So far, she hasn't appeared to want anything other than to beat others into obedience and snarl at the rest. Spirit eaters are not known for their robust vocabulary.

API has heard about a haunted forest and sent a team out to investigate, but they found very little. Each time a murderous forest is reported, they visit the site only to find an empty lot. The company knows something is afoot, but so far have not figured out the fact that the trees themselves are heading out towards greener pastures filled with the sound of screams. On the few occasions that API agents have entered Kellwood Forest, Craig has given specific instructions for the other Spirit Eaters to leave them alone. With no action, the company is sure to lose interest.

Spirit Stalkers

It takes a special kind of person to run around rumoredly haunted locations with a video camera and a machine that goes "ping". Those that do, however, can develop a small but dedicated and loyal fan base. Occasionally, the show becomes a hit and gains thousands of viewers, live spin-off shows, t-shirts, promotional deals, slots on Letterman, rabid fans, and piles of filthy money. Spirit Stalkers, practically a one-man production, is one of those special types.

Victor Weston dares to go where others won't, due to dangerous conditions, local by-laws, unsound structures, and personal faith. He goes in alone, armed only with his head-mounted webcam in order to capture amazing footage of Spectral activity. His shows are frequently streamed live to the Internet, complete with text-messaging audience participation. He never shows himself on camera and is very careful not to look at any mirrors during his filming, so no one knows the true face behind his amazing show. This is a good idea for Weston because, as faces go, he doesn't have one. He's been dead for almost 2 years.

Weston, once Tristan Porgatto, tried his hand at viral ghost videos when he was alive, but no one cared and there was no fame in sight. He had friends to go with him at first, before they abandoned him on a fateful ghost hunt due to boredom. Everyone in Tristan's life wished he would just give it up and get a real job, hopefully move out of his parents' basement, and meet someone to finally settle down with who could put up with marrying him. They wanted his happiness. Instead, Tristan's "Ghost Gangbusters!" was a bankrupt production with absolutely no followers. Determined to show that the afterlife existed and that ghosts were everywhere, he did the only logical thing left: he turned a camera on himself and filmed his very own suicide.

Things didn't go well from that point, as Tristan found himself trapped on Earth - he'd been too busy trying to check his camera to see if it had

caught his spirit exiting his body to go through his Bright Lights. It took him the better part of 14 months, but he finally figured out how to move objects and project his voice. He had proven the existence of ghosts to himself (obviously), but his quest to prove that to the rest of the world wasn't quite over. Using his new abilities, he got himself a high-end camera and a laptop that he now uses to go Spectral hunting. He can see other Spectrals (his subjects), but his camera cannot so he uses his own powers to "stir" things up a little and create a great show. It didn't take long to create his new persona of Victor Weston (which sounded like a cooler name). Now, sans his dorky-sounding name, he's filming authentic footage of Spectrals in action, even if it just himself.

His Biggest Fans

Apocalypse Prevention, Inc has taken a particular interest in Weston and is biding their time until they can close in on him. He's raising a bit too much awareness of ghosts, but API is still unaware that he is one himself. If they knew, their own Spectral squads would catch him in a heartbeat and seal away his footage so it never sees the light of the Internet. The company doesn't like Weston spreading knowledge of ghosts to the world, but they like the thought of him disappearing without a trace to men in black even less when it would be televised instantly to thousands of viewers. Scramblers don't work that well when used over the Internet and they know it. Apparently, Weston is also a Web Hunter (page 64), and able to hide any trace of his current whereabouts.



Weston currently has no idea that he's being stalked by API, but he does know that it's getting harder and harder to upload his videos online. His live feeds are interrupted, his older videos are being taken down, and API hackers plague his every move when they're not busy with the apocalypse of the week. Weston, however, is no slouch. He's got a computer whiz who edits his stuff and helps bounce it around online when he can't perform the action himself. Of course, she's dead too or API would have been all over her long ago. ZeeZeeTops is the handle of one "Zoe Candell" who is also a Web Hunter. She approves of Weston's message and helps out by keeping API one step behind. They have never met in person, but they recognize each other as fellow Spirits, which makes their allegiance to each other that much stronger.

Weston, needing a place to lay low while he's researching, has taken up residence in an

old castle that is now a large tourist attraction. He stores his laptop in the rafters of one of the exhibits and hits the streets in search of good haunted places until the castle closes. After the tours are all done, he opens up his computer on a bed once used by a king and Googles whatever he can find.

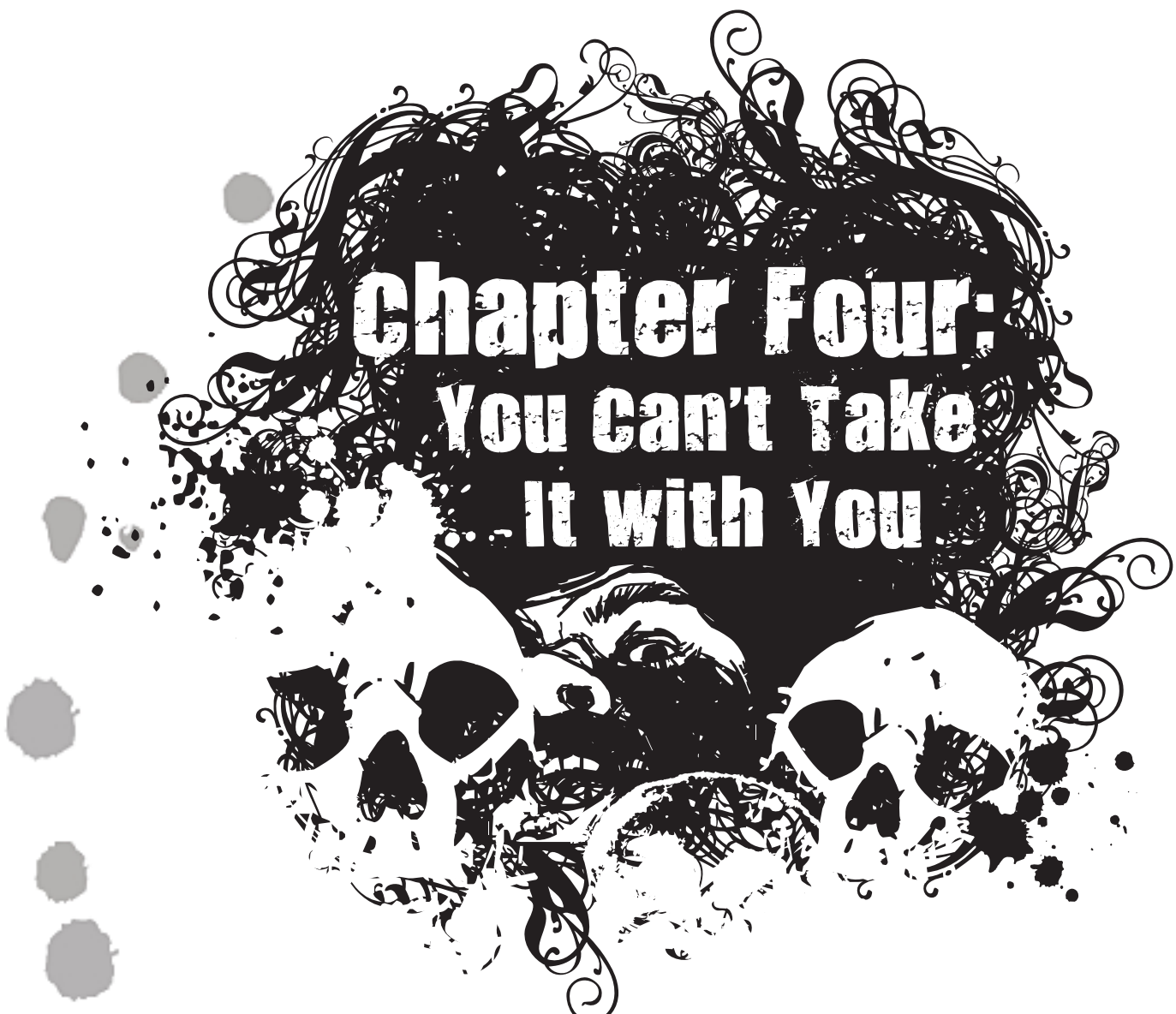
He is completely unaware that ZeeZeeTops is, in fact, funnelling him safe locations to shoot in that API is not keeping an eye on. She wants his show to continue succeeding just as much as he does, so she gets him hot spots that have a small chance of API interference. Her abilities allow her to keep tabs on a few select company emails and track cell phones of agents in the city. Her knowledge of them is far from complete, but she's smart enough to know that digging any deeper would only alert API to her occasional presence in their databanks. She doesn't wish to be dragged kicking and screaming to a painful API interrogation. She wants that even less than Weston getting busted.

ZeeZeeTops has an odd relationship with Weston. He treats her like a trusted ally who lives a thousand miles away behind the keyboard of another computer. ZeeZeeTops knows that Weston is a danger in the eyes of API and tries to keep him out of trouble. She floats around on the electrical current of the net and edits, uploads, and generally upkeepes Weston's videos. Weston is doing the same, which is how they got into contact in the first place. They have also developed a strange long-distance romance that is sure to come to a head when the show ends.

Lead Up to the Finale

The show itself is actually pretty good. Weston's stolen equipment is top-notch, and he scouts out his locations thoroughly. He actively removes or covers anything that could spoil his end-of-the-season surprise ahead of time. The new show "Spirit Stalkers" got the majority of its followers after its 4th episode in which Weston "had" to jump out of a 2nd story window to escape a antagonistic poltergeist that tore plaster off of walls and threw light bulbs around. Of course, all of it was theatrically staged, but it was impressive enough to bring on hundreds of loyal followers. T-shirts being worn by adoring fans and memes on the Internet are fairly common. Weston doesn't really know what to do with the money he makes on the show, so he just gets ZeeZeeTops to push it into advertising the show, bringing his exploits even more into the public eye. She does as Weston asks, but secretly siphons some of the funds to her still-living husband's bank account as well.

Weston plans to reveal himself as a ghost at the end of the current season. He has pre-recorded it and sent a copy to ZeeZeeTops to hold and release just in case he is ever caught or if he suddenly disappears. Revealing himself to thousands of people worldwide will clue everyone in on the presence of the supernatural, which generally means a lot of overtime for API.



chapter Four: You Can't Take It with You

Playing Tip for Spectrals

There are several ways to play a Spectral, all of them different and all of them correct. The thing about Spectrals is that they are as varied as the humans they used to be, all with their own motivations to act out and goals to pursue. So, there is no one true way to play a Spectral. In spite of this, Spectrals do share a few commonalities. They all died in assumingly horrible ways and there are circumstances behind each Spectral continuing to exist on Earth. No one rejects the Bright Lights without a reason, and that

reason is what keeps them “alive”. Some players may find it strange playing such a focused character, but there are ways to make this easier.

Nothing Without Passion

Spectrals are slaves to their Passion. This means that whatever the player chooses will be the character’s main focus in everything they do. The Spectral looking for his wife’s killer (Revenge) would have their entire existence wrapped up in this one mission. The rage that they hold onto in their heart is what keeps their ectoplasm from falling apart. It fueled their very

being into existence and their decision to reject the Bright Lights. This doesn't make the character a simple one-trick pony - it just makes them more attached to their reason for living than the humans who can sporadically visit their motivation when it suits them. If a Spectral turns their eye away from the prize even once, they risk fading into nothing. It happens to the best Spectrals: the moment when they feel content in their dead state and forget about the reason they exist in the first place.

Apocalypse Prevention, Inc takes measures to clearly profile each Spectral in their employ, seeking out their Passion in order for it to be fulfilled. The first deal they make is for the company's resources to follow the passion for them. In the case of revenge, the company will search the globe for the murderer. This means that every mission that the Spectral takes is one step toward to their final goal, even if they aren't performing the act directly. At the same time, they know that a Spectral's grasp on their continuation is risky at best when they finally achieve their goals. Stall tactics are a well-established method to keep a Spectral as useful to the company for as long as possible.

As a Spectral, players should take their Passion into consideration for their character even more so than others do. They also never truly give up everything to the company. They will often find ways to look for their own clues in-between missions. Others may even become so obsessed that they being seeing clues where they aren't present. Several accounts of a Spectral taking the life of the wrong guy come in every year. They are, of course, creatures of passion, so the company usually turns a blind eye unless the victim was someone of importance.

Attachments

Interestingly enough, Spectrals are at their core a collection of attachments. One may be attached to a particular person, watching them grow up, fall in love and eventually die, all while under their constant eye. Another may be attached to a specific place, guarding (or haunting) the house they were murdered in. They could even be attached to their old lucky coin, picked

up by one person and then another and another. In this instance, the Spectral "becomes" the good or bad luck they once felt from the coin.

In their interactions with other agents, a Spectral will also form attachments to the other players. They will often choose a single member of the squad to be their go-to person, sometimes called their "medium". In essence, this is the person (be they human or demon) that the Spectrals speaks and interacts with the most. It could even be the one they annoy the most. In either case, this attachment is important for a player to get right. They'll likely become attached to their headquarters, their training exercises and every other routine that comes with being an agent. It is in their nature, but could lead to them becoming complacent and forgetting their Passion. Be warned.

Understanding Intangibility

One thing that many have a problem truly understanding is a Spectral's ectoplasmic, intangible form. Being able to walk through walls and even spy on others without them even knowing can be a very useful tool. At the same time, Spectrals see their current form as a curse. They cannot touch the world or speak with another human being without draining themselves of their very ectoplasm. It is seldom a form that a Spectral thinks of as a good thing, even if the living love to use them in a variety of ways because of it.

The living take for granted what the dead cannot do without years of practice. "Yay! I have the power of touch," was a sarcastic quote from the very first Spectral agent on record, and it is very fitting. Touching a wall, speaking to another person or allowing another to see you are the powers that a Spectral must work very hard to master. Even when they do, they still must conserve their power, as each use drains them that much more of their precious ectoplasm. The Spectral form is not a gift but a curse, in many cases.

Too many players assume that they are unstoppable because they have no physical form. True, Spectrals are intangible and cannot be struck by your average attack. True, they are

usually invisible and can affect the world in this form (even with limited effectiveness), but they are far from without threats to their existence. Not only are there the big three (exorcists, necromancers, and Spirit Eaters), but there are also the Radiant (page 72), Loops (page 20), Death-Wishers (page 74), the fear of the Fading (page 24) and plenty of other worries that a Spectral carries every day.

Roles for Spectrals

Where does a Spectral fit into a squad? They often find it hard to find their true place within the dichotomy of being dead in the world of the living. Their form provides obvious advantages that are useful for Apocalypse Prevention, Inc, but they have other roles as well:

Negotiators

Spectrals, with all the knowledge that comes from living a full life, can often make great negotiators. This is especially true of those that died later in life and look older, because this delivers the idea that they have wisdom as well as intelligence. The company loves sending someone that's already dead to make their deals, just in case there is a double cross. What good is planting an explosive in the briefcase, if you can't kill the messenger? Spectrals are sent to handle all kinds of situations - anything from a hostage crisis to a hostile takeover. Yet more reasons as to why the CEO of API is currently untouch-

able (page 27).

Spies

Their biggest role within the company is spy work. They are naturally invisible to the naked eye and can phase through walls, allowing them to come and go in many places that a living agent couldn't. Some Spectrals consider this exploitative of their dead form and will refuse to do such work. Others have too much to lose if they tell the company no.

Lovable Smartass

No matter what their official title is, many Spectrals love to take the part of the wisecracking squad member. At time, this is all they can truly be anyway, with punches that phase through their enemies and zero access to magic. However, there are other times when a well-placed joke is truly what the squad needs to continue on their mission. The squad might end up hating

them if they are too smart-assed, but they can end up as the heart of the group if their caustic is used sparingly.

New Gifts

The following are specific Gifts and Drawbacks that revolve around Spectral characters and those who wish to be like them.

Dream Machinist

(3): The character has been chosen to be a test subject of the Dream Machine (page 57), giving them the ability to actually become a Spectral themselves. API agents only.



GM Note

GMs need to be careful that Spectral players spread their Skill points out evenly to avoid a Spectral with 10 levels in every Spectral Skill who cannot tie his shoe. Limiting them to 2 or 3 different Spectral Skills to start will make the player more creative with how they interact with the world and contribute to the squad.

Electro-Spectral Matrix (5): The character has volunteered to test out API's new line of Spectral-intended cybernetic husks. The player can select 3 BP worth of specific pieces, but additional upgrades are purchased separately. This gift may only be taken if the player is a Circuit Jockey (page 61).

Emotional Phasing (3): Some Spectrals have a strong connection to a particular emotion, so much so that their ectoplasm has a different effect than the normal "cold, shaken" feeling that ghosts usually leave behind. Only one can be purchased by any Spectral and it replaces the original effects.

- *Ecstasy:* By passing through a target, they begin to experience extreme pleasure all throughout their body. They feel instant love for life and others around them, lowering their inhibitions for 1 minute. They suffer a -2 penalty to Initiative checks, as they become lovers, not fighters, and they suffer a -2 penalty to resist the effects of Persuasion (Seduction) checks.

- *Fear:* The target is flushed with intense fear, leading to a quick retreat unless they succeed against a Fear 20 check. A Spectral can attempt this effect once per turn, with the difficulty raised by +2 with each pass. Effect lasts for 1 minute.

- *Hatred:* By phasing through a target, they are filled with rage for 1 minute, instantly blowing up with malice and attacking someone that is nearby, even if it's a friend or a prized possession (if no one is around). The target can resist with an Insanity 20 check. A Spectral can attempt this effect once per turn, with the difficulty raised by +2 with each pass.

- *Sorrow:* The target breaks down into a heavy depression, including tears and sobbing,

when the Spectral phases. The victim gets a -4 penalty to all actions for 1 minute, and they find it harder to react to things through a veil of tears.

Personal Medium (1-5): The Spectral has an ally, grunt, slave, or patsy that is always available for possession. A Spectral and her medium are bound together through ritual, circumstance or a connection that bonds them even beyond death, making it impossible for them to resist possession against the character with this gift. In addition, the medium gains a +5 bonus to possession resistance rolls against all spirits other than the gift-holder. A medium's value represents how helpful they actually are and they receive five (5) Skill points per level to spend. All mediums have Attributes of 4, unless raised by the GM. The player can also spend their XP to raise their medium's stats if they so choose.

- (1) Child or someone with limited faculties
- (2) Mundane person with no real training above normal
- (3) Capable employee with a few tricks up their sleeve
- (4) Valued and irreplaceable assistant
- (5) Truly remarkable and talented follower

New Drawbacks

Driven by Passion (4): The Spectral's Passion is no longer a benefit and a motivation. Instead, it becomes their very reason for being to the point of ending their own existence. The Spectrals *must* pursue their Passion every Session, even if only in a small way. They no longer receive XP from fulfilling Passions and going a Session without doing so results in zero XP no matter what other accomplishments they perform.

Tethered (1-5): The Spectral is tied to a certain area, not by their own choice. Instead, they are tethered to a place that is linked either to their death or something strong about their life and they cannot leave the area.

- (1) City
- (2) Neighborhood
- (3) City block

- (4) One building
- (5) A single thing (the monster that killed them, a murder weapon, their lucky coin, etc.)

New Equipment

From the Mind of Dr. Seymour Adams

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am so glad you took the time out of your busy schedules to join me today. You are the first people outside of my workshop to see the new tools that we (myself and my fabulous assistants) have created to help in the field of Spectral Studies. Before you, on these covered tables, are five new devices that will help to ease the difficulties that great researchers such as yourselves have encountered for centuries when it comes to dealing with and studying the Spectral community as a whole. Step forward, ladies and gentlemen, and feast your eyes!"

Serious study of Spectral phenomena is hardly a modern day craze. There are records dating back to the days of the Roman era that deal with the scientific study of otherworldly phenomena - studies that in the end really amounted to the observation of Spectrals and their activities. The main problem throughout the ages was that they were limited to what their five basic senses could tell them. Of course, there have been those who have discovered some sort of mystical item that helped them in their work or who opened their Inner Circles to facilitate interaction with the dead.

Technological assistance has until very recently been a thing of fantasy. The first serious attempts at harnessing technology to interact with the departed were made by Nikola Tesla in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nikola spent years trying to develop a device to "unmask" invisible Spectrals. Clandestine experiments conducted by Dr. Adams have concluded that the field created by an operational Tesla Coil does render ghosts visible to the naked eye. Various devices developed by scientists and engineers have been used in the field of Spectral Investigations, but no concentrated and methodical, scientifically grounded effort was put into the

field until Dr. Seymour Adams joined Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. and started the Igors (page 34).

Dream Machine

Description: Picture a dentist's chair that literally kills the person that takes a seat. Once they are firmly seated, their arms and legs are strapped in and their mouth and eyes covered. IVs pump strange blue liquid into their veins, slowing their hearts to an eventual standstill and shoving their personal spirit from their body. In this form, the character becomes a Spectral with no levels in any Spectral Skills, but they can learn more by expending XP just like any other ghost. They can stay in this form for up to 6 hours (at first) before they are snapped back into their body quite forcibly. This duration can be extended the more they use the machine.

There is, of course, a downside to borrowing death's gifts. Their ghost's grasp on their body becomes slightly disconnected, harming their resistance to magic over time. After a few times, they may suffer a -1 penalty, but may suffer up to -10 after years of use. Also, actions performed in this state are hard to remember, almost like they are a dream. They suffer a -5 penalty to all Recollection checks for these memories. If they get to the point that they are snapped back into their body, they lose 2 Stamina points permanently, so this is obviously frowned upon.

Ectoplasmic Disruptor

Durability: 4, **Size:** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued
(Speed 2, Stamina 0, Strike +3, 4 (L) to Spectrals)

Description: Ghosts are hard to hurt at times, but not if you have an Ectoplasmic Disruptor. Disguised as a regular, high-quality flashlight, the device actually works to break apart the ectoplasm that holds a spectral together and can even temporarily dispel any ghost stupid enough to stick around. Once a spirit possesses an object or person, they are safe from the rays that once hurt them, but it's still uncomfortable to have it shone on them. Not many ghost-hunting squads enter a haunt without at least one of these in their gear. Each use of the disruptor also makes it harder for the Spectral to use their Spectral skills, giving a -2 penalty per successful attack.

Residual Ectoplasm Detectors

Durability: 3, **Size :** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: These technological marvels can enable whoever wears them to see the ectoplasmic trails left on objects that ghosts have interacted with and spirits themselves. Anything that a ghost has used a Spectral skill on in the past 2 days can be clearly seen dripping with a whitish-green ectoplasm. Spectrals themselves can be seen as well, but are blurry and out of focus. The rest of the world is a dark-blue and causes difficulty in navigating and seeing details. When the goggles are worn but not active, they act as a high-end pair of sunglasses, capable of halving

Sun Allergy penalties for a Taylari. When activated, the user receives a -4 penalty to any ranged attacks (except with an Ectoplasmic Disruptor) and -4 to any Perception rolls.

The Shrieker

Durability: 1, **Size:** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: The Shrieker looks like a small gray kazoo but weighs about four pounds. It has one function: to scare away Spectrals. Blowing into the Shrieker produces a muffled whistle to the human ear, but to the Spectral it emits a deep penetrating tone that causes a fight or flight response. The Spectral must make a Difficulty (25) Fear check, but suffers a -3 penalty. A success means the ghosts are

disturbed, but are otherwise fine. On a failure, the Spectral rolls 1d20, with an even number resulting in the Spectral fleeing the scene and an odd number causing them to mindlessly attack the wielder.

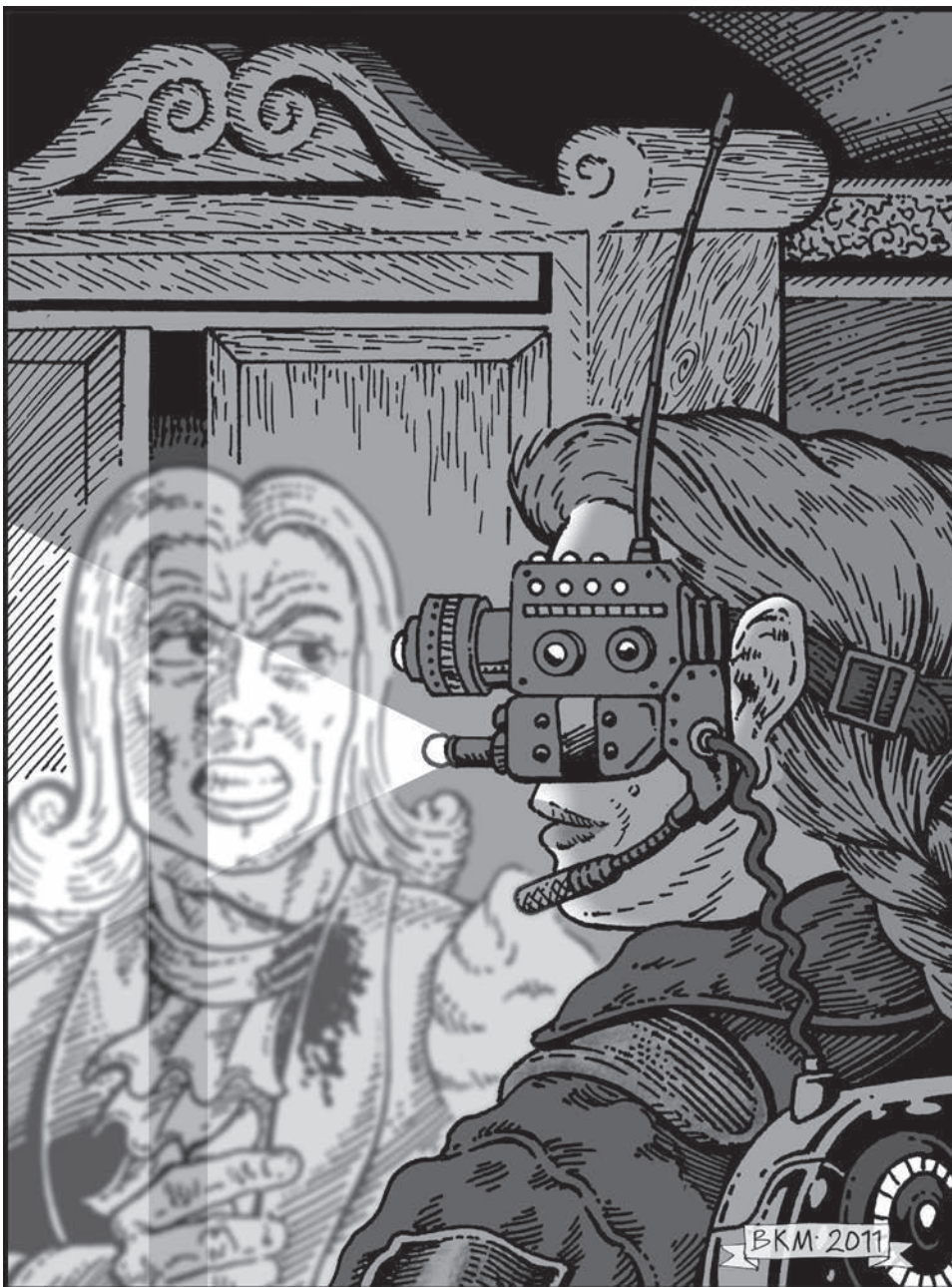
Spectral Specs

Durability: 2, **Size:** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: Spectral Specs are horn-rimmed glasses that allow people to view Spectrals to a limited degree, providing the viewer with a black and white image of the ghost. While it may seem that the Specs are useless when compared to the effects generated by the Tesla Sphere, this is not truly the case. The Specs are easily concealed, pocketable, and have an internal battery that lasts through 12 hours of constant use. All Spectrals also receive a -4 penalty to Stealth checks against the wearer.

Spirit Gloves

Durability: 5, **Size:** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued



(Speed +1, Stamina +0, Damage +0)

Description: The spirit gloves look like heavy, leather electrician gloves that allow the wearer to physically grab, hold, touch, or strike the Spectral. They can also deal damage per normal with unarmed attacks. There is a full body suit in development with prototypes for field-testing about a year away. The gloves have one hour of battery power.

The Tesla Sphere

Durability: 5, **Size:** 4, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: The Tesla Sphere is the most current form of Nikola Tesla's famous coil. After his death, applications of the Tesla Coils were limited mainly to the production and distribution of electrical power. The Sphere is a grapefruit-sized, opaque crystal ball laced with silver veins of wire. Housed within the crystal is a miniature version of the original coil. The Sphere must be mounted on a 4 ft. tripod (or vehicle at times) and attached to a portable generator since it's far from easily portable. When activated, the Sphere makes all ghosts within 100 ft. completely visible and partially-material and deals 5 (L) to each in the process. Any further attacks on the ghost deal half damage (rounded up) for the next 10 minutes, at which time they fade back to their normal intangible state.

The Tesla Cage

Durability: 5, **Size:** 4, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: Similar to the Tesla Sphere, except that the orb is obsidian with crimson veins of wire encircling it. The Tesla Cage has the same effects, but also emits a 30 ft. radius field that traps a ghost or spirit within. The barrier can be passed though by any living being without issue and lasts for 10 minutes.

Undulating Field Generator

Durability: 6, **Size:** 1, **Cost:** API-Issued

Description: This device creates an invisible, 10 ft. field of anti-possession energy around whoever carries the device - basically giving a +10 bonus to resistance check to the wearer and a +5 bonus to everyone else within range. The generator is about the size of a pocket book, and is usually attached to the belt. Once activated, it can last for up to 20 minutes. Any ghost or

spirit can see the field, which makes the wearer stick out to Spectrals in the area. The field is not strong enough to repel ghosts out of an object. API agents are known for putting the device on a possessed person and calibrating it on them, effectively trapping the spirit inside that host until the batteries give out. The device can store calibration settings for up to 4 users at a time, which only need to be recalibrated if they are removed or the device is damaged.

New Magic

Path of Radiance

The Path of Radiance is the staple of the Radiant (page 72), though some believe it to simply be an extension of the Path of Death. Other races can learn these spells, but they cost 2 BP per level (instead of 1 BP per level).

(1st) – Illuminate

Mana: 5

Casting Time: 6 / 4

Duration: 5 min.

Range: Area (20x20 ft.)

Resistance: No

Effect: The adept forms an orb of glowing blue energy between their hands that can be sent to hang at any location within line of sight. This creates a lamp that projects a soft blue light into a 20x20 ft. space. If there are any ghosts or spirits in the area, they will glow with a soft hue to anyone also bathed in the light.

Sacrifice: The adept loses any abilities to see anything beyond the light's radius.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana, Reduce Casting, Duration Bonus (15 min. > 30 min.), Range Bonus (+10 ft area, Max: 50x50)

(1st) – Dazzle

Mana: 6

Casting Time: 5 / 5

Duration: 6

Range: Touch

Resistance: Yes

Effect: Similar to the Illuminate spell, but highly concentrated. A light-orb is formed, then condensed to a pinpoint in the adept's palm. After

the spell is complete, the caster has two rounds to slap the tiny light onto the eyes of a target. On contact, the orb's surface-tension is broken and all of its illumination instantly flashes and blinds the target for the next 6 counts (-15 penalty to all sight-based checks). If used to attack a ghost, this also inflicts +5 (L).

Sacrifice: Because of the adept's proximity to the target, they suffer the same effects of the spell. However, since she is expecting it she is able to recover in 3 counts rather than 6.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana, Reduce Penalty (-1 count of blindness, Min: 1), Duration Bonus (+1 count, Max: 10), Damage Bonus (+5 (L), Max: +15 (L))

(2nd) - Beckon Spirit

Mana: 12

Casting Time: 10/10

Duration: 10 min.

Range: 100 ft.

Resistance: Yes

Effect: In their home dimension, the Radiant used the Beckon Spirit spell to catch their meals. The adept conjures a glow that mimics the appearance and energy signature of the Bright Lights. Any ghost or spirit that sees the effect and fails a Magic Resistance check is drawn to the light expecting its final release. While so entranced, the spirit is blind to its surroundings, noticing only the enticing glow. Once it reaches the epicenter of the light, the realization that these are not the Bright Lights hits, they come out of their trance and suffer 10 (L). The adept and her companions are usually waiting to spring their trap.

Sacrifice: While waiting for the prey to be drawn to the light, the caster is locked in position. They cannot take any actions other than speech while Beckon Spirit is active. The spell, and thus the Sacrifice, can be dropped at will at any time.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana (Min: 6), Reduce Casting (Min: 6), Reduce Recovery, Duration Bonus (30 min. > 1 hr. > 3 hrs. > 6 hrs. > 12 hrs. > 1 day), Range Bonus (300 ft. > 500 ft. > 1000 ft. > ½ mile > 1 mile), Damage Bonus (+2 (L), Max +20 (L))

(2nd) - Beckon Life

Mana: 12

Casting Time: 10/20

Duration: 10 min.

Range: 100 ft.

Resistance: Yes

Effect: As Beckon Spirit, but intended for living targets. The targets also only suffer 5 (L), instead of 10 (L).

Sacrifice: Same as Beckon Spirit.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana (Min: 6), Reduce Casting (Min: 6), Reduce Recovery, Duration Bonus (30 min. > 1 hr. > 3 hrs. > 6 hrs. > 12 hrs. > 1 day), Range Bonus (300 ft. > 500 ft. > 1000 ft. > ½ mile > 1 mile), Damage Bonus (+2 (L), Max +15 (L))

(3rd) - Mesmerize

Mana: 25

Casting Time: 3 min/ 5 min

Duration: Special

Range: 20 ft.

Resistance: Yes

Effect: As with the other spells in the Path of Radiance, Mesmerize begins with a ball of light. Any target within 20 feet of the orb that fails to resist immediately falls into a trance. The adept is then able to make a magically enhanced post-hypnotic suggestion. As long as the command is physically possible, the target will follow its orders with total compliance. Time is not a factor with Mesmerize. A command can be as immediate as "Give me your weapon, now!" or as delayed as "Assassinate Hitler as soon as time machines are invented!"

Sacrifice: The adept's eyes burn with a white light that strobes as they command the target, making it obvious that magic is occurring.

Upgrades: Range Bonus, Reduce Mana, Reduce Casting Time*, Reduce Recovery

(3rd) - Psychosomatic Crossing-Over

Mana: 40

Casting Time: 20 / 20

Duration: Instant

Range: Line of Sight

Resistance: Yes

Effect: The knowledge required to cast this spell is the most closely-guarded secret of the Radiant. The adept chooses a single target

within line of sight and focuses on it for 1 round. As the next action, an area of light completely envelops the target, perfectly mimicking the Bright Lights and the target fully believes they have been called into the next life. The living think their time has come, and spirits rejoice as they are finally offered eternal peace. It is the most euphoric feeling ever, leaving the target completely paralyzed and at the adept's mercy. If a Spectral target fails their Magic Resistance check, it immediately disappears into nothing.

Sacrifice: Performing this technique is no easy task. To make a being believe that it is dead so fully that it actually ceases to function takes a toll on the mind of the adept. After casting Psychosomatic Crossing-Over, the adept cannot cast any spells for 24 hours and any Stamina spent returns only after a full day of rest.

Upgrades: Reduce Mana*, Reduce Casting Time*, Reduce Recovery, Reduce Penalty* (12 hours > 6 hours)

New Spirit Evolutions

Listed below are several brand new Spirit Evolution types accessible (alongside Elementals, Conceptuals and Spirit-Eaters) by any Spectral character. With them come even more specialized Spectral Skills and some interesting weaknesses as well.

Mnemosyne

Prerequisites: Affect Senses 4+

Description: The myths of ancient civilizations on Earth, and even those from most other dimensions, tell of beings who reside in the underworld and hold the memories of the dead. While these myths are correct in assuming these beings exist, they fail to realize that they don't actually live in a hellish domain, but walk among the living. Mnemosyne Spectrals possess the ability to harvest the memories of the recently dead. With practice, they can even pull information from the gooey remains of ancient mummies. All that is necessary is a bit of brain matter. API utilizes this technique by training Mnemosynes as master infiltrators, spies, and assassins. After all, why risk an informant becoming a double-agent when

you can simply send in a Mnemosyne to kill the target and rip any necessary information from its dormant skull?

Gift - Rememory: A Mnemosyne gains access to the Rememory Spectral skill.

Weakness - Whiteout: Since Spectrals no longer have physical brains, they have lost a good deal of their ability to allocate space for new memories. Because of this they must constantly shift information around according to priority. Whenever a Mnemosyne attempts to pull a memory from a corpse, they must pass a Simple (10) Intellect check to shift a previously existing memory to the background of her consciousness. On a failure, the Mnemosyne loses access to one skill for the remainder of the Scene. On a Critical Failure, they permanently lose one point from a skill, as the memory of training is lost forever.

Rememory

Rememory is the purview of the Mnemosyne, allowing them to retrieve and house memories from the recently dead. This ability is perhaps the most sought-after by API executives, but the most traumatizing to the Spectral himself. The Mnemosyne can approach any dead being and make an INS + Rememory check to pull information out of its dying brain. The Spectral must specify what data they are looking for or all they'll receive is the most recent and powerful memory (usually that of the target's brutal and horrifying death). This skill is often used to retrieve passwords, ambush locations, and even find secret pathways. If used to gain access to a Skill, the Spectral loses it at the end of the Scene.

Possible Specialties: Specific information retrieval, Skill retrieval

Simple (10): Retrieve personal information about the target (name, rank, serial number).

Moderate (20): Retrieve tactical information (battle plans, passwords, key locations, lock combinations).

Tough (30): Retrieve Skill knowledge (one point per level in Rememory).

Circuit Jockey

Prerequisites: Possess Object +4, Stir 4+

Description: Across the universe, all energy types are basically the same. Minute differences

in wavelength, frequency, and rate of oscillation determine whether a given energy wave is designated as radio, micro, visible light, etc. This even extends to the ectoplasmic energy. API scientists have been working on a universal converter, but were largely unsuccessful until the discovery of a naturally occurring Evolved Spirit type - the Circuit Jockey. This evolution is seen among Spectrals particularly adept with the Possess Object skill, especially those with experience controlling electronic devices. Circuit Jockeys have the unique ability to convert their Spectral energy into electrical currents, which allows them to power and control electric technology without having to possess the item in question. More importantly, the advent of Circuit Jockeys gave API researchers the information necessary to create the Electro-Spectral Matrix, a power-converter that allows these particular Evolved Spirits to reside in and control a Cybernetic chassis.

Gift - Electroconversion: Circuit Jockeys gain access to the Electroconversion Spectral skill.

Weakness – Out of Juice: These spirits begin to leak power with every use of their Spectral Skill, raising the price to 4 Stamina per use. Also, powering the Electro-Spectral Matrix takes massive amounts of energy and concentration. Though the Spectral may abandon his Cybernetic body at will, he must wait 1 Round (or 20 Counts) to build up the reserves necessary to use any of his Spectral skills.

Electroconversion

Spectrals with the Electroconversion skill can convert portions of their ectoplasmic energy into electrical currents, manifesting as an ionized aura surrounding the spirit. Even if the Electroconverted Spectral is not

fully manifested, the area around him will smell of ozone and cause the hair of the living to stand on end. The Spectral can use these energy fields to control electronic devices in a manner similar to Possess Object, but without having to actually inhabit the device in question. The Electroconversion field extends for 5 feet per point invested in the skill, and the Circuit Jockey may control any electronic object within the field using a AGY + Electroconversion roll. Multiple objects within the field may be controlled pending a successful Tough (30) Concentration check.

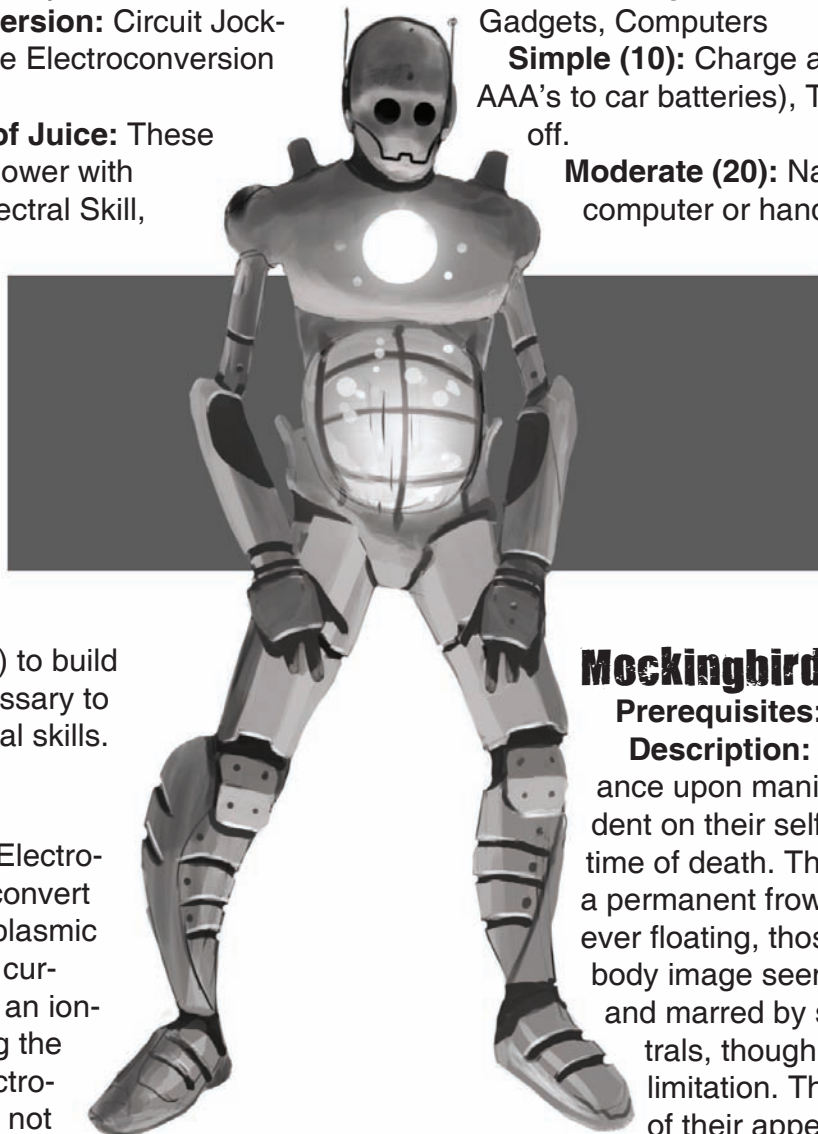
Additionally, the Electroconversion skill grants access to the Electrospectral Matrix Gift, which gives a robotic chassis to inhabit out of Cybernetic parts. The Spectral can move in and out of her chassis using the Possess Object skill, but when not inhabiting it the robotic hulk lies dormant.

Possible Specialties: Batteries and Cells, Gadgets, Computers

Simple (10): Charge a cell (ranging from AAA's to car batteries), Turn a device on or off.

Moderate (20): Navigate through a computer or handheld device's operating system/installed programs, Operate a hybrid motor vehicle.

Tough (30): Power and control large industrial machinery, Affect a local power grid.



Mockingbird

Prerequisites: Manifestation 4+.

Description: A Spectral's appearance upon manifestation is dependent on their self-image at their exact time of death. The depressed wear a permanent frown, the placid seem ever floating, those with a fragmented body image seem constantly shifting and marred by static. Some Spectrals, though, evolve beyond this limitation. They realize the nature of their appearance and strive to

rise above it. Mockingbirds are those Spectrals who can manipulate their ectoplasm's appearance and formation at will.

Gift - Automold: Mockingbirds gain access to the Automold Spectral skill.

Weakness - Ego Loss: When not taking on a new form, the Mockingbird naturally reverts to his original ectoplasmic form. For each use of Automold, the Mockingbird must pass a Moderate (20) INS + Fortitude check or his new form becomes his base appearance. Their original appearance becomes lost permanently.

Automold

The discovery of Mockingbird Spectrals has been a point of conflict within API. Mockingbirds possess the Automold skill, which some feel invalidates the need for one of the most crucial devices in the company infrastructure. R&D fears all of its scientists working to perfect the Ectoplasmic Reorganizers will eventually be sacked. This is because Mockingbirds have the ability to change their appearance at will. These fears are mostly unwarranted, however, as Automold has its limitations. Mockingbirds cannot make themselves appear as inanimate objects in the way a Changeling can, and the number of confirmed Mockingbirds is so low that researchers' jobs are safe. Automold does give these evolved Spirits the ability to manifest a monstrous visage or supernaturally beautiful mien, and to mimic the appearance of other living beings and ghosts. This aids them in both infiltration and scare-tactic missions.

Possible Specialties: Horrifying Image, Gorgeousness, Mimicry

Simple (10): They can alter the appearance of a single part of her body for one round (up to +3 bonus to Intimidation or Persuasion).

Moderate (20): They alter their entire appearance indefinitely, but the new form may be dropped at will (up to +6 bonus to Intimidation or Persuasion).

Tough (30): They can copy another's appearance exactly after direct observation of the subject or by viewing a comprehensive photograph. They can also become a true nightmare to behold (up to +10 bonus to Intimidation or Persuasion).

Straddler

Prerequisites: Affect Senses 4+

Description: Normal Spectrals have been refused entrance to the other side by never passing through the Bright Lights. Cosmological bureaucracy is no different from temporal bureaucracy, though, and occasionally people slip through the cracks. Straddlers have one foot in the land of the dead and one in that of the living. They have the unique ability to truly communicate with those entities that exist in the world beyond the Bright Lights. This is the rarest of the evolved Spirit types, making them a true breakthrough of magic and science.

Gift - Séance: Straddlers gain access to the Séance Spectral skill.

Weakness - Banishment: Straddlers do not receive the +3 bonus to Magic Resistance against the Path of Death as other evolved Spirits do. In fact, since they are so connected to the other side, their Magic Resistance penalty is a -4 even if the necromancer doesn't know the Spectral's name.

Séance

The Séance skill is the Spectral ability most coveted by the living. The obsession with learning the secrets of death leads to the constant hounding of Straddlers, and for this reason very few Spectrals have come forward and admitted to possessing the skill. These Spectrals have surpassed the power of the most powerful necromancers, which also infuriates several adepts who claim to be masters. While practitioners of the Path of Death can communicate with and manipulate spirits locked in the material plane, Straddlers can speak with entities beyond the veil of the Bright Lights. Séance is less cut-and-dry than other skills and requires careful handling by the GM. By making an INS + Séance check, a Straddler can seek council from spirits who have crossed over. Those at one with the other side have special insight into the affairs of the living and can offer advice or even bestow temporary Gifts to those with the capacity to ask.

Possible Specialties: None.

Simple (10): Denizens of the other side bestow a cryptic hint about the PC's current task.

Moderate (20): They can get the answer a

single question asked in a straightforward manner.

Tough (30): They may engage in an in-depth conversation with a crossed-over spirit.

Poltergeist

Prerequisites: Possess Object 4+.

Description: One of many Spectrals that go mad, but not to the extent of a Spirit Eater. They don't crave ectoplasm in their guts and do not change to a demonic visage. They do become quite angry at the world, however, so much so that they feel the intense need to lash out. Poltergeists become masters of possession and are known to leave plenty of destruction in their wakes. API finds it very hard to control these Spirits and often simply all for their annihilation.

Gift - Aggressors: Poltergeists do not get access to a new Spectral Skill. Instead, they receive a +3 bonus to any Spectral Skill checks and can possess multiple items and people at one time (up to their VIG in total). They also receive a +5 bonus to resist spells from the Path of Death (instead of +3 that other Spirits receive).

Weakness - Insanity: They are quite mad, often having several twitches and are very easy to agitate. Any type of stress forces a Tough (30) INS + Discipline check against Insanity. A failed check sends the Poltergeist into a hurricane of possessions, damage and terror.

Web Hunters

Prerequisites: Possess Object 4+

Description: It's hard to stop blogging now that you're dead. There's still so much to say! Well, the most dedicated fans of the Internet can continue their digital existence as long as they can stay sane. Diving into the world of cyberspace in life can be daunting and it's even more so in death: shrieking noises of modems dialing, flashes of light as emails whiz by, a sea of MP3s being downloaded and pictures and movies constantly filling up space are only some of the things which await the brave. Those able to prosper can find out pretty much anything about anyone else and then go about changing it if they so desire. A ghost in the machine is a useful ally,

but one that can potentially become a brain-dead shadow haunting the Silicone Valley of male enhancement products. Members of the dead community generally refer to them as "trolls", much to their displeasure.

Gift - Infomatic: Web Hunters gain access to the Infomatic Spectral skill.

Weakness – Gone Daddy Gone: Throwing one's consciousness into the often bizarre floods of information dumps known as "the Internet" takes a lot out of someone. To get back out of the Net, one must make an Infomatic + INS check at Difficulty (25) to see if they can pull enough of their consciousness back together to form a coherent form once again. If they fail, they spend the next five minutes trying to separate images of hilarious cats from the one time they went to summer camp. A successful check means they pull themselves out of the device they inhabited and resume being a regular ol' dead person once more.

Infomatic

Spectrals with the Infomatic skill can take in massive deluges of information weaved into the Internet and sift through it at incredible speed. To use the skill, they must possess an object with an enabled Internet connection (wireless or wired). From there, they can access practically anything that's available on the Internet in any form. The Spectral can also float around on the net and travel to any other device that is also connected to the Internet, giving them a limited ability to teleport - although it is far from instantaneous. To travel through the Internet or to pursue information takes time: the Spectrals must figure out which port is less secure, where satellites are located, and how to sort through background noise to get to the information they really want. While traveling, the Spectral moves as fast as an electrical current, but can get lost incredibly easily. To move accurately from one device to another regardless of location, it takes 5 minutes per mile of difference. Where they end up if they blindly leap to another location is left to the GM's mercy.

Possible Specialties: Macs, IBMs, Notebooks, Tablets, Cell phones

Simple (10): Find a suspect's home address, Delete someone's profile on a social networking

site, Reroute someone's GPS.

Moderate (20): Intercept a private email, Gain administrator access to a secure website, View live security camera footage.

Tough (30): Randomly change important numbers inside bank accounts, Erase someone's entire existence from the internet.

The Oozing

Description: The living fear the dead for good reason. They represent the greatest fears of everything with a pulse. Whether it's control over the elements, a rotting visage, or true knowledge of death, Spectrals remind the living of what awaits at the end of the tunnel. To this end, some Spectrals have opted to induce physical revulsion with their very being. The Oozing are constantly plagued by running sores and vile slime, either indicative of their modes of death or merely as an over-the-top scare tactic. They walk the Earth, inundating the unsuspecting populace with their flowing ectoplasm.

Gift - Slime: The Oozing gain access to the Slime Special Spectral skill.

Weakness- Runny Tap: Whenever the Oozing manifest, their nature is made apparent. Not even Ectoplasmic Reorganizers (or uses of the Automold skill) can hide the haunted phlegm that covers all Spectrals with this Evolution. Their essence is so pervasive that they leave trails and ectoplasmic traces much more often than other Spectrals, giving any trackers a +4 bonus to find them.

Slime

Possession of this skill means the Spectral is constantly covered in a film of gooey ectoplasm. Active uses, though, allow the spirit to project the slime from his body for a myriad of applications. When left on a flat surface, any character who steps on the slime must pass a Tough (30) AGY + Acrobatics check to avoid slipping and falling prone. It takes a successful Moderate (20) INS +

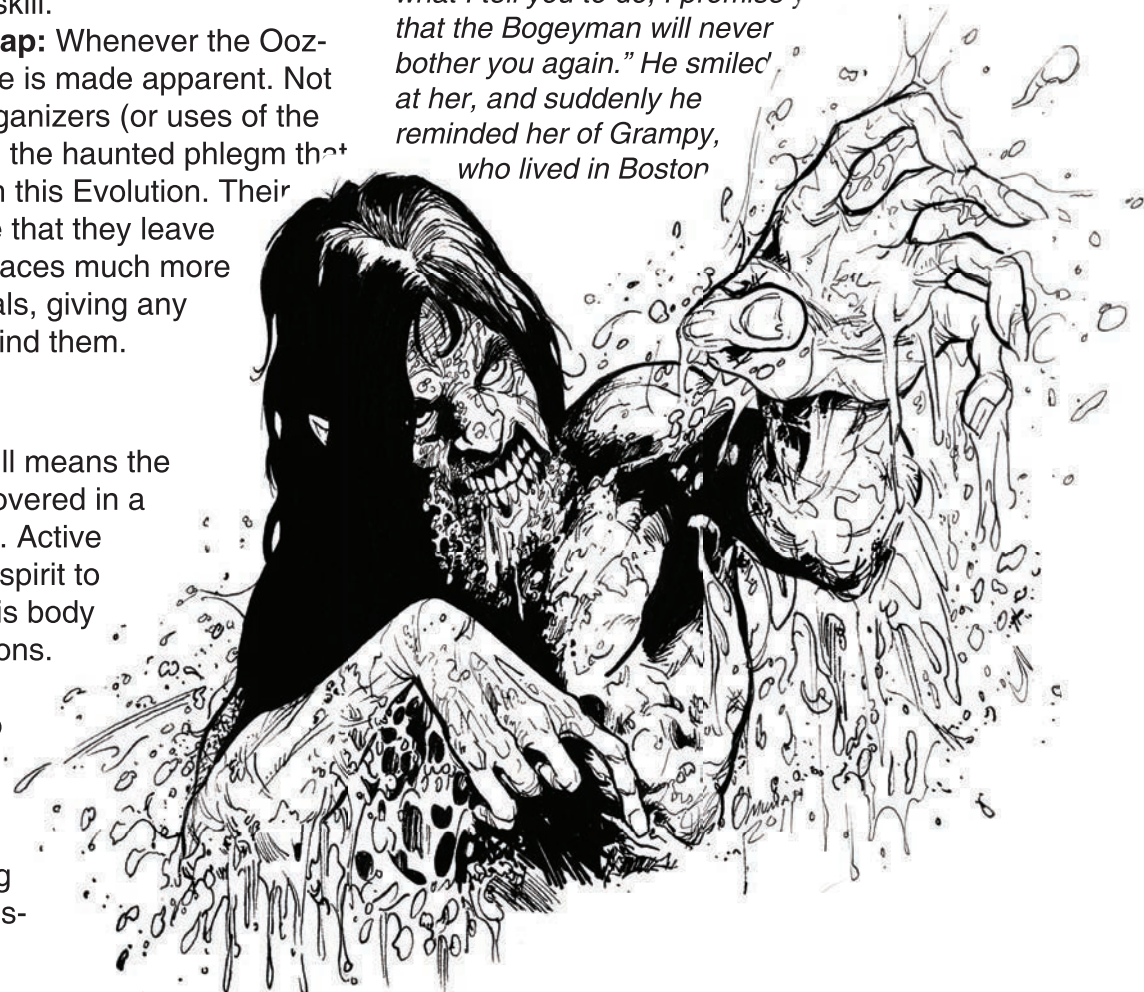
Discipline check to grab, continue holding, or use an item (or person) covered with slime (including any item or person they possess). Projected ectoplasm does +2 (NL) damage when used as a ranged attack, and any body part successfully hit by a Targeted Strike with Slime is automatically enveloped and disabled.

Antagonists

The Exorcist

Sandy Chambers sat in the back corner of her bedroom watching the little bald man draw a strange star and circle shape on the floor. There were candles burning everywhere and the smell made her a little nauseous. Her mommy was talking quietly to her daddy on the other side of the room, and every couple of seconds they would glance nervously in her direction and then quickly turn away. She was four years old and very afraid.

"Alright, Sandra," the little bald man said, "I need you to be very brave. I am not going to lie to you. This will be very scary. But if you are brave and do what I tell you to do, I promise you that the Bogeyman will never bother you again." He smiled at her, and suddenly he reminded her of Grampy, who lived in Boston



You Can't Take It With you

and always brought her presents at Christmas.

He motioned to her and said, "Please come stand in the middle of this circle, okay?"

The small girl nodded. It kind of tickled when she stepped over the border of the circle. Sandy giggled and a lot of the tension in the air seemed to go away.

As she stood in the circle, the little bald man chanted softly as the air became darker and a chilly breeze filled the room. This was how it always felt before the Bogeyman came to scare her. Sandy shuddered.

The monster rose up through the floorboards of the bedroom - a demonic clown with yellow eyes, standing more than seven feet tall. It looked at Sandy, grinned, and then seemed to notice that all the exits were blocked and felt the presence of the three other people in the room. Then its eyes fell on William, the little bald man.

"Do you think you can stop me?" The Bogeyman demanded.

"Foul creature, servant of the Darkness, I forever banish you from this plane of existence. Go forth and never return!" He started the litany softly and finished with a bellow.

The Bogeyman started to charge at William, but his words knocked it back, causing it to crash into the far wall. It gathered its strength and charged again.

"I'LL EAT YOUR SOUL, OLD MAN!" It screamed at William.

The Exorcist worked his hands in a series of rapid gestures and muttered faster than he had ever muttered an incantation in his life. The Bogeyman froze in midair and began to compress, tighter and tighter.

"NO!" It shrieked as its mass diminished exponentially. He then popped out of existence.

William let out his breath in a harsh rasp. That sure was close. The Spirit Eater had been stronger than he had anticipated.

Sandy ran to him and wrapped her arms around his legs, sobbing.

William smiled. This was what he had been born to do.

Description: An exorcist is an adept that mainly follows the Path of Death, but without the evil intent usually associated with disgusting necromancers. Exorcists are tasked with the responsibility of protecting the human race from hostile ghosts. In the past and up until as recently as the 1980's, this meant that any Spectral was a potential target for an exorcist. Having always taken

their jobs very seriously, they are usually affiliated with one organized faith or another. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church trained more exorcists than any other organization in history.

Exorcists largely believe that they follow a noble calling with a grand tradition dating back into pre-history. Only research from the last hundred years has proven Spectrals to be independent individuals with all the variation of living humans, and it has only been the last twenty years that many in the exorcist community were willing to accept this. For millennia before, there was no difference between a Spectral and a Spirit Eater in the eyes of an exorcist.

The newest generations of exorcists and their mentors have begun to change this attitude and are revolutionizing their practice. Most modern exorcists only take jobs to destroy or banish Spectrals that have proven themselves either evil or dangerous. This change in policy was heavily influenced by the Exorcists' Union, which was founded in the 1950's and officially sanctioned by Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. The main goal of the union is the destruction of Spirit Eaters and other nasty Spectrals. For the most part, however, the change has done little to alter the feelings of the Spectrals whose right to exist is constantly put into question. They still see exorcists as an enemy to be destroyed on sight, much like the necromancer.

Motivations: Exorcists have historically been motivated by a sense of duty to protect humanity. Others are too easily motivated by money, especially with the rising cost of magical banishing materials. Some exorcists have been known to walk away from a possessed person if there is no profit in saving them. Those who save people regardless of cost do so for the glory or to test their magic against unholy beasts.

Statistics of Note: Health 27, Stamina 32, Initiative +12, Movement 9, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +3, Cannot be possessed, Discipline (Concentration) +8, Perception +10

Combat: Exorcists are not exactly combat masters, but can defend themselves long enough to cast their magic effectively. Through greater physical training, they are able to boost their body's resistance to the draining effects of casting. **Bonuses:** Strike +3, Parry +5, Dodge +6,

Roll +8, Grapple +9, Damage +1

Powers: Exorcise (Speed 8, Stamina 4): The Exorcist is able to force a ghost out of an item or person they are currently inhabiting. The ghost needs to make a Magic Resistance (20) check or to avoid being flung into the open. The person or item cannot be repossessed for the next lunar cycle, but the exorcist can also sacrifice 1 INS to make the effect permanent. **Banish (Speed 5, Stamina 3):** The ghost is banished from the area (about ½ mile) and instantly thrust back if they miss their Magic Resistance (20) check.

Other Magic: They always concentrate on the Path of Death first, but they can learn from other paths as well depending on their heritage. Apprentice exorcists may follow only the Path of Death, while experienced adepts follow up to three paths, and masters up to five.

Weaknesses: Like all adepts, they often exhaust themselves early by spending Stamina to cast their spells. Exorcists find themselves targeted by angry Spectrals and even Walkers (page 70) on a regular basis.

The Necromancer

Jordan floated down the hallway of what was once his home. The plaster was falling off the walls and the building had a decidedly unclean smell to it - the scents left by feral animals marking their territory hung in the air like a putrid storm cloud. He knew that the bulldozers would be coming soon. It seemed that seventy-two years of protecting the place where his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren had been raised was coming to an end. Incorporeal tears ran down his face. It wasn't right! This was his home, his land, his duty damn it!

Jordan was so lost in his rage and frustration that he didn't hear the front door of the old Victorian home open and the quiet footsteps of a slender figure entering.

"Hello," a soft female voice called out, "is anyone here? I'm not going to hurt you, but I know you have been here a long time. Are you lonely?"

It took Jordan a minute to realize that she was talking to him directly. It had been more than twenty years since someone had spoken to him, so in his fear and sadness he decided to take a chance.

The dust in front of the woman began to swirl and dance as he manifested. Light sparkled and the form of a man dressed in a 1920's suit appeared before her, tall and handsome. Jordan smiled at her and was rewarded in kind, but then he noticed that she

was muttering under her breath and her hands were making a series of complex gestures at her sides.

"What are you doing?" Jordan asked her, concerned.

Instead of answering, she raised her arms and flung them wide. Jordan felt as if someone had wrapped his body in steel bands, his ectoplasmic shell painfully compressed. He tried to use his special skills to throw the broken down chair in the corner at the woman but couldn't. He tried again and again with the same results every time.

"Silly thing," she said in that same musical voice, "you are mine now... forever!"

Jordan screamed as the invisible leash around his neck was jerked and he was led from his home and into the night.

Description: The necromancer is often known as the darkest and vilest type of adept. They are solely concerned with the creation, control, and destruction of the dead and the undead. Necromancers revel in the sick joy of enslaving and torturing Spectrals, seeing them as little more than toys and possessions to do with as they please. The average necromancer has a few Spectral slaves or servants close at hand at all times. Most necromancers take a particular delight in destroying any Walkers that they encounter, as opposed to controlling them.

Motivations: All adepts crave an excuse to use magic. Focusing on the Path of Death gives them the power to communicate with and completely manipulate ghosts. Some join because of a true fascination with death, while others become necromancers for the same reasons that they would kill ants with magnifying glasses when they were young. Death and what comes after becomes an obsession that holds them in a grip as tight as any passion might hold a Spectral in this existence.

Statistics of Note: Health 27, Stamina 32, Initiative +12, Movement 9, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +5 (applies also to Spectrals skills used on them), Discipline (Concentration) +8, Perception +10

Combat: Like all adepts, necromancers are not exactly combat masters, but can defend themselves long enough to cast their magic effectively or allow their minions (Spectral or zombie) to come to their defense. Through greater physical training, they are able to boost their

body's resistance to the draining effects of casting. **Bonuses:** Strike +5, Parry +4, Dodge +7, Roll +9, Grapple +10, Damage +2

Powers: Enslavement (Speed 9, Stamina 3): The necromancer bends the ghost's will to their whim, overpowering their own power over their ectoplasm if they miss a Magic Resistance (20) check. They can control the ghost for up to 1 day with no range penalties. **Harm (Speed 5, Stamina 3):** The necromancer becomes able to hurt a ghost with their body or weapons, with no degradation to damage dealt.

Other Magic: They follow the Path of Death and all of their time, energy, and upgrades are usually focused in that direction. If they broaden their area of study, chosen spells will either enhance their existing powers or better allow them to defend themselves.

Weaknesses: Necromancers often exhaust themselves early by spending Stamina for spells. They are always in danger of attack from any Spectral or Walker who learns who they are, but they are usually able to keep their identities hidden quite well.

Spirit Eaters (Fear 18)

Just inside the alley, Jansen slouched against the wall. He was there for an hour, waiting for the perfect prospect to walk past him. He eventually heard high heels on the pavement coming toward him, and excitement built up from his lowest extremities until he could feel it crackling in his head. Jansen always loved this part, seeing their faces before he started testing them. The question was: would she run, scream, or submit? He always loved to find out.

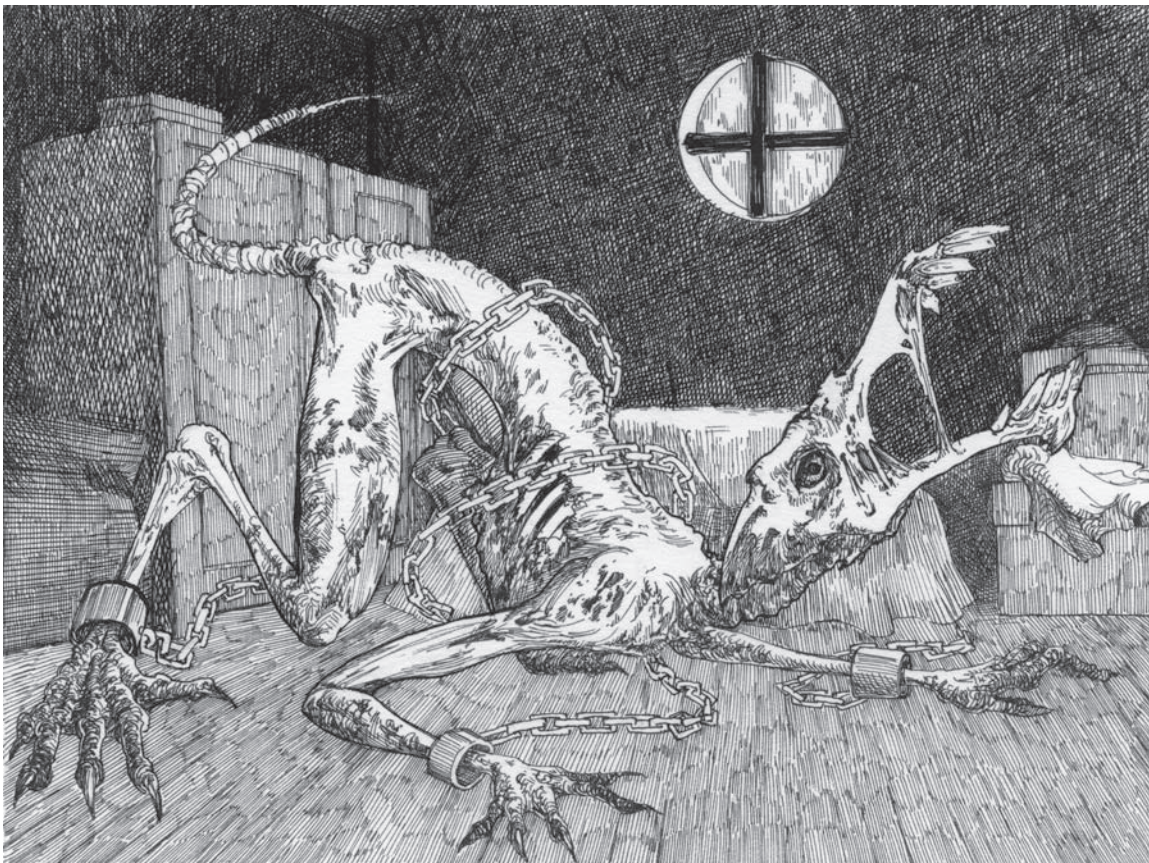
Marla Chambers walked toward the 24-hour parking garage, getting off late from work. It was a good night for tips because of the automotive convention. The bar & grill where she waited tables had been buzzing with activity: in fact, she may have made enough to finally go to Toronto to visit her brother. Being distracted, she didn't notice the figure emerging from the shadows until it was too late.

She felt his powerful arm snake around her waist and a roughly calloused hand cover mouth as she tried to scream for help. The smell was overpowering, as if Jansen had bathed in cologne and she vomited slightly. As he dragged her into the alley, never saying a single word, the arm around her waist began to pull down on her skirt.

"No, no!" She tried to scream as her skirt ripped and fell around her ankles. This was not happening, part of her mind thought. She didn't even stop

to think and bit down as hard as she could into his hand. Blood flowed from the jagged wound, tasting of salt and copper.

The son of a bitch screamed and let go, but he was just getting to the good part. Her skirt was gone and all that lay between himself and beginning of the audition was a thin triangle of silk. It was then that he finally noticed the pain in his hand screaming up



his arm. The stupid cow was supposed to panic and try to run or scream, not fight back. Who the hell did she think she was? He had miscalculated.

With a clear opening, Marla dropped to the ground and scooped up her purse. She reached inside, withdrew the hard, cold revolver within and fired. He knew this was the end of everything as the slug smashed into his chest. Jansen then watched his body fall to the ground with a wet and muffled thump. The woman dug further into her purse and extracted a cell phone, punching three numbers and yelling for the police. Exactly what was said wasn't really important, because Jansen's attention was drawn to the bright white portal that appeared before him.

He felt a yearning to enter those lights, and he walked toward them filled with the warmth of their glowing radiance, but then the Bright Lights began to fade and a chill blew through him like a knife. Not only had the wonderfully angelic lights disappeared, but all of the light around him was sucked into the ambient darkness. The atmosphere was thick and black, as if he were trying to swim through a universe of tar. All around him Jansen could hear the screaming of the damned.

Jansen was unsure how much time passed. His next memories were of waking up in that same alley. His body was gone and the police tape was torn and frayed. Jansen was overcome by a new feeling of strength and was sure of himself now - elated even. He'd passed his own test and had been reborn. His new form was composed of shadows that gathered as a long billowing cloak, and he shimmered with a dark radiance in the light. As he was admiring himself, the insubstantial form of a young female Spectral floated by the entrance to the alley. She stared at him and then took off screaming in terror.

Jansen smiled. He was hungry and it was time to feed.

Description: They have been described by many as a figment of one's deepest fears and, on many levels, Spirit Eaters are evil incarnate. They hunt down Spectrals and even the living (human and demon alike, to these fiends food is food) to devour them and satiate their eternal hunger. Almost all Spirit Eaters were once sane ghosts that went crazy and became cannibalistic, but some of them are created when the vilest of human beings are killed at the height of their living passion. These types of Spirit Eaters never exist as a normal Spectral but are instead fast tracked to this hellish existence of constant crav-

ing urges. Their appearance is traditionally demonic, with red glowing eyes and scary visages, but differences can be extreme and all encompassing. Some of the worst shed any semblance of their past human life, taking on an animalistic presence that can send any agent running for the hills.

Motivations: Spirit Eaters are cannibalistic spirits bent on destruction and hunger. They have gone through intense trauma or never really adjusted to not sleeping. Their souls are rotted with negative emotions like hate, vengefulness, and loss. They routinely hunger for the taste of ectoplasm and hunt down ghosts to devour, making them a very dangerous threat to spirits everywhere. Crash scenes usually have one or two stalking the area, attacking new ghosts before they can enter the Bright Lights.

Statistics of Note: Health 45, Stamina 37, Initiative +17, Movement 18, Actions per Round 4, Magic Resistance +4, Devour +10, Spectral skill of choice +10, Spectral skill of choice +5

Combat: Spirit Eaters like to play with their food before they close in and devour it, but when pressed by time and circumstances they will simply blitz their victims and finish the job as quickly as possible. While they care little for their own health and often heedlessly attack with the hopes of eating another soul, Spirit Eaters are far from stupid. They can be meticulous in their planning and actions, making Spirit Eaters some of the most dangerous opponents on the face of the Earth. **Bonuses:** Strike +10, Parry +8, Dodge +10, Roll +12, Grapple +14, Damage +4

Powers: Any assortment of Spectral Skills, as well as Devour (see page 147 of API Corebook).

Weakness – Holy Ban: They cannot tread on holy, purified, or otherwise magically altered grounds (i.e. affected by either the Cursed Land or Cleanse Environment spells). They also cannot affect targets that follow the Deity Passion. Many believe Spirit Eaters to be the true embodiment of evil from the bowels of Hell, if such a place exists.

WALKERS

Other Names: Ghouls, Shamblers, Dead Heads
Stereotypes: Dim Witted, Flesh Eaters, Pretty Much Evil

Origins

To put it into the most simple of terms, the Walker is a Spectral that refused to vacate their former corporeal body. They have been compelled by a force from beyond this earthly plane to remain in their physical form, basically creating intelligent zombies. The one common element between all Walkers is that their Bright Lights had a soft female voice that gave them the encouragement and power to re-inhabit their body. API researchers are still stymied as to how this is even possible. There is no known biological or mystical agent that causes this anchoring for a Spectral, and the identity of the voice they hear upon death is still a mystery.

Stories of the walking dead have permeated human history, mostly as a morality play told to children to keep them on the straight and narrow. There are tales of shambling hordes of dead things hunting every living thing before them, but the Walkers are a different breed entirely. Like the others, they don't age, breathe, sleep, or get sick. Then they being their new eating habits, but they also have retained their intelligence enough to feel remorse for Although they begin to crave the taste of human flesh, they retain enough intelligence from when they were alive to be able to consider their actions, feeling remorse when they give into their urges. It is no wonder that the majority of the human race has considered Walkers to be hideous monsters. For the last hundred years, mass media (books, movies, television, and the Internet) has depicted zombies as cannibalistic ghouls. Sadly, this is true in many cases.

Lifestyle

The vast majority of Walkers try to continue their pre-death lives as much as possible, although they quickly discover that this is an unrealistic goal in most cases. This does, however, give them the freedom to attempt more interesting lifestyles. Travel, exploration, research, and adventure tend to attract many Walkers after they have settled into their new "lives". Of course, their condition can have an adverse effect, since leaving one's arm or eyeball behind (let alone a trail of bodies) can draw undue attention.

If there is one severe drawback to being a Walker, it's the need to feed on flesh everyday of their existence. There is no avoiding this and it must be taken fresh from a living body. Meeting friends nice enough

to let the Walker take a bite out of them is rare, leaving them quite often solitary. Many become internet moguls or take on other jobs where personal interaction isn't necessary. Others develop into very keen serial killers, using their hunger as a motivator and keeping their prey for days to eat one piece of them at a time. More altruistic Walkers become vigilantes, taking out criminals and murderers and so they feel justified devouring their next meal.

There is a well-known animosity between Walkers and the Taylari. Many demonologists suspect that the Walkers have somehow been able to replicate the Taylari curse, assuming that a Taylari is truly dead down to their core. Both groups scoff at the idea and claim their individual origins, but researchers always have their own theories.

Recruitment

Recruitment of Walkers into Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. has always been a controversial act. Being a fairly new occurrence (in the last century or so), they are still seen as dangerous beings to be feared. In many cases, they are simply hunted down and destroyed, leading to long-standing feelings of mistrust and hatred between both parties. Despite this, there are approximately one hundred Walkers counted as loyal agents. They drift toward the more adventurous branches of the organization, but are never left to their own devices. As a matter of fact, they are usually teamed up with an API necromancer just in case they get out of hand.

Appearance (Fear 12/18)

When fully fed, a Walker looks just like anyone else, even though their lack of respiration and unnatural stillness tend to make people uneasy. Their skin dries, their eyes bulge and they begin to decay more and more the longer they go without food, until they eventually have no more body to inhabit. Their voices become gravelly and the odor that emanates from them is the sickly scent of death. Walkers have proven that they can live indefinitely as long as they keep up with their appetite, but few meet a peaceful end after so many deaths at their hands.

Gift – Tough and Immune

Walkers have certain abilities that come with being

Walker Antagonists

Statistics: Health 55, Stamina 45, Initiative +9, Movement 9, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +12, Athletics +13, Fortitude +15, Stealth +8

Combat: Walkers are slow, but very strong. They prefer to attack their opponents straight on, but can also be sneaky if the situation demands it. **Bonuses:** Strike +10, Parry +8, Dodge +2, Grapple +14, Roll +11, Damage +5

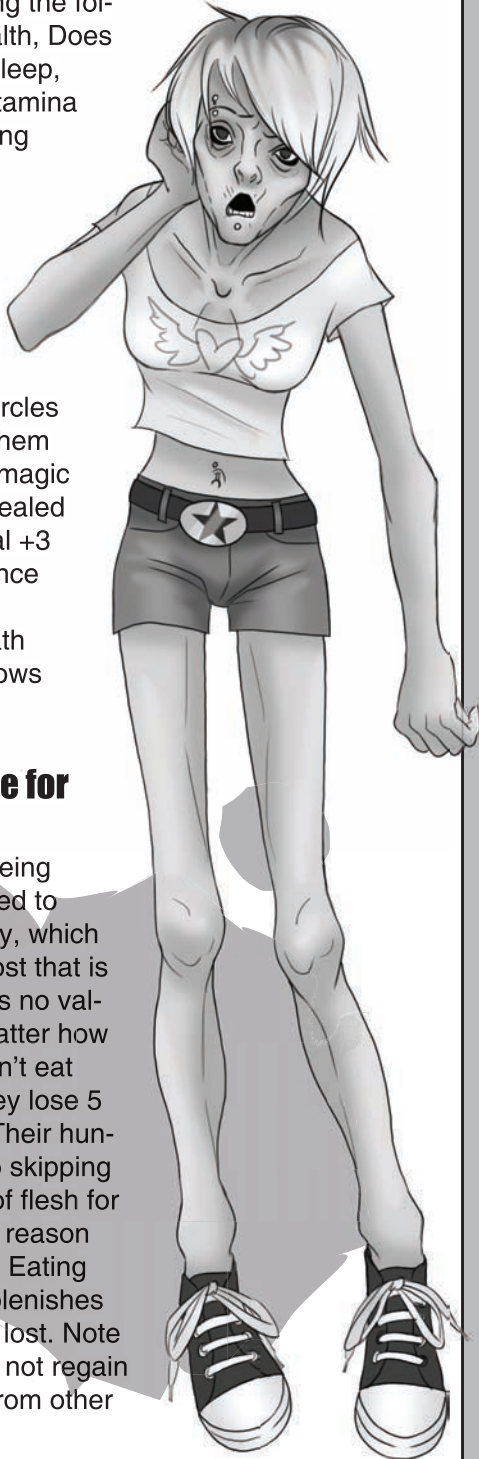
physically dead. There are no known pathogens or viruses that can infect them, making them immune to disease and poison. Their bodies are tougher and they tire much slower than others, giving the following bonuses: +5 Health, Does not need to breathe or sleep, +1 Base Damage, +3 Stamina points, +20 lbs to Carrying weight per POW.

Gift/Drawback – Sealed Inner Circles

Like ordinary Spectrals, a Walker's inner circles are sealed, preventing them from ever manipulating magic forces. However, their sealed power provides a special +3 bonus to Magic Resistance checks. They still suffer penalties against the Path of Death if the adept knows their real name.

Drawback – Appetite for the Living

The harsh reality of being a Walker is that they need to consume flesh every day, which must be taken from a host that is still alive. Dead flesh has no value to their pallets, no matter how fresh. Each day they don't eat at least 1 lb. of flesh, they lose 5 Health and 3 Stamina. Their hunger also carries over, so skipping Sunday requires 2 lbs. of flesh for Monday and so on. The reason for this is still a mystery. Eating the required amount replenishes the Health and Stamina lost. Note that this drawback does not regain lost Health or Stamina from other sources (damage, etc).



Skyla Reynolds

Race: Walker

Passion: Collection

Age: 22 (or so she tells people)

Background: A girl from the valley, Skyla was used to the finer things in life. This included the latest fashions, eating at the most expensive restaurants and attending the most exclusive clubs. However, what she didn't know was that her family's money came from unnatural sources - her parents being adepts with the ability to create funds out of thin air. They also, apparently, placed a spell on their daughter to protect her from ever being prey for necromancers. So, when there was a boutique robbery and she was shot in the back trying to escape, this magic kicked in and she became a Walker. She dealt with her attackers by eating them and never looked back. Since then, she has continued to enjoy the privileged life, but now it's on API's dime, as she became an agent the moment the company found her. Benefits and almost unlimited finances were enough to convince her that joining was the right choice.

Personality: Skyla is a snob that's used to being rich and getting what she wants. Now, along with her attitude comes the ability to tear people to shreds if they don't comply with her every whim. She's been known to do it too, when she's hungry. Give her what she wants and all is good.

Appearance: She dresses in the hottest fashions and trendiest clothes, even though her body is little more than cracked skin over brittle bones. She doesn't eat that often (company mandated), so she seldom looks healthy.

Secrets: None of note.

Statistics: Health 50, Stamina 28, Initiative +10, Movement 10, Actions per Round 2, Magic Resistance +12, Arts +8, Athletics +12, Persuasion +10, Vehicle Operation +6

Combat: Skyla isn't really a fighter unless she's really ticked off. She often tries to simply outlast her opponent, hoping her undead endurance keeps her standing longer. **Bonuses:** Strike +8, Parry +7, Dodge +4, Grapple +15, Roll +13, Damage +4

Special Abilities: The company has taught her how to use whips with grace, letting her take on opponents from afar.

Implementation: Skyla is often best used as a new recruit to be inserted into the character's squad. She's great at sowing dissension among the ranks, using her perceptiveness to find cracks in the group. Otherwise, the characters may be recruited to help her get a very rare jewel for her personal collection (off the books, of course).

THE RADIANT

Other names: Slaantium (shlahn-tyum), Bright-Lighters, Wanderers

Stereotypes: Sneaky, Inhuman, Predators

Origins

The Radiant, known as the Slaantium in their native dimension, originate from a land of nearly limitless desert called the Plains of Ash. The dimension is lit by a sun that menacingly fills the sky with burning red light, reducing most creatures to piles of dust lost in the desert. The Slaantium shared their old dimension with another race: the Gallot. These non-sapient spirits existed by the thousands, taking whatever form fit their mood, and they flowed across the Plains in search of, well, nobody knows. The secret of the Gallot nomadic tendencies is known only to the Slaantium, who are giant, arachnid protectors and harvesters of spirits. The Gallot were the souls of the ancient living beings who lived on the Plains of Ash and wandered in search of their Bright Lights. The Slaantium have learned to take advantage of their yearning by honing their own skills as natural adepts. They have developed the Path of Radiance (page 59) which simulates the effect of the Bright Lights. They use their powers to fabricate the Bright Lights, drawing their prey within range and devouring the spirits. They believe their feasts are holy and actually send the spirit to the afterlife, but no one truly knows.

Some Slaantium grow tired of the cycle of wait, entice, feed. They travel between dimensions posing as simple wanderers. They marvel at Earth's painless yellow light and were promptly approached by Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. The first Radiant registered as Geldon Ash-Walker and currently serves as API's head Slaantium representative and ambassador to the Plains of Ash (whose population is very few). Through his efforts, hundreds of Radiant have made the journey to Earth and found reliable jobs at API.

Lifestyle

What does it mean to be a Radiant on Earth? They possess a human-like form that lets them exist easily in everyday human jobs. They are a spiritual people, seeing what they do as a gift they give to the ghosts they "serve". Their holy scriptures compel them to send spirits on to the next plane and they consider their job to be similar to a shaman's, no matter how gruesome the act itself. When not in contention, however, they are incredibly peaceful beings. The Radiant often work with the homeless or in hospices, knowing that the time will come when it will be their job to devour the soul of those they care about.

Though they count their population in the hundreds, they are far too territorial to lump too closely together in a single city. Each Radiant does their best to spread their web of influence so that all ghosts within about a 20-mile radius are

theirs. Battles over domain occur quite frequently for their kind, making the taste of a single ghost a thing to create citywide wars. The Radiant are not known for holding back any strategic resource during battle, often becoming gang lords or extortionists so they can call on extra firepower whenever necessary.

Recruitment

They serve well as agents, especially when it comes time to clean out a haunted house, but are usually put in caretaking positions. They're used to staying in one place, and will gladly keep undesirables out of any location with a ceiling fan or central air. API suits are well aware of their taste for Spectrals, and they neither confirm nor deny the rumors suggesting the company funnels malcontent ghosts to Ash-Walker as a means of keeping him and his brethren happy and loyal.

Appearance

In their natural form, the Radiant appear as spindly humans with smooth skin accented by coarse hairs. These hairs bristle when in the presence of a particularly tasty spirit. They can be brown, black, gray, or white as a base, with bright colors forming accent lines determined by family and toxicity. The Radiant also possess a Predator Form that allows them to consume spirits. The Predator Form does not increase the size or bulk of the Radiant, but it does thicken their carapace and hairs. Their fingers and toes meld together, making their arms and legs taper to fine points. Four more such appendages sprout from their back, shoulders, ribcage, or hips. Their face warps as four great black fangs erupt from her mouth and their eyes glaze over and project a soft green glow. Average lifespan of the Radiant is 90 years.

Gift - Path of Radiance

As per the Path Access Gift for Path of Radiance. Also, they may purchase this magic at normal cost, while others must spend double.

Gift - Predator Form

(Speed 8, Stamina 4, then 1 per turn)

The Radiant can take on the form of a large humanoid spider for the purposes of additional combat power or for feeding on ghosts and spirits. They receive the following bonuses/penalties:

- AR 3/3, granted from thickened skin.
- +5 bonus to Athletics (Jumping) and +8 bonus for

Radiant Antagonists

Statistics: Health 42, Stamina 34, Initiative +16, Movement 17, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +3, Acrobatics +10, Deception +8, Knowledge +10, Stealth +13, Survival +13

Combat: The Radiant are agile and swift, taking out their opponents by leaping from above most times. If forced to attack head on, they go for debilitating strikes to pressure points. **Bonuses:** Strike +10, Parry +11, Dodge +8, Grapple +14, Roll +7, Damage +4

Athletics (Climbing).

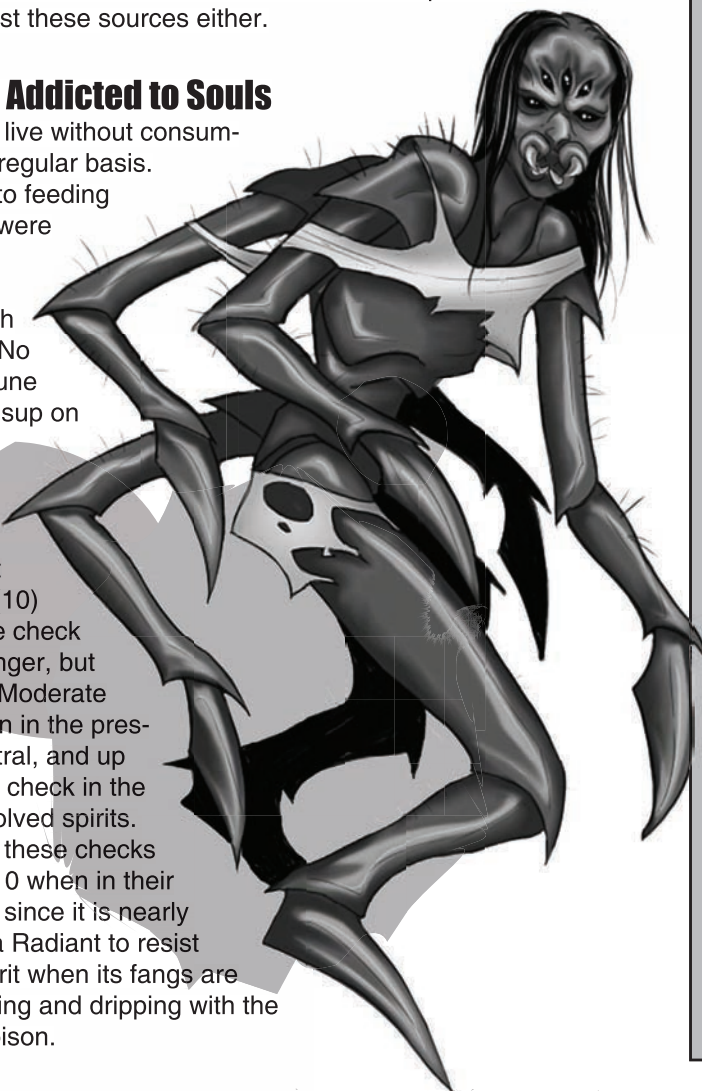
- **Limbs and Fangs:** +1 Action per Round, a +2 bonus to Strike and Parry, and +2 (L) from Bite
- **Deathlight:** their new eyes can sense nearby spirits or spiritual energy, allowing them to see ectoplasmic beings and anything they've affected within the last hour.
- **Soul Eater's Poison:** the Radiant can consume spirits as per the Devour Spectral Skill (page 147 from the API Corebook). Unlike the actual Devour skill, this does not affect living beings.
- -10 to all CHM-based checks, as the monstrous visage tends to quash the rationality of an unprepared mind.

Drawback – Vulnerable to Cold

The Radiant hail from a dimension of omnipresent heat where coldness is unknown and glaciers are nonexistent. Characters suffer double damage from cold or ice based attacks and their AR provides no bonus against these sources either.

Drawback – Addicted to Souls

They cannot live without consuming spirits on a regular basis. They are used to feeding on Gallot, who were always present, but human ghosts are much less prevalent. No Radiant is immune to the desire to sup on succulent sentience when in the presence of a ghost. A Slaantium must pass a Simple (10) INS + Discipline check to resist the hunger, but this raises to a Moderate (20) check when in the presence of a Spectral, and up to a Tough (30) check in the presence of evolved spirits. The difficulty of these checks increases by +10 when in their Predator Form, since it is nearly impossible for a Radiant to resist devouring a spirit when its fangs are already protruding and dripping with the Soul Eater's Poison.



Regina Childs

Race: Radiant

Passion: Protection

Age: 45

Background: Arriving on Earth in her early 20s, Regina has adapted quite well. She took courses to become a social worker, helping to find children from abused homes new places to live and hopefully grow up in a stable environment. All the while, Regina went about hunting down the abusive parents, killing them and devouring their essences. It didn't take long for API to catch onto her, especially since she got sloppy in her enthusiasm. She found herself incarcerated in a company facility for 3 years. Regina was reformed by psychotherapists and now works on the company payroll dealing with orphans often found in the wake of demon destruction.

Personality: Regina has a soft demeanor, especially when it comes to children. She's gained control over her emotions after her treatment, but all that goes out of the window if she changes into her predator form.

Appearance: She appears as a modest black woman of the same age with strands of gray in her hair. Regina prefers warm tones in her clothing, but is not above wearing an API suit if necessary. She almost always has a smile.

Secrets: She has learned the inner workings of the company and what it does with the children it finds. It used to be unorganized and sleazy, but she has tried her best to clean it up.

Statistics: Health 30, Stamina 25, Initiative +12, Movement 13, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +4, Acrobatics +8, Deception +9, Persuasion +12 (Kids), Stealth +10, Survival +12

Combat: Regina stalks her prey and prefers to perform Surprise Attacks if possible. Otherwise, she is very gentle.

Bonuses: Strike +8, Parry +11, Dodge +7, Grapple +12, Roll +6, Damage +2

Special Abilities: Predator Form

Implementation: Regina is helpful in situations where dealing with kids is a necessity. She is easy to talk to as long as the characters realize that she eats ghosts and is a reformed killer. She also can be inserted into the squad to psychoanalyze the characters for the company, if they have proven poor judgment in previous missions.

DeathWishers

Other Names: Khalas, Critters, Soul Suckers

Stereotypes: Calculating, Fearless, Sickening

History

These reviled demons are quite rare but are a danger to all of humanity. Khalas, as they call themselves, are small green parasites that come from a dimension where they are hunted down and killed for the pleasure of the Bekas, a race of mercenaries. Apparently their insides are a delicacy to many different demon races, and they are fed up with their kind being destroyed en masse. The Bekas were amazing adepts that specialized in dimensional portals. Unfortunately, they were also very unobservant which made slipping through portals using the traces of residual magic an easy task for the crafty Klahas.

Why were they hated and hunted? The Khalas attach themselves to the chest of their victims, completely taking over their minds and bodies to their own murderous ends. They literally feed on the adrenaline produced with the thrill of killing another being, the rush of fear their victim feels, and completely devour their victim's ghost before it ever has the chance to leave its now-dead body (let alone get to the Bright Lights).

The Khalas were first sighted on Earth in the late 1700s. Like many other demons, they touched down originally in Europe, but they were quick to spread throughout the world by hitching a ride on caravans to the Silk Road, ships to the New World, and slave transports going to and from other countries. Before the company knew that they existed, the Khalas (named DeathWishers by the company's agents) were practically everywhere. API is none too happy about this and has hunted them ever since.

Lifestyle

Today, a dozen or so DeathWishers can be found just about everywhere, though never in high numbers. Though they could certainly take over the Earth with numbers (many being born from just one breeding), they are smart enough to keep their number down or risk a worldwide hunt for them once more. Instead, they attempt to take a host body and use it until they can't possibly suck anything else from it. When they are done, the host regains all of their memories, including all the horrible things they did while "possessed".

However, their need for safety can never match the cravings they feel for the rush of killing. This is where they get their name from, as they wish only for the death of others. They become the best serial killers, often never

found, as they pick their targets quite carefully. When the time is right, they leap down and kill their opponent. Strangulation is a favorite method as it puts them face to face with their victim, necessary for the DeathWisher to also inject their feeding spike into their victim's heart, sucking out their very soul in the process. Pure elation comes with each kill, leading to another and another.

Other than their extracurricular activities, DeathWishers can pass for human quite easily. Some hosts have interesting jobs that they don't mind keeping, while others (like those with boring office jobs) get their lives turned upside-down by the Khalas.

Appearance (Fear 14)

DeathWishers are little more than horrible, spider-like parasites that are about 2 ft. long. The creature has twelve long legs, great for jumping and attaching itself to an unsuspecting victim. Though it is often found attached to a human host's chest, sucking and draining their life in the process, leaving the host sickly looking at their best. With their host's mind comes all of their memories, including their relationships and spoken languages. DeathWishers have an average lifespan of 200 years, with a few reportedly existing on Earth from birth to death, jumping from victim to victim.

Legal Status

Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. obviously has the DeathWishers listed as Illegal and threats to the continuation of humanity. Their few encounters with the company have resulted in the parasites stabbing agents in the back and attempting to make them their new hosts. There is no rational discussion to be had anymore. Agents have a kill-on-sight order whenever DeathWishers are involved, with the attempt always being made to save the host if they are not too far-gone.

Gift – Host Attachment (Speed 10, Stamina 5)

The DeathWisher is a parasite by nature, needing to constantly be attached to a host to continue living. Characters are assumed to begin with a host that they are comfortable with, living a life that they don't want to move away from immediately. Attaching to a Host requires that the DeathWisher has a clear shot at the victim's chest, meaning no armor (natural or otherwise). Normal clothes can be ripped through without a challenge. With a successful attachment, the host loses control of their body

DeathWisher Antagonists

Description: Except for the fact that DeathWishers happen to supe up the abilities of their host, they share no stats in common.

and mind. The Khalas usurp all of their memories and their life. Each week that goes by, the host body loses 1 Health permanently, leading the demons to seek out healthier and tougher hosts.

Gift – Soul Sucking

(Grapple Maneuver, -8 Grapple, +8 (L))

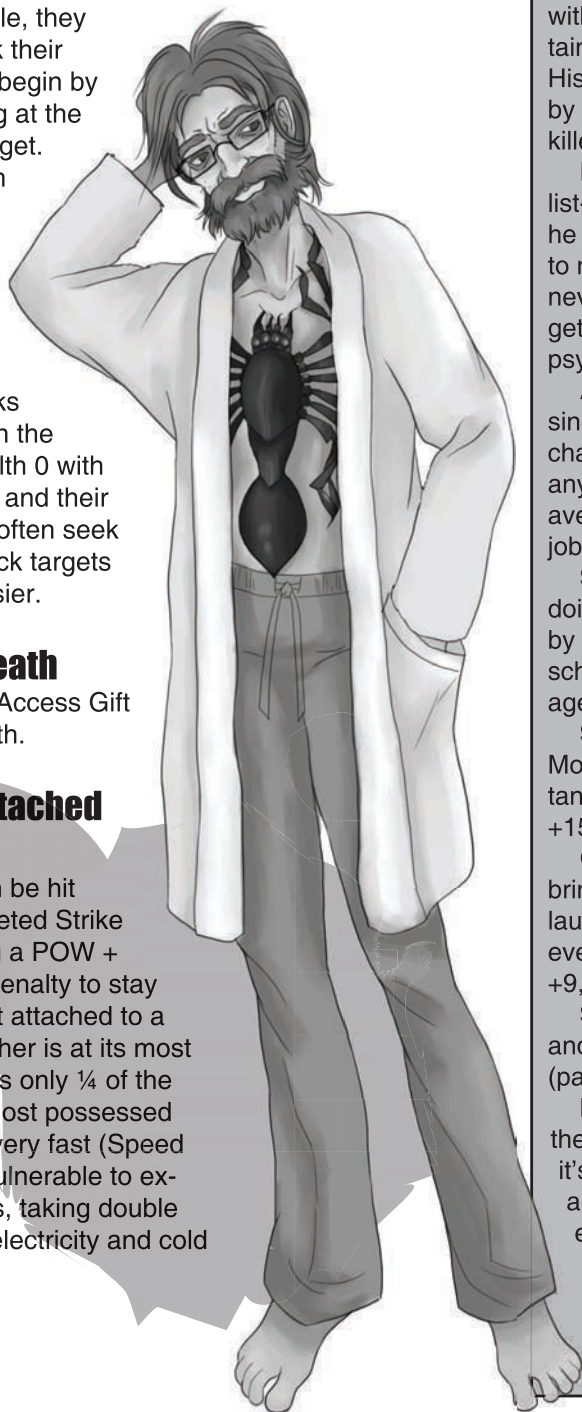
Nothing is stronger than the urge to devour souls. Once the DeathWisher has initiated a successful Grapple, they can attempt to suck their victim's soul. They begin by strangling, watching at the life drains out of target. Then, as they begin to die and their ghost lifts out of their body, the DeathWisher launches their feeding spike into their heart and sucks their soul out. When the target reaches Health 0 with this ability, they die and their soul is gone. They often seek out weakened or sick targets to make the act easier.

Gift – Path of Death

As per the Path Access Gift for the Path of Death.

Drawback – Detached State

The parasite can be hit directly with a Targeted Strike (-4 penalty), forcing a POW + VIG check at a -5 penalty to stay attached. When not attached to a host, the DeathWisher is at its most vulnerable. It retains only ¼ of the Health their latest host possessed and doesn't move very fast (Speed 4). They are also vulnerable to extreme temperatures, taking double damage from fire, electricity and cold sources.



X'nlik (aka Agent Eric Reed)

Race: DeathWisher

Passion: Rivalry

Age: 131

Background: X'nlik has been on Earth for around 50 years after surviving decades hunted by the Bekas. Coming to Earth, he found human ghosts to be more delectable than any other spirit he'd previously sampled. Three long-term hosts had come and gone with a slew of temporary feasts in between, until X'nlik had the opportunity to attach himself to an actual API agent: Eric Reed, the company's efficiency expert. With access to most of the stores of information that API holds and knowledge of other agents' schedules, X'nlik has been able to avoid detection within the company thus far. It doesn't hurt that a certain black market item rendered him invisible as well. His current plan is to schedule the deaths of agents by mixing up information in the records. So far, he's killed 5, and there are more where those came from.

Personality: On paper, he's Eric Reed, the quiet, list-making pencil pusher. There is no paperwork that he can't fill out or schedule that he can't put forth to make an agent more efficient with his time. He's never late and never wastes words, but if you do get him talking he never stops. X'nlik, however, is a psychopath.

Appearance: Regular API attire, except for a single earring in his host's ear. This earring is enchanted with detectable magic to erase X'nlik from any magical or technical scanners. Otherwise, Eric is average looking, never standing out, as that's not his job.

Secrets: He knows what almost every agent is doing at any time, sometimes being able to recall by memory alone, a talent that comes from years of scheduling experience. He also has the ability to fire agents if he can prove there are redundancies.

Statistics: Health 30, Stamina 34, Initiative +12, Movement 12, Actions per Round 2, Magic Resistance +4, Discipline +14 (Recollection), Knowledge +15 (Efficiency), Perception +12, Survival +14

Combat: Though Eric wasn't a born warrior, X'nlik brings years of survival training to the table. He can launch into combat mode to an opponent's (and everyone else's) surprise. **Bonuses:** Strike +9, Parry +9, Dodge +10, Grapple +14, Roll +5, Damage +2.

Special Abilities: Eric's 1st Inner Circle is opened and he possesses the spell "Time Consciousness" (page 115 of the API corebook).

Implementation: X'nlik can be an ally or enemy to the group. Of course, if he befriends the characters it's only to his own ends, probably to get another agent fired so they are easier to pick off. As an enemy, he will attempt to discredit the squad with official paperwork that says they are redundant. He can be assigned to travel with the group to observe directly, where he may even attempt to take out one of the characters.

Adventure: Ghost Road

A landslide killed a community of people living in a woodland religious commune a number of years ago and a lot of them came back as ghosts. For years they protected their lost community from outsiders, until a necromancer started to subvert their will. Now they toil to open up a door to the afterlife for an adept with her own interests. This scenario is an introduction to the world of ghosts in API. The characters can be of any level of expertise and can have any amount of experience with Spectrals.

Prologue: What's actually going on?

The Cumberland Gap has an old highway that's been closed to the general public since five or six people flew off cliffs at high speeds in the late nineties. Recently, however, the ghosts of the Cumberland Gap have re-opened the highway so they can take out people relevant to their new master's interests and recruit their ghosts in the process. To make things simple, one of the servant ghosts has been tethered to the highway, possessing it whenever necessary to single out the necromancer's victims and make them fly off into the forest in a steel coffin. When the local government closed the road down and the bodies stopped piling up, she turned to finding those lone unfortunates off in the woods and siccing her ghosts on them to tear them up in the fashion they know best (as it is how they died themselves). As soon as they were killed, she tethered their ghosts to prevent them from entering the Bright Lights and put them to work. Needless to say, all the ghosts hate her with every ounce of their being, but cannot physically resist her magic.

With the addition of a deceased API agent under her sway, the necromancer now has a huge resource at her disposal, and her work is progressing in ways she could have never thought before. Players are going to have to contend with spectral assassins, hordes of murderous ghosts, and the ingenuity of a fellow agent turned against them.

Part One: Mysterious Deaths

During a rather slow week in the character's current location, their superior officer coordinates a briefing with the squad. Leading the briefing is Agent Mackenzie, an Italian Elite in the Spectral department. He tells the players the following:

"15 days ago, we began hearing reports of a number of suspicious deaths that may have been ghost-related in the Cumberland Gap National Park in Tennessee. We sent a lone agent who was experienced in ghost hunting. Last night, his GPS reported a high-speed car crash and he is currently presumed dead. He hasn't reported in since, confirming his status as far as the company is concerned.

"There haven't been any reports of portal activity there for many years and our readings lead us to believe it is the work of ghosts. Agent Bernard Tishler was good at his job, and I want him back here to be put in the ground if he is in fact dead. The body can be returned by train; the details are included in the file. His original mission, his findings up until the time of his death and the last known position of the still operational GPS in his car are in the report that I'll give to you now. I

wish you good luck.”

Agent Mackenzie hands a file over to the characters and a number of facts are easily found within it:

- The location of his red, 2001 Chrysler, and presumably Agent Tishler. All that it provides is a set of coordinates just outside of the Virginia border inside the Cumberland Gap National Park.

- Agent Tishler was sent up to investigate the deaths of Ernie Bowler, Denise Richardson, Brad Kently, and Richard Parker. Ernie was a civil war re-enactor who went missing a month ago and was found 17 days ago wrapped around a tree, his car thrown at speeds close to 100 mph. Denise and Brad were hikers who also went missing, but they disappeared 2 years ago. They were found by a Boy Scout troupe in the same matter as Ernie, but they were torn up as if they had been thrown through a windshield. Richard Parker was a highway repairman who was killed on the job inside his truck back in 1977 and bore the same fatal injuries of a high-speed collision, except that his truck was undamaged. Enclosed readings show that the ectoplasmic radiation of the area was high, leading API to theorize that a ghost (or group of ghosts) had taken up residence somewhere in the area a number of years ago. They sent Bernie up to investigate.

- Included are the autopsy reports of everyone involved, but other than the fatal damage and the sometimes great distance from the road, nothing else is unusual. Autopsy and accident photos are also included. The pictures are rather disturbing for novice agents. Those not used to seeing piles of bloody, messy dead bodies should make at least a Simple (10) INS + Discipline roll against Fear. Those that fail may have a hard time driving over 50 mph for the next few days.

- There are multiple interview files from the parents of Denise and Brad, the leader of the boy scouts who found them, the re-enactors who were with Ernie, and Richard Parker's old boss. All the interviews are fairly extensive and emotional:

- Ernie headed into off-limits areas for the re-enactment to get a better view of the action, but he was “killed” at that point (“The south got ‘em!”) so no one really took notice until he didn’t show for his ride home.

What is the Cumberland Gap?

The gap is a pass through the Cumberland Mountains that was pioneered by the First Nations people and then rediscovered and widened by European explorers. It was soon used for logging and later on for transportation: a treacherous highway stuck between the cliffs. After a few deaths, it was closed down completely and a tunnel was built straight through to Kentucky. There's a small town of just over 200 people in the gap by the same name as well. In the national park there are picnic areas, caves to explore, hiking trails, and a little museum displaying lost artifacts amongst the gap's massive amounts of tall trees and rivers. In short, it's a big park with a tunnelled highway going through it. To top things off, depending on the time of year, there may be a lot of people in the park hiking, tobogganing, swimming, camping, bird watching, etc.

GM Note: The weather and time of year is left intentionally blank for GMs to insert whatever works best for their campaign. Working with Burners? Make it summer. Have a pack of Wendigos? Fill the state with snow. Nothing adds suspense like slipping in the snow with angry ghosts after you. Weather is a detail that can make or break an adventure, so it's not one to be forgotten.

- Denise and Brad went hiking one day and simply disappeared. Search teams were ordered, but no one found any trace until their bodies showed up a week later. The Scout leader relays that one of the boys went into the forest from camp with his buddy in the night and found the bodies.

- Richard's old boss just says that it was weird how he was found and how no accidents were reported in the area that day.

Any sort of extra details can be expanded upon if the players think they need more answers as long as they do not contradict the facts laid out in the scenario.

- Agent Tishler's personal notes indicate that he was fairly certain that a ghost was at work deep in the national park mountains. All the bod-

ies disappeared from within a mile or so of each other, but he hadn't found any strange deaths before Richard Parker's death in '77 that would make for a good haunting yet.

- Enclosed are plane tickets to Tennessee and back, along with a reserved car from a rental agency.

- Details of what train to put Agent Tishler's body on, if found, in order to return it to API. The

The Actual Old Route 65 East

The investigation may lead the agents to want to check out the physical remains of route 65E, as most of the deaths occurred there. If they would like, they can travel to the concrete wall blocking the entrance put there in 1996 (a standard pair of two 5 foot by 2 feet slabs) and either heave it out of the way with supernatural strength (POW + VIG (30)), magically erase it, or just step around it and walk. It's a long road and could take the better part of a day to explore thoroughly if the players are just hiking, but the process can be sped up by magic or motorcycles.

The road is crumbling, full of potholes, and badly in need of repairs if it's ever going to be driven on regularly. It borders a cliff and has far too many sharp turns and football-sized boulders lying around. If anyone decides to drive along the decrepit road above 40 mph, they need to make a few Moderate (20) AGY + Vehicle Operation checks to avoid flying off the cliff or rolling their car after hitting large rocks in the road.

Sadly, there is nothing really there but a closed down entrance to one of the many caves, and a small slab of concrete where a statue may have once stood. The only thing there worth noting is that there are several uprooted trees lying on the side of the road. It's easy to spot, but there doesn't really seem to be any reason for it. Anyone using magic to rustle up a vision of what's going on with the dirt and trees gets a vision of them floating in mid-air while a car flies by. The realization that there is not a single ghost around may come to necromancers or Spectral agents as well.

players need only drop it off in a cargo container within two days and API will take care of the rest.

Before the players rush off, Agent Mackenzie asks them if there are any questions and answers them as best he can. Afterwards, he urges them to be careful and gives them a few pieces of equipment that may prove useful: a pair of Residual Ectoplasm Detectors (page 58), an Ectoplasmic disruptor (page 57), and as many Undulating Field Generators (page 59) as there are agents. Having finished anything else they might want to do first, the players are free to hop on a rather mundane flight to arrive in Tennessee in the early evening before dark sets in. They can either start right away or first find a place to stay in the nearby town of Cumberland Gap. There are plenty of vacancies amongst the few motels and tourist shops.

Part Two: The Car

Presumably, the characters' first stop will be to investigate Agent Tishler's car, though they can go about the adventure in whatever order they like. People can be re-interviewed or research performed on the area, but most information should be found in Tishler's notes. His crash site resides in the middle of the Cumberland Gap National Park and is nearly a mile away from any roads. The GPS coordinates aren't exact, so it takes about an hour to circle the long roads and highways that go around the coordinates (unless they have a magical way to search or call in satellite support). There's not really a way to reach the car by road. The easiest option is to hike, but powers can provide other options: adepts may want to fly there, Lochs may attempt to swim through the rivers to get close to the site, and Spectrals can may float along, for instance. However, tourists and locals alike will have to be watched for and mind-scrambled as appropriate.

The car lies 20 feet deep inside a small cave barely big enough for it to fit inside. The rock surfaces of the roof and walls are covered in paint scrapings and twisted bits of metal are scattered about. A crumpled rear view mirror

rests amongst a trail of broken safety glass at the very mouth of the cave. Every footfall crunches on glass, and the agents may spend the better part of their evening picking sharp little bits of metal from their shoes. The car itself is crushed, compacted tightly to the far wall of the cave and the contents of what lies within are hidden by the folds of the car even though the cave is well lit. Those with good hearing - INS + Perception (15) - can hear the dulled GPS of the car repeating the phrase, "Please wait for assistance. Emergency crews have been notified" in a feminine computer voice.

Extracting the car in order to gather the clues can be done in a few ways. First, magic is always handy. Another way is hiring a helicopter and a gas-powered winch. Any mechanical method will require an IQ + Crafts roll (18) to remove the car and physical methods may require POW + VIG checks from characters who may have a chance of pulling it out (Tark, Lochs, characters with Bionic arms, etc.). Multiple attempts can be performed, but each unsuccessful attempt breaks another part of the car off, making future tries more difficult (+2 Difficulty every additional time). A mechanic can always be hired as well, but there's just no way of getting a huge generator and a winch down there without magic or a helicopter.

When the car is finally extracted (or when supernatural means are employed to figure it out), it's possible to see that Agent Tishler is indeed crammed in the driver's seat. The dashboard crushed most of his legs and the rest of him is

smearred over the rocks and car interior. The cause of death is fairly apparent. Any attempts to contact his spirit fail as it is not around. However, psychometry and other sorts of divining spells work just fine. Bernie's last moments were driving down a highway that he turned onto from the main highway (Route 32 also includes the Cumberland Gap Tunnel), while listening to Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire". He was headed to reinvestigate a cave that he had struck out at earlier that week. He passed a statue of a dog on a pedestal and thought it was out of place. When he turned back towards the road, it wasn't there. He barely had time to see the cave entrance before hitting it at 75 mph. Those experiencing the death vision need to make a INS + Discipline roll (15) or feel woozy for the next hour or so (-8 Stamina).

Clues that can be gleamed from the car with standard autopsy and investigation skills include:

- Agent Tishler has a brochure of the caves in the area in his jacket, obviously bloodstained and crumpled. There are X's beside a number of them and the last circled with a question mark.
- His GPS survived the crash and has a recording of the route he was driving when killed. If played back, it shows the vehicle driving 20 feet above the tree line for nearly twenty minutes before ending up at the cave. Despite the fact that there are no roads whatsoever nearby, it's fairly normal. If anyone overlays his route with local highways and roads, they find that it syncs perfectly up to the old Highway 65 East, except that it's in the wrong place.
- A key to his motel room. He's staying in



the second floor of the Cumberland Gap Inn. There's nothing there except a few changes of clothes and a tourist map of the area.

- If checked, there is no sign that he was drunk or on any known drugs at the time of his death.

Getting the corpse into the cargo container is easy enough - just wrap it in a tarp and deliver it. The workers at the train yard will pick it up with a forklift and load it for them. It's a temperature controlled storage unit so the agent won't rot, but they might have a few questions for the characters if they simply drop off a corpse and a car.

Part Three: The Drive

After dealing with Agent Tishler's body, the characters will likely want to investigate the questioned cave. The best way to get there is to simply drive. This is, of course, also the most dangerous and exciting way to go as well. The ghost who currently serves as the necromancer's assassin in the road will animate whatever road they decide to take so long as it's within the park

Cebas (The Highway Ghost) or Jacob

Description: Cebas is a child Mockingbird (page 62) that has shaped himself to appear as a terrifying monster. More resembling a skinless, chest-high dog with bulging muscles than a small boy, Cebas is incredibly deadly. Jacob was once his twin and looks like a regular nondescript kid.

Motivations: Cebas is under the sway of his necromancer lord, but she only exerted her will on him once. The rest of the time he just does as she commands out of fear. So does Jacob.

Statistics of Note: Health 35, Stamina 40, Initiative +14, Movement 15, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +3, Possess Object +10, Possess being +8, Affect Senses +10 (Hearing, Sight)

Combat: Cebas and Jacob will possess things first and then people. Cars and rocks are great, but knives and clubs work too. **Bonuses:** Strike +5, Parry +2, Dodge +5, Roll +6, Grapple +8, Damage +2

and by the mountains. The cave that the characters want to check fills both of these criteria exceptionally.

Once the squad piles into a vehicle or two and head toward the cave, things go badly. First off, the ghost forces them off the road they were on and onto the old route. It happens fairly seamlessly, but characters can make a Difficulty (25) INS + Perception check to notice if they are actively paying attention to the road. Those talking to other characters, fiddling with their guns, or sleeping a hard day off don't get a chance. A failure means they carry on but they may notice a slight sloping upwards at a higher angle than the usual road. If they roll between 20 and 24, they can tell their GPS has stopped working, freezing up and refusing to take any new routes. It works again when they aren't on a possessed piece of roadwork, stating "Please U-Turn when safe" in a tinny, mechanical voice before the car begins plummeting into a bunch of trees going 50 mph.

Those agents that succeed at their check immediately spot the road turning off from their route, but it's overgrown and dilapidated. It goes by fast, so unless the characters stop and get out of their car to check things out, that's all they get. Those who stop do find an item of interest. It seems the road isn't actually overgrown or dilapidated, but instead is covered up by uprooted trees, bushes, and clumps of dirt. They can also see signs that display the highway that they were supposed to be on. The road that they are now on doesn't match any maps they have.

But before the characters have the chance to discuss a plan of action, lights flash on behind them accompanied by a roar. It's as if a gigantic car just exploded into life about 30 feet from them, complete with a huge headlight on each side of the road (which makes the "car" about 20 unnatural feet wide) and the churning of an angry engine. Everyone can hear the squealing of tires and can feel the ground shake as this monstrosity starts to bear down toward them. Many choices exist at this point to escape what appears to be a horrible crushing death, but here are some good ones:

- **Jump to the side of the road:** All the dirt

and grass on the shoulder of the road is actually not there. There is nothing holding it there or supporting it in any way so the character has a fall of about 60 ft down, bouncing off sharp rocks before rolling to the ground by a bunch of trees. This would cause 30 (NL) damage from falling.

- **Hopping back into the car and the**

Chase: The lights behind them don't actually belong to anything, but are put together by the ghosts to make the squad drive real fast. To drive along this treacherous road, one must make a Tough (30) AGY + Vehicle Operation check if they want to outpace their pursuer. If they stay on the road for more than two con-

Wait, You Were Hiking?

If the characters decide to walk, fly, astral project, or teleport there instead, there's one small hitch. The crux of the adventure relies on the players realizing at the last possible second that they are on an imaginary highway paved by the dead who are waiting for more recruits, but if they don't drive, that's fine too. Spring it on them whenever they get in a car and drive for more than a few feet.

If they don't drive at all through the entire adventure, that's fine too. After all, these spirits are a desperate lot and it wouldn't take much to wait until the characters are just about to enter the cave before sending a car full of speeding teenagers careening off the end of Old Route 65 East into them from way up high. Treat this as a single attack against everyone in the group who has said they entered the cave. They first get a Moderate (20) INS + Perception check to even notice the incoming car and get a Difficulty (15) Dodge check to avoid the car. A failed Perception check means the dodge is made at Difficulty (25) instead. If it hits, the car deals 40L damage and pins all the survivors to the cave entrance or underneath, unless they possess a special ability to preventing this. Hopefully the remaining characters can drag the still living characters out from a slow death and do so without scraping jagged metal across their innards. Those who die aren't out of the game, as they can always return as antagonists later on.

secutive turns (success or failure), the lights and sound disappear as the highway disintegrates below the squad.

- **Flying off:** Some characters can fly off the road with the help of magic or cybernetics. They can then either try to help the others or watch what happens to them.

- **Standing their ground:** First, as the lights and engine noises get close, the ghost attempts to possess whoever is standing in the front or whoever has the lowest INS + Discipline. The possessed character then starts throwing former friends off the road and down towards the rocks or using whatever paranormal abilities they might have to kill as many people as they can. How the characters deal with one of their own turning against them is up to them.

Once the encounter is over, those surviving can carry on, or try to figure out what just happened. Magic points to an angry ghost named Cebas who possessed the highway and tried to possess a member of the squad. The Spectral is no longer inside the road nor is it in the area.

Part Four: The Cave

One way or another, the characters end up at Kingfisher Cave (where Agent Tishler was going when he was killed). A wooden door blocks the entrance to the cave, but has no alarm and is easy to open. There is a human-sized opening into a small antechamber before it stretches into a wide cave of large stalagmites and fragile-looking stalactites. A small, plastic sign attached to a metal post reminds visitors not to touch anything and stay on the narrow, two-person paved path that stretches further into the cave. Also, not to litter. The path leads to cavern after cavern filled with little bodies of colored water, rocks, and more rocks. There are the occasional railings to ensure people don't fall down shallow cliffs, small lights to show off the best the cave has to offer, other signs with facts on them about the cave and what exactly visitors should be looking at right now.

About halfway up the path, over a railing and past where the lights hit is a small pile of rocks about the size of a bathtub. Underneath is where

a group of frontier families trekking through the Cumberland Gap took shelter from the rain and tried to hide from mountain lions, only to be stuck by a rockslide they caused in their hurry. One was chased by the giant cat, and the others starved to death in each others' arms. One by one, they stayed behind to take care of each other instead of taking the Bright Lights at face value. They stayed there and protected each other until one day Corrine Westburn, our necromancer, was on a guided tour of the caves and noticed them all. She waited until the tour ended and snuck back in later to claim the ghostly group. Corrine is making the ghosts work to crack the mystery of what lies beyond death, and she takes one of the group with her wherever she leaves to ensure loyalty. The captive ghosts are trying, but they haven't the foggiest idea of how to go about getting beyond the veil of life they already denied. Corrine has figured this out, so she's started to expand the group to include locals found all along the roads. Of course, they didn't know anything either, but she keeps on trying.

Her luck changed just recently with Agent Tishler, an API agent with a brain full of facts on Spectrals and the afterlife. She's trying to find someone to kill, stick her head through their white door, and coax her old boyfriend who died recently back into our dimension. She's mostly angry that he passed on rather than staying with her, but he knew that she was a necromancer and he wasn't interested in being controlled. She's looking to berate him or bring him back, but either one will do her just fine.

The characters can find the hole using fancy spells or ghost-finding equipment. It glows like a torch when someone looks at it with Residual Ectoplasm Detectors, but moving the rocks will take a bit of strength to do POW + VIG (30). The 23 ghosts in the cave (all of which can be conveniently be controlled by Corrine at any time) will initially try to hide their presence, but they'll tell the squad whatever they ask if they can convey that they are there to help. Manifesting their voices as a chorus that reverberates throughout the caves, they tell of their research into the afterlife, how Corrine's been killing people, how they long

Agent Bernard Tishler (deceased)

Description: Bernie isn't looking so good. Still sporting his crushed legs and smashed face, he floats just over the ground dangling his mashed appendages below him. He'd be almost unrecognizable if not for his ripped agent suit.

Motivations: As a ghost expert for API, Tishler knows all about his new lot in life. He doesn't want to help Corrine, but she forces him with her necromantic powers and wrings him for advice.

Statistics of Note: Health 18, Stamina 21, Initiative +6, Movement 10, Actions per Round 2, Magic Resistance +4, Stir +10, Manifestation +5

Combat: When forced to fight for Corrine, he prefers to use Stir to unholster the character's weapon and turn it upon them after other ghosts distract them with the Affect Senses skill. **Bonuses:** Strike +8, Parry +5, Dodge +6, Roll +6, Grapple +8, Damage +1

Corrine Westburn

Description: A cute blonde, except that she has the beginnings of black veins along her hair line, suggesting that she is leaning toward the dark side of magic. She wears regular clothes most of the time, but has a black robe for rituals.

Motivation: She wants her boyfriend back and is willing to do anything to get him. Anything! Except get shot. Dying herself is definitely a limit she doesn't want to cross.

Statistics of Note: Health 22, Stamina 29, Initiative +10, Movement 9, Actions per Round 3, Magic Resistance +8, Discipline (Concentration) + 10, Perception +9

Combat: Corrine will let others fight for her. When they run out, she will stop fighting. **Bonuses:** +4 to all combat rolls, Grapple +6, Damage +1

Powers: Corrine knows all the spells from the Path of Death, but due to her extreme specialization she doesn't know any spells from any other paths.

for her to return their baby that is whole (Jacob), and most importantly, where the necromancer is.

Scene 5: The Confrontation

Corrine knew she was drawing a lot of heat to her escapades when Agent Tishler appeared. She already suspects that others will come after her, but isn't sure who or how many. With that in mind, she fled her hotel room and moved into the woods with a tent and all the essential needs of a 27 year old necromancer: a high-quality sleeping bag, propane stove, enough canned food for a month, a few good books, and her most powerful guardian ghost. The ghost is the baby Jacob (once Cebas' twin): powerful, angry, and completely under Corrine's influence. It will protect her in any way it can, including possessing people and objects like cars or large rocks. Use Cebas' stats for Jacob as well.

She made her camp off the beaten path, but the ghosts know where Corrine's hiding out. She can be found in about ten minutes. In all likelihood, Jacob will spot the party first, and he'll rush to Corrine's side and warn her. He is a small child and can be tricked easily by using magic to conceal the squad's arrival. He'll fight to the "death" or until dispelled, charmed, or controlled in one way or another while Corrine rallies her troops. Corrine will use the ghost of Tishler as well as any newly made ghosts of characters who died during the campaign. They will be at

her beck and call and will obey her every command until driven back or Corrine is killed or knocked out.

Corrine uses her ghosts to fight her battles, but stays inside the tent trying in vain to open a portal to the afterlife, using the Path of Radiance (page 59). If a player is killed during the combat, she has no qualms about using their corpse to fuel a zombie spell with their own soul stuffed back in under her control. She will give up if a gun is pointed at her or the Spectrals are all defeated. Lethal force is enough of a threat that she will stop her ghosts and give up if she thinks her own life is in danger. As it turns out, the afterlife is still too much of a mystery for her. She will tell the agents what they want to know and allow herself to be taken into custody. Depending on her treatment (if they manage to show kindness to her after all she has done), she may even show up as a new agent after a few months of rehabilitation. If not, she is locked away for the rest of her life swearing vengeance until she inevitably breaks out years down the road when the characters least expect it.

Experience

+1 Surviving Old Route 65
+1 Capturing Corrine
+1 Saving the ghosts
+1 Agent Tishler's body is returned to API
+1 Returning Jacob to his family

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We Stayed Behind for a Purpose

Spectrals are fueled by their passions and their desperate connection to the world of the living. They ignored the calling of the Bright Lights for reason or another, only to continue on as ephemeral beings. Some find only despair in their choice, while other hope their final destiny still awaits. Could the dead truly hold the key to life itself?

...But Even Death Has Its Dangers

Demon Codex: Spectrals is the second racial sourcebook for Apocalypse Prevention, Inc. and serves as a complete guide to adding ghosts and spirits to your game as characters or antagonists. Details on their dead gatherings and horrible threats await within, along with several new Evolved Spirit types that go beyond what science has deemed possible.

Demon Codex: Spectrals

Includes:

- Information on the daily existence of Spectrals and their involvement with API**
- New Equipment, Magic, and Threats to the Dead**
- New Evolved Spirit Types, as well as playable races, like the shambling Walkers**

