

ORPHEUS™



SHADOW GAMES™

BOOK FOUR OF A SIX-BOOK SERIES

SHADOW GAMES™

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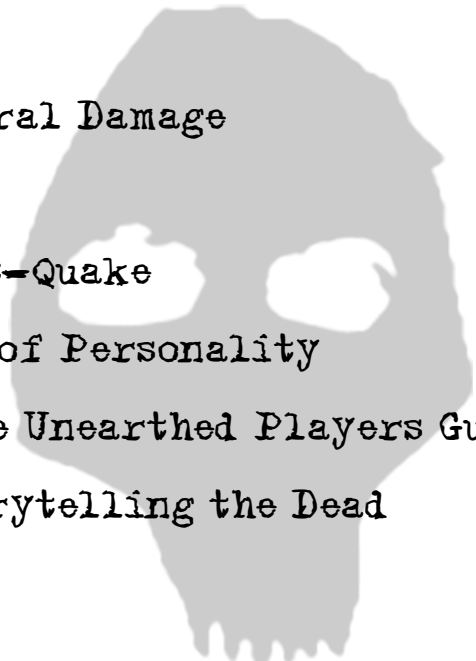
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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Prologue: Collateral Damage	4
Introduction	12
Chapter One: Ghost-Quake	16
Chapter Two: Cult of Personality	42
Chapter Three: The Unearthed Players Guide	104
Chapter Four: Storytelling the Dead	122

PROLOGUE: COLLATERAL DAMAGE

BY ADAM TINWORTH



There's one thing you learn quickly and learn well in the army: Anything that can go wrong probably will. It takes years in the field before you realize the big truth, that the thing that really fucks you over is the one thing you never expect.

It was supposed to be an easy mission. Me and two of the kids head into the field, and I teach them how to fight like guerillas. It's the sort of mission I did a thousand times before I retired and a few more, spook-style, since we founded Lazarus Redux. Damn stupid name if you ask me, but no one did, and I have to live with it. A stupid name doesn't make it a bad idea, though. We need organization if we're going to survive and take the fight to those twisted bastards out there. Lazarus is our best chance of doing that.

The idea's simple. Resurrect Orpheus, but with us running it this time. The guys who still have their bodies work our old contacts and help bring in the big bucks. Several Orpheus survivors are spooks full-time now, but others, like me, still need food and somewhere safe to stash the meat while we're projecting.

Mind you, I'm not exactly the flavor of the month there. Kids who don't know shit from Shinola run Lazarus; some hotheads are in charge of that outfit, no mistake. There's Kate, for one, with her spiritualist mumbo jumbo and her self-righteous ways. I've never been good with women bossing me around, not since my sister Maggie got some ideas in her head back when we were teenagers. "Chet," she'd say to me again and again. "This is the 60s. Time you learnt some modern values."

Modern values earned her a bastard kid and drugs problem. See why I've never had much time for "modern values?"

That's one reason I've got nothing to do with that side of the operations. I'm keeping busy enough doing what I do best... whipping baby spooks into shape. Taking a walk deadside is no day in the park. When you're a spook, the world's full of hostiles, from scum like Bishop and his drug-peddling goons to the twisted Spectres popping up on every damn street corner. Full-time ghost, pigment victim, sleeper or projector, it means nothing to me. I treat

'em all the same, as rookies that need some goddamn discipline if they're going to survive.

That's how I found myself walking down the deadside of a street with Ben Cotton and Craig Forest, looking for trouble. Good Lord, did we ever find it.

It's important to know how to ignore the living and concentrate on the dead. Sure, the living might be all around us, but they can't do much to us. Can't hurt what you can't see. Spooks, though, are a whole other kettle of fish, and learning to spot and deal with them was exactly what I was teaching those two kids.

Forest was a good soldier. Sharp eyes, good mind. He hasn't been great since he lost his head over a woman, developed an itch for pigment and died. He was just another victim of Maggie's "modern values." Still, he was trained boot-camp style, like me, though we operated in different circles. He had the discipline and experience as a spook to make him a vital part of the operation, or so I thought. Problem was, Forest was taking the Orpheus fiasco personally and needed an excuse to cut loose. My

job was to give that guilt some focus. He was the first to sign up for my little defense team and I've been keeping a close eye on him ever since.

Cotton is a different ball game. Kid's full of anger, and that *can be* good. I've seen plenty like him become all spit and polish after a couple of years serving Uncle Sam. No reason the same can't be true now, just as long as he learns to use that anger. While he didn't lose his body after Orpheus, seeing Tom Hayes become a spirit before he turned Spectre really shook Cotton up, and that

doubt and fear is my way into his head. He joined my little unit reluctantly. He doesn't take well to orders, but I've broken stronger kids than him. It'll just take time.

So, the three of us were itching for a fight. We'd practiced as much as we could back at Lazarus Redux, but its studios don't make for good training grounds as far as I'm concerned. The boys needed to cut loose, and hostiles aren't hard to find anymore... not since those damn hives started appearing everywhere deadside. You can see 'em if you're a spook, but they're invisible to the living. The damn things still make me shudder

It takes years in the field before you realize the big truth, that the thing that really fucks you over is the one thing you never expect.



every time I lay eyes on them. They got this whole bulbous, organic thing about them that reminds me of Nam and peoples' guts hanging out.

"You're full of shit, *Sarge*," Cotton said.

Damn. I was thinking out loud again; another sign of senility.

"You've got an attitude kid, for a corpse looking for that last death experience. Keep your eyes peeled and that smart mouth shut," I replied. "And I was a captain... not a sergeant."

Cotton grinned and did as he was told. Smart mouth, but a smart guy, too. He was learning.

The plan was simple. Find one of those damn hives — a small one — keep a low profile until we spot a Spectre or two, and go to town on them. We'd done runs like this before, and each one got a little easier. We'd figured out some ways of working together as a crucible that let us use our powers in some interesting new combinations. Frankly, I was looking forward to trying them out in combat.

Forest took point. He had sharp eyes and could spot Spectres coming well before they saw us. He scouted ahead, either as a hue or in the meat of some passerby, while Cotton and I followed him at a safe distance. We'd been out a couple of hours when Forest motioned for us to stop. I nodded, and he slipped away for a few minutes. When he returned, slipping through the wall of the building Cotton and I were using as shelter, the kid looked pale, even for a spook.

"Something's up on the next block," Forest said. "The whole place is crawling with hives. I don't think there's a building on the block without one or two hanging off the side. They're even bulging out of the street in places. It's ugly."

"Hostiles?"

"A few. They're not moving in groups, though, and they seem a little, uh, confused."

"Confused?"

"Well, kinda wandering about. They don't seem to be doing anything much, just waiting."

"Great," Cotton said, already moving off. "Let's give those bastards something to remember us by."

"Stop right there, soldier," I shouted. The damn bastard ignored me and broke into a run.

"You know he's counting on us to follow him, right?" Forest said.

"Damn straight," I replied. "I was knocking punks like him into shape while you were stealing your Dad's copies of *Playboy*. First, we haul his ass out of the trouble he's about to cause, then we kick it from one side of this city to the other."

"Whatever you say, *Sarge*."

I fixed Forest a nasty look before we set off at a jog. I let Cotton get a little ahead of us. No point in rushing into a confrontation. If he ran into more hostiles than he could handle, that was his problem, not mine. You don't disobey orders in the field. Well, not if you want to make it home alive — or whatever passes for alive for folks like us.

Forest was right about the hives. Before, we'd find them scattered around the city. Here, they were everywhere. They were making the back of my neck itch, just like in Nam when Charlie was in the trees, watching us. What was worse, Forest was right about the Spectres, too. There were small bunches here and there, but they were just drifting back toward the hives. This wasn't the way the bastards normally behaved... they seemed

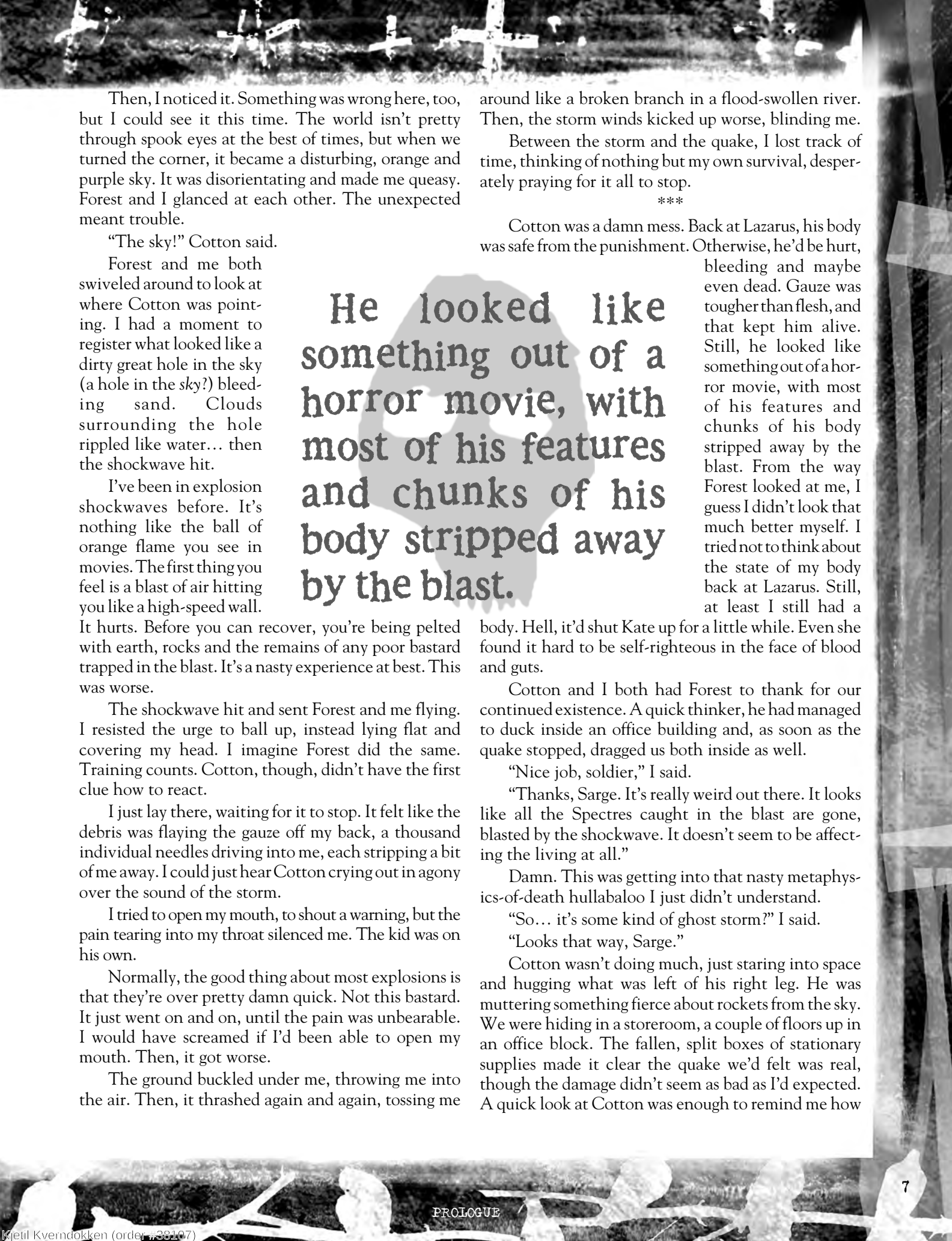
too damn organized. I'd only seen them full of murder and mayhem before. This wasn't good. I just wanted to find Cotton and hightail it the hell out of there. Pity the kid had just disappeared round the corner of the block.

Then, I heard something rip, like God just tore the sky like cloth. A damn

horrible screeching noise followed, like forks being dragged across a million plates, drowning out all noise.

When we turned the same corner, Cotton was just standing there in the middle of the street, like a damn fool, facing back our way. His mouth was open, and his eyes were wide. What was the idiot thinking? He was easy prey for hostiles. The kid wasn't thinking like a spook. They could be through the walls around him and all over him in a second, and there wouldn't be a damn thing he could do to stop them.

"The whole place is crawling with hives. I don't think there's a building on the block without one or two hanging off the side."



Then, I noticed it. Something was wrong here, too, but I could see it this time. The world isn't pretty through spook eyes at the best of times, but when we turned the corner, it became a disturbing, orange and purple sky. It was disorientating and made me queasy. Forest and I glanced at each other. The unexpected meant trouble.

"The sky!" Cotton said.

Forest and me both swiveled around to look at where Cotton was pointing. I had a moment to register what looked like a dirty great hole in the sky (a hole in the sky?) bleeding sand. Clouds surrounding the hole rippled like water... then the shockwave hit.

I've been in explosion shockwaves before. It's nothing like the ball of orange flame you see in movies. The first thing you feel is a blast of air hitting you like a high-speed wall.

It hurts. Before you can recover, you're being pelted with earth, rocks and the remains of any poor bastard trapped in the blast. It's a nasty experience at best. This was worse.

The shockwave hit and sent Forest and me flying. I resisted the urge to ball up, instead lying flat and covering my head. I imagine Forest did the same. Training counts. Cotton, though, didn't have the first clue how to react.

I just lay there, waiting for it to stop. It felt like the debris was flaying the gauze off my back, a thousand individual needles driving into me, each stripping a bit of me away. I could just hear Cotton crying out in agony over the sound of the storm.

I tried to open my mouth, to shout a warning, but the pain tearing into my throat silenced me. The kid was on his own.

Normally, the good thing about most explosions is that they're over pretty damn quick. Not this bastard. It just went on and on, until the pain was unbearable. I would have screamed if I'd been able to open my mouth. Then, it got worse.

The ground buckled under me, throwing me into the air. Then, it thrashed again and again, tossing me

around like a broken branch in a flood-swollen river. Then, the storm winds kicked up worse, blinding me.

Between the storm and the quake, I lost track of time, thinking of nothing but my own survival, desperately praying for it all to stop.

Cotton was a damn mess. Back at Lazarus, his body was safe from the punishment. Otherwise, he'd be hurt,

bleeding and maybe even dead. Gauze was tougher than flesh, and that kept him alive. Still, he looked like something out of a horror movie, with most of his features and chunks of his body stripped away by the blast. From the way Forest looked at me, I guess I didn't look that much better myself. I tried not to think about the state of my body back at Lazarus. Still, at least I still had a

body. Hell, it'd shut Kate up for a little while. Even she found it hard to be self-righteous in the face of blood and guts.

Cotton and I both had Forest to thank for our continued existence. A quick thinker, he had managed to duck inside an office building and, as soon as the quake stopped, dragged us both inside as well.

"Nice job, soldier," I said.

"Thanks, Sarge. It's really weird out there. It looks like all the Spectres caught in the blast are gone, blasted by the shockwave. It doesn't seem to be affecting the living at all."

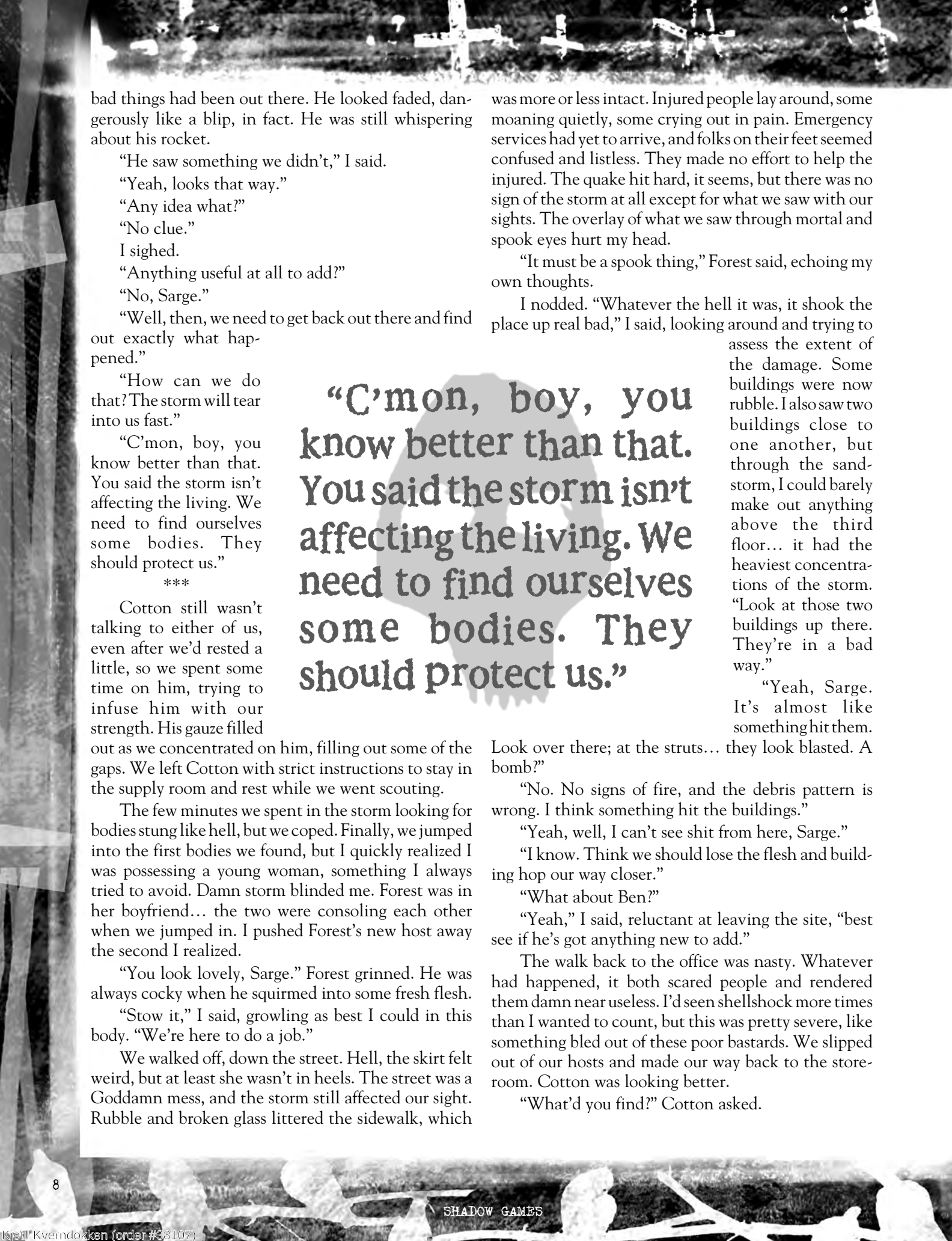
Damn. This was getting into that nasty metaphysics-of-death hullabaloo I just didn't understand.

"So... it's some kind of ghost storm?" I said.

"Looks that way, Sarge."

Cotton wasn't doing much, just staring into space and hugging what was left of his right leg. He was muttering something fierce about rockets from the sky. We were hiding in a storeroom, a couple of floors up in an office block. The fallen, split boxes of stationary supplies made it clear the quake we'd felt was real, though the damage didn't seem as bad as I'd expected. A quick look at Cotton was enough to remind me how

He looked like something out of a horror movie, with most of his features and chunks of his body stripped away by the blast.



bad things had been out there. He looked faded, dangerously like a blip, in fact. He was still whispering about his rocket.

"He saw something we didn't," I said.

"Yeah, looks that way."

"Any idea what?"

"No clue."

I sighed.

"Anything useful at all to add?"

"No, Sarge."

"Well, then, we need to get back out there and find out exactly what happened."

"How can we do that? The storm will tear into us fast."

"C'mon, boy, you know better than that. You said the storm isn't affecting the living. We need to find ourselves some bodies. They should protect us."

Cotton still wasn't talking to either of us, even after we'd rested a little, so we spent some time on him, trying to infuse him with our strength. His gauze filled out as we concentrated on him, filling out some of the gaps. We left Cotton with strict instructions to stay in the supply room and rest while we went scouting.

The few minutes we spent in the storm looking for bodies stung like hell, but we coped. Finally, we jumped into the first bodies we found, but I quickly realized I was possessing a young woman, something I always tried to avoid. Damn storm blinded me. Forest was in her boyfriend... the two were consoling each other when we jumped in. I pushed Forest's new host away the second I realized.

"You look lovely, Sarge." Forest grinned. He was always cocky when he squirmed into some fresh flesh.

"Stow it," I said, growling as best I could in this body. "We're here to do a job."

We walked off, down the street. Hell, the skirt felt weird, but at least she wasn't in heels. The street was a Goddamn mess, and the storm still affected our sight. Rubble and broken glass littered the sidewalk, which

was more or less intact. Injured people lay around, some moaning quietly, some crying out in pain. Emergency services had yet to arrive, and folks on their feet seemed confused and listless. They made no effort to help the injured. The quake hit hard, it seems, but there was no sign of the storm at all except for what we saw with our sights. The overlay of what we saw through mortal and spook eyes hurt my head.

"It must be a spook thing," Forest said, echoing my own thoughts.

I nodded. "Whatever the hell it was, it shook the place up real bad," I said, looking around and trying to

assess the extent of the damage. Some buildings were now rubble. I also saw two buildings close to one another, but through the sandstorm, I could barely make out anything above the third floor... it had the heaviest concentrations of the storm. "Look at those two buildings up there. They're in a bad way."

"Yeah, Sarge. It's almost like something hit them.

Look over there; at the struts... they look blasted. A bomb?"

"No. No signs of fire, and the debris pattern is wrong. I think something hit the buildings."

"Yeah, well, I can't see shit from here, Sarge."

"I know. Think we should lose the flesh and building hop our way closer."

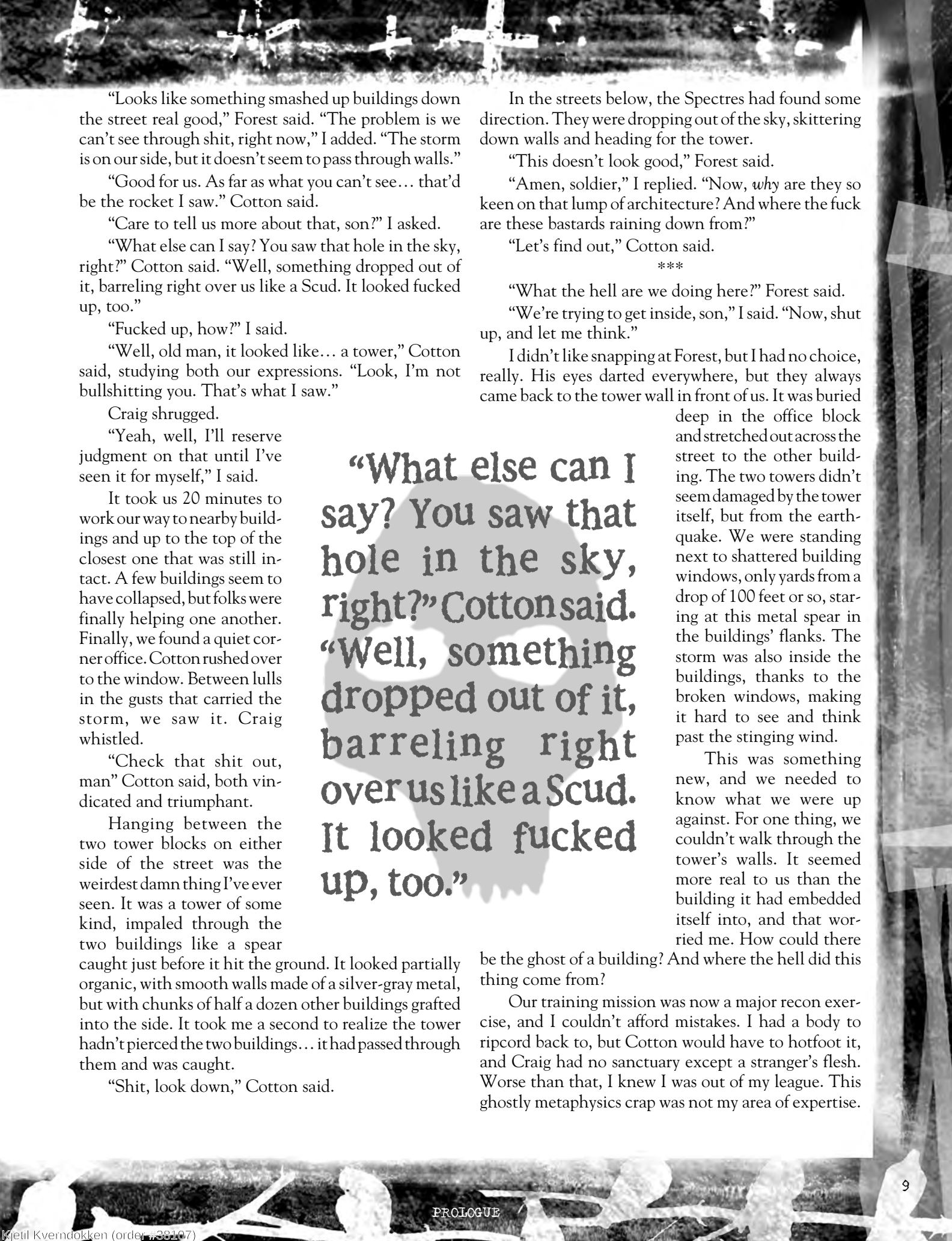
"What about Ben?"

"Yeah," I said, reluctant at leaving the site, "best see if he's got anything new to add."

The walk back to the office was nasty. Whatever had happened, it both scared people and rendered them damn near useless. I'd seen shellshock more times than I wanted to count, but this was pretty severe, like something bled out of these poor bastards. We slipped out of our hosts and made our way back to the store-room. Cotton was looking better.

"What'd you find?" Cotton asked.

"C'mon, boy, you know better than that. You said the storm isn't affecting the living. We need to find ourselves some bodies. They should protect us."



"Looks like something smashed up buildings down the street real good," Forest said. "The problem is we can't see through shit, right now," I added. "The storm is on our side, but it doesn't seem to pass through walls."

"Good for us. As far as what you can't see... that'd be the rocket I saw," Cotton said.

"Care to tell us more about that, son?" I asked.

"What else can I say? You saw that hole in the sky, right?" Cotton said. "Well, something dropped out of it, barreling right over us like a Scud. It looked fucked up, too."

"Fucked up, how?" I said.

"Well, old man, it looked like... a tower," Cotton said, studying both our expressions. "Look, I'm not bullshitting you. That's what I saw."

Craig shrugged.

"Yeah, well, I'll reserve judgment on that until I've seen it for myself," I said.

It took us 20 minutes to work our way to nearby buildings and up to the top of the closest one that was still intact. A few buildings seem to have collapsed, but folks were finally helping one another. Finally, we found a quiet corner office. Cotton rushed over to the window. Between lulls in the gusts that carried the storm, we saw it. Craig whistled.

"Check that shit out, man" Cotton said, both vindicated and triumphant.

Hanging between the two tower blocks on either side of the street was the weirdest damn thing I've ever seen. It was a tower of some kind, impaled through the two buildings like a spear caught just before it hit the ground. It looked partially organic, with smooth walls made of a silver-gray metal, but with chunks of half a dozen other buildings grafted into the side. It took me a second to realize the tower hadn't pierced the two buildings... it had passed through them and was caught.

"Shit, look down," Cotton said.

In the streets below, the Spectres had found some direction. They were dropping out of the sky, skittering down walls and heading for the tower.

"This doesn't look good," Forest said.

"Amen, soldier," I replied. "Now, *why* are they so keen on that lump of architecture? And where the fuck are these bastards raining down from?"

"Let's find out," Cotton said.

"What the hell are we doing here?" Forest said.

"We're trying to get inside, son," I said. "Now, shut up, and let me think."

I didn't like snapping at Forest, but I had no choice, really. His eyes darted everywhere, but they always came back to the tower wall in front of us. It was buried

deep in the office block and stretched out across the street to the other building. The two towers didn't seem damaged by the tower itself, but from the earthquake. We were standing next to shattered building windows, only yards from a drop of 100 feet or so, staring at this metal spear in the buildings' flanks. The storm was also inside the buildings, thanks to the broken windows, making it hard to see and think past the stinging wind.

This was something new, and we needed to know what we were up against. For one thing, we couldn't walk through the tower's walls. It seemed more real to us than the building it had embedded itself into, and that worried me. How could there

be the ghost of a building? And where the hell did this thing come from?

Our training mission was now a major recon exercise, and I couldn't afford mistakes. I had a body to ripcord back to, but Cotton would have to hotfoot it, and Craig had no sanctuary except a stranger's flesh. Worse than that, I knew I was out of my league. This ghostly metaphysics crap was not my area of expertise.

"What else can I say? You saw that hole in the sky, right?" Cotton said. "Well, something dropped out of it, barreling right over us like a Scud. It looked fucked up, too."



"We could go up a couple of floors," Forest said. "Push through the building walls and walk on top of the tower. I mean, it's slanted, but I can handle the slope." He had a point. Through the side of the office building, we could see that the tower had windows. There were bound to be windows topside as well, maybe some inside the building."

"So can I," Cotton said. "The million-dollar question is: Do we want to?"

"Forest, you're on point," I said, as we made our way upstairs. "I'll follow, and Cotton can bring up the rear. No arguments, Cotton, you're still hurt."

"Suits me, Sarge.."

When we finally made our way around the tower's walls and up the stairs, we pushed through the building wall and scaled down the tower's slope. It wasn't the most fun thing I've ever done, between the angle of the slope and the blowing storm winds. I had no idea if a fall could hurt a spook as badly as it hurt flesh, and I had no intention of finding out. It was a hell of a long way down, and the storm wasn't helping our footing.

"Sarge, look," Cotton shouted.

I turned to look. Forest was helping a girl climb out a tower window. She was young, late teens maybe, and she looked scared.

I gestured back toward the building, and Cotton nodded and turned around. The scramble in and out only took a couple of minutes. Once all four of us were safely within the sheltering walls of the office, I turned to the girl.

"Who the hell are you?" I said.

"You're ghosts," she said. "You're actually ghosts, here."

"No shit, sister," said Cotton.

"Are you Reapers?" she asked, afraid.

"Hell no. Do we look like Spectres?" Forest said.

The girl seemed confused, like "Reaper" was something different in her language. She shook her head. It didn't matter. "We have to run," she said. "The other side is gone, everything... obliterated. They're coming to take us to Her."

Then, we heard 'em. The chittering and howling from the walls of the tower. Spectres. Lots of 'em. They swarmed out of the window like rats out of a storm drain and skittering along the tower's wall toward us, fast.

We ran.

The storm had abated some, thankfully, by the time we squeezed through the office building's front doors and back into the street. It was still painful, but I could see and keep my feet, as could the others. We ran, fast, but it wasn't enough. The Spectres were still gaining on us, bursting through the walls of the office right across the frontage. The girl was still muttering about "being taken to Her."

"Just shut up and run," I shouted at her. Then, they were all over us.

The Spectres burst from the ground and from the walls. I lost my hold on the girl, who vanished in a sea of oily-black Spectres. That was it... I was pissed off. I went "Hulk" as Forest called it once and pumped myself up on Vitality. I tore through the Spectres, trying to stop from being dragged down, shredding a few with my bare hands. I headed for the sounds of gunfire. That's when I found Cotton, blazing away with congealed Uzis, keeping the Spectres at bay. "Where's Forest?" Cotton said, his voice barely carrying over the storm and machinegun fire.

I spun around, to see Forest barely visible beneath a Spectre pile-on. Couldn't see

the girl anywhere.

"Keeping running, Sarge," Forest said, fighting the Spectres off. "Get out of here."

And that was it. Forest reached down into himself and poured his life into us before the Spectres buried him. I felt my gauze flicker and dance with static, my energy full and hot like diner java. Damn fool just made Cotton and me invisible using his own life.

I tried making my way to him, but the Spectre mob was growing thicker by the minute, and many collided into me, figuring out I wasn't real like they thought.

Forest vanished again, this time screaming in pain. Something cut it short...

...I had no choice.

**"You're ghosts,"
she said.**

**"You're actually
ghosts, here."**

"No shit, sister,"



I grabbed Cotton and raced through the walls of an adjoining building.

"Sarge—" Cotton said, but I cut him off.

"Just run," I said.

We ran through rooms, shifting direction and playing hide-and-seek with our pursuers till we finally lost them. Unfortunately, on our way out, we rounded a corner and almost ran into a small group of Spectres. Cotton wasn't thinking or taking any shit this time. He pulled his guns and ran straight through them, clearing a path and blasting the shit out of anything in his way. I played cleanup, mauling through them like a runaway train.

If there's one thing the Army never really teaches you, it's how to cope with losing one of your men or a hostage. I didn't even know her name. Sure, you learn to numb yourself to it, to not think about it. The Army even provides chaplains to tell you that the dead souls go to a better place.

Losing Forest was worse, though. Much worse. I couldn't save a girl and a good man from having their souls torn to shreds. I can tell myself again and again that it was his choice. I can tell the others that this is war and that war means casualties. Forest saved Cotton and me, though, and the excuses don't work. Even safely back in my sagging flesh, I can't help but hear his screams in my sleep.

And I know that he's nowhere near a better place. None of us are.



INTRODUCTION



Sergeant Harry Wells: I am not breaking radio silence just cos'
you lot got spooked by a dead fucking flying cow!
— Dog Soldiers

Are we dead yet? Why the fuck not?
— Self-Made Spook



Another layer of the puzzle has hopefully fallen away and, with it, the problems afflicting the characters during **Crusade of Ashes** and **Shades of Gray**. Congratulations, you've made it far enough to meet the bridging point... the mid-tier concern that ties the first two supplements together with the last two. This supplement is a transition point where the characters graduate to more serious concerns.

And by knowing that these problems ultimately face them, the characters can assume a more aggressive role in contending with them.

Shadow Games concerns the discovery and slow realization that there might well be another world out there — and that it's home to monsters. While the identity of the person responsible for Orpheus Group's destruction is finally unveiled here, it's with a caveat of greater lurking dangers. In essence, the characters close the door on one chapter, finally putting to rest the events begun in **Crusade of Ashes** and mostly resolved in **Shades of Gray**. Consider this an epilogue to Orpheus Group's fall. Unfortunately, when one chapter ends, there's always a new one that begins. That's when the stakes grow higher and the risks greater. This sourcebook is, thus, the prologue of the next and final two chapters. It's a taste of things to come....

Before we kick this off, please note that the metaplot is sparse on specific current dates and locations. We encourage the readers to make what they will of this book, and one way to facilitate its offering to the creative spirits is to keep it unanchored. This way we also offset the "but it's canon" syndrome, whereby we say it, therefore it is real. Well, perhaps it isn't canon yet. **Orpheus** is only as real to the World of Darkness as you want to make it.

THEN AND NOW: AN OVERVIEW

If some readers are still playing through the events of the previous two books, we recommend you hold off on reading this section until the Storyteller gives you a thumb's up on the matter.

IN THE BEFORE

Its scientists called themselves Orpheus Group, and it was the first company to offer its unusual services in the new science called projecting. Orpheus Group was a pioneer in its field, even if folks weren't willing to admit that perhaps science had actually bridged the lands of the living with the hereafter so easily. Still, many people were desperate for help in one fashion or another and willing to take a chance on this fledgling operation despite its seemingly outrageous claims. And for that trust, Orpheus Group helped them to settle their issues with departed loved ones or troublesome ghosts. With each personal affirmation that projecting was legitimate, the prospect caught on like slow-moving fire. Soon, everyone knew about the hereafter... whether they chose to believe in it or not.

Unfortunately, Orpheus Group's success was built upon a foundation of secrets... many of which would haunt it throughout its brief existence. Its first skeleton was that the drug pigment owed its origin to Orpheus Group's early explorations into death. When both the drug and the corporation's projecting technologies slipped into public consumption, rivals such as NextWorld and Terrel & Squib appeared from out of the woodworks. Its second and greatest secret was an affair called Project: Flatline, whereby Orpheus Group, with the NSA's help, tested the early stages of projecting on convicts. Elements within the NSA were interested in the potential results of the endeavor but, given its highly controversial nature, maintained minimal ties to the company. They honestly expected few results, but Orpheus' soon-to-emerge success caught the NSA offguard. Unfortunately, the fruits of that success, the convicts, escaped their cryogenically frozen prisons and slipped out into the world as ghosts.

In **Crusade of Ashes**, Orpheus Group's past caught up with it and played a significant role in the organization's destruction. Unknown parties paid NextWorld to destroy the company and its personnel, both physically and spiritually, thus eliminating the corporation in one bloody stroke. NextWorld partially succeeded, but it allowed too many survivors to escape the pogrom — many of whom scattered to the four winds. Those elements within the NSA who were involved with Orpheus Group feared the survivors represented a potential security risk... one that could lead investigators back to them... one that could disseminate projector technology or services to "undesirables." The NSA hired Death Merchants to eliminate the stragglers. Adding insult to injury for Orpheus' survivors, the FBI launched a massive manhunt, alleging Orpheus Group's projectors were somehow involved in terrorist activities. It was all a bid by competing agencies within the US government to claim jurisdiction over projector-related technology.

In **Shades of Gray**, the characters remained fugitives, but now, they had the opportunity to rectify matters and reclaim their lives. One by one, the FBI, the NSA and NextWorld became forces to overcome or circumvent entirely. Unfortunately, the same antagonist responsible for sending NextWorld after the characters also laced a pigment shipment with poison. Hundreds died in the fiasco, creating immediate hues. In the process of uncovering the culprits behind this act, the characters likewise discovered a new enemy in Terrel & Squib, as well as new allies in Radio Free Death's Terrence Green and Grace Ishida.

IN THE BETWEEN

Storytellers should allow some in-game time to pass between **Shades of Gray** and **Shadow Games**. Since **Shades of Gray** relates specifically to resolving prior storylines with the NSA, the FBI, Terrel & Squib, etc., we recommend those plotlines be resolved before the events of this book kick the action into high gear. Assuming the



characters have rebuilt their old lives or fashioned new ones, six months to a year has passed. The world is still uncertain as what to make of projecting, but it's definitely becoming a worldwide phenomenon. Various governments react to the matter differently, either banning projection outright or regulating it heavily. Still, in North America, where projection agencies did suffer tremendously, no companies emerge with the strength or dominance of Orpheus Group or Terrel & Squib.

On other fronts, the number of pigment cults is growing, with one cult — calling itself the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost — gaining in prominence. One reason behind the cults' success is thanks to a growing segment of the population suffering from nightmares. Medical associations ascribe the nightmares to everything from a depressed world economy to increasingly bad diets. Nobody is willing to admit that perhaps folks are dreaming of things that shouldn't, but do, exist.

Still, if one light has emerged for spooks, it's the recent formation of Lazarus Redux, a company comprised of former Orpheus Group personnel who plan on helping folks and ghosts... the right way.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Shadow Games covers the state of the world and the changes awaiting the characters through the four main chapters. Each offers relevant tidbits of information, with a split between player-related material and Storyteller-pertinent data. The chapter breakdown below is more specific on which sections are for whom.

THE MOVIE MODEL

Perhaps **Orpheus** does draw as much inspiration from such movies as *Aliens* as it does from films such as *The Sixth Sense* and *The Ring*. If there's a reason for the former of the three choices, however, it has mostly to do with the energetic pacing of James Cameron's classic flick. *Aliens* is fast moving, and it contends with a species of dedicated, single-minded creatures completely alien to the human mindset... much like the Spectres. So, in like vein, we again visit *Aliens* to offer reference to the current sourcebook.

Ripley: You started this. Show me everything. I can handle myself.

Hicks: Yeah, I noticed.

Again... a simple scene that immediately cements the respect Ripley and the marines share for one another. Why is that important? Because one of the unspoken currents in this sourcebook is strength born from unity. **Shadow Games** has its events to rattle the crucible's world, but it also introduces allies to help in the upcoming fight. The bad guys had their chance to unite and whittle away at the characters, but it's the crucible's turn now to form a strong front. The events of the last two sourcebooks isolated the characters from the world and perhaps themselves.

No more.

Shadow Games is perhaps **Orpheus'** most subtle offering in gear shifts. It helps to bring the events of the previous books to a close, sealing the final chapter in Orpheus Group's past, but it also introduces that necessary step into the future as portrayed in the subsequent and final two books. The opening story is therefore unique in that it remains independent of external movements and machinations. It is simply a matter of coincidence, but it's one that opens the chronicle to the potential of other places... a world beyond the Stormwall.

THIS MOVIE SUCKS

It's a given that only a few great storytellers and dream-smiths can craft tales that seize everyone's fancy. **Orpheus** isn't about crafting the next seminal classic or giving the reader pause to consider the philosophical realities of existence. **Orpheus** is about telling a hopefully fun story, one that will undoubtedly please some readers with the changes and leave others ambivalent. Nothing prevents Storyteller and troupe alike from ignoring the major changes suggested, however, and working their way around the events as though everything remained untouched. Throughout the series, the sourcebooks continually offer suggestions as how to incorporate certain events without them altering the very dynamic of the world (as written). In fact, **Orpheus** encourages it if only because it'll keep players guessing as to the game's course, including for those who've already read the sourcebook.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Shadow Games contains four main chapters, not including the fiction piece and introduction. Players should avoid reading the Storyteller sections and chapters to enhance everyone's enjoyment of the product. Regardless, however, it's difficult to read some material without gaining immediate insight into how some events play. Therefore, players should ask their Storyteller what they can and cannot read, and further, they shouldn't assume that just because the mechanics incorporate a new set of rules or style of play, that their characters are automatically privy to them.

Chapter One: Ghost-Quake is the opening story of a new chapter in **Orpheus**, the beginning steps of a journey that brings the characters toward the next two books. This section is for Storytellers only, but before running it, Storytellers should discuss with the players the possibility of keeping the chronicle the same or of introducing a major change to the chronicle. Fortunately, this event can be treated as a stand-alone story, with as little or as many aftershocks in the characters' lives as the Storyteller wishes.

Chapter Two: Cult of Personality falls into two sections, the first for players and the second for Storytellers. The players' side of things deals with readily accessible



information that the characters would know about their world, but the players often don't. It contains tidbits of pertinent information that allow players to approach Storytellers and say "Our characters want to check this out." The second part, the Storyteller's portion of the chapter, deals specifically with the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, a cult with a strong stake in the hereafter.

Chapter Three: The Unearthed Players Guide is for the players, and it usually includes a variety of crunchy material available in each supplement. For this sourcebook, the crunchy material includes the introduction of a new technique — using Spite to fuel Horrors and manifestation forms, as well as new Stains to further explore a ghost's dark side.

Chapter Four: Storytelling the Dead is strictly for the Storyteller, and it includes advice on playing **Shadow Games**, techniques to involve new characters based on recent chronicle events and several new allies in the form of Lazarus Redux — a company comprised of Orpheus Group's surviving signature characters — and various Freedom Fighters — new crucibles of like-minded individuals. This chapter wraps up with "Ghost Stories": Instead of simply stating the new revelations awaiting the characters, this offers ready made stories where the Storyteller can reveal new facets to the game.

SERIES BREAKDOWN

Following the core book, the game's limited run progresses in much the same manner as would the action

of a suspense film, with events building up with each successive revelation (supplement). These metaplot events reach their climax in the final book of the series, with the progression as follows:

Supplement Four — The Orphan-Grinders: "They wanted war <static> this is war. Fight hard <static> fierce, but most importantly <static> Fight BACK!"

Final Supplement — End Game: <static>

RECOMMENDED VIEWING

Following the cinematic experience, here are a couple of films to provide inspiration for **Orpheus** and **Shadow Games** stories. Let's see if you can pick up on the common factors between these flicks:

The Deceivers: This really dated Pierce Brosnan flick deals with a British tax collector in early 19th century India who discovers the existence of the Thuggees. After seeing their effects on the indigenous population, Brosnan goes undercover as a Thuggee to infiltrate their society but discovers that he's in over his head.

The Serpent and the Rainbow: Not a ghost flick, but definitely one of Wes Craven's scarier enterprises. Bill Pullman plays a scientist who goes to Haiti to investigate the incredible properties of a plant. Unfortunately, in searching for the plant, Pullman's character is pulled into the local voodoo culture and draws the unwanted attentions of one particularly nasty voodoo priest.



CHAPTER ONE: GHOST-QUAKE

trabbold

Sergeant Harry Wells: Now, as of this moment as far as we're concerned, we are 50K's behind enemy lines. Now if we do happen to make contact, I expect nothing less than gratuitous violence from the lot of you. Just cos we're firing blanks doesn't mean we have to be thinking nice thoughts.

— Dog Soldiers

The only <static> I know is a name <static>tower<static> from a place called Styg<static>. Not even the dead live there anymore
<static>

— Radio Free Death

INTRODUCTION

The events detailed in **Shadow Games** start with a very physical disaster — one that should eventually bring the crucible to question much of what it knows about ghostly existence. This chapter covers the disaster, from the first signs that something is about to happen right up to when the city returns to business as usual. There are all sorts of possible adventures associated with this calamity waiting to ensnare the crucible. That means this chapter is strictly for the Storyteller. If you're going to play through these sequences, please skip to the start of Chapter Two now. You'll have a lot more fun that way.

Most of the material in this chapter assumes that the disaster — an earthquake triggered by a piece of ghostly debris — takes place in the crucible's city and that the players are interested in involving their characters. That doesn't have to be the case, of course. As the Storyteller, you're the only authority in regards to the events in your chronicle. If you would rather have the impact happen in a different city, you'll find some notes, further in, to help you. If any of the locations or details here are inconvenient for you, then change them around a bit. If you'd rather eliminate certain aspects altogether, that's fine too. It's your game.

Whether or not you decide to stick with the quake as portrayed, you'll find a whole wealth of information to make your life as easy as possible. The "Background" section gives you some perspective on the impact and where the debris came from. "Heaven's Spear" details how events unfold, from before anything happens right up until the National Guard pulls out weeks later... unless the crucible does something to alter matters. System notes and other details are all in "Technicalities." A whole host of supporting characters and things with which the characters may need to interact are showcased in "Enter the Crucible." The fifth section, "The Tower," covers the actual layout and content of both the ghostly building and the physical epicenter of the blast. Finally, "Aftermath" indicates what's likely to happen as the city pulls itself back together.

NOTE: While this event has little to do with Uriah Bishop, it's important to understand Bishop's role in matters. In short, Bishop heads a pigment cult called the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost. The cults detailed in **Shades of Gray** are under the secret aegis of the Missionary Works through the other Flatliner convicts who run them. Bishop is also the principle antagonist in matters right now. He was responsible for hiring NextWorld to destroy Orpheus Group; he maintains an alliance with Spectres, as mentioned in Chapter Two; and he instructed the Spectre riding Squib to poison

pigment shipments in **Crusade of Ashes**. That means any Flatliners allied with Bishop (Ethan Torrance) or any Missionary Works cultists in this story are relatively safe from Spectres.

BACKGROUND

Spectres are a complete mystery to the great majority of projectors. Most people barely know about Spectres, and those that do have enough to worry about. Just the thought that these silent monstrosities may appear anywhere to wreak havoc is frightening. What few people know is that Spectres have a home far from the living world. There is a ghostly realm intertwined with our own, as close to us as the gap between atoms, yet as inaccessible as the furthest stars. Well, most of the time, anyway. It's a place of pure spirit, beyond the reach of physical beings. This realm is called the Underworld, and it is hell.

It wasn't always that way, however. Just a few years ago, the Underworld was home to a mighty civilization of the dead and discarnate. Only a small percentage of the world's deceased found themselves there. They were too attached to the lives they left behind to accept passing on to their final reward, whatever that would be. Vast numbers of humans die every minute, however, and the Underworld was populous. The dead had cities and armies and rulers, a whole existence after life.

Then, something went wrong.

There was a terrible disaster, and if any ghosts survived those days, they are keeping silent on the matter. The result was brutal, however. The Underworld was devastated, the residents destroyed, the civilizations scoured out of existence. A world-devouring titanic storm, one beyond any human experience, rages there now. The winds are razor-sharp with sand and debris, and the air is so thick that vision is often useless, even if it were somehow possible to avoid being swept up into the Maelstrom. Only the Spectres and their kin endure, and every moment they spend there is a nightmare of torment.

Fortunately, the mortal world has little to fear from the Maelstrom and its hungry ghosts. A spiritual barrier keeps the storm and the Spectres at bay. The Stormwall is the living world's protection, a shroud preventing the destructive fury of the Underworld from flooding in and overwhelming the living. Mighty as it is, however, the Stormwall is not utterly impenetrable. There's a lot of Underworld debris caught up in the Maelstrom, and some of the pieces are large indeed.

This story involves one of these chunks, a tower that's been ripped from its foundations by the ravaging winds, that is propelled with such velocity that it tears through the normally resilient Stormwall. Somehow, it

punches a hole in the sky above the city, carrying in its wake a cloud of Spectres and just the smallest hint of the furious Maelstrom. The tower hits the ground with such force that the shockwave utterly vaporizes spirits in the vicinity and even causes a physical earthquake — which is the starting point for **Shadow Games** (though characters can certainly witness the “meteor” strike... from a safe distance).

This intrusion is a disaster and not just because of the physical damage and the resulting deaths. The presence of a gigantic new hive of Spectres in the city should terrify any projector. Just because the crash was catastrophic, however, it doesn't necessarily mean that it was accidental. There are several ways the tower might have penetrated the Stormwall.

FORCES IN MOTION

Bear in mind that the Stormwall isn't actually a visible “wall” or spiritual battlement. It's like an invisible mist, pervasive and encompassing, but one that prevents one from easily stepping sideways from one world to the other.

The most obvious reason why the tower might have pierced the Stormwall is because of its kinetic energy. The tower is huge and weighs a tremendous amount. In the Maelstrom, it could easily reach speeds in excess of 400 or 500 miles per hour. If it slams through a weakened portion of the Stormwall at just the right angle, it could quite easily rip through. This is the primary reason why ghostly micrometeors sometimes impact the living world as well.

Not every possibility is so innocent, however. The tower is not significantly unique from Underworld architecture and design, yet the real world does not suffer from continual bombardment. It could be that a particularly dedicated group of Spectres, desperate to escape their prison, found a means to direct the tower. Working together from inside the structure, perhaps they piloted the building through the Stormwall and into our world. Conversely, Spectres have shown signs of working on behalf of a “greater” agency. Perhaps this controller is taking an active hand in matters and exerting itself in ripping the Stormwall apart for as long as it could. The tower then might be a bridgehead, and the invading Spectres simply the vanguard of a larger host waiting to fall on the mortal realm.

There's also the chance that other forces were involved. The Underworld is almost a repository of sorts, and some of its artifacts are incredibly powerful — some even possess a degree of self-will still because, in the lands beyond the Stormwall, one form of artifact comes from forging fellow ghosts into items as punishment (or just for cruelty). Maybe the tower houses an item of great power that now seeks to place itself back in the game, for good or for ill.

HEAVEN'S SPEAR

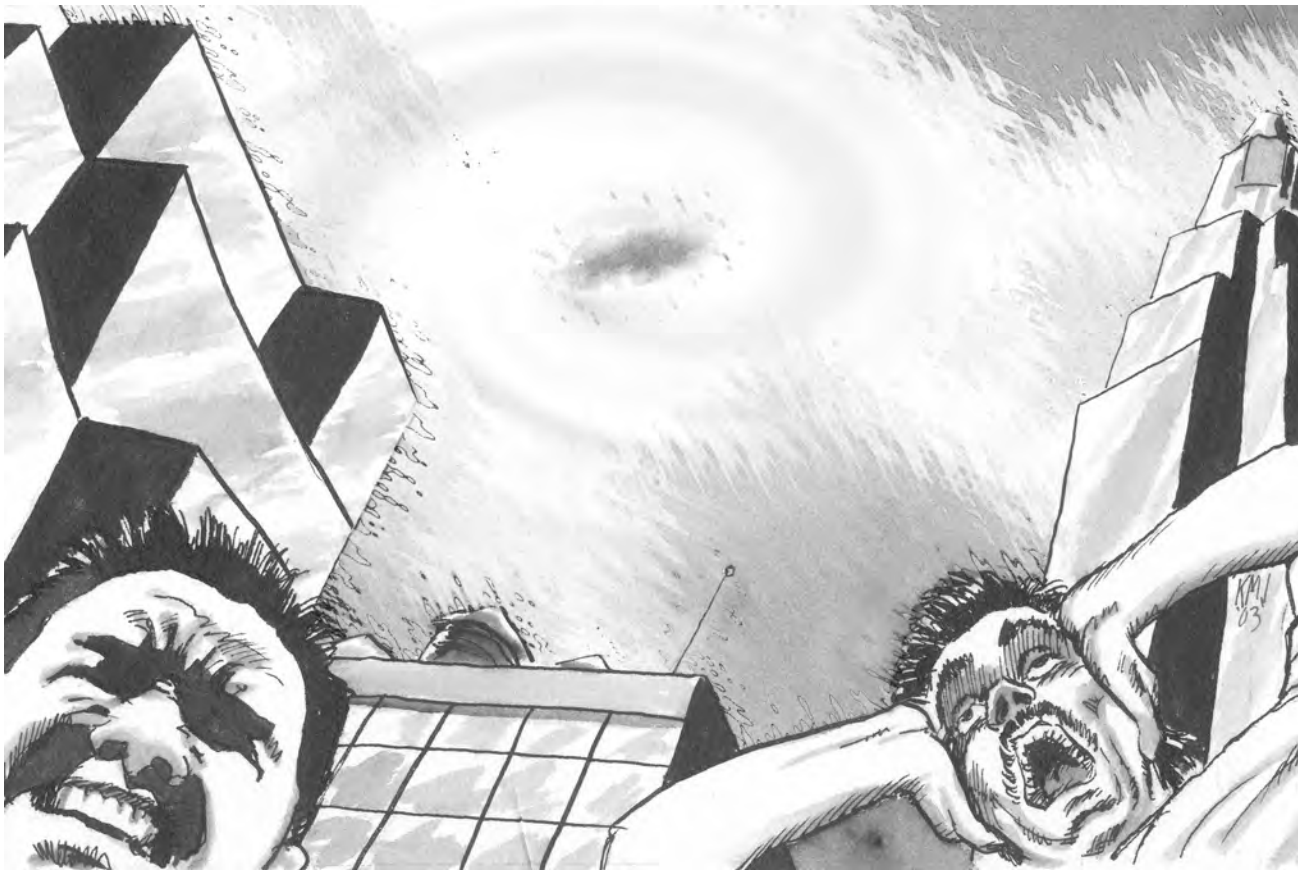
At 2:26 PM on Wednesday afternoon, a gigantic screeching noise echoes across the city, like a million fingernails being dragged down the largest blackboard in existence. Although it's clearly distant, it drowns out all other sound, and it is entirely spiritual. Projectors, ghosts, pigment users on a high and other sensitives can hear it as clearly as though it's happening next door, but no one else is aware of it.

Moments later, there's a thunderous crash, and any projector looking up into the sky sees a bright flash that lights up the horizon from one compass point to its opposite. The few peering in the right direction see shockwaves that emanate outward from a single point in the sky, briefly disturbing the clouds. A blurred streak of darkness causes the shockwave, as the tower hurtles down toward the city. It isn't possible to make out its details with it moving so quickly. At the same time, a huge cloud of thick dust descends, blown into whorls and eddies by the tower's passage.

Seconds later, a huge ghostly explosion melts into the rumbling roar of a very physical earthquake, which lasts for about a minute. The whole city grinds to a shocked halt, the ground lurches, and pictures leap from walls. The epicenter is a business district. In fact, the tower impales itself through two adjacent buildings, like an askance crossbar on the letter “H.” It's not the buildings' structures that stop the meteor, but the buffered resonance that prevents ghosts from unwillingly falling through floors. The buildings catch and hold the tower in place, and while mortals can neither see nor feel it, it's as solid an obstruction for ghosts as the two normal buildings are for the living.

The tower's impact creates a localized quake, which in turn, damages the surrounding buildings. The two buildings survive along with the tower, but surrounding buildings collapse under the stress, and fires erupt throughout the region.

Things are worse still for local ghosts. The tower's impact causes a huge shockwave that tears through the city, wreaking havoc. It knocks every ghost and discarnate projector in the city flat on her back, stunning them for minutes in some cases. Spirits within 100 yards of the impact site receive 16 levels of lethal damage. Only a lucky (and sheltered) few in the area survive. Most are vaporized instantaneously. Between 100 and 200 yards from the impact site, the damage is halved to eight levels of lethal damage. Surviving skimmers find themselves back in their bodies, propelled by the explosion, though there's no extra damage associated with that. Over 200 yards out, up to a mile from the epicenter, spooks suffer



eight levels of bashing damage. The event dazes survivors for the better part of 10 minutes, and many have difficulty hearing for at least half an hour (difficulties related to listening increase by three).

Physical projectors, active pigment users and sensitives within the city all feel the explosion's force, though it doesn't cause them any real harm. There's a sudden fleeting sensation of crushing pressure and violent heat, which evaporates almost as soon as folks notice it. As for mortals within the greater blast radius of a mile, the shockwave is intense enough that it physically staggers them like a blow. These folks have difficulty collecting their thoughts for a minute or two, though they later blame the effect on the quake (knowing nothing of the falling tower). Every mortal in the area, and every sensitive in the city, also receives a nasty little headache for a few hours. Petty concerns such as headaches are banished very quickly, however.

Then, the fun begins....

EVENTS RUN RIOT

The preceding events will happen with or without the characters' help. After the initial blast, however, Storytellers can throw characters into any of the subsequent proceedings, involving them in any of the related stories. The following section details matters as they

unfold. All relate to the disaster, and though this section progresses through each step from beginning to end, we polished the details so Storytellers know where best to place characters. The events all assume some level of character interaction.

THE FIRST 30 MINUTES

It's a hellish scene in the four blocks surrounding the epicenter. Agonized screams of pain, terror and anguish interweave with the rumble of falling masonry, car-wrenching collisions when drivers lose control and the dull whump of explosions. Wherever one looks, buildings sag, crumble or collapse completely. There are huge cracks in the roads and sidewalks, some large enough to be called pits. Pieces of rubble litter the streets. The whole area stinks of oil, dust and sewage, and beneath it all, the stench of blood steadily increases, a hot, coppery smell that sticks in the back of your throat. Meanwhile, fires blast up from all corners, threatening the buildings that survived unscathed. Injured victims and corpses lie throughout the streets, blood pooling around them from all the flying stone and glass. It's more than anyone can easily comprehend. And at the center of the devastation lie two buildings, somehow still standing tall and erect. For those who can see the dead, however, a tower stolen from history and twisted into something ominous and

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Given the amount of information present in the following section, this timeline offers a quick, easily referenced synopsis of events over the first four days. Those entries in *italics* are predominantly supernatural in nature. The times indicated are also generally rounded off to provide Storytellers with some leeway.

Day One

2:26 PM Heaven's Spear strikes the ground, resulting in an earthquake.

2:30 PM Police cruisers arrive on scene to help people.

2:35-2:40 PM Ambulances, fire engines and other emergency services personnel and vehicles arrive, along with various news agencies.

2:40-3:10 PM Spectres sweep through the area, capturing ghosts and dragging them back to the tower.

2:45 PM Quick-thinking looters move through the area, stealing what they can.

3:20 PM The Office of Emergency Management assumes full control of the situation, directing current efforts. Nearby hospitals establish a medical pavilion to handle emergency triage.

4:25 PM Out-of-city units arrive to help with the disaster. A crisis assessment team with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) arrives.

5:50 PM The National Guard arrives and announces dusk-to-dawn curfews.

6:00 PM Seismological teams arrive to study the anomalous earthquake.

6:30 PM Cultists arrive to "study" the epicenter, but authorities bar them entry.

Dusk+ Lazarus Redux and affiliated spooks arrive, in force and unseen, to help ghosts contend with the Spectres and to study the tower. The night becomes a running battle.

Day Two

Morning The Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security assumes control of crisis management in tandem with the OEM.

10:30 AM Spectres sweep out from the tower and launch attacks against spooks. The battle is heated, but eventually, Lazarus Redux must withdraw and regroup.

10:50 AM *Lazarus Redux and allied spooks establish a base of operations in a building just outside the cordoned-off areas. From here, they launch forays and ambush parties against the Spectres.*

12:05 PM A team of rescue workers is badly hurt or killed when a wall mysteriously collapses atop it. This is but one bit of mayhem caused by the Spectres.

2:00 PM A desperate woman claims to have received a vision that her mother is dying in one of the impaled office towers. The National Guard finds nothing.

3:00 PM A gas main believed to be shut down ruptures. The explosion collapses another building and causes several new fires.

5:00 PM The storm finally dies down.

10:00 PM Workers rescue a young boy from the rubble, boosting everyone's flagging spirits.

1:15 AM Authorities find a young man still living in the cordoned off area, prompting the National Guard to conduct more sweeps of the site at dawn.

3:00 AM The Spectres spread out from the tower and begin establishing hives in the office towers and adjoining buildings

Day Three

Dawn The National Guard sweeps the epicenter blocks and nets 12 stragglers.

10:00 AM Fifteen volunteers and rescue workers walk off the job for reasons unknown.

11:00 AM Firefighters douse the last of the blazes, though smoldering fires remain scattered under piles of debris.

2:00 AM Spectres attack two workers, collapsing the rubble beneath them and crushing them under debris.

3:20 AM Uriah Bishop's chief enforcer, Ethan Torrance, along with two allied spooks, arrives at the tower to retrieve artifacts. One Reaper attacks them and is quickly beset by other Spectres protecting Torrance.

4:50 AM A Spectre causes the death of transient, Lucie Simich, before inhabiting her at the moment of death. As a Jason, Simich stalks other stragglers in the area.

Day Four

Dawn Work crews search for missing rescue workers, but with no success. This prompts the National Guard to increase its presence in the quarantined zone.

11:00 AM The National Guard and the police increase the area of the quarantine to disperse the gathering cultists and push them further from the epicenter.

12:00 PM After the media misconstrues a scientist's statements, FEMA announces that all statements concerning the quake or clean-up efforts are to be issued by FEMA alone.

2:00 PM Workers hear a weak voice beneath the rubble, but after a half-hearted attempt to dig, they assume it's another trick and continue to dig with heavy machinery.

3:30 PM A seismologist announces to the press that the scientific community still doesn't know what instigated the quake.

3:30 PM The National Guard rescinds the curfew in all areas but the epicenter.

3:45 PM Homeland Security sends in projectors to investigate the area. They discover the tower and launch the first of many forays to retrieve artifacts from the tower.

Night The Spectres increase their hold over the area and consolidate their positions within the two blocks surrounding the tower.

Night Two groups of cultists sneak into the quarantined area to indulge in pigment and have a look around.

3:40 AM A guardsman mistakes a colleague for a terrorist and empties a clip into him.

macabre impales both office buildings. It is partially metal and partially mortar, with bits of other buildings somehow entrapped in its architecture, almost a mosaic of different eras.

Within moments of the quake's end, terrified survivors flood out of the buildings, some fleeing the epicenter, some curious as to the cause. They're all dazed and shocked, and many are screaming, crying or both. Quite a few are wounded, and the sight of all that blood further traumatizes the crowd. Everyone seems to be in various states of panic, and no one really knows what to do. There's a lot of running around, and some crowds accidentally trample the injured on the streets. The pleas for help are heart-wrenching. The collapsed buildings are worse, the screams and moans issuing forth from beneath the rubble horrifying. Some individuals find the strength or wherewithal to band together and pull people free, but they don't get very far. Most survivors are too traumatized to consider anyone's concerns but their own and shy away from the destruction.

The police arrive first. Within five minutes of the quake, cruisers thread their way past traffic jams, into the area, moving in as far as they can. The horrified officers can barely restore order and start by directing the panicked crowds capable of walking to move out of the area. Some refuse to leave, of course, desperate to find missing loved ones or to retrieve some possessions. The first wave of officers must leave them be for the moment. Their efforts relate to keeping the majority of people as calm as possible, to moving them out of the district and to identifying those most in need of medical attention.

Ambulances, fire engines and sizeable police reinforcements turn up after 10 minutes. The first arrivals help with crisis management — paramedics and firemen deal with the critically injured and the most urgent blazes respectively. The police, meanwhile, mobilize the fit survivors into a volunteer force to assist. They then nervously go through the standing buildings, their main aim to clear the area completely, so everyone fit and healthy is out of the district and the injured are found and either helped to ambulances or flagged for stretcher aid.

Not all new arrivals are beneficial to the situation, however. The local reporters arrive within 10 to 15 minutes of the quake, all hellbent on reaching the center of the action so they can scoop the most dramatic footage. They film the injured, photograph the traumatized, interview emergency personnel who are trying to save lives and get good, solid "human-interest" shots like a doll half-crushed in the rubble or a terrified old man leaning out the window of a burning building, screaming for assistance. What they *don't* want is to leave the area and let the professionals help the victims without dis-

traction. The reporters spend significant time dodging police teams, hiding in crowds and working their way through the buildings and offices at the heart of the quake. Some reporters even create drama if they can't find something suitable.

Others are just as bad. A few criminally minded opportunists quickly realize that an area in chaos is easy pickings. Several small gangs of scofflaws — 14 people in total, in groups of three and four — swiftly make their way to the scene, the first reaching the district within 20 minutes. They're not really interested in the offices, though a few enterprising thieves will focus on high-end office computers. Most hit the area's shops and businesses.

The first phase of attack targets cash registers, electronics and jewelry stores and businesses likely to have portable computers and other goodies. The gangs slip in under the cover of the chaos and then hide from police and other members of the emergency services searching the buildings. Some are armed and prepared to defend their loot. The police, however, don't have time to worry about goods yet, and the pillaging is surreptitiously ignored in favor of saving the injured. It doesn't take long for most crooks to slink off with a nice haul, only to be replaced with fellow thieves who are slower on the uptake.

THE FIRST HOUR

Within an hour, the Office of Emergency Management coordinates all emergency services personnel in the city, helping to bring the situation under better control. Police cordon off four blocks surrounding the epicenter and escort most survivors out of the area. In an adjoining block, the nearby hospitals establish an emergency medical pavilion to handle the walking wounded and emergency triage cases (stabilizing them before sending them to the hospitals). Many reporters are forced to make due with covering the event from behind police lines, their numbers swelling rapidly as more crews arrive, with better equipment, news vans and more persistent reasons as to why they should be allowed to get underfoot. The police officer in charge of the scene, Lieutenant Joseph Silber, remains unmoved by their pleas.

Initial surveys make for grim reading. It's a weekday afternoon. Many people were at work, and there are many casualties. Initial estimates put the dead at over 200, and the wounded at several hundred. Five buildings collapsed completely, and many more suffered partial collapses or are in danger of tumbling. Fires are spread out over a dozen different locations, and the fire department is trying to contain blazes rather than to put them out, at least for the moment. Some blazes spread despite the best efforts of fire-fighting teams, and the smoke is adding to the dust and the smell, casting a pall over the whole city. Teams now work on collapsed buildings,

moving chunks of rubble under the direction of expert fire-service engineers. The screams and panicked wails have died down a little, but it's too early to tell whether it's because people are exhausted or dead. Grim-faced volunteers that emergency services personnel rounded up are helping to search for survivors.

THE FIRST HOUR: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

On the hereafter side of things, the situation is more chaotic. Within seconds of the impact, a gigantic storm of Maelstrom effluvia blankets the area and races outward, covering the city within minutes. Ghosts and disincorporate projectors near the epicenter must take shelter, and even within buildings, the dust reduces visibility to a poor few dozen feet. Sensitives, including physical projectors, are effectively blinded, their spirit sight caught in the brief storm. Dozens of Spectres use the cover of the tower's fall and the ensuing storm to spiral down from the rapidly sealing tear in the Stormwall. They head straight for the tower and quickly occupy it.

Bad as the dust storm is for local ghosts, it's an absolute paradise compared to the Maelstrom afflicting the Underworld. Within moments of arriving, new Spectres start spreading out into the immediate area. There are plenty of new, confused ghosts around, and the Spectres prey on and poach those who don't hide quickly enough, dragging them off into the tower, their screams adding to the wail of the living victims. Once the obvious areas are picked clean, which takes about 30 minutes, the Spectres retreat to consolidate their position. Only the frenzied, ghostly shrieks issuing forth from the tower offer any clues as to the Spectres' location.

Although the storm blinds projectors, it also has an unpleasant effect on less perceptive mortals. Everyone within four blocks of the epicenter is nervous, their tempers running high. People who had close brushes with death — those with the potential to project — feel sick to the pits of their stomachs and develop strong headaches. Emergency personnel attribute this to stress, shock and trauma.

The event also adversely affects dogs and cats, who become irritable and listless. The storm remains visible to all those who can see it. Occasionally, a long funnel-shaped whirlwind descends upon the quake's epicenter. It churns a cloud of Maelstrom dust up all over the city, gumming up everyone's sight. Over the hour, it gradually sinks and shrinks from the top down. Just the sight of it makes projectors and sensitives uneasy, for reasons they can't really explain.

THE FIRST THREE HOURS

After two hours, the first out-of-city units arrive to lend assistance. Nearby towns send personnel that they

can spare to help out with the situation, swelling the ranks of the emergency personnel. A crisis-assessment team from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA; the Department of Homeland Security) also arrives to assess the situation and deliver a report to the federal authorities.

The reporters have made their own encampment, away from the injured and evacuated, where the police can keep an eye on them as well as keep them contained. The breaking headlines are carefully lurid, of course. "HORROR AND FURY AS QUAKE SLAYS DOZENS" remains the dominant theme with the ladies and gentlemen of the fourth estate.

Although the Office of Emergency Management controls the efforts, the OEM's director leaves Lieutenant Silber in charge of local police (with an OEM liaison advising him, since Silber has been on-site from the T plus one minute). Reinforcements allow Lieutenant Silber to marshal a more coordinated response to the disaster over the next several hours. The fire department brings the fires under control slowly, with one or two of the smaller ones already extinguished. The larger blazes may require the entire evening, however.

By now, the professional criminals (while still active) have given way to small bands of amateur looters. The police give chase whenever possible, now that they can focus their attention on law enforcement or on cordoning off areas. Construction teams and engineers are helping with the collapsed buildings, clearing debris and working alongside medical personnel to pull survivors from the rubble. Most of the area's shops and businesses have been picked clean of cash and easily portable valuables, and the assorted kids, junkies and other thieves turn to local domestic properties to try to find a score.

Medical personnel remove the last of the seriously injured (not trapped beneath rubble) from the cordoned area, dispatching them to neighboring hospitals. The dead are also bagged and removed to a secure location for later identification. Despite police efforts to keep this gruesome stage quiet and respectful of the dead and their families, an enterprising camera crew manages to shoot some grainy footage of a deceased elderly couple being removed from a crushed car. They then follow this with several shots of bagged bodies lined in rows, carefully filming the deceased from ground level so as to suggest great numbers, while a breathless anchor talks about the horror.

Perhaps more uplifting, the media also delights in covering the removal of the first survivors from a collapsed building. Although rescuers retrieved several people from shallow locations in the rubble during the first hour after the quake, it takes over two hours to

retrieve the first completely buried survivor. The rescuers pull a middle-aged woman from under a partly braced concrete support. She suffers from severe shock and a crushed leg, but her prognosis is excellent, and all the rescue workers are heartened by her retrieval. Six more people follow in the hours until darkness.

THE FIRST SIX HOURS

Over three hours after the quake hits, at 5:50 PM, the National Guard arrives. It announces a city-wide curfew starting at dusk, and quickly steps in to heighten security in and around the cordon, ruthlessly contending with looters. Anyone found in the area is summarily arrested and held for further questioning at a more convenient time. A few particularly foolish looters open fire or flee the Guard, who guns them down without a shred of mercy.

Unknown to the police and guardsmen, several stubborn, elderly or frightened residents in apartment buildings bordering or within the cordoned area resist evacuation. Most of these isolated individuals plan to stay until someone drags them out or until their supplies run out.

Behind the scenes, the OEM and FEMA are very keen to discover how a quake could hit with no warning whatsoever, particularly away from known fault lines (if the city, is in fact, supposedly “safe” from such events). Unfortunately, initial findings leave the researchers with more questions than answers. The event itself destroyed several buildings, a feat requiring a quake of at least 6.2 on the Richter scale. Seismographs, however, only measured a shock of 4.6. Furthermore, there are absolutely no aftershocks. Seismographs measure some quakes up to a dozen times over as they ripple around the world, and the absence of any further activity is extremely peculiar. The scientists are left confused and appear (at least in the eyes of the mayor’s office) incompetent. Seismologists and geological research teams quickly assemble portable equipment so that they can conduct surveys at the epicenter itself. They start arriving by 6:00 PM.

THE FIRST SIX HOURS: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

There are many sensitive individuals in the city who can perceive ghosts to some degree. A few make their way to the area almost immediately, drawn by the effects accompanying the crash. Most join the volunteer teams, making no mention of any discomfort caused by the ghost storm or of the ethereal screams issuing forth from the center of the district. Just before sunset however, a sizeable band of cultists affiliated with the Church of the Children of the Angelic Host (among others) arrives at the cordoned-off area, asking for admission. When the police

OUR HEROES, THE CHARACTERS

While there are any number of activities available for them to pursue, including contending with Spectres, the characters can emerge from this event as heroes if they help with rescue efforts. (This is assuming the authorities aren’t still hunting the crucible.) Characters with Helter Skelter, Inhabit or Juggernaut, for example, can displace rubble quickly and safely. Those with Forebode can try to use their Horror to locate survivors trapped in collapsed buildings, while Pandemonium can affect the probabilities that crews actually find survivors. Wail and Unearthly Repose are perfect powers to help calm panicked folks, while Contaminate can ease the suffering of victims. That’s not to mention how the characters might help newly formed ghosts deal with their situation or become insubstantial to search the rubble for pockets and gaps that hide survivors. Regardless of how they do it, helping in such a visible manner propels the characters to heroic status in the public eye, possibly netting them a future Good Samaritan award or medal.

refuse, the cultists draw back a short distance and wait patiently, seemingly resigned to the fact that they’ll be there for some time.

The cultists are quite a boon for news-starved reporters. Most of the cultists stand impassively around the cordoned area, looking in toward the epicenter. They don’t chat amongst themselves, move around or even blink very much. A few are happy to speak with the media, however, and are perfectly open about their beliefs. Only one or two explain to anyone who asks about the spectral effects accompanying the quake, the gigantic storm blinding their inner eyes and the voices they hear coming from the epicenter — voices, they claim, raised in thankful praise. Reporters gleefully portray the cultists as total nutcases, but they don’t seem to object or care in the slightest. Occasional, small bands gather around a particular sensitive and try making their way in toward the epicenter. Inevitably, a few succeed and become involved in extended sessions of hide-and-seek with the Guard and emergency services personnel. The cultists’ agenda is anyone’s guess.

By now, the storm isn’t as fierce, and the “tear” in the sky is completely gone. The resultant dust storm, however, has a mind and physics of its own, moving and affecting some areas, while leaving over places free of disturbances.

THE FIRST 12 HOURS

Night doesn’t substantially alter the situation. Rescue efforts continue by floodlight, as do National Guard patrols and firemen’s efforts to control the large blazes. Quite a few

people try using the cover of darkness to sneak into the area, however, from souvenir hunters to cultists to local residents trying to get home, resulting in a fresh rash of looting. The National Guard does a reasonable job of suppressing it, but some of the more cautious and patient looters manage to amass reasonable hauls. Several journalists manage to sneak in as well, drawn by the lure of burning buildings against a dark sky and other dramatic images. These media opportunists are little more than a nuisance, however. The National Guard and the police manage to stop most people at the cordon.

The emergency triage pavilion moves the last of its critically injured patients during the course of the night to neighboring hospitals and medical centers. A small group of paramedics remain behind with a trauma doctor and ambulances to help stabilize survivors and wounded firemen before sending them off for proper treatment. The pavilion's departure cuts down on the chaos in the area and facilitates the job of the volunteers manning the rest stations. The press immediately condemns the departure as a callous disregard for the hordes of trapped survivors.

The city houses those evacuated citizens with nowhere to go in temporary shelters in churches, school auditoriums and cheap hotels around the city. There are no outward signs of refugee-style encampments, and all the injured are safely stashed in the frenetic hospitals. There are three large rest stations bordering the cordon however, so rescue workers have cots to sleep on and hot food to invigorate their spirits. Volunteer numbers ebb and flow, but once word of the city's need for more volunteers reaches the major news providers, the constant arrival of fresh help outweigh the departures. Numbers swell just before dusk, and again at dawn when the curfew is lifted. Still, there are enough good-hearted citizens to help in any number of roles throughout the dark hours.

THE FIRST 12 HOURS: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

Ghostly activity is sporadically intense during the night. The storm is shrinking from the sky down, essentially settling like sediment in water. It still rages at street level, and it's not very pleasant to travel within. The local spooks that avoided the first wave of Spectre attacks are either escaping or trying to determine the nature of the tower. They can't approach it too closely, however. Visitors to the area have little chance of navigating successfully through the stinging, blinding clouds and fierce crosswinds. The Spectres are far less concerned about the storm, but most remain inside the tower anyway. A small number are out and about, exploring buildings and causing minor accidents for rescue workers if they can. A falling chunk of masonry here and

a sudden fire there are enough to keep rescuers on their toes... and whispering about curses and ghosts. Some rescuers even try to persuade their foremen to contact groups such as Lazarus Redux to look into the matter.

Lazarus Redux is already on-site, however, and in force. After gathering a sufficient force of projected entities and ghosts to help, it's moving unseen through the area, trying to help new ghosts, combat the Spectres and to find Craig Forest, who vanished in the area. Lazarus is also curious as to the nature of the tower but is careful in its attempts to approach the structure. Lazarus Redux will fail, unless it receives help from other groups... such as the crucible.

DAY TWO

By dawn, THE OEM announces the rescue of 10 individuals from the rubble and the removal of 38 bodies. Six patients also die of their wounds overnight, bringing the current death toll to 70, with several dozen people still unaccounted for. A joint police and Guard press conference also reports the capture of 18 looters. Industrial rubble-clearing machinery also arrives to help accelerate rescue efforts.

During an interview with Silber, the Lieutenant mistakenly admits that the nature of the earthquake is still causing some confusion. He's tired and lets slip a comment made by one seismologist studying the epicenter who claims that "it's almost like the quake was triggered by an explosion rather than tectonic activity." The media quickly prints the comment, leading folks to question whether the existence of "quake-bombs" is possible. It doesn't help that certain scientists openly state that the quake's early characteristics appear to be highly anomalous.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security swiftly steps in and "asks" the governor to allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency (in cooperation with the OEM, of course) full jurisdiction in handling the quake. The governor agrees, hoping cooperation with the feds means more emergency-relief funds in the pipeline. The Department of Homeland Security secretly sends field observers from its Science and Technology Directorate to determine if the quake was, in fact, an act of terrorism.

Fire control proceeds well over the course of the morning and the early afternoon. By midafternoon, only one fire remains, and the fire marshal expects the last one to give way soon. Unfortunately, the situation worsens shortly before 3:00 PM when a gas main believed to be secured ruptures and explodes, destroying two unoccupied buildings. The explosion starts several fires in the vicinity, and most crews immediately rush in to tackle the new

threat. By the time they can bring their hoses to bear, however, the new problem is quite deeply entrenched.

Into the evening, the press faces a rather tedious night for newsworthy content. Rescuers only pulled two survivors out during the day, and the journalists believe the public needs something into which their viewership can sink their teeth. When the seismological research teams depart for the night, refusing to answer any questions, the media decides that the evening's big story concerns the scientific community's failure to predict or identify the quake. The news channels trot out assorted talking heads and malcontents to attack tired researchers with furious barrages of insulting rhetoric. It helps to fill air time.

Ratings receive another boost when rescuers find a survivor at around 10:00 PM. The delightfully photogenic little boy survived by crawling into a load-bearing alcove when the earthquake started. Although he was trapped, he avoided injury and drank water trickling down through the rubble from a burst pipe. Everyone is charmed by his innocent description of eating spiders and bugs for food. FEMA (eager for a positive spin) and the media find his parents, dust them off and film the reunited family from all angles sobbing their delighted hearts out. By the following morning, the family receives almost \$140,000 in charitable donations from citizens countrywide, and there's talk of a book deal.

The National Guard beefs up its activity for the second night. Determined to reduce the number of people slipping through, it increases patrols and reacts more aggressively when it finds trespassers. There are still some fools who believe looting is worth the risk, particularly with the bars closed, but the Guard handles them easily enough. Most of the criminal element already knows to avoid the epicenter blocks and, instead, exploits the lack of police presence elsewhere in the city.

At around 1:15 AM, a group of rescue workers receive a shock when a gaunt, wild-eyed young man walks up to them wearing nothing but a pair of jockey shorts. He's incoherent, so it takes him a while to explain he's been in the area all along but only now ran out of medicine. The rescuers gently escort him out of the cordoned blocks and turn him over to bemused police officers. The press quickly seizes on the story of locals remaining hidden inside the cordoned-off area, living shadowy lives. The National Guard orders another sweep of the cordoned off area just in case, to start some time after dawn on the third day.

Nothing unpleasant happens to any of the rescue workers overnight. The general mood is extremely bleak, however, despite the rescue of the little boy. Most rescuers blame their surroundings for the depression and

mortality — the surrounding broken buildings are all oppressive, and the area smells of decay and death. Even professionals, used to such grim environments, feel mysteriously drained or oppressed. They all keep working, however, but there isn't much conversation, just unhappy determination and quiet efficiency. Some of the more superstitious workers blame the mood on ghosts, and a few talk openly about leaving... and fast.

DAY TWO: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

The presence of industrial machinery speeds work along steadily during the morning of the second day. As the morning progresses, however, rescue workers grow increasingly depressed and agitated, somehow unnerved by something they can't properly identify. The handful of sensitives helping emergency services personnel leave entirely, looking and feeling distinctly weak. Rescuers hear new, pleading voices buried deep in certain parts of the rubble, and efforts to reach the poor souls intensify. The media seizes on the potential tragedy, and news updates fill the airwaves with lurid guesses as to the likelihood that rescuers can reach the victims in time.

The ghost storm dies down considerable by 10:00 AM. It's no longer painfully blinding for ghosts and projectors in the area, though the air is still thick with dust and sand and a vile spectral tang of rotten fruit now pervades everything. More cautious ghosts are rewarded for their prudence when a wave of Spectres from the tower washes across the area at about 10:30 AM, combing the streets for ghostly victims. Several bold, and perhaps foolish, spirits are caught out in the open and dragged off to join the souls trapped in the tower. Although the Spectres concentrate on the area around the tower and the two anchoring buildings, they roam throughout the cordoned off sector. Lazarus Redux and its allies are in the thick of the fight, but after losing a couple of ghosts, they pull back beyond the cordons to regroup and recoup their strength. They establish a base of operations inside an office building outside the cordoned-off area. From here, they direct sorties and ambush parties into the quarantined area, destroying Spectres where possible.

Just before midday, a group of rescue workers tries digging its way down to the weak, young voice heard earlier. A large section of masonry crushes the group, however, killing two outright and badly injuring the remaining three. The horrified workers all insist they clearly heard the pleading voice turn to an evil chuckle just before the wall collapsed. FEMA manages to keep the men quiet about the matter, but rumors surge through the volunteer and rescue forces like wildfire.



They aren't the only ones relating odd tales. Word has it that a policewoman barely avoided death when an electric cable came alive on a quiet sidewalk and snaked toward her, trying to jab her with the live end. No one can corroborate the story or the officer's identity, however. Another rumor making the rounds says that two emergency services personnel were surveying a building when a wall quite clearly told them in a menacing, demonic voice to run away. While the National Guard remains well-disciplined and refrains from idle rumormongering, it too seems noticeably subdued and wary.

Naturally, the press picks up on these rumors, and though it doesn't derive much mileage from them, it does reference little snippets. Self-proclaimed cult members happily tell the nation that angry ghosts are causing these problems because of the sudden and brutal manner in which they died. Cult members suggest making little offerings to the ghosts to help pacify them, be it offerings of food, alcoholic beverages or fake money.

For the most part, however, the cultists merely hang around the cordon when it isn't curfew, staring silently and impassively at the epicenter. Although most can't

see anything, the few who indulge in pigment relate their visions to their brethren. More cultists arrive, many from out of state. The rescue workers find their presence unsettling, and even the National Guard is a little uncomfortable. There are plenty of other onlookers and media present though, who help to lighten the impact of the cultists. These range from bored, jaded suburbanites with nothing better to do than to hope for something titillating, right through to would-be volunteers. The OEM teams have everyone they need and pleasantly turn away extras.

A fuss erupts at a small checkpoint at around 2:00 PM. The National Guard catches a tear-stained young woman trying to sneak into the area. She immediately turns violently hysterical, insisting that her mother, who is still on the list of missing people, is close to death on the top floor of one of the epicenter buildings. The daughter is convinced that she's the only one who can save her mother and that she must reach her immediately. She insists she has a crystal-clear vision of her mother, pleading for urgent assistance. An unhappy guardsman checks the building, but paramedics sedate the daughter regardless. No one is

particularly surprised when the guardsman reports that there's no one in the building.

After the gas main ruptures at 3:00 PM, several wild rumors circulate concerning the source of the explosion. The most popular is that nearby rescue workers heard a hollow wail that muttered threats and obscenities near the building shortly before it collapsed. More rational rescue workers quickly point out that no one was actually in the street when the gas main exploded, so there's no way any "witnesses" were present to hear the mutterings. Weary fire crews stoically ignore the speculation and settle in for another long, tiring night.

By 5:00 PM, the ghost dust settles enough that the area is now visible again, if not a little misty from the churning storm. The tower is a stark new addition to the district's skyline, having embedded itself through two office buildings like a thick spear or extreme Leaning Tower of Pisa. Spooks and sensitives can see much of it from across the city, its outline wavering through the orange haze.

Although most projectors and self-aware ghosts in the city heard something crash into ground, only some knew that the mysterious meteorite was a tower. The possibility of finding usable tools and artifacts within the building is a powerful lure, and several individuals converge on the area as sunset approaches. The presence of so many Spectres comes as a nasty surprise. A pair of high-vitality spirits head off to the tower, damn the risks, for a look. When they return, however, they deny finding anything interesting. Whether caution or honesty motivate their claims, they tell others that they couldn't track down the source of the screams. Other spooks quickly decide against penetrating the tower, but those who do quickly vanish.

By 3:00 AM, Spectres have fully explored both office buildings that the tower penetrated, and they have a good working knowledge of the entire area. They spread out from the offices slowly, taking over the surviving buildings immediately around them. On a spiritual level, the office blocks start looking extremely obnoxious. The walls drip with ichor, and the Spectres build a couple of bulging nests within the maze of rooms and cubicle farms. The tower itself still looks the same as when it arrived, untouched (on the outside, at least) by any hint of spectral decay. Lazarus Redux, meanwhile, attempts limited forays into the area, in the hopes of gauging the tower's purpose and the best way to attack so many Spectres. To succeed, however, it needs more troops.

DAY THREE

There's the usual shift change of volunteers shortly after dawn, but people's dark moods remain, almost manifesting with their arrival at the disaster site. One

young reporter also claims, rather wildly, that some of the cultists aren't moving from their spots whatsoever when curfew breaks. She insists some return to their exact spots and stand steadfast, watching until dusk curfew, neither shifting nor eating. Her colleagues ignore her.

The National Guard launches a sweep of the epicenter, to find stragglers such as the young man discovered last night. The Guard's dawn raid surprises a few squatters, resulting in 12 arrests.

Shortly after 10:00 AM, a mixed group of individuals offer their regrets and leave the site. There are 15 in all: volunteer rescue workers, rest-station assistants, police officers, construction workers and, strangely, a camera crew. Some people mutter darkly about the apparent defection, but the remaining volunteers view the sudden mass departure stoically, if not with drained disinterest. A short while later, everyone is heartened by the news that the fire fighters managed to extinguish all the fires, including yesterday's late additions. It doesn't significantly dispel anyone's depression, but it does help make matters more bearable.

The collapsed buildings are still a mess, but rescuers carefully search the top layers of rubble. The chances of finding survivors, however, are dropping rapidly. Although workers use heavy equipment to remove the rubble, each site still has people and dogs listening carefully for voices. Throughout the day, work repeatedly slows after someone hears faint screams, pleas or the rhythmic taps of Morse code. Nobody can verify the sounds, however, and the confused monitors grow dispirited quickly. When someone mentions ghosts screwing around with the rescue teams, everyone's hair stands on end. It's all too believable in this dispiriting atmosphere.

The rescue and recovery efforts settle into a routine, the lively chaos of the first two days giving way to quieter, more sterile order. After having so much happening, the relative peace adds to many people's unease. Surveyors patiently inspect buildings on a street-by-street basis, checking which to condemn and which can be reoccupied later. It's slow going, and many buildings will have to be torn down. There are also many researchers still in the area, looking for clues as to the earthquake's cause. They run tests, take readings and grow increasingly baffled.

Around lunchtime, the major networks pull their heavy hitters back, replacing experienced anchors with junior reporters. The disaster and recovery efforts are now "pedantic," and the veterans are better used elsewhere. What the new reporters lack in polished manipulation, they make up for with raw ambition and

bloody ruthlessness. Some are interested enough by the strange rumors to actually poke around, asking questions and looking for something controversial to give them that all-important profile boost.

The afternoon passes “quietly.” The rescue teams don’t find any clear signs of trapped survivors, just a baffling sense that something’s wrong. They feel jumpy throughout the day. None of the team leaders are particularly keen on pressing their men during the night again. They speak to their superiors, but the OEM refuses to scale back operations until it’s certain nobody else survived. The night crews remain, listening for possible survivors, excavating buildings and remaining on guard against strange accidents and misleading voices.

The National Guard continues patrolling the quarantine zone and the city at large. Aside from the floodlights on wrecked buildings and the occasional National Guard patrol jeep, the zone is pitch black. There’s a horrible sense of isolation for the night crews, out of sight of each other, their backs to a malevolent darkness. The area is eerie in its weighted silence, and all the stories that seemed silly during the day assume a new significance at night. The cloying stench of decay, an unwelcome reminder of death and mortality, adds a certain menace.

DAY THREE: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

On the supernatural front, the day is relatively quiet, except for the occasional accident or distant voice calling for help. At 2:00 AM, however, two members of a night crew at a small rubble site are sitting on a fallen post, chatting about sports, women — anything to keep the night at bay — while on a coffee break. The younger of the two, Bob Wilson, is in the middle of a lengthy sports diatribe about the Packers when a noise from the rubble below him stops him dead. Suddenly, a large patch of broken stone and metal girders slide straight down into a previously undiscovered pit. Both men tumble in. The sides of the pit cave in, crushing Bob into his colleague, Ryan Donnelly. The collapse is quick and almost silent. No one notices anything out of the ordinary, except for the Spectre responsible for the tragedy.

Other Spectres spread further out from the epicenter. Their patient take-and-consolidate pattern suggests they are claiming territory and expecting resistance along the way. Certainly, the advance is steady in all directions, though Lazarus Redux assaults force the Spectres into temporary redoubts. Meanwhile, behind the Spectre’s slowly advancing front lines, small groups flit around on obscure missions, seemingly comfortable in their possession of the territory.

STRANGE THINGS

The attack of the Reaper is not the only time Spectres seem to suddenly shift gears and either hinder allies or help enemies. In fact, should the characters find themselves in heated combat, and overwhelmed, it is feasible that one or two attacking Spectres suddenly switch sides, attacking their brethren and affording the crucible an avenue of escape. Afterward, they seemingly return to their senses and either attack the crucible again or fall to their irate brethren. The reason why this occurs is a mystery for this book — but it’s also a revelation to be revealed shortly.

A little after 3:20 AM, Uriah Bishop’s chief enforcer, Flatliner Ethan Torrance, and two allied spooks arrive at the epicenter via Storm-Wending. They head straight for the tower, where the Spectres allow them passage. They vanish within and reemerge 45 minutes later carrying several potentially useful trinkets, such as sharp pieces of metal to serve as ghostly knives. As Torrance and his cohorts emerge, a lone Reaper drops upon them and attacks ferociously. Despite the Reaper’s best efforts, the Flatliner holds it off, while other Spectres swarm in and tear it to shreds. The visitors then depart, somewhat ruffled but, otherwise, unharmed. Lazarus Redux has one high-Vitality ally in the area who witnesses the encounter.

At 4:50 AM, a bitter, eccentric old transient named Lucie Simich, who quietly hides within the cordon, wakes up to find a glowing beast of smoke lurking at the foot of her sleeping bag. Its eyes are fiery pits that seemingly lead straight down to Hell. The shock and fear induce a cardiac arrest, and as she slips toward death, the Spectre seizes control of her body. It then settles back down to sleep — and waits patiently.

DAY FOUR

Dawn brings the realization that two rescue workers, Bob Wilson and Ryan Donnelly, are missing, when they fail to turn up for shift change. Police and rescue workers pour over the collapsed building, but find nothing save for Ryan’s half-eaten sandwiches sitting on a flat stone. After trying to contact Bob’s and Ryan’s radios and cell phones fail, the OEM begins the unpleasant task of contacting their families to see if they know the whereabouts of the two men. All this accomplishes is to terrify both men’s wives.

Frightened by the disappearances and the strange happenings, seven members of the day shift refuse to work the quarantine zone and are replaced. Their superiors remain surprisingly sympathetic — given they’re affected by the area’s strange atmosphere as well.

The seismological and Homeland Security teams are having difficulties of their own. Although the scientists and personnel pay little credence to the stories flying about, their equipment acts up. The delicate machines report all manner of implausible readings, and the portable computers keep crashing. The scientists already feel pressured by their inability to explain the root causes of the quake, and their frustration at this new round of setbacks is almost tangible. It doesn't improve the general mood one bit. At 11:00 AM, FEMA, sensing problems, asks the National Guard and the police to disperse the cultists who continue flocking to the cordons. The action is swift, with police driving the cultists and onlookers away under the threat of impeding rescue efforts. Those foolish enough to return are thrown in jail after a bit of manhandling.

The media picks up on the preceding stories, and now, most of the networks find people prepared to swear that the earthquake zone is haunted. Some reporters try getting statements from the various cults, but some claims seem too lurid or improbable, even for ghost stories. When one junior scientist speaks to journalists about magnetic anomalies in an attempt to provide a rational explanation for the equipment failures, the press quickly draws colorful parallels to justifications for the Bermuda Triangle. FEMA pointedly tells the researchers to keep their damn mouths shut in future. All press releases and statements will come from FEMA to ensure that everything is said with one voice.

During midafternoon, a voice calls out from deep in the rubble of one large building. The only word that rescuers can clearly hear is "help." By this point, the rescue workers are so completely spooked by the last few days that most of them react fearfully rather than with enthusiasm. Nevertheless, they dig diligently until two hours later, when the voice falls silent. After taking a long, hard look at each other, the rescue workers unanimously decide to resume mechanical digging and simply don't mention the "failed" attempt.

At 3:30 PM, the lead seismologist, after securing permission from FEMA, gives a short press conference. Dr. Harper states that, while they have no definitive answers concerning the quake, the theories currently include one concerning a high-pressure gas bubble in the mantle that shifted and resulted in the localized earthquake and its surprisingly poor transmission. Another possibility is that an extremely dense, micrometeorite crashed into the area, vaporizing on impact — even more improbable than the first possibility — and triggered the quake. She quickly assures the press that there was no way the quake could have been predicted and that the scientific community did not, in fact, fail. She also provides assurances that there's almost no chance of

any follow-up quake occurring. Madeline Harper is an old hand at dealing with the press and manages to smoothly deflect the more outrageous attempts at scaremongering with calm denials, bland jargon and impressive-sounding statistics.

In a separate press conference, the National Guard, to the public's delight, rescinds the curfew, though it warns that the curfew remains in effect for the cordoned-off area and the surrounding blocks, which were also evacuated. The National Guard extends its perimeter to five blocks from the epicenter. After last night's disappearance of the two workers, FEMA also asks the National Guard to maintain a presence among the rescue workers to protect them. Workers are not allowed to move about except in groups of four.

The area remains relatively quiet overnight. Patrols throughout the quarantined zone increase, and radio contact between work crews is steady. The looting dies away completely. A tragic accident does occur at 3:40 AM, however, when a guardsman somehow mistakes an approaching colleague for a gun-wielding psychopath and empties a clip into him. When he realizes his mistake, the distraught soldier goes into shock, whimpering about bandanas and Kalashnikov assault rifles. The press makes the most of the story, alternately suggesting that stress drove the man insane or that the area is somehow cursed in some mysterious fashion.

DAY FOUR: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

The Spectres infesting the area keep from sight during the day, though they're certainly busy. Meanwhile, the storm haze is now barely an evil-smelling orange tint. There is a thick layer of slimy muck underfoot where the Underworld dust settled, and it makes the ground slippery to walk on. A couple of brave ghosts take advantage of the lull and explore the area cautiously, ready to run if necessary. When they return without mishap, others decide to take the plunge. Most have no contact with Spectres, though the office blocks look increasingly like gigantic boils. One hue, Sarah Degas, fails to return. She actually falls victim to her own curiosity. She enters the wrong house and disturbs a Spectre, who quickly overwhelms her and drags her off into the bowels of the tower. Her screams join those of other tormented victims.

Homeland Security personnel investigate the area's purported spectral activity by hiring freelance projectors. The projectors enter the district at 3:45 PM and make a run through the destroyed blocks, returning to report the existence of a spectral tower. Homeland Security hires the team to retrieve material from the building. The projectors wait until their Vitality stores

are at their peak and manage to return with invisible and intangible samples. This is the first of several forays to the tower.

The Spectres, meanwhile, spend an industrious day within the tower and the surrounding buildings, reinforcing their positions, restricting access to certain sections and building hives. The screams die down a little now. Optimist or pessimist, however, nobody can deny that the Spectres are either destroying their captives or converting them into more of their ilk. The Spectres have already explored and taken over the buildings within a block of the tower and are expanding their territory out to a two-block radius. They're still moving quite slowly, spending a reasonable percentage of time in seemingly random activity. So far, none have tried moving beyond the area affected by the earthquake. They rarely venture within one block of the cordon, preferring to remain in the area surrounding the quake's epicenter.

The last of the independent sensitives leave the area. It's too oppressive and threatening for them. Even the most curious ones would prefer to be elsewhere. The cultists are still strong though, watching from rooftops or at the borders of the National Guard's new perimeter. Police arrest several cultists at a time for loitering, but their numbers increase slowly. There are more than 60 now, and they seem perfectly content to wait around, watching. Many remain very still and very quiet.

Two small bands of cultists do successfully penetrate the region at night, successfully evading the patrols. The cultists don't cause any trouble. They simply make their way to the center of the district, indulge in pigment and stare at the tower for an hour. They escape unscathed and split up, spending the next few hours convening with allies and relating seemingly pointless information about the tower's appearance.

DAYS FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN

Rescue efforts continue through the remaining week and weekend, but the teams give up on all hope of finding any more survivors. Work speeds up a little. It will still require a while to be rid of all the rubble, however. Some rescuers can still hear noises in the piles, but they often just ignore them, convincing themselves it was shifting rocks or wind causing strange acoustic effects.

Morale is seriously low and no one wants to be inside the area. Folks are spooked, and most workers suffer from severe nightmares. The people who remain relatively unaffected are skeptical of the supernatural and wear their doubt like a badge. Even so, they know there's something unsettling about the place. The teams work quietly and avoid spending time alone. The OEM is forced to shift work crews to four-hour work rotations.

Media interest drops rapidly, and many news crews are pulled out to cover other stories. The public's attention span just isn't long enough. The few reporters who remain busily try making the most of the "ghost angle," but they don't have much with which to work. Everyone involved knows better than to speak to the press now. Unfortunately, all the footage is stale. There isn't anything to see that media helicopters haven't already broadcast time and time over. After a quick tour of the quarantine zone, most members of the press are perfectly happy to stay outside the cordon, where the stench is tolerable. The whole region now smells ghastly. Many apartments are without power, and food is rotting in fridges and cupboards. There are undoubtedly many bodies still to be retrieved as well, but the work crews pretend the stench is compounded by the corpses of dead animals, such as rats and household pets. The OEM and FEMA are particularly careful with the handling and transport of the small, steady stream of bodies, to prevent illnesses from spreading.

DAYS FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN: THE SUPERNATURAL SIDE

Lucie Simich, the Spectre-ridden transient, is now a Jason, and if the National Guard has found no more stragglers in the quarantine zone, it's because she's picking them off like in some bad slasher flick. Meanwhile, Spectre activity follows the same pattern of the first few days. They continue advancing outward gradually, securing territory as they go. By the end of the week, they uncover and drag off six more local ghosts and gain a strong foothold in a two-block radius around the tower. They also discover the sewer systems as an effective transport network beyond the perimeters, allowing them to ambush outside ghosts and drag them back to the tower. The screams issuing forth from within the tower continue dying down as the Spectres convert the spirits they snatch into more Spectres, fodder or building material.

On the afternoon of day six, Lucie Simich surprises rescue workers who stumble upon her hovel. The men are astonished to see her. She attacks the men, seizing two in her vicelike grip. The others try to rescue their compatriots, but she bites into the throats of her two captives. The remaining workers flee, straight into the arms of a National Guard patrol. The men are hysterical... incoherent. The guardsmen spot Simich walking toward them, her chin, neck and nightdress streaked with blood. The workers beg the guardsmen to "Shoot the bitch!" but for obvious reasons, they don't. When Simich fails to respond to the patrol's challenges, one of the soldiers approaches her cautiously. She's on him immediately, clawing his face and tearing strips of flesh

from the bone. The other soldiers immediately open fire with automatic weapons.

A hail of bullets rip into the old woman, who descends upon the soldiers and the frightened workers. All told, she eventually falls to over 20 direct hits from automatic-weapons fire, but three more men lie dead from her attacks and from friendly, but panicked, fire. FEMA squashes the news fast, and it never airs, but the incident's survivors are placed under psychiatric observation. Their only saving grace is that the autopsy reveals that Simich actually died about three days ago from heart failure. The Department of Homeland Security advises the survivors to keep their mouths shut about an incident that *didn't happen*.

EPILOGUE

On the eighth day, the OEM and FEMA abandon rescue efforts. Only one or two survivors were found following the rescue of the photogenic little boy, while several dozen still remain unaccounted for. The rescue crews switch to rubble-clearance operations. It takes them two months to fully complete them. Seismological researchers also scale back their presence on the ground. They debate the quake for months to come, but for the time being, the pressure is off. They did all they could.

Surveyors still assess buildings, condemning a few more to demolition. Guardsmen escort each survey team, a new precaution following the Lucie Simich incident. The area remains quarantined to all citizens for

WHAT HAPPENED TO LAZARUS REDUX?

You'll notice that after day three, there's little mention concerning Lazarus Redux or its efforts to clean out the sector. That's because we've left it open for the Storyteller to play out as she sees fit. Lazarus Redux will try to eliminate the Spectre presence in the area and to determine the nature of the tower. To do so, however, requires a concerted effort against the Spectres, which entrench themselves further with each passing night. If the characters don't participate, Lazarus Redux fails in its bid and, at best, can only contain the Spectres to the quarantine zone. If the characters participate, however, then everyone has a fighting chance. The characters, by virtue of their unity as a crucible, are already stronger, both alone and united. That kind of firepower is exactly what Lazarus Redux needs to turn the tide. The characters, in this instance and throughout the series, are pivotal lynchpins.

They must be.

Orpheus is about them.

the remaining two months, a fact evidenced by the armed patrols.

The cultists thin out as well, though the district becomes an unspoken pilgrimage site for many sensitives and people who believe in the occult. Still, some cultists quietly sneak into the cordoned-off zone, squatting in condemned buildings near the tower. They do so gradually, one at a time and late at night, taking advantage of the National Guard's fatigue. They're not the only people who manage to sneak in. Inevitably, a few kids make it past the cordon over the next two weeks. The area remains unsettling, however, and none of them stay very long.

By the eighth day, the orange haze surrounding the area vanishes completely, and the Spectres extend their hold on every building and sewer pipe within two blocks of the epicenter. A week later, they extend their control to three blocks, and after a month, they hold the four blocks around the tower. The Spectres diligently drag any ghost they encounter back to their lair and, occasionally, molest a wayward cultist. Flatliner Ethan Torrance does return on occasion to scavenge more shards, but his patterns are erratic.

Finally, two months after the tower struck, the clean-up operation grinds to a halt, and the process to bring down the condemned buildings begins. The rubble is gone, the stench is finally faded, power and water are restored, and the area is duly opened up again to its residents. There are a few weeks of chaos while the police and insurance companies itemize stolen goods and try to ensure everyone is where they are supposed to be, but after that, the city breathes a large collective sigh and returns to normal. None of the relieved residents even offer a fleeting thought to all the rumors of curses and hauntings that the media reported two months ago...

...at first, anyway.

Meanwhile, the two office buildings remain off limits indefinitely, but that's because the Department of Homeland Security assumes jurisdiction over them, opening labs within the office complex. Their primary interest is in ascertaining the nature of the material constituting the tower. After all, what could be greater than developing technology using ghost materials? Invisible guns and bullets, even intangible tanks and planes... the applications are mind-boggling.

TECHNICALITIES

So, you know the tower fell with a deafening screech, but what exactly does that mean? The resultant storm is blinding and stinging, but what are the game effects? This section details the specifics of the event and how they may affect or hinder the characters. After all, no

event is truly frightening or “real” without some attached risk, and this section offers rules for those risks.

- **A Deafening Roar:** Every projector and ghost in the city hears the screeching noise made by the tower ripping through the Stormwall. It requires some awareness to realize that the unexpected noise is not actually physical (Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 7). The event drowns out all sound, and the screech lasts for five seconds.

Players of characters in flesh or manifesting who successfully realize the noise is spectral in origin and don't want to betray the fact that they alone hear it must succeed on a Wits + Subterfuge roll, difficulty 6. Those whose players fail the roll do flinch, clap hands to their ears or probably yell something appropriate such as “What the fuck?” Because no one else hears it, the characters look like fools. The accompanying spectral boom is less intense and deeper, so no rolls are required, especially since it mixes right into the earthquake.

- **A Bright Flash:** Similarly, anyone who can see spectral matters will notice the flash of light. The cloud of dust is easy to notice, but actually seeing the tower plummet requires great eyesight or tremendous luck (roll Perception + Alertness or Wits + Awareness, difficulty 8).

- **An Earth-Shattering Kaboom:** Damage from the blast applies to discarnate entities only — 16 levels of lethal damage within 100 yards, eight levels of lethal damage within 200 yards, and eight levels of bashing damage within a mile.

- **And Then, the Ground Shook:** When the shockwave hits, it's difficult for any discarnate being in the city to stay upright. It requires three successes on Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 6, for a character to remain standing. The shockwave stuns all spooks into dazed confusion, however, for one to several minutes depending on their distance from the epicenter. Players must make an extended roll of Stamina + Awareness, 10 accumulated successes at difficulty 7, for their characters to shake off being stunned. Being attacked also helps to rally someone's thoughts, decreasing the number of successes required by half. Embodied projectors within a mile of the blast suffer the same effects, though they don't fall over, just stagger around a bit — with the quake in full force, however, no one will likely notice.

The quake itself lasts for about a minute, making any activity within a mile of the epicenter difficult. The difficulty for all rolls increases by five during the quake, and just walking requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7). Those whose players fail suffer one die of bashing damage from hitting a wall or from falling. Outside of that mile, the difficulty drops by one for each mile thereafter.

Outside, there's some danger from falling debris... glass, flower pots, people. A Dexterity + Alertness roll (difficulty 5; minimum two successes) is necessary to avoid harm. One success means the character suffers a level of bashing damage from falling debris. No successes means the character suffers three levels of bashing damage or one level of lethal damage from falling glass or displaced bricks. On a botch, a large chunk of masonry hits the character, dealing six levels of bashing or three levels of lethal damage.

Players of people driving within a mile of the epicenter must make a Wits + Drive roll (difficulty 6) for their characters to stop without a mishap. Otherwise, they damage their cars — on a botch, the car is totaled or takes out a bystander.

- **That's Some Dust Storm:** Even before the quake subsides, a dust storm descends upon the district and lasts until the following morning — though remnants linger for a few days. When it first hits, it blankets an area about a mile and a half across, centered on the tower. It is fiercest at its heart, but it kicks up residual dust and haze across the whole city, blanketing everything.

Inside the hazy areas, anyone capable of seeing on a discarnate level discovers that range of sight is halved and that all sight-related actions incur a penalty of 3 to existing difficulties. This obviously includes targeting long-range Horrors and other weapons, noticing someone sneaking around and anything else relying on sight. Within the storm's radius, vision is simply impossible. Even fully incarnate projectors, while they don't feel the biting storm (and thus, don't have to squint), can't perceive the world around them for more than a few feet. Essentially, it's like a collision of visions overlapping one another... or, better yet, someone spray-painting your sunglasses.

For the first two hours, the heart of the storm deals one level of bashing damage a turn to any spooks caught in the open — it's like being swept up in a ferocious sandstorm, which is blinding and agonizingly abrasive. Staying indoors or underground or simply body hopping are all options. After the initial two hours, the rupture slowly seals itself, and the storm's fury abates enough to where it is no longer harmful. The storm remains blinding for the first day and night, however.

Mortals near or at the storm's heart feel unusually nervous and irritable, though they're unsure why. Self-control is tricky, and all Willpower rolls have their difficulties increase by two. People with the potential to become projectors feel nauseous, developing nasty migraine headaches (due to the distraction, increase difficulties to all actions by one). Spooks, however, suffer the normal penalties associated with tapping Spite during ghost-quakes (see **Orpheus**, p. 309).

Once the storm abates, most of the city appears clear except for the mile-and-a-half around the storm area. There, the air is tinted a thick orange hue, which lingers a further week. As it disperses, it coats the ground with an unpleasant layer of gritty slime, but this slime has no significant game effects. The slime itself evaporates over the second week.

- **Give Us a Hand:** Police likely pressure anyone arriving at the epicenter during the first half-hour or so to lend a helping hand. The police won't force anyone into service (who wants a reluctant rescuer?), but people refusing to pitch in are made to feel as welcome as chain-smokers in an emphysema ward. It's easy to slip away after agreeing to help, however. The situation is chaotic, and the grossly overstressed emergency services personnel do fall for all but the simplest bluffs. Players can pair Charisma, Manipulation and Wits with Empathy, Leadership, Subterfuge and Bureaucracy to fabricate any number of excuses (difficulty 4). Once outside of a volunteer detail, anyone moving around with purpose is left to his own devices. There isn't enough manpower to worry about random individuals.

- **Fight the Powers That Be:** After an hour, however, when the Office of Emergency Management directs everyone efficiently and the police establish a cordon, the

situation slowly comes under some control. Penetrating the area remains as simple as volunteering, but the police are so sickened by reporters and looters that anyone without a uniform who is not working on a collapsed building attracts their suspicion. Lines of communication are still not great, though, and few officers have the time to verify stories. Characters can lie about being on errands — Manipulation + either Subterfuge or Bureaucracy are the easiest; difficulty 5. Reduce this difficulty to 4 if the character has a good working knowledge of police procedure (with either Law at 3 or more or the Detective License Background). Relying on bluster is less effective (Wits + Subterfuge at difficulty 7), though Storytellers can reduce this difficulty to 6 if the character knows due process.

Officers will question characters moving around (if the cops have half a moment), so anyone exploring the area openly can expect to be stopped multiple times. It's not too tricky to stay unnoticed, however, since folks are distracted. Perception + Stealth is only difficulty 4. The downside is that anyone caught sneaking around is automatically suspect — difficulty 9 for a character to talk his way out of this situation. At this stage, officers escort anyone failing to answer their questions out of the cordoned area, and they arrest suspected looters (and anyone sneaking around is suspect).



• **A Different Ball Game:** When the National Guard arrives, security improves tremendously. Volunteering is still the easiest way into the area, but moving around is trickier. The OEM and FEMA do report missing volunteers, and the National Guard is willing to open fire on looters or trespassers after dark. The difficulty in sneaking around is now 7 because the National Guard is actively watching for looters and desperate residents trying to get back home. Looking busy and lying about errands (Manipulation + Subterfuge or Bureaucracy) is still possible, but the difficulty is 7, since lines of communication are tighter than before. Bluffing (Wits + Subterfuge) is even harder, difficulty 8, though military procedural knowledge reduces difficulties by one.

After two days, sneaking through the National Guard cordon is harder than staying in there. A relevant ally, contact or patron (someone with significant sway in police, fire or city planning) can arrange passes for the crucible as deputies, fire investigators or building surveyors, respectively, in return for a big-time favor at some later point. Respected PIs (Detective License at 3+) can almost certainly persuade someone to let them in (Manipulation + Empathy to cajole or Wits + Subterfuge to bluff, difficulty 4 either way) with their “team.” Even a bit of awe might work on a sentry guard — Manipulation + the character’s rank in the Influence Background (difficulty 7).

If the characters have no recourse (i.e., no Backgrounds of note), then allow them to sneak in the old-fashioned way and either lie convincingly or use distraction and misdirection. The crucible can also steal or borrow the appropriate uniforms (rescue workers, OEM assessment managers, National Guard, etc.), pretending to be on duty, with a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6) required to explain why they have no supporting documentation. Otherwise, it’s down to sheer glibness, with Wits + Subterfuge to bluff, Manipulation + Empathy to persuade, Charisma + Intimidation to cajole or, at an absolute push, Charisma + Intuition to try to appeal for sympathy. Regardless, the difficulty is 8, and anything less than two successes may well provoke a hostile reaction.

Please note that many of these difficulties depend on the excuses or arguments used. If their claims are wildly implausible — “Let us in! We’ve seen aliens landing on the rubble!” — then by all means, increase the difficulty to 9 or even 10.

The other alternative to sneaking in is to distract the guards at the cordon. This is risky, because they are well-armed and well-trained. A series of partial but threatening manifestations in the wee hours of the morning will

spook a small guard post, facilitating sneaking in (Dexterity + Stealth, Difficulty 6), as will destructive situations such as nearby fires, a carefully engineered street brawl, a car crash, etc.

Once inside the cordon, the National Guard’s presence is not as extensive, particularly until the morning of day four. It runs occasional patrols, but these grow less frequent over the first three days. Hiding from a patrol ahead of time is simple — Intelligence + Stealth, difficulty 4 — but if the patrol is unexpected, it’s much harder to dive from view — Dexterity + Stealth, difficulty 7. During the day, there are also survey teams, engineers and researchers wandering around, though they’re too intent on the job at hand to question people. Unfortunately, after the two rescue workers vanish on the evening of day three, the evening of day four sees an increase in vigilance and in the number of National Guard patrols. Raise the difficulties for evading patrols by two.

If guardsmen notice the crucible and the characters aren’t dressed appropriately or displaying ID, the patrol will demand the characters raise their hands. If the characters do not comply immediately, the National Guard will open fire if necessary.

• **What Smells?:** The National Guard is far from the only danger inside the cordon. The crucible’s other challenges range from the minor to the truly horrific. At the trivial end of the scale, there are some atmospheric issues to consider. Collapsed buildings throw up tremendous amounts of dust (though this isn’t an additional consideration for characters who can see into the hereafter). For the first day, all tasks requiring clear vision add two to their difficulty. That drops to an increase of one on the second and third days. In the time it takes the air to clear, however, organic material starts to rot. There are plenty of decaying animal and human corpses, along with heaps of spoiling food, trash bags and exposed sewer lines. The smell is absolutely revolting.

Some people are more susceptible to the stench of decay than others. Storytellers may demand players roll Stamina + current Willpower (difficulty 6) when their incarnate characters first encounter the smells. Anyone failing to achieve a success loses one die from all those pools requiring concentration while inside the cordoned area. The smell fades at the end of the second week, thanks (at least in part) to ongoing cleanup efforts.

• **Watch Your Step:** Another matter to remember is that rubble is dangerous to walk on. Characters suffer halved Movement rates when on rubble — and a quarter at night — and that’s assuming they pay close attention to their steps. Doing anything requiring balance, speed or physical exertion over the rubble (such as hand-to-hand

combat or running) requires a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6). Failure indicates a painful fall (one level of bashing damage); a botch means the clumsy character broke a bone (three levels of lethal damage) and needs medical attention. On the plus side, though, rubble makes for excellent cover. A character in debris can always find total or partial concealment, as required.

• **Watch Your Head:** Damaged buildings represent a high risk factor compared to stretch and loose rubble. Determining the structural integrity of buildings from a casual glance is nearly impossible unless the person has solid engineering skills (Perception + Science [Engineering] roll, difficulty 8). Some partly crumbling structures may appear safe but are, in fact, so weakened that the slightest vibration brings the walls down. As Storyteller, you must decide where to place the dangerous walls, ceilings and floors. In general, these appear in groups: about to collapse, weakened, fragile and robust.

The first type of building is the one ready to collapse. If the entire building is in jeopardy, however, there should be signs that even laymen can spot — huge cracks in walls and ceilings; groaning noises as masonry settles; breaks and even holes in floors, ceilings and staircases; drizzles of dust; and even occasional visible movement in the structure. Players can also roll Perception + Science (difficulty 5) for their characters to realize something is amiss with the structure. If they proceed inside regardless, then heavy movement or exceedingly loud noises may cause a collapse. Slamming a door, firing a gun, etc. may bring down the house — roll one die; the building collapses on a 1. Smashing a hole in a wall or breaking a door down is just begging for trouble — roll one die; the building collapses on a 1 to 5. If the building collapses, it inflicts 10 levels of bashing damage per floor to anyone trapped inside.

The second type of building is the one weakened by the quake (and sure to be condemned) but still standing. Weakened buildings (as opposed to those about to collapse) aren't likely to entirely disintegrate, but there are sections that might give way at any moment. While visible cracks and holes in ceilings or floors are partial clues, these aren't always present. Some sections might give way when exposed to any pressure — when someone walks on the floors, opens or closes a door set in a weakened wall, makes a loud noise under a fragile ceiling, etc. Other areas in weak buildings are less dangerous and, therefore, have a small chance of collapsing when encountered. As with buildings on the verge of collapse, any potentially violent movement is the main factor. If something does give way, a character's best hope is to try getting out of the way — Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty ranging between 5 to 10, depending on the section

collapsing and the character's proximity to the edge of the cave in. Damage is typically four levels of bashing, and a character falling down a level or more may break a bone.

The third type of damaged building is somewhat fragile in spots but not slated for demolition. Such buildings are mostly safe but require some work. Some sections might give if they receive rough treatment, but none of the affected areas are load bearing or support in nature. Rough treatment qualifies as breaking down walls or doors, jumping up and down a lot, etc. Parts of the interior might also have collapsed, but any character caught by a falling wall or ceiling only suffers three levels of bashing damage.

The final type of building is robust and generally unaffected by the quake. Nothing short of deliberate damage using industrial machinery will bring such a place down.

• **And the Kitchen Sink:** Quake-damaged buildings also present crucibles with other dangers or annoyances. Darkness is the most obvious — the electricity is out throughout the area for the duration of operations, so none of the lights work. Many offices are dingy during the day and pitch black at night. Unfortunately, torches will bring the National Guard like flies to honey, so the characters must operate under certain considerations. Someone exploring an unfamiliar building with only ambient or faint illumination moves at quarter speed or suffers one level of bashing damage every two to four turns, be it from smacking into debris, from slipping and hitting the floor, etc.

The quake fractured many pipes, and though the city quickly turned off gas services, there are still localized areas where the crucible might encounter a wet or oily floor from broken pipes and broken household products or a room filled with gas. Water and gas hazards are most common in the first two days after the quake, but oils do not evaporate quickly, so vehicle or cooking oils remain until cleaned. A hot-water heater, a fish tank, a radiator, a toilet or a filled bath may leak, as could a home gas cylinder or other gas-storage appliance. Anyone walking across a wet or greasy floor must halve her movement rate. Attempting vigorous motion on a slippery surface requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 5, if the character knows about it, or difficulty 8, if it's a surprise (for example, an unseen patch of cooking oil). On two successes, she remains unfazed. With one success, she retains her balance if she stands still for a second and aborts her current action or intention. If the roll fails, she slips and falls. On a botch, she smacks into something and suffers two levels of bashing damage.

Anyone walking into a gas-filled room carrying a naked flame, firing a gun or creating a spark will cause an explosion.

This deals between five to fifteen levels of lethal damage to everyone inside the room and half that to folks in adjoining areas. The exact force of the explosion depends on the room's size: An exploding broom cupboard might only deal five levels of damage, while a gas-filled state room easily inflicts 15 health levels of damage. The shock of the blast will destroy weak buildings or those about to collapse, while fragile buildings have a 50 percent chance of following suit. Robust buildings are strong enough to cope with the explosion, but it does weaken them.

Unfortunately, while it's possible to detect the scent of gas before pocket concentrations build to dangerous levels, most companies taint their normally odorless gas with the scent of rotting eggs (something to which the human olfactory sense is particularly sensitive). With all the decay and rot in the air, it may be difficult to distinguish the fetid stench of gas from the decomposing bodies. Therefore, it requires a Perception + Alertness or Intelligence + Science roll, difficulty 8, to notice the familiar smell and to distinguish it from actual decomposition. If the gas pocket remains sealed behind closed doors, the smell will be fainter (difficulty 9). If a flame-wielding character (and this includes someone employing Broadband Ghost or Witch's Nimbus) opens the door... it's too late. By the time anyone smells the gas, the explosion is already happening.

There are some cinematic hazards awaiting the crucible, requiring the characters to jump over holes in the floor or over missing sections of staircase (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty ranging from 4 to 9, depending on the gap). Failure almost certainly means a nasty fall — and remember, even a short fall can cause lethal damage if the character impales himself on a sharp object or strikes a broken surface. If a staircase is missing entirely, characters may have to resort to impromptu ladders. If the crucible ties sheets together, then the player of the knot-maker should roll Intelligence + Survival (or a relevant Craft), difficulty 6, to ensure they can bear a person's weight. Climbing or rappelling down a rope requires Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 6.

Unfortunately, in a setting such as this, any number of problems may arise, including raging fires, clouds of toxic smoke and snaking electric cables. It's up to the Storyteller to play out these dangers as he sees fit, using this section as a guide on handling matters.

ENTER THE CRUCIBLE

Given the broad scope of the story, it's doubtful the characters would ignore the ghost-quake or not examine the epicenter. This chapter is perhaps the easiest of the current storylines in which to involve the crucible. So,

the question isn't "How do I involve the characters?" (because if a falling tower, a spectral dust storm and a ghost-quake doesn't attract their interest... nothing will), but rather "What do I involve the characters in?" The area surrounding the epicenter is extremely busy, particularly throughout the initial hours. While their agendas create their own opposition and conflict, here are other people and situations to throw at the crucible.

SURVIVORS

During the first two hours, survivors are the most pressing problem facing the crucible. The scene following the earthquake is a major tragedy, and events should reflect this. The survivors listed below should all give you a chance to confront the characters with a dilemma and to engage the players' sympathies. If the characters react callously, feel free to award them Spite points for their unpleasantness if someone dies or suffers for their actions.

- **Rubble (First hour):** A partly collapsed store pins a young man under debris. His legs are crushed, and a large piece of concrete lies across his chest. He's still conscious and calling for help with an enfeebled voice, but he is clearly weakening. Unfortunately, the reason no one has helped him yet is because he's in an out-of-the-way location, away from the other rescue efforts. If the characters don't save him or alert the police to his presence, however, he will perish. Rescuing him is not easy, however. The characters can't simply pull him free. They must shift the rubble around carefully. If done improperly, the weight of the concrete pillar crushes his chest completely. If no one has a pertinent Ability (building, construction or engineering related, for example), then the crucible can rely on common sense. Leveraging the pillar off the man properly requires an extended roll using Intelligence + any pertinent Ability, difficulty 6, with 15 accumulated successes required to succeed. Assume each roll indicates two minutes of effort with the characters operating in the open. A botched roll at any time injures the man further for one health level of bashing damage per "1" not cancelled out by a "10." The man has four health levels remaining and a Stamina of 4 to soak. After that, he's dead.

- **This Ol' House (First two hours):** In one of the few houses left in the area, a woman is trapped on the third floor, which is clearly about to collapse. A fallen staircase and jammed security windows prevent her from escaping, though she manages to hammer a hole in the glass to yell through. She's on the verge of hysterics. If she panics and runs around, banging into things, she'll likely bring the house down on her head. Anyone going in to help her must deal with a very delicate situation — the house could fall down at any moment.

• **Allie** (First day or more): Allie is five, she's lost, she's desperate to find her mother (who survived), and she's a ghost. She wanders toward the characters (because of their Vitality) and tearfully asks for their help. She has no idea that she died in the quake — she barely understands the notion of death, let alone how to come to terms with the fact that it happened to her. The kindest option would be in helping her to resolve her single tether... her mother. If the crucible temporarily "adopts" her, Allie's curiosity and mood swings might try their patience. Leaving her for the Spectres, however, is decidedly heartless and worthy of a Spite rating.

• **Slippers** (Any time): In an apartment building, the characters hear noise from inside an apartment. Within, the crucible finds an old man shuffling around. He's tidied up a bit and — despite the cold temperature and the lack of running water and power — refuses to leave. If pressed, he becomes extremely distraught. He's 86, and his wife died six months ago, in this apartment. He's lost without her and determined to remain within the apartment until he too dies, so he can join her. He's irrationally terrified that he might die outside the apartment and miss meeting her. In fact, his fear is so great that, if forced to leave, the stress will result in a heart attack.

The old man's wife did not remain as a ghost. All he really wants is some fresh food and water every morning, a stack of blankets and perhaps a friendly face for some conversation. Will the characters help bring him supplies? The authorities certainly won't coddle an old man. They'll haul him out to his death, if they find him.

EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL

For the first 20 minutes following the quake, there's a steady stream of emergency services and OEM personnel flooding into the area. They're all shocked, pressured and upset, and that makes them impatient and cranky. It's unlikely the characters will clash with paramedics and firemen, but the police are a different matter. They need to evacuate residents, clear the area of civilians and remove the impeding reporters and petty criminals. Within two hours, the situation stabilizes enough that they can concentrate on keeping the area clear, searching the cordoned area and maintaining order.

If characters clash with any members of emergency services or the OEM, the police won't hesitate to use their firearms. Any violent open confrontation with the police draws a swarm of officers against the

characters, to the point of the police launching a major manhunt across the city if necessary.

COPS

An average officer trying to do his job in very difficult circumstances.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Bureaucracy 2, Drive 2, Firearms 4, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2, Law 3, Melee 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 4

Nature: Bravo

Willpower: 7

Equipment: Glock 17 pistol, nightstick (club)

HARK, THE SPECTRES

The Spectral infestation is probably the greatest active complication at the epicenter. About four dozen Spectres of all types escape through the Stormwall tear and follow the tower down. In the first 15 minutes, they swarm over the area looking for any ghosts wandering around openly. Within 10 minutes, they grab over a dozen such unfortunates, dragging them back into the tower and proceeding to apply their brutal ministrations. The screams carry across the area.

Any character projecting into the disaster area within the first 25 minutes is in serious jeopardy. The storm hits almost immediately, so spooks are effectively blind, but the conditions don't bother the Spectres, who navigate their way around just fine. The Spectres are only too happy to add intrepid explorers to their kennel of captives. After 25 minutes, the Spectres retreat back into the tower, but since no character can see well through the storm, having a look around doesn't reveal much.

In addition to the new types of Spectre listed in Chapter Four (which might well be skulking around the earthquake site), the following two breeds are definitely present. Both are intelligent enough to make excellent use of the ruined terrain.

LURKERS

Specializing in the acquisition of fresh victims, Lurkers have little interest in standing and fighting. They are strange, translucent beings looking a little like tattered funeral shrouds with wide-fanged mouths at their centers.. Their preferred strategy is to conceal themselves somewhere where ghosts might not notice them. When a suitable target passes, a Lurker wraps itself

around its victim like a straitjacket.. It takes flight with Flit and carries the delivery straight back to its lair, biting her into submission along the way. If several spirits pass, the Lurker concentrates on the group's last member, alerting others of its kind to remaining spooks.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Intuition 2, Stealth 5

Nature: Loner

Willpower: 8

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Carapace (Leathery: 2B/4L), Envelop, Flit, Hive-Mind, Maw, Tentacles

SENTINELS

Sentinels are highly mobile and athletic, covering ground quickly. They look like flayed corpses with large, staring eyes, four snaking arms writhing out of their shoulders and unnaturally long legs. Sentinels are inquisitive by nature and frequently play the hive's scouts. They almost always keep Flit active at one or two Spite points when in potentially hostile situations, giving them great maneuverability when combined with their long limbs. Sentinels run in packs of three, each exploring alone, but never far from the others. When characters encounter one, the other two are rarely far behind. They always make good use of their surroundings and rarely fight to destruction just for the sake of it.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 4, Melee 4, Occult 2, Stealth 4

Nature: Explorer

Willpower: 7

Spite: 7

Offensive Abilities: Claws, Flit, Hive-Mind, Immolate

THE MEDIA

Reporters love getting underfoot. They certainly won't try stopping anyone from entering the cordoned area, but they will tag along if they realize the characters are sneaking in — essentially, they go if they spot anything that makes for a good story. Unfortunately, in pursuit of a story, they pester characters about their names, their plans, how they are feeling at this time, etc. If they don't get good answers, most reporters try goading characters into revealing something by being deliberately offensive or clueless.

It's much worse if reporters recognize the characters from the whole Orpheus Group debacle and FBI manhunt. Reporters instantly surround and bombard characters with all sorts of questions, from vile and sensationalist ("Miss Jacobs, why did you kill your former employers?") through to the pointlessly bland ("Miss Jacobs, how do you feel about the earthquake?"). It's impossible to avoid attention with a media frenzy. It's difficult enough having crews tagging along, especially since some reporters may actually attract notice to the crucible just to land it in trouble and boost their network's ratings.

LOOTERS

There are plenty of callous opportunists willing to exploit even the most tragic situations. The more professional looters, so to speak, reach the site quickly, grabbing high-value goods and escaping as fast as possible. Unless the crucible is quick on its feet, the characters may not encounter these hardened criminals. While some thieves prefer hiding over fighting, the first wave of scofflaws are dangerous and hardly gun-shy.

It's likelier the crucible encounters lesser crooks, petty vandals, thrill seekers and kids on a dare. These individuals are less prone to shooting folks, but a cornered rat will turn to fight, and situations can turn ugly easily, particularly if the characters run into a large group of thieves. Confident crooks might even consider mugging the crucible, believing they won't call the police since the area is cordoned off. The sample criminal below is a petty crook. Hardened criminals are considerably more dangerous.

CROOKS

A little man putting in a dishonest day's work.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Nature: Bravo

Willpower: 4

Equipment: .38 Special, knife

THE NATIONAL GUARD

When the National Guard arrives, its priority is to secure the area, as well as the city in general. That means stomping out any hint of looting or rioting and ensuring the epicenter is locked down. After the first three days, its taste for patrolling the disaster area definitely thins. Although guardsmen still patrol every night, they spend as much time as possible at the cordons.

The National Guard doesn't screw around. Guardsmen tell any character found inside the cordon who is visibly armed (and not wearing an appropriate uniform) to drop her weapon and lie down on her stomach with her hands on her head. If the character doesn't comply or makes any suspicious move, the soldiers will open fire. Worse, any character aiming at a guardsman or approaching with a weapon drawn will be shot without warning. At night, guardsmen issue a verbal challenge to anyone they see (or think they see) and assume that anyone who doesn't step forward is hostile. On the positive side, they are perfectly pleasant and polite to anyone with an official reason to be inside the cordon.

NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

Jumpysoldiers in a situation growing steadily stranger.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Drive 3, Firearms 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Nature: Conformist

Willpower: 9

Equipment: Assault rifle, flak jacket

RADIO FREE DEATH

Nothing demands the quake occur in the chronicle's city. If you want to follow the story arc but would rather avoid the bit with the tower — or your players seem disinterested in investigating the matter — then Terrence Green is an excellent avenue for relating crucial bits of core information.

There are two main areas where Terrence must enlighten the characters. The first concerns the cults and their surprising level of knowledge concerning spectral matters. This is a small bridge allowing the crucible to eventually find its way to the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost and Uriah Bishop. The revelation and confirmation that an Underworld exists, along with the very basic information concerning the Maelstrom's nature is the second point. The characters now have a nominal idea that there's a ruined world of insane storms and Spectre flocks that remains separate from the living world by a thin wall... and that the wall can be breached.

It's also entirely possible that the crucible is personally friendly with Terrence by this point. If so, he can relate most of the information contained in the "Background" section, along with a simple overview of the cults and their knowledge. Even if he remains unknown to the characters, however, the crucible can glean the gist of that information through his broadcasts.

THE CULTISTS

The cults — or, more specifically, the pigment cults — are active in the city and growing in strength. All are fascinated by the tower thanks to what they see through pigment, though most have no idea why. As more members flock in from out of town, the local cults swell tremendously, creating a plague (according to some people).. The cultists occasionally try to sneak through the blockades, and some of them inevitably succeed. The media quickly hears these stories and capitalizes on the material, while still portraying the cultists as utter idiots, of course. Still, the information appears accurate, potentially attracting the crucible's interests and suspicions.

While not all the cultists at the site are dangerous, some do pose a significant risk. The principle cult of this story, the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, owes fealty to Uriah Bishop and serves as a controlling entity for the other pigment cults. If the characters attract the attention of local Spectres, there's a chance that Uriah may task some Missionary Works members with following or even attacking the crucible. Enough Missionary Works members are prepared to obey their divine superiors that the characters may find themselves in a very sticky situation.

PROJECTORS & GHOSTS

Despite the surfeit of criminals, journalists and cultists, there are some decent people in the city who venture to the site, either out of curiosity or to help. They may wish to assist with fighting the Spectre infestation alongside Lazarus Redux or to help the characters out of harrowing situations. A couple of potential allies are listed below, but they are just the beginning of other, so-called "Freedom Fighters" (see Chapter Four).

SOPHIE NEILAN

A former Terrel & Squib employee, Neilan dropped out of the company before its involvement in pigment manufacturing became known. She left in protest of the company's methods and practices. Since that time, she's returned to her roots as a freelance journalist, though skimming certainly helps when seeking a decent scoop. Neilan is a pretty, petite woman in her early 30s, with a well-practiced pleasant and sympathetic attitude. Despite her previous and current employment, she's genuinely concerned about the screams emerging from the tower and the Spectres spreading into the area — and if she can earn a story in the process of investigating the matter, so much the better.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Firearms 1, Intuition 3, Investigation 2, Meditation 3, Occult 2, Performance 2, Security 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Shade: Banshee

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Gallant

Willpower: 5

Vitality: 7

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Forebode, Inhabit, Pandemonium, Unearthly Repose, Wail

Equipment: .38 Special, pepper spray

JOHN RAYNE

Rayne was always accident-prone. He was a slight, artistically inclined man with a wild shock of bushy, black hair who liked a quiet life. He derived most of his pleasure from poetry and music. He spent significant time in his own little world, which may have contributed to his frequent accidents, including the one that killed him when he stepped in front of a car. Something kept him going, however — a sense of dissatisfaction, perhaps, that allowed him to persevere as a ghost. He maintained in contact with Orpheus and remained on good terms with its agents, even though he never signed on. Rayne generally minds his own business, save for occasional periods when something attracts his attention in the real world... like a ghost-quake.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 5, Animal Ken 2, Awareness 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 4, Etiquette 3, Expression 5, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Performance 3, Science 2

Shade: Skinrider

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Dreamer

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 8

Spite: 4

Offensive Abilities: Contaminate, Helter Skelter, Jugernaut, Puppetry

THE TOWER

The area immediately around the tower's point of impact received the brunt of the so-called earthquake. Aside from the two office buildings where the tower

struck, the buildings around the epicenter are weak at best or have collapsed entirely. The ground remains strewn with rubble for at least a month — there are more important things for the crews to do than clean sidewalks. The close proximity of three collapsed buildings means that the office blocks through which the tower is stuck are in open view, during the day anyway.

The office buildings themselves are long, rectangular, 20-story structures. Their layout is simple, with a central corridor on each floor leading to a dozen middle-class businesses, split evenly left and right. All the doors are of thick glass, many of which shattered during the quake. The buildings otherwise escaped the quake with little structural damage, though glass, ceiling panels and wall pictures clutter the floor. Because of their position out in the open, the offices suffered little looting. They do stink, however, reeking of fetid rot even after cleaning crews douse the offices in cleaning detergents. Folks don't realize the stench is spectral in nature. The ground floors are also slippery where a cracked water main below both buildings is seeping water up through the foundations.

The office buildings are the first to fall to the Spectres. Within a day of the crash, the walls drip a green Spectral slime, while long ribbons of pus-colored mucus are festooned between the walls and furnishings — chairs, tables and light fixtures. The material is very unpleasant to the touch and surprisingly solid, though it doesn't incur any penalties. Lurkers guard both buildings, waiting above the roof of the entrance lobby, in the stairwells and elevator shafts. Spectres will wait to ambush any visible spooks approaching, waiting for them to penetrate deeper into the office buildings.

The tower itself was once an Underworld watchtower before the fury of the Maelstrom ripped it from its foundations and eventually flung it through the Stormwall. Its exterior is stone and unearthly metal, but it appears functional. The jagged bottom of the tower hangs pointed toward the sky, while the tip is closest to the street. Access is possible through various windows, some of which are inside the office buildings themselves. Spooks traveling in the office buildings can pass through the office walls, but the imbedded tower must be circumnavigated, turning a dozen floors in each building into a strange maze. Many Spectres like to flit from the tower, so the windows have steady traffic.

The tower's layout is simple. There's a central winding staircase, made of stone, even though it's practically upside down and various doors either open at one's feet or are imbedded in the ceiling (from the characters' perspective). The bottommost floor holds prison cells, some of which require skilled climbers to reach. The second story contains guards' quarters for the tower and

consists of four dormitory rooms aligned along the compass points. The third floor contains various chambers, probably used for storage at one point, while the remaining two floors are donut shaped around the stairwell, with arrow slits rounding the exterior tower walls.

The tower leans at an angle on its side, making movement inside tricky. The circular staircase in particular is quite an effort, though it remains navigable with sufficient persistence, thanks largely to an ornamental handrail bolted into the wall. The inconvenience involved in traversing the tower is one reason why the Spectres congregate on the fourth and fifth floors. Like the office buildings, the tower drips with slime inside.

The captive ghosts remain restrained on the fourth floor. When they're not on specific missions, most Spectres venture here to torture or feed on the poor souls or they rest in a proto-hive encompassing the fifth floor. Some perch on the top of the exterior wall to search for potential victims. There are never less than eight Spectres on the fourth floor and another eight on the fifth. The other Spectres remain hidden in the office building or in neighboring structures.

TREASURES

Very few furnishings or other movable objects remain within the tower... they've long-since gone, one way or another. There are some bits of ghostly debris that could come in handy, however. Down on the second floor, there are several sharp pieces of ghostly metal left over from where beds once lay. Some can serve as makeshift blades that can only affect spooks. There're also pieces of ghost metal from the ruined cells on the first floor that can serve as clubs or staves for characters.

More interestingly, however, there's an artifact concealed under a flagstone (now in the slanted

ceiling) on the fifth floor. The flagstone is part of a mosaic depicting a stylized heraldic rose, picked out in gray. The stone is the centerpiece of the mosaic and can be pried loose. Beneath it is a wooden artifact box that contains a six-inch granite statuette of a woman in flowing robes. When a character holds this statuette and infuses it with a point of Vitality, it glows a soft blue and stays this way for 10 minutes. While glowing, it allows the holder to communicate with any number of allies who are within a mile of the statuette.

THE AFTERMATH

The Spectres increase their activities over the next couple of months, assuming the crucible and its allies haven't cleared them out (itself a tough proposition). Rumors of hauntings are rife, which folks assume ties back to the deaths that occurred in the earthquake. Interest in the cults also skyrockets in the region as people seek solace and help from the growing nightmares. Crime, disease and depression all rise steadily as well. Before the building work is even finished, the whole district develops a reputation as a dangerous part of town.

The Spectres don't confine themselves to the immediate area, however. Some follow assorted surveyors, rescue workers and builders back home to different neighborhoods, where they spread their influence. Gradually, crime and suicide rates rise across the city. Several Spectres find their way into the hospitals, where the relatively good supply of fresh ghosts persuades them to set up camp. Mortality rates immediately spiral out of control. City officials, however, ascribe all these negative effects to posttraumatic stress disorder.



CHAPTER TWO: CULT OF PERSONALITY



Thulsa Doom: They shall all drown in lakes of blood. Now they will learn why they are afraid of the dark. Now they will learn why they fear the night.

— Conan the Barbarian

I used to joke that I cheated death when I became a ghost. Now, I know... death wasn't what I should've been worrying about.

— Annie Harper, spirit



This object of this chapter is to provide both players and Storytellers with information about the world in which the chronicle unfolds. The information is contained within two sections, one for player consumption and the other one for Storytellers. The “Players Section” offers the reader “common” or public knowledge about the world. How does one know what’s happening across the globe in relation to the projector phenomenon? After all, Orpheus Group’s destruction and the FBI’s subsequent “witch hunt” only affirmed the viability of projector technology. After all, why bother hunting after projectors and related know-how if none of it was real?

Like the real world, the sources of information are readily at hand: Newspapers, television shows, the Internet and just plain being out there, mingling with other people and hearing what they know. The players will come to understand that their characters can learn about Spectres, projectors and cults by using such resources. Again, the characters learn only what most other people know about these subjects. This, however, offers the players the chance of going to their Storytellers and saying “We heard about this rumor, and our characters would like to investigate it.”

The chapter goes on to discuss more about the various pigment cults across the world, with information derived from public sources plus encounters with cult members trying to recruit the characters. This forms the basis of the crucible’s general knowledge about these cults.

This section also explains how the world’s religions are affected by this newfound knowledge concerning the existence of displaced ghosts (some religions’ belief in an afterlife is based on faith, but now, there is evidence, which changes people’s perception of the matter), how the international scene copes with this knowledge and, finally, how society is reacting to this information.

For the Storytellers, we part the public veils to reveal a pivotal player in current spook-related events. Needless to say, players should not read this section if they want to experience the anxiety and surprise of learning about their world through their own exploration and investigation.

To assist the Storyteller in his chronicle, the “Storytellers Section” exposes the history of the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost and its leader. It provides an overview of the Missionary Work’s organization, how it recruits its members and the methods it uses to keep them loyal (and once loyal, how difficult it is for them to break free). The section contains the cult’s agenda and how a character, with some special knowledge, might uncover certain facts that she was not meant to know.

Please note that the following material treats matters as though certain events in **Crusade of Ashes** and

Shades of Gray have been resolved (predominantly, the FBI’s manhunt, NextWorld’s contracts on the crucible and the discovery of the group responsible for hiring Death Merchants to kill the characters). If they haven’t been, Storytellers should adjust matters as they see fit.

PLAYERS SECTION

As described above, this section offers players publicly accessible information with which to arm their characters when playing in an **Orpheus** chronicle. The knowledge gained herein is easily obtained through public avenues of information available to a majority cross section of the population. We detail some of that knowledge in this portion of the chapter to help players understand the chronicle world and to help facilitate their investigations into unraveling **Orpheus’** secrets and metaplot.

Pivotal to the following information is that the existence of ghosts has not sent the world panicking and rioting, nor increased the murder rate, nor affected the stock market. Many people accept the existence of spooks and move on, or they ignore that aspect of existence (whether through denial or because they simply don’t care enough to feel concerned). Some embrace the knowledge concerning another level of existence by joining cults, which promise such people a stake or share in the hereafter’s power... or protection from it. Of course, not everyone feels secure now that they believe in ghosts, but at the very least, they find some way of dealing with this knowledge.

This section describes how folks contend with this newfound realization. It helps players understand how the existence of ghosts has affected their world, through normal channels of information. Just by “existing” in this world, the knowledge is readily available. Some points described below help characters to access this information and to use it to further their investigation and exploration of matters.

Also contained herein is how the various religions view the existence of the dead and what they tell their worshipers. Some embrace the knowledge and incorporate it into their canons, while others believe projecting to be a new “devil” to combat. On a similar scale is how other countries deal with spooks and how it’s affected their thinking, whether in relation to themselves or their worldview. On a more immediate level, this information also pertains to how society treats the matter or, more importantly, how it’s chosen to capitalize on this new trend. Essentially, whether on the world stage or the next door neighbors’, how has the existence of ghosts subtly, in most cases, been incorporated into society’s outlook?





PUBLIC AVENUES OF INFORMATION

How do we know what we know? Where does it all come from, how do certain ideas stick so well and why do long-lost thoughts rise unbidden? Whether one calls it “tapping into the collective unconscious,” media saturation or water-cooler gossip, somehow we just know. Certainly people focus on their individual jobs and skill-sets, but as social creatures, we strive to create links to our world. We seek common ground in daily news, entertainment sources or personal hobbies. While one person skims the front pages, another absorbs his news through late-night talk show sound bytes — yet, both have an inkling of what’s happening in the world. The two may reach wildly differing conclusions about the same event, of course, but that datum moves from reporter to television to radio to newspaper to sketch comedy to e-mail joke... and at every junction, more individuals learn what’s transpiring in the world.

Nobody knows everything, obviously, but the information carpet bombing the Internet has helped to foster, not to mention the overload from handbills, posters, television spots and movie trailers, means people have many points of reference. Perhaps knowing who got voted off the island last night isn’t socially profound, but it helps people interact with those around them. Information bombing also ensures one gleams scads of ideas without necessarily knowing where one heard them, what spin someone gave them or whether they are at all accurate.

The trick in **Orpheus**, however, is in knowing how to impart such breadth of knowledge to your characters, who are caught in the perpetual Catch-22: The characters know more about their world than any player, yet the characters are inherently restricted by what their players know. This section explores the concept of mundane information by-roads — the stuff we simply come to “know,” through normal means. By considering how your character might learn more about his world, you can become more proactive in the story, giving the Storyteller more hooks to hang the game upon. A list of the most common avenues of public information to exist in a modern context is below.

Note: You must remember to take what follows with a healthy grain of salt. All information gleaned from this process can be correct, partially incorrect, painted by personal bias, highly incomplete or terribly wrong. Your character may have picked up a rumor, and may fully believe it to be true, but only the Storyteller knows for certain.

WORD OF MOUTH

Gossip is still a dirty word, but nearly everyone partakes, whether by spreading hot news or simply by listening hard. It takes a stony, frigid individual to ignore the dirt concerning her peers, family, community, etc. Thus, many indulge in the oldest form of information dissemination. Whether you’re breaking the ice at a party, chatting up a girl on a bus or hanging out with a bunch of ghosts at the

coffee shop, current events are the key. The topic may be local, national or international, and it may concern news, politics, sports, entertainment or the weather. It doesn’t matter. It’s all about sharing our views and listening to what others have to say. Debates and arguments spring up, regardless how well or poorly versed we are on the subject, as we teach, learn, score points or make fools of ourselves. Quite often, the information discussed is erroneous or misinformed, and with every relay, it risks becoming more convoluted.

Most conversations still happen in the flesh (so to speak). People like to talk and enjoy being the center of attention while they relate some new factoid. Water coolers still make for great hangouts, as do the rapidly diminishing smoking areas, the everpresent sports bars and thronging university student centers. People are most comfortable opening up either in familiar environs or when in unusually charged situations, like while feeling the joy of being on vacation, the excitement of a casino or the frustration of being snowed in at the airport. People want to talk to each other, and it takes only a miniscule amount of commonality to initiate contact.

Modern technology enhances our avenues of gossip, possibly turning “word of mouth” into a misnomer. Still, e-mail, text messaging, webpages, blogs, cell phones, etc. are all methods to stay in contact. For those comfortable using them, these technologies provide an amazing way to learn and to dispense information. We all know the problems of digital communication — losing signal, idiot posters, gobs of hate-filled porno spam, hardware crashes, 404 errors — but what are the real benefits?

Your best friend, visiting a girl in the Florida Keys, sends you a draft of an AP article on the recent earthquake back home. His girl uploads an MP3 of some serious spooky ambient jazz, suggesting you listen to it while you read. You put the MP3 on a private server for friends in LA, London and Reykjavik, who are all into ghost tracks. Your old flame in Iceland fires out pictures of haunting sites in Berlin and Vienna, digital shots of her with her new clients. One of them sends you a draft of his upcoming book, while simultaneously blogging how good the MP3 is. That news bite is picked up by a high-traffic counterculture newsgroup, and the band’s website crashes from the traffic. You read the draft in a Wi-Fi café attached to the airport, where you’re waiting for a flight to Montreal for the next project, while old roommates instant message you snapshots from Tokyo of EctoChambers. Here’s a revolutionary network, literally at your fingertips. No dark conspiracies or hoary beasts controlling the night for their means. This is your world... your playground.

PRINT ARTICLE OR PROGRAM SEGMENT

The problem with gossip is the information tends to be lightweight — rarely does the speaker know an issue in depth. Therefore, to delve more deeply into a subject,

people often seek out an expert's opinion. "Expert" is certainly open to interpretation, and that's a key point to remember. Still, print articles (magazine, newspaper and tabloid) or program segments (radio or television) are often summaries of an issue in comparison to dedicated exposes and serious analysis.

Newspapers and news programs are ubiquitous today, and they are only proliferating. They are a solid way of catching up on the state of the world but limited in time and scope. They focus on what just occurred, and in this era of competing ratings, they must move constantly onto the next big thing. Rarely do they follow an issue beyond its 15 minutes of fame, except in the occasional retrospective. If you missed what happened last week, too bad for you. Additionally, because of the ratings chase, news outlets reduce headlines to simplistic sound bytes, with armchair experts on staff to perform running commentary and pop-analysis. This makes very complex situations palatable to the music-video audience, which can then gossip about the event with childlike simplicity.

One of the more fascinating, and troublesome, aspects of articles and segments is the spin factor. Every news report has a bias, whether it's the business section of a neo-conservative national paper or a current-events magazine on public radio. Most reputable sources stick fairly closely to the middle of the political spectrum, but they also tend to stick to the popular story. Many of the issues you'll want

to know about fly in the face of mundane reporting, thus forcing you to search out alternative sources. Occasionally, the mainstream news does a spot on ghosts and projecting (or on the culture obsessed with it), but rarely does it present any revelations for someone well-versed in the field — though it may be important to know what the media thinks of your world. Do they still see you as a sideshow anomaly, a counterculture fad or something to fear? For cutting-edge research, you'll need to plunder information from independent community papers, journals or underground magazines. Unfortunately, television and radio are tightly controlled medias, and advertising sponsors dictate most investigative journalism, but small local cable or radio stations (even pirate ones) eagerly explore society's fringes. Finally, the Web is an unrestricted avenue in which to publish, though good sites tend to attract the cream of the net. Obviously, since anyone can post somewhere on the Internet, these articles should be scrutinized most closely for veracity, for they are likely rife with erroneous facts, hasty assumptions and ill-informed opinion.

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment mill is sometimes seen as the dark side of news reporting. It cares far less about level coverage and more about "what's hot," even though it still derives its material directly from news feeds. Popular entertainment spans the gamut from late-night talk shows, entertainment buzz reports and



THE MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS YOU

April
18th Issue

\$2.00

WON'T BELIEVE IS TRUE!

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY AND GLOBAL CRYOGENICS ORGANIZATION TURN DEATH-ROW INMATES INTO GHOSTS TO STEAL SECRETS!! TURTLE-BOY TAPPED AS HEAD OF PROJECT: FLATLINE!

BY ROMANA CLAY

THE MONITOR has discovered the horrible, apocalyptic truth about a secret, globe-spanning conspiracy reaching the highest levels of the National Security Agency! The NSA was using ultra-secret technology to turn death-row inmates into wraiths, to spy on American citizens!

The secretive NSA was in league with leading parascientists from the nefarious and now defunct, Orpheus Group in developing Project: Flatline, a terrible scheme where experiments in projection were first tested on serial killers, rapists and child molesters, turning them into black-bag operatives for the agency. Once dead, these human monsters were to be turned loose on the global citizenry — on people that included American citizens! — to steal information, to maim, to torture and to murder the agency's enemies! Possessing terrible, dark powers, the agency's would-be assassins could travel the Netherworld to find and attack specific targets, to carry out the agency's unscrupulous Master Plan.

How was the plan carried out? The two sinister partners bribed corrupt legislators and corrections officials to find condemned inmates who had survived near-fatal accidents. Orpheus Group's covert research theorized that multiple near-death experiences laid a subject's soul bare to the turbid vibrations of the Netherworld, vibrations not felt by anyone who hadn't shared the same ordeals. Orpheus Group's scientists injected these prisoners with a diabolic narcotic and "flatlined" them, so that, once their evil, violent souls were separated from their physical bodies, they could perform the agency's bidding! These deviants could soon project their vile consciousnesses beyond the veil separating life from death. But that's not all! The NSA and its macabre partner proved lax in their security measures, allowing the villainous phantasms to escape as ghosts, leaving their empty corpses behind! THE MONITOR learned that the marauding spooks of Project: Flatline are at large and can strike at a target anywhere on Earth, while their vacant cadavers rot in unmarked cargo containers held in the same government warehouse containing a UFO that the government moved from Area 51!

THE MONITOR uncovered the NSA's and Orpheus Group's murky schemes thanks to the Turtle-Boy, who was tapped to act as head of the project. Fortunately for us, he turned it down for patriotic reasons!

"I couldn't do it," the Turtle-Boy said, in an exclusive interview with this reporter. (For the complete Romana Clay interview with the Turtle-Boy, please turn to page 8.) "The plan was simply immoral. The wages of death are a natural and permanent thing. Mankind wasn't meant to cross over to the Other Side at will. Experimenting with the lines separating the dead from the living is something that tears at the very moral fabric of our society! And even more important than that, it's an invasion of our God-given American freedoms! If they only planned on using it to catch foreign terrorists or to steal secrets from the evil axis of America's enemies, I might have been persuaded, but Orpheus Group had other plans! It wanted to market the technology as a service, selling it to the highest bidder. And look what that brought the company. Why, then Orpheus Group could have used it to spy on God-fearing American citizens, for profit even! No, I couldn't do it. Our freedoms are precious to us, and to see them besmirched by those corrupt and wicked people sickened me. It's simply too dangerous!"

AT RIGHT:
TURTLE-BOY
BABYSITTING
FOR FRIENDS
ON HIS
REPORTED
VACATION
TO THE
JERSEY
SHORE





hot-button call-in programs to glamour magazines (both women's and men's), the tabloid press and comics (or underground comix) to reality shows, TV movies-of-the-week and dross Web-portals built on hype. While these forms of popular entertainment rarely provide depth of information, they do present an important snapshot of what the world currently thinks. If you find yourself falling out of the loop for whatever reason (long cryo-sleep, deep cover, extensive vacation), catching several talk-back segments or late-night shows will help you catch up with what's happening these days. Are ghosts still hot? Are people worried about yesterday's earthquake? Floods? Plagues? Has the media latched onto new, freaky cults?

Of course, the rapier- (or machete-) like wit of such shows' hosts is trained to elicit a reaction. They need to hook the audience's attention, whether by amusing, engrossing, revolting or frightening them. The punch line is often far more important than the facts, and more average Joes or Janes filter their news via *Saturday Night Live* than by reading the paper. Because the pop world is so superficial, however, sometimes the one element the shows focus on is serendipitously important to you. Thus, they might present it in a new, irreverent light, revealing new angles and interpretations.

Additionally, having a finger on pop culture's pulse, recognizing the Zeitgeist that encompasses you, is tremendously important for being in tune with people around you. While you may not be a fan of *Simpsons* quote marathons, knowing about *The Simpsons* is a necessary ingredient for connecting with a section of society. At the end of the day, it's one more track for information and another way to network with those in your environment.

INTERNET SEARCHES

Research, these days, no longer starts at the library. It starts on the Net, with Google or one of its ilk. Not just a proper name anymore, "Google" is becoming a verbal noun ("I Googled him and discovered..."), and it's an oft used tool for research. The question is, how useful is this method? As with all things on the Net, search engines are both blessings and curses. A great deal depends on the available data surrounding the subject matter. Optimally, you want something with a reasonable quantity of information but not a flood. Web space is cheap and accessible in many parts of the world now. Thus, anyone with interest and a little know-how can establish a personal website. Folks use these soapboxes to promote themselves, their likes or their points of view. Nothing restricts content or opinion, although not everyone is heard. More so, some search engines base their searches on the number of hits

received or the links a website possesses — hardly worthy qualifiers in some instances.

Regardless, link to link to link, you can stream through reams of information for endless hours, learning everything and nothing at all. As with any research tool, you must learn how to use the search engine well to benefit, but unlike a research library, information is rarely organized logically, and the dross can be both enchanting and stupefying. There are strong communities devoted to improving the net. Some host encyclopedias, online dictionaries and texts that are free to all; others cross-reference additional links, purging the dead and rating what's left; some even archive important events. Sadly, most of these groups have limited funding or grow bored and stagnate when their owners drift away, leaving abandoned websites like tumbleweed-strewn ghost towns, deep in cyberspace.

What's fascinating, however, is how much material is available on the Web, especially concerning the obscure or the arcane. Placing files on a secure server allows you to share them with a select few or to access them from any Internet connection but simultaneously keeps them hidden, effectively, in plain view. Digital information is easy to lose but difficult to permanently erase. There's inevitably a backup. You just have to find it.

APPLICATIONS OF DATA

So, you know what avenues of information are available, but how does that tell you anything more about the world of **Orpheus**? Well, understanding the media is equally important to understanding the information they impart. Now that we've dealt with those information outlets available to most everyone, here's what they have to say about the world. Consider all of this public access data, though it remains the Storyteller's purview to dictate what is accurate and what is myth.

CULTS

The media has "confirmed" the concept of life after death, which is now "accepted" throughout the world. Yet, while the majority mentally files the notion of ghosts under "interesting but not relevant to today," like cloning or nuclear attacks, more fragile or impressionable sorts react fervently. What they know, or perhaps experienced directly, attracts or repels them, and they become obsessed with how ghosts fit into their lives. These personalities are given to neuroses, fixating on the current state of the world, often believing a sweeping change is set to occur. Some may not correlate every bizarre occurrence to a "ghost," but even a general awareness of these supernatural beings can change one's perspective.

Here's the public buzz on cults:

Dealing With Addictions Page

Addiction Discussion

>Drug Addictions

>One Year

Author: sadgirl

Member

Posts: 6

Reply

One Year

—
i just wanted to share with you all that i'm so happy for my boyfriend. he was really strung out on smack a couple years ago, but i stuck with him and me and his sister helped get him into a rehab program. another guy we knew had gone to first step, and was doing ok. so that's where we took him. now it's been one year since he took that first step, and it's been great, they have a really good counseling groups, and doctors, and the bf is still clean.

Author: drkapa

Charter Member

Posts: 89

Reply

Re: One Year

—
That's great to hear, sadgirl. Give him all the support and understanding you can — he has to do this himself, but it's much easier with a loving support network.
Dr. Kapa

Author: m900dred

Unregistered User

Reply

Help!

—
What is First Step? I have a problem. My brother used to be heavily into heroin but cleaned up a few years ago. He had an accident at work last year and really screwed up his knee. Now, he's on disability. He's on strong meds, but about once a month, after he goes to the clinic, he comes back all zoned. It's right around when he gets his disability check, but I don't know if he's really going to the doctor. He's all drowsy and glossy eyed and *****ed up for a couple of days, before recovering. Then, the next month, it happens all over again.

Author: sadgirl

Member

Posts: 7

Reply

Re: Help!

—
hey, you really should call first step. they often have signs up at clinics, rehab centers, community centers, etc.etc.etc. i think they also have a webpage. they start you off with counseling, group prayer and medicine but not like methadone. it's totally not addictive.

Author: step10

Unregistered User

Reply

Re: First Step

—
Thanks, sadgirl. I'm happy to hear First Step helped you and your boyfriend. As for m900dred, you should definitely check First Step out. We're here for people like your brother. You can learn more at www.firststep.com, or call our hotline, 1-800-555-STEP. Or just come by the center for our weekly session. This week, Dr. Sarah Franks herself is giving a talk about "self-healing through spirit." Check it out.
JD

Author: sadgirl

Member

Posts: 8

Re: Dr. Franks

—
i just wanted to say that i met dr. franks and she is the warmest, coolest person ever. she's a very strong woman, and totally honest and filled with sunny thoughts. she's like the grandmother i always wanted. go meet her!

Pilgrims Flock to Holy Epicenter

Heeding the call of Reverend Cale O'Reilly, hundreds of pilgrims have come to the city. The Seventh-day Adventist minister claims the recent earthquake was a "sign from Heaven, heralding the next step in the return of the Glorious Savior himself... Jesus Christ." The pilgrims have tried to establish a tent city around the disaster area to await more divine signs, forcing the authorities to intercede and to arrest several members of the congregation without incident.

Reverend Cale O'Reilly, considered an atypical Adventist minister, leads the Children of the Angelic Host, a once-small Seventh-day Adventist church, whose congregation swelled after Reverend O'Reilly recovered, miraculously some say, from pancreatic cancer. Reverend O'Reilly claims the spirit of Christ healed him and told him to go forth and recruit. In a recent press conference, Reverend O'Reilly announced that the recent earthquake marked the city with a "Godly Light" and that the angelic host is now among us, preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Sermonizing every evening from the Adventist Temple on 7th and Bloor St., Reverend O'Reilly often calls all believers to make a pilgrimage to witness the holy spectacle. This has spurred hundreds of Adventists from all over North America to travel here. The upcoming weekend will only see hundreds more fly in from around the world.

City officials are still deciding how to deal with the pilgrims, since the quake's epicenter is still considered an emergency-relief zone and unsafe.



Reverend O'Reilly and his followers await more divine signs... Like this one?

27

DAILY STAR

EXCERPT FROM TONITE! TONITE!, WITH HOST TODD COLE

COLE:

So there are 400 cultists - excuse me, pilgrims - camped out around the earthquake site, with more arriving by the hour. Now, get this. These guys believe the quake signaled the end of the world? C'mon people, the debut of Fox News was the first sign that the jig was up. And that was years ago!
(WAIT FOR LAUGHTER)

COLE:

So, the cultists claim their leader, Reverend O'Reilly... how to put this delicately... "passed"... the cancer out of his body. How do people know this? If someone even knocks on the stall door, I can't go.
(WAIT FOR LAUGHTER)

COLE:

Did he show them proof? Now, these pilgrims see angels in the sky. I think someone spiked the holy wine, padre. News Alert: Watch for runs on Nike sneakers or grape Kool-Aid.

THE WEEKLY MERCURY

A6

Police Report: Possession of Drug Paraphernalia/Trafficking

PARKSIDE — Police, last night, arrested two people involved in a drug sale. They were apprehended and caught behind the First Step Community Center on 11th Avenue.

The dealer was one Steven Roach (M/33), a known associate of the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang. He was found with five grams of pigment and a duffel bag containing an electronic scale. Steven Roach was charged with trafficking in a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance (pigment) and illegal possession of a firearm. The police booked Roach. He's currently being held at the County Detention Center, awaiting his bail hearing.

The purchaser, one Paul Kineson (M/25), was purportedly a recovered heroin abuser and a counselor at First Step until they fired him last week. The police charged Kineson with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance (pigment). He's currently being held at the County Detention Center, awaiting his bail hearing.

Hey Kate,

Thought you should read this. I sent Cotton over to the park as a ghost, like you asked, and recorded the preacher using a parabolic mike. Sure enough, the guy spots Cotton (who's invisible) and starts preaching to him. Here's a transcript:

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

That is what God told Ezekiel, who lived in a time of apostasy, an age of casting out one's beliefs and turning away from the Holy Truth. A time when faith was failing and people turned their face from God. Does that sound like today, like this era of backsliding?

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

He didn't just say this to Ezekiel or to those who rebelled in Ezekiel's time. He meant it for today, also, for you, brother, son of man, and for your son, and his son, who insist on rebelling today. He is saying, "It is not yet too late. You can still turn back to Me. Why do you insist on dying, O house of America?"

We must not ignore this question. As Adventists, we have a responsibility to our church so that it can fulfill its mission. The Church of the Angelic Host knows that we must watch over the whole church, so it remembers the gospel. Some days, we must perform surgery — and the scalpel is sharp, and the healing process painful, but our sublime God is the Master Surgeon and none truly perish under His care.

The Reverend Cale O'Reilly has been blessed. He was sick and blind, but he has been healed, and the scales have fallen from his eyes. Now, he can see. He is surrounded by the divine host, and he would show them to you ... as he has shown them to me. Soon, I will be going on, upward to the Missionary. I see the angels around us, announcing that the final days are nigh. In my dreams, I see the forces of Satan and the awesome face of God. You must join us, seek salvation before it's too late....



LOST?

ALONE?

ISOLATED?

DEPRESSED?

We meet you at the crossroads and help you find your path. You'll discover that the journey upon the road less traveled does not have to be a solitary one... We will be with you every step of the way.

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What is the
Aphrodite Society?

Who Are it's
Members?

How Can it
Help Me?

How Can I be a
Part of the Society?

What Is the Aphrodite Society?

Welcome to the Aphrodite Society. Experience Life.

The Aphrodite Society is a new idea a new community a new universe a new philosophy for our lives. The Aphrodite Society is dedicated to enhancing the happiness of its members.

The Aphrodite Society offers those who are lost, confused or alone connections that turn life into a positive, rewarding and exciting experience. We help build self-esteem and confidence through relationship opportunities, social interactions and a like-minded community of ideas and information.

We recognize that all human beings hope to connect. Our history and mythology is filled with elaborate ceremony and ritual — ways of sharing tradition and opening the circle into a great family. We have lost many of those opportunities in the modern rat race, however. That is why the Aphrodite Society was created — to facilitate those crucial connections.

OVERHEARD TEENAGERS

"Check it out," the boy wearing the toque said.

"Yeah, I saw it. Lucy's already got tickets," said his friend, a white kid with blonde dreadlocks.

"Damn. You gonna get me one?"

"No prob. Y'know, she joined up with that Aphrodite thing?"

"Your sis? Weren't some of them busted for hooking?"

"Shut the fuck up. You're such a 'tard. It's... it's like a dating thing, like a chatroom," dreadlocks said.

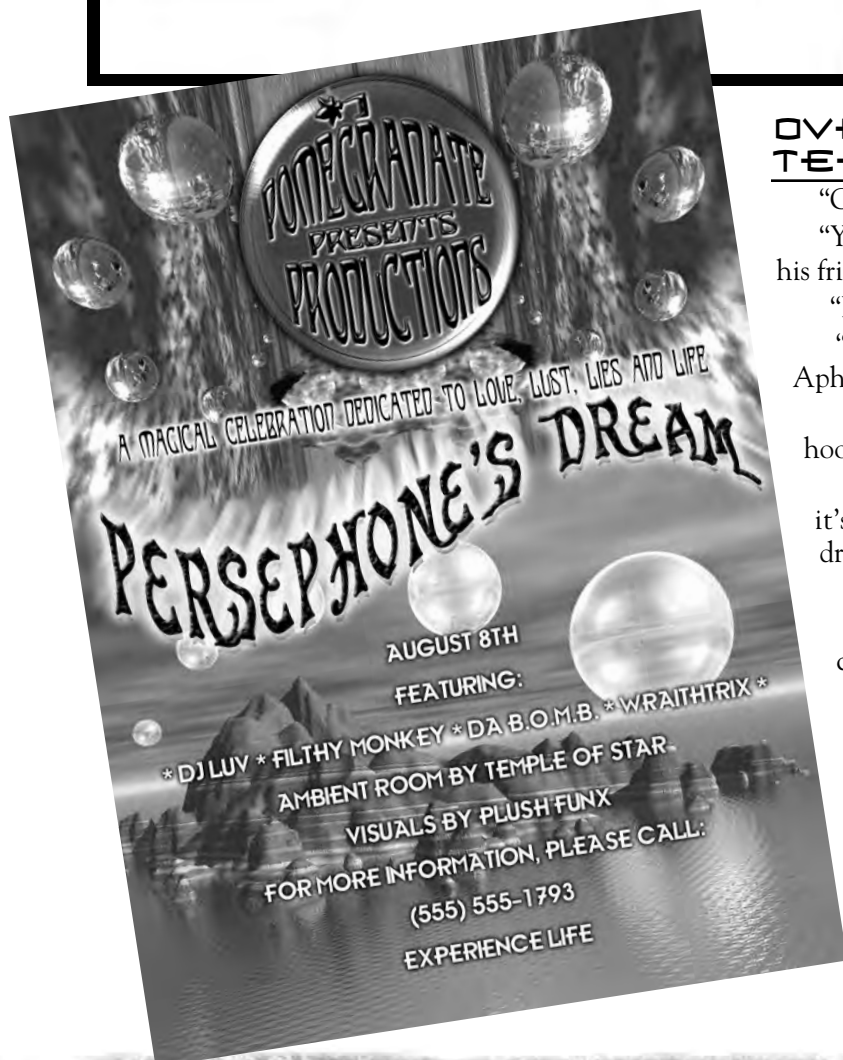
"Oh yeah? That how she got the tickets?"

"Uh-huh. Some kinda VIP thing. She came home last weekend with this killer tat."

"Really? They made her do it?"

"Naw, not like that. A bunch of them who joined up went out and celebrated, and all six of them got the same inks — hearts with barbed wire. They're going to have a chill room with a tattoo artist set up, and anyone they pull out of the crowd is gonna get inked."

"That's fucking cool."



The Machine Spaketh Recent Entries

Recent Entries

Friends

History

Info

Previous 25

Entries

Counting Down to Projection

So I'm sitting here, twiddling my thumbs. Got confirmations from over a dozen people, and just waiting for the last stragglers to sign in reporting scores or to watch them sneak awake into "idle" mode like cowards. This is the biggest s anee yet. We need a name for this thing, maybe digi-s anee? e-s anee? Ghost hackers, maybe.

I've got my finger on the button, holding a slightly sticky dime bag of pigment, rubbing it between forefinger and thumb. Has my dealer seen what I'm about to see? MadHacker and Doc Axe just pinged me, so now, we're 14. They each scored, though Axe only got a gram, and he has to split it with his girl. Will they see more or less than the rest of us? Will they hear the same thing? And there are 15 minutes left until blast off.

Posted by Guy at 11:46 PM

The Plan

Next Monday. All y'all. Crisscross the country, all plugged into satellite. All y'all tune it, turn on, plug in. The plan is to take the hit around five to midnight, then stare Clockwork Orange-like at the screens, while keeping a chat open. See if we can reach out and touch something.

Posted by Guy at 3:19 AM.

Score!

My heart goes pitter patter. There must be an easier way to hook up on pig. My regular, ah, how-you-say, supplier, was picked up by the cops two nights ago, and I'm scoping for a backup source. I hope I didn't miss anything last night. I was sniffing fumes and saw only a vague flicker-hiss. Doc Axe posted to his blog, verifying he heard "Radio <pop>Death." MadHacker finally got his video card plugged in, so we're going to try a mass witnessing next week. Like a dozen people. Be there.

Posted by Guy at 2:33 AM.

Contact x2

Axe and I both saw it again. And we found another message board where a couple of guys were discussing the same thing. And we all think we saw each other, in the haze. No clue how that happened. Can't make out the voices, tonight. Zilla's itching to try. I've heard the military is using pigment, so can they, like, see into your soul?

Posted by Guy at 6:59 AM.

What the Hell Was That?

Axe and I were chatting. So was 'Zilla-love. Zilla was on meth, while Axe and I each picked up some pigment. We both saw some crazy shit. Zilla saw dead space. Axe was watching his folks' TV, but I had the video running into my box, like Zilla. Axe and I both heard something crystal clear for one sec, "hundreds dead," and saw dozens of dead faces flashing by. Then, a broken "Death signing out." Coolest goddamn thing. I gotta try this shit again.

Posted by Guy at 12:46 AM.

RELIGION AND GHOSTS

By definition, religion is about belief in and reverence for a power or powers beyond human ken, which is related to the creation or direction of the universe. All religion is built upon faith in what cannot be touched, seen or physically proven — messianic miracles to the contrary. Thus, when groups such as Orpheus proved spirits existed in the modern world, institutionalized religion experienced a surge in membership. People realized there might be more in Heaven and Earth than they had thought. Savvy religious leaders capitalized on this paradigm shift and made bold statements on their view of ghosts. Truly, for most people the fact that ghosts exist doesn't change their lives one iota, and many skeptics argue that you can't prove spirits as real, but for those seeking proof... the universe has delivered some promise.

BUDDHISM

The Buddha teaches that life is filled with suffering. This suffering is caused by desire and ends when desire ceases. Followers can achieve enlightenment through right conduct, wisdom and meditation. Until then,

however, the soul continues through the cycle of birth, suffering, death and rebirth.

Buddhists see death as a breaking down of the material body. The soul then awakens, and a new journey begins. Some Buddhists liken this process to a candle flame. When a lit candle touches an unlit wick, the light passes from candle to candle. The actual flame does not pass over, it is still as it was, but it is the cause of the second fire.

Not all souls pass on immediately, however. They may become earthbound. Many Buddhists believe in ghosts, though the term has an evil or negative connotation. Some describe ghosts as bundles of *yin* energy that have shadow but not form or form but not shadow. Conversely, humans live in the *yang* world. It is said there are as many types of ghosts as grains of sand in the Ganges River. They may be wealthy kings, holding sway over ghost realms, or lawless beggars — the poor ghosts are typically the ones who trouble the living.

Various Buddhist sects hold different opinions, of course, selecting only a few of the Buddha's teachings to guide them. Thai Buddhists, or practitioners of Theravada Buddhism, for example, believe a great host of spirits who play major or minor roles in one's life populate the

world. Phi spirits have power over humans. While some of these spirits have always been in this state, others are the reincarnated souls of humans who died through violence or mystery or whose burial was improperly performed. Phi can be found in the forests, in trees and flowers, in animals, in water, in earth, etc. and can be harmful or helpful. One type of hateful ghost is the phi pop, or ghoulish spirit, which invades a person's body and consumes his internal organs. In contrast to the malevolent ghosts are the chao, protector spirits, like the chao thi, the guardian of the house. Families ask it to protect the entire household from illness and misery.

Chinese Buddhists have a strong belief in ancestor worship. The Hungry Ghost Festival, or Zhongyuan Yulan Jie, centers on the Buddhist belief of the day of redemption for the dead. In one legend, Mu Lian, a pupil of Buddha, saw his mother sent to Hell for a life of wicked and miserly acts. She became a hungry ghost, suffering eternally in the lowest depths of Hell. Mu Lian journeyed to her with rice to ease her pain, but the rice turned to ash. Mu Lian prayed, thus touching the Buddha with compassion. He decreed that once a year, the gates of Hell would open so ghosts could roam the Earth to be fed. During the festival, people leave offerings of food and paper money for the ghosts and light lanterns to guide their way. When people perform these rituals properly, these offerings transform into a ghostly state and become of use to ghosts.

CHRISTIANITY

To say a wide range of disparate groups clusters under the umbrella of Christianity would be an understatement. Ranging from the Roman Catholic Church, the largest Christian church in the world today, to its oldest relation in the Eastern Orthodox Church, to dozens of post-Reformation groups, to regional sects, Christianity covers an enormous gamut. Many Christian movements view the world's confirmation of ghostly beings in stride, sometimes relegating them to the roles of angels and devils. Those with a strong belief in religious miracles may have an easier time accepting paranormal experiences. The Bible itself references ghosts, such as in Mark 6:48-50 "He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified," and in Luke 24:37-39, "But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.'"

The actual crux of the issue for religious institutions isn't a belief in ghosts, but the sanctity or blasphemy of projecting. Most religious institutions have made no





A Statement of Confidence in the Angelic Host

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes, through God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, that angels may walk amongst us. We know every person is valuable in the eyes of God, and with the help of the angelic host, we may live in harmony according to God's Word.

The technology of projecting, however, raises serious ethical concerns. First among these is personal safety. Many of these technologies are not fully tested or approved by governing scientific bodies and tread dangerously upon hubris. Are there intrinsic problems with venturing into the realm of angels? Secondly, could we not be exposing ourselves to sin, through negative spiritual energies of which we are not yet familiar? Thirdly, if projection firms, such as Orpheus Group, truly "hunt" ghosts, are they not striking at the angels themselves? This is heresy through ignorance. At this point, without further study, only egotistical or self-indulgent individuals possess the arrogance to venture into God's sphere, putting themselves, and all of us, at great risk.

official comment about projectors or projector firms. Pentecostal churches favor such spectacles, however, for they seem to strengthen the Pentecostal belief in charismata ("Gifts of the Spirit"). Pentecostal services are often marked by miraculous manifestations, such as speaking in tongues, faith healing and ecstatic experiences. Therefore, they welcome anyone who claims the power of projection.

Presbyterian churches are the most theologically liberal of American Protestant denominations and do not automatically ascribe ghosts to heavenly or infernal roles. There is some room for an alternative, if currently unfathomable, view. The Presbyterians leave this determination to the individual, on a case-by-case basis.

Methodists are moderately liberal and believe the Bible is the primary source of doctrine, modified by tradition, reason and experience. They do not venerate saints nor believe in purgatory. They often believe Heaven and Hell are metaphorical concepts. As such, they are less likely to believe in ghosts. Methodists are also permissive, allowing birth control, abortion, divorce and tolerate gambling and drinking. Many, therefore, have no issues with self-proclaimed projector.

Seventh-day Adventists believe the Advent, or the return of Jesus, will happen in the near future. They identify the dead as merely sleeping, or unconscious, waiting for Jesus to return and restore the faithful. Ghosts are clearly angels, and their increased presence signals the imminent advent. Adventists also believe in

the gift of prophecy, stating Ellen White, whose visions established the group, was the Lord's messenger. They believe Ellen White wrote the truth and described a vision of Christ and his angels battling Satan, detailing the end of this Earth's history. This is how the Adventists know to prepare.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is a diverse body of beliefs, philosophy and traditions that describe life as part of one eternal truth. Hinduism believes both good and evil are natural and part of a supreme being with many forms and natures. It is a very flexible and accepting faith, not limited to a single scripture, prophet or institution. Hinduism embraces new traditions and cultures and transforms itself according to the modern world. It believes in both reincarnation and science, in a multitude of heavens and hells and in the physical world.

Humans are born to a life based upon what they did in a past life. Each person's purpose is to experience life. When a soul accrues enough good karma, through positive actions and faith in God, he becomes one with the universe and ascends the path of the sun. Those who have not yet achieved that state walk the path of the moon and may travel to numerous hells or heavens before they are reborn to another life. Hindus believe in a multitude of worlds, vast sun filled heavens and demonic places. These realms are not intended to punish nor to reward souls, but to teach them. All of existence is concerned with learning about itself, and thus, it does not matter, in some senses, where the



dead go. In any case, they learn important lessons before returning to Earth.

Hinduism accepts a wide selection of spirits, from the good Gandharvas and divine devas to the dangerous and demonic: Asuras, the mischief makers; Pretas, ghosts; Bhutas, spook-spirits; and Rakshasas, seen as giants or vampires. Some ghosts can enter another's body and experience the world through that person's senses. As in Buddhism, Hinduism describes ghosts as hungry spirits, to reinforce their condition of misery. These hungry ghosts often live in abject conditions, dwelling in holes filled with urine and feces, possessing a distended stomach and a long, thin, needle-like neck that is too narrow to swallow food. A few subsist on moths, catching them by opening mouths filled with fire.

There are three main differences in Hindu beliefs, though the distinctions are quite subtle. One belief, the Advaita, suggests the entire universe is one self-same reality. There is no difference between God and souls — souls are neither separate nor distinct. They simply cannot see they are a piece of the whole. Visishtadvaita, or qualified non-dualism, says again that there is no separation between God and the soul — as God transforms into nature and earthly forms, however, peculiarities or distinct qualities develop. These differences between the souls are purely illusion. The final major philosophy is Dvaita, which states the soul is separated from God at creation. Both God and the soul have an independent existence — reality is split into the One and the Many. In this philosophy, the soul is reborn and dies until it achieves its own liberation.

Hinduism is still centered around India, a country marked by technological acumen and tremendous poverty. The poor obviously care little about projectors or the new acceptance of spirits. They believe as they have always believed. There is a large body of tech-savvy middle- and upper-class Indians, however, who are fascinated by the technology of spirituality. These Hindus, many of whom travel to Europe and North America, do focus on Orpheus-type groups, looking for a chance to study the science, either for job opportunities, to resolve curiosity or to import the technology back to India. These people often believe in the Dvaita or Visishtadvaita philosophies rather than the Advaita — who see little need to obsess over spirits.

ISLAM

Islam is the second largest religion in the world — but also the fastest growing. Estimates suggest that somewhere within the next 50 years, Muslims will outnumber Christians. Muslims are guided by the Word of Allah as related to the prophet Muhammad. God

delivered his message to Muhammad through the angel, Gabriel, forming the basis of the Qur'an. Additionally, the Five Pillars, the cornerstones of Islam, guide all Muslims. The first of the Pillars is the shahadah, the faith in Allah and his prophet, Muhammad. The second is salat, the five daily prayers to Mecca. Zakat is the third, and is a financial contribution to the community. The fourth is sawm, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan for purification. The fifth pillar is the hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim must make once in his or her life.

Muslims who submit to the will of Allah are saved and taken to Paradise when they die, where eternal spiritual and physical pleasure awaits them. Conversely, Allah consigns those who break with Him to suffer in Hell. Many Muslims readily believe in supernatural forces, especially in the form of angels, or Mala'ikah. Non-angelic spirits are called jinn, or jinni. Allah created these beings from smokeless flame. Jinn who dwell among mankind are aamar, jinn who are malevolent are shaitan, and the most powerful jinn are known as ifreet. Like humans, these beings are capable of piety and sin. Thus, some are heretics, and some are devout.

There are two major divisions amongst Muslims, as well as numerous minor sects. Sunni Muslims are the most orthodox. Their relationship with Allah is personal and direct, not mediated through a "priest." They accept the first four caliphs (or religious leader) as the rightful successors of Muhammad. The Shia, or Shiite, Muslims hold the same fundamental beliefs as other Muslims, but reject the first three caliphs. They only accept the fourth Imam, Ali, as the legitimate successor to Muhammad. The initial split between the two sects occurred over choosing Muhammad's successor: The Sunni believed it should be an elected position from among Muhammad's followers, while the Shia believed the successor should come from Muhammad's family. Regardless, suffering and martyrdom are important themes to the Shia — they remember how the Sunni massacred Ali's son, Husain, and his followers. Imams also continually expand and reinterpret the holy doctrine in Shia Islam, unlike the Sunnis.

Orthodox Islamic leaders do not accept the concept of projection. While some Muslims encourage scientific inquiry and exploration, religious leaders rarely accept this when it questions the foundations of the Muslim religion or their way of life. The Qur'an says spirits can never return to Earth, though people can experience visions through prayer or dreams. If ghosts manifest, however, traditional Muslims may treat them as jinn or ifreet, depending on whether they're friendly or dangerous. In the holy doctrines, however, the Muslims don't

offer jinn any importance to the lives of men, though, recommending you ignore these troublesome spirits.

Projection technology is banned in most Muslim countries, though in many cases, this has more to do with national-security concerns than religious piety. Any projection-related technology is likely to be in the government's hands. Not all Muslims are against such explorations, however. The Sufi sect, for example, follows the mystic's path, or *tariqa*, which uses mental and physical exercises to focus one's communion with Allah. Sufis believe they can achieve a direct and personal relationship with Allah through meditation and self-discipline. Sufis maintain they are not learning new facts about reality that are not discussed in the Qur'an, but rather, investigating new ways to understand reality as it is described. Therefore, Sufis (individually) may be curious about the concept of projection.

JUDAISM

Judaism teaches that after this life, there is the Olam Ha-Ba (the World to Come). God rewards the righteous, who travel to Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden), a place of perfection and peace — the living cannot truly envision it, however, just as the blind cannot truly envision color. Conversely, the average soul travels to a region of punishment and/or purification, known as Gehinnom (Gehenna, in Yiddish), or She'ol. The Torah doesn't particularly explore either because Judaism focuses more on life than the afterlife. This lack of dogma leaves much open

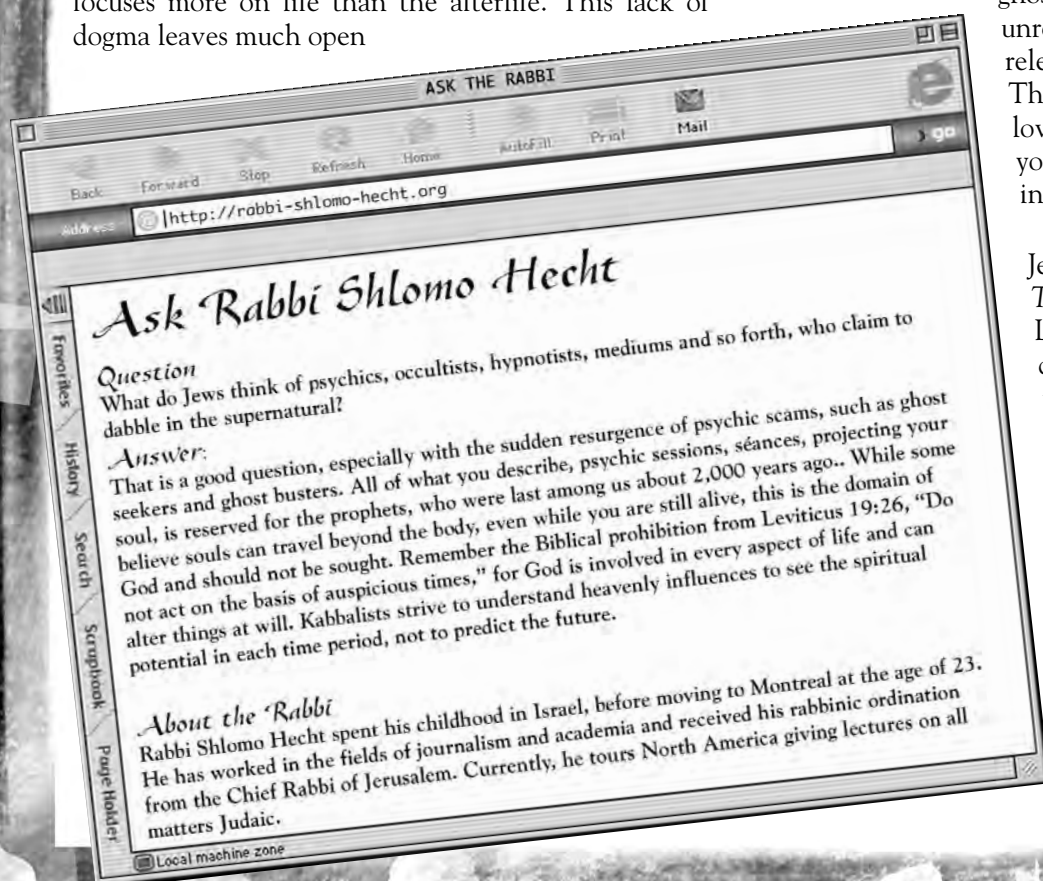
for personal interpretation. Some liken Gan Eden to a Christian Heaven, and Gehinnom to Hell, where personal demons torture the wicked. Others believe in reincarnation (called *gilgul ha'ne'shamot* in Hebrew). Many sources suggest the soul has three chances to improve itself, after which it continues. An alternate view suggests souls stay dormant until the coming of the messiah, when they will be resurrected.

Orthodox Jews see ghosts as the souls of the deceased, who cannot yet go on. The period of penance and purification in Gehinnom does not exceed 12 months, however, at which time the soul ascends to Olam Ha-Ba. If the souls were truly wicked, though, God punishes them for the full 12 months. At that point, some believe the corrupt soul is utterly destroyed, while others state the soul continues to exist in a state of constant remorse.

Orthodox and conservative Jews frown on or dismiss the new science of projecting. They consider psychic powers as prophecy, which is reserved for the realm of prophets. Thus, the living should not interfere with the journey of the soul — that is the providence of the messiah. Conversely, liberal or secular Jews have few issues with projecting or the notion of ghosts, though it is up to each person to decide his own truth. It is not uncommon, however, for liberal Jews to forego the notion that purification only lasts 12 months. They see

ghosts as tied to the living through unresolved anger, who only find release when the mortals die. Thus, if you argue bitterly with a loved one right before she dies, you may be responsible for holding her in the hereafter.

Both orthodox and liberal Jews endorse the classic text, *The Way of God*, by Rabbi Moshe Luzzatto. Luzzatto explains that, during sleep, the soul's ties to the body are loosened. While most dreams are simply "day residue," this great freedom enables the soul to access many possibilities denied to those who are awake. This includes diverse spiritual influences, from the positive and truthful to the false, misleading and negative. Therefore, orthodox Jews maintain the custom of reciting the Shema (embodying the





Oneness of God) as the last thing said before sleep, to better focus on God's goodness.

OTHER BELIEF SYSTEMS

While Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism cover a large percentage of the world's beliefs, they by no means represent the full gamut of worship. There are dozens of distinct concepts of faith... hundreds if you include all the splinter sects that broke with the main institutions. The more dogmatic frown on radical ideas that shake their foundations, while the more liberal, at the very least, consider these new questions.

• Rastafarianism

Marcus Garvey's African Orthodox Church initially inspired the Rastafarians. This Jamaican movement developed around Garvey's works and declared Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie the expected messiah. Although Garvey himself had little involvement with the new religion, its adherents considered him a prophet. Rastafarians condemn European colonialism and slavery. They wish to return to Africa to defeat oppression and believe in the divinity of Haile Selassie. One of their precepts is the religious, not recreational use of ganja, or marijuana. They proscribe its use only for holy or medicinal purposes and as an aid in meditation, thus allowing the user to perceive profound mystical insight. Pigment initially penetrated the Rasta movement through the new generation of youth, who do not hold to the religious tenants as seriously. It is slowly making its way into the world scene, however. Many of the faithful are embracing pigment, without realizing the drug's full dangers.

• Alawis

The Alawis are a distant branch of Islam who "strayed" so far from that belief that most Muslims do not consider them Islamic. The Alawis live mostly in Syria, and their name translates as "followers of Ali." They believe God can become flesh, as in the case of Ali, who created Muhammad. Secondly, they reject the Qur'an, and while they live by the Five Pillars of Islam, they interpret the pillars in an allegorical sense. Their third distinct belief is in reincarnation, where all men are reborn seven times before they can return to the stars, where Ali is their prince. Those who are not faithful enough return as Christians, while infidels are reborn as animals. According to the faith, however, women have no souls and, thus, do not reincarnate. Because of these views, Alawis are very interested in the idea of ghosts and projection, if they can use it to improve their faithfulness. Women, however, are banned from such studies. As a result, the military-minded Syrian government is said to be experimenting in projecting, secretly using Alawis as guinea pigs, since they do not fear the process.

• Voodoo

Voodoo, or Vodoun, is a traditional belief system found predominantly in Haiti. It is a blend of Christianity, West African magic and animism. The religion is polytheistic, with hundreds of gods, or Loa, who followers worship in daily life. The houngan and mambo priests and priestesses who treat with the Loa, call upon them for favors and blessings. These gods possess, or "mount," participants to act upon the world through flesh.

Voodoo practitioners divide a person into the corps cadavre, the flesh and blood of the body; the gros bon ange, or "big good angel," which is the communal soul shared by all sentient beings; and the ti bon ange, or "little good angel," the part of the soul that is one's character and individuality. Thus, the notion of ghosts and projection are second nature to those serving the Loa. Pigment has a welcome home in Haiti and among some Haitians in North America (with more people calling directly upon the Loa).

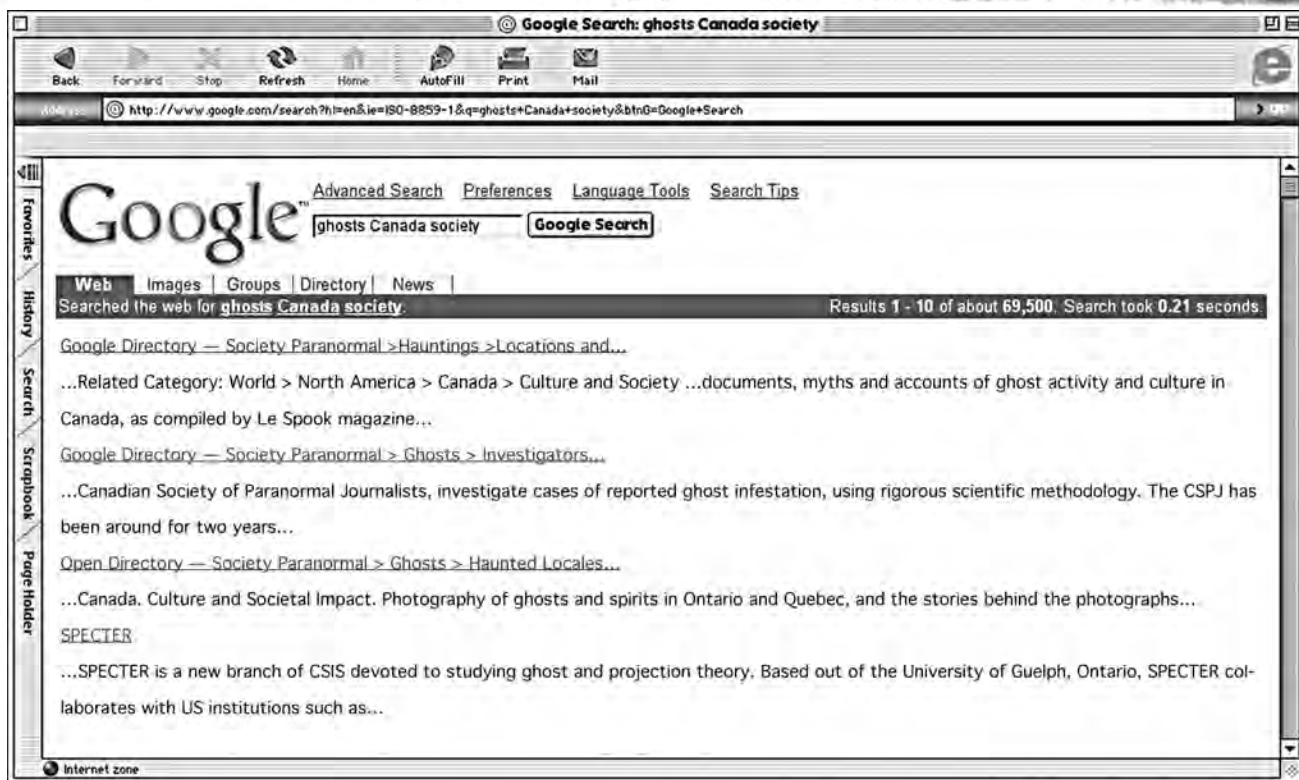
GHOST EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Although the United States has been center stage for ghost activity since the debut of Orpheus Group, this doesn't mean other areas of the world haven't noticed or have remained untouched. The US government can be slow to act if a threat isn't imminent, or if those in power are in bed with the issue, but other countries have their own ways of responding to paradigm shifts. Some Storytellers may prefer to ignore the rest of the world, keeping their chronicles tightly focused, which is perfectly reasonable. Others may want to take these fragmentary ideas and spin them into global chronicles involving post-life intrigue.

NORTH AMERICA CANADA

The Canadian government says very little about projecting organizations or related technology. The relatively porous border with the US means travel between the countries is very easy, and while such technology is confiscated and investigated if found, the government knows it cannot control the flow of information. Still, the Canadian authorities, such as the RCMP and CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service), monitor the operations of known "ghost agencies," ensuring they pose no security risk to Canada.

Should the US government decide its borders must be protected against foreign projector activity, one can be certain that the debate will draw in the Canadians.



Of more immediate concern to Canadian authorities is the stream of black heroin traffic making its way into Montreal and Toronto. Unlike marijuana, which is grown locally and then transported south into the US, no black heroin production has been found in Canada. Runners smuggle the drugs across from places such as Blaine, Washington to Vancouver, British Columbia and Rouses Point, New York to Montreal, Quebec. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and various criminal groups hotly contest the Canadian black heroin trade. In

western Canada, the Hells Angels remain dominant, but in eastern Canada, the Angels battle with the Quebec-based motorcycle gang the Rock Machine to control drug distribution. Meanwhile, in central Canada, Chinese (more specifically, Fukinese), West African and Iranian groups dominate the trade.

MEXICO

Often considered the bastard stepchild of North America, Mexico's border with the

The world fact page



Transnational issues: Mexico

international Disputes: None

Illicit Drugs: Mexico is known for illicit cultivation of poppy flowers (for opium production). Approximately 4,400 hectares were cultivated in 2001, which translates into a potential 7 metric tons. There is also a strong cannabis culture. Approximately 4,100 hectares were cultivated in 2001. Mexico is a large producer and distributor of ecstasy. Mexico is also rapidly becoming one of the greatest producers and distributors of pigment. In 2001, 1,100 hectares were cultivated, up over 500% from an estimated 200 hectares the year before.

The Machine Spaketh Recent Entries

Recent Entries

(This is copied from Doc Axe's blog, Orf Wit Da Hedz, dated some months back — Guy)

This chyk, Laura, invites me to go to Mexico for the week. Now, I've been mentally undressing her in anthro for the past month — so I say "yes," without a second thought. She has mondo cheap plane tickets. Great! She didn't tell me she was into some serious kinky shit — and I don't mean the good kind. This was a goddamn religious tour group! I kid you not. But I don't figure this out 'till I'm on the plane, with two dozen of these wacky Angelic Children. There were about six of us "civilians" who had been invited along. Clearly, they wanted to show us how cool they were, join their church and all that shit. Straight up, I said, I'm not buying no Nikes and not drinking no grape-flavor Kool-Aid. Laura actually laughed. We were down for the Day of the Dead festival, in this town called Mixquic. Tons of tourists, all there to see the graveyard festivals, with the candles and the skull candies, the flowers, the ghost cameras. Bleah. I end up hanging out with Paul, who is the tour guide, I guess, but he was surprisingly cool. Listened to electronica and a diehard Jim Jarmusch fan. Paul — the frickin' tour leader — brings me along the first afternoon to run some errands. We go to this church, named Santa Maria de Jesus de Izquierda or something. Paul tells me it used to be named for Mixquic herself, an Aztec goddess of life and death. Paul hooks up with an older priest (American) from some group called the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost. The priest had nothing but good things to say about Paul... seems he's up for promotion or whatever it is churches give... and then... and then... he hooks Paul up with, I kid you not, a bag of the finest black horse! Paul tells me it's for later that night, like 2:00 in the morning, watching for all the little ghost-children to return to the cemetery. Click for Part 2: Naked ghosts, naked Laura, naked Axe! (Or Part: 2 out of 3)

Posted by Guy at 10:06 PM.

United States causes even more problems than the one with Canada. Officially, the border is a solid barrier, keeping projection technology in the north and pigment in the south. The reality, however, is that if someone has the tenacity and the wherewithal to seek out something aggressively, that someone can acquire whatever her heart desires, border or no border. Mexico's government, under the leadership of Vicente Fox, has been very distrustful of so-called ghost agencies. Mexico does not allow any projection firms to establish corporate enterprises in Mexico (following the Orpheus Group fiasco) and asks the United States government to share whatever information it has on such agencies, in case they do manage to secure a foothold in Mexico.

Both the Mexican and US governments recognize that Mexico is rapidly becoming one of the largest providers of the drug pigment. Although a significant portion of the pigment supply comes up from further south through Mexico, the local narco families are taking notice and changing over from suppliers to producers/suppliers (creating "black heroin farms"). Surprisingly, pigment usage is fairly low in the country, though accurate assessments remain difficult to come by.

The average citizen has noticed the ghost fervor sweeping the USA, though the notion of ghosts has always been popular among the Mexican people. They celebrate the Day of the Dead, a two-day festival held annually on November 1st and 2nd. The first day is reserved for the remembrance of lost children and infants, the *angelitos*, while adults who have died are honored the following day. People celebrate this festival, commemorating the revisitation of souls, with food, flowers and lights, all for the benefit of the deceased. Over the past three years, the holiday has drawn larger and larger crowds, primarily tourists, as evidence of spiritual manifestations grow stronger. This results in booming crowds traveling to

Mexico at this time of the year, creating an enormous tourist economy, all desperate to see a graveyard filled with the souls of children.

EUROPE

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union has less exposure to projection technologies than the USA. As such, the Council of the European Union still debates rules and regulations for "post-life oriented" agencies. Orpheus Group was rumored to be in negotiations with several Member States, offering to set up satellite offices, before its troubles erupted. Currently, Member States are making their own policies. These range the entire spectrum, from the UK's outright banning of all "ghost," "projection" and "post-life" technologies, in the interest of

Britain to Ban Ghost Walks

Britain is to ban so-called "projection science," which theoretically allows people to interact with spirits and ghosts, to assure the public that post-life science is used solely for the public's benefit only.

Ministers promised action to ensure that "ghost hunting" agencies do not appear in the United Kingdom, as they have done in the United States. The Home Secretary expressed concern over the allegations of rampant human-rights abuses carried out by the American-based Orpheus Group. "We neither need nor want to put people's privacy, and sense of security at risk. Either these organizations are well-constructed scams, which we don't need, or they are tapping into a completely new field. If it's the latter, it must be regulated by governmental controls so the public's security is not threatened."

The EU Research Commissioner is also calling for a global ban on projection science. "Although our American colleagues proceeded forward bravely, we must pause a moment and consider what is at stake. We feel that projection science must be restricted and condemned, not only for the obvious ethical and moral reasons, but because it is reckless and wholly negligent from the scientific point of view." Currently, Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden allow private organizations to pursue projection science and technology. Britain, Denmark, Greece, Portugal and Spain have banned or are in the process of banning the technology. Austria, France, Ireland and Luxembourg remain undecided.

Do Your Dreams Slide to Nightmare?

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Spotlight Publications Intelligence Newsletter
March, 2001

SECTION: COMMUNITY WATCH: FRANCE

THE INTELLIGENCE WORLD'S GHOST HUNTERS!

Paris, France. A group of high-profile magistrates are voicing increased concerns that many French intelligence and law-enforcement officials have joined a new occult-entrenched fraternity, *Monts d'Aree*, named after the Black Mountains, where devil worshipers sacrificed a young girl over two decades ago.

In a number of cases, especially in the region of Brittany, officials suspect members of the *Monts d'Aree* within the police and judiciary hierarchy of interfering where fellow brothers are implicated.

The magistrates charge other members of the *Monts d'Aree*, connected with the General Directorate for External Security (DGSE), with participating in blackmail and extortion schemes. Victims claim these cultists have access to information that can only be obtained illegally, through government surveillance, while other witnesses, who spoke only through a veil of anonymity, claim the brotherhood uses apparitions to discover impossible secrets.



EXCERPT FROM RADIO CALL-IN SHOW

Cogan: Welcome back. Our guest today is Hans Tholen, a scholar of paranormal law and technology. A "paralegal," as it were. <chuckles> Mr. Tholen, I'd like to ask you about "ghost laws" in Europe today.

Tholen: It's very interesting. Although most of the judicial bodies in the EU are scrambling to figure out how to respond to these innovations, there're actually some historical examples, for those who care to look. For example, in Iceland, Icelandic law had a statute on the books for many years that permitted people to legally summon a ghost to court for abusing and harassing them... and the authorities were responsibly for dealing with it.

Cogan: That's remarkable.

Tholen: Yes. Vatican City, the see of the Pope, fears this technology falling into the hands of the general public. The Vatican has a cadre of ghost investigators, little more than holy debunkers, who travel the globe, inspecting "hot spots" and generally denouncing the locals. This has placed them at odds with the Italian government, which is allowing for projector firms.

Cogan: Have these groups seen any increase in ghost-related activities?

Tholen: Certainly. The Vatican constantly denounces research into these fields, and its investigators have seen their workload triple these past few months. In the past, they would only go to places where the image of the Virgin Mary or Jesus or perhaps a saint was seen... primarily in the Third World, where "miracles" are more accepted. But I've heard that, today, they spend half of their time in North America and Europe, running after reports of post-life events.

Cogan: Well, we certainly have had a lot of those. We have to take a short break, but when we return, we'll continue speaking with Hans Tholen about the city's recent "ghost-quake," as various projectors describe it, and we'll take some of your calls.

national security, to the entrepreneurship of the Swedish rejuvenating afterlife-based technologies.

The current argument is that many of the practices of organizations like Orpheus Group contravene several Articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 3-1 states: "Everyone has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity." If these ghost watchers can truly interact with the deceased, is the physical and mental integrity of the everyday man and woman at jeopardy? Further, Article 7 grants "Respect for private and family life," stating: "Everyone has the right to respect for his or her private and family life, home and communications." If these technologies allow one to interact with, and possibly have power over, the spirits of the deceased, what impact might these have on the living? Until society can resolve such questions, the issue will likely remain a complex web of competing interests.

ASIA

CHINA

Officially, Beijing has banned projection science and technology, but there are unconfirmed reports of state-sanctioned laboratories and a nationwide training program to study ghosts and spirits. In China, the belief is that children who have recovered from terrible illness or accidents are the best receivers of the ethereal world. Apparently, the government conducted a national survey through mainland China's elementary schools, using techniques such as hypnotic suggestion, psychological tests, acupuncture, visual and sound stimulation and even "trained" chi gong masters, to discover which children were natural projectors.

Researchers believe that, with training and focus, these children can open a plethora of new opportunities in the projection field. China regards its children as the future wealth of the nation, and thus, the government feels obliged to protect them. Reports indicate that the state takes these natural projectors to several training camps, where it further enhances their abilities. So far, no other nation has publicly commented on these rumored practices.

JAPAN

The Japanese adore technology and the bizarre, and they flock to fads like moths to a flame. As such, Japan welcomes any ghost-related technology or spirit science with open arms. A number of high-profile television studios have apparently acquired several cryo-cradles, in an attempt to create new, ghost-driven game shows. Likewise, the European EctoChambers are found in a number of luxury spas, as the latest in gimmicky health care. The Japanese government has not encouraged



private research into these fields, but neither has it shied away from it like the Europeans or the North Americans. There is growing concern about pigment use, however, which has seen a dramatic increase among teenage boys and girls.

SINGAPORE

Of all Asia, Singapore is its most-haunted city and renowned for its ghost-epidemics. Numerous schools, beaches, tenement blocks and streets are long believed to be haunted. As the key financial and high-tech hub of Southeast Asia, Singapore welcomes this taste of the exotic, for it acts as a beacon to ghost researchers, who bring their investing capital to the country. The national government of Singapore strictly regulates such technologies, which are not available on the free market. Private companies, however, can obtain government permits to operate freely. Unfortunately, the shadow side of Singapore is its role as hub for the Golden Triangle heroin trade, which has seen a tremendous rise in black heroin smuggling. Street projectors who use pigment to skim are becoming more prevalent, as are the gangs of spooks who rob and murder victims without fear of reprisals.

CULTURE'S TAKE ON THE DEAD HALLOWEEN

Halloween was once the delight of kids and adults alike. Nearly akin to a religious holiday, it became a celebration where evil spirits, the undead and witches ventured out to party. Naturally, once upon a time, when society believed such "evils" did not truly exist, it was alright for kids and adults to impersonate such creatures. In fact, part of Halloween's allure was the pretense that monsters existed and using that day to dress up like one. Once the public realized ghosts were real, however, Halloween adopted a different feel. People became less enthused about impersonating monsters, as though the very act would somehow attract those monsters' ill intentions. Still, there are some communities where Halloween parties remain an annual event and children trick or treat under the watchful eye of chaperones.

For teenagers, Halloween remains an excuse to engage in light mischief, such as egging homes and shooting shaving cream at people. Naturally, the more antisocial strata of society engages in destructive activities — Devil's Night and Hell Night, as many delinquent teens call it, is a time for arson, vandalizing graveyards and even some B&E. Natu-

rally, the existence of ghosts becoming more widely known has only exacerbated these activities. Now, typical Halloween rites of passage involve holding séances with Ouija boards in graveyards or spending the night in reputedly haunted locations.. Adding to the thrill of potential danger is one new urban legend concerning a recent Halloween where matters got out of hand and took a serious, evil turn in several adjoining communities. Nobody seems to know the real story, or every one believes they do, but the general gist is that some teens went too far in their exploits and managed to anger the local spirits. The ghosts then retaliated... hard and en masse. Others say the incident in question was actually the work of several death cults, many of whom maintain that commercial festivals such as Halloween are offensive to the dead. Regardless, the communities in question suffered a wave of terror, destruction and death overnight, committed mostly by average citizens who suddenly went on bloody rampages. The governor pulled in police from across several counties to handle the violence after local authorities found several bodies mutilated beyond recognition. Ordinary citizens engaged in property destruction and wild killing sprees, hacking apart friends, family members, trick-or-treaters and strangers. Reports of missing persons and people who weren't acting... right, flooded in as well.

So... if such a thing did happen, why hasn't anyone heard about it? The most obvious explanation (if it did occur) is that the authorities suppressed the news for various reasons. Maybe they feared copycat incidents or knew it would panic the public. Perhaps it is merely an urban legend, ground in 25 percent fact and 75 percent speculation and embellishment. At any rate, this tale is affecting the once pure enjoyment of the holiday, with some groups advocating a ban of this "negative and evil festival." Regardless of whether the public is heeding their call or not, the fact is that this occasion, historically associated (rightly or wrongly) with the dead, is now making way for the real dead. Whatever people believe about ghosts, many now acknowledge that Halloween may be a time when these supernatural beings demand some form of respect. And as to the urban legend or a recurrence of its events... no major incidences have been reported... or at least, they haven't been made public.

THE INTERNET AND THE LAZARUS REDUX POST- LIFE WEBSITE

Orpheus Group and projector-related technology essentially let the cat out of the bag. When more



people believed in the existence of the dead, many tried desperately to contact their loved ones. At first, mediums rose in popularity as an affordable substitute to projector firms, raking in significant coin with very few results. The real trouble began when ghosts tried frequenting mediums in the hopes of being heard. When they discovered that most mediums were, in fact, frauds, many ghosts attacked the séances and the mediums out of frustration. An incident involving a poltergeist resulted in the permanent disfigurement of one medium. Once mediums realized someone could, in fact, hold them accountable for their claims, many charlatans stopped offering their services, thus allowing the real deal to rise to the fore.

Naturally, most people favored using projectors for their hereafter concerns, even though projection services proved costly. That's precipitated the appearance of so-called bargain-basement projectors and mediums, who earned national attention through radio programs and, finally, through television shows such as Madame Cassandra's Arms of Light (see **Crusade of Ashes**). This, in turn, inspired a new craze of projectors offering their services through cheap and available mediums, such as the Internet.

The Internet is the perfect forum for projectors and mediums looking to expand their client bases. Aside from the convenience offered by the Internet — such as saving on travel expenses and avoiding ghosts eager to dispense with their frustrations — it allows projectors to work from the safety of their own homes. Now, they have more assurances that their bodies are safe from harmful elements while projecting.

Unfortunately, with the appearance of supernatural websites and related e-commerce, so too appears a dearth of spam e-mails — how to project in 10 easy steps; are ghosts haunting you?; is your soul safe?; how to contact your loved ones, or find a missing people, or ask questions about the afterlife, or have your own ghost lover... and on and on ad nauseam. These projectors and mediums work the chat rooms, but the really business-savvy among them host their own websites, offering affordable services with a few clicks of the mouse. With the proliferation of Internet projectors and mediums, some of whom are fraudulent, it is also necessary to protect the consumer — and the reputations of legitimate projectors.

This is where Lazarus Redux comes in. Lazarus Redux is a new enterprise created from the ashes of Orpheus Group. Its principle members are ex-Orpheus employees including John Carruthers, Kate Dennison and Hoyt Masterson. While Lazarus Redux is in the business of handling post-life events, it is also trying

to establish a sense of community among projectors and mediums. One such endeavor is the Lazarus Redux Post-Life Website, an online community devoted to informing the consumer about how to work with projectors and mediums, who to avoid and the potential scams extant out there. While Lazarus Group is running a business and, thus, is in competition with other freelance projectors, it has greater issue with charlatans ruining everyone's reputation than it does with competitors. It also fosters a community where projectors and "normal" people can find common points of understanding (to avoid another mishap like the FBI's attempt to sway public opinion).

The first consideration the website explains are the differences between mediums and projectors. Then, it discloses what it means to be a projector: how a projector leaves his body, how he initiates contact with ghosts. This is done to dispel any misconceptions and fears that people may possess in believing that projectors and mediums traffic in evil. The website's chief purpose is to provide information on legitimate "ghost talkers" and to reveal those who aren't. The Lazarus Redux Post-Life Website even provides a Performance Rating Table that lists known projectors and mediums and both their ratings and comments received from consumers. This feature alone has drastically cut down on the number of people falling to confidence artists and their schemes (though that's not to say it still does not happen).

Unlike Orpheus Group, Lazarus Redux offers honest assessments of its competitors, even when detrimental to its service. The website provides a breakdown of fees one can expect from projectors (depending on the job), advice on facilitating the projector's/medium's job and, of course, a form to register either complaints or kudos about a job. To maintain a sense of community, Lazarus Redux also encourages consumers and projectors to post their success stories upon contacting a ghost or resolving some issue dealing with the hereafter. The website maintains a monthly e-zine to help support its efforts toward a good relationship between projectors and consumers. The Lazarus Redux Post-Life Website also helps projectors. When a client refuses to pay for contracted services or someone threatens physical harm to a medium, the projector or sensitive can turn to Lazarus Redux for help in resolving the matter.

THE HAUNTING HOUSE

Take a varied group of individuals, throw them into a haunted mansion for a season, and offer \$100,000 to the one person who "survives." That's the premise of a hot new reality show, *The Haunting House*. While the



idea of surviving a haunted house is not new — many movies and books cover it — there is one significant difference... in this show, the haunts are real.

The brainchild of a reality-show mogul, the show's inspiration came from the heightened activity of poltergeists that successfully ousted the owners of a house. The mogul simply merged the public trend for so-called reality television and the growing interest in the hereafter, both hot topics to be certain, creating a potential sure-fire hit. He was right. The idea of ghosts scaring the living daylight out of real, everyday people, makes for great ratings.

The allure of the show is that the ghosts — and thus, the hauntings — are real, though the producers never state whether the ghosts are in on the fun. They are, however, with a projector on staff to communicate with the spooks and to ensure they stick with the script. In exchange, the show provides for the living families of these ghosts, paying them damn decent wages under the pretense that their loved ones were actually insured. The series is entering its second season now, garnering a huge share of the ratings. The show's main appeal is that it provides real scares for participants and viewers alike, since nobody knows what the ghosts will do next. So far, the furniture's become animated, blood has streamed from the walls, horrific wails issued through the house, participants were possessed, horrific manifestations suddenly appeared, folks developed leprosy, etc. No one dies or is seriously hurt on these shows, though there are injuries from the frights the participants receive. A team of doctors and nurses is always on hand to mend wounds, and at least three participants quit the running from the mental stress. On at least one occasion, the censors had to delete scenes because they were too graphic or disturbing (though there are plans for a special-edition DVD).

The show airs once a week for 12 weeks, with an episode replaying a day before the new one airs. There are cameras everywhere in the house, and no place is sacrosanct — a scare can happen anywhere, anytime. The participants form one single team, and every episode, must participate in a group challenge. The point is to cooperate to circumvent the ghosts and to win the contest, though some members do negotiate amongst themselves or even with the ghosts, to oust the group's weak members (one woman stripped for the ghosts so they'd target the team captain). The ghosts can claim whoever they wish during the episode, whether when everyone is asleep or during play. The only stipulation is that the person must be alone... thus creating circumstances where players try to aban-

don one another by losing each other in corridors or locking one another in rooms. Only one person can win, so, while there is a single team, everyone is out for him- or herself. A player may also leave voluntarily by going to the front door and screaming "Let me out," at which point the door opens and the person can escape. Of course, if someone breaks down in another part of the house and can't make it to the front door, the staff quickly intercedes and escorts the person out. Otherwise, all the doors and windows are completely shut, offering no hint of time of day. Since the producers never know how many people will break down during an episode, they keep extra participants on hand to extend the shooting schedule and go the full 12 weeks.

The show's main concern (besides ensuring that no deaths occur) is in keeping enough ghosts active within the house and that they don't go overboard on scaring the participants. The show employs three projectors to help handle the ghosts. There are rumors, however, that the ghosts and handlers could not attribute the source of some of the scares. In fact, with the show promising an upcoming live, two-hour special episode, one projector has already walked off the set, claiming he refuses to take responsibility for what is sure to be "a fatal fiasco."

ECTOCHAMBERS

A culture obsessed with looks always tries finding that secret "Fountain of Youth" formula to keep itself young, healthy and good-looking. Already burdening the age-obsessed market are exotic drink mixtures, weird-sounding herbs, strange meditation techniques and a variety of creams and lotions. The newest youth formula fad, however, called the EctoChamber, was founded by Swedish holistic practitioner, Dr. Johan Hendrickson.. Dr. Hendrickson designed these coffin-like chambers and proscribed their treatment for his exclusive spa, Tranquility Resort. Of course, initially, only the rich and famous could afford such treatment, since they had to fly to Sweden, spend a week in the prestigious spa, enjoy the services provided by the courteous staff and immerse themselves in the EctoChambers every day for the full week. Despite the cost (and the EctoChamber treatment alone ran a small fortune), the patrons swore by it. Eventually, however, Dr. Hendrickson began selling the EctoChambers to affluent clients in other countries, netting himself additional millions in the process.

The EctoChambers are steel sarcophagi filled with so-called ectoplasmic material, or ghost ichor. The patients, according to Dr. Hendrickson, absorb the material into their pores, strengthening and tight-



ening their skin and muscles and improving their heart rate. As a result, the blood flow to the brain improves as well, boosting thought and memory processes. Unfortunately, there is no scientific evidence to support the process, but Dr. Hendrickson offers himself as proof of the treatment's success. Dr. Hendrickson claims to have used the chamber faithfully for these last couple of years and defies anyone to deny the result — he's 72 years old but looks 40. This is evidence enough for people to continue visiting his spa and using his EctoChamber treatment.

The treatment calls for the patron to enter the chamber and immerse himself in the spiritual miasma, which remains invisible save as wisps of organic-looking smoke — it does not constrict breathing, and one often feels “floaty,” as one patron described. The attendants then seal the EctoChamber, providing a sensory-deprived experience. One hour later, the chamber opens, and the occupant emerges, feeling refreshed and, sometimes, a little evanescent. Dr. Hendrickson's treatment calls for immersion in this chamber one hour a day for a week. The body must then remain outside the chamber for at least a week before beginning the procedure anew — some-

thing about rooting oneself in the real world before experiencing the touch of the hereafter again.

Dr. Hendrickson claims the EctoChambers need refilling after a year's worth of usage. Nobody knows where the ichor comes from or how ghosts are involved in the process — and Dr. Hendrickson isn't talking either. This is to his benefit, since some chambers are now in some exclusive spas and in the homes of the very rich. Dr. Hendrickson provides the ichor and technical help to keep the chambers running (for a fee of course) and thus maintains some control over his design and treatment.

Dr. Hendrickson's market is growing internationally, with the treatment available to a wider cross section of the public. Some people are questioning the treatment's efficacy, going so far as to proclaim it a hazard. The tabloids constantly run stories about people who undergo Hendrickson's treatment and how they seemingly “change,” not physically, but mentally. They appear and act different. Still, this hasn't dissuaded many from using the chambers as their hold on the Fountain of Youth. After all, what treasure doesn't have its risks.



STORYTELLERS SECTION

This section focuses on the main enemy facing the characters following the ghost-quake — the cult known as the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost. Led by the powerful spirit Uriah Bishop, this organization utilizes not only spooks to conduct its dirty work, but Spectres as well. The Missionary Works has been responsible for much of what's transpired since the original attack on Orpheus. In fact, Bishop is the central antagonist behind many events. He hired NextWorld to obliterate Orpheus Group, and he was the mastermind behind the poisoned pigment shipment in *Shades of Gray*. Here's where the characters can exact their revenge and close one chapter in the *Orpheus* metaplot, while beginning a new one through the enigmatic and frightening entity known only as Grandmother.

The characters may have learned about the Missionary Works and some of its features using any of the means discussed previously, but what is the cult really like? How did it come to be, and what are its true aims and goals? Moreover, who is Uriah Bishop beyond the original snippets of information provided in the previous supplements?

This section details the history of the Missionary Works and Bishop himself, including his rise to power and influence, his alliance with Terrel & Squib, the destruction of Orpheus and more. Furthermore, this section explains the structure of his cult.

All cults require worshipers. This section explains the recruiting process involved in gathering a flock as well as outlining those most likely to join. Bishop uses many means to collect new volunteers — some of whom aren't quite as willing as others. He doesn't induct just anyone, though. He targets specific types of people who meet his proper criteria and can offer the cult something in return for his pseudo-divine guidance and protection. The methods he uses to find followers, bring them into the fold and convert them to his cause are detailed herein. Additionally, the means to deprogram a victim of Bishop's brainwashing are also provided, in the event that such a thing become necessary.

The Missionary Works is not a collection of fanatics dancing around in circles and chanting hymns. The cultists are active in a variety of missions on Uriah Bishop's behalf. To this end, the Holy Ghost himself provides what he calls "sacred instruments" to his chosen. These are Spectre artifacts, terrible weapons created through the use of Spectre ichor in much the same way pigment is produced. Such items are similar to standard artifacts, except these are real objects to the living —



they can exist physically, enabling the cultists to perform deeds far beyond those of mortals. You'll find a complete guide to the creation and use of Spectre artifacts later in this chapter.

Finally, beyond the cult unfold several other strange matters. These are not actually associated with the Missionary Works, but the characters won't be aware of this. As far as they know, Uriah Bishop is behind these activities in some way. The first matter is the unexplained disappearance of the projectors' physical bodies (should the Storyteller pursue such ends), which involves the actual severing of the silver cord—an ability previously thought impossible. Additionally, the characters encounter Spectres who temporarily change sides, even in the middle of combat, providing aid instead of punishment. Although this never lasts long, it does suggest that some other, unknown force is at work.

THE MISSIONARY WORKS OF THE HOLY GHOST

The Missionary Works is unlike the other cults, mostly because its members are far more aware of the spectral world than the other pigment cults. In fact, the Children of the Angelic Host, First Step, the Aphrodite Society and the Temple of the Mother of Vision are the cult equivalents of dummy fronts and holding companies for big business. They fall under the aegis of a central body, the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, and its leader, Uriah Bishop. Bishop filters those members with the greatest potential into his organization. Who does he seek and attract? Mostly those individuals with the ability to project or those suffering from nightmares, so-called sensitives. The number of people suffering nightmares is on the rise. Some people seek solace in accepted religions, but they can't stop the flood of bad dreams. Many people fall to various cults, who not only offer an explanation for events, but a certain freedom from it. Only the Missionary Works offers "redemption" from the nightmares, or so it claims.

The Missionary Works cultists "worship" Grandmother, or fear her, in the way the Indian Thuggee feared Kali Ma... as this enormous chthonic entity. They use pigment as a "ceremonial" drug, the way the Aztecs gave their sacrificial victims fermented cactus juice called pulque to keep them sedated and high. The cultists are mediums and sensitives of sorts, driven mad by dreams of Grandmother and the horrors she'll inflict on this world. The cult believes it has the best of intentions in distributing pigment and anchoring people's souls to the hereafter. When the Spectres appear, they

take these "sacrificial lambs" instead of humanity, thus placating Grandmother and preventing her from claiming *everyone*. Their own use of pigment is different, however. The cultists believe that by partaking in the Missionary Works, they will be exempt from the coming horrors. They will have a place in Paradise as both servitors of Grandmother and as humanity's saviors.

As for Grandmother herself, Grandmother is an entity that exists somewhere beyond humanity's understanding, beyond the Stormwall.. She is the nexus of the hive mind and the entity the other Spectres heed and follow. Her name is well deserved, for she seems to encompass a matriarchal role among the Spectre breeds, controlling and directing them. The most humanity knows about her is what they see and experience in their nightmares, for her presence seems to touch upon the primordial and subconscious part of humanity's mind. Only a few manage to sense more about her, much less court her favor. Uriah Bishop is among those terrible few capable of securing the aid of her Spectres. The truth behind Grandmother's being is the beginning of the next and final chapters in the Orpheus metaplot, and what better place to start than by introducing her mortal priests....

THE HISTORY OF THE MISSIONARY WORKS

There are some evils in this world beyond the touch and taint of the supernatural, some wrongs born in the fertile imaginings of the mortal mind and soul. Uriah Bishop thought he was one such individual—but that was before he met the Spectres and allied himself with Grandmother.

Bishop was a mean, nasty child born to weak-willed parents. What Uriah Bishop wanted, then, by tantrum or manipulation, he'd get. Some people, including his own family members, figured Bishop was a serial killer in the making. He enjoyed hurting animals, and he started a few fires. But Bishop was never a slave to anything, including his own passions. He was merely testing the limits of his control over the world, and for each indiscretion that his parents failed to punish accordingly, Bishop grew more bold. Everything became a matter of power, first over himself, then over his environment. Uriah Bishop didn't have sex, he raped to exert his authority over the act. Uriah Bishop didn't have friends, he had pawns to manipulate and control. Uriah Bishop didn't have parents, he had accomplices who would provide him with alibis and a place to crash.

Fortunately, Uriah Bishop was spending so much time in and out of youth facilities that the state arrested and charged his parents for negligence. When relatives refused to take Uriah Bishop in, he became a ward of the

Date: January 7, 1996
Time: 11:52:59 PM
Subject: Bishop, Uriah Ezekial
Age: 35 Years, 9 Months
Birthdate: April 6, 1960
Incarceration Date: October 17, 1988

Conviction Type and Charge(s): Felony(ies); 40 Counts Murder - Capital, 40 Counts Conspiracy to Commit Murder - Capital, 1 Count Armed Robbery, 1 Count Conspiracy to Commit Armed Robbery, 1 Count Grand Theft Conviction (See attached file for further counts...

Sentence: Death

Execution Method: Lethal Injection

Habeas Writs Filed and Date(s): Ad subjiendum, U.S. Const. Art. I & 9, also 28 U.S.C.A. § 2241 et seq. 15 October, 22 April, 30 November

Certiorari Writ Filed: December 2, 1995

Appeals Exhausted: December 24, 1995

Race: Caucasian / "White" X
Negro / Black / "African American"
Asian / Polynesian / Pacific Islander
Indian / "Native American"

Religion: Southern Baptist

Near Death Experiences: Prison stabbings, December 15, 1988 - January 21, 1989 - June 4, 1989 - August 4, 1990 - February 23, 1991 - September 24, 1991 - January 3, 1992 - March 14, 1994.

Suicide attempt, self asphyxiation, September 14, 1985.

Prison shooting, May 22, 1993.

Circumstance: That on the date of August 17, 1987, Uriah Ezekial Bishop did conspire to commit felonious actions against persons and property of the sovereign State of Mississippi. That on the self-same date, Uriah Ezekial Bishop did commit said action and, in the execution of said action, did commit the murders of Pastor John Brown, a human being, Scott Bixby, a human being, Eleanor Ronner, a human being (Researcher Note: List Truncated - he poisoned 40 parishioners from his church). That in the commission of said conspiracy, Uriah Ezekial Bishop did knowingly plot to use deadly force, force that would reasonably be assumed to result in lethal harm to persons and property of the sovereign State of Mississippi. The felonious action, therefore, holds capital sway.

First Tier Research Team:

- Dr. Robert P. Fredericks, M.D., Board Certified, Psychiatry, State of Mississippi, Consulting Psychiatrist, Mississippi State Board of Corrections.
- Dr. Althea Russell, M.D., Board Certified, Psychiatry, State of New York, Consulting Psychiatrist, Orpheus Group
- Dr. Sarah Grishom, M.D., Board Certified, Psychiatry, State of New Hampshire, Consulting Psychiatrist.
- Dr. Delton Brunner, M.D., Board Certified, Psychiatry, State of Maryland, Consulting Psychiatrist.

Place of Evaluation: Marion Federal Penitentiary

Experiment Detail: Subject 3, Bishop, Uriah Ezekial, was brought into the medical labs at 11:35:46 PM in the evening of October 28, 1995. Subject appeared lucid and subdued. Safety and defensive protocols were followed according to manual procedure, in the form of two prison officers armed with semiautomatic pistols. Additionally, the subject was bound by hand, chest and foot restraints before being placed in cryogenic pod 004. Baseline pulse/respiration rate and blood pressure were measured at 65 bpm and 125 diastolic/70 systolic. A preparatory hypodermic of 10cc's of Halidol (antipsychotic) was administered at 11:40:33 PM, along with 5 milligrams of Ativan (anti-depressant, tranquilizer). (Note: Administrators continue to test varying combinations of preparatory drug cocktails in order that their interaction with Recombinant C be recorded for experimentation. At present, the first subject reacted badly to Halidol when combined with Valium and Recombinant C, the reaction resulting in a catatonic state with apparent reduced brain-wave activity. A greater degree of success has been achieved by combining the milder form, Ativan with the antipsychotic protocol and Recombinant C. The second subject entered a catatonic state but was brought out of said state after two days.)

At 11:52:59 PM, an injection of 15cc's Recombinant C was administered by the head project physician, Dr. Robert Fredericks. The subject remained stable and awake during administration. Pulse was recorded to elevate to 72 bpm, while blood pressure increased to 150 diastolic/85 systolic. In Dr. Fredericks' opinion, this elevation was likely due to nervousness.

At 11:59:58 PM, Dr. Fredericks noted a sharp change in the subject's blood pressure and pulse/respiration rate. Subject's blood pressure dropped to 60 diastolic/32 systolic, and pulse to 26 beats per minute. During the interim, Dr. Fredericks and Dr. Russell had prepared the defibrillator for dispensation. When the subject's vitals hit the reported mark, they administered a lethal jolt of 600 joules. The subject flatlined immediately. There was no gradual drop in vitals, as expected. There was immediate loss of muscle control, resulting in voidance of urine and fecal matter. (Dr. Fredericks felt it best not to administer diuretics and an enema to the subject prior to experimentation, to keep the subject calm. The resulting evacuation of bodily fluid and matter was not unexpected.) The subject's vital signs were checked again and appeared negated. The subject was pronounced legally dead at 12:00:02 AM, 29 October, 1995.

Immediately after pronouncement of death, the subject corpse was cleaned and injected with an embalming cocktail, to retard the necrotic process. (Immediate necrosis in dead tissue is not uncommon. Left unadulterated, dead tissue will move to a state of serious decomposition after roughly 20 minutes. Dr. Fredericks felt the cocktail was a necessary precaution to negate decomposition preparatory to reanimation and reinvigoration of the subject corpse.) We commenced cryogenic suspension with slow targeted temperature regression.

At 12:14:36 AM, Dr. Fredericks noticed an apparent change in the corpse's visage. It's usual in dead tissue for some involuntary motor reflex to remain, but Dr. Fredericks indicated that this was not usual. The subject's lips were not supposed to curl upward. Dr. Fredericks indicated that he at first thought the subject "appeared to smile" but naturally dismissed this idea as merely visually onomatopoeic. He did voice his puzzlement, however. (It's been observed that tissue around the mouth of a deceased person, including the lips, can often recede past the gum line, but in Dr. Fredericks' opinion, this particular movement was not due to such a recession.)

At 05:30:14 AM, the cryogenic chamber reaches bottom-line temperature. Dr. Russell then remarks on a noticeable chill in the room. Given room temperature is a specific protocol in all empirical experimentation, she made comment about procedural misstep and checked the thermostat. It registered at the appropriate 72 degrees Fahrenheit. It's difficult to relate the events that proceeded immediately after, but Dr. Fredericks noticed that every glass fixture in the lab - beakers, antiseptic receptacles, microscope slides, test tubes, equipment lenses, cryo-pod view port - all developed a thick coating of frost. Dr. Fredericks then took a manual reading from the area directly surrounding cryogenic pod 004. His opinion was that the chill appeared isolated to that specific locale, possibly a side effect of the liquid nitrogen cells within the pod. The technicians verified, however, that there was no nitrogen leak to account for the chill. Dr. Fredericks observed that the temperature drop was rapid. He marked its nadir at -10 degrees Celsius. It was necessary to leave the operating theater at this point, and though we lost a minute's direct observation time, however, the incident continued to be recorded on security cameras. Once the research team and attached security personnel reassembled in the observation room, it became apparent that the temperature drop encompassed the entire room. We noted frost everywhere. Dr. Fredericks felt it prudent to invoke further security protocols and called for the immediate lockdown of the wing.

At 05:39:18 AM, the security team went to full readiness, though Dr. Russell argued against such a course of action. She felt it tainted the research, even though the cameras were no longer functional. Unable to decide on a further course of action, I instructed the guards to enter the room and train their assault rifles on cryogenic pod 004. Over the intercom system, I instructed what I believed to be a non-corporeal entity to cease and desist in affecting the temperature or the guards would open fire on the cryogenic pod, permanently destroying the body. Temperatures rose subsequently, and we managed to begin resuscitation procedures on Subject 3.

The next step in our process is to determine if we can produce the same effects by bypassing the flat-lining stage and proceed directly with cryogenic freezing. I further recommend that each cryo-pod contain a termination function to immediately render the body irrecoverable. I believe the threat of this should keep any non-corporeal entity in check, and it spares us from destroying a multimillion-dollar pod just to reach a corpse.

Submitted,

Dr. Sarah Grishom

state and continued on his downward spiral. Eventually, Bishop served time as an adult but found salvation within a Baptist prayer circle at the prison. He seemingly changed his ways after finding God and fooled the parole board well enough to secure an early release. This was Bishop's last chance. As a youth, he committed countless crimes, but his records were sealed at 18. As an adult, Uriah Bishop landed in jail twice. One more conviction would saddle him with the three strikes rule and turn a conviction into a life sentence.

There were those folks who believed Uriah Bishop was only pretending to follow God, but in truth, he really did find faith. Unfortunately, his faith required an orbit of worshipers around *him* as a mouthpiece for the Lord's wishes. When Bishop left prison, he joined a local Southern Baptist Church and became heavily involved in church affairs. Unfortunately, Bishop was never one to follow the herd, and in trying to lead the Baptist flock away from the local minister, alienated his fellow churchgoers. Bishop solved his dilemma by poisoning his fellow parishioners at the annual spring picnic, killing 40 people. He earned instant notoriety and was tried well outside of the state because his lawyer believed he couldn't receive a fair and impartial trial anywhere in the South. Still, Bishop landing on death row in record time, and the court sent him to Marion Federal Penitentiary to await execution.

Uriah Bishop was well-suited for prison life, especially now that he'd found God. He gathered a small cadre of worshipers from among the death-row inmates and dispensed salvation from his ministry of one. Reinforcing his forceful nature was Bishop's seemingly Teflon nature and abundant luck. He missed several appointed dates with the syringe, each time by the grace of seconds. Bishop claimed he wasn't going to die, and each stay of his execution date only enforced his assertions.

When Orpheus Group and the NSA screened candidates for their maiden forays into projecting, Uriah Bishop was first among their test subjects. He agreed to participate in Project Flatline and even manipulated the technicians and psych evaluators into including several members of his flock from death row. Bishop didn't know specifically what might come of these events, but he did sense their importance. When the techs introduced the inmates to the projecting drug, acclimatizing them to the chemical cocktail — in the weeks before actually placing them under cryo-sleep — Bishop discovered why. All the inmates suffered horrible nightmares and night terrors under the drugs, but only Bishop remembered the experience clearly. He saw the Spectres for the first time, and particularly, the Spectre inhabiting Dr. Amours Katilian, the botanist who "discovered"

the plant that was responsible for allowing projection. He approached Katilian and negotiated a partnership, which in itself was unusual given the Spectres' later single-minded nature. In exchange for the Spectre's help along with that of its Spectre master, a beast called Lamachis the Devourer, Bishop would help to generate a drug trade based on the projection drug, trapping souls for the Spectres.

Uriah Bishop and the other inmates fled the project while projecting, but only Bishop had a plan in mind and an understanding of the proto-pigment plant. Uriah Bishop knows what he wants. He desires power, to be certain, but more than anything, he enjoys the admiration, fealty and subservience of his followers. He wants to control them, to manipulate their very lives. This is not to say Bishop believes himself a god. He knows full well he is not because he believes in God and because he believes in the Spectres as both power players in ghostly events and things to be feared.

Over the months, Uriah Bishop slowly and quietly worked with his followers from Project Flatline to develop and distribute pigment to the general public. He founded a drug network based on pigment and built himself a cartel of sorts, but his real desire still eluded him. Bishop wanted followers.

URIAH BISHOP AND GRANDMOTHER

Uriah Bishop became aware of Grandmother and her ultimate goals before she sent her horde to cull ghosts from the world. In fact, he saw the change in his Spectre ally and discovered it no longer served Lamachis the Devourer. Bishop recognized Grandmother's power and realized that the only way to survive her onslaught would be to ally himself with her fully. Besides, while Grandmother was not a "god" in the sense of the Almighty, she was still powerful enough to elevate him in scale. This path was admittedly dangerous but well worth the risk. After all, Grandmother was coming whether he helped her or not, and since he was a ghost himself, he might ultimately fall victim to her Harvest. The only way to save his gauze hide was to ingratiate himself to the Spectres, becoming indispensable to their pigment trade. Thus, Bishop "serves" Grandmother and her Spectres, ostensibly to protect himself but also to further his own goals.

Uriah Bishop used pigment to establish the foundations of a cult, with himself in control. Bishop positioned his Flatliners to run the pigment cults and oversee the pigment trade, while he researched cults in great detail, adopting many classic recruitment and brainwashing techniques to form the core of his new "religion." Pigment allowed members to experience out-of-body events, where

they saw the shining, hovering form of the Holy Ghost for the first time. To ordinary mortals, particularly those with strong religious convictions, such visions were all they needed to believe Uriah Bishop was a real, deific prophet in ghostly form. Perhaps he was even the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, Mohammad, John the Baptist or whoever else matched their own particular beliefs.

During this time, Bishop became concerned with rival organizations that had a hand in the supernatural. Of these, Orpheus Group was by far the most dangerous. It was investigating pigment closely, and Bishop believed it capable of eventually hampering his operations. So, he happily hired NextWorld and provided resources for the attack that devastated Orpheus. He felt no remorse for the organization's destruction since it allowed him to proceed with the tainting of an entire pigment shipment, thus killing users at a rave and at several parties (as detailed in **Shades of Gray**).

CURRENT MATTERS

Grandmother is Uriah Bishop's path to ultimate glory, and he serves her completely. By becoming her prophet, he feels he can finally earn the power and respect he truly deserves. Surely, she will recognize his contribution as more important than that of any other.

Bishop is desperate to gain Grandmother's favor, in part because he fears her. His growing cult, the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, is a means to save both himself and his chosen acolytes should the worst happen, but Bishop is not above using his followers as sacrificial lambs should the need arise. For now, however, the Missionary Works provides him with the necessary resources and worship he craves, but he is also selective in his recruitment process. He doesn't collect just any old person off the street. He needs those with specific abilities, who can help with his efforts directly and who, in turn, desperately need him. Thus, he leaves the ordinary citizens to the pigment cults.

It is important to remember that Uriah Bishop does not want the world immersed in chaos. Grandmother could destroy everything he's set out to create for himself. Thus, his involvement with pigment is primarily focused on anchoring enough souls so that Grandmother can harvest them without interfering in matters more directly. Her direct touch, no matter how light, would be an event of Biblical proportions.

Bishop's alliance with Squib — or, more specifically, with the Spectre responsible for "creating" pigment — is a long-standing one. Squib has since watched, with some dismay, as Bishop's power base slowly expands, and should it survive the events listed in **Shades of Gray**, then its territorial nature will only grow. Like many

Spectres, "Squib" is protective of Grandmother and wishes to share little of the glory in its service to her. It sees Bishop as a rival for this coveted position. Unfortunately for the Spectre, it needs Bishop's organization to continue widespread distribution of pigment to the masses. Whatever Squib might think of Uriah Bishop, the escaped convict is extraordinarily efficient at culling souls for Grandmother, as evidenced by the tainted pigment debacle. Whether this uneasy alliance lasts beyond the Harvest remains to be seen.

Uriah Bishop's operations are entering their final phase. With the increase in Spectre hives, Bishop believes, more than ever, in the need to attract Grandmother's attention and curry her favor. The spiking of a large pigment shipment was but the first step in this greater purpose. He knew the large sacrifice of souls for her Spectres might well attract the eye of his goddess. Whether she has, in fact, noticed is something he doesn't yet know. If he believes she hasn't noticed the offering, he might well pursue more drastic steps to keep her placated....

ORGANIZATION OF THE CULT

Layers, known as "circles," comprise the Missionary Works. Uriah Bishop sits at the center, like a spider in a web, and the cult carefully controls and scripts access to him. An initiate, for instance, cannot simply walk up and introduce himself to the Holy Ghost without first progressing through the other circles.

- **The Inner Circle — Grandmother's Eye:** Six individuals, all of them Flatliners, currently comprise this level. Topping the dog-pile is Uriah Bishop himself. Three others, Bruno Tavoularis, Jason Hein and Harper Forester, head the pigment cults detailed in **Shades of Gray**. The last two serve as enforcers (one of them appears in the "Proof of Life" fiction piece in the **Orpheus** core book) and are both ex-convicts from Project Flatline who now serve Bishop with all their hearts and souls. Bishop may permit others to join the Inner Circle — but only for short periods and only spooks who know how to play the game.

- **The Advisory Circle — The Council of Ministers:** The next circle consists entirely of ghosts, many of whom have undergone ritual-assisted suicide in their final step to transcend the physical world. Some are Bishop's followers among the dead, while others are new allies or spooks he met and manipulated after the Flatline fiasco. Although not all of these spirits possess significant power, Bishop trusts them implicitly. They surround him constantly, providing advice and information as well as the adulation he so desperately covets.

• **The Defense Circle — The Council of Blessed Guardians:** This is a small group of Spectres and other spooks who act as Uriah Bishop's personal guards and warriors. Although he sends them on missions occasionally — such as helping with Orpheus' destruction — they are usually somewhere close by Bishop's side in case someone attacks him. He can summon an average of two to twelve Spectres and spooks at any given moment, though he generally leaves the more dangerous assignments to NextWorld (if it's still around).

• **The Middle Circle — The Council of Wardens:** Only Bishop's most powerful, subservient and dedicated worshipers progress to this circle, which presently consists of 100 members. These lucky few receive regular visits from the Holy Ghost, who provides them with visions, quests and tasks of varying importance. It is the Council of Wardens who act as lieutenants, overseeing the mundane operations of the cult. The Wardens are, for all intents and purposes, bishops.

• **The Persuasion Circle — The Council of the Word:** Those cultists who firmly (and blindly) believe in Uriah Bishop's glory and teachings serve as members of this council. The Council of the Word acts, in part, as a propaganda ministry and as an Inquisition force of sorts. Its members are responsible for torturing "heretics" (members who betray the cult), for brainwashing potential initiates to "Believe" and for regulating internal security. The so-called Persuaders are also a paranoid lot and act in strict accordance with Bishop's teachings, considering they even spy upon one another. Even death doesn't protect a Persuader from his peers, who can be either living or dead, projector or mortal.

• **The Second Circle — The Sons and Daughters of the Holy Ghost:** When a cultist proves herself truly worthy of responsibility and influence, the Council of Wardens promotes her to this circle. Here, she participates in her faith more actively, serving as a true missionary in spreading the faith and bolstering the beliefs of the doubters among the initiates. This circle serves as an intermediary authority figure, acting more as a big brother or sister for the cult's novice members. Its members hear concerns and offer advice, going so far as to accept confessions (which they then dutifully report to the Wardens or the Persuaders, if necessary). In effect, they act as priests, with their faith serving as the only criteria in this role.

• **The First Circle — The Reborn:** These are new initiates to the cult, often in the process of being indoctrinated or educated in the Holy Ghost's ways. During their first experience with pigment (within the cult, that is), recruits see Bishop for the first time. He appears as a glowing figure who urges his new charges to leave

their mortal concerns behind. This ensures the so-called Reborn, who have visions and sometimes project under pigment's influence, associate the cult with the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost. Most initiates become believers almost instantly because they want to believe, although others need further convincing.

• **The Outer Circle — The Blessed Associates:** Although not technically part of the cult, members of this circle serve the Missionary Works in other ways. Some are informants and subtle recruiters in the world at large. Others are authority figures who serve the cult, offering money, prestige or influence. It's even rumored among cult watchdogs that some are hostages by proxy, granting help and services for the safekeeping of their loved ones already indoctrinated into the cult. A few "Blessed Associates" are investigators or members of other religious communities attempting to ascertain the cult's true nature without resorting to pigment use. The cult does not fully trust the Outer Circle but recruits it as part of Bishop's long-term plan.

THE GEARS OF THE CULT

The Missionary Works revolves solely around the single charismatic figure of Uriah Bishop in his guise as the Holy Ghost. Everything else is secondary, as far as the individual recruit is concerned. Often, the cult knows who it wants to recruit before it even approaches them and carefully screens new arrivals to the outlying pigment cults. It selects those who meet one or more of several criteria, including those who show unusual skill and aptitude in projecting, those who see ghosts without pigment or demonstrate unique sensitivities to the supernatural or those suffering from horrible dreams. Not all initiates hail directly from the pigment cults, but the majority do. Bishop's agents roam the streets and target insulated communities (pagan, gay & lesbian, religious denominations, ravers, etc.) where informal information travels fast, searching for anyone fitting their criteria. The favorite targets are those individuals suffering from night terrors and nightmares concerning a gigantic, horrible being or her minions — any dream that might indicate the person is experiencing nightmares of Grandmother or the Spectres. Many recruits might join the cult if only to end the bad dreams or to understand them. Even if a potential recruit is unwilling to attend, however, she is eventually coerced through any number of means and brought before Uriah Bishop for the Initiation Rite. The most typical approach is to use Sandman to enter someone's dreams and offer her direction or even respite from the nightmares — but with the conviction that it was the Holy Ghost who helped.

The Initiation Rite is a group ceremony held within a large auditorium or cathedral, one usually owned by a

Blessed Associate. The cult treats recruits to a short presentation followed by an "invitation" to stay and witness a life-altering event. It isn't much of an invitation given that most attendees belong to an existing pigment cult whose hierarchy insisted they attend. Known sensitives or otherwise gifted individuals are likewise monitored and kept there through a variety of tricks. Bishop might assign Spectres to lurk in doorways in order to frighten sensitives into staying, or a handler might convince someone to wait. If the person suffers from nightmares, perhaps a handler promises the initiate a night of calm sleep for her attention. Those who remain, as most do, listen to a 10-minute oration by a Warden, during which the Holy Ghost's power manifests for the first time through a variety of Horrors. The cult then offers initiates refreshments of various types, from water to soft drinks, wine and even beer. Naturally, these beverages are laced with pigment, a fact the cult does not hide. Most people here indulge in pigment, and those who don't will resent being "tricked."

Once the willing attendees partake of the drug, the Warden resumes his pleading chant, urging everyone in attendance to "Believe." Whether through pigment use or because Bishop manifests with someone using Bedlam to alter his appearance, the congregation witnesses Uriah Bishop in all his glory. The Holy Ghost tells the attendees they were all selected for a greater purpose — which, as far as he's concerned, is true. If they place their faith in him, he can wipe away all their fears and terrors, instilling their lives with new meaning.

Most of those attending the Initiation Rite become initiates, taking to the cult with surprising vigor. Some do not join, however, fleeing for one reason or another (typically because of fear or uncertainty), though the members Bishop truly desires earn his personal attentions and visitations. Their nightmares may worsen — or even become true in small doses. The cult instructs the Sons and Daughters of the Holy Ghost to track down secondary recruits and to make friendly attempts to assuage any of the targets' doubts and worries. Of course, if these tactics fail, there are other methods that may be employed, such as addicting a target to pigment or using Sandman to break a target mentally.

Once someone becomes an initiate, the cult runs him through a series of ceremonies and rites with the stated purpose of "cleansing his soul." During this process, the cult gradually strips away the recruit's old existence, allowing the initiate only enough access to his former friends, job and family to sever those ties as neatly as possible. Those recruits who have second thoughts receive more convincing through growing nightmares, frightful encounters with spirits and pig-

ment-accentuated experiences that supposedly only the Missionary Works can allay. In any case, within weeks, if not days, the new recruit is living in a cult facility, with all attachments to his old life permanently severed.

The initiate's path from this point entails a steady increase in pigment-enhanced worship sessions. Uriah Bishop appears occasionally to offer encouragement and words of hope and promise. This process tests the individual's ability to project and to employ his gradually growing powers in spirit form. It is a difficult path. Many initiates exhibit little aptitude for this and eventually fall to insanity or perish — though the cult's more fanatical but less talented followers undergo ritual suicide to serve Bishop. Those who prove useful to the cult become Sons and Daughters of the Holy Ghost — joining the Second Circle.

Upon joining the Second Circle, the cultists receive new responsibilities and tasks. The cult dispatches those it deems "true believers" as missionaries to gather new recruits. Other Sons and Daughters help the initiates by offering words of encouragement and by curtailing doubt and fear. When necessary, they report troubling behavior among the First Circle to the Wardens or Persuaders. Those Second Circle cultists who can project with any skill help to herd the spirits of initiates while they struggle to control their new abilities. Sometimes, a rookie, finding himself outside of his body for the first time, will panic and attempt to flee. Second Circle members are always on hand to rein him back in.

Most cultists never progress beyond the Second Circle in rank. Despite their valuable service, their deaths deposit their souls to the immediate hereafter, where they are fodder for the coming Harvest — which few realize. A few members of the Second Circle, however, prove even more capable and serve the cult in other ways. Some become Persuaders, while others advance to the coveted Middle Circle to become Wardens.

Persuaders can be either alive or dead. They are fanatics and believe completely in Uriah Bishop and his great promise. To them, anyone who has seen the Holy Ghost and does not "Believe" is ill and must be cured. Persuaders are not necessarily cruel or inhuman — well, not all — they simply believe, with all that remains of their hearts. Their belief's enough to dispel any personal doubt and to convince them that they must drive out disbelief regardless of the cost. Someone delivered to a Persuader cannot simply burst into tears and bluff his way past punishment — he must convince the Persuader he is truly repentant. This is accomplished not only through words, but through deeds as well. A Persuader who saves a doubter sends this new convert on a holy quest, such as to hunt down an escaped cult member or

to perform some other task to prove his loyalty. Should the convert succeed, the sect pronounces him redeemed. If the conversation fails, the Persuader kills the heretic and sends his soul to the Spectres.

The Middle Circle forms the high priesthood of Bishop's cult. The Wardens are the most powerful and trusted of all of his still-living flock. They are skilled enough that they can project without using pigment or any other special drugs or techniques. Wardens preside over the cult's various ceremonies and rites and oversee the testing of new initiates to determine their potential worth to the Missionary Works. Wardens exert considerable influence over members of any lesser circle, though Persuaders can ignore the Wardens' instructions if they feel they can better serve the cult by doing so. The Wardens may appear to be "officers" of the cult, but they are not militaristic in any fashion. Each is actually akin to a Catholic bishop or a Jewish rabbi, receiving respect and admiration from everyone in his congregation.

Ghosts and Flatliner enforcers serving Uriah Bishop on a purely personal basis comprise the remainder of the cult, with the Spectres forming an outside body (Bishop may instruct them, but he does not lead the Spectres). The Flatliners and allied spooks alone know the true nature of the Missionary Works and do not reveal these facts to anyone below their station. They are not subject to the Wardens' control and are, in effect, an independent and autonomous segment of the cult.

The cult often calls the Spectres and powerful ghosts comprising the Council of Blessed Guardians the Right Arm of the Holy Ghost. They handle Bishop's dirty work (especially if NextWorld is no longer active). The Blessed Guardians handle those missions beyond the cult's internal interests. While Persuaders handle runaway initiates and troublemakers within the Missionary Works, the Guardians target Bishop's enemies in the world at large. If a reporter threatens to unveil the Missionary Works' true nature, the Guardians handle the matter. If a rich family pays a deprogrammer to kidnap their offspring from the cult, the Guardians ensure the family pays for such an affront. If someone threatens Bishop's pigment interests, the Guardians deal with them most severely.

Amusingly, the only way to advance into the Council of Ministers is to commit assisted ritual suicide in the name of the Holy Ghost. All members of the Advisory Circle are dead, but their actual qualifications for the job also demands their obedience and deference to Uriah Bishop himself. The Ministers are advisors, but only inasmuch as Bishop craves the fawning of subordinates. Thus, the Ministers are mostly yes-men and -women, lauding every one of Uriah Bishop's decisions in a chorus



of praise. That's not to say Bishop doesn't trust these individuals — otherwise, he wouldn't allow them so close to himself. In fact, many know Bishop is "only a ghost," but he is still their messiah, protecting them from Grandmother's hunger. His control over Grandmother's Spectres is proof of his ability and his mission.

The final circle, Bishop's inner camp, otherwise known as Grandmother's Eye, consists of Project Flatline graduates who either serve Bishop utterly as former members of his original congregation — or they know a safe bet when they see one. The Flatliners may not necessarily believe their leader to be semidivine, but they know his power and understand his influence with the great power that is Grandmother. The Flatliners handle the most dangerous tasks, the ones that Bishop entrusts to no one else. Three presently oversee the pigment cults, while the remaining two serve as his personal guard and enforcers. One is with him at all times and provides the last line of defense should someone attack the Holy Ghost himself.

RECRUITMENT

No cult survives without new members, and the Missionary Works is no exception. The relevant difference here is that the Missionary Works' initiates are rarely pulled directly from the streets. Instead, they are sensitives who suffer from dreams of Grandmother, or they are potential projectors. The Missionary Works identifies such people during their enrollment with the pigment cults, often with the help of low-level doses of the drug. Most new initiates

WHY SENSITIVES?

There are several reasons why Uriah Bishop targets so-called sensitives for his cult. The most practical is that he knows these folks are the easiest to sway and manipulate. They feel isolated and outside of society, so he lures them in with a sense of community and home where their uniqueness is celebrated and encouraged. He knows many sensitives dream of Grandmother in their nightmares, and that, in itself, marks them as blessed. Also, he figures that they'll be desperate to end their nightmares, making them far more amenable to his approach. Beyond those immediate reasons, sensitives are better braced for what lies in the hereafter. Bishop sees them as the elite of humanity and the cream of the crop. The fact he leads them must therefore mean he is better than everyone. Also, if he excludes them, they may become a force to contend against. Including them as allies means his army is that much stronger to battle against the other ghosts out there.

in the satellite sects rarely demonstrate those qualities desired by the Missionary Works and remain with the "lower" cults thereafter. Those who display the proper aptitudes are brought before Uriah Bishop, as described in the previous section.

Before beginning with the recruitment process, it's important to remember that few cults identify themselves as such. Cult, as a word, carries such negative connotations that the sects themselves are insulted by society's liberal application of the term to their movement or church. After all, they don't see themselves as dangerous. That said...

The cults recruit in a variety of ways. After all, most folks don't wake up one morning and think, "Ahh... I think I'll join a cult today!" This isn't a beverage choice. Prime candidates for recruitment feel lost or isolated in the world. They need to belong or to fill a void in their soul. That said, the Missionary Works and its subsidiaries are actually pursuing a different tact in the matter. They are catering to those people affected by the otherworldly and the hereafter. Grandmother's influence on the world seeds the human mind with growing nightmares, and while not everyone picks up on her touch, those people sensitive to Grandmother's presence suffer from terrible dreams. The Missionary Works preys on the fear, doubt and concern produced by the nightly terrors and insanity caused by Grandmother's presence penetrating the Shroud.

Even so, the mere reality of bad dreams doesn't necessarily lead one to rush into the arms of a strange new religion. In fact, the very name "cult" conjures up fearful notions in the minds of the average citizen. Memories of Heaven's Gate and the Jonestown mass suicide still weigh heavily on people's minds, so the Missionary Works takes great pains to appear as something more than just another cult. Even then, once people become aware of the Missionary Works' true nature, the cult still provides a safe haven from the nightmares and the malevolent angels known as Spectres. A small absence of freedom is far easier to accept than the loss of one's very soul to Grandmother's brood.

The Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost uses the following methods to locate new members:

MISSIONARY DUTIES

Perhaps the simplest and most direct approach involves small groups of missionaries preaching in the streets, near airports and bus stations — essentially anywhere large groups of people might hear their voices. While this might conjure up images of chanting Hare Krishnas, most recruiters are actually level-headed, well-dressed men and women who simply rely on natural charisma to encourage others to listen. Each speech begins with a commentary on the

growing presence of nightmares and mental disorders in people's lives — and of a way the Missionary Works has to end the bad dreams.

The trick behind this approach is that, although many people might ignore the cultist, those folks who are actually enduring night terrors and dementia see the pitch as prophetic. After all, they were actually suffering from the very visions these cultists described. The recruiters are smart enough and sharp enough to see who hesitates in step or turns an interested ear to the speaker. The recruiters simply hand these folks a pamphlet, with the promise of help.

Anyone who remains to listen to the recruiter is told that the blight on her soul — reflected in the nightmares she suffers — isn't her fault. She can be cured through spiritual purification and freed of the nightmares. In the end, the recruiters send interested parties to an open house of sorts, where experienced cultists answer questions and screen visitors. There is no pigment usage at this time, though spooks are often present at these gatherings, trying to see who is sensitive enough to notice them. During these open houses, the recruiters are not overly aggressive in their pursuits because even they're not too sure if they want a particular applicant. Instead, the promising candidates earn a spook shadow for the evening, who spies on the candidate's home and work life. Later, a recruiter can "accidentally" encounter the applicant on the street and continue the sales pitch — or even visit her dreams and exacerbate the nightmares.

Missionaries also make door-to-door calls for potential recruits in neighborhood where there's a hive or Spectre infestation. In these situations, sometimes a spook has already secretly canvassed the neighborhood, trying to determine who suffers from bad dreams. A typical introduction might go something like: "Pardon me, friend, but have you suffered from terrible nightmares recently? Or have you been feeling depressed, like you knew something terrible was coming? We can help you find the answers you seek, if you'll allow us a moment of your time." If they get their foot in the door, as it were, the missionaries then relate the help the Missionary Works offered them in their time of need. Such door-to-door recruiters carefully avoid parallels between them and Jehovah's Witnesses or other religious movements, avoiding connecting the nightmares with any particular belief structure. Furthermore, the moment a missionary realizes he can't convince a skeptic, who might be debating him for his own amusement, he leaves without any further insistence or pressure. After all, the missionary does not wish to attract undue attention to himself or his sect. Should the target prove genuinely interested,

however, the missionary invites her to an open house, as described previously.

RELIGIOUS SERMONS

When a cultist hails from a religious background, the Missionary Works may use his skills to gather new recruits. This method requires time and effort, naturally, and is among the few times the cult allows a member to associate with his old community. In fact, a cultist in this position often hides his affiliation with the Missionary Works, working undercover, as it were. The cultist strives to rise to a position of trust or influence within the local religious community, whether as a youth leader or even (in some cases) an authority figure such as a priest, deacon or rabbi.

Publicly, the cultist keeps his opinions to himself, but in private, among his growing throng of friends and supporters, the cultist slowly recruits those willing to listen. His place within the community already puts him in a position of trust, and he may already know who suffers from nightmares or growing mental instabilities. Knowing this, he can thus approach various candidates and relate his very same experiences with the nightmares or dementia. The cultist goes on for a while but stops short of actually telling his targets how to rid themselves of the dreams. Instead, he answers questions for anyone who seems truly interested, allowing them to approach him. From there, it's an invitation to an open house, though the recruiter remains outside this process. The cult doesn't want to risk the recruiter's standing in the community by making he seem partisan to anything.

TROLLING THE JAILS

Given escaped convicts comprise the Missionary Works' Inner Circle, Uriah Bishop has no qualms about recruiting prisoners and criminals into his flock, especially if they fit the cult's criteria. He uses a variety of recruitment techniques to encourage such people to join him.

For petty criminals, some hardcore cultists willingly serve jail time for minor offenses to preach to their "unfortunate brethren." Many such criminals dream of liberty from the mire encompassing their lives, so the recruiters play upon those desires, offering them easy answers to a hard life. Cultists who volunteer at homeless shelters, or spend the night in them, also use the same techniques on transients, many of whom are equally desperate.

For criminals with more permanent accommodations in the nation's penal system, the cult is far more selective. Bishop and the Flatliners know the prisons are breeding grounds for potential projectors given the prison population's propensity for violence. Spooks spy

on the prison populace to determine likely candidates for indoctrination, while cultists volunteer as teachers, assistants and activities coordinators, targeting those individuals who meet the Holy Ghost's criteria.

One particularly insidious technique is to send a spook to solitary confinement, where the inmate may be serving his term in isolation. The spook can manifest, often providing the prisoner with companionship and slowly indoctrinating him into the cult. Prisoners in isolation often undergo severe mental distress and are far more susceptible to nightmares. They make good candidates for indoctrination and often commit suicide to escape their fleshy prison (for those enduring life-sentences) after the recruiter sneaks pigment into their cells to ensure they stick around as ghosts.

PSYCHIATRIC HELP

The onset of constant nightmares drives many people into the hands of psychiatrists and sleep clinics. There are far more patients now than qualified specialists, and the vast majority of people couldn't afford this treatment if they wanted to. This is where some Missionary Works recruiters come in, as a cheap alternative to psychiatric care. These missionaries have some medical training (or simply a fake degree on the wall certifying their skill) and a secretary who screens out all patients not affected by Grandmother's nocturnal influences.

A typical session begins with the "doctor" listening to stories of the terrifying nightmares afflicting the "patient." The pseudo-psychiatrist uses the sessions to feel out the patient, eventually establishing trust and suggesting "atypical" approaches to conventional medicine when dealing with the nightmares. The recruiter encourages the patient to attend a special meeting concerning newly developed techniques said to help people with their nightmares.

Needless to say, this "special meeting" is a Missionary Works open house. If the patient shies away from the meeting, the psychiatrist prescribes pigment in the guise of "new medication." Although the vast majority of potential recruits are frightened by their first experiences with either the drug or the open house, the cult ensures that potential recruits receive a reprieve from their nightmares — at least for a time. The only way the victim can find peace is to continue the program, thus remaining free of further mental torture. Most return to the cult voluntarily thereafter, if only to avoid the nightmares.

MIRACLE WORKERS

Some of Uriah Bishop's more charismatic recruiters attract potential followers from other cults by staging miracle shows, showing them their "miraculous" power.

These "miracle men" are actually in the company of one or more projectors, and many Horrors available to the missionaries can easily duplicate or simulate miracles, especially in the minds of those who want to believe or among the uninitiated.

During a performance, the miracle man surrounds himself with viewers, who can approach as close as they wish for a perfect view of the activities to come — after all, the recruiter doesn't want anyone doubting the powers they are about to witness. The recruiter doesn't wear long-sleeved garments or anything else that might suggest sleight of hand. The stable of tricks the projectors perform on his behalf include the following:

- Shattering a glass from across the room (Wail)
- Mind reading, object reading or fortune telling (Forebode)
- Making an object move of its own accord (Inhabit or Helter Skelter)
- Creating electricity (Witch's Nimbus)
- Possessing someone in the audience (Puppetry)
- Teleportation (Storm Wending, see below)

These are just samples. Using multiple projectors with a variety of Horrors, spooks can perform any number of amazing feats, particularly if they manifest long enough to step out of the audience as "volunteers." The most effective tricks, however, involve ordinary citizens who cannot possibly be assisting the magician.

After the session, the miracle man explains that his "magic" is indeed real and not a trick or illusion. Anyone interested in learning these powers should remain after the session. The miracle man invites those who remain behind to attend an open house, with the promise that, eventually, they too can wield miracles.

OTHERS

The cults use other methods to collect new members. Those listed above are only examples. Note that if the characters encounter any of these circumstances, most of these situations appear quite innocent on the surface. A character suffering from nightmares might well seek out the services of a psychiatrist, for example, and find himself directed to a cult's open house, without any advance warning of unusual activity. Conversely, a crucible attending a miracle show will see spooks all over the place — and the ghosts, in turn, won't be happy to see the characters looking over their shoulders.

One method that's particularly insidious is using pigment to addict the member to the point where he enters into debt or bankruptcy to feed his habit. The cult then steps in to eliminate the target's financial miseries or to feed his predilections. By this point, the person is so grateful for the help (and the drug) that he'll do

whatever he's told. The cult only uses this method on promising targets who otherwise refuse to join.

BRAINWASHING

The term "brainwashing" comes from an almost direct Chinese translation. During the Korean War, Chinese subjected captured American soldiers to interrogations designed to convert them to the Communist way of thinking. The Chinese phrase for this process, "Xi Nao," literally means "wash brain," referring to purifying one's thoughts. Folks later corrupted this into "brainwashing" and expanded it to refer to any method used to alter someone's mind and thoughts to another point of view.

Naturally, the Missionary Works does not consider its activities to be brainwashing. Its official term is "conversion." Uriah Bishop subjects all of his followers to these techniques in one form or another to establish unquestioned order, obedience and worship from his people. Even those in the cults partake of the various rites, chants and ceremonies, ensuring their conformity and submission to Bishop's needs. Although he has no direct use for anyone without any paranormal skills, they still serve a purpose in his grand scheme.

Conversion assumes any number of forms, depending on the individual, her willingness to partake of the cult and her abilities and potential. Uriah Bishop is a patient ghost and knows his timetable well. Unless a new recruit shows significant potential, he is content to let the members of his flock come into their own gradually. Similarly, unless an individual has something special to offer, he doesn't mind a few deaths or failures along the way either. As long as Bishop has them pinned down through pigment, all cult members have some use in the end, even if only as Spectre fodder.

Some of the means by which the Missionary Works converts new members are discussed herein.

DRILL

Used by religious and military groups throughout the ages, this is among the simplest means of brainwashing. The technique targets willing subjects who honestly want to join the cult. The typical individual wishes freedom from the nightmares, the betterment of his own life, a cleansing of his soul, an escape from mortal stresses, etc. He openly embraces the cult and all it represents from the beginning.

This technique is similar to the one used in boot camps, though, as far as the cult goes, it is not in and of itself military in nature. Essentially, the cult helps make the new recruit respectable, shaves him, gives him a "uniform" of some drab, monotonous color and tells him he is no longer different than anyone else. His past has

little meaning now that he possesses a clean slate in the physical world. He must now prepare himself for his new role, however, by cleansing his very soul.

The cult incites this transformation through physical activity, repetitive tasks, songs with monotonous lyrics and mantras chanted during meditative exercises. Through these activities, as well as through ceremonies involving pigment, the cult strips away the person's past life. During this process, each recruit receives a new name during the first week of "purification." The cult members never use the recruit's old name under any circumstances. To further break their willpower, the cult lessens the food and water intake of its initiates and increases physical activities so that weakness and fatigue take their toll. Eventually, an initiate lives solely for pigment, with all other activities merely marking time's passage until the next mind-expanding dose.

By the time the cult finishes this procedure — a process spanning anywhere from three to eight weeks — the individual is reduced to little more than an automaton mindlessly repeating the same daily tasks. Most initiates have little or no recollection of their former personality, and few have any desire to return to that state. They are like ants in an anthill, perfectly content with their lot. This is when the Missionary Works rebuilds their personality according to Uriah Bishop's wishes.

GROUP THERAPY

Uriah Bishop and his people learned much from their study of psychotherapy. They borrowed an interesting method from this otherwise legitimate practice, using it on "borderline" initiates — those who profess an interest in the cult but waffle when it comes to joining the organization. Generally, the cult tells individuals who meet this criterion that membership in the cult may, in fact, be too drastic for them. People of this sort typically believe their nightmares and resultant depression are psychological in nature, with no connection whatsoever to anything spiritual. The cult tells them about free "clinics" where group therapy sessions have helped people with bad dreams and other troubles. These sessions are completely free and offered as a public service by the Missionary Works (but not to the general public), though they will accept donations if an individual feels the process has helped him.

Members of the cult's Second Circle run the group-therapy sessions three times a week. These cultists are charismatic, with some psychiatric training gleaned from their own experiences or classes taken since joining the Missionary Works. There are usually several other cultists present at the meeting as "shills." They initially doubt the proceedings but, by the end of the first

evening, are visibly excited and encouraged by what took place. As matters progress, they show excellent "progress" in curing themselves, thereby encouraging others to remain and achieve a similar level of success.

The sessions begin innocuously enough. Each member of the group describes himself, explains his reasons for coming (if so inclined) and how he feels the group can help him. The first night, the group leaders simply analyze the nightmares described and what they might mean, vectoring their explanations toward matters that make the recruits feel better about themselves.

The final activity of the meeting differs, however. The group leaders "conclude," after some discussion among themselves, that what might help the members is some anger management. They bring a large punching bag into the room and hand a whiffleball bat to one of the skills, to ensure nothing goes wrong with the first demonstration. They then instruct the individual to envision the bag as something that frustrates or vexes him. After a few tentative blows, and some well-placed verbal jabs by the leaders, the skill loses his temper and pounds the bag relentlessly, not stopping until he's visibly sweating and hyperventilating. He then professes that he does, in fact, feel considerably better.

One by one, the other participants earn their chance at the bag. The leaders, who remember what troubles each member from the meeting, provoke their marks with practiced skill. After each person has a chance to vent his frustrations on the hapless bag, the meeting ends for the night. The skills make sure they encourage the others to return, saying things like "I haven't felt better in years!" and "I'm definitely coming back."

Usually, many of the initiates return. They do, in fact, feel better, and who can turn down free therapy? Sometimes, they even bring friends along, which the group leaders encourage. The sessions continue as before, with additional anger and insult sessions that gather in strength. They also slowly introduce pigment, through the free cookies or refreshments that the skills "voluntarily" bring. So, slowly, visions and dreams make their appearance during these meetings, when the recruit finally "loses it" completely. The leaders insist these visions are, in fact, memories that must be brought out and dealt with. The group becomes more like a family, supporting the individual in curing his "disease" and working toward ending the nightmares and stress.

Late in the process, the "memories" that rise to the fore are actually carefully worded suggestions and off-hand comments made more powerful by the pigment-induced hallucinations. By this point, however, the individual can no longer determine whether these memories are false or simply deeply rooted memo-

ries of things that happened in his forgotten past. The cult induces someone with father issues, for example, to "remember" an incident of incest that occurred when he was a small child. The cultists insist that the person's parents, family and friends are all part of the disease that must be expunged (essentially placing the blame on external influences rather than forcing the individual to blame himself). Slowly, the group-therapy members cut ties with their former lives and are invited to start their life anew in the Missionary Works. By this point, these folks are too far gone to realize anything untoward is happening. The group usually joins together and remains a cohesive unit for the rest of its stay with the cult. They are each other's family now.

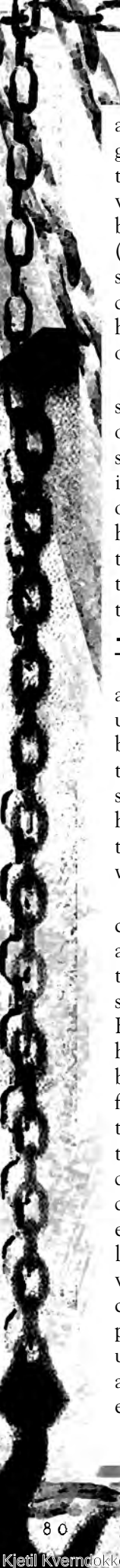
HYPNOTISM

When one thinks of hypnotism, one usually envisions holding a pocket watch or other object, letting the item slowly swing back and forth until the victim drops into a trance. From there, the hypnotist can offer hypnotic suggestions to encourage an individual to perform various uninhibited acts. Or, perhaps, the hypnotists asks him questions about memories, past lives, etc. After the session, the hypnotized individual usually doesn't remember anything about what happened.

Perhaps the best known story about hypnotism is that of *Trilby*, a 19th-century novel that painted a frightening picture of this valid psychological technique. In the book, an unsuccessful musician named Svengali hypnotizes a woman named Trilby into becoming his virtual slave. Within her, he creates a secondary personality who becomes a brilliant singer, as well as his willing tool. With a predetermined posthypnotic trigger, Svengali transforms her from the independent, free-willed woman the public knows into his personal servant, who does literally anything he asks. People still use the term "Svengali" to describe someone who seeks to persuade or force others to do his bidding.

These examples are but two of the many ways most people see hypnotism. The Missionary Works, however, uses this technique in an entirely different fashion. When a new recruit proves unwilling to remain with the cult, the cultists might use hypnotism to coerce him. The danger of this technique is that suggestions rarely remain in place after death, so the cult rarely trusts a cultist programmed in this way with duties beyond the Second Circle, if that far.

Hypnotism begins with the application of sedatives to draw the reticent recruit into a malleable state. The hypnotist drops the victim into a trance and tests his suggestibility through a few simple trials. If this shows promise, sessions continue, without the individual's knowledge. He continues going about his regular job



and life but receives daily hypnosis sessions that subtly guide him into remaining with the cult. Gradually, through the use of pigment and other drugs, the individual alienates his former friends and family. He might believe himself to be insane and seek professional therapy (including, potentially, cult-assisted group-therapy sessions as described previously). He might also retreat into drug abuse or other self-imposed means of dealing with his problem, never realizing he's under any sort of outside influence.

Note that this method is time-consuming, requiring several months to complete fully, and it demands the use of highly skilled and reliable cult members, who are in short supply. The cult reserves this method for those few individuals who show significant promise as projectors or sensitives. Should the person die, he manifests as a hue, fully aware of the sessions visited upon him. Since the cult can rarely control such hues and since hypnosis no longer affects them, Uriah Bishop sanctions their sacrifice to the Spectres.

BATTERY

This method of brainwashing is not unlike the actions taken by abusive spouses or parents. The cult uses it most often to control members who join the cult but later try leaving its folds. On some rare occasions, the cultists use it against folks they kidnap right off the streets (usually people displaying some sensitivity to the hereafter), as a way of breaking their will and fostering the Stockholm syndrome (where the victim identifies with her kidnapers/abusers).

The battery method is all about "tough love." The cult tells the individual that the Holy Ghost loves her and wishes to make her part of his family. Sometimes, this has religious connotations — using Bible parables such as the Prodigal Son to reinforce the idea that Bishop is akin to the Messiah. Like an unruly child, however, the recruit must first learn respect and proper behavior. The cult metes out punishment to those who fail to comply, but this is always of the "it'll hurt me more than it'll hurt you" variety. The subject quickly learns that she has no power or hope, while her "handlers" dominate her in every sense of the word. As the procedure continues, the victim "learns" that her failures are entirely her fault. "Guilt trips" are common, often followed by imprisonment for long periods of time for the victim to "think about" what she did. Periodically, the cult offers such a subject brief glimpses of hope, such as possible avenues of escape, but these are always and utterly crushed. The message is release through belief alone. Soon, the victim ignores even the most valid escape routes, believing she has no chance of fleeing her

condition. She might even view a rescue attempt by family, friends or the authorities as yet another trick.

Eventually, the new recruit falls completely under the cult's power as a means of escaping the abuse. She no longer sees the rest of the world as important. Even the thought of returning there brings her pain and guilt. She becomes entirely dependent on the Missionary Works for her existence and sanity.

TORTURE

Surprisingly, this brainwashing technique has the least likelihood of success and is, therefore, highly undesirable. The cult reserves this method for powerful projectors or sensitives who can't be converted any other way (and most often as a final resort before death). Even after completing the torture sessions, the victims require constant supervision to ensure they don't flee, rise up against their oppressors or relapse into their old habits. Spectres often "herd" groups of torture victims and are quick to quash any resistance.

Torture assumes a variety of forms, many of which are best left to the Storyteller's imagination. Stapling, prying, scalding, burning, cutting, mutilating and more are all viable practices used by members of the Council of the Word. The cult practices variants of old classics such as the Chinese water torture and the medieval rack in abandoned warehouses situated in equally desolate industrial sectors, far from the Missionary Works. The Council of the Word's torturers routinely perform both physical and mental tortures until the unfortunate victims are made to realize they must either serve or suffer.

Not surprisingly, many of those who perish under such conditions return as spirits with terrible thirsts for vengeance, which is why the torture sessions are monitored by several Spectres to prevent the spirits from escaping through death.

DEPROGRAMMING

Once the cult controls a subject, undoing its brainwashing can be extremely difficult. Depending on the method used to initially convert the individual, her personal desire to remain with the cult and the level to which pigment affects her judgment, deprogramming efforts can take many forms and many months (in some cases).

Crucible members shouldn't have to deprogram someone under normal circumstances — it's a process best left to the professionals. Exceptions might include the cultist's family or loved ones. The crucible, however, can be instrumental, if not responsible, for rescuing cult members for any number of reasons such as to gather information about the Missionary Works, to help a friend or as part of a contract for a client.



Storytellers should be note that only members of the First or Second Circles can be successfully deprogrammed. Those who have progressed deeper into the Missionary Works have done so because there is a certain amount of free will involved in their actions. They progress further into the cult because Bishop trusts people with inherent conviction more than someone he has to truss up and forcibly convince.

SNAPPING

A man named Ted Patrick originally developed this technique in the early 70s. Patrick saw a cult called the Children of God nearly take his son. It roamed the beaches of Southern California, looking for new recruits among vacationing students and carefree dropouts.. Patrick launched a one-man campaign against this and other cults and, in the process, discovered an excellent method for breaking the mental programming used by cults to hold sway over their victims. Called "snapping" for the way it literally snaps someone back to reality, the technique consists of a series of rapidly fired questions designed to break through cult-induced mental barriers.

Against Missionary Works members, snapping works best when used to help those brainwashed through the "drill" method. Victims of the drill method are taught the proper answers to any questions, which they repeat without thought or hesitation. When interrogated by police or other authorities, they appear dull and listless and respond to questions with the same redundant cult rhetoric. Breaking through this shield is difficult but not impossible. The interrogator cannot simply fire a barrage of random queries in an attempt to confuse a victim because the cultist simply starts over with each question and proceeds as though nothing happened. The proper method is to ask questions relevant to the individual, ones she hasn't been programmed to answer. The cult's training is so ingrained that she honestly believes she has the answers for everything. The trick is to find things the cult hasn't programmed into the victim, particularly personal questions gained through a thorough investigation into that person's background. The deprogrammer must ask the questions in rapid succession, forcing the cultist to think for herself.

If done properly, the victim should experience a breakthrough... a moment where she literally snaps out of it. Her eyes and face light up with the sudden recognition of everything that's happened or been done to her. The harder the cult pushed to incorporate this member into the fold, the harder she falls away from it... and away from the cult's lies and deceptions. The cultist is effectively deprogrammed at this point, whether the process takes days or weeks. Many months of drug

rehabilitation, therapy and psychiatric care lie ahead, however. Still, if all goes well, there's no reason the former cultist can't live a normal life again.

BULLYING

Curiously, this method of deprogramming is the very one that Ted Patrick's opponents insisted he employed during his "snapping" efforts. The cults, who called him "Black Lightning" and built walls and defenses around their compounds to keep him out, told members that Patrick used torture as a tool to break a member's faith. The cults even taught their followers methods to resist such efforts. Naturally, Patrick and those who followed in his steps rarely resorted to these techniques. Instead, fear of torture did as much damage to the cultist's mental barriers as any physical attacks might have done.

Physical bullying is still appropriate in some cases, though its legality is in question. Anyone utilizing this method had better remain anonymous or achieve success, lest he answer for his activities in court. Among Uriah Bishop's followers are a stable of lawyers who can and will press charges against anyone trying to steal the cult's members — and bullying certainly provides them with all the ammunition they need to bring the law to their side.

Bullying is most appropriate against someone who the cult brainwashed using the "torture" or "battery" methods. This is like fighting fire with fire, essentially reversing the original attack in an effort to cancel out the mind control. For victims of battery, bullying involves sleep and food deprivation followed by physical and mental abuse that stops short of actual injury. This method works best if the victim's friends or relatives are present to offer support and love — but only if the cultist breaks down and asks for it. Since the cult's teachings supposedly eliminate previous relationships, the subject is not normally inclined to agree with these terms until the deprogrammer breaks him down.

Those subject to torture at the hands of the Missionary Works often respond to similar punishment. As above, the deprogrammer tells the victim that he can end his pain by simply renouncing the Missionary Works. The danger here is that cultists often fake a "breakthrough" to avoid further torture. It's thus wise that, upon his recanting, the cultist be asked for information about the cult that no true believer would voluntarily surrender. If the cultist is pretending to change, he won't give an answer, or he'll lie. Naturally, the deprogrammer asks questions to which he already knows the answers through research (and in this aspect, the characters' help might be pivotal). If the cultist lies, the torture resumes.

Bullying uses a mixture of physical and psychological attacks that batter the victim from all directions. If the interrogator has paranormal abilities (or access to them), she can use various Horrors to terrify the subject into recanting his belief in the cult. This dangerous technique can backfire, however, and deprogrammers should use it sparingly. The appearance of a manifesting ghost, for example, might convince the cultist that demons or devils in the service of the Holy Ghost's enemies have captured him. After such an episode, breaking the victim is that much harder.

RELIGIOUS

Those joining the Missionary Works for religious or spiritual reasons can sometimes be deprogrammed using their original faith as the tool of their salvation. This follows the "snapping" paradigm by using a known religious figure from the cultist's old life... someone such as a priest, deacon, imam or rabbi. The best choice in the matter is someone well-known to the cultist. Essentially, the deprogrammer takes the victim to a recognized place of worship and tells him that agents of the Evil One — the archetypal wolves in sheep's clothing, in this case the Missionary Works — captured him. The deprogrammer then uses passages from the Bible, the Qur'an or other important scriptures to break down the Missionary Works' tenets.

If the subject was Christian, for example, the deprogrammer might use various Bible passages to attack the Holy Ghost's claims. Uriah Bishop claims to be the Messiah, the next coming of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, however, it is said that Jesus will return in power and glory and that all men would know him. This hardly applies to Bishop, who remains hidden from the masses. The deprogrammer presents similar arguments over a period of several days, eventually revealing Bishop (in his guise as the Holy Ghost) as a megalomaniac interested only in his own self-glorification. The priest explains that he only wishes to return the victim to God's path of his own free will. It is imperative that the deprogrammer employ no force during this method lest he undermine this technique's most basic tenet.

If paranormal powers are available for the religious deprogramming, they can greatly accelerate the treatment. Characters can use their Horrors to convince the subject that the cult's powers were in no way its sole providence. Under the deprogrammer's direction, objects levitate, "angelic" images manifest, voices from nowhere praise God's love, etc. At the very least, this proves that the Missionary Works' so-called miracles were, in fact, shams that can be repeated beyond its walls.

Achieving a religious breakthrough is time-consuming and difficult because the Missionary Works, like many of its ilk, teaches that other religions are nothing but lies made to enthrall and pacify the masses.

HELP FROM THE CRUCIBLE

Some cult members are simply too far gone to recover through the above methods. Constant pigment use and the cult's brainwashing methods drove the original personality so deep into the subconscious that nothing can recover it. Nothing *normal*, that is. In such situations, direct aid from a crucible can sometimes accomplish what normal psychiatry and snapping fail to do.

Perhaps the simplest method available is to force a "snap" using paranormal abilities to influence the victim. Spooks can produce rapid-fire question sessions by manifesting long enough to ask a question, then vanishing to permit another spook to continue the process. Similarly, the crucible can possess other cult members, forcing them to reject the Holy Ghost verbally in the presence of the victim. This process can work relatively quick wonders, especially if the original personality was forced into the cult through one brainwashing method or another.

If the cultist can project while under pigment's influence, the crucible can use this to its advantage. While projecting, the victim is approached by members of the crucible and treated in the hereafter, where his true personality is closer to the surface. The crucible must immobilize the subject and use Default Abilities on him, as though he were a normal ghost. Since the cultist doesn't want this to happen, he will likely resist. Employing Misery Loves Company, Sense Lifeline and Sever the Strand in this fashion do not instantly strip away brainwashing, but they help identify the reasons why a person joined a cult, the vacancy it fills in his life and how to help resolve the issue. Only, instead of ascending to his ultimate reward, the cultist comes to grips with himself and slowly turns his back on the cult. Unfortunately, the crucible neither gains Vitality nor loses Spite as a result of this action (unless the Storyteller feels so inclined). Nearby Spectres — those within a block — can detect this activity, however, especially those who might be searching for the captured cultist. Therefore, the crucible must be extremely careful when employing this ability.

The final method involves a direct infusion of Vitality into the affected individual (who must be projecting for this to work), in the hopes that the target's suppressed subconscious will awaken and rise to the fore. This effort is very similar to that used to create a new projector or ghost. The individual must be conscious but

immobilized and must — in the deep recesses of his soul — truly wish for liberation. Thus, this method won't work against anyone who joined the cult voluntarily or who honestly accepts its tenets as the gospel truth — not unless he experience a change of heart.

The infusion requires the crucible channel 30 points of Vitality through a single character as a conduit. The conduit burns one Willpower rating, just like that required to elevate a new ghost for the crucible. Doing so instantly raises the suppressed subconscious to the fore, no matter how tattered and broken. This does not completely eliminate the cult's programming — a process requiring psychology, hypnotism and similar activities — but it's a kick start to recovery, one best reserved for the lost-cause cases. The now-former cultist is in for an extremely long ride and faced with psychological hurdles thereafter. More importantly, the person must now combat his addiction to pigment as well, meaning that such folks sometimes relapse back into the cult and back into addiction because it's easier than the pain of living life.

Using a Vitality infusion in this capacity is like a metaphysical beacon. Spectres within three blocks will know something is happening and the general direction of the disturbance. Those associated with the Missionary Works will instantly know what just occurred and make a beeline for the site. Since this effort may severely weaken the crucible, it should probably beat feet as soon as it completes the infusion. It's probably a good idea to conduct such an operation outside the city limits, in an area scouted out in advance for Spectral influence.

CULT AGENDAS

With everything that's been said about the cult's operations thus far, there's been little attention given as to what the cult actually does. Certainly, its ultimate motive is to create a flock of followers and potential sacrifices for Grandmother, as well as to offer Uriah Bishop worship and admiration, but the cult needs a public agenda.

The individual cultists engage in a variety of internal activities, such as attending ceremonies, conducting rituals and, of course, recruiting and indoctrinating new members. That's not all there is to the Missionary Works, however. It frequently undertakes other activities where it will likely encounter the characters.

One thing to remember about most members of the Missionary Works is that they do not think of themselves as evil or corrupt. Nearly all believe themselves to be spiritually pure. They honestly think that they're performing good deeds in the service of the Holy Ghost, and for the most part, they are (up to the point one

realizes they are sacrificing spirits to “protect” the world from Grandmother). Anyone who suggests otherwise is wrong beyond a shadow of a doubt, and this attitude is actually common among all types of cults, not just the Missionary Works.

Bearing that in mind, here are several cult activities that might intersect the characters’ lives. The cult pursues some for the sake of recruitment — or at least in order to identify those who might make good additions to the cult’s roster. Not all activities are out-and-out recruitment drives, however. Instead, the cult pursues them to make others aware of the Missionary Works and the good deeds it can accomplish. In other words, they are public-relations ploys. It doesn’t mean that should the cultists believe a character to be a sensitive or projector that they won’t try recruiting him.

FUNDRAISERS

Like all successful cults, the one thing the Missionary Works needs is plenty of money to support its operations. After all, the cult needs to continue expanding its operations, and it needs to feed, clothe and house its members, all things requiring a constant influx of cash. Since the vast majority of recruits are poor, desperate people looking for a new start, they can rarely offer large reserves of money for the cult’s coffers. More importantly, while Uriah Bishop’s drug empire certainly provides the cult with a surfeit of

assets, the cult needs legitimate enterprises on its tax books to justify its income.

To this end, cult members frequently involve themselves in fundraising efforts, be it car washes, cookie sales or more complicated services. Cultists with special skills, such as accounting, medicine, mechanics, craftsmanship, etc., offer their abilities to people in exchange for donations. The Missionary Works also owns several subsidiary companies it uses as fronts for the manufacture and sale of legitimate items, siphoning off profits for the cult’s own use. One company produces cute, collectible stuffed animals that are sold in gift shops across the country. Another grows natural foods and herbs as nutritional supplements. Several others also exist.

Now, typically, the best way to involve characters in this aspect of the Missionary Works is if a company (a competitor of one of the Missionary Works’ subsidiaries) hires the characters to contend with supernatural espionage. Likewise, the Missionary Works subsidiary could hire the characters, ultimately to determine if they could prove a threat or an asset to the cult.

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

The cult needs to present a wholesome image to the general public. It doesn’t want to become the next Hare Krishnas, treated with the same rolled-eyes and snickers as its members walk past. Instead, those involved with



the Missionary Works wear standard clothing when in public, albeit with a visible pendant, pin or other jewelry marked with the symbol of the Holy Ghost. Dressed conservatively, they undertake various charitable activities designed strictly to improve public relations.

The cult begins by locating something that needs doing in the community, something within its power to perform. For example, its members might repair a broken fence, but filling potholes is beyond their capabilities — they don't have the asphalt or trucks, for one thing, but more importantly, they don't have the authority. Secondly, the Good Samaritan service must be something that doesn't help one group of people while angering others. Visiting sick orphans in a hospital is all right, but cleaning stylistic graffiti is not, since, by doing so, the cultists upset the artists who painted those pieces in the first place.

Once the cult locates a suitable activity, it proceeds to the task with single-minded abandon. Anonymous calls to newspapers and television new programs ensure that the public notices the Missionary Works and appreciates its efforts. Of course, the cult carefully avoids overkill, so large-scale activities are limited to no more than one every month or so. The cult performs very little recruiting during these events, mostly to avoid the ever-present cameras. There are, however, pamphlets available to interested parties describing the Missionary Works and its goals — which, of course, are described as totally altruistic in nature.

CONSULTATIONS

As mentioned in the recruiting section, the cult actively employs charlatan psychiatrists to recruit new members. The cult uses a similar ploy by having members pose as psychic consultants. One popular trick has the cultist offering psychic consultations at occult shops, meetings and conventions (often accompanied by a spook with Forebode who can feed the consultant information). Students of the occult are often drawn to the supernatural because they bear some sensitivity to such matters. The cultists use these consultations to locate viable targets for indoctrination into their cult, though they won't recruit during the consultation itself. Instead they "mark" a subject for further surveillance. The cult then seizes those with a potential for real power, converting them through soft, then increasingly harder approaches. It indoctrinates the weak sensitives through long-term methods.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

Given the Missionary Works' connection to the criminal element, it rarely frowns upon those cult members willing to perform "questionable" acts on behalf of

the cult. While Uriah Bishop might use the Council of Blessed Guardians for the important tasks, members of the Second Circle — sometimes assisted by a small cadre of First Circle toadies — undertake petty criminal activities. Some examples include:

— Locating and kidnaping an unwilling "recruit." The cult's press gang usually pursues this avenue only if the individual in question knows more about the cult than it feels comfortable allowing. Someone who attended a meeting and left immediately is safe, but someone who took pigment, interacted with garrulous cultists and saw a ghost or Spectre might become a target for kidnaping.

— Setting up a frame job. The Missionary Works has many rivals — not just projectors, but other cults, watchdog agencies, pesky news reporters, etc. — all of whom are a cause of constant concern. Sometimes, the cult believes a constant thorn has pricked it too often. When this happens, cultists perform some act of violence or criminal undertaking before planting evidence that their target was responsible for the act.

— Killing someone. This rarely happens, but when it does, the cult uses projectors to make the death appear accidental. The cult doesn't go around murdering people at random. The target is usually troublesome, such as a crusading reporter or a private investigator who ventured too close to the truth. Sometimes, the Missionary Works tracks and kills its own, such as an escaped or disgraced cultist.

For each activity, the cultists chosen have no verifiable connection to the Missionary Works (no family members who know to where they vanished, no pins, etc.). Should the authorities capture the person, the cult either bails him out through intermediates (such as someone claiming to be a relative) or it sends spooks to eliminate him behind bars (because the member poses a risk). Those who are welcomed back into the cult's folds do not pursue any similar activities again, for fear of any subsequent capture and incarceration leading investigators back to the cult.

Cultists encountered in the process of committing a crime will deny membership in the Missionary Works. If pursued secretly, they avoid returning directly to the compound to foil just such attempts. Many even take pigment to spot potential spooks if they don't already have that capability. After a few hours, however, the cultists do return to the compound, unless, of course, they know someone's pursuing them.

INFORMATION GATHERING

The cult occasionally sends its people out for the sole purpose of collecting information on one subject or

another. Sometimes, this is merely reconnaissance for later recruitment efforts, though there are a variety of reasons for cultists to undertake such activities. Perhaps the cult wishes to find some new charitable activity for the cult, or it could be involved in something more sinister.

The cult keeps tabs on its competitors and adversaries when it can (often a difficult endeavor for the cult's projectors, who are in high demand). One activity they pursue with particular diligence is to monitor the movements of rivals, be they known Death Merchants, Orpheus Group survivors or Lazarus Redux employees. On such assignments, cultists roam the city without any identifying clothing or jewelry of any kind. Sometimes, they assume the guise of reporters, bike messengers, mothers with baby strollers, etc. They undertake some normal-looking activity while monitoring the movements of specific individuals. Cultists involved in surveillance have some skill in the matter and are

WHAT ARE SENSITIVES?

Sensitives are those folk with some extraordinary ability that society considers supernatural in nature. Sensitives are normal humans, with all of humanity's blessings and shortcoming, except they can see ghosts, glimpse snapshots of the past or future, manipulate objects with their minds, see those things they wish they couldn't, etc. While most folks hunger for that kind of power or distinction, a sensitive generally despises his abilities because they've always alienated him from society.

Creating a sensitive for the game is simple. They are normal people, except they wield one or maybe two Horrors. The difference in this case is that their ability with a Horror is rarely more than two Vitality in strength — and even that's exceptional. As for how their powers work, use the following as a guide:

- Animal Magnetism: Unearthly Repose
- Astral Projection: Projecting
- Blessed (Lucky): Pandemonium
- Channeling: Skinriding, but in reverse — allowing ghosts to ride the sensitive
- Clairvoyance: Forebode
- Empathy: Wail or Forebode
- Faith Healing: Contaminate, but the result is real
- Pyrokinesis: Witch's Nimbus
- Sight: Dead Eyes
- Telekinesis: Helter Skelter
- Telepathy: Sandman, but only in gaining information

relatively difficult to spot (difficulty 8). If attacked, they often declare ignorance and pretend as if nothing untoward was happening.

The Missionary Works also hires detectives and hackers to undertake more subtle infiltrations if necessary. Spooks can always be spotted and tricks such as Broadband Ghost are known by so few ghosts. The cult hires experts through dummy corporations and back-alley arrangements, however, to avoid leaving any evidence pointing back to the cult itself. Usually, the contractors have no idea they're actually in the employ of the Missionary Works.

OTHERS

The cult certainly pursues other activities as required by the situation. It constantly strives to improve public relations, to attract new members and to increase its flock. The Storyteller should feel free to create any activity he can think of to bring the cult and the characters into orbit. Late-night telethons, dissemination of flyers, on-camera interviews, charity car washes and minor-league sports team sponsorships are all good examples of how aspects of the cult might appear in everyday life.

TO DREAM OF DARK THINGS

Grandmother's presence grows stronger with each passing month, while Spectre hives increase in size and number. Both affect the dreams and mental health of mortals, whether through nightmares or psychotic episodes. This is a primary mean by which the cult attracts new members — promising (and delivering) relief from these awful dreams. Just why are the nightmares so horrible? Why don't people simply forget them as they would a bad dream and move on with their lives?

For one thing, the echoes of Grandmother's thoughts are much more intense than normal dreams. Sufferers awaken frequently during the night, sweating profusely and remembering details with terrible clarity. Not surprisingly, they earn little sleep each evening, and what rest they do manage is not particularly effective. Victims spend the following day fatigued and on edge, as one might expect from someone who is exhausted.

As the dreams persist, a victim comes to dread the night. Sleeping pills don't work, instead forcing the individual to remain asleep, unable to awaken from the nightmares. Sleep deprivation sets in. The horrible visions take their toll, making the victim high-strung, jumpy and prone to feelings of hopelessness and pervasive dread. Although certain prescription drugs and psychological techniques can alleviate the effects, the nightmares continue unabated, driving the unfortunate

victim steadily toward madness. Small wonder, then, that the cult's promise to alleviate these dreams draws so many into its clutches.

Initially, the nightmares take the form of common fears similar to those the individual feels in life. Someone with arachnophobia, for example, will dream of creepy spiders climbing all over his body or of being trapped in a web while a huge arachnid approaches, fangs glistening. As Grandmother's influence increases, these terrors grow in intensity and detail. Carrying the arachnophobia example further still, the victim might envision the spider's bite paralyzing him, forcing him to watch while an egg sac hatches and hundreds of baby spiders gradually devour his flesh, bite by agonizing bite. Escape is never possible. In the end, the nightmares catch the unfortunate individual and deliver him to a grisly fate.

Not all dreams are the same. Most people fear more than just one thing, and the nightmares touch upon all of them. Some of the most common fears and phobias involve open (or enclosed) spaces, spiders (or other creepy-crawlies), being buried alive, etc. Here are some examples of how Grandmother's presence might corrupt these into terrible, memorable nightmares. The Storyteller can use these as harrowing dreams to inflict upon the characters or anyone using Sandman:

- **Enclosed Spaces:** The individual is trapped in an elevator, which refuses to open. The bottom begins to fall out. Other passengers, including friends and family members, plummet through the resulting holes one by one. Their bodies fall into something that looks like a huge garbage disposal built of chainsaw blades, which steadily approaches. The elevator contracts, the walls closing in and forcing the victim toward the broken floor. Soon the dreamer is alone, forced to choose between being crushed to death or being ground to a pulp.

- **Public Speaking:** Curiously, this is the number one fear suffered by Americans. In a related nightmare, the victim is at work, school or somewhere else where people he knows watch him fumble at the podium. He is naked or equally vulnerable, drawing laughs and giggles from friends as he stumbles through his speech. Worse, each time he says "uh" or "um" or struggles to find the right words to say, dark shadows rise up among the audience and begin to torture people. Soon, horrible demons fill the room, rending and tearing his friends, gradually working their way toward the dreamer himself. Soon, he can no longer control his words, coughing, sputtering and knowing all of this horror is his fault.

- **Insects:** The victim is lost in a dark wood or in an unfamiliar home, unable to find the path leading home or to the front door. He runs frantically, encountering

disgusting insects at every turn, which spill from the dark niches. Ants, cockroaches, beetles, earwigs, mosquitoes and more pursue him with single-minded intent. For each swarm he somehow eludes, more appear, each time larger and more menacing. Soon the insects are the size of dogs or even bigger. The trees and plants or the furnishings are also enormous, and the dreamer realizes in horror that he's slowly shrinking to the size of the bugs he fears. Soon they are as large as he is, biting and clawing at him no matter what he does. The dream ends as he finds himself surrounded by insects as big as houses.

- **Doctors/Hospitals:** The dreamer is traveling to someplace familiar, such as his office. However, he steps through a door and finds himself in a hospital. Doctors immediately seize him and drag him off to an examination room, where they strip, poke, prod, inject and expose him to all those medical tortures he fears the most. The anesthesia has no effect either. The doctors smile and ignore the dreamer's struggles, conferring and deciding on the best course of action. They then strap the subject down for further tests. Now, the cutting and organ removal begins....

- **Buried Alive:** The victim discovers he is stretched out on a slab in a morgue, the mortician replacing his fluids for burial. The dreamer can see, hear and feel everything, but he cannot move or attract anyone's attention. The "corpse" is brought to a funeral home, dressed up and laid out in a coffin. He hears his own eulogy, which inevitably begin tearfully but end with a cruel evaluation of the individual's faults. In the end, the mourners decide perhaps he wasn't such a nice person after all. The funeral is worse. The minister delivers a sermon about the departed soul burning in Hell for eternity. The so-called mourners lower the horrified dreamer into the ground, his coffin still open. They pour dirt inside one shovelful at a time. Only then can the dreamer draw his breath, inhaling and choking on dirt. It's too late, however — the victim is entombed in the darkness, completely helpless and alone.

- **Flying:** The dreamer is aboard an airplane, seated near the back. Things seem normal at first, but then, the turbulence starts. The plane bucks and weaves, and people scream and run up and down the aisles in panic. The pilot's voice urges calm, but then, an engine explodes, ripping off the wing. There's a large hole in the cabin, and the passengers are sucked out row by row. The plane slowly disintegrates, and people are holding on for dear life, but to avail. The victim must watch, screaming, as he's the last to go. Soon, he's falling amidst a cloud of debris, watching the ground rapidly approach.

- **Snakes/Aliens/Zombies/Etc.:** The individual begins the day normally, going to work or visiting friends as

he would on any other day. Then, he notices the people he knows are growing scales or pallid flesh or whatever is relevant to the fear. They don't seem to notice, though the dreamer is naturally horrified. Soon, his associates develop more outward signs of change, transforming into the very thing the dreamer fears. They watch the dreamer with hungry expressions and isolate him with their behavior. He runs, but everyone is in the process of transforming. Soon the victim realizes, as he's being pursued, that he's the only human left in a world comprised entirely of monsters.

NIGHTMARES AND THE CHARACTERS

Eventually, these deep and troubling nightmares reach the characters' attention. This need not be a result of one or more of them coming under Grandmother's nocturnal influence, but the dreams could affect friends, family or other associates with equal impact.

A character under the influence of these dreams suffers from general malaise and fatigue that slows her usual recuperation of Vitality by 25 percent (i.e., one point for every 10 hours of rest for most characters, or one point for every hour and 15 minutes for projectors in their own bodies). A full week of nightmares reduces the character's maximum Vitality cap by one. This does not lower *starting* Vitality. It merely means that the character cannot saturate herself fully. Her Vitality caps out at 9 instead of 10 (6 for hues), even after receiving infusions from other characters or after tapping Spite or Willpower.

A character suffering from nightmares for a full month is even more penalized. Vitality recovery is decreased by 50 percent (one point for 12 hours for most characters, or one point every hour and a half for projectors in their bodies). Maximum Vitality falls by 2, to a maximum of 8 (5 for hues). Each additional week that passes without treatment increases recuperation times by one hour for ghosts and 15 minutes for projectors in their own body. The maximum Vitality cap also falls by one a week, quickly affecting a character's ability to recuperate back to full. Characters whose Vitality cap falls to zero through nightmares can no longer project and will gain a derangement.

Once a character dies, he no longer suffers the nightmares. If the character dies while his Vitality is at zero, his soul never manifests in the hereafter. One nasty possibility is that the soul is too weak to hold cohesion and simple dissipates. A more positive possibility is that the soul goes directly to its final reward, its tethers to this world unable to bind it — much like chains can't hold smoke.

PURGING THE NIGHTMARES

All dreams are rooted in the subconscious. Somewhere, in the depths of a person's mind, fears and

anxieties rise to the fore during a nightmare. This process is a natural and healthy part of the human condition, since it helps give those emotions a release valve. Doubts and terrors normally haunting the conscious mind can work themselves out during a good night's rest.

Grandmother's influence reaches deep into the psyche and draws on those emotions with such frequency that they cause more harm than good. The solution is not in interrupting Grandmother's influence, which is a vast undertaking far beyond the current abilities of the crucible. Instead, the characters are better off locating the source of the nightmares within the dreamer. It's a simple fact that, whatever Grandmother is, her echoes find resonance in certain emotions that might remain unresolved. In helping the character or dreamer contend with those issues, the crucible limits the avenues through which Grandmother touches the subconscious mind. That said, there are some sensitives who are simply too empathic to be helped. This treatment might alleviate the strength with which certain dreams touch them, but it won't eliminate the nightmares entirely. The one surefire, but dangerous, remedy is pigment, a drug that manages to dull or distance its users from their senses. The question in this case, however, is whether the treatment is costlier than the symptom.

Helping a dreamer contend with her inner demons is accomplished in much the same way as freeing a ghost from its tethers or deprogramming a cultist... through the characters' Default Abilities. Unlike deprogramming, where pigment might be necessary to force the dreamer to project, a viable alternative is to use the Sandman Horror — though the trick is in creating a solution involving the entire crucible and not simply one member. Thus, Sandman can be the first step in a path of recovery. Instead of only using Sense Lifeline, then, one member explores the dream while the others use Sense Lifeline to explore the emotion resonating with Grandmother's presence. Another option is that, since these aren't ordinary dreams, something about their nature affects spooks. Someone using Sandman or even Misery Loves Company on a dreamer suffering from the nightmares may, in fact, experience a waking version of the dream within his own mind. Chapter Four contains a mission entitled "Sleepless Nights" (see p. 163) and a unique ability called Terrible Fancy (see p. 164). The Storyteller can use Terrible Fancy's effects to transmit the dream into the minds of the entire crucible, thus allowing them to share in the danger and adventure. It's still the dreamers' nightmare, but it's been broadcasted into all their heads because of the Vitality link that they share with one another.

While trapped in the nightmare, the characters can use Horrors as they see fit and share Vitality with one another. Within the nightmare, the characters experience the same events the sleeper does and can interact with that person's dream self. The characters can then use their Horrors to defend the dreamer from his fears, while searching for the root of his terrors. Does he have arachnophobia because he saw spiders bursting out from beneath someone's skin? Is he afraid of water because he almost drowned? In essence, the individual should learn to control his emotions, not be ruled by them — even in dreams. It's this uncontrolled fear or anxiety that resonates with Grandmother's presence.

The Storyteller can handle the nightmares in a variety of manners, dependent entirely upon the dream in question. If the entire crucible participates in the nightmare, then allow them to use their Default Abilities within the dream to free the victim from his terrible tethers (using Sense Lifeline and Sever the Strand to good effect). Each nightmare is unique, but the archetypes listed previously can serve as good starting points. Why does someone fear these insects? Is the fear of insects tied to a phobia of filth or the unseen? Maybe someone is afraid of drowning because he can't swim? The solution lies in empowering the victim and teaching him how to control his phobia, both in the dream and outside of it.

If the Storyteller doesn't pull the characters into the dream, then perhaps the answer lies in empowering the dreamer in real life. In this case, the crucible acts as a unit, with one member using Sandman or Misery Loves Company to determine the psychological source of the nightmares and everyone else pulling together to help empower the person in her waking life. Does someone have recurring nightmares of powerlessness because she was raped? Then the trick might be to find the rapist and bring him to justice to give the victim some closure. The characters can use this method to free members of their own crucible from Grandmother's nightmares, as well as to help other victims they encounter.

In addition to Sandman's use in this matter, nightmares also have a disturbing effect on another Phantasm Horror, Dream-Walker. Someone using Dream-Walker to move through the mind of a dreamer experiencing nightmares may suffer the dream as with Sandman — or open another mind to the nightmares as well. The actual experience depends greatly upon the nature of the dream itself, of course. If the victim envisions a world where humans are becoming snakes, for example, the dream-traveler may encounter one or more of these hybrid creatures on his way from the dreamer's mind. He

may need to fight them before escaping, emerging with an extremely strange story to tell. In fact, one potential hook for the Storyteller is that the character encounters a particularly nasty nightmare while dream-walking between two dreamers. Perhaps the dream deals with Spectres or something most folks wouldn't know about, or perhaps the nightmares were strong enough to hurt the character. The session becomes a mystery in determining whose mind the character encountered. The crucible would have to investigate the dreamer and then his acquaintances to determine who is experiencing night terrors.

While dream-walking through the dreamer's mind, the character might hear distorted cries for help emerging from some nebulous direction, distance unknown. These are coming from the sleeper himself as he desperately tries to flee his fears. If the dream-traveler tries moving in that direction, he feels an intense foreboding, as though his own doom approaches. In this state, the character is transitioning through dreams, not exploring, so everything happens quickly. Any attempt to investigate means the dream-traveler veered from his intended course and popped out... somewhere *else* in the world.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Early on in the characters' investigations, they should know little to nothing about the Missionary Works. Aside from occasional encounters with cult members and the usual media sources described earlier in this chapter, there are several ways the crucible can acquire details about the cult or encounter them on the basis of various Traits (thus allowing all crucible members to participate in the process). The Storyteller can invent other potential cult activities and situations as well, rewarding the innovative use of Talents, Skills and Knowledges as appropriate.

Note that not all these Abilities provide ways to uncover information about the Missionary Works. The list below provides suggested examples, along with the difficulty rating required to uncover some interesting fact or to properly interact with cult members.

TALENTS

- **Alertness (difficulty 7):** The cult is involved in something secretive or conspiratorial — perhaps it's planting a listening device, engaging in some petty theft or simply carrying out a quiet conversation about its plans in the near future. Or characters can use this Talent to spot a Missionary Works pin or pendant on a cultist engaged in recruiting activities. Alertness only functions

if the character is in an area frequented by the cult, where he can actually encounter cult members in person.

- **Athletics (difficulty 7):** A new yoga, or other pseudo-mystical body-management, class has started at the character's health club. Initially, the class sounds relatively innocuous (not one that would interest the character unless he happens to be into that sort of thing), but the class gains a reputation as extremely bizarre. Those in attendance report weird chants, having unusual visions and other strangeness. The teacher is burning pigment in class disguised as incense, and he's also a cult member using the class to locate potential projectors.

- **Awareness (difficulty 6):** The character sees a powerful ghost in a normal-looking house or room. The spirit is defending his demesne against Spectres sent by the cult. Hidden in the room is an object of power coveted by the Missionary Works, but the cult does not know the artifact's specific location. The crucible can thwart the cult and take the artifact for itself, if only they can send the ghost to its final reward, one way or another. Of course, cult members or Spectres might interrupt these efforts....

- **Empathy (difficulty 6):** Visits to various hospitals, psychiatric wards, homeless shelters, etc. all give the characters the same recognizable vibe. Strange nightmares afflict more and more people, leading to sleepless nights, emotional outbursts, mental disorders and outright paranoia. Further investigation (difficulty 8) — by talking to authority figures such as head nurses and chief psychiatrists — reveals another clue: Many patients suffering from these problems have vanished. People saw a few of them later, working with the Missionary Works, which apparently cured them of their afflictions.

- **Expression (difficulty 7):** The character encounters a crazy man preaching about the end of the world. He insists that the terrible nightmares many feel are, in fact, the first sign of the impending apocalypse. If the character attempts to question the man, she must engage in a debate to get any further information. A successful Trait roll (such as Manipulation or Charisma + Expression) indicates that the character learns the doomsayer's chosen means to survive the world's end is by joining the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost. Only it has the true means of salvation, he insists. Further investigation shows this nutcase has nothing to do with the cult and was, in fact, rejected because he's certifiably insane (even Uriah Bishop has standards).

- **Intimidation (difficulty 8):** The police have in their custody several members of the Missionary Works who officers captured trying to commit murder (actually, the cultists weren't interested in success as much as they were in planting evidence that a rival cult, the Children of God, was involved). The cultists refuse to speak with the police

and are awaiting bail. One policeman (if the characters have an ally or friend on the force) wants the characters to spy on the cultists as ghosts... and perhaps even to try intimidating them into revealing their true intentions.

- **Intrigue (difficulty 7):** The cult is engaged in a charity fundraiser, such as a car wash or some other innocuous-looking event. Upon attending, the character realizes that some of the volunteers are members of the Missionary Works and are pursuing more than good deeds. Are they trying to recruit someone, or are they trying too hard to improve people's views of them? Their intent is a mystery.

- **Intuition (difficulty 8):** After interviewing several nightmare victims (perhaps for a friend or a colleague), the character feels that something bad is going to happen to one of them. If he follows her, the desperate woman visits one of the pigment cults. She goes in but doesn't exit. She's inside, indulging in pigment, and if the crucible doesn't help her, police find her body later, floating face down in a nearby sewage ditch. There are no visible marks on her, but an autopsy reveals pigment in the bloodstream.

- **Streetwise (difficulty 6):** Street people have seen strange figures passing through the neighborhood, preaching and distributing flyers about salvation for the soul. Most of those "in the know" believe them harmless kooks, but with every pass they make, a few more people vanish into their organization. In fact, one individual in particular used to sell crack and now walks the street himself, telling anyone who'll listen how he has been "saved." The same guy distributes pigment, though.

- **Subterfuge (difficulty 7):** The character can use this Trait upon encountering a cult member and try to infiltrate the group by pretending to join. On a success, the cultists believe whatever story the character fabricating, allowing him to attend an open house or perhaps even a ceremony. Depending how far the character wishes to pursue the investigation, he might infiltrate the cult in one of several ways... if he survives the brainwashing, that is.

SKILLS

- **Animal Ken (difficulty 8):** The Missionary Works paid big money to buy security dogs to patrol the compound, but the dogs vanished. The cult resorted to human security after that. The Missionary Works claims the dogs ran off, but the agency in charge of training the animals say their dogs would never do that. Neighborhood citizens, however, have reported an increase in animal attacks and disappearances. Police visited the cult and found nothing suspicious.

- **Crafts (difficulty 7):** Members of the cult indicate they're in the market for skilled artisans to provide donation pieces to support a charity craft fair. The cultists true purpose, of course, is to talk to potential customers about

nightmares and to spread the word that the Missionary Works can ease their pain. While crafts that the characters create are likely of the mundane kind, some of the booths manned by cultists feature images relating to the nightmares or Spectres. This is intentional, to encourage potential recruits to ask questions (especially if the craftworks strike a familiar chord). Characters can learn more about the cult by visiting this craft fair or by obtaining a booth of their own. In the latter case, the cultists are more open about discussing the Missionary Works with “fellow artists.”

- **Drive (difficulty 6):** One sweet little scam involves employing cultists as cab drivers. The cabbies engage in conversation with their fares, and if a person admits to suffering nightmares, the cultist claims the same. He then hands the passenger a card for a Missionary Works run therapy group or faux psychiatrist with claims that the group or person helped him. Some of the more unhinged, zealous cabbies don't even bother waiting. Instead, they kidnap their passengers and try taking them to the cult directly. Characters might learn about these “strange” cabbies through local automotive-related hang-outs... garages, the street-racing scene, chop shops, etc.

- **Etiquette (difficulty 7):** Not all cult activities involve the dregs of society or revolve around the poor and the desperate. Some involve high-class citizens. While attending a large, classy fundraiser, the characters meet a

charismatic man debating the significance of the strange nightmares afflicting some of the party's guests. He is actually a member of the cult's Middle Circle (The Council of Wardens), while many of the staff helping to cater the event are Second Circle cultists in disguise. Their goal is to locate potential converts among the upper class — those idle rich whose nightmares are particularly troubling — and to point them out to the Warden.

- **Performance (difficulty 7):** The cult organizes a free symphony to earn money for a branch compound in a nearby suburb. The event features skilled musicians who are volunteering their time. During practice, skills among the performers inquire about the cult's nature, treating the entire group to an “impromptu” recruiting session. The same may occur for improvisational theater performances in the park, etc.

- **Security (difficulty 7+):** Characters investigating the cult's facilities may try to determine the nature of its defenses. An initial success with this Skill (difficulty 7) determines that a local company, ARC Security Systems, installed the cult's latest protection. For the specifics on the security systems, see the Missionary Works write-up in Chapter Four.

- **Stealth (difficulty 7):** A character trying to follow cult members on a typical night's work can use this Skill to stay on their tails. In doing so, he observes



a wide range of cult activities — passing out flyers, posting signs, talking to passers-by, etc. The character can follow the cultists into one of their smaller “way stations,” where they unwind with a few drinks and some light discussion of the day’s work. While the character gains little information this way, he can at least discover that the individuals in question seem lucid and happy about their work. If the Storyteller wishes to make matters exciting, however, a Spectre is accompanying a particular cultist for some reason. Now, trailing both of them requires greater skill (difficulty 8).

- **Survival (difficulty 7):** Parents of a university student are seeking the return of their son, whose last e-mail to his family suggested his growing involvement with a cult following the agonizing death of his girlfriend. The young man is no longer with the cult, however. In fact, he’s a projector whose addiction to pigment sent him over the edge. He escaped the cult and now roams the nearby forests, living off the land and scavenging food. He’s totally paranoid and trusts no one. Locating him requires survival skills as well as getting to know locals and tracking down sightings and even local hauntings. Whenever pursued, he flees into the wilderness and vanishes. If tracked down and deprogrammed, though, his parents pay \$20,000 for his safe return, providing much-needed resources to a crucible on the run (if it still is).

- **Technology (difficulty 7):** The cult is installing state-of-the-art computer systems, networks and firewalls into its main compound’s network. A character who proves he possesses the necessary skills can earn a temporary job with the consulting firm that has the contract. This offers the character an opportunity to see the compound from the inside without drawing too much suspicion upon himself. The cult, however, maintains a close guard on visitors, rarely allowing them to go beyond the work areas or to interact with cultists.

KNOWLEDGES

- **Academics (difficulty 5):** A character researching cults can easily locate a wealth of information described earlier in this chapter. This includes brainwashing and deprogramming methods, recruitment techniques and specific examples of existing cults (Hare Krishna, the Children of God, Heaven’s Gate, the Branch Davidians, etc.).

- **Bureaucracy (difficulty 6):** This Knowledge permits the character to locate information regarding the Missionary Works in city files. This information includes land purchases, building floor plans, permits on file (or not on file), criminal records of known members, etc. Information gleaned in this fashion must be of a sort normally available to the public (though players are

rarely loath for their characters to commit some B&E). A character, for example, might discover that the cult formed a non-profit corporation, but the character could not determine bank account numbers or anything else of a private nature.

- **Computers (difficulty 9):** Storytellers can use this Knowledge in concert with the Technology Skill example described above. The cult’s security is extremely careful in monitoring the movements and activities of its contractors, but the character may be able to surreptitiously attach a small monitoring device or back door into the cult’s computer systems. Once the character places this device, however, his player must make a similar roll each week (difficulty 9). Failure means a regular security sweep found and eliminated the device/back door. A botch means the cult can trace it directly back to the character, somehow.

- **Enigmas (difficulty 7):** A player can attempt this roll for his character only after the crucible has observed Missionary Works activities for a significant amount of time (at least a week). If successful, the character automatically unearths details about cult activities that he didn’t yet know. He might, for example, discern the reason why Bishop deliberately spiked the recent pigment shipment, or the fact that certain fundraisers and other innocuous-looking events unfolding around the city are actually connected to the cult itself.

- **Finance (difficulty 7):** The Missionary Works is, like most religious organizations, a non-profit company immune to taxation. In fact, its financial structure is modeled after that of the infamous Church of Scientology, a borderline cult with members worldwide. Success with the Finance Knowledge will discern this fact along with other cult details, such as its publicly available tax records, federal employment ID number and so forth. Analysis of this information yields no criminal activities, but does indicate large expenditures for land purchases, expansion activities, and payments to offshore accounts for unknown purposes (actually to cover inbound shipments of pigment).

- **Investigation (difficulty 7):** The cult needs a private investigator and perhaps discovered through a cultist that Orpheus’ projectors carried detective licenses. Someone stole a valuable artifact — a gilded cross that empowers characters with five extra Vitality points per session. The culprit was a projector who pretended to join the cult so he could make off with ghostly related loot. The cult has already tried finding the thief, but he’s seemingly vanished. Spectres are searching for him, but the cult needs help nonetheless.

- **Law (difficulty 5):** If the Missionary Works ever catches the characters conducting anything borderline

illegal against the cult — shadowing or harassing cult members, breaking and entering, attempting physical violence, etc. — it will file charges. Successfully using this Knowledge allows the character to find some loophole that lets him and his companions off the hook... this time. This roll isn't particularly difficult, since the police have no love for the cult. With each additional infraction, however, the difficulty rises by one. Serious crimes such as murder or grand theft require other means of acquittal.

- **Medicine (difficulty 6):** The cult has been practicing "faith healing" publicly in a blatant attempt to attract new followers. Through this Knowledge, a character can watch the display to discern the "victims" being "healed" are either not actually hurt or are receiving treatment through the Contaminate Horror. If confronted with the truth, the cultists demand that the characters prove the healers' actions are not, in fact, miraculous. If the characters foolishly reveal they can accomplish the same effects, the cult members try keeping tabs on the crucible for later.

- **Occult (difficulty 6):** The study of the occult is not a common one, and those who pursue it often know each other relatively well. Upon visiting occult bookstores or scholars, the character discovers (on a successful roll) that cultists have been hanging around dropping hints that they need help from actual psychics. Naturally, they're only seeking new recruits with some amount of power, but they'll also take those who make promising converts.

- **Science (difficulty 6):** Cultists have been harassing members of the scientific community, heckling them for denying the existence of ghosts or pushing them to recognize the legitimacy of projection science (because once the scientists publicly agree on this matter, the public will follow suit). The cultists involved in pestering the scientific community are actually on the outs with the Missionary Works, so when one of its ex-members goes too far and murders a scientist using Horrors, the cult steps in for damage control and to distance its involvement in the matter. In either case, one of the victims in this incident might be a character's friend or ally.

SPECTRE ARTIFACTS

Most objects found in the hereafter crossed over upon their destruction, but some ghostly artifacts never existed in the living world to begin with. For every spook with a treasured pocket watch or beloved teddy bear, there are three more who desperately need weapons, tools or other utilitarian items. Over time, the spooks

who existed long before the Spectre harvest three or four years ago learned to cope with this need in a very... creative fashion. They created some items in the lands beyond the Stormwall, fashioning them from the only raw resources available... the gauze of other spooks.

Unfortunately, while this knowledge appears to have been lost, its practice survives in the hands of the one set of creatures who shouldn't possess it: Spectres. Spectres, possibly aided by old ghosts turned by Spite, pushed the process further by creating objects useful to *solid, living* individuals — thereby increasing their power in the physical world.

Spectral artifacts differ from regular artifacts in that they may exist in three different possible states. In addition to some being comprised of the standard shadowy gauze of all ghostly objects, they can also be solid or an even rarer sort, called flickering artifacts. This last type of artifact flickers, or synchs up, to its owner's state (solid or incorporeal).

And the Spectres are naturally making the most of their newfound technology.

SPECTRAL ARTIFICING

Spectres are neither sentimental nor frivolous. Given the relatively low frequency of useful items crossing into the hereafter, Spectres have devised other means of creating necessary items. The only substance to which Spectres have ample access, however, is the ichor of their brethren. That, then, is what they use.

Some Spectres can craft their brethren into mindless (or nearly mindless) inanimate objects, most often preying upon the least coherent or most uncontrollably violent of their kind for material. This practice is known as soulforging or, sometimes, artificing.

The process of soulforging involves draining a Spectre of all (or at least most) volition and sentience, which means robbing it of its Spite and Willpower, almost to destruction. Using tricks such as Witch's Nimbus as a concentrated heat source and hammering the creature's ichor (through Juggernaut, for example), the Spectre works the material until it assumes the malleable consistency of putty. At this point, the Spectral smith can determine the strength, texture and shape of object it is to assume. The Spectre being soulforged, obviously, must be restrained during this process, though it's often easiest just to soulforge one limb at a time to keep the creature's squirming from affecting the craftsmanship of the final product.

Soulforged Spectre ichor resembles a dull black metal with red or blue iridescent flecks. There are some projectors (those with high Spite ratings who remain

close to the whispers of the hive-mind) who claim that elite artificers can forge the Spectre's ichor with other substances, to create alloys with particular qualities. Apparently, this knowledge is both rare and carefully guarded. Given the properties that Spectral artifacts already possess, it's probably best that these techniques don't become common knowledge (or subject to common application) among the Spectral hordes.

The process of soulforging does not destroy the Spectre used as raw material. Worse, the process may leave the creature's malicious psyche sentient and, in all likelihood, mad. Many spooks comment that their Spectral artifacts exhibit a disturbing tendency to moan or even whisper incoherently on occasion, though such propensities don't interfere with the overall quality and utility of the item.

More recently, Spectre artificers discovered new techniques for affecting not only the plasm of other Spectres, but for imbuing solid items among the living with the power of that ichor. This technique came about after Spectres noted the effect ichor had on the plants being grown for pigment production. With a concentrated quantity of Spectre plasm and enough time and careful preparation by a skilled and intuitive forger, the artificers could affect solid items among the living. Once the Spectral artificers learned how to weave ichor into the fabric of a solid item, it wasn't long before they launched a concerted effort to create items that could affect the living.

Creating solid artifacts is a complicated and arcane process. The Spectral artificer must possess a sharp intuition if he is to work his will on an item with which he normally does not interact. He must also possess great skill to imbue such items with the properties of the ichor he's manipulating. There are very few Spectres with this combination of intuition and skill and, consequently, very few solid Spectral artifacts. The small number that exist, however, are coveted by the few who know about them. Some of these items are in the hands of Uriah Bishop and assorted allies, but with the techniques of ichor-imbuing becoming more prevalent among the Spectres, they're no longer as rare. Again, this is within reason. The Spectres may serve the Hive-Mind, but they, too, are given to infighting and jealousy. A Spectre with a immaterial artifact is already the envy of many cutthroats. A Spectre with a solid artifact is likely strong enough to deal with many contenders.

ARTIFACT TYPES

Spectre artifacts are, obviously, most commonly of the incorporeal variety, but those don't account for *all* Spectral items. In addition to Spectre-gauze artifacts, there are also those that can exist in the physical world

and those that adapt to the state of their user — incorporeal when the user projects and solid when the user manifests or is in flesh.

Interestingly, the properties of an artifact depend, at least in part, on what kind of artifact it is. Artifacts made of forged shadow gauze have slightly different qualities than those that are solid, which, in turn, have different properties from so-called flickering artifacts.

Shadow Gauze

Artifacts made from insubstantial shadow gauze are, by far, the most common. Spectres have long known how to forge others into objects, and over the long years, the Spectral artificers have produced some truly remarkable, if disturbing, items. Given their nature as shadow gauze, these items are only available to spooks, though that doesn't *necessarily* mean the items won't affect the living.

Solid

Solid Spectral artifacts are those with a physical presence, usable by living (or at least substantial) individuals. The process required to create such items is remarkably complex. Spectre ichor cannot be made physical (at least not through any known means), even if the Spectre used in an artifact's construction can manifest. Ichor *can*, however, stain a physical item with its otherworldly properties (like how drug-producers use ichor infused into the plants to create pigment). Once the Spectre plasm "corrupts" solid material (such as wood or metal), it turns an inky black, allowing a Spectre artificer to fashion its function.

The artificer rarely, if ever, manifests to alter the appearance of the item itself. Since Spectres deal in misery or pain, their items of choice are often destructive or lethal, such as knives, guns, scalpels, chains, etc. Spectres may also imbue an object based on the irony of its usage, such as a teddy bear whose claws are real enough to hurt a child. Regardless, the item looks different thanks to its black hue, but the true fashioning process happens among the unseen. The artificer forges the Spectre ichor into the gun, thus anchoring the plasm to the item. While physics demand that no two objects can occupy the same space at the same time, this process directly contravenes that assumption on a metaphysical level. The item and the plasm become one, but in doing so, the Spectre's incorporeal presence is seemingly obliterated by the unbearable heat of Witch's Nimbus. Only the item's physical presence remains.

An artificer can't fuse an item with ichor and just leave it at that, however. If the Spectre wants the item to become an artifact, with the full properties of its unearthly material, the Spectre must invest the item using the forging itself, as well as investing his own Spite, to provide power. It is in this way that the artificer

determines the strength and properties of the completed artifact. Without the artistry and awareness of the artificer, items stained with ichor bear only cosmetic changes.

Flickering

Even more rare than solid Spectral artifacts are those items mirroring the state of their user. If the user is a ghost, the item remains a dense shadow gauze, but when the owner is materialized or living, the item crosses over to manifest to the living. Interestingly enough, many flickering artifacts seemingly have slightly (or, in some cases, wholly) different properties depending on whether the artifact is solid or insubstantial.

Artificing flickering artifacts requires more care and diligence than crafting single-state artifacts. The process remains much the same as with solid artifact forging except for two key differences. The Spectre used in this instance normally has the ability to manifest to the living, and the forging process is a more delicate and precise procedure that doesn't obliterate the Spectre entirely. In fact, enough of the Spectre's consciousness remains that it possesses a rudimentary awareness (enough to sense its user's state). However, before an artifact of this sort will work properly (that is, stay in synch with its owner's state), its owner must mollify the artifact.

Mollifying an artifact requires the user "feed" the item by tapping two points of Spite (and willingly allowing his own Spite points to increase by two) and expending a Willpower point to attune the artifact to its new master. The experience is, obviously, draining for the spook mollifying the item, but without performing this small ritual, the artifact remains in whatever state the character found it in, possibly tied to its previous owner — it won't change states with him. Also note that if the possessor fails to meet the artifact's requirements (covered later in this section), such as a sacrifice or being anointed in blood, the item will flicker to "opposite" the possessor's state or become inoperable. Only by fulfilling the requirements will the item match its owner's state.

PROPERTIES

The characteristics of Spectre ichor are varied, but not infinite. Artificers are always experimenting with their craft and devising new properties for their often-unique creations. As a general rule, however, infusing an item with plasm and forging it imbues the artifact with one or more of the following relatively common properties:

Dark Horror

Artifacts with this property fuel one application of a Horror, but with one to three points of Spite. The Spite is not that of the spook, but rather, the artifact, so the character doesn't need to tap his Spite or assume any of the risks associated with doing so. Such artifacts can

only fuel a Horror in this way once per scene and only with one, two or three points of Spite, though the character may tap his own Spite (or use Vitality) to fuel that Horror for more dynamic effects.

Example: A black pocket watch forged from Spectre ichor that lets its possessor use any Spite-activated version of a Horror once per scene, but only when the watch is open. If the watch is closed, the Horror stops cold.

Hive-Mind Radar

Spectres remain plugged into the constant buzzing thoughts of other Spectres in the area. Spectre-created artifacts sometimes impart the ability to listen in on the local hive-mind. While this variant of the Spectre's natural ability is weaker than it is for Spectres, it's handy nonetheless. Depending on the quality of the artifact, the Hive-Mind Radar can detect the thoughts of Spectres in a radius between 20 to 100 feet (the range starts at 20 feet for weak items and increases by 20-foot increments for more powerful artifacts). The thoughts impart general information, such as a planned raid on a nest of ghosts, or they divulge the location of nearby Spectres and their intentions (kill Bob, feed, hide, find Bob, bring more fodder for the hives, etc.).

Example: The only known example of this type of artifact was a truly grotesque carved wooden mask that allowed the wearer to hear the thoughts of all Spectres in a 20-foot radius.

Hive-Safe

Artifacts with this property emit a potent spectral signal that other Spectres can sense in some way — perhaps it's a scent, a sound or a low-level hive-mind signal. The possessor can enter a hive and pass unnoticed (or at least unmolested) by the hive's defense systems. This is not a carte blanche for mayhem and destruction, however. The Spectres will attack anyone who tries to damage the hive, to kill its residents or to rescue trapped ghosts. Additionally, dropping or losing such an artifact when one is already inside the hive is a recipe for disaster (and, probably, destruction).

Example: The item most frequently found with this particular property is a gruesome leather-like face mask made from Spectre ichor, though some spooks have seen carved staves that perform the same function.

Leech

Some artifacts made from Spectral ichor absorb Vitality from other spooks when activated. Triggering such an effect typically requires some kind of contact, either a successful roll to hit or a casual caress, depending on how easily the possessor can deliver his touch (if the subject is unwilling, the possessor's player must roll to hit just for the charac-

ter to make contact). In either case, the possessor must be holding on to his artifact during contact (only a select few such items can leave the wielder's hands). If the artifact's wielder is below his maximum Vitality, the Vitality travels through the item and into him.

Example: Some switchblades absorb one point of Vitality from their target upon inflicting damage (but only if the target actually takes damage). Other artifacts possessing this property include Vitality-leeching ichor gloves and boots, which steal two points of Vitality upon inflicting damage on another spook.

Lethal

Spectres are the very essence of malice and the desire to harm. Frequently, weapons (and sometimes other sorts of objects) treated with or made from ichor adopt a penchant for causing harm, therefore inflicting lethal instead of bashing damage. On occasion, an artificer can make even those items that don't normally inflict punishment at all impart lethal damage with just a glancing contact.

Example: A pair of Spectre-infused steel-toed boots can now deliver Strength + 2 dice of lethal damage on a solid kick, while a sharp ring might deliver Strength in lethal damage on even the lightest punch.

Nullification

Once per scene, artifacts with this property can cancel out the use of any one Horror by another spook for a full scene (regardless of accompanying Benefits and Vitality injected into the effect). The spook making use of the Horror still loses whatever Vitality he attempted to channel into the power, but nothing happens. He may try using another Horror the following turn, but by then, it might well be too late.

Artifacts of this sort can be dangerous (if not lethal) for spooks who rely too heavily on one particular Horror in conflict situations.

Example: Spooks have encountered pendants that allow their wearers to nullify an opponent's use of Storm-Wending (preventing escape) as well as a monocle that prevents the use of Helter Skelter. Some Spectres collect Nullification-dispensing artifacts in hopes of rendering an enemy completely helpless and feasting on his terror during the attack.

Ruin

When used through direct contact, the artifact ages things (solid materials generally) by rapidly accelerating their decay. Metal corrodes, wood splits and cracks, paper crumbles, and food rots. Some items, those especially well made or relatively im-

mune to the passage of time (a boulder, for example, or a safe door), may not evince any change at all, even if the possessor uses the artifact on them repeatedly. This does not work on living material, except plants, and effectively weakens the integrity of items, making them brittle or rotted. The area of effect is immediate, meaning the artifact can affect small to medium-sized objects completely, ranging from phones to big-screen televisions. If used against a car, however, it will only affect the impact area, such as a car door, hood or windshield. If used on a building wall, it will only affect an area approximately three feet wide and three feet high.

Example: A hammer that ages any object it hits by a century per hit.

Spectre Vision

The artifact allows the character to sense areas where decay and corruption are rife. Such an artifact would, for example, reveal weak points in a building as black arteries throughout the structure (think of a cracked window, where a hole lays center in a spider's web of cracks). The diseased or the elderly would be thick with these dark veins while a healthy baby would be almost entirely free of them. Folks high on pigment are especially visible, their entire bodies appearing fractured and broken like cracked glass in a picture frame. While some corruptions are strictly usable for roleplaying purposes, the Storyteller might decide that some weaknesses are exploitable through game mechanics. Perhaps striking a particular spot allows the artifact's possessor to increase damage by

SPECTRAL DECEPTION

The Spectral creative urge is nothing if not perverse. Many artifacts forged by Spectres from the plasm of their brethren are examples of form *deliberately* not following function. The urge to deceive prompts many, if not all, Spectral artificers to hide the true abilities of their creations behind a front that belies their nature. The Lethal property, for example, can be found in unexpected items, in theory to give a Spectral attacker the benefit of surprise. The artificer might invest a teddy bear infused with Spectre ichor with the Lethal property, allowing the possessor to maul an opponent with the toy for Strength dice of lethal damage by thrusting it into the face of an enemy.

When dealing with Spectral artifacts, it isn't necessarily safe to assume that the shape of the item offers any insight into its Spectral properties.

two dice, or perhaps the artifact's possessor may determine the nature of someone's vice.

Example: A pair of sunglasses that, when worn, reveal a person's state of health and weak points, or a mirror that reflects the true state of whatever is within its reflection.

Spite Well

Certain artifacts possess enough of their Spectres' sentience that users can benefit (if that's the appropriate word) from the wellspring of the creatures' malice. Such an item allows a character to tap Spite once a scene at reduced risk, without touching his own Spite pool. This doesn't mean the character's own Spite points might not increase, merely that it's more difficult to gain Spite by tapping it. In this case, the possessor still rolls a number of dice equal to Spite tapped to gain Spite but at difficulty 9. Items can carry anywhere from one to five Spite points for tapping per session (unless the session spans a long period of time, in which case the Storyteller can allow its use per scene).

Example: Any of those mentioned in this chapter since this property is often a secondary effect attached to an artifact.

Stain

The malevolence residing in Spectral artifacts sometimes manifests by giving their wielders access to one or more Stains that they would not normally possess. Depending on the artifact, these Stains might manifest only when the user calls on the artifact's power, for the week after she gains a point or more of Spite or whenever the owner is in contact with the item.

Example: A pair of black leather gloves that imparts the Claws Stain to their wearer or a beautifully wrought torque that imparts the Shifting Identity Stain.

THE DANGERS OF SPECTRE ARTIFACTS

While their power makes them appealing, using Spectre artifacts comes with a certain degree of risk as well. Each type of artifact (shadow gauze, solid and flickering) is prone to certain problems, but any of these items can come with any drawback (or drawbacks) that the Storyteller deems appropriate.

Note that, while the following may be among the most common deleterious side effects exhibited by Spectral artifacts, Spectres are a diverse and perverse lot, and the quirks with which they invest their handiwork are as varied as they are. The Storyteller, therefore, has complete liberty to deviate from the

following list as much as he feels is appropriate. The only guideline is that artifact side effects, while nasty and unpleasant, shouldn't lead a character to ruin, death or damnation within a couple of uses. After all, misery enjoys perpetuating and prolonging its effects, not ending them too quickly.

The Storyteller should also bear in mind that the restrictions or drawbacks should mirror or equal the item's usefulness. Eyeglasses that impart Spectre Vision should not demand murder for their usage. A scythe that inflicts lethal damage and flickers to match the state of its user, however, may demand an animal or mortal sacrifice for access to its abilities.

Addictive

When the character initially uses an artifact with this side effect, his player receives one additional die toward the artifact's effects. The number of times the character benefits from this bonus is up to the Storyteller, but it should be somewhere between five and ten. After those uses, the small windfall disappears, and the character rolls as per normal, except he suffers a two-die penalty on *all* rolls if the item is not with him. He will sleep with it, shower with it and respond aggressively if anyone tries to take it from him. If he loses the artifact (which he won't willingly do) or it's taken from him (which he won't willingly allow), the character enters a state of withdrawal punctuated by extreme anxiety, profuse sweating, nausea and the offering of any price for its return. After a week of withdrawal pains, the Storyteller should halve the two-die penalty and, after the second week, eliminate the penalty completely. The character still longs for the object, however, and aggressively seeks it out for a number of months equal to his Spite rating.

Flickering artifacts evince this problem more than other artifacts.

Bloodlust

This side effect is relatively straightforward. Upon using the artifact, the character becomes agitated, short-tempered and aggressive for a scene. Even if he is normally calm and rational, he is inclined to violence for that scene. Whenever he triggers the artifact, there's a possibility the character may become violent toward those around him. Roll the character's Willpower against difficulty 5. If the roll fails, the character flies into a frenzy and attacks any nearby enemies or strangers with the intent to kill or destroy them. If the roll is a botch, the character attacks the nearest person to him, regardless of whether it's a friend, a foe or a loved one.



Dimming

An item with this drawback drops the user's maximum Vitality ceiling by two points for as long as the character remains within 10 feet of the artifact. Once the character rids himself of the artifact, he regains Vitality as usual, up to his normal rating. Characters with high Vitality may actually find this side effect helpful when passing among Spectres.

Shadow-gauze Spectral artifacts show this side effect more often than the other two types.

Hunger

Spectral artifacts with this side effect have a particular appetite that their users must satiate after each use. Some need their users to inflict pain, while others require the users tap their own Spite for some effect before they'll work. The range of hungers evinced by Spectre-forged items varies markedly. Various artifacts have required handlers to pour blood on them, to anoint them with feces or urine, to channel Vitality into them or, in a few cases, to kill before they'd work again. A Spectre-forged blade, for example, may likely want blood, while an artifact book might demand the character spend Vitality or Willpower before it functions.

Spectral Beacon

The ichor used to forge this artifact often contain vestiges of the sentence of the Spectre (or Spectres) from which it was artificed. A Spectral artifact with this side effect use a weak variant of Hive-Mind to "paint" the user to all nearby Spectres, as though the character had just expended copious amounts of Vitality to fuel an effect. This occurs mostly when the artifact is in use (which, for some artifacts, means constantly).

Stain

Some Spectral artifacts impart a Stain upon their users while they're in contact with the items. The Stain can be any of those the characters do not possess, preferably one with notably visible effects. This danger is more common with shadow-gauze artifacts.

SAMPLE RELICS

Below are six unusual and powerful Spectre artifacts. The crucible's principle antagonist may use these weapons, or perhaps these dangerous items fall into the characters' possession in the course of play.

THE FETTERS OF DESPONDENCE (SHADOW GAUZE)

Forged from the ichor of three insanely malicious Spectres, this length of black chain wraps around the wielder's arms and torso, with each end terminating in heavy metal weights. The Fetters are not misnamed.

They are heavy and difficult to wield, but they're diabolically effective. Every strike by the Fetters triggers a sense of desolation and despair in the target, weakening his resolve and confidence. Enough strikes from the Fetters can break a target's will completely (assuming he lives through the experience).

System: Wielding the Fetters of Despondence requires Strength 4 or more, but hitting a target (within range, of course) is only difficulty 5. A successful hit inflicts Strength +3 bashing damage.

The Fetters have a range of 10 feet. When the wielder hits and deals damage to an enemy with the Fetters, roll the target's Willpower against difficulty 8. A failure indicates the target lost a point of Willpower (in addition to suffering damage), while a botch means the target loses two points of Willpower and a point of Vitality. The Fetters transfer the stolen Vitality back along the length of chain to its wielder.

Drawback: The Fetters of Despondence have the drawback Dimming, which lowers the user's maximum Vitality cap by three for as long as she's within 10 feet of them.

THE HELL SHROUD (SHADOW GAUZE)

A powerful Reaper forged this mask itself, which allowed the Spectre to stride fearlessly into battle. The defensive properties of the Hell Shroud are unusual for a Spectral artifact, which normally tend more toward the offensive, but the combined effects of its properties make it a highly sought after item by Spectre and spook alike.

This black mask of metallic cast bears a carving of a diabolical visage, complete with horns and a terrible toothy grin. Chain-mail "hair" covers the back of the head, balancing the mask and covering the straps that secure the mask to the head.

System: Players of those who see the Hell Shroud's wearer bearing down upon them must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 7), or their characters flee, terrified, for the next five turns. The Hell Shroud grants its wearer three additional dice for soaking bashing and lethal damage. It also allows the wearer to use the Juggernaut Horror (at two Vitality points), while prohibiting one opponent from using that Horror as well.

Drawback: The Hell Shroud's wearer automatically receives the Adder's Scales Stain while wearing the artifact. It also has the regrettable side effect of being a Spectral Beacon (see above), summoning Spectres to the wearer for so long as she wears the mask. In a Spectre-free area, that's not a terrible drawback, but it's amazing the places where Spectres pop up.

THE HOLLOW MAN'S EYE DAGGER (SOLID)

The Hollow Man was the name of a serial killer who was, in truth, a Jason — a Spectre-possessed human. For years, the Hollow Man terrified the environs of Orange, New Jersey, killing and mutilating his victims with an antique dagger. As the name of the artifact implies, the Hollow Man removed the eyes of his victims (occasionally along with their genitalia and, from special victims, their ears).

The Spectre possessing the Hollow Man grew particularly fond of the dagger he used on his victims. Eventually, he found a Spectral artificer capable of imbuing it with the power he felt it deserved. Once the dagger became an artifact, the Hollow Man pursued his murderous agenda with a new audacity. The authorities never caught the Hollow Man, but Terrel & Squib did, dispensing with the possessing Spectre and his host. But his weapon remained, still filled with pain and hunger and waiting for its next chance to cut.

The Hollow Man's Eye Dagger is an antique Nazi dagger (an HJ-Fahrtenmesser, given to Hitler Youth boys who saw service on the field of combat) from World War II. The whole knife is flat black, an effect of the process that made it an artifact, but the swastika is clearly visible on the hilt.

System: When the user activates the Eye Dagger by tapping a point of Spite, it inflicts Strength + 4 lethal damage and adds three dots to its user's Dexterity for an entire scene. It also has the property of being Hive-Safe, allowing the bearer to enter and leave hives unmolested.

Drawback: The Eye Dagger hungers for eyes. If it goes for more than a month without stabbing into the vitreous humor of a human eye, all its special abilities cease to function.

THE MAGGOT REVOLVER (FLICKERING)

Among the fouler objects to be forged from Spectre ichor, maggot revolvers are also among the most prized. Rather than shooting bullets, these weapons fire revolting creations called shadow maggots. One shadow maggot is delivered as ordnance on each success on a damage roll. The turn after impact, the shadow maggots bore into the target, delivering an additional die of lethal damage per maggot present in the spook's gauze. In addition, the pain from each maggot is excruciating, increasing the difficulty of all the victim's actions by one.

The shadow maggots must be cut from the target's gauze, or they will kill the victim by eating him alive from the inside out. Digging out a shadow maggot

inflicts another health level of lethal damage on the target, but it will stop the maggot's voracious feasting.

The maggot revolver is unusual for a flickering artifact in that it has exactly the same properties in both its solid and its insubstantial state.

System: These Colt Anaconda revolvers (Difficulty 7, Range 35 yards, Rate 2, Spite cost of two per maggot, Damage 6) store up to 12 points of Spite (thus, six maggots). The Spite regenerates at a rate of two points per day.

Drawback: Every maggot fired is effectively like tapping a point of Spite. The shooter's player must roll as per tapping Spite but against difficulty 6.

OBIVION GLOVES (SOLID)

The hands of time manhandle everyone eventually, as evinced by these gloves, which channel the powers of time and decay to devastate the object of their foul touch.

System: The gloves cause whatever the wearer touches to age. For inanimate objects, this manifests as the Ruin property (see above), with each touch aging the item by a century. For living entities, a touch of these gloves causes physical aging, translated into actual damage and diminished capacities. Each successful touch causes the equivalent of one health level of lethal damage, in the form of the decrepitude of time — the target grows stooped, wrinkled and weak. Furthermore, each touch robs the target of one dot from a Mental Attribute. If the target endures more health levels of damage than she can spare, she dies of old age or disincorporates. If her Mental Attributes all fall to zero, she enters a vegetative state. If she survives the experience, however, she regains her youth at the rate appropriate for the amount of damage suffered. Mental Attributes lost to the oblivion gloves return at the rate of two dots per week.

Drawback: Oblivion gloves affect the wearer as well as all that he touches. So long as the possessor wears the gloves, his maximum Vitality is 3 (see the Dimming side effect, above).

THE SOULSCYTHE (FLICKERING)

Pulled from the winds of the Maelstrom that afflict the lands beyond the Stormwall, the origin of the Soulscythe remains unknown, but its power is legendary and literally addictive. Those who've benefited from the artifact's abilities are loath to surrender it and will do *anything* in their power to take it back if it's stolen from them.

As a flickering artifact, the Soulscythe shifts phase in accordance with its wielder. When its wielder is alive or manifesting, the Soulscythe is solid and looks like an enormous scythe stained matte black. When the weapon's bearer is incorporeal, the Soulscythe appears a glossy black scythe with iridescent red flecks in the blade.

System: The Soulscythe is a large weapon and awkward to wield (difficulty 7 to hit), but it inflicts Strength + 5 lethal damage when it does strike. The Soulscythe grants its user one additional attack per turn and gives a two-die bonus to Dexterity related actions in both solid and gauze forms. When the Soulscythe is solid, it allows its user to see the dead as though she were immaterial herself (not a big deal for projectors), while stamping the butt end of the scythe blade on an inanimate object ages it by a century (see the Ruin property, above). When the Soulscythe is insubstantial, it allows the wielder to listen in on the Spectre hive-mind for a radius of one mile, as well as granting the possessor the ability to use Storm-Wending at two Vitality.

Drawback: The Soulscythe is unusually addictive. In addition to the usual benefits initially conveyed by an addictive artifact (see Addictive, above), the Soulscythe also grants three dice to Strength related rolls for the first two weeks its possessor uses it. That bonus drops by one die each week thereafter, leaving the user at her normal Strength after the fifth week. If the user loses the Soulscythe, her Stamina drops to 1 for a week and returns at the rate of one point per week thereafter, in addition to the other difficulties associated with addictive artifacts.

SPECTRE HOUNDS

Since some cults engage in illegal or immoral activities and since some of their locations remain hidden from public view, the cults must protect themselves from discovery. Posting armed guards or installing other visible security measures only attracts unwanted attention to their hideouts, but in a city filled with stray animals, no one would suspect that some of these creatures are more than they appear.

The cults' Spectre Hounds serve as guards to scare away potential intruders, to protect cult members from attack or to guard "unwilling guests," thus preventing escape. Every major cult with ties to the hereafter or the Missionary Works has one or more Spectre Hound packs under its control. Each pack consists of three to eight canines, with one designated as the alpha.

Spectre Hounds are Spectre-possessed canines. The Spectres seek out those dogs that have been starved, tortured and abused, and upon possessing the beasts, often attack the abusive masters. In some cities, whose borders lie near the wilderness, a Spectre may possess a wolf instead. These Spectre Wolves are a little stronger and smarter than their domestic cousins, and in fact, if the conditions are right, characters may find a Spectre Wolf pack or a Spectre Wolf leading a Spectre Hound pack.

The appearance of a Spectre Hound is that of a gaunt and mangy canine, with missing hair, a stubby tail, ears that were bitten off, scars, etc. Even though the cults care for these hounds, the host bodies cannot repair themselves and maintain the taint of abuse and starvation. Spectre Hounds also radiate an aura belying their appearance: It is not one of desperation as with many strays, but of menacing evil. In its projected-Spectre form, however, menacing evil is only part of its description. Pure horror is a more accurate, with the Spectre Hounds appearing as four-legged, hairless monsters, with no tail or head. The neck ends in a stump possessed of teeth and a torn maw.

A Spectre Hound has enhanced senses and can detect the presence of intruders before the characters even know there's a pack present. The physical attack of a Spectre Hound is the traditional dog attack: A running bite for the throat or other vital area. If a bite is successful, the jaws lock, making it very difficult to break free, especially since the hounds use Juggernaut to improve their strength, resilience and speed. A character must succeed in a Strength test or beat the canine to death (or submission) to survive. Naturally,



other characters can help to free the victim, but this might prove difficult since there are often several Spectre Hounds attacking in unison.

On a rare occasion, a Spectre Hound may see someone who reminds them of (or actually is) the person who tortured or abused its host body. In such cases, the Spectre Hound reacts violently, totally consumed by the memories of its host body, attacking the "abuser" over anyone else, regardless of the situation. It rushes for the throat or any other vital area and will not stop or let go until either it or its target is dead. After this attack, if the Spectre Hound survives, the Spectre escapes the dog's body, which then falls and dies. The reasons for this remain unknown, unless perhaps the animal's anger and hatred was the only fuel and nourishment available to the Spectre.

SPECTRE HOUNDS & SPECTRE WOLVES

Prolific in city settings, you can tell the difference between a regular stray dog and a Spectre Hound. An aura of fear and sickness permeates these animals and their eyes glow slightly. The stats of Spectre Wolves, when they differ from a Spectre Hound, are in parentheses. Storytellers should also note, that upon destroying the Hound's physical host, the characters must then contend with the Spectre within (since they share Traits, the information herein applies to both the flesh-ridden Hound and its Spectral self).

Attributes: Strength 2 (3), Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1 (2), Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Nature: Survivor

Willpower: 7

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Claws, Flit, Juggernaut, Maw, Puppetry (dogs only)

VANISHINGS

As if dealing with cults and Spectres wasn't enough, on occasion, the characters might hear stories of projectors' bodies vanishing without a trace. To worsen matters, these vanishings have only increased of late and can potentially affect projecting characters themselves.

The reasons why the vanishings occur remain a mystery, but its culprits do not. A team of two Spectres work in tandem, tracking and locating projectors. Once the spirit leaves his body, the team moves in to sever the silver cord, thus leaving the physical body vulnerable for the taking.

This Spectre team consists of a creature called a Ribbon Cutter and another called a Gatherer. The Ribbon Cutter's sole duty is to sever a projector's silver cord, thus preventing him from ripcording back to his body. The Gatherer retrieves the projector's flesh before the spook can return.

The silver cord — believed to be nigh-indestructible, completely intangible and mostly invisible — requires the Ribbon Cutter to expend its own being to sever it (as explained later). Only then can the Gatherer transport the body to parts unknown. If the character returns to save his body after the silver cord is snapped, he can repair his connection to it by reentering his body and spending both three Willpower and five Vitality in the effort. If the body vanishes, the character becomes a spirit or a hue instantly, though the body remains *alive*.

The reasons behind these kidnappings are currently a mystery, and Storytellers may wish to hold off on using this ploy until after the truth emerges. After all, it's unlikely the characters will say "Oh well, so much for my flesh." On the other hand, if the group is a patient lot and willing to see this out over the course of the metaplot, then play out this event and ask for their patience in the matter. This is not intended to frustrate or humiliate the players.

GATHERERS

These terrifying abominations are single-minded in their pursuit of their duty, which is to find and capture soulless bodies. Never will they transport a

corpse or a body with a soul. The whys and hows remain a mystery, but the Gatherers are unique in that, once one encases a mortal body, it can "ghost" with its passenger, passing through walls if it wishes but most often teleporting away with its guest to parts unknown. Unusually enough, once a Gatherer assumes control of a body, it never inhabits it and does its utmost to protect it from physical harm and from other Spectres who might try to inhabit it. In fact, no body taken by the Gatherers has ever died while under their care.

Gatherers look like albino leeches with arms and legs but equally slimy and glistening. When one carries a body, it excretes out the clothing and accessories (with earrings, for example, it does inflict some damage when it rips the piercings away from the passenger's flesh). Its skin is somewhat translucent, so witnesses will see a full-grown human within the Gatherer, floating fetal-like in an amniotic sac. The nature of the Gatherer preserves and protects the passenger within its form, so it will never suffocate or die from malnutrition. In this state, however, a Gatherer is exceedingly voracious. It is eating for two, after all.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 1, Survival 5

Nature: Survivor

Willpower: 8

Spite: 7

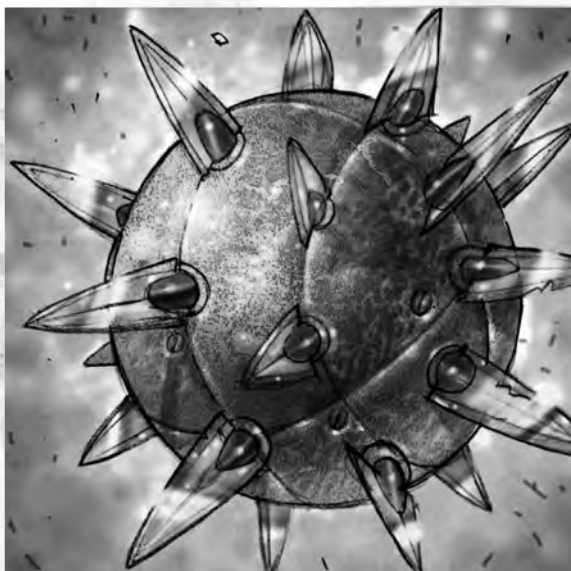
Offensive Abilities: Claws, Flit, Juggernaut, Maw, Storm-Wending

RIBBON CUTTERS

Ribbon Cutters exist for a solitary purpose, and when they've performed that purpose successfully, they die. It's a brutal and short existence, but it is necessary. The silver cord linking a projected entity to his body is normally invisible and indestructible, but the Ribbon Cutters are fascinating creatures in that they can see that silver cord and can cut it. The energy required to do so, however, demands their existence, destroying them in the process.

Ribbon Cutters look like balls of blades, all pointing outward. There is no sense that they possess a front or backside, given that they twirl and spin about constantly, often orbiting Gatherers as they move. When they attack, the blades lance outward, striking





targets. When one tries to sever a silver cord, it moves until the cord is situated center mass within itself before spinning about quickly. The blades essentially implode, consuming the Ribbon Cutter and destroying the silver cord.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Charisma 0, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Intimidation 5, Melee 4, Stealth 1

Nature: Martyr

Willpower: 4

Spite: 8

Offensive Abilities: Blades (each blade inflicts Strength + 2 lethal damage; the Ribbon Cutter can also spin in combat, inflicting Strength + 5 lethal damage; anyone engaged in hand-to-hand combat suffers two dice of lethal damage every time he hits the sphere with any part of his body), Flit



CHAPTER THREE: THE UNEARTHED PLAYERS GUIDE



trabald

Call: And now they've brought the beast out of you.

Ripley: Not all the way out.

Call: What?

Ripley: It's in my head, behind my eyes. I can hear it moving.

— Alien Resurrection

I don't know who I want to kill more, the guy who murdered me
or the fucker who brought me back.

— Unattributed



INTRODUCTION

Playing the same old game for too long can get boring, and we would *hate* to bore anyone. Consequently, this chapter provides both players and Storytellers with new powers, effects and game mechanics to help your **Orpheus** chronicle keep pace with the increasing challenges presented by the metaplot. Even if the Storyteller dispenses entirely with the metaplot, the material herein offers a plethora of new options for your characters.

For the most part, this chapter is about Spite and how to make the most of it. It's not just a burden or a danger for which characters must be diligent, it's also a resource (albeit a risky one) that characters can call upon if they need to dish out a little malice and find themselves short on other, more comfortable methods of taking care of business.

First we take a closer look at what Spite is, then we examine its use in a variety of ways. One of the many uses for Spite is in manifesting. Spending Vitality, obviously, is the default method for allowing an insubstantial spook to appear and act on the solid world. Tapping Spite enables a character to do the same thing, but with some crucial — and disturbing — differences. Characters can also use Spite in lieu of Vitality to power their Horrors, and just as using Spite to manifest results in some unmistakable differences, so to do Horrors have an entirely different feel (and often function) when powered with Spite.

Lastly, since tapping Spite for all the above uses will cause your characters' Spite ratings to increase precipitously, we introduce more of those troubling (yet frequently useful) side effects of Spite: Stains. So, sit back, reach into our dark toy box and see what new twisted playthings you can amuse yourself with. We think you'll like them.

SPITE

That feeling you have when you really wish thoughts could kill because somebody just did something so stupid, so pointlessly antagonistic, so completely and unnecessarily hurtful that you really, truly and honestly wish them dead... that's Spite.

That rage you can sometimes summon to help you run that last half a mile or lift the weight one more time... that's Spite.

The malicious joy you feel when you're in a heated argument and you say something so devastating, so pain-inducing, so scathingly accurate that your opponent shuts up (and maybe starts crying)... that's also Spite.

Spite is the dark side, the Mr. Hyde bedeviling our Dr. Jekyll, the id plaguing our ego, the shadow haunting

our psyche. It is anger and hatred, loathing and malevolence, and sheer, simple malice. And it's powerful. Words can lose their power when used excessively, but as you read this chapter, remember that Spite isn't some vague intellectualized notion or abstract game mechanic. It's a visceral emotional force that you can, for a price, call upon. This entire chapter focuses on that feeling, the ways of channeling it and some of the costs it exacts from those who rely upon it too much. Bear that in mind as you read.

TAPPING SPITE

The **Orpheus** core book provides mechanics for tapping Spite to augment Vitality. Vitality, however, is not the only thing for which a spook can tap Spite. In fact, Spite is a marvelously useful, if dangerous, force (not unlike nuclear power), and you can use it all you want — so long as you don't mind the consequences. And tapping Spite *potentially* carries many consequences. Hatred breeds hatred. If you feed your malicious side, it grows. Tapping Spite nourishes your dark side, which is that echoed voice pushing you further. It's betting you grow to rely on its power more than it can manipulate you through temptations. This is the classic Faustian bargain. What do you desire so badly that you'd trade your soul for it? And have no doubt, you *are* betting your character's soul because every time his Spite rating increases, a little bit of his soul is wagered away, and he takes another step toward the Void.

A little refresher course in tapping Spite seems appropriate here. This is the short version, mind you. If you want the full treatment, see the **Orpheus** core book (p. 191).

Characters can only use the Spite points in their Spite pool, meaning they have between zero and nine points of Spite with which to work. A character whose Spite rating recently increased, and who therefore only has one point of available Spite, can only tap one point for Vitality. This is enough to enable manifestation or to power a Horror's most basic effects. *Tapping* Spite isn't *using* Spite. You can call on it all you want, and it's still there. In fact, if you tap it a lot, it's likelier to grow, if anything.

When tapping Spite, the player rolls dice equal to the number of his character's Spite points he taps against difficulty 7. Every failure indicates that the character gains another point of Spite in his pool. If the player botches, the character gains *two* points of Spite for every 1 the player rolled that was not cancelled out by a success. If the character adds enough Spite to bring his Spite pool over 10, then he increases his Spite *rating*, perhaps earning a new Stain in the process or altering an existing Stain.

Example: Emily's character Lola is in a bad position. She's low on Vitality and a particularly vicious Spectre, who she cannot shake, is pressing after her at every turn. She's used up her one artifact, and her armor is cracked. Lola has the Juggernaut Horror, but she doesn't really have enough Vitality to fuel it how she'd like. Luckily for her, she's in a bad, bad mood. In her Spite pool, Lola has 8 points of Spite just waiting to be tapped. Emily first taps Spite for Vitality. She taps three points of Spite and, consequently, must roll three dice. She rolls well, earning a 7 and two 9's. Lola's Vitality increases from 4 to 7, and she feels a little more prepared to party with Mr. Grimguts. The following turn, the Spectre finds her and closes in. Lola responds angrily and lets her hatred of this vile thing take over. Emily, emboldened by her earlier wager with Spite, decides to tap five Spite to fuel Juggernaut, turning her into a terrifying apparition. Emily rolls five dice, one for each Spite point she tapped to fuel the Horror. She rolls: 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8. While she still has the advantage of tapping all five Spite, those three failures indicate Lola accrues three new points of Spite. Since that pushes her up to 11 points, Lola's Spite rating increases by one. While she'll regret it later, in her current situation, she's happy to have one more weapon to bring to bear against her adversary.

In the course of any given chronicle, some characters may value their clean gauze and may never tap Spite.

Others may not be able to resist the temptation of drawing on all that power. Of course, to entice anyone, we need the enticements.. Without further ado, we introduce a vast array of new Spite-driven delights to tempt characters into things they'll relish in the moment... and probably regret later.

POWERING MANIFESTATIONS

Among its myriad uses, Spite can allow characters to manifest. Since Spite is, at root, a destructive, negative energy, a character tapping Spite to power her manifestation will appear significantly different — both more menacing physically and more disturbing mentally — than when channeling her Vitality for the same purpose. That said, there is an ease to manifesting with Spite that makes it very tempting. And tapping one Spite seems so harmless, right?

A character using Spite to manifest calls on her negative emotions — jealousy or rage, for example — to will herself to appear in the material world, propelled, as it were, by a black wind. Once the character begins the process, she simply surrenders to the feeling, letting it wash over her and willing herself to appear. She is ready,



in all likelihood, to accomplish something aggressive with those feelings, rewarding her dark side yet again.

And it shows in her appearance.

Characters can tap from one to three Spite points to channel into their manifestations. Tapping even one point of Spite allows a character to manifest fully, completely whole and solid (albeit with one Stain). The more Spite the character taps, however, the more monstrous her manifested form becomes. Each additional Spite point tapped appears as one more Stain on the manifested form, clearly visible and ready for use among the living.

Spite Tapped	Result
One point	Fully manifested with one Stain
Two points	Fully manifested with two Stains
Three points	Fully manifested with three Stains and five extra Attribute dots

A spook tapping three Spite points to manifest makes a strong statement, like the angry ghosts in the movies who suddenly appear huge and terrifying, possessing a mouth full of big sharp teeth. Spooks call this manifestation the Horrid Form — and appropriately so. It is a reflection of the anger, rage, resentment and hostility that most of us keep well hidden. Tapping three Spite points to manifest in Horrid Form is like the character surrendering to the very darkest part of herself — it's like snapping, going off the deep end, losing control. She becomes a terrifying reflection of her Shade and something of a monster, in appearance if not in deed. Make no mistake, however, the Horrid Form has its advantages, too.

Assuming the penultimate Horrid Form represents a sort of critical mass of Spite. A character manifesting in this manner appears not only with three visible Stains, but also with five dots to place into any Attribute — Physical, Social or Mental — for the duration of the scene. These extra Attribute points can also bring a character above the standard maximum of five.

A spook manifesting in her Horrid Form is hard to miss and bad to mess with. Not only does she have three Stains and five additional Attribute points at her disposal, but her full arsenal of Horrors is also at her command. And if she chooses to power *those* with Spite as well, she'll be nothing short of a walking nightmare.

POWERING HORRORS

Gaining Vitality and manifesting in the physical world are not the only avenues for which a character can tap Spite. Characters can tap Spite to give a certain edge to their Horrors as well. As a character quickly discovers, however, channeling Spite into a Horror does not yield the same results as she has come to expect. Powering a

Horror with tapped Spite *changes* the Horror's effects slightly (or sometimes drastically) in malevolent and violent ways. Spooks often find that using Spite to power a Horror works better than fueling it with Vitality (depending on the exact results they're looking for, of course). It's certainly more useful in combat situations, but the risk taken for that added kick can take a toll on a character much more quickly than she might imagine if she taps Spite with any frequency.

Besides the potential for gaining more Spite (a potential risk whenever the character taps Spite), there is one other drawback, a *serious* drawback some would say, to powering Horrors with tapped Spite: Spite is not a “works well with others” kind of energy. Consequently, the character cannot produce the standard Benefits from her Horrors when powering her Horrors with Spite, nor can she use the Benefits of others. The moment the character taps Spite to infuse a Horror, she instantly becomes unable to use the Benefits of those around her, and they lose any advantage her Benefits may have been providing them. Any spook who taps Spite to fuel her Horrors with any regularity, then, will likely develop a reputation as a bit of a maverick or, at the very least, as not being a team player.

That said, tapping Spite to fuel Horrors is always a temptation, especially for those spooks who frequently find themselves in messy combat situations. A character may fuel *some* Horrors with a mix of Vitality and Spite, but only those Horrors that give a specific effect for each point of Spite invested (e.g., Helter Skelter) are candidates for this kind of mixed fuel.

The full effects of fueling Horrors with Spite are given below, arranged by Shade.

Banshees

The most malicious aspects of the Banshee's powers are much easier to bring forth and use to their full effect when fueling them with Spite. The malevolence and anger represented by Spite nudge even seemingly innocuous Horrors such as Forebode toward destructiveness and mayhem.

- **Wail:** Wail differs only slightly when fueled by tapped Spite instead of Vitality. Its effects are darker and more destructive. A character using Spite to power Wail is unable to use any of the Horror's soothing or calming effects.

For a single point of Spite, the Banshee's Wail can evoke the darkest feelings in her audience: despair, rage and sheer malice. All attempts to evoke these negative emotions gain an additional success when determining the Horror's effect (as per the table on p. 101 of the **Orpheus** core book). Only a botch roll of 1 without any other successes can cancel out this automatic one success.



Any effect below using Spite to fuel Wail automatically accrues one success.

Tapping two or more Spite points allows the Banshee to wound anyone standing directly in front of him (same as with expending Vitality). Roll Stamina for victims to soak damage, against a difficulty equal to the number of Spite tapped + 5. Tapping three or more points of Spite allows the Banshee to warp and crumble solid objects with the power of his voice (again, as with Vitality, only easier given the innate destructive nature of Spite). By tapping four Spite points or more in this instance, the user automatically enjoys two automatic successes (which can be canceled out by 1s).

- **Forebode:** Tapping Spite to power Forebode changes, or even warps, the Horror significantly. Positive, happy or even neutral events become fuzzy, unclear and more difficult for the Banshee to see. Furthermore, the time frame for seeing such things is halved (i.e., instead of seeing a day into the past or the future by tapping a point of Spite, the character can see only 12 hours if looking at events that are either pleasant or emotionally neutral). On the other hand, the range *doubles* if the character seeks out those things tinged with sadness, dread, hostility or violence. Worse, the emotional tinting of a scene worms its way into the mind of the spook using Forebode, heightening all those negative emotions for the Banshee tapping Spite to power this Horror — he assumes some of the emotional resonance of the vision, feeling angry upon witnessing rage or itching for a fight upon witnessing violence. The feeling doesn't actually last beyond a scene, and the character is not impelled to act on such feelings. It's merely how he feels.

Another drawback to Spite-tapped Forebode is that every twisted and brutal detail of the scene is hyper-clear and unmistakable, rendering every sickening detail more vivid than it was, even at the time of action: A vision of a woman being beaten grants the Banshee insight into the state of mind of both the victim and her assailants, and it shows the woman's agony in almost slow-motion vividness. Every purple bruise and every grunt of pain swims in the Banshee's inner eye with a luridness that may disturb even jaded spooks. Likewise, a vision of a murder will allow the Banshee to feel the bullet as it penetrates the victim's sternum, watch the vivid arterial blood spray from the exit wound *and* see the satisfied smirk of the gunman who committed the deed. To convey the Horror's full effect, the Storyteller is encouraged to wax eloquent, if not downright garish, in describing such events to any character using Spite to fuel Forebode.

After tapping Spite to power Forebode, the character needs one turn to recover for every turn he spends looking at the past or future. Any actions he performs during that time add a penalty of two to his difficulty because of the intense emotional distress and the difficulty of returning to the present after such painfully vivid visions.

Clearly, while many Horrors become *more* popular with their users when powered by Spite, this is not one of them. Many Banshees will probably refuse ever to use Spite to power Forebode because of the emotional toll doing so entails. Unfortunately, when trying to determine a murder or the potential of violence in the future, this Spite-fueled application of Forebode is the best at gleaming the past or future.

- **Pandemonium:** As with all Horrors, fueling Pandemonium with Spite instantly disallows any of the Horror's benign effects, since malice and rage do not lend themselves easily to constructive uses. Channeling Spite into Pandemonium *does*, however, result in a potent probability hex with which the Banshee can curse his enemies.

Depending on how much Spite the Banshee taps — and, therefore, how much Spite he's potentially willing to accrue — he can simply frustrate his opponent or condemn her every action to failure and ruin for the rest of the scene.

Tapping a single Spite to fuel Pandemonium makes the target's life a little more difficult for the remainder of the scene: Increase the target's difficulties by one. If the Banshee taps two Spite points, the target's life becomes more difficult *and* even her successes seem a little dimmer than usual. At this level of power, the Spite-fueled Horror increases the target's difficulties by one *and* cancels one success from every roll for the remainder of the scene. Furthermore, the spook can make life *very* difficult for the target of his curse by tapping three Spite, thus increasing the target's difficulties by two. Finally, tapping four Spite increases the target's difficulties by two and cancels one success on all her player's rolls for the rest of the scene.

Lastly, if the Banshee truly wants to undermine his target's efforts, he can crudely yank the strings of probability so as to make her every act and effort seem nearly impossible. A target suffering from a curse of this magnitude finds that even simple acts require skill, will and concentration and still, more often than not, they fail. A debonair charmer comes across like a rude idiot. A world-renowned surgeon finds she has all the skill of a butcher's apprentice. The cocky martial-arts master suddenly discovers he can't land a punch even on a blind

grandmother (and he probably falls down and makes a fool of himself if he even tries). If the spook taps five Spite to fuel Pandemonium, he increases the difficulty of all his target's rolls by three *and* cancels one success from every roll for the rest of the scene.

Haunters

There is always a certain destructive potential when dealing with the Haunter's favored Horrors, but, as with all things, using Spite to power those Horrors all but ensures a destructive outcome. Not only does tapping Spite make Inhabit difficult on the item possessed, though, it also heightens the destructive capabilities of Witch's Nimbus and Broadband Ghost.

- **Inhabit:** Powering Inhabit by tapping Spite isn't noticeably different from the more common Vitality-fueled version so far as the spook is concerned, but doing so subtly exacerbates the entropic, destructive forces at work on the item. Spite is inherently corrosive and takes a toll on anything exposed directly to it, a characteristic that a clever Haunter can turn to his advantage.

Inhabiting a car using Spite, for example, significantly amplifies friction, heat and torsion at work on the engine, causing extreme wear that accelerates the machine's breakdown process by orders of magnitude. On the other hand, the Spite might more directly exacerbate any tiny crack or flaw in an object in such a way that something "gives" the next time someone uses the device: A gun barrel cracks the next time someone fires the gun, for example, or the rotors of a helicopter snap off right after takeoff. How the machine gives out, as well as the exact mechanism of failure, is up to the Storyteller, though corrosion, metal fatigue or sheer brittleness are all suitably likely for any given item's demise.

Obviously, a spook's reasons for using Spite to fuel this Horror can vary. He may simply be low on Vitality, or he might want to destroy the item he possesses. The in-game effect of using an item so doomed is like rolling botches with no successes to cancel them out.

Spite Tapped	Time to Breakdown
One	One week
Two	One day
Three	End of scene
Four	Five turns
Five	One turn

- **Witch's Nimbus:** This Horror can assume one of three variant forms when using Spite. One version turns the fiery or fulminating nimbus around the character "sticky," so that, when he touches someone (or she him), a portion of the nimbus sticks to that individual and continues to burn for several turns afterward. The second version allows the spook to construct the fiery (or electrical) nimbus around a target, creating either a

fiery prison or a lethal second skin that can easily destroy any spook who can't break free. The third version works in reverse of heat generation and, instead, sucks the ambient warmth from the air and objects, creating a numbing cold.

The first version works exactly like the Vitality fueled variant, with one key exception: Any target taking damage from the ghost has a patch of fire (or electricity) sticking to her that continues to burn after contact is broken. The target automatically takes Witch's Nimbus damage -1 on the turn following the initial contact, -2 the following turn, -3 the turn after that, etc.

If the burning wound is somehow extinguished (with water or through simple smothering, both of which work for unmanifested spooks as well), the damage ceases the turn the victim smothers the flames. A burning wound from fire simply looks like an area of seething red coals on a spook's gauze, while an electrical wound glows, crackles and throws off blue and purple sparks.

Example: Hoyt is in a bad situation that forces him to tap four Spite points to power Witch's Nimbus. He lands a punch on a Spectre and inflicts four dice of lethal damage to the target, plus the damage from the punch. The following turn, the Spectre flees, but it still takes three dice of damage from the burning wound left by Hoyt. The next turn the Spectre suffers two more dice of lethal damage from the burning wound. The turn after that, the burning wound does one last die of lethal damage to the Spectre before it flickers and dissipates.

The second Spite-fueled variant of Witch's Nimbus allows the Haunter to sheath a target in flames or electricity instead of creating the nimbus around himself. If he encases the target without touching the opponent's skin/gauze, it's simply a hot prison and the target suffers no damage unless she tries to escape (in which case, she takes full damage). If the spook places the burning sheath directly on the target's gauze (or skin), the target suffers lethal wounds equal to the number of Spite points the character tapped until she breaks free of the nimbus (taking one full turn's worth of damage) or somehow extinguishes it (though Storm-Wending and using Puppetry to seek refuge in a target's body are also viable solutions).

The final application of Witch's Nimbus possible when tapping Spite enables the Haunter to plunge temperatures toward the arctic. For each Spite point tapped, the temperature drops considerably in the area around the ghost. This bears two different effects. First, anyone in direct contact with a spook using Witch's Nimbus suffers a level of bashing damage for each Spite point tapped to fuel the effect. This means any hand-to-hand combat



attack made against the spook incurs an immediate case of frostbite, whether to flesh or to gauze. The second effect is that Spite creates a cold field around the spook, which extends out by five feet for each Spite point tapped. This field drains targets (living and dead) of one dot in any Physical Attribute, for every turn they remain inside the numbing field. Once outside the field, the dots return at a rate of one per minute. This Horror's effects last for the duration of the scene.

• **Broadband Ghost:** By powering this Horror with Spite, the character combines the destructive effects of both Inhabit and Witch's Nimbus. The Spite allows the spook to move through all manner of electrical and electronic devices, destroying them in a spectacular display of a massive and potentially explosive power surge.

It's worth mentioning that this Horror is far more versatile than it first appears. Broadband Ghost enables the character to assume a wide array of energy forms, of which electricity is only one. A character channeling himself into flames can just as easily enter an engine to blow it up as he could to a computer. Alternately, he can become radio waves and wreak havoc on a stereo, a cell phone or a garage door opener with equal ease.

Tapping one Spite point lets the character enter an electronic item and short circuit it by using his power to bypass resistors and other forms of impedance. The effect lasts for the duration of the scene, after which the device returns to its previous functionality.

Using two Spite enables the character to completely fry a system, be it a radio, a stereo, a mainframe computer or a plane's guidance computer. Items suffering such punishment are completely ruined and will not work again without significant time spent on repair and replacing parts.

When using three Spite points to power this Horror, it fries the system as above, but it also creates an explosion (or

an electrical fulmination) that deals three levels of lethal damage to anyone within two feet of the device.

Four Spite allows the Haunter to affect a connected series of devices in the same area: computers in an Internet café or computer lab, for example, or a bank of televisions in an electronics store. Anyone within five feet of the devices suffers four health levels of damage.

Finally, tapping five Spite points enables the spook to function as above but across a much larger area than before: three floors of a high rise, for example, or a five-square-block area. All the devices affected must be of a single type and connected through some kind of electromagnetic link: computers hooked up to the Internet, telephones on different floors or even cars hooked up to the same block heater. The punishment inflicted is five levels of lethal damage to those within a 10-foot radius of the affected devices, though the character can only channel damage through one device each turn.

Phantasms

When fueled with Vitality, the oneiric Horrors used by Phantasms deal with dreams and illusion. When a spook taps Spite to power these Horrors, however, they suddenly deal nightmares and *delusions*.

• **Bedlam:** Fueled with Spite, Bedlam adopts a radically different tone from its Vitality-fueled form. Upon tapping Spite to fuel this Horror, the Phantasm creates a convincing sensory illusion of the worst, darkest, most vile or terrifying thing in the target's mind, whatever it may be. Only the target and the Phantasm know what that thing is, however.

Fueling Bedlam with Spite does not cause the target to see horrible monsters or other unlikely things (unless the individual has actually *dealt*, somehow, with horrible monsters and they left an impression). Instead, the Horror causes him to experience horrible, *but very realistic*, delusions. A lover under this Horror's influence might hear his girlfriend say "I slept with your brother" when she really said "Let's go together." If the Phantasm tapped enough Spite to affect the visual realm, he might see his girl "looking guilty." If the spook taps an additional Spite for the olfactory sense, the target might also smell his brother's cologne faintly wafting from his girlfriend....

Not only does this application of Bedlam create potentially volatile illusions, it also informs the Phantasm as to her target's key fears and concerns, by showing her what her target experiences.

These maleficent illusions generally revolve around a single theme. The target's least favorite memory may involve the smell of gunpowder, and he may be terrified of dogs, but he won't smell gunpowder and see dogs at the same time. Rather, he'll either smell gunpowder and see a

SHIELDED SYSTEMS

At the Storyteller's discretion, some important electronic devices—crucial government mainframe computers, the guidance system on Airforce One, etc.—may enjoy shielding in such a way that this Horror has little or no effect. The military may use such shielding to protect electronic items from the electromagnetic pulse following a nuclear detonation, but it also prevents Broadband Ghost from working on said items. Such shielding is *very* expensive and, therefore, *very* rare, but sometimes, rich antagonists—especially governments and large corporations—find reasons to shield even the most unlikely devices.



phantom killer pointing a gun at him, or he'll see dogs baring their teeth and hear them growling as though ready to lunge at him. The sensory effects of this Horror work together to create a convincing illusion of whatever evokes the most anxiety, pain or rage in the target.

• **Sandman:** The Spite-fueled version of this Horror doesn't deal with the state of sleep and dreams so much as it contends with the state of mind existing somewhere between sleep and wakefulness and nightmares.

Tapping a single point of Spite allows the Phantasm to evoke a state of disorientation — like the one we experience right after being jolted awoken — in her target, regardless of whether the target is sleeping or awake. If sleeping, the target wakes up suddenly and does not recognize his surroundings or anyone around him. If the target was awake, his mind goes completely blank for a moment and, again, he won't recognize his surroundings or those people around him. This snaps any thread of conversation, as though the victim's brain just rebooted. This disorientation lasts no more than 10 seconds before the target remembers who and where he is again, but 10 seconds of absolute disorientation is frequently all that's needed to achieve the spook's goals.

By using two Spite points, the Phantasm sends a sleeping target into terrible nightmares. As with the more common Vitality-fueled version of this Horror, the difficulty of pushing the target into nightmares depends on whether the target is already in REM sleep or not (see the write-up on the Vitality-powered version of Sandman on pp. 95-97 of *Shades of Gray*).

Tapping three points of Spite enables the Phantasm to evoke a psychotic episode in her target by inflicting him with nightmares while he's still awake. The target first experiences a momentary state of disorientation (as above), and then, the nightmare eclipses his conscious, reasoning mind completely. The waking terror is usually one that plays heavily on the target's greatest fears or on current situations unfolding in his life.

To elicit this waking nightmare, the Phantasm's player taps three Spite. The player then makes a Manipulation + Awareness roll (instead of the customary Perception + Awareness roll used when Vitality fuels the Horror). The difficulty of the roll depends on the target's situation:

Situation	Difficulty
Target is alone	6
Target is with one or two others	7
Target is in a social setting with many others	8

The psychotic break/waking nightmare lasts for the duration of the scene, at which point the victim again experiences a moment of disorientation and

returns to his senses with no memories (or very vague ones) of the incident.

A Phantasm who really wants to mess with her target can tap four Spite to plague the individual with long periods of horrible recurring nightmares every time the target sleeps. These nightmares plague the target the moment he falls asleep, and they don't end until he awakens again (which usually doesn't take very long). The target wakes up screaming several times on any given night, making it impossible for him to rest. For each week the character deprives the target of rest in this fashion, the victim loses one dot from Wits. If Wits falls to 1, the character then loses dots from Stamina. Worse yet, it is impossible to regain Willpower when the target's sleep is so disturbed.

To elicit this effect, the Phantasm's player must tap four Spite points and roll Manipulation + Awareness against a difficulty of 8. Each success dooms the victim to one week of horrible recurring nightmares, though the Phantasm has no control over the nature of those dreams nor any knowledge pertaining to their content. In other words, the character gains no insight into the target.

At the extreme, the spook can tap five Spite to send the target into a psychotic break (as described above with tapping three Spite). In this case, the episode is prolonged, lasting for one week per success on the Phantasm's player's Manipulation + Awareness roll. Each success sends the target into a full week of apparent madness, as his version of what's real departs radically from reality itself. Psychiatrists will almost certainly diagnose the target as suffering from acute schizophrenia (or some similar psychosis). The difficulty of the roll depends on the general mental health of the target. The spook can affect well-adjusted individuals who are, for the most part, happy with their lives, who have solid connections with friends and family at a difficulty of 8. Affecting unhappy, lonely or depressed people who otherwise have more or less normal lives is a bit easier (difficulty 7).

The Phantasm can most easily affect those already on the edge of society: outcasts, vagrants, freaks and those whose grip on reality's nozzle is already tenuous. These individuals present the spook with a difficulty of only 6.

• **Dream-Walker:** Powering this Horror with Spite changes it substantially. The Spite-fueled version of Dream-Walker doesn't allow the Phantasm to travel through the dreamscape, though it does let her peer across it in search of specific minds. Better yet, the spook can connect several minds and immerse them all in the same Sandman experience.

Fueling this Horror with one Spite point allows the Phantasm to link two minds in the same Sandman dream.



Likewise, two Spite lets her link three minds, and so on. The spook can't trap more than six minds in the dream she creates, however.

The character can also use this Horror as a tool for communicating with up to six far-flung individuals. Those sharing the dream can communicate with each other, though the Phantasm using the Spite-fueled version of Dream-Walker can prevent this easily enough (or put the targets in a situation where they *must* communicate).

Poltergeists

No other Shade derives as much use from tapping Spite as Poltergeists do. The Horrors used by these spooks lend themselves perfectly to the increased violence and destructiveness that comes with channeling Spite. The drawback, of course, is that tapping Spite becomes *de rigueur* for these spooks, giving Poltergeists (already among the more violent Shades) all the more opportunities to embrace their baser natures and increase their permanent Spite ratings.. This temptation could be one reason why Poltergeists have such bad reputations for losing their grip on humanity and becoming Spectres.

- **Helter Skelter:** The malignant and more destructive nature of Spite is ideal for powering this Horror, so long as the character doesn't need much in the way of

control over the items he's manipulating. Tapping Spite to fuel Helter Skelter doubles the Strength dice of the Horror (but not the Dexterity). Whereas one point of Vitality can add one additional dot of Strength or Dexterity to Helter Skelter, Spite provides two dots of Strength or one dot of Dexterity for every point tapped. This illustrates the inherently destructive (and uncontrolled) nature of Spite.

- **Congéal:** When using Vitality to fuel this Horror, Congéal creates relatively common, familiar-looking weapons: A sword looks like a sword, and a gun looks like a gun. When tapping Spite to power this Horror, however, the weapons assume a bizarre organic look and, thanks to the increased destructive nature of Spite, inflict greater damage as well. In addition to the Congealed weapon's normal damage, tapping Spite grants one additional die of lethal damage per point of Spite tapped. A large weapon (such as a bastard sword) that would normally require five Vitality and inflict Strength + 5 dice of damage would, when fueled by tapping five points of Spite, inflict Strength + 10 dice of damage — a tantalizing bargain when pressed in combat.

- **Anathema:** As with the normal application fueled by Vitality, Anathema affects distance and force, but it does so slightly differently and with less control when fueled with Spite. The whorls of force are black,





not silver, when Spite is the fueling power, and the spook has minimal control over what his power affects or how. The effects are bigger and more powerful but far less controlled. The spook may do as much damage to his friends as he does to his enemies if he uses this version of Anathema carelessly.

Along with the standard effects of the Vitality-fueled version, Spite-fueled Anathema may also manifest the following results over which the Poltergeist has only the slightest control:

- Space curves, sending thrown items on a curved or circular trajectory.

- Distance lengthens, causing a 10-foot hallway to grow to 50 feet in length.

- Space shrinks, causing a large room to close in on its occupants.

- Weight varies, making affected targets 10 times their normal weight, weightless or anywhere in between.

- Gravity suddenly shifts direction, hurtling items (and individuals) in one section of the room onto the ceiling before dropping them back on the floor three seconds later.

- Light itself acts strangely, pooling in one corner of the room and leaving the rest of the room in shadows... even in a well-lit room.

- Metal items become super-magnetized and stick to any metal object in their vicinity with a strong grip.

Spite-powered Anathema does not give the character the option of walking on walls or flying. Those applications require far more control than Spite offers when powering this Horror.

Skinriders

Tapping Spite to fuel Horrors is not particularly popular among Skinriders. Spite-fueled effects vary widely and not typically in ways that help the Skinrider. The exception to this rule, and it is quite a pronounced exception, is Juggernaut, which works quite effectively when Spite-fueled.

- **Puppetry:** Fueling Puppetry by tapping Spite offers few advantages for the spook, but it has a lasting impact on the host. After the character departs the body he possessed, the host feels his possessor's last negative emotion in a dangerously amplified fashion. If the possessor felt annoyed at a crucible-mate, the host flies into a rage at the first person he encounters. Conversely, if the possessing spook felt a little blue, the host sinks into a profound depression for the remainder of the scene. Spooks using this version of Puppetry must be completely aware of their own mental state if they don't want to create situations that interfere with their own plans. Otherwise, smart spooks might

engineer circumstances using their own mental state to affect someone's upcoming decision. Additionally, Spite-fueled Puppetry can also turn the target *real* ugly — ugly as in the type of stuff associated with most possessions: cracked skin, wispy hair, yellow eyes, sharp teeth, etc. The actual effect is that for each point of Spite tapped, the character can (if he wishes) reduce the target's Social Attributes by one dot.

- **Juggernaut:** The effects of fueling Juggernaut with Spite are identical to those when fueling the Horror with Vitality, with one exception: When tapping Spite, the character also manifests one Stain per point of Spite tapped, thereby making him all the more terrifying. When a character fuels Juggernaut with Vitality, he appears to be wreathed in a silver flame. When a character fuels Juggernaut with Spite, however, those flames can appear red, black or any shade in between. Those who've seen the difference can easily tell what the spook is using to fuel the Horror, even if the Stains don't give it away.

- **Contaminate:** Using Spite to Fuel Contaminate heightens the symptoms precipitously. Beyond suffering the symptoms of the disease, the target has the symptoms of an especially bad case of the disease. Using Vitality to fuel Contaminate gives someone the symptoms of the flu for example, resulting in sweats, aches, chills and fever. Using Spite for the same effect, the target also suffers debilitating coughs, vomiting and other indicators of a terrible chest and stomach flu combined.

Storytellers represent this difference by allowing the disease to inflict damage in addition to the effects caused by the basic version of this Horror. Powered by Spite, Contaminate inflicts one level of bashing damage per point of Spite spent, and the target can soak the "attack." If the spook wants to hit the target again in a few days to maintain the effects, he can do so as well. Long illnesses, of course, may lead to death. The symptoms may be false, but the toll they inflict on the body is, nonetheless, real.

Wisps

The strange appeal of Wisps assumes sinister overtones when empowered by the spooks' more baleful nature.

- **Unearthly Repose:** Fueled by Spite, Unearthly Repose loses some utility but gains other dramatic advantages. The character cannot use the calming ability normally granted by this Horror when tapping Spite. What tapping Spite *does* allow, however, is the planting of short-term suggestions into the target's mind.

The allure that is so basic to this Horror mixes with the dark emotions represented by Spite, resulting in a strange but powerful attraction/repulsion that affects the target like an obsession. To some people, the sensation



might feel like powerful animal magnetism. To others, it might manifest as an obsession to really get to *know* the Wisp. In any case, the net result is the same: The target is *really* desperate to please the spook (at least for the duration of the scene). For his part, the Wisp is free to subtly imply any manner of desire, but directly telling the target to do anything breaks the effect entirely. The difference is very much like that between asking “Do you have the time?” and saying “Tell me what time it is. Now.” The Wisp character cannot say “Give me the gun,” but he can say “I wish I had a gun like that.” He cannot say “Take off all your clothes,” but he can say “I’d love to see you naked.” While some Wisps find that element of this Horror (when fueled with Spite) to be a pain, others take great delight in the artful phrasing required.

The suggestions imparted with this Horror last for the duration of the scene. The exact mechanics of the Horror appear below.

One Spite: The Wisp’s player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 6. The target resists with Willpower, difficulty 7, though the target may spend one Willpower to ignore the suggestion.

Two Spite: The Wisp’s player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 6. The target resists with Willpower, difficulty 7, though the target may spend two Willpower to ignore the suggestion.

Three Spite: The Wisp’s player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 6. The target resists with Willpower, difficulty 8, though the target may spend three Willpower to ignore the suggestion.

Four Spite: The Wisp’s player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 5. The target resists with Willpower, difficulty 7, though the target may spend four Willpower to ignore the suggestion.

Five Spite: The Wisp’s player rolls Charisma + Subterfuge, difficulty 5. The target resists with Willpower, difficulty 8, though the target may spend five Willpower to ignore the suggestion.

• **Storm-Wending:** Tapping Spite to fuel Storm-Wending changes the Horror in an unusual manner. A character using Spite to fuel this Horror can partially emerge across multiple points, his gauze being split into several manifestations. During this time, the character vanishes using Storm-Wending and reappears in multiple locations for a number of turns equal to the Spite points being tapped + 1 (so one Spite point creates a two-turn effect, even though the first turn is always used up by activating the Horror and the emergence of the duplicates). At the end of the Horror’s duration, the character reintegrates and emerges at the transit point whole. For each Spite point invested in this use of Storm-Wending, the character can travel equal dis-

tance (as per Vitality usage) at a slower clip, but he also draws enough gauze away from himself to create one temporary doppelganger who appears within the range of his Horror. For each point of Spite tapped, each duplicate has one dot in every Trait the character possesses, up to his maximum.

Thus, a player who taps one Spite for his character creates a two-turn duplicate with one dot in each Trait. This means the duplicate can only act for one turn before being reintegrated with the original character. A player who taps five Spite, however, creates up to five duplicates for six turns (5 + automatic 1 = 6 turns or five turns of combat), each with their Traits equal to the original character.

While this enables the character to engage multiple opponents within the range of his Storm-Wending, they all share the same health levels when they reintegrate. Thus, while each version of the character has his own health levels and ability to soak, when the duplicates return to the character, he assumes *all* their damage. This means that, with a couple of Injured duplicates here and a Wounded duplicate there, the character might well be Incapacitated upon emerging from Storm-Wending.

The only Traits that can’t be used by the duplicates are Horrors, Merits and Backgrounds.

• **Beckon Relic:** The standard version of this Horror, fueled by Vitality, enables the Wisp to pull a random relic from the Underworld into his possession. When tapping Spite for the effect, however, the item brought to hand is always a Spectre artifact, forged from the ichor of a Spectre (see the section on Spectral Artifacts on p. 93). The Wisp taps his Spite to call to the malicious essence of the Artifact in a way that almost resembles the Hive-Mind ability of Spectres. The number of Spite points tapped may (at the Storyteller’s discretion) determine the size of the object (as it does with Vitality), the power level of the item or simply how much Spectral sentence remains in the object. The artifact may be in any state of repair.

STEALING SPITE

It’s a fact of life (and death) that horrible crimes happen every day. People (and spooks) victimize each other in a myriad of shocking ways. The aggressors can rob, beat, torture and murder their victims, and there’s worse they can do to them. They can sap away their very life force (as represented by Vitality and discussed in the *Orpheus* core book on p. 151), and still, there is something more that one spook can take from another... anger. One spook can rob another of his rage, his malice, his hatred — and derive a rush like no other.



Stealing Spite is at least as brutal as stealing Vitality, and it can be shockingly addictive to those spooks who develop a taste for it. Rage and aggression, as represented by Spite, are powerful driving forces — among the strongest in the human psyche. Hatred can drive an individual for years to find his father's killer, or it can motivate an army to massacre a village of innocents. Now, enterprising players might wonder where's the harm or benefit in draining a target's Spite. The harm in draining a target's Spite is that you rob him of a certain will and drive that propels him through existence. Spite entails a level of determination, regardless of whether its source is negative or not. A hatred of personal inadequacies, for example, might relate to Spite, but it also produces that desire to improve one's self beyond one's limitations. Therefore, Spite is a necessary balance, if it's well maintained. Conversely, what can someone gain from draining Spite, other than an energized high? Vitality and/or Willpower. Stealing Spite enables the predator to convert the target's Spite into Vitality or Willpower, though this isn't a conscious process. The Spite stolen is of the more positive variety, like stealing oil and leaving the crude behind, which literally energizes the gauze of the predator. This brief high is represented as a temporary increase in Vitality or Willpower.

Stealing that kind of drive from another is, at its root, obscene, in the truest sense of the word. But it can be done, and here's how.

The Predator

There are many ways to steal Spite. From hardest to easiest, they are: eye contact (difficulty 8), skin contact (difficulty 7) and mouth-to-mouth (difficulty 6). Each of these methods has its own obvious advantages and disadvantages. Eye contact is the most difficult method of stealing Spite for several reasons, notably the prey's ability to escape easily. The moment he feels the tug indicating his Spite is being drained (Wits + Awareness, difficulty 5), the prey need only break eye contact. Skin-to-skin contact requires a roll to grapple the target. Once the predator grapples the target, she must make a contested Strength roll (difficulty 7) to retain her hold on her prey long enough to leech Spite from him.. If the predator can actually get a solid lip lock on her prey and keep it, inhaling Spite directly from the target's gauze is the easiest and most direct means of taking Spite from one's prey — as is rendering the target unconscious and draining Spite in that fashion.

Regardless the vector, all three methods share the same basic formula for draining Spite: The predator makes the necessary contact for one full turn, and the following turn, her player taps her own character's Spite point and makes a contested Willpower roll with the prey (whose difficulty is always 7). If the predator wins,

the beneficial aspects of the target's rage and power flow into her, and she reaps two points of Vitality or one Willpower (but can never exceed her starting value for the latter) for each Spite point stolen. The target, however, loses one point of Spite and the drive and energy that goes with it (see below).

There are drawbacks to this: If the attacker drains more Spite points than she has a Spite rating in one session, she gains one new Spite point for every point stolen beyond her current rating. Additionally, the stolen Vitality or Willpower lasts only for a scene before the sensation evaporates like every good high. Finally, the attacker can only drain one Spite point per turn, meaning she must succeed in whatever rolls are necessary to maintain her eye contact, grip or mouth lock on the victim each turn beyond the first.

The Storyteller should play up the ecstatic experience of draining Spite from another. Stealing Spite feels, for the moment in any case, like avenging every injustice that's been committed against you, proving your every last detractor wrong and receiving a steamy, passionate kiss from the hottest person you've ever lusted after — all at once. The experience lasts for a few seconds, but even when it's over, the character is still left with a faint afterglow (not to mention a few more points of Vitality and/or Willpower). This is exceedingly dangerous for ghosts, who can no longer experience such tactile rushes as intensely as they did when living. It's like sex for ghosts whose manifested sensations are mostly memories of acts past. It is for this reason that stealing Spite from others can get... out of hand. Spooks have been known to indulge in binges of Spite-theft to derive as much sensation as possible. Such things tend to end badly, with the character gaining so much of his own Spite in the process that his Spite *rating* increases. It's obviously dangerous, but the sensation feels so good that it can be easy to forget how grim the consequences really are. It is not unheard of to encounter Spite junkies in the hereafter.

The Prey

The victim of Spite-theft is left feeling dispirited. Negative emotions are powerful motivators, and a character whose Spite is stolen feels tired, depressed and docile. For every Spite point beyond the first that the predator steals, the victim's player needs to make a Willpower roll against a difficulty of 7 (i.e., if a character has just had three Spite points stolen from him, his player must make two Willpower rolls). Any failure indicates the character lost a point of Willpower along with the Spite. From a roleplaying perspective, this means that, for a few days after being drained of Spite, the character feels morose and listless. Entering any sort of aggressive situation (especially combat) requires the expenditure of a Willpower point until the

character's Spite and Willpower return to normal. Both Spite and Willpower lost through this kind of theft return at the rate of a point a day.

Example: Cletus (with a Spite rating of 4) attacks Jedediah (with a Spite rating of 3) and opts to steal Jed's Spite through skin-to-skin contact. Cletus has a Strength of 5, while Jed's is only 3, so there's a definite disparity between the two. Cletus also has more Willpower. Cletus' player rolls to hit and succeeds. Jed fails to dodge. Cletus, therefore, lands a solid clamp on Jed. The next turn, the players make contested Strength rolls. The difficulty is always 7 for the defender, and it's 7 for Cletus because that's the difficulty of stealing Spite through simple gauze contact. The first turn, Cletus rolls three successes while Jed gets one. Cletus' player taps one Spite point and makes a contested Willpower roll (which he wins). The rolls vary on subsequent turns, but Cletus wins the contested Strength and Willpower rolls three turns in a row and, consequently, steals three Spite points. Jedediah is losing the dark angry drive that Spite represents, and so, his player must make three Willpower rolls—one for each turn that Cletus successfully steals Spite—against a difficulty of 7. He rolls 3, 6 and 8, so, in addition to losing those Spite points, Jed also loses two points of Willpower. Cletus could press for another turn, but he's already taken as much of Jed's Spite as he can use, and he doesn't want to risk tapping another Spite point or increasing his Spite rating, so, making a cutting parting comment, he laughs derisively and lets the smaller spook go. At the end of the conflict, Cletus, feeling like the emperor of all that is, walks away recharged with four points of Vitality and two Willpower. Jed, on the other hand, has lost not only three points of Spite, but two points of Willpower as well. It'll take him quite a while to recover from this ugly little confrontation.

STAINS

The ways in which self-perception and Spite can shift and deform gauze are innumerable. The following Stains augment the list presented in the **Orpheus** core book.

ARMLESS

Some people perceive (or portray) themselves as helpless and unable to accomplish things for themselves when, in reality, the tactic they adopt actually bolsters their position in some way. When this Stain manifests, the character's arms are reabsorbed into her body, effectively rendering her seemingly helpless, but adding the mass of the arms into the main body mass. Only her hands are visible, poking out the front of her shoulder blades.

Advantage: For the duration of this Stain's appearance, the character gains three additional Bruised health levels (from the mass of the absorbed arms).

Disadvantage: Obviously, the character has extreme difficulty accomplishing anything requiring the use of arms or hands while this Stain is active. Any action involving the use of hands or arms suffers a three-die penalty from all relevant dice pools.

ARMOR OF CORPULENCE

A character manifesting this Stain grows enormously and grotesquely fat. Although she can barely move and see over her enormous mass, she's impervious to many forms of harm.

Advantage: While using the armor of corpulence, the character is entirely immune to all bashing damage and takes only one quarter the normal damage from weapon attacks that inflict lethal damage. Fire, electricity, poison gas and other non-object-based sources of harm still inflict normal damage.

Disadvantage: A character manifesting this Stain is so heavy and rotund that her legs are trapped in a mire of heavy rolls of fat. While this Stain is active, all movement-based actions suffer a four-die penalty to all relevant dice pools. The Stain also restricts movement to a maximum of three yards a turn.

ATROPHY COMPENSATION

They say that when one personal capacity is weakened the body compensates for that weakness in other ways. This Stain illustrates that tendency dramatically. When this Stain is activated, the character experiences a sudden shift in his body, becoming weak in one way but inexplicably more powerful in another.

Advantage: The character gains two or more dots to a particular Physical Attribute.

Disadvantage: The character loses the same number of dots from another Physical Attribute. A character who gains three dots in Strength from this Stain, then, would lose three dots from either Dexterity or Stamina.

BAD BLOOD

A character with this Stain has a foul substance pumping through her gauze that acts like a toxin to her and to those who make contact with it. Even if the character doesn't bleed, it's clear when she is manifesting this Stain: Her veins become swollen, black and unmistakably visible through her gauze. If she bleeds, the Stain becomes even more obvious: Her ichor produces a terrible stench and burns anyone who touches the substance.

Advantage: A character with this active Stain can inflict eight dice of lethal damage on an enemy within 10 feet of her with a successful Firearms roll. To spray her ichor, the character must cut a main artery—brachial, femoral or carotid—thereby inflicting one level of lethal damage on herself in the process. The substance burns skin and gauze and stains black anything else it touches.

Disadvantage: Not only does the character need to hurt herself to use this Stain to its best effect, but twice a day, she must bleed herself deliberately to drain the ichor buildup. This means she accumulates two levels of lethal damage each day. If she doesn't drain the ichor, she takes four levels of lethal damage for every day that she fails to purge herself. She can only use the ichor as an attack four times in a day before she endangers her well-being. The ichor regenerates at the rate of one use per day.

BEAST NOSE

The character has a particularly powerful sense of smell and a nose that reflects that talent. He may simply have an extraordinarily large nose — around the size of a coffee cup — when manifesting this Stain, or he may have the full snout of a hound. In either case, the nose grants the character the ability to detect scents normally imperceptible to the human nose or even to track others by scent.

Advantage: The character can track a scent for up to two days after the target's passage. This ability is automatic unless the quarry doesn't have much of a scent (most spooks and some Spectres, for example), in which case the player rolls Perception + Survival, difficulty 6, to stay on the trail. Furthermore, if the character has Storm-Wending, this Stain allows him to track others who used that Horror to make a sudden escape.

Disadvantage: The character's Appearance drops by two. Furthermore, any strong odor overwhelms the character, causing his eyes to water for three turns and rendering tracking impossible for five additional turns beyond that.

BILEOUS SPEW

Most Stains have some outward expression. A spook who sees himself as caustic or cruelly witty is likely to evince this Stain, which allows the character to regurgitate a spray

of acid at his opponent. The vomit attack is as effective as it is repulsive, but it's also hard on the spook who launches it.

Advantage: Such sprays count as ranged attacks — affecting targets up to 20 feet away — and inflict six dice of lethal damage on a target.

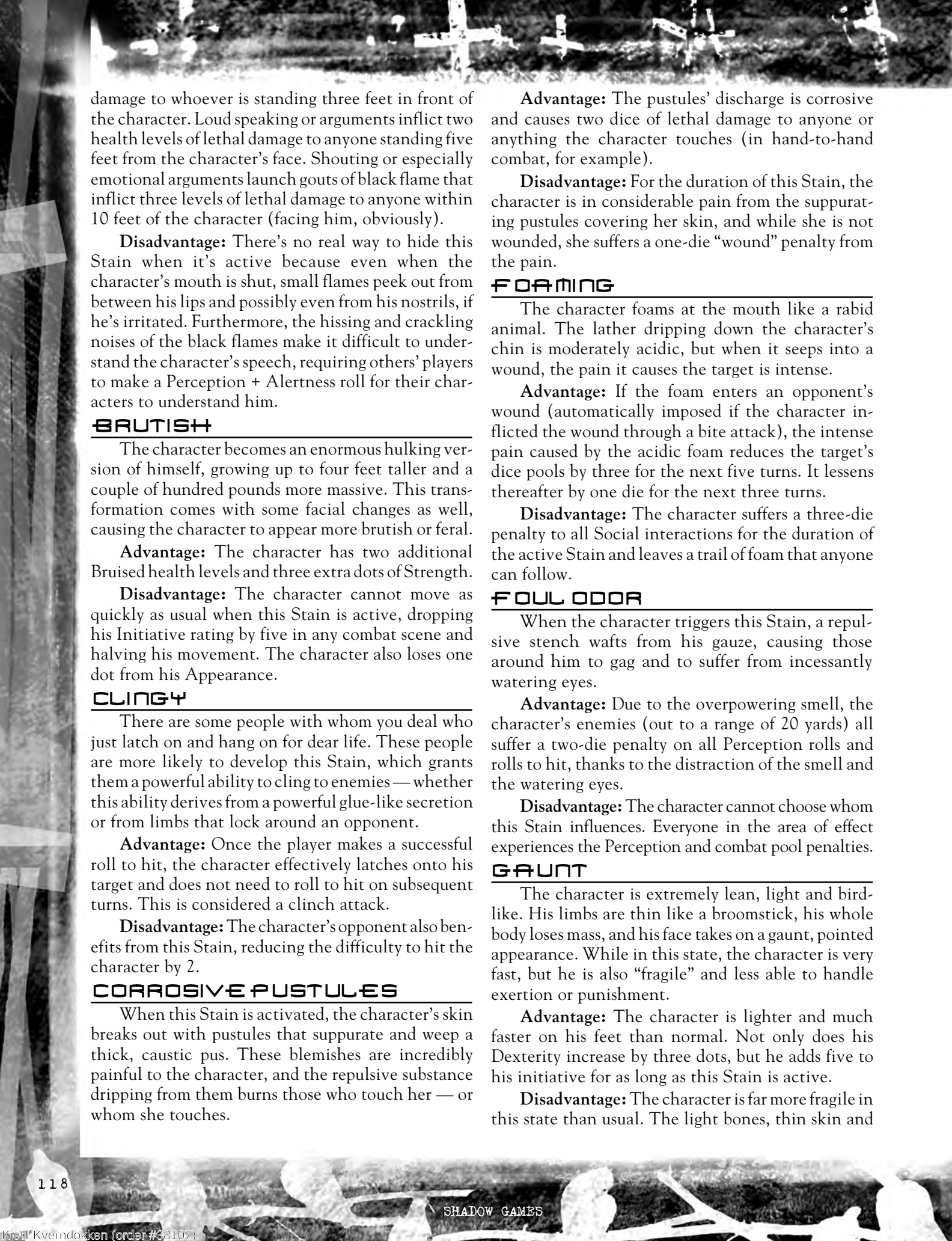
Disadvantage: Projectile vomiting is remarkably difficult and drains the spook significantly. Each use of this Stain brings the character's Stamina down by one for the remainder of the scene. A character with a Stamina of one isn't strong enough to launch an attack with this ability.

BLACKFIRE SPEECH

Words can burn, more literally in some instances than others. This Stain gives words a visible and dangerous component by causing black flames to spew from the character's mouth as he speaks. The louder and more hostile the words, the hotter the flames and the greater their range. A whispering character would have only the faintest flames licking around his lips as he spoke. If, on the other hand, he shouted in anger at someone, the flames would be much darker and hotter, shooting out the character's mouth for up to 10 feet.

Advantage: Blackfire does damage just like any other source of fire, burning skin and setting flammable objects alight. A whisper invokes no damage, but regular speech inflicts one health level of lethal





damage to whoever is standing three feet in front of the character. Loud speaking or arguments inflict two health levels of lethal damage to anyone standing five feet from the character's face. Shouting or especially emotional arguments launch gouts of black flame that inflict three levels of lethal damage to anyone within 10 feet of the character (facing him, obviously).

Disadvantage: There's no real way to hide this Stain when it's active because even when the character's mouth is shut, small flames peek out from between his lips and possibly even from his nostrils, if he's irritated. Furthermore, the hissing and crackling noises of the black flames make it difficult to understand the character's speech, requiring others' players to make a Perception + Alertness roll for their characters to understand him.

BRUTISH

The character becomes an enormous hulking version of himself, growing up to four feet taller and a couple of hundred pounds more massive. This transformation comes with some facial changes as well, causing the character to appear more brutish or feral.

Advantage: The character has two additional Bruised health levels and three extra dots of Strength.

Disadvantage: The character cannot move as quickly as usual when this Stain is active, dropping his Initiative rating by five in any combat scene and halving his movement. The character also loses one dot from his Appearance.

CLINGY

There are some people with whom you deal who just latch on and hang on for dear life. These people are more likely to develop this Stain, which grants them a powerful ability to cling to enemies — whether this ability derives from a powerful glue-like secretion or from limbs that lock around an opponent.

Advantage: Once the player makes a successful roll to hit, the character effectively latches onto his target and does not need to roll to hit on subsequent turns. This is considered a clinch attack.

Disadvantage: The character's opponent also benefits from this Stain, reducing the difficulty to hit the character by 2.

CORROSIVE PUSTULES

When this Stain is activated, the character's skin breaks out with pustules that suppurate and weep a thick, caustic pus. These blemishes are incredibly painful to the character, and the repulsive substance dripping from them burns those who touch her — or whom she touches.

Advantage: The pustules' discharge is corrosive and causes two dice of lethal damage to anyone or anything the character touches (in hand-to-hand combat, for example).

Disadvantage: For the duration of this Stain, the character is in considerable pain from the suppurating pustules covering her skin, and while she is not wounded, she suffers a one-die "wound" penalty from the pain.

FOAMING

The character foams at the mouth like a rabid animal. The lather dripping down the character's chin is moderately acidic, but when it seeps into a wound, the pain it causes the target is intense.

Advantage: If the foam enters an opponent's wound (automatically imposed if the character inflicted the wound through a bite attack), the intense pain caused by the acidic foam reduces the target's dice pools by three for the next five turns. It lessens thereafter by one die for the next three turns.

Disadvantage: The character suffers a three-die penalty to all Social interactions for the duration of the active Stain and leaves a trail of foam that anyone can follow.

FOUL ODOR

When the character triggers this Stain, a repulsive stench wafts from his gauze, causing those around him to gag and to suffer from incessantly watering eyes.

Advantage: Due to the overpowering smell, the character's enemies (out to a range of 20 yards) all suffer a two-die penalty on all Perception rolls and rolls to hit, thanks to the distraction of the smell and the watering eyes.

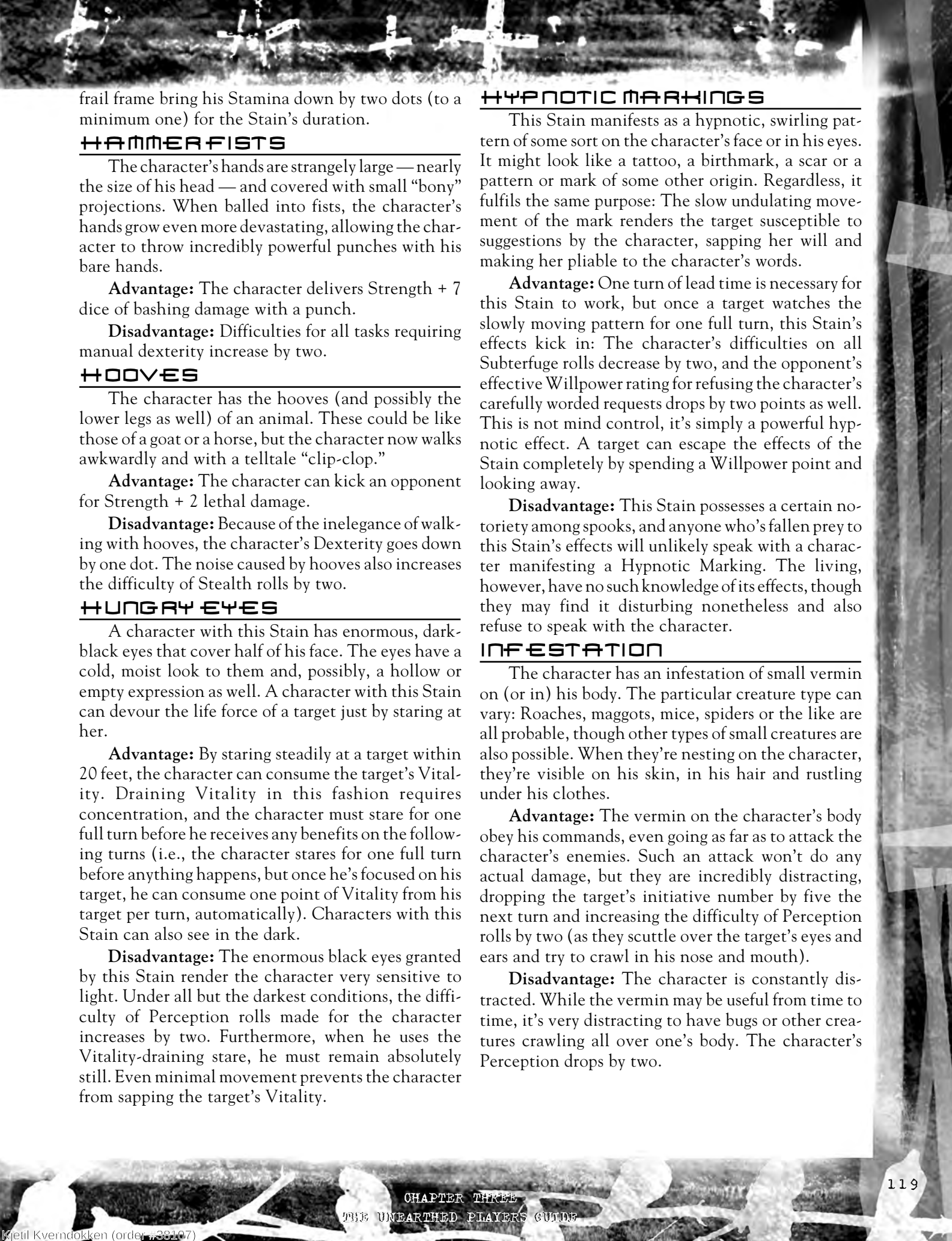
Disadvantage: The character cannot choose whom this Stain influences. Everyone in the area of effect experiences the Perception and combat pool penalties.

GAUNT

The character is extremely lean, light and bird-like. His limbs are thin like a broomstick, his whole body loses mass, and his face takes on a gaunt, pointed appearance. While in this state, the character is very fast, but he is also "fragile" and less able to handle exertion or punishment.

Advantage: The character is lighter and much faster on his feet than normal. Not only does his Dexterity increase by three dots, but he adds five to his initiative for as long as this Stain is active.

Disadvantage: The character is far more fragile in this state than usual. The light bones, thin skin and



frail frame bring his Stamina down by two dots (to a minimum one) for the Stain's duration.

HAMMER FISTS

The character's hands are strangely large — nearly the size of his head — and covered with small “bony” projections. When balled into fists, the character's hands grow even more devastating, allowing the character to throw incredibly powerful punches with his bare hands.

Advantage: The character delivers Strength + 7 dice of bashing damage with a punch.

Disadvantage: Difficulties for all tasks requiring manual dexterity increase by two.

HOOVES

The character has the hooves (and possibly the lower legs as well) of an animal. These could be like those of a goat or a horse, but the character now walks awkwardly and with a telltale “clip-clop.”

Advantage: The character can kick an opponent for Strength + 2 lethal damage.

Disadvantage: Because of the inelegance of walking with hooves, the character's Dexterity goes down by one dot. The noise caused by hooves also increases the difficulty of Stealth rolls by two.

HUNGRY EYES

A character with this Stain has enormous, dark-black eyes that cover half of his face. The eyes have a cold, moist look to them and, possibly, a hollow or empty expression as well. A character with this Stain can devour the life force of a target just by staring at her.

Advantage: By staring steadily at a target within 20 feet, the character can consume the target's Vitality. Draining Vitality in this fashion requires concentration, and the character must stare for one full turn before he receives any benefits on the following turns (i.e., the character stares for one full turn before anything happens, but once he's focused on his target, he can consume one point of Vitality from his target per turn, automatically). Characters with this Stain can also see in the dark.

Disadvantage: The enormous black eyes granted by this Stain render the character very sensitive to light. Under all but the darkest conditions, the difficulty of Perception rolls made for the character increases by two. Furthermore, when he uses the Vitality-draining stare, he must remain absolutely still. Even minimal movement prevents the character from sapping the target's Vitality.

HYPNOTIC MARKINGS

This Stain manifests as a hypnotic, swirling pattern of some sort on the character's face or in his eyes. It might look like a tattoo, a birthmark, a scar or a pattern or mark of some other origin. Regardless, it fulfils the same purpose: The slow undulating movement of the mark renders the target susceptible to suggestions by the character, sapping her will and making her pliable to the character's words.

Advantage: One turn of lead time is necessary for this Stain to work, but once a target watches the slowly moving pattern for one full turn, this Stain's effects kick in: The character's difficulties on all Subterfuge rolls decrease by two, and the opponent's effective Willpower rating for refusing the character's carefully worded requests drops by two points as well. This is not mind control, it's simply a powerful hypnotic effect. A target can escape the effects of the Stain completely by spending a Willpower point and looking away.

Disadvantage: This Stain possesses a certain notoriety among spooks, and anyone who's fallen prey to this Stain's effects will unlikely speak with a character manifesting a Hypnotic Marking. The living, however, have no such knowledge of its effects, though they may find it disturbing nonetheless and also refuse to speak with the character.

INFESTATION

The character has an infestation of small vermin on (or in) his body. The particular creature type can vary: Roaches, maggots, mice, spiders or the like are all probable, though other types of small creatures are also possible. When they're nesting on the character, they're visible on his skin, in his hair and rustling under his clothes.

Advantage: The vermin on the character's body obey his commands, even going as far as to attack the character's enemies. Such an attack won't do any actual damage, but they are incredibly distracting, dropping the target's initiative number by five the next turn and increasing the difficulty of Perception rolls by two (as they scuttle over the target's eyes and ears and try to crawl in his nose and mouth).

Disadvantage: The character is constantly distracted. While the vermin may be useful from time to time, it's very distracting to have bugs or other creatures crawling all over one's body. The character's Perception drops by two.



MANDIBLES

When this Stain manifests, the character's jaw splits to become the mandibles of an enormous insect.

Advantage: When the character successfully hits his opponent with a biting attack, the mandibles inflict Strength + 3 lethal damage on the target.

Disadvantage: While the character is suffering the Stain's effects, he cannot speak or even vocalize.

NAUSEATING

Some spooks perceive themselves as so hideously ugly, so utterly repulsive that it literally sickens others to look at them. Perhaps they have maggots swarming under their skin or are covered with truly disgusting lesions. Regardless of the specifics, the effect is the same: Those perceiving the character are disgusted to the point of feeling utterly nauseous (even spooks feel like throwing up).

Advantage: Opponents within five feet of the afflicted character suffer a penalty of one die to *all* dice pools.

Disadvantage: Obviously, the character manifesting this Stain has absolutely no appeal to *anyone* for the duration of its effect. Her Appearance drops to 0.

ROAMING EYES

When this Stain manifests, the character's eyes (indeed, with their sockets) are free to roam anywhere on the character's body. Thus, the character might have a single eye dead center in her face and one on the back of her head. Alternately, she might choose to have one on each palm, leaving her face with smooth skin where her eyes should be.

Advantage: This Stain potentially provides the character with several helpful abilities. For one thing, the character can use her hands to peer around corners. For another, it's possible to move one's eyes to a safer location if there's an enemy who tends to go for eye gouging. Lastly, it never hurts to see behind you.

Disadvantage: The costs of not having two eyes in the configuration others expect are notably high. The Stain screws with depth perception, incurring a penalty of two to all difficulties related to aiming (punching, shooting, kicking, dodging, etc.). Other spooks might also avoid a character with this Stain altogether, though the standard penalty is two to the difficulty of all Social rolls.

ROOTED

Some oddity in your gauze causes your feet to grow roots into the ground (or whatever else) beneath them. Roots of various size try to anchor themselves into the floor with every step you take.

Advantage: If you don't want to be moved, nobody can budge you, and so long as you're bodily intact, you can remain standing, literally rooted to the spot.

Disadvantage: Reduce your movement rate to a quarter of normal due to this Stain. Staying in one spot for more than five minutes requires a Strength roll (difficulty 7) to uproot yourself. The difficulty rises by one for every five minutes thereafter, so woe betide the spook who's knocked unconscious.

CONJOINED ANIMAL TWIN

The character has the head or forepaws of a sickly animal growing out of his chest or back. It could be any small animal or, potentially, a human baby.

Advantage: The conjoined twin can act independently of the character. A head sticking out of the back, for example, can bark warnings (although it's too small and weak to bite effectively), while spare arms or legs can help to ward off or block attacks, adding one to the difficulty of rolls to hit the character.

Disadvantage: The twin acts like a parasite, consuming one point of Vitality a day from the character.

STINGER

The character has a stinger of some sort on his body. It can be as large as a scorpion tail — originating at the terminus of his spine and arcing over his head — or something smaller and more anatomically elegant. Regardless, the character can wield it effectively and it delivers a venom that hurts the target.

Advantage: The character can sting a target with a simple roll to hit. On a successful hit, the sting delivers one level of lethal damage. For the next five turns, the venom delivered by the stinger inflicts three additional levels of bashing damage per turn. The victim can soak the poison.

The stinger contains three doses of venom, which regenerate at a rate of one dose per day. The character can use the stinger alone multiple times.

Disadvantage: Using the stinger hurts because it pulls and twists at one's own body like an overextended muscle or a strained joint. For three turns after



using the stinger, the character suffers from one additional wound penalty as a result of the strain.

WORM HAIR

The character does not have hair, per se, but rather worms or perhaps small snakes where hair would normally be. They may be short (in the case of worms) or relatively long, with snakes looking rather like cornrow braids at a distance.

Advantage: Manifesting this Stain gives the character the ability to use a pale version of Hive-Mind to listen in on the thoughts of others (so long as he's within line of sight). The player rolls Perception +

Awareness against a difficulty of 7, and each success achieved allows the character to pluck one fact from a target's surface thoughts.

Disadvantage: Beyond the character's obvious physical repulsiveness, this Stain does rely on Spite's connection to Spectres and the hive-mind. A character using the mind-reading powers of this Stain also unknowingly broadcasts his own thoughts to all Spectres within a 100-yard radius, allowing them to pluck at random thoughts or even to track down the character if they so wish.



CHAPTER FOUR: STORYTELLING THE DEAD



Samantha Kozac: Dig.
— Stir of Echoes

I'm no longer afraid of falling asleep because my nightmares
have escaped into my waking world. I have no refuge left.
— Missionary Works cultist



Roll up your sleeves, and take hold of the bar. We've got tips and tools for you, faithful Storyteller, to help you pull your players in, to keep them engaged and to prod them on their way. In this chapter, you'll find the following sections.

- **It's a Whole New World:** This section lays the foundation for weaving a story around the characters. It begins with a discussion of how the characters' role has changed, from survivors struggling to find their way to leaders of a resistance. Next, it offers methods for helping the characters to discover their motivation ("You didn't really need that body, did you?"). Then, it covers compelling reasons for a crucible to stick together. Lastly, there are guidelines for incorporating a chronicle in which Orpheus is still alive and kicking, if that's the direction you favor.

- **A New Beginning:** Here, we spin plausible and useful plots for integrating new players and/or characters. A new character, after spending some time with a crucible, can be an excellent vehicle for delivering new information or steering the chronicle in new directions. Here, you'll find ways of turning this opportunity to your advantage.

- **Anatomy of an Adventure, or How to Run a Chronicle:** This section delivers usable stories to serve as hooks to involve the characters and subtle exposition delivery systems and scenes to challenge and entertain your players.

- **Lazarus Redux:** Lazarus Redux is a new entry in the afterlife service provider industry. This section introduces this new ally, focal point and plot driver.

- **Freedom Fighters:** This section lets the characters know they're not in this alone. Other factions have noticed the rising Spectre activity, and they are mobilizing. This section details four crucibles the characters may meet in their travels.

- **Ghost Stories:** This tells stories through which the characters can learn more about the world, discover allies and test their skills.

IT'S A WHOLE NEW WORLD

WHO THE CHARACTERS ARE NOW

The world is changing around the characters, whether they like it or not. The crucible began as agents for Orpheus: a very serious, business-minded organization with loads of intel (and more than a few dark secrets of its own). Uriah Bishop, through NextWorld, attacked and destroyed Orpheus, leaving the characters orphaned, adrift and on the run from private and government organizations. Now, the crucible is regaining its footing and coming into

its own as an entity with which to reckon. In **Shadow Games**, the crucible learns a great deal about the real menace to its safety: Uriah Bishop. It also uncovers the existence of Grandmother, a massive chthonic entity inhabiting the lands of the dead.

To survive **Shadow Games** and the upcoming supplements, the crucible must arm itself with information and forge alliances with like-minded ghosts, projectors and crucibles. It must evolve from operating as an isolated, self-interested unit to acting as the potential leader of a movement. A coalition against entropy is forming, and the crucible is poised to become its nucleus. Your challenge, as Storyteller, is to subtly guide the character down this path by providing them with opportunities to flex their muscles in the new roles you want them to fill.

WHAT THE CHARACTERS DO

Of course, the crucible needs reasons to pursue the leads you've crafted for them. How can you encourage the characters to become proactively involved in assuming control of their destinies? You must let them know that their continued survival depends on gathering information about what's happening and whom they can count on in a pinch. Here are some possibilities for jumpstarting the characters to this direction:

- **Radio Free Death Broadcasts:** Terrence Green is broadcasting juicy tidbits of information whenever he can to anyone with the good sense to tune in. He provides the easiest way of dropping hooks into the crucible's lap. If you don't have another means established already, have the characters catch one of his broadcasts. Green can also play matchmaker, setting up meetings between the characters' crucible and supporting characters. You can also send crucibles on missions by having Green broadcast special requests to the characters or even have him contact the crucible in person.

Why is Green spreading information and matching people up? Because he was there for the previous Spectre invasion and suspects the same thing will happen again. If another Spectre assault happens and no one's prepared for it, Green knows that the hereafter will be an even bleaker place than it already is (assuming anyone survives to see it). The best way to avoid a grisly fate is to organize a strong resistance movement. Green has a vested interest in bringing the different crucibles together, and he'll encourage the characters to do likewise.

On a final note, Green is not interested in acting as the movement's leader. There are many people, living and deceased, gunning for him. He doesn't want the movement to suffer because of its associations with him. Secondly, Green is not interested in becoming a leader. He feels he can accomplish more operating from the



shadows, which is why he needs the members of the crucible to step in and act as the movement's directors.

• **Precognitive Nightmares:** Grandmother draws close to the lands of mortals, brushing against the Stormwall like a cat scratching at the door. Her presence disturbs the living, twisting the dreams of those individuals sensitive to spiritual resonances, turning their sleep into hellish and frightening visions of the macabre.

These nightmares are not solely the domain of supporting characters. Crucible members can appreciate Grandmother's touch, too. If the crucible consists of passive characters who need constant prodding, then it's time to hit them with a little motivational foreshadowing. Dreams involving a shared dark fate can inspire characters to try to avert their impending misfortunes. When they investigate matters, the characters can meet other spooks comparable in ability to themselves, and you can set the plot in motion. Begin by running the crucible through a mini-story set in the character's dreams, but don't let the players know that it's a dream sequence shared by the crucible. Start with the characters awakening and going through their morning routines, and allow the day to progress accordingly. Over the day, insert bits of malevolent oddness (think *Jacob's Ladder*). Now is the time to remind your players about all the plot hints you dropped and they ignored. Gradually, build the dream to the horrible fate awaiting them as the reward for their inaction. For example, if the characters ignored Green's warnings about an emerging hive in the area, run a story where bands of marauding Spectres based out of the ignored hive pick off the characters and the supporting cast. Start by eliminating unimportant supporting characters, then Background related contacts, allies, etc. Work your way up to attacking the crucible itself in a massive ambush. If you kill a character or two, it's okay — it'll get their attention. Remember, it's a dream sequence, so you don't have to hold anything back.

At the end of the dream, the characters awaken, with everything the way it should be. Yeah, it's a cliché, but if you run it fair and square, then your crucible should realize the gravity of its situation and, hopefully, tackle the leads of which you've provided and reminded them. This brings up an important point: Don't use this approach unless the characters already know (or learned about) the steps necessary to avert their projected fate. If you run a "dream sequence of doom" without offering the characters some way of averting it in reality, it'll just frustrate and demoralize them, transforming it from a handy plot device into a cheap shock just there to upset players.

• **Hostages:** Does the crucible have one or more sleepers? Does anyone keep watch over their bodies when they're projecting? Think of how alarming it would be if you came back to reenter your body, only to find it missing or the cryo-sleep unit it's in rigged with

explosives with a ransom note glued to the cradle? If the characters can't safely secure their bodies, then another faction might kidnap the sleepers (who can't ripcord back to their flesh) and use them to extort services from the characters. Any faction that does this must expect the characters to refuse an unreasonable request.

Federal agents who have been tracking the crucible since **Crusade of Ashes** work nicely here, if the events in **Shades of Gray** remain unresolved. What would federal agents want with the crucible? Perhaps a deep-cover agent investigating the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost missed her last three debriefings. In this situation, they need the crucible's help to extract their operative or to uncover her fate. The feds provide the crucible with "up-to-date" intel concerning the cult's resources and the main compound's layout. Unfortunately, "up-to-date" means the information is a month old. Aside from wanting their bodies back, the crucible will likely comply because it will want to find out more about the cult, anyway.

Perhaps the feds aren't involved in this instance. Maybe it's a well-informed pigment gang that's kidnaped the bodies, instead. The gang doesn't like how Bishop's cult is horning in on its territory, and it has kidnaped the characters' bodies because the gang wants the crucible to sabotage the cult's operations. Another, open-ended option is that the bodies are simply missing, with the reasons a mystery to be resolved at a later date. The metaplot certainly has likely candidates in this instance, though the investigation to uncover the bodies may certainly prove frustrating for the players whose characters are affected.

Regardless of the culprits' identities, if the group holding the bodies is more powerful than the crucible, this gives the characters a great reason to look outside their immediate circle for help. Lazarus Redux or allied crucibles could give the characters a hand in retrieving their bodies. Once the crucible has its prized possessions back, it'll owe the people who assisted it a big favor. Having characters seek out allies for assistance, as well as the favor they'll owe later, provides you an opening to guide the crucible to whatever plot element you need them to uncover.

• **Cult Rescue:** At least one character should have a contact or an emotionally significant supporting character. The next time the crucible tries to contact that person, the characters discover he hasn't been at home for several weeks. Further investigation reveals that folks last saw him with a known recruiter for the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost. The same recruiter works the local subways and public parks, handing out pamphlets and proselytizing for the cult. Contacting him directly offers very little information about the missing supporting character but an eager invitation to



attend an open house. If the crucible does force an answer from the recruiter, he only introduced the supporting character to his training mentor at the cult. Ultimately, the crucible must confront the cult directly, either through infiltration or ghostly assault. Before this, however, a clever crucible has plenty of work to do with gathering as much information as possible about the Missionary Works' resources and defenses. This brings the crucible into contact with other projectors and crucibles with similar interests, leading to a potential team-up.

If you can't find a reasonable way for the contact to be involved in Bishop's cult, then perhaps a loved one of the contact falls into the cult's grasp instead. The contact needs the crucible's help to rescue his loved one. If the crucible refuses, then the contact goes to the police, who can do nothing since it isn't a kidnaping, and finally tries to rescue the new cultist himself. The contact vanishes after that.

The danger behind the crucible ignoring the contact's plea for help is that Uriah Bishop and his minions can use information they extract from the contact against the crucible. With said data, Bishop can eliminate the characters' resources or associates that the contact knows about. Bishop can even use the contact to ambush the crucible or to track the crucible back to its lair.

• **Hive Proliferation:** Spectre attacks have always been a danger of conducting business in the hereafter, but they were easy enough to avoid if you had half a clue and kept your wits about you. Now, hive blisters appear across the city like an ethereal cancer run amok. Not surprisingly, Spectre activity is increasing proportionately. And where there's violence and despair, the danger of encountering hungry Spectres hangs heavy. Odds are that a new hive is somewhere nearby as well.

This has a direct impact on the safety and well-being of the crucible and the supporting characters with whom it shares the world. Traveling in the hereafter is now more dangerous, and any spook traveling alone is asking for trouble. This sudden increase in hives and Spectral activity should pique the crucible's curiosity. Why are the hives proliferating, and what steps can the characters pursue to stop it? Their best bet is to network and consult an expert. Good options are Terrence Green, a veteran projector at Lazarus Redux or a local rumor mill contact.

Terrence Green advises the crucible to infiltrate the Missionary Works and learn more about what's going on there. He's sure there's a link between Uriah Bishop, the Spectres and the hives, but he doesn't know enough to be certain. Bishop has too many Spectres guarding his facilities for it to be sheer coincidence, and Green knows that most of the pigment in town stems from Bishop's cult.





As for the veteran projector option (the best bets might be Kate Dennison or Annie Harper), the vet can introduce the crucible to a fringe scientist friend who can project. This scientist has a theory on the nature of the hives and why they're proliferating, but to verify her hypothesis, she needs the crucible's help. She believes the hives are a cancer or supernatural tumor related to the Spectres. However, she needs the crucible to retrieve fresh samples of hive gauze from a hive's inner walls. With the samples, she'll can run tests and offer the crucible some hard answers.

The final avenue of the local rumor mill directs the crucible to a group of supporting characters the players' characters haven't met before. This group should have answers to some of the crucible's questions. Conveniently, the group and its answers just happen to be the same one that you've written the next story around.

• **The Ghost-Quake:** The principle story in **Shadow Games** is the appearance of a building that rips through the Shroud from somewhere in the Shadowlands, creating a ghost-quake when it collides with two skyscrapers in the tangible world. The event is large enough that the crucible is either involved in the matter or its members heard about it almost immediately from other ghosts. The crucible should have several resulting questions as a result: Where did the building come from? What's inside it? How did it get here? The characters will probably go to the ghost-quake site and investigate it without any prodding from you.

If the characters don't leap on the bait and you need to visit the site, have John Carruthers from Lazarus Redux contact them. John offers them a contract as a backup squad for one of Lazarus' veteran projectors. The mission is a basic exploration and fumigation mission. The crucible is to explore the crash site and eliminate any Spectres it encounters. If the crucible performs well on this mission, then Lazarus Redux will offer it more interesting and lucrative contracts, as well as access to some of Lazarus' resources. Through the social scene at Lazarus Redux, the crucible can meet all sorts of interesting people and crucibles.

WHY THE CHARACTERS STAY TOGETHER

Your crucible probably weathered enough adversity by now to understand the need to stick together. You might be starting a new chronicle at this point, however, or the characters might (erroneously) believe their recent woes have passed, allowing them to go back to their old lives. There are many good reasons for the crucible to stay together, but the two simplest ones are safety and power.

PROTECTION FROM SPECTRES

How does sticking together keep the characters safe? Spectre hives proliferate everywhere, not only in the chronicle's city, but across the globe. Likewise, the level of Spectre activity is also on the rise. Terrence Green, on his Radio Free Death broadcasts, relates more and more reports concerning Spectre attacks. Choosing to go it alone in an environment such as this is tantamount to suicide. How do you convey this to the characters without telling them directly? Perhaps they hear about attacks when they chat with other projectors. Perhaps a Spectre attacked a friend or contact, who barely survived to tell the tale. Increase the number of random Spectre attacks against the crucible when it is off on missions. If a character decides to go off on his own, even after all of these warnings, then let him. Once he's away from the crucible, attack him with Spectres, pummel him all to heck, but allow him to escape... perhaps barely. If the character insists on venturing away from the crucible, thereby forcing the Storyteller to devote more time to him alone, ask the player make a new character and introduce it to the crucible. Bring his old character back in three sessions for a cameo... as a Spectre. This sends a strong message: Lone ghosts and projectors are doomed. It also stops selfish players from occupying too much Storyteller time.

PHYSICAL PROTECTION

The characters also need to worry about hazards in the real world. When they're projecting, who's protecting their bodies? If they're sleepers, they're especially vulnerable and need loads of bulky equipment to boot. Aside from Spectres skin-jacking their bodies, the characters should also worry about the people they've upset in the flesh. There might be a lingering threat from government agents and Death Merchants looking to interrogate, recruit or eliminate the crucible's members. In **Shadow Games**, the threat from cults such as the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost grows very, very real. If the dangers of the hereafter don't nail a lone spook, odds are good that a real world threat will. If the crucible isn't protecting its material assets, a small event can remind the characters of their vulnerability. You can also use the missions from later in this chapter to target the crucible's bodies and material possessions.

STICKING TOGETHER HAS ITS "BENEFITS"

The crucible's members have been together long enough to realize the advantages of using their Horror's Benefits for one another. Later in this chapter, you'll meet Adrian and Tameka, members of the same crucible. Adrian is a Poltergeist, and Tameka a Banshee. Individually, they're impressive, about as competent as



the characters themselves. As a team, with the other members of their crucible, they're fearsome. Tameka uses Wail from a distance, while Adrian uses Helter Skelter's Benefit (+2 Vitality) to help her. In close combat, Adrian molds a weapon with Congeal while Tameka uses Forebode's Benefit (eliminate two from action difficulties) to ensure his success. Like Adrian and Tameka, the characters should already have "killer combos" of their own. The crucible is far more powerful together than its members are separately. If your crucible hasn't reached this conclusion yet, then introduce them to Adrian, Tameka and the rest of their crucible. Show your players' crucible these supporting characters in action, eliminating a Spectre hive that the characters intended to handle. Once they see how much more effective Benefits can be to group cohesion, they may stick together with no prompting from the Storyteller.

The crucible also accumulates material power and contacts by remaining a unit, allowing the characters to maintain their effectiveness and, thereby, enhance their reputation. The crucible develops a rep for possessing certain skill sets, which, in turn, puts them in far greater demand than they would be as individuals. Aside from pursuing individual goals and improving themselves, the members of the crucible may hope to accumulate material wealth and to gain access to resources and information concerning the background events driving the story. Each of these is a form of power, and the characters' best hope toward accomplishing this is to work as a team and to network with other crucibles and organizations. By rewarding team effort through cash, goods, resources, contacts, secrets and status, you'll teach your crucible that working as a unit pays off.

PLAYING NICE WITH OTHERS

Having the crucible stick together and work as a team is one thing, but convincing the characters to open their crucible to new characters is another. We've already established that the crucible has wants and needs that it can't fulfill from within. We also know that, even though its members are very capable and creative, the crucible has limitations to what it can accomplish. Whenever your characters encounter an obstacle that they can't overcome with the available resources, they will have to look outside the group. For the crucible to reach out to other groups or organizations, you must bring these needs to the fore without making the crucible feel ineffective or weak. Here are some strategies to accomplishing this task.

First, introduce the crucible to trustworthy supporting characters. It's okay for some supporting characters to have secret agendas, but don't overdo it. If various persona betray and backstab the crucible at every turn,

then the characters will never look outside themselves for assistance (with good reason), and you'll be stuck. Terrence Green, Lazarus Redux and the sample crucibles presented later in this chapter are perfect for incorporating into your chronicle as reliable allies for your crucible to turn to in a pinch. Make sure the characters observe the strengths and weaknesses of the supporting characters introduced, so they'll know how to tap them in the future.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS AS BACKUP

Your crucible needs a reason to ally itself with an outside force. When you set up a story, you should incorporate scenes and events that play to a supporting character's strengths so long as it doesn't relegate the crucible to secondary consideration. Say the crucible has to crack really tough security, but the group has no relevant Abilities. That leaves them with three choices: Abort the mission, find a way around the obstacle or ask a supporting character or group for help. If you introduced the crucible to a trustworthy security expert two or three sessions ago, then there's a good chance it will give her a call for help now. If the characters don't and take the hard way around the obstacle, don't panic and force the group's hand. You want the crucible to cooperate with other groups of its own volition. Don't force it on the characters.

A related ploy is to deprive the crucible of a critical piece of information or research that the characters know is in the hands of a supporting character. Perhaps one of the supporting crucibles has clinical information concerning the nature of gauze and Spectre hive material. If the crucible needs intel on hives and knows that a supporting crucible has this information, then it's likely to consult the supporting crucible to fill in the gaps. Of course, information and support are rarely free, and paying the piper is usually a story in itself. Even if the person helps without asking for anything, the characters still have a debt hanging over their heads, which you can use as a plot hook in the future.

The crucible may need help in the middle of a story. Characters, being the adventurous sort, frequently place themselves in danger. Sometimes they'll bite off more than they can chew. With some foresight, they may even realize they're about to enter a situation they aren't equipped to handle. When the crucible is in a tight spot and failure isn't an option, its best bet is to seek assistance from another person or group. If you establish that a supporting character or crucible is always ready for action (such as Lazarus Redux or Adrian and Tameka's crucible), that allows the characters to call on them for help in a pinch. It also enables the crucible to work with other groups, demonstrating the advantages of cooperation.



Naturally, the crucible can network with supporting characters beyond the “save me” syndrome. The crucible may try to pick up extra cash by working for a client or to earn karmic credit for a future favor from a contact or to purchase an artifact from a contact or to acquire specialized training or to gain access to resources that are unique to a supporting character. If the crucible is composed of paranoid sociopaths who never consult with supporting characters, however, then stop being subtle. If the crucible won’t seek out other groups, then have other groups contact the crucible. Maybe the characters meet a supporting persona at the request of a respected signature character, such as Terrence Green or a prominent figure at Lazarus Redux. The request can be to deliver a message or a package, to provide assistance or protection on a mission or even to meet the crucible. In the latter case, the supporting characters heard so much about the crucible’s exploits and expertise that they want to meet the characters in person. If the characters are reluctant to meet up with others, playing to their pride and ego is a sure-fire way to involve them.

There are abundant reasons why your crucible might seek outside help. You simply have to let the characters know who’s out there for them to ask for help.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

You can (gently) force changes on your players, but you don’t have to alter your chronicle just because this book tells you to. Perhaps you want to incorporate the ghost-quake and the cult raids, but you’re still running a chronicle where Orpheus Group survived? Perhaps the characters are still on the run, with Death Merchants and feds in hot pursuit? No problem.

ORPHEUS GROUP

If Orpheus Group is still active, it’ll focus on the following issues:

- **Ghost-Quake:** The contracts flow in from the affected area, given the levels of Spectral contamination. Orpheus Group wants to fumigate all the local Spectres, meaning loads of juicy contract opportunities for the crucible. Orpheus is also curious about the ghost building and sends agents on-site ASAP to monitor the situation and report on developments. Simultaneously, it negotiates with the owners of the impaled buildings to draw up and sign “Fumigation and Removal” contracts. With the contract in tow, Orpheus will coordinate efforts for the eradication of the Spectres and the study of the tower (if the Department of Homeland Security hasn’t already stepped in).

Orpheus management is determined to acquire sole rights to this contract, so they will underbid and eliminate any competitors, even at a considerable loss. They want exclusivity relating to the projected research data to be gathered, and they also want any and all artifacts their teams can scavenge from the ghost building. They

expect (and rightly so) that the structural material will provide significant insight into the nature of the hereafter. The potential for military contracts alone is tremendous — the ghost building is the ultimate in stealth technology, with any spectral craft built from the material to earn Orpheus Group billions of dollars.

- **Hive Proliferation:** Increased Spectre activity may be good for business, but it’s awful for agent survival. Orpheus creates several special task-force teams to determine the reasons behind the hive proliferation. Ultimately, it wants to capture a nascent hive and send in a research team. Thus, capturing a hive is paramount — and dangerous, since wave after wave of Spectres assault the crucible and researchers without mercy. The crucible must protect the research team until it withdraws with samples. However, the researchers and the characters should quickly come to realize that the hive seems to be constantly growing new Spectres. Once the crucible or the researchers realize this, the mission changes from study and acquisition to sterilization of the hive. Orpheus Group pulls the research team out and provides the crucible with teams of Banshees, Poltergeists and Wisps to eradicate the hive completely. While Orpheus Group campaigns to eliminate the hives, its research group works frantically to determine the hives’ nature.

- **The Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost:** Orpheus eventually discovers that Uriah Bishop is in charge of the Missionary Works. It also knows how incredibly dangerous he is. Its plan is to learn all it can, then to discredit his cult in the public eye while attacking him directly in the hereafter. The goal: Destroy Uriah Bishop. This is strictly a black-ops job, so the crucible should either really hate Bishop or have no qualms about performing assassinations.

Before starting the slander campaign and sending in the brute squad, Orpheus hopes to accumulate information about the layout of the Missionary Works compound and its security measures. If the crucible is suited for this kind of work, then give them the assignment. If Orpheus Group does not use the crucible to gather intel, then Orpheus provides details on all the mundane physical defenses in the facility but not very much data on the Missionary Works’ intangible defenses, save that the mission’s borders are guarded by Spectres of sorts. All agents sent to infiltrate the Missionary Works’ compound before the crucible does will not report back or return. This fact only heightens Orpheus’ need to remove Bishop and disband the cult.

THE FEDS AND THE DEATH MERCHANTS

What if Orpheus Group is gone and the crucible is still fleeing the feds and the Death Merchants? How will the FBI, the CIA and the NSA react to the events in **Shadow Games**?



- **The FBI:** Whether the FBI is simply interested in pursuing the mandates of its charter or in bringing projector technology under the Bureau's belt, the ghost-quake will concern it (and, by this point, the feds should have a minimum of one or two projectors working for them). If the feds discover an accumulation of projectors in the pigment cults and the Missionary Works, then the FBI will try to shut the cults down as well. Compared to the ghost-quake disturbance and the cults, and with the media's waning attention, pursuing the crucible probably isn't worth the effort anymore. The FBI may even approach the crucible and try to recruit it for two missions: investigating the ghost-quake and infiltrating the cults.

The FBI's primary concern about the ghost-quake is to ascertain whether it was a terrorist attack or just some strange, random act. Once the Bureau establishes that it was a freak accident, it will likely try to obtain samples of the ghostly building material. The only thing that might sway the Bureau's opinion would be the increase in Spectres and Spectre hives that follow the ghost-quake. If these incidents are linked together, then the FBI may ask the crucible to determine the nature of the link and determine how to reverse the trend.

In relation to the pigment cults, the FBI is worried about the domestic security threat posed by large fringe groups, especially those with supernatural powers. Its goal in infiltrating the cults is to determine their abilities, to gather the intel it needs to turn the media and popular opinion against the groups and then to take the cults down.

- **The DEA:** The DEA's primary concern is to dismantle the pigment network. Terrence Green knows that the cults and Terrel & Squib (if still active) are dealing and using pigment. He can leak this information to the crucible to use as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the DEA. Either way, this allows the crucible to turn the DEA from enemies into "friendlies," if they aren't allied already.

The DEA wants solid evidence on Terrel & Squib and the cults. It'll try to recruit the crucible to gather intel on each group, one at a time. The DEA tasks the characters with infiltrating the groups in disguise or incorporeally. Chapter Two and the Ghost Story "Hunger" (pp. 154-157) in this chapter provide details of the Missionary Works' security, while you can use Orpheus security as a template for Terrel & Squib, along with the T&S data from the core book.

The DEA is unconcerned about the ghost-quake and the proliferation of hives and Spectres. It will not take any steps to investigate or counter them.

- **The NSA and its Death Merchants:** The NSA's goal is to eliminate the loose ends created by Orpheus' demise. Consequently, the ghost-quake, hive prolifera-

tion and the Missionary Works aren't of consequence to the NSA. The only thing it cares about is eliminating the characters or any surviving Orpheus intel. Conversely, if the crucible survived thus far and remains ignorant of Orpheus' connection to the government (or the NSA's machinations), then the NSA may try to recruit the crucible for covert-ops work. After all, it's the NSA's business to know what's happening in the USA.

A NEW BEGINNING

So, a new player wants to join in on the fun. But how can you work her character into the plot without making it seem contrived? More importantly, why should the crucible accept her into its group? If the new player and you work toward creating a character history that's tightly integrated with your chronicle's background, introducing her is not only easy, but also great for involving the crucible in all the juicy new plots you want to lay on it. To ensure character integration goes smoothly, the new character must fill gaps in the crucible's Trait sets. Indoctrinating a newbie should also expand the crucible's opportunities or bring it a step closer to resolving its unanswered questions. Fortunately, this is easy to do. If the player works with you, there are many ways to incorporate these requirements into a new character's concept.

LAZARUS' LIAISON

The most obvious and simple way to introduce a character involves Lazarus Redux. The new character can be a Lazarus Redux member, perhaps acting as a liaison between the crucible and Lazarus Redux if the crucible remains independent of that organization. While John Carruthers acts as liaison and contact between Lazarus Redux and other crucibles, the new character can be Carruthers' assistant (or can replace Carruthers as liaison), delivering contracts and jobs to the crucible or joining them as ambassador. The new character runs with the team as an official representative of Lazarus Redux, which might offer access to some of its resources in return. This provides you a great opportunity to give the crucible a tour of the Lazarus Redux complex, introducing (or reintroducing) them to the key figures. It also facilitates offering the crucible missions and requests from Lazarus Redux in the future. If the crucible maintains good relations with Lazarus Redux and its ambassador, it may have the later opportunity to "move in" to the Lazarus Redux complex and use it as a base of operations.

ONE GOOD TURN...

There's also Terrence Green. Of all the supporting characters, Green is the man with the plan, the ghost with the goods who's plugged into what's unfolding in the hereafter. It's easy enough for him to introduce the crucible to the new character. Green may ask the crucible to "show



the new guy the ropes” as a favor to him. In return, Green owes the crucible a favor. He can provide information about specific things the crucible needs or arrange an introduction between the characters and a particular supporting persona. This is another great opening to drop some plot into the characters’ laps.

The crucible may wonder, “Why is Green so interested in the safekeeping of this person, and why did he choose us to take him?” This isn’t a terribly sticky question, but be prepared to answer it in case the players probe for a response. A few possible reasons might be: Green is repaying a favor he owes someone else, Green believes the new character needs guidance that only an experienced group like the crucible can provide, or Green believes this new character will complement the crucible well.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

How about Orpheus Group? The organization’s been dismembered and scattered to the winds, but who says the characters were the only ones who survived when everything went to hell? The new character may be an ex-Orpheus operative only now coming out of hiding. There may be several reasons why she is reemerging after all this time. They include: There are significant disturbances in the hereafter with all the hives appearing and Spectre activity on the rise. It’s a dangerous time to be alone with no one covering your back. The new character may have been keeping her distance and watching the crucible since she, herself, is not being hunted. She was just waiting until the heat and the media attention cooled off a bit. In that vein, the characters have been running from the feds and the Death Merchants for a while, trying to keep a low profile. It could have taken the new character this long to track down the crucible.

These backstory options give the new player plenty of selections for engaging character concepts. Aside from being a projector or a ghost, was she trained in any other Orpheus-related skills, such as implementing Spectral intrusion countermeasures or maintaining and repairing sleeper cradles? You can introduce new story hooks by giving the character access to Orpheus files and dossiers the crucible didn’t know existed or forgot about. Additionally, where did the new character hide until now? The answer makes another great mini plot: If Spectres forced the new character to flee her bolt hole, she may need the crucible to help her evict the interlopers. In return, the crucible gains access to old Orpheus records, locations of hidden sleeper cradles and a relatively secure place to stash its stuff.

For an added twist, the new character could be formerly affiliated with Terrel & Squib or NextWorld, providing the crucible with another point of view.

SEND IN THE CULTS

In *Shadow Games*, the characters uncover the real danger presented by the Missionary Works and its agenda. The cult has tendrils of influence threaded through mortal and ghostly affairs. It deliberately anchors unwitting souls to the hereafter with pigment as sacrifices for the Spectres, and its mortal influence grows daily with more people seeking answers to their nightmares and concerns. Although it’s rare, some of those who join the cults do defect (or are rescued by a deprogramming team). Introducing a former cult member as a new character offers you an easy way to introduce cult-related plots, while simultaneously giving the crucible someone armed with tremendous insight into the cults. What role did the former cultist play in the cult, and why did he leave? Was he a lay member seeking answers to his disturbing nightmares or someone more important in the hierarchy who learned a little too much about pigment? Both character concepts add valuable information and skills to the crucible — though a disadvantage with the latter character concept is that the cult will try to “rescue” its wayward lamb and bring him back into the fold. Has the new character used pigment? If he has and he knows what it does, then he may seek out the crucible for assistance in averting his nasty fate.

Bear in mind that a former cultist doesn’t have to be a doomed soul or a tortured dupe. The cults are social organizations and, as such, require bookkeepers, janitors, lawyers... essentially your standard array of support personnel. These people still know plenty about the cult’s day-to-day operations. This kind of knowledge is invaluable when infiltrating the cult for a rescue or sabotage mission.

PENANCE FOR SINS

Perhaps the new character is a reformed pigment dealer. After slinging the drug for a while, she suspects she’s handling something more than just another hallucinogenic or heroin variant. She kept track of the new “out-of-body” technologies and knows about the visions brought on by pigment usage. Matching similarities between the two tells her that things are not what they seem to be. Now, she’s looking for someone to bring her up to speed. She wants to set things right and repair the damage she’s inflicted, but she needs a little help along the way. That’s where the crucible comes in.

The new character’s strengths relate to her dealings with Uriah Bishop’s network, and she has a fair bit of knowledge about the workings of the cults. She also knows many pigment users and dealers, so she can guide the crucible to those souls in jeopardy, perhaps helping to save her former clients from a cruel fate. If the new character hasn’t stopped dealing pigment yet, then she may still have strong ties to her drug contacts in the cults or on the streets, which provides the characters with all sorts of useful back doors.



THIS IS NOT MY IDEA OF A GOOD TIME

The new character was to be a cult sacrifice, but he escaped his captors and Spectral watchdogs before they could drag him, kicking and screaming, to the altar. Since the Missionary Works does not perform live human sacrifices (instead encouraging ritual suicide in some members), it's important to note that the new character should be a ghost and is likely a former pigment user (and, thus, a hue). Perhaps the new character seeks out the crucible because he's understandably miffed about how the cult treated him and wants revenge (or wants to return and save others from the fate he avoided).

The advantage for the crucible is that the new character knows a lot about the cult's true mission and its connection to the Spectres, if not to Grandmother herself. The new character understands the mundane and arcane abilities of the cultists and their unearthly security. This information should prove valuable if the crucible assaults or infiltrates the Missionary Works — making it worth the crucible's while to accept the new character.

ROLLIN' WITH THE HOMIES

For this to work, a character must have a cherished supporting character or contact, whom the Storyteller

can incorporate as the new character. However, the player who created the supporting character may initially have very specific ideas about how that particular supporting character should be roleplayed. If this proves a problem, it's easy enough to circumvent.

Supporting characters also have friends and relatives, one of whom might serve well as the new crucible member. The supporting character approaches the crucible and asks it to take the new character under its wing. Since the supporting character is either a contact who's provided the crucible with help previously or someone especially favored by the characters, this favor is a difficult one to refuse.

This character background is advantageous in its flexibility with Abilities and history. Unfortunately, this character offers very little immediate benefit, except to offer roleplaying opportunities. Regardless, there are other ways to incorporate a new character into the action. When working with a player to introduce a new character, keep two things in mind. First, this persona should fill "Trait gaps" in the crucible with Abilities, Backgrounds, Horrors or information the crucible's current members do not possess. Secondly, the crucible should receive some immediate or foreseeable benefit from accepting the new character, such as knowledge, social status, an artifact, a favor or a reduction in favors owed. With these potential advantages, you eliminate



your crucible's reasonable, in-character blockades to allowing new, relatively unknown individuals its midst.

ANATOMY OF ADVENTURE, OR HOW TO RUN A CHRONICLE

In *Shadow Games*, the characters can become part of a movement larger than themselves. As such, they may receive requests, assignments or friendly advice from supporting characters and organizations. You can use these tools to provide your crucible with the background information it needs to participate in upcoming storylines. In this regard, specific contacts, groups and hooks include: Terrence Green (now in supposed regular contact with the crucible), the signature characters operating through Lazarus Redux (see below), allied crucibles trying to establish a network (partially tied to Green and Lazarus Redux) and even old Orpheus files that surface with greater disclosure on incidents or characters from the past (such as Uriah Bishop).

EXISTING STORY HOOKS

As mentioned earlier, the Storyteller's best mouthpiece is Terrence Green. If he isn't already doing so, he'll try to maintain regular contact with the crucible. If you're careful not to overuse him, then he becomes doubly advantageous to the crucible as support and morale. First, he can offer juicy information and hot leads that no one else has access to. As the crucible's information pipeline, this should buoy the characters' egos quite a bit. Second, Terrence Green is a celebrity of sorts in the spook community through his Radio Free Death broadcasts. He's a celebrity with a multitude of contacts and immense resources, and he's taking the time and energy to seek out and chat with the crucible. This means he believes the crucible to be important, which should be another ego boost. So long as you keep Green in reserve for the really big plot hooks, you can be pretty sure the crucible will take what he says to heart and act upon it.

Just behind Green in popularity are the signature characters at Lazarus Redux. Although not as well known as Green in-game, the signature characters are listed in the *Orpheus* books. If you ask, you're certain to find that each player has a favorite signature character. This means each player's character is likelier to be disposed toward accepting advice and guidance from that particular supporting character. If you need to relate some intel to the crucible but it's not urgent enough to use Terrence Green to reveal it, perhaps

someone such as John Carruthers approaches the characters and arranges their meeting with one of their favorite signature characters in Lazarus Redux's conference room. Alternately, Carruthers presents them with a contract and lets it slip that their favorite signature character is overseeing the mission and providing the briefing. Either way, you'll get the players hooked into the plot and eager to know more.

If the crucible is tired of being told where to go and what to do by the supporting characters, then perhaps a representative from another crucible approaches them. Later in this chapter, you'll meet four crucibles. Each one has different needs, goals and aptitudes, and each one has several potential reasons for reaching out to the crucible to exchange information or to seek help. The crucible might seek training, protection or information it believes the characters possess, or perhaps it's just being friendly. If none of these reasons fits well, then perhaps the characters bump into one of the crucibles at a commonly frequented place such as Lazarus Redux or Spooky Brews, the nearby coffeehouse. Alternately, the two crucibles can meet up while they explore the ghostly tower responsible for the ghost-quake. Unlike the first two options, this "hook vector" relies on capturing the crucible's interest instead of issuing it a direct request.

The most engaging way to drop stories on characters also requires the most work from you: long-lost Orpheus files recently uncovered. The methods for introducing these files are numerous. The crucible can find them on its own, any of the three preceding plot catalysts can offer them to the characters, a contact might have the information or a new character has the required intel as part of her starting equipment. If you have some details prepped, lost Orpheus files make a great goal for a mission: "We recently discovered a map leading to an Orpheus safe house and record-storage facility on the edge of the city. Since you all worked for them, we figured you'd be interested in seeing what's there." The other handy thing about Orpheus records is that you can use them to drop nearly any kind of plot you want on the characters. You don't have to justify how Orpheus obtained the information (well... within reason), and you don't have to worry about the crucible endangering its interactions with the supporting character. It's probably the purest form of information dump you can use. It's also the most blatant, especially if the file the crucible obtains just happens to relate to the exact problem with which they're dealing. That's why it works better as foreshadowing for future plots or as a reminder of past plots that the crucible left hanging with loose ends.

ON THEIR OWN

All this assumes you must actually guide the group in the first place. The crucible can likely discover much on its own just by going out and investigating events. If



you mention, “There’s a great big ghost tower sticking out of two buildings downtown,” the likeliest reaction will be, “Keen! Let’s investigate.” Taken to the extreme, however, a proactive crucible can derail your carefully planned chronicle by pursuing aspects of the world you don’t want them chasing or by going after completely unrelated tangents.

So... how do you guide the crucible without letting the players know that you’re doing it? Don’t worry about keeping absolute control of the game. If the players are having fun, then you’re probably having fun too. If the crucible is caught up doing the “dungeon crawl, explore the ghost tower” thing but you really want them to go bust the cults wide open, don’t sweat it. Sate their dungeon-crawl fix before nudging their attention back to the primary plot. If you subtly integrate your plot with the characters’ goals instead of clubbing them over the head with it, then your chronicle flows more naturally, and the players are less likely to rebel against the path you’ve laid out for them.

Remember, the only way the players know what’s happening in the game world is through your Storytelling... and, well, reading this book, but let’s assume right now they’re keeping their noses where they should. If you don’t want the crucible venturing down a certain path, then don’t introduce plot elements leading them that way in the first place. If you don’t want the crucible investigating the ghost tower, then either have it erode rapidly after striking the buildings or just postpone the event for a later point in the chronicle. The corollary to this is to ensure that the plots you want the crucible pursuing are easy for them to access and highly visible. Remember that characters, like water and electricity, tend to follow the path of least resistance.

PURSUING GOALS

Speaking of making goals easier to access... if the crucible likes going to different places and the characters are interested in improving themselves, then that means they have goals they’re trying to reach. If your crucible has goals, you can place obstructions to those goals, thereby generating conflict (a necessary ingredient to any yarn). Aside from making the game entertaining by keeping it challenging, you can use these obstacles to bring the characters back to the main story thread. A few ways to keep a stray crucible focused on the principle story arc include the following.

- **Like a Moth to the Flame:** Hang a carrot in front of the group. If it’s pointed in the wrong direction, change the crucible’s course by baiting it with what it wants. If the crucible’s looking for information in the local bars and need to be hanging out at Lazarus Redux, then maybe a contact mentions that John Carruthers or another Lazarus Redux employee is the person to whom the characters should be talking. It’s just a matter of associating the goal they’re

pursuing with the plot elements with which you want them to come in contact.

- **Running with Scissors:** Threaten the crucible’s resources. If the crucible isn’t heeding a threat, then perhaps that threat should impact them directly. Endanger its contacts and resources. If the crucible wants to maintain its resources, then it must address the threat head-on. Another way to threaten resources is if another party, such as the cults, shares the same goals as the crucible but not its application. Thus, the aforementioned plot elements become automatic rivals by virtue of their goals. This forces the crucible to become interested in its rivals and to take steps to prevent them from succeeding. If these threats fail to motivate your players, then kick it up a notch and threaten the crucible directly. A less subtle plot, certainly, but it forces the crucible to act or to perish.

- **Prepackaged Fun:** Incorporate plot-associated scenes into what the crucible does. Say the crucible is to meet up with a contact to exchange information. The contact may set the meeting in a location where you want the characters to go. Does one of the locations listed later in this chapter pique your interest? Just drop it right in. The contact can then arrange a meeting with the crucible under a freeway, at the public pool or in the trailer of a partially completed condo. After the crucible is finished conducting its business, you can seamlessly segue into the plot associated with that setting.

- **Cause & Effect:** Weave “ripples” from world events into the surrounding background. While the crucible is off pursuing its own agenda, be sure to mention ghost-quake refugees they see while traveling. When they pass the impaled towers, take a moment to describe the silhouetted skyline. Mention the increase in Spectre activity — dark things with claws that drip ichor, flitting in the shadows and skittering among the rooftops looking for souls to reap. If you don’t remind the crucible that the world moves with or without them, the characters will forget all about it.

- **Yank Their Crank:** Pull their chains, and push their buttons. Every character either has a debt he owes someone or an obsession he can’t resist (such as a code of honor or an overwhelming hatred). If the crucible doesn’t go where you want it to, then give it a compelling reason to do so. If a character can’t tolerate the abuse of children, mention rumors of the recruitment and abuse of children among members of Uriah Bishop’s cult. Call in its debts by having contacts ask the crucible for favors. Contacts are a two-way street, so refusing to fulfill a contact’s request is a good way of quickly turning that hot lead cold.

READY-MADE LOCATIONS

It’s been a busy week, and you haven’t had time to prepare for tonight’s game. You need a plot for the evening that you can drop into the session and with



which you can run. Look no further. The following are seven locations that you'd find in almost any major metropolitan area, ready for play at a moment's notice. Each also has an affiliated story and a disembodied entity attached to it.

CLOVERLEAF UNDERBELLY

What do you want?

*Fuck off. I'm no goddamned secretary. I don't keep track of who's coming and going. *snk**

Look, you got a handkerchief or you just going to give me shit?

*Well, fuck you, then. *snk* I never heard of no Eye-Sack Hite, and even if I did, fuck you.*

Isaac. Whatever. I don't keep tabs on where he went. I don't care about him. Good riddance, I say. Don't let the door hit you on the ass, I say.

Fuck you, "What door?" He had a nice watch is all I know.

You're damn right, "and now it's mine." That's fair. All he ever did is eat, sleep and shit. And show off his fancy-ass watch.

*You know what? You're starting to annoy me. *snk* You're prettier than Isaac, but I bet you bleed just the same.*

Where you going?

A small clutch of Spectres nests under a highway cloverleaf. The sheltered area below is a popular spot for homeless people to congregate and make camp for the night. The Spectres deliberately stock the locale with little things they steal from passing trucks and cars to make it more appealing for homeless people to live there.

Teeming masses of humanity roar overhead in SUVs and 18-wheelers, zooming on interlaced ribbons of concrete and asphalt. Punks, vagrants and the homeless huddle underneath in the shelter created by the overpass, like the audience of a postmodern amphitheater. Makeshift shelters are scattered amidst beer bottles, discarded needles and abandoned tire scraps. It's cold and bleak and depressing. It reeks of exhaust and stagnant water. For people with nowhere else to go, it's home. A proto-hive (not large enough to manufacture defenses yet) hangs high above, stuck to the underside of the freeway, a giant hornets' nest under the limb of a concrete tree.

Five Spectres call the small hive home. They look like mottled-gray octopi with leathery, dappled bat wings and obsidian beaks. Usually, only two are active at a time, crawling about on the surface of the hive-nest or the highway's underbelly. Ironically, they're doing everything possible to make this shelter safe and convenient for vagrants. Occasionally, one skitters above to the freeway, grabs an item or two from a passing tractor-trailer or a traffic-stalled car and deposits it in the homeless camp below. The Spectres do this to bait people into setting roots here. The ambient misery and petty crimes of the locals are enough for them to subsist,



but the Spectres want more. They exert just enough energy to inspire jealousy, envy and anger and to let human nature do the rest. They've been here for seven months. So far, they've indirectly caused eight rapes, 23 violent assaults and six deaths. The residents don't leave because the best junk collects here, thanks to the Spectres, and it's relatively dry and warm. It's transient turf, and they're going to stay there.

Individually, the Spectres are weak. Even as a group, they're not terribly fearsome for a competent crucible, though they can be a nuisance. If attacked, the Spectres retreat to the hive-nest. If their attackers can still reach them, then they flee and find another overpass to build a new nest. It's easy to force these Spectres to relocate, but the characters must immobilize or obliterate the Spectres if they want to dispense with them permanently.

COLLECTORS

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Empathy 3

Nature: Deviant

Willpower: 4

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Flit, Limited-Manifest (two Spite tap only, which allows it to manipulate objects, "scratch" the living with one die of lethal damage or use Wail), Maw, Tentacles, Wail (but fueled by Spite to provoke avarice, envy, gluttony, lust, pride, sloth and wrath.)

BUTTONWOOD TOWERS

Sneaking off to get high, or breaking in to vandalize? Grace wasn't sure what the two teens were after, but their



furtive movements and trespassing convinced her to keep an eye on them. The unfinished eyesore of the Buttonwood condos created an appealing place for rendezvous and sundry transactions. Grace walked up the stairs, casting no noise in her state. She followed her charges up to the finished floors, but when the two boys held hands and kissed, Grace felt embarrassed. It wasn't her preference, but it wasn't her place either. Grace turned to leave.

She nearly bumped into a businessman coming up the stairs... a blip. He spoke with someone she couldn't see, gesticulating about ledgers and taxes. He walked past her. She waited, listening. A moment later, the room at the top of the stairs erupted. A man's voice, hoarse and distraught, screamed, "You bitch!" Objects crashed into the walls and clattered to the floor. Grace hurried back up the stairs.

In the center of the room, planks, nails and saw blades spun in a whirlwind of silver chords. The two teens, naked to the waist, sat on the floor clinging to each other. What was once a mild businessman now foamed and raged. His face was purple and bruised, and the cords stood out on his gauze neck. A circular saw plunged itself into the tender drywall. The enraged ghost picked up more tools nearby, more equipment to fling into the air.

Grace Ishida moved in to stop the rampage and protect the frightened lovers.

Erecting a building on a foundation of graft, corruption and greed is a less than auspicious way to begin a project. Shoving your partner off the topmost floor, dumping his corpse into the unfinished foundation, covering it in concrete, playing the sympathetic ear to his grieving widow and then marrying her a year later is a great way to build a haunted building.

Within two months of their partnership to build Buttonwood Towers, Garth Bennings decided he wanted Louis Fardman's wife. Never one for half-assed jobs, Bennings also figured he should assume full ownership of the condo as well. Sending Fardman flying seemed like a great way to kill two birds with one stone. Fardman's fury at his sudden and brutal demise, however, kept him here as a looping ghost, causing enough accidents to slow construction of the condo to a crawl.

Fardman's presence sends chills up people's spines, causes nail guns to misfire and distracts workers just long enough for them to lose an occasional finger or three. These persistent accidents prolong construction on Buttonwood Towers. After 21 months of work, it still remains unfinished.

Buttonwood Towers was to be a high-class 24-story condominium in the posh quarter of downtown, just a few blocks from the concert hall and neighboring exclusive restaurants. Composed of pink granite, burnished steel and rose-tinted glass, it would have inspired envy in anyone who lived elsewhere. In-

stead, Buttonwood Towers has become an unfinished eyesore. The lower 16 floors are mostly done, but the upper eight floors are exposed girders and drywall. The tower's peak juts into the skyline with steeple-like skeletal fingers. Bare bulbs in metal cages hang from unfinished ceilings, shedding harsh light; PVC piping pokes out of the floor randomly, waiting for a toilet, sink or appliance to settle on top of it; and the wind howls through the building, causing tarps to flap, wires to lash and flail about and the gaping mouths of pipes to whistle and moan.

Bennings knows he's being haunted, but he will never hire a supernatural investigator for fear of his crimes coming to light. Every day that passes means more money wasted, however, and Bennings isn't the project's only investor. Anxious to protect their assets, the bank underwriting the construction might hire a team from Lazarus Redux to investigate the building, if the Storyteller so chooses.

LOUIS FARDMAN

Louis Fardman wasn't the most upstanding businessman in the world. He'd doled out his fair share of bribes and kickbacks and, as such, should have known not to involve himself with Garth Bennings. Unfortunately, Bennings had the other half of the 20 million dollars necessary to complete the condominium, and he was willing to commit within the week. Construction began two months later, with completion time set in a year.

Eight months later, Bennings pushed Fardman off the unfinished 24th floor penthouse suite. Now Fardman's ghost is a blip roaming the halls of Buttonwood Towers. He starts in the basement, directly above where Bennings entombed his body, then walks up the stairwell, stopping at the ground floor to check the status of the plans in the office





trailer. He then wanders the building's halls building. Eventually, he arrives at the 24th floor, where he goes through his conversation with Bennings, walks over to the balcony to appreciate the view and falls to his "death." This cycle repeats continuously, interrupted only by the occasional tantrum.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Finance 3, Intrigue 2, Politics 1, Subterfuge 2

Shade: Poltergeist

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Conniver

Willpower: 3

Vitality: 3

Spite: 2

Offensive Abilities: Helter Skelter

THE 37TH STREET SUBWAY STATION

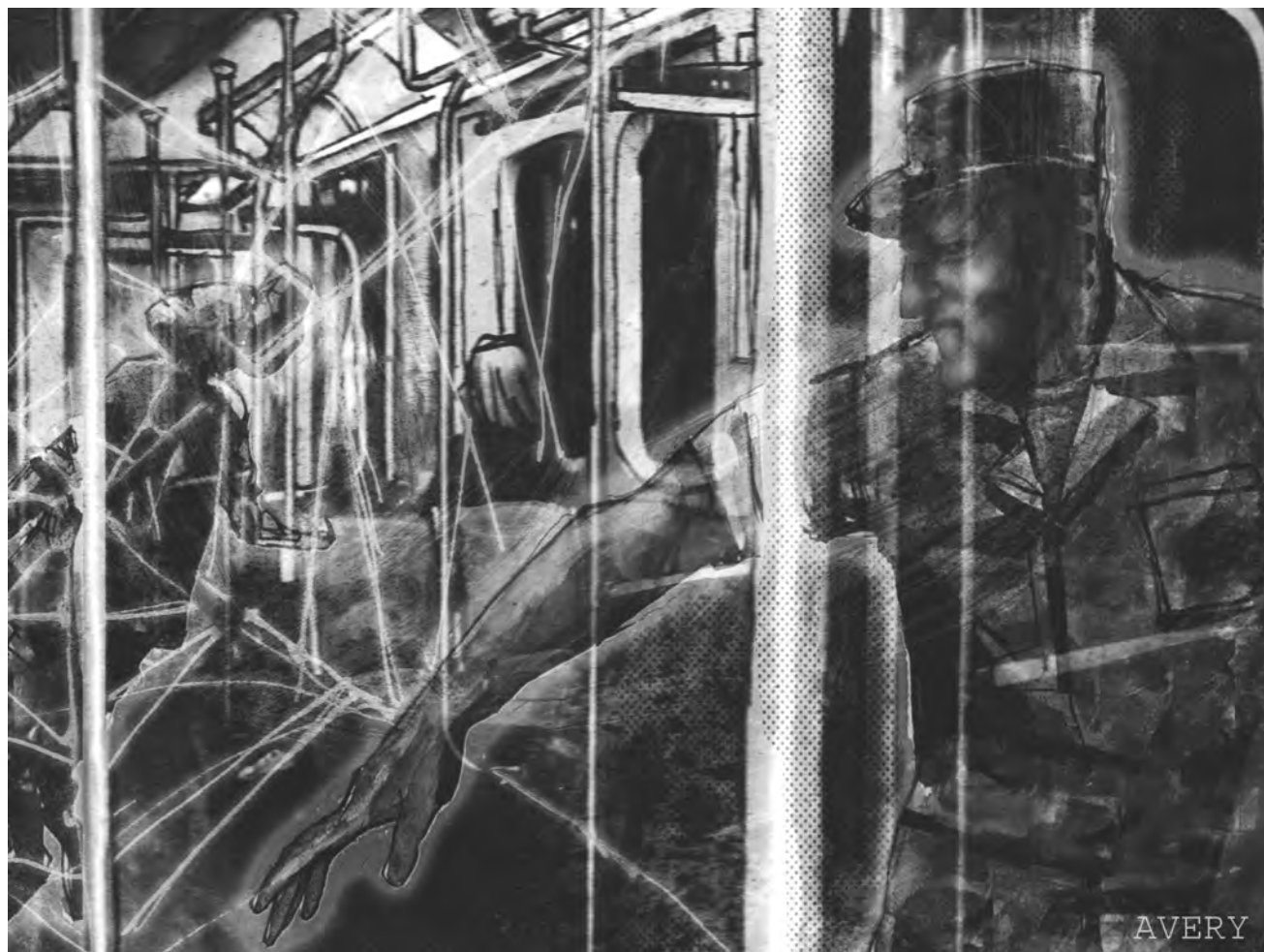
Chet Mason sat in the orange-backed seat, looking at his fellow passengers. He was invisible to everyone on the

subway train by virtue of his state... well, almost everyone. He nodded to another guy in fatigues, but the low-ebb spirit never looked away from the black, reflecting window.

Sitting at the rear of the car, Mason saw the gauze web in time to move out of its way. He reacted out of instinct, but that instinct saved him. The web was anchored to the subway's ceiling and floor, but passed through the train in a second like an egg slicer. Mason spotted that the surrounding tunnel walls covered in a miasma of gauze that reeked like an old wound left to fester in the same bandages and tropic heat for days. More anchored webs whipped by — one of which caught the seated ghost across the chest and snagged him. He vanished, pinned to the web and slammed through the remainder of the train. Mason muttered a curse reserved only for Spectres.

More webs passed through the compartment, nearly catching Mason. In at least one instance, he swore he could see the remnants of some other poor soul who'd been trapped by one of the webs and devoured. Mason cursed again. This was a high-speed spider's web for spooks. More webs appeared. Mason leaped for the nearest person, intending to ride him and hoping his host would protect him from this trap.

In the tunnels diverging off from the 37th Street station, Spectres have made a web to catch ghosts riding





the trains. Rotting and mealy, these Spectres are mucous-white with gaping mouths that never close. Their cavernous maws are without teeth, and instead of a nose or ears, they possess ragged holes and eroded stumps. When they're hungry, they harvest their web — and they're always hungry.

The 37th Street station has been under construction for as long as it's been open. The contractors seem to make no appreciable progress. They just block off different sections of the walkway, turnstiles and platform from week to week. Feeble iron poles support orange plastic cargo netting, surrounding a large hole near the wall with the "Restrooms" sign on it. Few folks peer into the hole, but whether it's because they don't want to seem interested or because they caught glimpses of something that shouldn't be remains unknown. The hole remains undisturbed, even by the workmen who regularly find excuses not to work there. The station itself isn't much better, however. The wall tiles are a dirty yellow. The floor is concrete. Trash, fast-food wrappers, paper and Styrofoam collect amongst the greasy and black rails. Signs warning readers about STDs or promising blissful escape through alcohol and cigarettes are water-stained and peeling. There is nowhere to sit.

The station itself is a hub for three different lines, but it's also a large hive, with gauze webs scattered throughout the adjoining tunnels. While the webs do nothing to mortal commuters, they do affect spooks. A projector still in her body or a spook skinriding a host is safe from the webs, their souls protected within a flesh casing. Ghosts and projecting entities, however, are not.

Characters riding the subway can "dodge" the incoming webs with enough forewarning (such as by seeing them approach through the adjoining compartment or by standing way in the back of theirs). In this case, the players can attempt to have their characters dodge by rolling Wits + Athletics (difficulty 7). If snagged, the effect is like hitting a branch while sticking one's head out of the sunroof of a moving car. The damage inflicted is 10 dice bashing, but the character is also slammed through the remaining compartments as the train moves on without him. Unless the character is completely incorporeal, the Storyteller should roll 1D10 to determine how many compartments the character moves through. Each compartment robs the character of one Vitality. To add insult to injury, the web is sticky, requiring nine successes on an extended Strength roll, difficulty 7, to escape. While the character struggles to break free, however, the Leeches sense the vibrations along their web and come to investigate within eight turns.

LEECHES

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4



Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 5

Nature: Followers

Willpower: 4

Spite: 8

Offensive Abilities: Flit, Hive-Mind, Maw (instead of teeth, the Leeches suck gauze from their victims, one layer at a time).

THE PARK GROVE PUBLIC POOL

Young children shine more brightly than the rest of us. Their colors are more intense. By the time you're an adult, you broadcast like a sitcom on a television with a 30-year-old cathode ray tube and a chunky dial that clunks past "UHF" and "VHF." Ben Cotton went to the public pool to watch the vibrant children, hoping for a rare glimpse of how real families work. They seemed as strange and alien to him as Spectres but in a far more romanticized way. He never had a real family and was trying to connect with that sense of loss.

Sitting on a bench, Cotton closed his eyes against the Saturday-afternoon sun and felt himself float over the constant din of shouts, splashes and laughter. A sharp word just behind him snapped his eyes open. A stringy 10-year-old, puffed with big-brother authority, charged past Ben and snatched a precarious toddler from the pool's edge. Taking his job very seriously, Big Brother launched into a scolding diatribe, one born of his own fear of what nearly happened... what had already happened here over the last year.

That was close. Ben found a metallic taste in his mouth. A cloud passed in front of the sun, casting the light into gray. He folded his towel and walked to the exit, failing to notice the one little girl who swam alone and cast no ripples.



The city closed the Park Grove Public Pool for a full two weeks after Sherry Ehrman drowned, and it forced the lifeguards through a grueling recertification process. After the second drowning, the city fired the lifeguards on duty and the bereaved family leveled lawsuits against them. After the third drowning, the city drained the pool and closed it indefinitely. The Park Grove Public Pool reopened the following summer after five consecutive days of 90° heat. Three weeks later, the morning staff found a child's body floating in the pool. She'd climbed the fence the night before and drowned while swimming unattended.

A moment of carelessness 14 months ago... four dead children today. Was every death due to neglect? No. Just the first. But that was enough. Sherry Ehrman's ghost haunts the Park Grove Public Pool, unwittingly luring and dragging children to their deaths. Until someone lays her spirit to rest, the pool will never be safe again.

The city built Park Grove Public Pool as part of a neighborhood revitalization project in 1963. Built by the lowest bidder, the cinder block pool house has all the charm of a pillbox. The snack bar is infamous for its anemic hot dogs and nachos with cheese sauce the consistency of Latex, while the pool itself is little more than a rectangular concrete pit coated in flaking sky-blue paint. Mottled splotches stain the bottom, flickering in a bizarre dance under the rippling water. The sharp tang of chlorinated decades permeates the air, hitting visitors deep inside their nostrils.

Despite its aggressive lack of charm, the pool still possesses a magical quality. Shrubs completely encircle the 10-foot-high guard fence while tall poplars provide ample shading. The vegetation blocks the view of the street and muffles noise so well that it's easy to forget about the surrounding asphalt, steel and urban sprawl. The water is cool and inviting. The low churning hum of the filters lulls the nerves like the murmuring of crickets. When the pool is filled with children laughing and splashing about, Park Grove Public Pool is as close to paradise as a city kid on summer break can hope for.

The pool's recent tragedies are still fresh in people's minds. There are always a minimum of two lifeguards on duty, each rotated out from guard duty to the pool house to the snack bar on two-hour shifts. The pool's lifeguards are vigilant and tolerate no horseplay whatsoever. Life preservers, hooks and rescue boards are all readily available, and safety rules are clearly posted on the walls and fences.

Sherry Ehrman died when she was eight years and three days old. Two weeks earlier, she went to the public pool with her 13-year-old brother, Jake, to cool off and plan her birthday party with her friends. After lying in the sun for a few hours, she felt a little dizzy and dove in the pool to cool off.. She misjudged the depth and cracked her head on the bottom. The lifeguard on duty



was tending to a screaming toddler with a bee sting and failed to notice Sherry's body until it was too late. He resuscitated Sherry to a semiconscious state, but she never emerged from her coma. She died a little over two weeks later.

Sherry's ghost haunts Park Grove Public Pool. She occasionally manifests as a little girl with brown pigtails in a dark green swimsuit with a purple daisy on it. Otherwise, her gauze seems liquid-like and almost translucent. Sherry blames the lifeguards for her death. Sherry blames her brother Jake even more for not being there to watch over her. When she is strong enough, she possesses another child and reenacts her death. As it is right now, Sherry is in danger of becoming a Spectre.

SHERRY EHMAN

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 1, Crafts 1, Empathy 3, Expression 1

Shade: Skinrider

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Judge

Willpower: 5

Vitality: 5

Spite: 4

Offensive Abilities: Man-of-War, Puppetry (use Sherry's Manipulation + Empathy)

THE EASY RIDER

Benson mixed a Long Island Iced Tea and accepted bills in return. If he seemed distracted, it was because his attention roved with Don Foley's, drifting through the Easy Rider crowd. Standing near a pool table, Foley made eye-contact.



He indicated a few girls: 1, 2 and 3. Benson nodded to the *Amaretto Sour* and set it in front of a customer. He had his assignment.

Girl 2 approached the bar first. Benson beamed with Southern charm and asked what he could get for her. His eyes never once strayed to the inviting crease behind her third open button. She had nice skin, he thought. As instructed by Foley, but without the girl's request, Benson made her drink a double. Foley watched the entire transaction, a circling vulture.

Benson smiled at the pretty girl when he placed her undoing into her hand. He briefly wondered if killing Foley would send him to Hell or make him a hero. He actually didn't care either way.

Get your motor runnin' and kick back at the Easy Rider! This theme bar captures the carefree, party atmosphere of the 70s with a modern dance mix twist. Well, the local college students know not to believe the hype. The Easy Rider is a meat market, pure and simple. With Wet T-Shirt Wednesdays, Ladies' Night specials on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Best Buns Fridays, it's hard not to figure that out. The bar is located in a prime spot on the main drag across from the university campus. Before zoning changed 20 years ago, it used to be a strip club, and it shows. Smoked mirrors cover the upper walls and ceiling. The floor and lower walls have dark red carpet with green and gold vine accents. Tarnished brass banisters and other touches sit on the walls around the dance floor and bar. The dance floor is straight out of the 70s, with its translucent lit-up floors, just like in *Saturday Night Fever*. That and the five decommissioned Harleys suspended over the dance floor are the club's token gestures for an "all-American" 70s feel.

The bar dominates one side of the club. It's directly opposite the front door. The DJ booth sits high on the left wall, framed on either side by rows of weathered, semi-vintage album covers. Curved booths covered in cracked red leather and sporting old hardwood tables line the wall on right. Three pool tables (the one in the rear is off-balance) and a dartboard are directly to the right of the door, just beyond the coat check. To the left is the tacky dance floor.

The Easy Rider proves that some places don't need the dead to be haunted. On occasion, a woman goes to the Easy Rider for an evening of fun, has a few drinks, black out and wakes the next day in bed, violated and battered. If she files charges, she discovers she "let herself" be gang raped on videotape by a group of complete strangers. She's lucid and willing on tape, and drug tests show no signs of date-rape drugs in her system. What's really happening? A misogynistic skimmer named Don Foley is skinriding women at the club and seducing male patrons.

Don Foley's mother left when he was two years old, and she left with good reason: His father was a brusque, demanding and abusive man. In his mind, women de-

served only slightly more respect than cattle, and his son even less. Foley's father drilled this message into him from an early age.

Foley joined the Navy straight out of high school and eventually became a SEAL. After a particularly harrowing mission, Orpheus approached him and trained him as a Hunter skimmer, though he branching out to learn other Horrors in his spare time. Foley's misogynist attitudes cost him his job at Orpheus, perhaps also sparing him the later massacre and witch hunt. He quickly found work as the Easy Rider's bartender, then manager. Since Foley's arrival, that bar's earned a reputation for attracting some of the loosest party girls on campus, which is not accidental. On rare occasions, when Foley's urges override his conscience, he walks the floor, picks a mark for extra strong drinks and then retires to the back office. From there, he projects and hijacks the victim's body, seduces a group of guys and lets them use the poor girl however they wish. He usually videotapes the woman to show her willingness to participate.

Foley tells himself he's giving the girls just what they deserve, but deep down, he gets off on being victimized and abused. Now, he's trapped in a cycle of compulsion and self-disgust that he can't break, and he's growing more destructive with his hosts, allowing them to be hurt to satisfy his needs.

DON FOLEY

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 3, Finance 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Medicine 2, Melee 3, Survival 3

Shade: Hunter





Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Masochist

Willpower: 8

Vitality: 7

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Inhabit, Puppetry, Unearthly Repose

THE CITY ZOO

A silverback gorilla watched Blink through the bars. Brown eyes, sad and searching, studied Blink for some comprehension. Blink reflected on the apologies his species would have to write if they ever accepted great apes into the United Nations. Elephants, too...

Boy, Blink thought. Do we ever owe a big mea culpa to the elephants.

The gorilla's eyes flicked to somewhere over Blink's shoulder and then back to his. The silverback bared his formidable teeth. Blink stepped back, unsure what this display meant. Then, the ape howled, banged at the bars, batted the air and shielded his head from something. Blink froze. He glimpsed shadows in the cage around the animal and felt a familiar helpless rage stir in his gut. More frightening, however, was that he couldn't clearly see whatever was in the cage. Blink thought about helping the gorilla, but fear of this unknown thing tore at his heart and stomach. He could only watch in horror.

A moment later, the shadow things vanished, and the gorilla's unnerving display subsided. He sat back on his haunches and looked smaller, haggard. Blink considered, for one crazy moment, about reaching into the cage to touch the animal's shoulder. Instead, Blink stared into the ape's intelligent eyes with sympathy.

Blink didn't know how long he stood there, but the hour nagged at him. Time to go. He bid the gorilla a silent farewell. They understood each other. Blink would be back with friends... lots of them. And the silverback would be waiting.

While the public likes the zoo for its diversity of animals and its trained staff, it somehow seems too small and cramped. The zoo covers 33 acres and includes a reptile house, a bat cave, a room-sized ant farm and a prairie dog coterie. The zoo is even proud enough of its pandas, Xie Xie and Ebony, to advertise them on the sides of city buses. Still, the cages always seem a foot smaller than comfortable, and the animals a far edgier lot than the standard broken fare found in other zoos.

Recently, the zoo's staff has been investigating an "illness" affecting many different animals... or, at least, that's the only explanation the staff has for the moment. Its symptoms include fur loss, diminished appetite and edginess. Some handlers call it stress, but only one or two could swear that they've seen shadow forms darting around the agitated beasts, stirring them to frenzy.

The actual problem is four Chupacabras, which hide in various parts of the zoo, staking out their territory

like some small-scale turf war. For the time being, the Spectres are choosing their "mounts," deciding which will best serve them in battling the other three Chupacabras. Unfortunately, their presence and periodic "test-drives" are affecting the different animals adversely (ruining their appetite and health). If the zoo thinks it has a problem now, however, just wait until when the Chupacabras ride the four toughest animals they can find and battle it out to decide which of them is to be king of the zoo... during opening hours.

CHUPACABRAS

See **Crusade of Ashes** for more on these animal-riding Spectres.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 6, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Nature: Monster

Willpower: 6

Spite: 5

Offensive Abilities: Carapace, Claws, Hive-Mind, Juggernaut (when embodied), Maw, Possession (functions as Puppetry but affects only animals)

THE SUNRISE DINER

Kate picked at her spoon with her thumbnail, scraping off whatever it was food became after someone ran it through an industrial dish washer. The Sunrise was okay. The coffee was good, but it was best to avoid the pie. You could count on the staff not to spit in your food. It was a place to drink a cup of joe and poke at a plate of greasy fries in peace at two in the morning.

Sue brought the check and left. Kate left a generous tip before returning to her coffee. Out of the corner of her eye, the couple in the corner booth looked strange. Kate looked again. The guy was a ghost... but the girl wasn't. Kate thought he looked familiar... the girl too. She made a habit out of reading the obituaries lately, just in case she encountered a new ghost who needed help. The ghost at the booth definitely looked familiar. The girl, however, had on gloves and a long-sleeved shirt. She covered her face with a hat, but Kate saw the scar.

Shit, thought Kate. She suddenly remembered the ghost and the girl. Her name's Ellen. Her ex-boyfriend nearly cut her face off before she escaped. He slashed his wrists... bled to death. Only, he's still around and just as jealous as ever. Kate struggled from the booth, clamped a firm hand on Ellen's shoulder and elbow and hustled her out into the night.

At the Sunrise Diner, Sue will probably serve you your meal. She's young and pretty when she doesn't look beat down, and she's smart enough to run this place rather than wait on tables — but never tell her that, or you might hear her life story. Five booths line the wall with the windows, and the counter runs down the other side. Lights with cone-shaped glass shades that were once stylish hang from chains above each booth and at sensible intervals above the counter.



Jer, with blue tattoos lining his thick arms, is a short-order cook with an omelet that's worth driving across town to order. He dreams of opening a vegetarian bistro, but he can't get the start-up capital. The state of the pie at the Sunrise is not his fault. It would be divine if he had the time to make the filling from scratch.

Chain-smoking Maureen manages the books, and Dan, beleaguered co-owner and partner, tries to minimize her contact with customers. He keeps a roll of antacids in his shirt pocket and works at all hours.

Not a part of the paid entourage is Chad Brecht. Chad had the perfect woman in Ellen Warrender for three beautiful months, but his less-than-hourly phone calls, surprise visits to her office and suspicious questions drove Ellen to break it off. In a deluded attempt to teach her that only his love would transcend her physical beauty, Chad cornered Ellen in her apartment and cut her face, hands and breasts with a straight razor. It was supposed to be a statement of his love for her, a love deeper than skin. When she escaped, Chad fled. When the police came after him, Chad slashed his wrists and bled to death.

Ellen is still recovering from her emotional wounds and always hides the scars on her face. She hasn't been intimate with anyone since the attack. Her only solace is going to the Sunrise Diner either late at night or in between the peak periods. She feels comfortable here and has befriended the staff. Unfortunately, that also means she's stirred Chad jealousy. It's only a matter of time before he rains harm down upon the Sunrise Diner's staff.

CHAD BRECHT

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2



Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Melee 4, Stealth 4

Shade: Banshee

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Addict

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 5

Spite: 4

Offensive Abilities: Wail

Equipment: Pearl razor (Background Artifact: Affects gauze and flesh.)

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense
Chad's Pearl Razor	+2	+0	5L	+0

LAZARUS REDUX

The following assumes the Storyteller resolved the fugitive-style chronicle, allowing the characters to live "normal" lives again. If the FBI is still pursuing its crusade against projector technology, however, then Lazarus Redux exists as an underground movement. Otherwise, it's quite in the open.

OVERVIEW

Uriah Bishop hired NextWorld to do a job, which it did quite well. Now, Orpheus and most other commercial projecting services are out of business or eradicated, leaving a new group to rise from the ashes of these shattered organizations: Lazarus Redux. After Orpheus Group's demise, Kate Dennison salvaged Orpheus employee records (note to Storytellers: allow the characters to find the records for Dennison in the first place) and used them to track down and contact surviving agents. Her initial hope was to provide for mutual protection, but over the months, she realized that despite Orpheus' inadequacies, it still provided an invaluable service for herself and for others affected by the hereafter. She and several Orpheus survivors decided to create a new business without the behind-the-scenes secrets and dark connections that plagued Orpheus Group. Those who agreed join, pooled together their money and contacts, thus helping to birth Lazarus Redux.

Lazarus Redux's formal structure is one of a limited partnership offering commercial paranormal services. The primary partner is Kate Dennison, with John Carruthers and Hoyt Masterson acting as secondary, if uncomfortable, partners. Many other signature characters featured in the previous books are on the staff as trainers and agents.

Lazarus Redux is located in a former microbrewery, which has been renovated to suit the business' unique needs. Lazarus Redux maintains 28 employees on the payroll, along with 12 to 18 contractors at any given time. A minimum of seven people (three projecting) are



on site at any time, as is at least one of the company partners. Lazarus Redux currently receives more work than its on-staff projectors can handle, so it farms out excess work to independent contractors (this is an easy way to involve the crucible with Lazarus Redux.) Kate and her partners refuse any contracts involving hurting or assassinating the living. The pay is competitive, making Lazarus Redux and Spooky Brews (the nearby coffeehouse) popular places for projectors and projector wannabes to hang out.

Lazarus Redux has a progressive attitude toward relations between the living and the dead. The company philosophy comes down to one simple axiom: All people, living and dead, are people. As far as it is possible to do so, the living and the dead deserve equal treatment and respect. Consequently, Lazarus Redux is deeply involved in the newly formed activist group RIP, Rights for Interred Persons. Odette Dubois, the company lawyer, provides RIP with legal support, and Lazarus Redux funnels about five percent of its profits to RIP. You'll never see Lazarus Redux employees participating in the maltreatment of ghosts as pursued by Terrel & Squib. This overarching dedication to living-dead equality has made Lazarus Redux very popular with the recently deceased, if a laughing stock with comedians and the media.

LOCATION

Lazarus Redux own a 160,000-square-foot lot on the edge of the warehouse district. The Red Hart microbrewery formally occupied the building, and its "charging stag" logo is still present in various spots around the building. The medium-sized front lobby has a receptionist's desk and badge-activated double doors leading to the warehouse. The warehouse is 60 feet high and 500 by 300 feet wide. This space is subdivided into conference rooms, break rooms, a gym with showers, a computer room, the sleepers' room, general working space and a little cubicle farm for office work. Kate, John and Hoyt have their own enclosed offices with small apartments attached to them. The apartments have kitchenettes and bathrooms with showers. It is not uncommon for one or more partners to stay on-site for a week or more just to keep an eye on operations and missions.

Not counting the three company heads, Lazarus Redux has a staff of 28. Thirteen are "mundane" and unable to sense the world of ghosts: The receptionist in the lobby, one facilities/security worker with two lackeys, one accountant for taxes and payroll, one lawyer for drawing up contracts and organizing the Rights for Interred Persons' lobby, two marketing and sales people, one employee in charge of benefits and human resources, one office manager/administrative assistant and one technician to maintain the sleeper tubes with two resident nurses to assist. The remaining fifteen people



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Hey Kate,

I found this flyer at Spooky Brews. Some clown's handing them out along the business corridor, promising some convictable services. It's another garage-business cryo-kid playing big league. Do we put the kibosh on this before the guy gets us all in trouble or just hand the info over to the cops?

Your call

John

are "gifted": Four are sleepers, eight are skimmers and three are spirits. All living members of the staff are on the payroll, while the three dead employees receive compensation with resources, services and other intangibles if they so wish. Otherwise, Lazarus Group pays them as well, whether to their living relatives or directly to bank accounts opened under a loved one's name (thanks to their ability to manifest, some ghosts can enjoy a brief physical existence).

Given the violent demise of Orpheus Group and similar businesses, Lazarus Redux's founding partners are understandably paranoid and security conscious. Consequently, they've pursued many steps to ensure the security of their employees and their material investment. The mundane security at Lazarus Redux is tight. The main entrance is an alcove containing bulletproof and shatterproof double doors. The alcove is a giant metal detector (with a tray slot to slide keys and coins through) and explosives sniffer. If someone registers positive for either, the double doors remain sealed until a spook can search the visitor..

Every employee and contractor has to "badge in" at the lobby to access the main warehouse. The badges

don't use magnetic strips. They contain wire coils that create a unique three dimensional magnetic field that the card readers detect. Access to secured storage, the sleeper area, the loading bay doors and any other location you'd expect to be locked down also require a badge. Unknown to all personnel except for security and the three partners, there are sensors throughout the building that track the location of each unique badge as it moves around. This sensor grid, in tandem with the closed-circuit video/Kirlian cameras, enables the head of security to pinpoint anyone at any time. Restricted areas (secured storage, air ducts, etc.) all have Kirlian-activated motion and infrared sensors set to trigger silent alarms in the security room.

Lazarus Redux also discovered that, while possessions are difficult to detect normally, there are variances in a person's Kirlian aura from two overlapping fields. Thus, specialized equipment can detect a possessed person (or someone recently possessed) if one has a baseline from which to operate. Thus, every portal with a card reader has a passive Kirlian sensor. These sensors are connected to a database containing the last 10 readings for every badged employee, as well as a baseline



reading. If the current reading differs from the median of the previous ones by more than 20 percent, then security immediately sends a Skinrider to test that person for possession. The occasional false positives are explained away as “random security sampling” tests.

The supernatural security at Lazarus Redux is perhaps more exceptional. The brewery’s walls are completely impenetrable to intangible ghosts and projectors. Supernatural effects (such as Storm-Wending) can not pass through or bypass the brewery’s walls, regardless of whether they’re generated by a Horror or an artifact. This is because the brewery is situated on the site of a very old Spectre hive that’s been eradicated. After cleaning out the hive with assistance from the other members of Lazarus Redux, the founding partners and their allies spent weeks blasting and fusing spectral flakes into the building’s walls by using Broadband Ghost and Witch’s Nimbus. This process created a screen as solid to spooks as any living wall is to mortals. The Lazarus Redux crew correctly surmised that the building, while intangible, still possessed some presence among ghosts. Otherwise, the hives would never grow along the walls and ceilings. They thus insulated the building’s walls (including from sewer and sky access) from the inside out, blocking spooks and Spectres from passing through the walls and preventing anyone from picking at the fused spectral material to mine a gap in the screen. The only entrances are the main one and the docks, where Kirlian cameras provide wide fields of vision. Opening the front door or the warehouse docks opens gaps in the screen, allowing ghosts inside. Unfortunately for skimmers, they cannot use ripcording to retreat to their bodies, unless the doors are open, but their flesh is supposedly safe from unfriendly possession. The only other way into the facility is to use Broadband Ghost to ride the power lines in, but Lazarus Redux is currently examining the possibility of using circuit breakers to trap electron-highway-riding spooks.

Lazarus Redux is also exploring the possibility of building an electromagnetic resonance field generator to block spectral passage in the same way the hive material does, but the current staff lacks the technical expertise and manpower to dedicate to this project. The Hyenas, a crucible mentioned later in this chapter, are exploring this technology and implemented it on a smaller scale but know little about Lazarus Redux and nothing about its needs. Allowing the crucible to meet the hackers and to discover their supernatural barrier might make a good game session.

Being a former brewery, the facility has industrial-strength electrical, water and waste-disposal systems. Lazarus Redux cut back the water and waste-disposal services to less industrial quotas, but maintains the electricity service at the same level. It also added three

kerosene-powered backup generators, storing them in the warehouse’s back rooms. Each one can maintain enough power for the facility to run the sleeper tubes, emergency lighting, business-critical computer systems, security cameras, electronic locks and nominal central air and heating for 18 hours. The three-bay loading dock at the rear of the warehouse has not been modified. Lazarus Redux still uses it to receive shipments of medicine, computer equipment, fuel and other supplies.

A quarter of the warehouse’s shelving units have been left intact, including a secure cage for restricted supplies. All the provisions and spare parts you’d expect to find in a facility such as Lazarus Redux are kept here. These include cleaning supplies; coffee and snacks; 10-gallon water-cooler bottles; maintenance tools (ladders, rope, extension cords, raw lumber); computer parts (logic boards, hard drives, keyboards and mice, toner, etc.); tanks of oxygen, nitrogen, propane and kerosene; office supplies; medical supplies (drugs, spare first-aid kits); and spare parts for sleeper cradles. Lazarus Redux also stashes some unexpected items in storage, such as dozens of spare cots with blankets and pillows, MREs, canned food, more bottled water to sustain 60 people for about three weeks and hand-cranked radios and flashlights.

Attached to the warehouse, side by side with the lobby, is the 40-foot-tall, 250-foot x 200-foot brewing room. Two huge (30-foot diameter) copper tanks dominate the left and right sides of the chamber. Lazarus converted the tanks into storage chambers for incorporeal entities. Like the main building, the tanks are lined with material scavenged from the hive and fused with the object, making it impossible for ghosts and projectors to pass, teleport or use effects through their walls. Each tank has a high-pressure access door attached to an airlock alcove (with Kirlian camera) as found on a submersible. Spooks welded hive materials here as well, allowing incorporeal entities to be brought into the alcove one at a time before being released or stored. Entities in gauze form can enter and leave the chamber when either airlock is open, but the chamber is spook and Spectre-proof when the airlocks are closed. Kate Dennison hopes to capture a Spectre, trap it in one of these holding chambers and “redeem it” back into a ghost through counseling and other means. This is Kate’s pet project, but her two partners also support this plan. The purpose of the brewing chambers is not common knowledge. Contractors and mundane employees don’t know Kate modified these chambers to hold Spectres. They generally believe the brewing room was left intact because it would be otherwise expensive to remove the tanks.

Across the street and a short walk down the block from Lazarus Redux is Spooky Brews, a small bar and coffeehouse. Although not part of Lazarus Redux, Spooky



Brews is important to the Lazarus Redux scene. Before Lazarus Redux, Spooky Brews was called Java Joe and maintained a regular clientele of 20 to 30 people. Business improved when Lazarus Redux moved into the neighborhood. Freelance projectors would come in after stopping by Lazarus Redux to check for contracts, and Java Joe quickly became the “staff favorite” for a quick cup of mighty fine coffee. Java Joe was the natural hangout for staff and contractors alike to swap afterhours stories. When wannabe projectors discovered the scene, patronage skyrocketed, and Java Joe expanded, using the opportunity to remodel and change its name to Spooky Brews. The newly remodeled coffee house seats 80 in three connected seating areas. The decor is an odd fusion of art deco and gothic, with burnished chrome, wrought iron, burgundy, forest green and mahogany serving as the dominant themes. The picture frames contain newspaper clippings about the projecting phenomenon as well as local ghost folklore.

Spooky Brews is a great place to meet for casual rendezvous, but it's also a good place to tap into street rumors. Whether it's contract projectors moving in different circles or projector groupies with a constant eye on the scene, the clientele at Spooky Brews is a great source of info. Most of the time, these folks are a few steps behind the game, but sometimes, the fanboys and -grrls spot trends weeks before anyone in the business even notices them. The public announcement board also has a high static-to-noise ratio, but scoping it sometimes yields interesting leads.

OPERATIONS

Where Orpheus Group was clean, professional and corporate, Lazarus is gritty and frontier-style rough. Orpheus Group: Expensive professional Italian assassin; Lazarus Redux: Grizzled veteran gumshoe with a hip flask and a battered fedora. Their common ground, aside from their interactions with the hereafter, is that they're both businesses. Lazarus Redux offers a variety of services for customers, both living and deceased — by and large the same services that Orpheus Group provided before its demise, but on a smaller scale.

The primary services offered by Lazarus Redux are:

- **Protection:** Paranoid clients can hire intangible bodyguards for protection from both tangible and supernatural threats. The length of a contract can be set for days, weeks or even months. Basic protection agreements include chasing away anyone using supernatural means to spy on the client, while more expensive contracts include blocking and countering tangible and intangible threats to the contractor's life and property. The most expensive contracts include all of these features and usually require more than one agent operating on rotation.

- **Surveillance:** Similarly, Lazarus Redux operatives will maintain surveillance over property or individuals. Surveillance contracts cover only that... surveillance and activity reports. If pressed, Lazarus Redux may harass a target for a significant fee (such as dissuading a stalker from pursuing a target), but it will not accept contracts involving maiming or killing a people. The company does not do “wet works.” Kate Dennison figures that enough organizations are watching or hunting projectors that they don't need to give them any more reasons to come gunning for them. Lazarus Redux employees defend themselves with lethal force when necessary, but they're not a band of thugs or hired killers.

- **Secure Communications:** Lazarus Redux provides secure courier services. Three sleepers and one skimmer are bonded and certified to carry sensitive parcels and documents. Although they will transport secure tangibles, Lazarus Redux prefers dealing in messages and other intangibles since their agents can memorize and transport them exclusively as spooks. Transporting secure physical containers does not play to the company's strengths, and it will not accept purely physical contracts unless the shipment needs to be protected from intangible threats.

- **Secure Body Storage:** Lazarus Redux “timeshares” sleeper cradles to the occasional sleeper who needs a place to crash for a week or two, but it only does so after conducting a thorough background check. In addition to the cost of the cradle's rental and medical support, Lazarus Redux contracts for a percentage of the profit that the sleeper makes on her run (or simply charges a higher storage fee). Lazarus Redux has eight tubes on site and four sleeper agents on staff, so it never leases out more than four tubes at once unless there's a compelling reason to do so.

- **Paranormal Investigations:** House haunted? Car cursed? Call Lazarus Redux: Paranormal investigations *with teeth*. Lazarus Redux advertises in magazines such as *The Scrutinizer*, offering initial one-hour on-site consultations for a very reasonable \$100 fee. About 60 percent of the consultations turn up no evidence of supernatural influence, 30 percent are the result of some poor blip or drone, and 10 percent are the actions of a malevolent Spectre. Lazarus Redux charges an additional \$1,000 to \$5,000 or more to lay supernatural matters to rest, depending on the severity of the danger and the relevant research required to resolve the situation.

- **Cult Extractions:** Lazarus Redux does *not* do cult extractions because its employees aren't trained for it. The company refers clients seeking cult extraction for loved ones to Lost Sheep, a local deprogrammer/detective agency. In return for the referrals, Lost Sheep contracts with Lazarus Redux for supernatural backup



when necessary. Lazarus Redux has assisted Lost Sheep with three cult extractions so far. From this experience, Lazarus suspects that the cults may be far more involved in the unseen world than it previously believed. None of its extractions have targeted anyone in Uriah Bishop's Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost yet.

Additionally, Lazarus Redux also has a suite of services specially tailored to the needs of the "living impaired." Often, these ghosts may use their families to pay for such services, but often, Lazarus Redux accepts barter in skills and time for helping its deceased brethren and sisters.

- **Employment:** While the living might not consider this a service, the cognizant dead know that there's not a lot to do with their time other than to avoid Spectres and eavesdrop on the rich and famous. Ghosts need something to give their continued existence purpose. In exchange for providing the services listed below, Lazarus Redux contracts ghosts to perform specific tasks. In other words, it gives them jobs. This is important since people form strong bonds between their sense of self and the jobs they hold. Having a job strengthens a ghost's identity and keeps that ghost from surrendering to despair and ceasing to exist (or worse, turning into a Spectre). Sometimes, it's comforting to be a working stiff.

- **Horror Training:** The afterlife isn't all Elysian Fields and harps and frolicking through meadows, as many ghosts can attest. It's a cold, hard world mirroring the corruption and violence in our own. There are dangers and predators there just as real as any physical threat. Fortunately, when you're thrust into that world, you're gifted with certain innate talents that you can use to protect yourself. It's just a matter of learning how to use them. Lazarus Redux has the facilities and knowledge to teach ghosts how to use and develop their unique powers. Each of Lazarus Redux's ghosts is talented, and several skimmers and sleepers were trainers at their previous jobs. Lazarus Redux provides a safe environment for the newly deceased to master their new skills and will help experienced ghosts hone their talents. Lazarus Redux also provides training services for projectors on a case-by-case basis.

- **Networking:** When you die and discover you're a ghost, you're often alone, scared and confused, bereft of a support structure. Even with science's and the popular media's awareness of the afterlife, it's still a shocking experience to most. Before you can consider refining your skills or pursuing a new occupation, sometimes, you simply need to speak with someone. It's important to know that there are others like you, that you're not alone. Because it's a "safe" place frequented by professional projectors and experienced ghosts, Spooky Brews has become the ghostly equivalent of a meet-up spot.

Ghosts come here to meet other ghosts, to swap information about what's happening around the city and around the world and to check out the available freelance job opportunities. There are other places to visit if you're interested in what's happening in the underworld, and there are places that know what's transpiring in different communities before word reaches Lazarus Redux, but Spooky Brews is always a good place to start. Those ghosts who pass Lazarus Redux's background check (and a Forebode reading of their state and intent) may network inside at the Lazarus Redux building itself.

- **Counseling Services:** Dr. Koberda is one of three spirits on Lazarus Redux's payroll, and he puts his PhD in analytical psychology to good use by offering counseling services for the recently deceased. Right now, Dr. Koberda is the only person on staff who is qualified to provide counseling services, and he's dead, so Lazarus Redux isn't formally advertising his services. In fact, several employees mocked the ghost psychologist at first, but that stopped after RIP conducted sensitivity training seminars. The few ghosts who have been through counseling with Dr. Koberda have adjusted well to their new existence.

- **Protection:** If you're a ghost and you're employed by Lazarus Redux, either as a full-time employee or as a contractor, you may spend your off-hours on the premises. With Spectre activity on the rise, the hereafter is a dangerous place in which to exist. Lazarus Redux, with its nearly impenetrable supernatural security, is an island of calm in a turbulent world. It's nice for ghosts to have a place where they can just relax and not worry about being ravaged for Vitality or ripped to bits. Since ghosts don't assume a physical space or consume resources, and since happy ghosts make happier employees, Lazarus Redux is more than willing to provide this service. For security reasons, ghosts not employed by Lazarus Redux are not permitted inside the premises without approval from one of the three partners or the head of security. Intangible guests must be escorted at all times by two employed projectors or ghosts.

- **Evidence:** As part of its work with Rights for Interred Persons, and just because it's the right thing to do, Lazarus Redux will supply the authorities with any *tangible* evidence or information concerning a ghost's human demise. This is a free service, but the ghost must be able to identify her killer or point the police to the necessary evidence. Often, Lazarus Redux accepts the reward pertaining to the apprehension and conviction of certain criminals and uses the money as directed by the deceased. Some ghosts are simply grateful enough to let Lazarus Redux and RIP keep the money to continue their operations, while others ask the reward money be given to their living loved ones or a favored charity.



ORPHEUS GROUP VS. LAZARUS REDUX

So, we've mentioned that Orpheus Group could survive the assault, and the chronicle becomes far more interesting if both Lazarus Redux and Orpheus Group are around at the same time. Methods toward accomplishing this include the following:

- **Walkout:** Orpheus Group is no saint, and while it's managed to hide its secrets, the entire miniseries has been about unearthing buried skeletons. So, in this option, Kate Dennison, along with the other sigs, uncovers Orpheus' criminal past, its illicit transactions and its connections to the government. Perhaps they even accomplish this with the crucible's help. Regardless, Kate and several others leave Orpheus Group, and while their non-competition clause prevents them from seeking employment with other existing projector firms, nothing stops them from going into business for themselves.

- **Subsidiary:** Orpheus Group isn't truly the bad guy either. After discovering the fate of ghosts over three years ago, and given the increase in hives and Spectre activity, Kate Dennison convinces Orpheus Group to open Lazarus Redux as a shelter and halfway house of sorts (with only nominal affiliations to its parent company). More so, Lazarus Redux operates closer to the streets, while Orpheus Group represents the respectable façade seen by the middle- and upper-class public.

- **Moles:** This option is a little from column A and a little from column B. Here, Kate Dennison and the other sigs know Orpheus Group has its secrets, and they intend to unearth them from within. In case they have to bail ship, however, they need a safe haven from which to operate and gather like-minded spooks. Hence, Kate, Hoyt and John need the characters to assemble and run Lazarus Redux, thus operating as the sigs' proxy. To all outside appearances, Lazarus Redux is a new competitor, but only the characters and the signature characters know the real link between them.

PURPOSE

On the surface, Lazarus Redux is just another ghost-boom start-up looking to capitalize off the technologies Orpheus Group pioneered. In reality, it's a place and haven for "unattached" projectors and spirits to gather, train and stay safe. The spirit world is a dangerous place, and no one knows this better than the projectors and spirits who survived the destruction of Orpheus Group.

Lazarus Redux is a rare safe spot. Kate, John and Hoyt want to open the facility to as many people as they can, but they also have to keep careful tabs on whom they allow inside for security's sake. That's where Spooky Brews, the coffeehouse down the street, comes into play. John and some of the other projectors closely monitor who's at Spooky Brews in the tangible and intangible sense. If there's someone there who needs or deserves access to Lazarus Redux and its training facilities, John approaches her with simple freelance contracts. If the applicant can handle the contracts efficiently and well, then Lazarus Redux offers her a job (after the previously mentioned background checks).

Aside from the business mission and its function as a potential safehouse, Lazarus Redux also has a secret agenda. It's a spook equivalent to a nuclear fallout shelter. Kate's been doing her research and has enough foresight to realize something ugly is brewing on the horizon. Given the Spectre attacks over three years ago, she'll be damned if her and her kind are caught unprepared again. That's why Kate's picked somewhere that can be defended in the real and ghost worlds and staffed it with the best talent she could find. Now, she's using it as a base to network with the remaining projecting community, recruiting and training more talent and using that talent to gather resources and favors on both sides of death's fence. She's stockpiling resources to weather the coming storm and gathering information to prepare for (and hopefully prevent) it. The only people who really know about this purpose are Kate and her partners. The head of security also handles inventory and knows about the stockpiled rations in secure storage. It's not his job, however, to question what Kate stores in there, so he's not jumping to any conclusions.

ON-CALL PERSONALITIES

KATE DENNISON, HEAD OF LAZARUS REDUX

Pure, unbridled fury. That's what Kate felt when she saw Orpheus Group decimated and her friends and colleagues murdered. Then came fugitive-hood and the loss of Tom Hayes to Spite. Enough was enough. Instead of allowing all of the talent and resources accumulated by Orpheus Group go to waste, she would gather it together under a new organization: Lazarus Redux. Kate convinced her allies to share their resources and contacts, thus laying the foundation for the new projector firm.

As the primary partner of Lazarus Redux, Kate acts as the enterprise's trainer-coordinator and provides general direction for the company. The organization is shaping up the way she wants, but she has a difficult problem. Kate hasn't enjoyed a good night's rest for weeks now. She suffers from nightmares (spawned by



Grandmother's presence), and nothing works in eliminating the dreams. This has made her more terse than usual. Kate is throwing herself into her work with even greater zeal than before, in the hopes of alleviating her thoughts from the nightmares, but it's not working.

JOHN CARRUTHERS, SECONDARY PARTNER

When Orpheus Group fell, John was among the lucky few who escaped with his body and soul intact. He was more grateful that Kate and others didn't consider him a liability given the slow spread of his cancer, but his inability to seek treatment as a fugitive did tax his system. Currently, John is pursuing more radical treatments, but his so-called sabbatical may have lessened his chances for survival. Only time will tell.

Until he "keels over," as he's fond of saying, John does most of the face-to-face negotiations on behalf of the company. He negotiates with banks and suppliers and approaches potential freelance groups with job offers (once they've been screened for security, of course). If the crucible is relatively stable and amenable, it's likely John who'll approach it with contracting work on a simple surveillance mission or as backup for a protection or investigation contract. If the crucible does well and gets along with Lazarus Redux employees, more contracts will follow, with John as liaison.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Your dog always notices it before you do — the metallic taste under your tongue, your arm hairs standing on end, the leaden sky, that heavy pressure on your chest... there's a storm coming. Your dog, at least, has the good sense to hide under the bed. The characters are more likely to challenge it to single combat.

This is a good time to work together, however. Crucibles reach out to each other, find others to complement their weaknesses and hunker down for the impending hurricane. They're allies, honest-to-organized allies, but they're also distractions. A well-tuned team can hold its own or integrate effectively with another team. Crucibles are still made up of people (whether living or less so), though, so they have crusades, agendas and issues of their own.

Presented in this chapter are four supporting crucibles to introduce to the characters. Unlike in physics, in politics, like attracts like. Crucibles and individuals committed to reclaiming the city from Spectres drift toward each other. Terrence Green, with his midnight calls to action, prods them in this direction. A mouthpiece and a leader, he is the seed around which the disgruntled and the righteous accrete. As a movement forms, Lazarus Redux gives it a base of operations. Establishing itself not just as a service provider for the

recently deceased, but also as an advocacy and lobbying group, it is a focal point for those concerned with the quality of the hereafter.

If characters keep their ears to the rail, and especially if they heed the missives broadcast by Terrence Green, they will discover many opportunities to join forces with like-minded crucibles. And if the tornado ever touches down, it's everyone's best hope for survival.

MI FAMIGLIA

Leo nicked a thumbnail against a match and cupped it to his cigarette. He checked his watch. The timing would be tight, but they all knew their parts. He exhaled the smoke loudly and tried not to look like he was playing the lookout.

Leo knew Shark would be skimming by now, insinuating himself into the fluorescent-lit aisles of candy bars and tortilla chips, choosing his moment. Seth would be browsing, nonchalant. Squidge should be walking up to the counter now, asking directions with his honest, baby-smooth face, giving no hint of the pistol jammed into the waistband of his jeans at the small of his back. Little Sister should be nowhere near.

Leo looked up the street and down, smoking his coffin nail. He leaned against the building opposite the convenience store, one motorcycle boot propped on the wall. The clerk shouldn't have made the cash drop yet. Leo checked his watch...

...on cue, screams told him it had begun. He could visualize the hit. They had it down pat. This was his family....

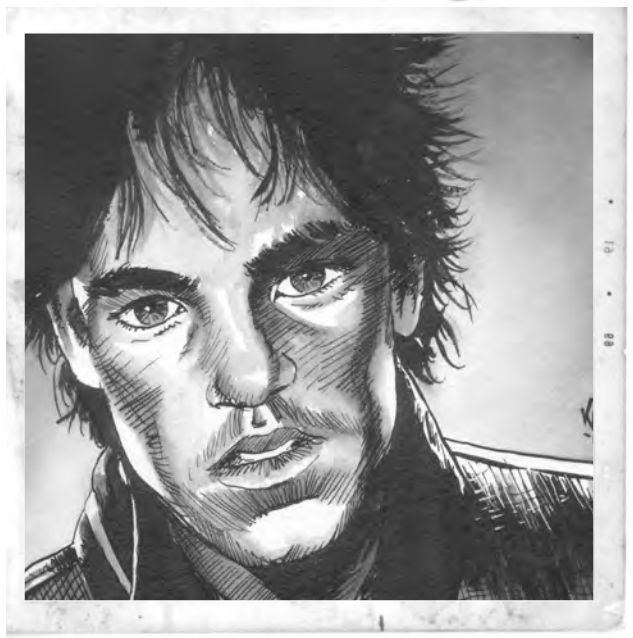
Squidge asks how to find 7th and Parsons, when Shark flexes. Between junk food and air fresheners, a spark begins. Like time-lapse photography, a mote grows into a homunculus, grows into a manikin, grows into a man. The man opens his mouth to vomit black beetles, heaving uncontrollably. The glistening, chitin-covered beetles scuttle down his chest, into and out of his shirt, over his pants, spilling onto the floor. He gags, writhes... the scrabbling flow of beetles surges and increases, slick with bile.

The clerk freaks, scrambling over the counter, screaming curses and prayers at the same time and bolts from the store. Squidge shakes himself and remembers his role... the illusions Shark is spinning are that good. Squidge rounds the counter, crunching carapaces into yellow glue under his sneakers (and cursing Shark's abilities) and empties the cash register. Seth covers the door, hulking and ready, looking for something to hit. Squidge cocks his jaw: Time to go.

But there's Little Sister, near the counter. Leo didn't see this... this wasn't part of the plan. With her small braids and accusing eyes, one fist clutching a limp artifact doll, she stops Squidge with a look.

"What?" he asks, guilty and exasperated in the same breath. She shakes her head.

Squidge pushes past her, calling to Shark over his shoulder and herding Seth out the door. Leo already has the car ready and running. Shark deflates and diminishes, trailing straggling beetles that melt away, hissing, into the pavement.



Squidge clambers into the front, slamming the door. Seth hustles his bulk around to the rear driver's. Shark becomes indistinct and dissipates. Little Sister goes to wherever it is that Little Sister goes to when she isn't here. Leo makes the tires scream and roars toward home.

MI FAMIGLIA

LEONARDO GAUE

Leo was born on the East Side and orphaned at three. Bounced around different homes, he eventually hit the streets and survived. At 17 years old, he wears his dark hair short, cut carelessly whenever it's convenient, and he's skinny. He started skimming at 14, when an older kid gave him a hit of pigment, and he's felt immortal since then. He feels responsible for his friends, who are his new family.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Empathy 3, Firearms 3, Leadership 4, Melee 2, Security 3, Streetwise 5

Shade: Wisp

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Leader

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 8

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Inhabit, Unearthly Repose

SHARK

Shark (Kuan-Yin Li) is 19, Chinese, gaunt and nihilistic. He bears acne scars in the hollows of his cheeks, and his hair hangs greasy over his eyes. The studio Mi Famiglia

shares is in his name. He's an adept skimmer, sometimes traveling without pigment if he's in the right mood. He met Leo and his friends after eliminating a group of street toughs with a vendetta against Leo's crew. Shark isn't sure how long he'll run with Leo's family, but he finds it funny playing the hero for a change. When asked where he gets the ideas for the visions he manifests, he answers, "My dreams." Occasionally, he scares even Leo.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Firearms 4, Intimidation 4, Melee 4, Streetwise 4

Shade: Phantasm

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Deviant

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 8

Spite: 5

Horrors: Bedlam, Congeal, Helter Skelter, Juggernaut, Puppetry

OTHER MEMBERS

Squidge (Sean McIntire) is Leo's right-hand man, 15, red-haired and pudgy. He would have been a good kid if he had fallen in with a better crowd. He met Leo at the YMCA when he was 11, feeling estranged from his self-absorbed parents who fought their way through a divorce. The only kid more alien than himself was Leo, the orphan, so they became best friends. Squidge skims occasionally, but it always leaves him dry-heaving and edgy.

Seth Tanner is the heavy. He's 16, over six feet tall and built like a linebacker. A few years ago, a gang of teens who were a touch less naïve than Seth made him the patsy in their liquor store heist. For whatever reason, Leo stepped up as a witness to convince the officers called to the scene that Seth wasn't involved. Seth's outlook is simple... Leo saved him from jail, so Leo is family. The idea of skimming scares him, and he believes drugs are a pollutant that he won't tolerate in his own body.

Little Sister (Evangeline Santiago) was eight when four men she never saw robbed and slaughtered her and her family. She stayed behind as a ghost... they didn't. Little Sister shines a little brighter each time her friends release a young drone from his torment, and that's enough to keep them helping others. Leo isn't sure if he found Little Sister or she found him, but now that she's with him, he'll protect her with his own life. She's family now, too.

EXORCIST MOBILE, LLC

Jennifer clinched her teeth and tried feeling big, tried forgetting she was incorporeal. Digging her nails into her palms, she focused on fearsome and dangerous... The three-story house, built in the 1930s, groaned and shifted with a will its own,



asserting its dominance. Jennifer grabbed three quick, and essentially useless, deep breaths, determined to be ready.

A static charge built in the air, heralding Michael's shift into position. A house's wiring, he'd explained, was like blood vessels. Inhabit that, and you had the place locked down. His job was to ensure the house didn't become the next receptacle for possession... once they ousted the ghost from its current host.

Sensing Michael in the walls and ceiling sent a shiver through Jennifer. She felt watched because she knew he was there... high on pigment. It was obvious Michael was shooting pigment. She wondered why his wife Shauna pretended not to notice. His addiction made him an unstable element in their attack plan, and he wasn't the best choice to be watching her back. Jennifer shook her head and focused on the fight about to unfold. She needed to be calm.

Bertland's voice echoed from the foyer into the family room, where Jennifer waited. He interspersed chanting with explanations and instructions for the home owners, nervous yuppies in their early 30s who felt embarrassed and titillated that they'd purchased an exorcism. Bertland's chanting was unnecessary, but he found it reassured customers — and he always put on a good show for their cash. It made them feel they were getting their money's worth. Chicken blood and corn meal, with Bertland's rich Jamaican accent, preemptively eliminated all questions relating to his competency and efficacy. Jennifer snorted. They were part spectral liberators and part Vaudeville act.

A baby toddled into the family room. Jennifer dropped into a fighting stance and stretched her hands into sharp-edged flails. The boy's skin was green, while black boils erupted from the corners of his mouth and eyes. He bared a row of pointed teeth and advanced unsteadily on Jennifer. Shauna's projection emerged from the shadows and oozed into his small body, intent on evicting his current Skinrider.

The toddler's limbs went rigid, and his eyes rolled into the back of his head. He fell on his back, thick, white foam gurgling out of his mouth, and Jennifer could only hope that Bertland kept the parents from seeing this. The toddler arched his back, throwing out a ghost that shrieked with rage. Jennifer stepped in and swung.

The skimmer was a gaunt man... a quick and agile fighter. He matched Jennifer's skill in altering her gauze and formed knives on his hand, a blade for each finger. She landed another blow with her flail. He reeled, stumbled, then caught his footing and leered at her. She closed the distance and swung again, but he ducked, cut her cleanly across her collar bone.

Jennifer blinked in shock. The ghost stepped in, sliced her hip — deeper, this time — and dodged out of range before she could react. He laughed at her paralysis.

"Tell me you like it, bitch," he said, entirely too please with himself.

Something in Jennifer snapped. The ghost sensed it too, and his smile faltered. Jennifer took two deliberate steps forward, her arms melting and congealing into scythes. She fainted right, anticipated his dodge to the left, and embedded a blade in his neck. She kicked him in the gut and groin until he slid from her scythe. He went fetal on the floor, but Jennifer continued kicking him in

his kidneys, his spine and his head. She made no sound. She just worked with grim, jaw-locked efficiency, until Michael and Shauna wrestled her away. That's when she spun around and decked Michael for not backing her up like he was supposed to.

EXORCIST MOBILE, LLC

When Bertland Roberts discovered that his astral projection support group had members whom he could teach to skim through meditation, he promptly incorporated Exorcist Mobile, LLC, and ran back-page classifieds sporting the slogan, "Ghosts evicted, always discreet." Exorcist Mobile, LLC, now distinguishes itself from its competitors by avoiding uncomfortable questions as to the nature of the hauntings. When business became steady, Bertland grudgingly promoted his students into employees, complete with paychecks.

Second in importance to the group is Shauna, who surprised Bertland with her skill at skinriding. He didn't hold much hope for her initially — she didn't seem the go-getter type — but her enthusiasm for his classes compensates for her poor education. Bertland doesn't read anything into Shauna's attentive gaze and all-too-enthusiastic laughter. He's also oblivious to the sour looks he receives from her husband, Michael. Shauna's Puppetry is critical to exorcisms because she's strong-willed and skilled at pushing hostile Skinriders from their host.

Initially, including Shauna also meant taking Michael. Thankfully, his presence is no longer a burden since Michael is surprisingly adept at inhabiting inanimate objects, performing a service analogous to Shauna's. The real prize of the team, however (in Bertland's opinion), is Jennifer. Aside from the shine of her honey-blond hair and the distracting swing of her delicate hips, she is an adept Poltergeist. She shows excellent command of her Horrors and burns bright with Vitality.

MICHAEL SCHULTZ

Michael Schultz loves his wife and can't quite figure out how someone with a mug like his ever landed a woman





as beautiful as Shauna. He's an electrician from New Jersey, a world that has no psychic phenomena, but that didn't matter. He began using pigment after learning there was a magic shortcut into a place his wife loved... one that remained inaccessible to him. To hide his habit, however, he shoots up between his toes to avoid the telltale track marks on his arms or legs.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Finance 2, Intuition 2, Meditation 1, Streetwise 1, Technology 4

Shade: Haunter

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Conformist

Willpower: 5

Vitality: 6

Spite: 4

Horrors: Broadband Ghost, Inhabit, Witch's Nimbus

JENNIFER LEEDS

Jennifer Leeds began to suffer from lucid dreams when she was 10, essentially the first time her father hit her. Now 22 years old, she's almost finished with her degree in molecular biology. She wears low-riding jeans that flare at the bottom and chunky beads on necklaces. Fighting ghosts enables her to feel like a warrior instead of a victim, though Michael's addiction to pigment does frighten her, as it reminds her of how her father's alcoholism ruined her life.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Abilities: Academics 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Empathy 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 2, Science 3

Shade: Poltergeist

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Dreamer

Willpower: 7

Vitality: 7

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Anathema, Congeal, Helter Skelter

OTHER MEMBERS

Bertrand Roberts moved to America from Mandeville, Jamaica, when he was nine. After completing a bachelor's in Psychology, he landed a job at Terrel & Squib, helping projectors to cope with their jobs. After leaving Terrel & Squib, Bertrand earned a certificate in remote viewing over the Internet and hung out a shingle for his astral projection support group.

Shauna Schultz believes she has psychic sensitivities, inherited from her Barbadian grandmother. To date, she's successfully remembered two of her past lives and continues to seek others. In this lifetime, she's a cosmetologist who looks to Bertrand to unlock her latent abilities.

THE DRAGONS

Trillian scratched Sinatra between the ears and lay down across the back seat. Sinatra knew his job and stood sentry in the front passenger's seat. Trillian drifted.

Outside of the Jeep, outside of herself, she walked to the small church, steeling herself to reenter battle. Through the vestibule and down the narrow stairs, she remembered how Saturday-night slumber parties with Lutheran friends meant Sunday mornings in buildings like this one. She smiled.

When Trillian reached the door with the metal push plate, she drifted through. The snarling, embattled Spectres didn't notice her, but Dante registered her entrance and nodded toward Adrian. Trillian followed his gaze.

Adrian was fighting three of them. They snapped with pointed teeth, too many to fit in their mouths. Adrian had stretched his hands into long blades that sliced the air, cutting deep into the attacking Spectres. They screeched in unison with each blow. Adrian, however, looked dim and indistinct. His skill with Wing Chun still showed through, but his movements slowed. Trillian attuned herself to him alone and moved closer. As she walked, she mirrored his dance: Paak sau, juk jeung and strike. She knew him from the intimacy of sparring.

When Trillian matched his rhythm, she closed the gap and placed her hand between his shoulder blades. His parries and punches didn't miss a beat, and his gauze sharpened, regaining color and vibrancy. Satisfied, Trillian stepped out of his space and nursed the sweet ache of surrendering Vitality. It felt like donating blood. Adrian crowed and killed the Spectres with three quick thrusts, then he turned to engage others.

Many of the small hive's Spectres were already dead. Dante and Tameka had cut a large swath through them at the start of the raid. Trillian had surrendered a bemused smile when the pair, rooting themselves to launch their attack, had held hands, like children. A reassuring squeeze, and then, they opened their mouths, opening their souls and giving voice to every hurt, every horror and every fear that they ever owned. Even standing behind them, Trillian covered her ears against the keening wallop. D&T called it wailing, but Trillian thought "soul screaming" was more appropriate. It had sliced a tornado path through the Spectres.

Adrian and Aaron then moved to the front-lines, while Tameka and Dante dropped back to lend support. Trillian moved among them, replenishing their Vitality with her own and returning to her body parked on the street above when she felt weak.

Confident that Adrian was back in stride, Trillian looked for Aaron. She spotted him as his boot connected with a Spectre's head. She whistled to him. They met in the middle. His small smile was apologetic and grateful when she rested her hand on his sternum. Then, he was off again, back into the fray with a Doberman's enthusiasm.

Trillian cast a wistful thought for the breakfast bar in her backpack and turned for the stairwell door when a snarl dropped her into a fighting stance. Her Vitality was low, and a Spectre had seen her and was now advancing. It snapped its shark's teeth, foam dripping from its jaws, and lunged.



THE DRAGONS

The team met over two years ago at the White Dragon Wing Chun Kung Fu studio. Through their sparring matches and Friday-night roleplaying campaign, the five became close friends. When Aaron learned that they could rent projection equipment — sleeper cradles — from Lazarus Redux, they found a focus for their frustrations, the festering disease taking over their city. To Friday Game Night and Wednesday-Night Wing Chun Practice, add Saturday-Night Liberation Raids. It feels good to have a purpose.

ADRIAN COSMA

Adrian Cosma is a graphic artist and 3-D modeler. He alleviates the corporate-gray of his job with rock climbing and mountain biking — a good day ends with him bruised and bleeding. Adrian relishes the feel of a good fight, the red flash and thunder of pumping blood.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3



Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Computer 3, Crafts 3, Enigmas 2, Intuition 2, Leadership 3, Medicine 2, Melee 3, Stealth 2

Shade: Poltergeist

Lament: Sleeper

Nature: Mentor

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 8

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Congeal, Helter Skelter

TAMEKA BENNET

Tameka Bennet is serious about her LP collection. If you can't get it on vinyl, it isn't worth listening to or

buying. She's also a computer programmer and a firearms hobbyist, a surprising career move for a Banshee. She's one of two Dragons who learned how to skim on her own, though nobody can figure out how. She shouldn't be a projector. By all accounts, she's never had a near-death experience, though, perhaps a blessed life also means never knowing the pitfalls you've avoided.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Empathy 3, Firearms 2, Meditation 4, Occult 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2

Shade: Banshee

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Defender

Willpower: 5

Vitality: 8

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Forebode, Pandemonium, Wail

OTHER MEMBERS

Aaron Dobovsky is a Poltergeist and a sleeper, which he feels makes him better at Wing Chun (as his body isn't getting in the way of his movements). He is a hardware engineer for a computer manufacturer, which suits his gearhead tendencies well. He experiments with digital music and spends his winters skiing and his summers complaining about not skiing.

Dante Gavelli believes that projecting helps his writing. His first novel was picked up by a publisher and is currently undergoing endless editing and revisions. Magazine articles and advertising copy pay his rent and fund his quest for smaller and smaller Internet-capable devices. Dante is a Banshee, though the group often jokes that he only became one to spend more time with Tameka.

Trillian Vogel finds purpose when she's volunteering at the women's shelter. Playing career councilor at the local college pays the bills, but the shelter makes her feel needed. Maintaining her friends' Vitality as they rout Spectre hives makes her feel rather needed, too, as does her status as the group's first skimmer. In her private time, she finds peace in the rhythm and quiet of wheel-thrown pottery on an old-fashioned kick wheel.

Sinatra is Trillian's black-and-white border collie. His sharp blue eyes don't miss much. Intelligent and loyal, he's the perfect best friend, keeping Trillian safe while she skims.

The team's strategy for a hive raid is a long-range, wide-area attack followed by hand-to-hand combat, with Trillian running a one-woman supply line of Vitality to the others. Skimming, Dante and Tameka lay into the Spectres with Wail, while Aaron and Adrian supplement the attack's efficacy with ranged Congeal and



Helter Skelter. Then, the Poltergeists take the fore and pair Congeal with their Wing Chun training to kill the stragglers. The Banshees augment the fighters' reflexes and responses by tapping into the near-future with Forebode.

THE HYENAS

Alan rolled across his basement floor without getting up. His eyes scanned one of the three monitors providing the room's only light. Readings for Trent and Marcus checked out. Alan switched to another window and recorded the status check, meticulously logging the time at 2:21 PM.

Based on heart-rate, perspiration and theta-wave activity, Alan was confident his crucible had reached the church basement. They'd be collecting remnants now, scraps dropped from the jaws of those smarmy critters and traces of their hive. Involuntarily, Alan glanced at the containment chamber. Trent's "Grand Experiment" throbbed in response. It was the stupidest thing Trent had done yet — ballsiest, too. Alan couldn't guess at what Trent hoped to accomplish by collecting Spectre gauze, much less by cultivating it.

Alan recalled Marcus's hyena laugh. "Someone blows their nose," he'd said, quoting Ghostbusters "and you want to keep it?" Clever, that one, but it sounded funnier coming from Bill Murray. Marcus also needed a bath, which made everything he said less funny.

Alan verified the electrodes nestled in Marcus's greasy hair before wheeling over to attend to his other charge. Trent looked less like a murderous sociopath when he was skimming. Alan studied him. Trent's face looked almost sweet in its deeply relaxed state of forced meditation. Looking at him, Alan suspected Trent was just as surprised when their little souvenir began growing. Actually, he sure as hell didn't expect it to begin... sprouting? Birthing? Undergoing mitosis? What was the right word?

All Alan knew was, it was getting out of hand fast. He hoped he understood the containment technology better than he felt he did. This experiment was likely to explode in their faces, all to satisfy Trent's curiosity... or maybe ego... or both. Alan felt like he was holding a tiger's tail for the sake of hubris, and he doubted Trent would back him up when the tiger got pissed.

Trent looked serene when he skimmed. Alan punched him in the gut. A signal, Alan thought, justifying his actions. Time to come back. Then, Alan rolled back to the bank of monitors to log another reading: 2:29 PM.

THE HYENAS

The Hyenas are a crucible of convenience whose only interests are scientific exploration, discovery — and the potential to become filthy, stinking rich. The crucible's chief tech, Alan Villeneuve, has found a way of creating a magnetic field capable of affecting spooks. He believes it's the same principle that prevents ghosts from moving through the earth or through overly thick objects. Unfortunately, his tests are only successful on a

minor scale. If the group can somehow create an energy-efficient barrier against ghosts, then the Hyenas are likely looking at eight-figure deals for Alan's technology. Marcus and Trent feel obligated to keep Alan around and relatively happy.

ALAN VILLENEUVE

Alan Villeneuve designed and built the equipment allowing the others to skim without drugs or meditation. Because he trusts only himself to run it correctly, he doesn't skim. He feels like a mad scientist whose experiments are now controlling him. Some of his more observant co-workers at the aerospace research facility think he looks strung out. On lunch breaks, he fantasizes about Trent having an "accident" while skimming, but he knows the bastard would just haunt him more effectively. Alan tolerates Marcus because Marcus can get him electronics.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 3, Awareness 2, Computer 4, Enigmas 3, Intuition 1, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Science 5, Technology 5

Nature: Scientist

Willpower: 6

NOTE: Alan does not skim, since he's the only one who knows how to operate the equipment.

MARCUS RIEGER

Marcus Rieger likes knowing that the universe has a plan, and he skims with Trent if only to earn a small glimpse of that plan. Marcus has found a few amazing Spectral artifacts during their post-raid scavenging sessions, along with a ton of debris. He carefully itemizes each trophy in a small black notebook held shut with an elastic band, and it even includes the ones he keeps hidden from Trent in an air duct. Marcus's job as a technician at a computer-repair shop provides him with a steady supply of electronic components that "clearly need replacing."

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Computer 2, Enigmas 2, Intuition 2, Occult 1, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2

Shade: Poltergeist

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Bumpkin

Willpower: 7

Vitality: 7

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Helter Skelter



TRENT PHAM

Trent Pham is the smartest man on Earth, but he plays it down so he doesn't demoralize the rest of his team. Never mind Alan is the genius who developed the ghost barrier or that Trent's molecular biology professors didn't think enough of his work to graduate him. He has a good phone voice, allowing him to convince people to add Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance to their already spotty credit portfolios. This side job, however, is nothing compared to his basement research. Trent knows his ticket to greatness lies in uncovering the great power hidden within the remnants of a hive, so he listens obsessively to Radio Free Death for leads on successful hive fumigations. He uses Alan's passable skimming equipment to lead Marcus (with his annoying laugh) on clean-up missions whenever someone cleans out a hive. Trent occasionally dabbles in the growing black market of Spectral artifacts (some collectors have Kirlian cameras set up for their pieces), but he's convinced the real prize lies in uncovering the secrets of gauze.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Computer 2, Enigmas 2, Intimidation 3, Intrigue 2, Intuition 2, Leadership 1, Linguistics 1, Melee 1, Science 4, Technology 2

Shade: Skinrider

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Autocrat

Willpower: 8

Vitality: 5

Spite: 4

Offensive Abilities: Juggernaut, Puppetry

GHOST STORIES

Shadow Games introduces many new elements to Orpheus, but bringing them into chronicles or allowing the characters to interact with them may prove problematic. This section focuses on the major revelations of this sourcebook and provides a story to facilitate the Storyteller's job. As always, these story arcs are presented in rough form, enabling the Storyteller to provide for chronicle-specific allowances or to alter events as best befits her game. Before running these stories, however, we encourage Storytellers to read them fully and to consider their potential impact. If the Storyteller feels uncomfortable with a specific event because she isn't sure of its full ramifications, then wait until the next chapter of the metaplot emerges and decide then. These stories may be germane to the overall Orpheus storyline, but they may not fit a specific chronicle.

MISSION NAME: HUNGER

BACKGROUND

Uriah Bishop, head of the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, uses pigment to anchor souls to the hereafter. He does so to placate an ancient chthonic entity known as Grandmother.. Grandmother has a night-insatiable hunger and requires souls to sustain her. She also seemingly controls all the Spectres, who act as her reapers. Bishop believes that, by feeding souls to Grandmother, he can keep humanity safe from her fullest depredations. He also believes he can cement his power base among the living by allying with her. Whether this proves to be true or a horrible miscalculation remains to be seen.

THE MISSIONARY WORKS

The Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost purchased and renovated an old elementary school. This brick and mortar testament to the virtues of solid construction was completed in 1941, and it still stands firm. The mission is three stories tall, not counting the basement, with a 300-seat auditorium attached to the west side of the school. Beyond the auditorium are the cafeteria and a long dining hall. On the east side is the gymnasium and a concrete yard with rows of basketball courts.

Each floor of the school proper is rectangular, with stairwells on the north and south ends and a hallway running the length of the middle. Flanking the hallway on each side are four classrooms, except for the first floor, where offices and a small library dominate the west side of the corridor. All standard rooms facing outside have three large wire-reinforced windows, while the cult added showers to the restrooms on the second and third floors.

The cult relocated its library to the mission's basement, but it's kept mostly as a reading room stocked with religious and occult literature pertaining to the nature of death and the afterlife. Left unaltered in the basement were the facilities room, with the water heater, air conditioning, oil heater, circuit breakers and workshop. The janitor/repairman lives a primitive apartment with a cot and shower in the rear of the workshop, while a forgotten door behind a stack of storage boxes in the workroom leads to a crawl space under the auditorium's stage. Pipes, wiring and the occasional rat's nest fill the crawlspace, which goes all the way to, and exits, the cafeteria's kitchen (if you can crawl through a one-foot-square grill in the floor), the auditorium stage (via a trap door) and outside (through a small barred window). The basement also contains a large storage room where the cult stores all its nonperishable supplies. The storage room has a caged area for secured items such as pigment. The cult also maintains two sleeper cradles in a second,



smaller storage room, allowing trained and trusted cult members to enter the “sacred slumber” for a two-week period. During this time, they patrol the grounds protecting the mission, though it’s not uncommon for them to vanish as fodder for a hungry or ill-tempered Spectre. Understandably, the cult keeps these accidents a secret.

The first floor of the main building contains mostly offices, converted to serve as mission security, an infirmary, business and accounting and general clerical work. The mission’s main office still serves the same basic function it did when it was the principle’s office. A member of the Warden’s circle occupies the office, though Uriah Bishop rotates these individuals to keep the cult from having an identifiable figure in a leadership role aside from Bishop himself. The receptionists also help to screen calls and to spin doctor events when inquisitive reporters call for a statement or when potential recruits call seeking solace and answers. The offices also hold records for all Missionary Works members, who also serve as employees. The closed-circuit cameras, window alarms and motion sensors (all Kirlian activated) feed to the security room across from the main office. The remaining two rooms on the north end of the floor are for deep meditation and are often occupied by cult members. The receptionists include these rooms on their tours, though they’re mostly reserved for veteran members of the cult to engage in thoughtful contemplation or deeply intense prayer.

The cult converted all the rooms on the second floor into dormitories (housing 16 people apiece), with each containing eight bunk beds and two writing desks. The rooms also hold a devotional shrine with a painting of the “Holy Ghost” surrounded by a choir of angels. In the painting, the angels are delivering the word of God to a prophet and his disciples. The painting is masterfully rendered not in its execution, but in how the prophet and his disciples bear an uncanny, if not unexpected, resemblance to Bishop and his henchmen.

Five of the former classrooms on the third floor were completely remodeled into 10 special suites for the reeducation and integration of new members. The remaining three rooms are for meditation and education, where new recruits participate in group classes. All doors to the special suites can be locked from the outside to ensure new members are not disturbed by unwanted visitors.

The auditorium, the gymnasium, the cafeteria and the dining hall are largely unaltered, their purposes unchanged. Missionaries meet in the auditorium every morning to hear inspirational speeches and pick their new “assignments,” whom they approach with the Holy Word (remember, the Missionary Works rarely recruits folks directly, as it seeks a specific breed). The flock also gathers in the auditorium every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 6:00 PM for devotional worship, though only

the Sunday service actually serves pigment. However, the cult allows members to use pigment at any point in time, so long as they can pay for it. Those who can’t and who prove a liability to the cult for whatever reason (because they’re thoroughly addicted to and addled by the drug) are quietly fed to the Spectres.

HOOKS

There are several ways to introduce the Missionary Works to the characters. Here’s one ploy beyond “Terrence Green says...” or “Lazarus Redux instructs you to...” One evening, while the crucible enjoys an evening at Spooky Brews or is just leaving the Lazarus Redux facility, a ghost runs up to the characters screaming for help (she realizes they can see her or recognizes them for one reason or another). Her gauze is shredded and ragged, and her eyes wild. Spectres equal to the crucible in number are in hot pursuit. The ghost hides among the crucible, even if it attacks her, because falling to the Spectres is far more frightening a fate. The Spectres attack the crucible to reach the young ghost. Once the characters dispatch the Spectres, Carly (the ghost) explains the situation.

Carly is a member of the Missionary Works and was formerly involved with the Aphrodite Society. Her nightmares, however, brought her to the attention of the Missionary Works, where her addiction to pigment deepened. Despite this, she ranked high in the cult’s hierarchy, eventually earning the right to use the sleeper cradles.

Unfortunately, Carly’s addiction became severe enough to outweigh her usefulness to the cult. It placed her in forced cryo-sleep so that she might “reflect upon her state,” but the real purpose was to feed her soul to the Spectres and to provide a Spectre with a host body. Carly escaped her fate, but her body is still held hostage.

Carly really wants to go back and retrieve her body from the cult. Unfortunately, she remains an addict who needs time to detox... not that that’ll stop her from pestering the crucible mercilessly until it agrees to help her. If the crucible drives her away, she’ll turn elsewhere for help or even handle the matter herself, dying in either case.

Another, less dramatic way of introducing Carly is through Lazarus Redux (or through an occult contact or through Terrence Green). This method nets the crucible the same information, but it doesn’t have to fight the Spectres. If the crucible isn’t adequately motivated, then the contact requests the characters investigate the mission.

Several other hooks can be tied in with this adventure as well. Since they were presented earlier in this chapter, here’s a short review of them:

- **Cult Rescue:** Carly asks the crucible to raid the cult to rescue some of her friends.
- **Information Gathering & Infiltration:** If the characters announce their intentions concerning the



cult to allies, a background character, such as Terrence Green or a Lazarus Redux representative, asks the crucible to gather information on the Missionary Works to help fill in “the big picture.”

- **Assault:** Carly carries a secret in that she knows Uriah Bishop was responsible for Orpheus Group’s destruction. If the characters didn’t know this already, this information may motivate the crucible to exact revenge.

INTEL

There are several means to procure intelligence on the cult.

- **Just Driving By:** If the crucible drives by the mission, Dead-Eyes reveals a pack of Spectre Hounds (see p. 100) patrolling the grounds. If any character projects and is low on Vitality, the Hounds leap forth and attack, yowling and screeching the entire time. The yowling attracts the attention of Bishop’s “angels,” who arrive within a minute. The crucible better be gone before they arrive.

- **Bureaucracy (difficulty 6):** With one or two successes, the character discovers the local zoning office has a copy of the school’s original blueprints. The crucible doesn’t know about the modifications or the purposes of the rooms. With three or more successes, the zoning office clerk offers the paperwork containing the most recent modifications and additions to the building but not their purposes.

- **Investigation (difficulty 7):** Through newspapers, the local police precinct or just asking questions around the neighborhood, characters discover that several people have attempted to break into the Missionary Works to rescue cult members (for clients or because the cultist is a loved one). The cult always catches them, and it always turns the trespassers over to the police. There are rumors, however, that a couple of trespassers simply vanished while on the premises. Also, the number of animal attacks in the neighborhood has risen (thanks to a Chupacabra).

- **Security (difficulty 7):** The mission purchases security services from ARC Security Systems. It takes ARC about 10 minutes to appear on site if the alarms are tripped. The doors and windows are all rigged, and the windows have iron bars. With three or more successes, the characters learn that the mission does not hire outside security to monitor the grounds, using its own members instead.. They patrol in twos and carry walkie-talkies. Every exterior and interior motion sensor is coupled with a closed-circuit video camera that feeds to a central security room.

- **Streetwise (difficulty 7):** There have been virtually no local spooks ever since some ghosts figured out the hard way that Spectres haunt the mission. Mortal neighbors find the mission quiet and have few complaints, except for feeling creeped out. They also suspect the Missionary Works is somehow tied to the local animal disappearances.



THE OPPOSITION

Characters can expect the following obstacles to impede their progress (not including the Flatliners themselves):

- **Mission Security:** All of the windows are barred and made of reinforced glass, not to mention they're also patched into the security system along with the doors. They're very challenging to circumvent physically (Intelligence + Security, difficulty 9). Every hallway and room has a closed-circuit video camera and motion sensor paired with Kirlian sensors, which transmit data to the security room. The mission has a strict 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM curfew (though bathroom breaks are allowed). The motion sensors activate at 10:15 PM and deactivate at 5:45 AM. The video cameras are active at all times. If someone trips a motion sensor, it sets off a silent alarm in the security office and automatically brings up the relevant camera angle. An adjoining monitor also automatically plays the 30 seconds before and after someone trips the motion sensor, though on most evenings, it's a false alarm (a cultist using the restroom).

Two security patrols also begin at 10:15 PM. Patrols consist of two people with walkie-talkies, flashlights and taser pistols. There is a security officer in the security room at all times.

- **Intangible Defenses:** At least four Spectre Hounds and four Fetches (See Chapter Two and the Orpheus core book for more details) patrol the exterior grounds of the mission. The mission also keeps two sleepers on duty to patrol the premises.

MISSION SECURITY GUARD

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Intuition 3, Meditation 2, Melee 1, Security 3, Stealth 1

Nature: Defender

Willpower: 6

Offensive Abilities: Some security guards are sensitives and, thus, possess Dead-Eyes or even a minor Horror variant (Helter Skelter for telekinesis or Witch's Nimbus for pyrokinesis).

Equipment: Walkie-talkie, flashlight, taser or pepper spray

Name	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal
Taser	4L	10	1	1	P

MISSION PROJECTORS

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Intuition 3, Meditation 2, Melee 3, Security 2, Stealth 2

Shade: Banshee or Poltergeist

Lament: Sleeper

Nature: Fanatic

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 7

Spite: 3

Offensive Abilities: Forebode and Wail (Banshee) or Congeal and Helter Skelter (Poltergeist)

THE BRASS RING

The primary rewards are information and, possibly, retribution. There are plenty of opportunities for the crucible to learn about the workings of the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, and while we recommend this adventure act as the characters' introduction to the cult, it shouldn't result in the cult's downfall. Additionally, busting open the Missionary Works and helping Carly to rescue her body could help alleviate a few of the characters' Spite points (if the Storyteller so wishes).

MISSION NAME: BYOB
(BRING YOUR OWN BODY)

BACKGROUND

Terrence Green believes it's time for the anti-Spectre movement to organize, so he puts forth a call on Radio Free Death for all ghosts and projectors who are willing to help fight to meet three nights from now in a local soccer stadium. Unfortunately, while this provides the crucible with a tremendous opportunity to meet many supporting characters it has heard about or, possibly, characters it hasn't seen since Orpheus Group's destruction, it also reveals a traitor in their midst. Like Uriah Bishop, Klaus de Groot knows the Spectres represent a great danger, and like Bishop, De Groot is a megalomaniac. De Groot betrays the gathered assemblage to a horde of Spectres, believing he can step in to save the day. The Spectres, however, plan to deal with many a troublesome spook, once and for all.

Conversely, if the Storyteller wishes to keep the meeting friendly and Spectre-free, for the purposes of roleplaying, she can forego the Spectre attack and transmit Green's message via word-of-mouth. Regardless, this presents the Storyteller with ample opportunity to introduce new supporting characters such as the Freedom Fighter crucibles and the signature characters.

THE UNIVERSITY SOCCER STADIUM

The meeting takes place in a covered soccer stadium at a local university. The stadium is still under construction, but it is mostly complete. The inflated dome is in



place; water, electricity and air pumps are all functioning; and the stadium is clean and well-lit inside. The sports ground is a full-size soccer field, while the stadium seats 1,400 people. The dome is 118 feet tall at its highest point and maintains its form with support girders and higher air pressure inside the dome than outside. This means any significant gashes in the dome's fabric will gradually deflate it. Shutting down the air pumps or the electricity will also deflate the dome.

When and if the fight begins, there are plenty of weapons of opportunity laying around: unanchored seats, buckets of rivets, spools of cable and bags of concrete. There are also live industrial power cables near the construction equipment on the south end of the field for anyone who can use Broadband Ghost.

HOOKS

The best motivations are those the characters already possess. If the characters have any supporting or signature characters they want to meet or speak with, then use those supporting persona to draw the crucible to the meeting. Another useful lure might be if one of the supporting characters has pertinent information for the crucible and he will be in attendance at the meeting.

Lazarus Redux may ask the characters to attend as a personal favor (to show solidarity), or it may ask them to play security given their experience (if the crucible's been active since the Orpheus days). Otherwise, an allied crucible might make the same request of the characters, if only because they'd like to see some familiar faces at the meeting.

INTEL

There are a few things the characters can research before the meeting, be it the host, the potential attendees or the location. A sufficiently paranoid group should suspect something might go wrong, so doing some intelligence gathering couldn't hurt.

- **The Host:** There's not much for the characters to find out about Terrence Green at this point in the game. He's still keeping out of sight, but he is becoming more involved in people's "lives." This stunt is the biggest one he's yet tried to pull, but Green is desperate given what he believes are now inevitabilities. Now is the time to act.

- **The Guests:** If the characters decide to research the possible attendees, feed them information concerning the ones you want them to meet. That said, they may also learn about Klaus de Groot, a megalomaniac who tried to organize spooks under his banner several weeks back. Few who meet him have any kind words to say about him or even trust him. For further information about him, read the sections further down.

- **The Location:** If the characters study the location, let them know about the equipment on-site and

the building's exits. There's nothing significant about the construction company, the site or anything else related to the stadium.

- **Forewarning:** If one of the crucible uses Forebode to foresee the meeting, reward her with the following vision:

There is a man who shines on the outside but is as black as pitch inside. He stands in a crowd, in the middle of a huge tent, staring daggers at the ringmaster. The man lifts a megaphone to his mouth and calls into it, but a web of gauze covers the opening. The gauze quivers, transforming the sound into vibrations along the spider's web. The gauze tears, and tiny black spiders pour forth, biting, stinging and killing with their venom.

Hopefully, this is enough to alert the characters to the presence of a traitor in their midst. If they go and prevent de Groot from summoning the Spectres, they'll earn definite props from their peers.

THE OPPOSITION

The traitor is Klaus de Groot, a Skinrider. Once the meeting begins, de Groot reveals the location to his Spectre contact by using the Sotto Voca, a Spectre artifact that allows him to communicate with a specific Spectre. The Spectres it summons are up to the Storyteller, based on the crucible's strength and the number of spooks present. This can be a massive battle royal, however, with a dozen power effects being unleashed simultaneously. The Storyteller should include a few manifested Spectres so the characters can use the tools at hand. When the Spectres arrive, there should be plenty to go around. What's more, the Spectres want the Sotto Voca back and will attack de Groot with that goal in mind.

KLAUS DE GROOT

Klaus de Groot is pleasant to look at — healthy and charismatic — but he has a bad manic-depressive streak. For the past few weeks, he's been on a bad manic bender. He tried rallying people under his name, but his overbearing megalomania turned most potential followers off, and nothing came of his efforts. Defeated, he's in a dark depression and feeling vindictive. He figures there's no reason that Terrence-fucking-Green should enjoy success if he's only going to lead from the shadows, against an enemy that can't be beaten, no less. De Groot has owned the Sotto Voca for a while and knows it transmits to a powerful Spectre after a near-lethal test of the device. He expects a few Spectres to show up and scare the masses a bit, and once he's fought them off, he'll launch into a tirade against Terrence Green, advocating himself as leader. The problem is, de Groot seriously underestimates the Spectres who heed his call. He knows he can disrupt their concentration with it, but he doesn't realize how badly they want it back.



Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Enigmas 3, Expression 2, Intrigue 4, Leadership 2, Meditation 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Subterfuge 2

Shade: Skinrider

Lament: Skimmer

Nature: Competitor

Willpower: 8

Vitality: 8

Spite: 5

Offensive Abilities: Juggernaut, Puppetry, Unearthly Repose

THE BRASS RING

The crucible's reward is also your reward: contacts, contacts, contacts. Before running this story, review the goals of each character, and make an effort of having your characters meet supporting persona and crucibles who match their goals. If the crucible acts well at the meeting, it'll make a good impression on the supporting characters and become part of the community of Freedom Fighters. This means potential allies in sticky situations or new venues for information.

If the crucible identifies and captures de Groot before the Spectres arrive, it then gains the Sotto Voca artifact. The Sotto Voca looks like an old-fashioned loudspeaker in miniature. The device's trumpet is about a foot long and 10 inches in diameter at its mouth. To employ the Sotto Voca, a ghost or projector must sacrifice a sheet of his gauze (costing one health level that can't be soaked), which covers the trumpet portion. By then spending a point of Vitality while speaking into the

Sotto Voca, the user's voice transmits directly into the hive mind, alerting the Spectres of its location. The reason the Spectres want the Sotto Voca back is because the voice disharmonizes the hive mind. While someone is using the Sotto Voca, all nearby Spectres suffer a penalty of one to all difficulties.

MISSION NAME: A FRIEND IN NEED...

BACKGROUND

There's a strange ghost existing on the fringes of the city. She goes by the name Mother Mary, and rumor has it that she manifests unusual powers. Some spooks even say she knows how to use Spite to fuel her Horrors, thereby creating unusual effects. She's been tutoring students, but nobody knows if she's helping folks or accelerating their path toward Spectrehood. If the characters are smart, they'll ask her to tutor them. Everything comes with a price, however — in this case, a stormcloak.

Regardless of how the characters meet Mary, she offers them tutelage. Just as equally, she demands a price, this time in the form of a service. She wants the crucible to obtain a Spectre artifact called a stormcloak from a former acquaintance, who also happens to be a newly formed Spectre himself. The caveat in this scenario is that the characters can't kill the Spectre. Otherwise, they earn an enemy in Mother Mary.

PICK-A-PART

Pick-a-Part is an abandoned car-wrecking lot on the edge of the city, where rusted cranes carry aloft scarred electromagnetic lifting plates over the gutted-out shells of cars, some stacked eight or nine high in this metal graveyard. This is where Mother Mary set her roots, in the abandoned office shack, and this is where she trains folks, among the heaping maze of abandoned cars. She has three ghostly hounds and several dozen rat spirits that seem to enjoy her attentions and Vitality snacks. They monitor the grounds and attack anyone jeopardizing Mary's safety, including interlopers who don't receive Mary's seal of approval to be visiting.

HOOKS

Well, a picture is worth a thousand words, so the Storyteller can show Mary's prowess with Spite-fueled Horrors by allowing the characters to see her in action. The crucible happens across a lone spirit, Mother Mary, engaged in a heated battle with three to five Spectres (depending on whether the crucible is the type to pitch in and help strangers or to point and laugh). The lone ghost is holding the Spectres off, but the numbers are in the Spectres' favor. As the crucible watches (or joins in on the fray), the spirit manifests strange and unusual variants of several Horrors to good effect. If the characters help Mary fend off the remaining Spectres, she'll



offer them tutorials in using Spite to fuel their Horrors... for a price. If the crucible complains that they just saved her, she'll assert she was in control of the fight and didn't need its help. Her offer to teach the crucible still stands. If the crucible won't help Mary defeat her attackers, then she'll vanish using Storm-Wending, leaving the Spectres with new dance partners... the characters.

Reintroducing (or introducing) Mary is fairly simple. Perhaps Terrence Green or Lazarus Redux wants someone to verify her abilities. Maybe the characters are themselves curious of her alleged skills. If the characters haven't seen her use her Spite-fueled Horrors yet, let them do so when they arrive at the Pick-a-Part. Mary is finishing a tutoring session with another ghost, allowing the characters to see, firsthand, some of the strange and powerful effects that require Spite instead of Vitality. This should pique their curiosity sufficiently.

In exchange for her knowledge, Mother Mary wants an item called a stormcloak, currently in a Spectre's possession. The Spectre calls itself Black Dog, but Mother Mary insists that Black Dog not be destroyed. It's more important to allow Black Dog to exist than it is to get the stormcloak. Mother Mary won't say why, but she will tell the crucible where to find Black Dog. Afterward, she'll teach them how to use their Spite to good effect.

INTEL

Characters can pursue the following routes to acquire information about this situation:

- **Investigation or Intimidation (difficulty 6):** Questioning Mary's former students reveals that she's very knowledgeable about the nature of Spectre hives and artifacts. Her previous "fees" for teaching Spite use all revolve around gathering information and tools that focus on a Spectre named Black Dog, his hive, his patterns and his habits.

- **Subterfuge (difficulty 7):** Conversing with Mary may yield some clues, especially if the characters are friendly and approachable. Mary died alongside her lifelong mortal love, Jacob, in a car accident. Jacob eventually surrendered to his Spite and became Black Dog. Before he fell from grace, however, Jacob understood his Spite well enough to teach Mary how to use it to fuel her powers. Mary wants his stormcloak, to draw Black Dog to her. She's helplessly romantic and stubborn, believing she can rescue the man within the monster.

BLACK DOG

Black Dog is a mean, bitter and caustic bastard, but he is a Spectre after all. He's only been a Spectre for a few months, so he's still closer to his humanity than other Spectres are to theirs. Although this makes him comparatively weak, he's also far better at inflicting harm on an emotional and intellectual level than the average Spectre.



Before his fall from grace, Black Dog was the kind and generous Jacob Prisant, husband of several decades to Mother Mary. Jacob was also religious, and he truly believed himself Heaven-bound for a lifetime of good deeds and positive thoughts. But to find himself in a ghastly limbo, alongside his wife, who he considered of near saintly virtue, was enough to shatter his faith in the good Lord. Jacob's slide into his personal hell was slow and agonizing, and while Mary proved his sole solace, he eventually left her lest he bring harm upon her too. As a Spectre, he now enjoys using his presence to torture and prod his wife.

Black Dog inhabits a nearby hive, but his real haven is his old church, where he brings misfortune to the parishioners.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Intuition 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 1

Nature: Critic

Willpower: 6

Spite: 4

Offensive Abilities: Chill, Flicker, Maw

Equipment: Stormcloak (acts as Carapace +5B/5L; wearer can spend one Spite to Envelop one human-sized target, as per the Thorn)

MOTHER MARY

Mary Prisant always joked that Jacob and her were so right for one another that they'd be spending several lifetimes together. She never realized how cruel the universe could be in its interpretations. After the accident that



claimed both their lives, Mary made the best of their plight while Jacob sank into an increasingly foul state of depression. They still loved each other dearly, but Mary realized she was losing her husband and did the best she could to anchor him. He, in turn, loved her enough not to direct his anger against her, even going so far as to teach her how to use Spite to her advantage. That was before his fall from grace ended and he left on the verge of becoming a Spectre.

Mother Mary, as some affectionate spooks call the kindly old ghost, has never given up on her husband. She keeps tabs on him and, once in a while, tries to save him from himself. Mary's devotion is admirable. It's a love equaled only by her sense of guilt. Mary actually believes God relegated Jacob and she to this poor hereafter because of her sins. Before the pair had married, Mary discovered she was pregnant with Jacob's child. Between threats of the potential family scandal, their inability to support a child financially and the fact Mary still wasn't sure Jacob was the man she wanted to marry, she aborted the child. That decision has haunted her ever since, and it's a burden nobody else knows about. Mary never believed God to be a vengeful being, but her current circumstances have forced her to reconsider her position. Now, thoughts of her deed plague her, and Mary believes if she cannot rescue her husband from his personal hell, then she'll join him. Her tutoring of Spite usage is only accelerating her own path toward Spectrehood.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Empathy 4, Enigmas 1, Expression 2, Intrigue 1, Intuition 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2

Shade: Wisp

Lament: Spirit



Nature: Caregiver

Willpower: 6

Vitality: 9

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Forebode, Storm-Wending, Unearthly Repose, Wail

THE BRASS RING

If the crucible agrees to retrieve Black Dog's stormcloak, Mary starts to teach the characters the basics of using Spite to fuel Horrors. If the crucible returns with the stormcloak, Mary teaches them everything else they need to know about using Spite toward fueling their various tricks. If the crucible destroys Black Dog while obtaining his stormcloak, however, Mary conceals her rage until the characters leave but refuses to teach them anything. She then dedicates her time to hurting or destroying the crucible. In this instance, she offers to teach other ghosts about Spite usage, if they'll harass or launch hit-and-run strikes against the crucible. The odds this trauma will turn Mary into a Spectre are high. The crucible has earned a dark and dangerous enemy.

MISSION NAME: ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH

BACKGROUND

Lazarus Redux has a problem... a big problem. Tom Hayes, one of its top projectors, has gone bad. He turned into a Spectre and retreated into a hive in the local sewer system. Kate Dennison believes they can save Tom if they rescue him quickly. Unfortunately, all of Lazarus Redux's primary agents (unless, of course, the characters are part of the group) are unavailable. Kate needs an experienced, professional freelance team to rescue Tom Hayes from the hive, and that team happens to be the characters.

SEWER HIVE

Once you climb down the manhole ladder, you're in the sewers — it's that simple. The sewers are arched tunnels about 20 feet wide, with a canal running down the middle and three-foot walkways lining either side. As one approaches the hive area, the walls become lumpy and overgrown... something only the dead can see. They're enmeshed with gamy, web-like fasciae that barely cover pulsing green veins as thick as a human arm. Splotches of leopard-spotted mold float in the water and cling to the arched roof alongside toadstools with tiny writhing tentacles hidden under their caps. The air is thick with the odor of decayed cabbage and putrid mushrooms.

The heart of the hive is a hub chamber, with tunnels branching off in different directions. The ceiling opens up considerably here, though the pulsating hive set



against the ceiling limits any sense of real dimensions. Walkways encircle the room, where, at the center, rests a brown, sludge-like pool. This is a reservoir chamber, a collection point.

The veins on the walls run out of every tunnel to collect and climb toward their destination at the top of the chamber. The hive itself is like several large and interconnected wasps' nests, while the veins act as arteries to transport and disgorge small Spectres rapidly from one point in the hive to another. Unlike most hives, which grow in bulk, this hive is more spread out. The various veins and arteries all end at protohives being built throughout the city, extending this hive's touch over several square miles.

HOOKS

If the characters aren't already affiliated with Lazarus Redux, John Carruthers seeks them out and arranges to contract the crucible ASAP. Once the crucible learns about the situation, the benefits of assisting Lazarus Redux should be obvious. Lazarus Redux pays well (especially for this mission), the characters gain access to the Lazarus Redux facility, and they earn tons of brownie points with signature characters such as Kate Dennison and John Carruthers. This combination of factors should make the mission nigh-irresistible.

INTEL

If the crucible doesn't already know about Tom Hayes' history of family turmoil, the loss of his wife, his bout with cancer, his distrust of Orpheus and his daughter's horrible death, then Kate Dennison and Hoyt Masterson brief the characters on the entire ordeal. The two sigs can provide the events in *Shades of Gray* that finally pushed him over the edge. In short, Tom Hayes suspected Orpheus was responsible for subjecting his family and he to lethal situations to create the necessary near-death experiences required to forge projectors. Before he could verify this allegation, however, Hayes' body perished during the attack on Orpheus, leaving him a ghost. Subsequently, he lost his daughter during the tainted pigment fiasco, when Spectres kidnaped her soul and turned her into a Spectre. Hayes willingly became a Spectre to seek out and find his daughter.

Equally important to this endeavor is finding the layout of the sewers. Lazarus Redux knows the general area where Hayes was last seen. It knows he's taken refuge in the sewers, but it's not sure exactly where. Lazarus can provide the crucible with a basic street map, along with a map of the sewers below. Enterprising characters who conduct their own research (Manipulation + Bureaucracy or Intelligence + Investigation, difficulty 6) discover the maps are outdated but can find new maps to suit their needs. Characters checking out the area and chatting up resident ghosts before plunging into the sewers (Charisma + Subterfuge/Streetwise,

difficulty 6) can pinpoint the location of the sewer hive to a four-block area. This also reveals the types of Spectres infesting the area.

THE OPPOSITION

Aside from having to capture and return Tom Hayes intact, the crucible must contend with the hive's other denizens. The hive has its standard defenses as outlined in *Shades of Gray*, though, if they prefer, Storytellers can replace the hive's Spectres with those mentioned in Chapter One. Tom Hayes is also formidable on his own, so don't add *too* many more Spectres to the hive, or the crucible won't stand a chance. If the crucible can't incapacitate Tom Hayes and bring him back to Lazarus Redux, the characters should consider baiting him into pursuing them. This way, they set up a trap or bring him close enough to Lazarus Redux to call in support and throw him into a holding tank in the brewing room.

If matters turn bad and it looks like the crucible is facing destruction, then allow one or more Spectres to turn on their compatriots, giving the crucible the edge it needs to win the battle. The change in allegiances is only temporary. If the crucible tries to interact with the turncoat, it will attack the characters. Weird? Of course it is, but it's supposed to be. It's foreshadowing upcoming events.

TOM HAYES

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Enigmas 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Meditation 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4, Survival 3

Nature: Survivor

Willpower: 8

Spite: 8

Offensive Abilities: Claws, Congeal, Flicker, Helter Skelter, Tentacles, Virus

THE BRASS RING

If the crucible returns Tom Hayes intact, Lazarus Redux pays the characters very well. John offers them "favored contractor" status, which grants them access to Lazarus Redux facilities and resources. It also allows them to work on more sensitive contracts and nets them the respect Lazarus Redux's employees — especially the three primary partners.

If the crucible fails to return Tom Hayes, then Lazarus Redux assembles who it can and sends in its own team. It'll pay the crucible its contracted fee, but no more. If the crucible kills Tom Hayes, it'll create a huge rift in relations between the characters and Lazarus Redux. They'll have to pull a miracle-sized favor off for Lazarus Redux to ever work with them again. Even if



OOPS

So, there's poor Spectre Tom, face down in the gutter after the characters went off like a motherfucker on his ass. Is that a problem? Well, uhm, yeah, kind of, but not really. Tom Hayes' story isn't yet over, but never let that stop you from running the game the way you want. If you want him to survive, then perhaps he uses Flicker to escape, or maybe he's simply an ornery, tough bastard who won't die. Perhaps it wasn't Tom they killed, but one of many fakes running around. That tangent might prove interesting if Tom's jumping from ghost to ghost, using Virus to keep himself safe. Thus, it's not Tom who dies, but one of his three or four carriers.

they do, relations between the crucible and Lazarus Redux employees remain strained at best.

MISSION NAME: SLEEPLESS NIGHTS BACKGROUND

With all their meddling, the crucible attracts the attention of Grandmother's "special agents." These entities are more than just Spectres. They have enough presence and force of personality that Grandmother allows them "autonomy" in their actions. In return, they serve her faithfully. These are not mindless creatures of destruction, nor are they monomaniacal and obsessed with one little emotion or aspect of life or death. These Spectres are Grandmother's enforcers: They seek out irritants and then capture, convert or eliminate them as appropriate. They are as skilled in using their Thorns and Horrors as the characters are with their supernatural abilities.. They use strategy and tactics as clever as any you can devise. After their first encounter with these Spectres, the crucible should understand that Grandmother has agents that are as powerful and as capable as they are — the crucible should come to fear Grandmother's agents.

A cabal of three agents has monitored the crucible's activities for a while now. Perhaps they observed the rescue of Tom Hayes or the operations against the Missionary Works. The cabal may have even "interrogated" supporting characters that the crucible interacted with in the past. These Spectres understand the strengths and limitations of the characters, especially which ones are likeliest to succumb to Spite. They decided that the crucible has caused enough trouble. It's time to stop the characters.

DREAMSPACE

The cabal is capable of a nasty trick called Terrible Fancy, whereby the Spectres can attack the crucible in

dreams, pulling the characters into someone's dream in a reverse of the Phantasm Horror, Dream-Walker. Terrible Fancy also has Sandman's ability to affect dreams. The twist Terrible Fancy enjoys is that it can be used against someone who's awake. Given the Vitality link connecting the characters, the cabal plans on drawing the crucible into the dreamscape and attacking it there.

The dreamscape environment is dynamic and malleable. The principle danger is that Grandmother's agents operate together to elicit their effects, and they stage the nightmare in the head of a close, mortal acquaintance of the characters (to provide the link that Dream-Walker requires). Storyteller's choice as to the victim, but the mortal acts a bridge to the characters and eliminates the player propensity to feel violated or frustrated in these instances ("Hey! Why can't I do that? It's my character's head?"). This way, the Storyteller can also allow Phantasms in the group to war for control of the dream.

The dreamscape can be as average or as wild as needed. Much as the characters pool Vitality, the cabal can do the same with Spite. In this instance, however, one Spectre concentrates on affecting the dream's environment (use Sandman rules), another controls the dream's inanimate objects (use Inhabit), while the last one controls the dream's denizens to harrow or attack the characters (use the Spectre Thorn Virus). All the Horrors and Thorns have the same effect that they would in the waking world, except that, to survive the experience, the characters must either use Sandman to seize control of the dream long enough for them to escape or find some way of awakening the dreamer.

Fighting for control using Sandman is a matter of accruing more successes than the *three* Spectres combined. This enables the entire crucible to participate. So, while one character fights for control, the other characters must locate and preoccupy the Spectres, eliminating their ability to participate or contribute successes. The important thing to remember is that, in the dreams, the Spectres and the characters are neither invisible nor unseen. They have dream forms that can be killed, though the Spectres can withdraw at any time. Awakening the dreamer is also challenging. The dreamer has an avatar of sorts within the dream, regardless of the appearance. By identifying the avatar and either convincing it to awaken, jolting it awake through shock or hurting it to the point of near-death, the dream ends and the characters' consciousnesses return to their bodies/gauze. The same happens if the host dies in her sleep. Conversely, the characters may be able to end the dream by fulfilling the parameters of a particular fantasy or wish. For this to work, however, the crucible must



preoccupy the Spectres, who will do what they can to change the dream's factors to their favor.

Please note that the Horrors Dream-Walker and Storm-Wending do not allow the characters to escape Terrible Fancy because the characters are not physically present in the dream. Instead, it bounces them around within the nightmare.

HOOKS & TERRIBLE FANCY

Since the three Spectres attack the crucible, there's little planning required to introduce the characters to the scenario. Drawing them into the dream, however, is another matter.

- **Terrible Fancy:** Terrible Fancy works the same way as Dream-Walker and Sandman, except the Spectres must first use it on a sleeping mortal, whose dreams act as the protean stage. Afterward, the Spectres use Terrible Fancy as they would Dream-Walker, except this Horror acts more like a Venus's-flytrap, pulling in its victims' consciousnesses rather than allowing the Spectre to travel to a specific person. The reason the Spectres don't use this method more often is because it automatically costs them two Willpower per person (living or dead) whose consciousness they pull into the dream. The act is automatic, but with the caveat that, as a Storyteller ploy to involve characters in a situation, it shouldn't be abused either.

Now, Terrible Fancy allows the cabal to roll and combine the Spectres' cumulative scores together when determining successes. This pertains only to affecting the dream environment. This doesn't require actions on all the Spectres' parts, only the one modifying the environment at that time. If the Spectres are preoccupied with, say, combat, then only those not preoccupied may contribute to the cumulative score.

INTEL

Since this is an ambush, the crucible should have little opportunity to research and prepare for this mission. Once the characters are in the thick of things, they'll have to rely on their wits alone.

THE OPPOSITION

The three Spectres stalking the crucible are all experienced, having dealt with hundred of souls. It's been a while since they've had a real challenge, but they believe the crucible to be a rare test of their skills. They are all vaguely female in form, though nobody knows why they identify themselves using names of the Celtic Babd, the so-called War-Witches: Nemhain, Macha and Morrigan.. They also share Spite between them, much as the crucible would Vitality, though they don't need to see or touch one another to do so.



NEMHAIN

Calling herself Nemhain after the Celtic goddess of battle fury, this Spectre is a huntress in natural form. Lean, slender and shadow black, she remains near to the ground when moving and possesses wolf-like qualities. Indeed, she's exclaimed to many an opponent that she was once the ghost of a wolf. She prefers to hide within other ghosts and dream constructs until she's ready to strike out with savage ferocity.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Expression 5, Intrigue 4, Melee 3, Performance 5, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 4



Nature: Barbarian

Willpower: 8

Spite: 10

Offensive Abilities: Claws, Hive-Mind, Jugger-naut, Manifest, Terrible Fancy, Virus (except Nemhain doesn't overwrite her appearance over that of the ghost or dream denizen unless she so wishes.)

MACHA

The so-called war goddess is like a vision of ages past. This armored entity is covered in an almost knightly, nightmarish carapace and, while she enjoys the thrill of direct combat, is quite proficient in either inhabiting objects and items, turning them against opponents, or tossing them about in chaotic fashion.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5



Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Enigmas 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

Nature: Fanatic

Willpower: 9

Spite: 10

Offensive Abilities: Carapace (+5B/5L soak), Claws, Helter Skelter, Inhabit, Maw, Storm-Wending, Terrible Fancy

MORRIGAN

The final of the Babd is the raven goddess Morrigan, who also leads the cabal. She is the most mortal in appearance, with an ice-cold beauty, but her eyes are like onyx, and her voice echoes with the tortured cries of her victims. Sometimes, when the light hits her just so, one can see the withered old crone hiding beneath the gauze of beauty. Morrigan often controls the dream's environment, though she isn't given to overly fantastic or elaborate fabrications.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Empathy 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Linguistics 4, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3

Nature: Visionary

Willpower: 10

Spite: 10

Offensive Abilities: Forebode, Puppetry, Soul Delve (Morrigan can peer into the deepest corners of the target's soul [once he's within the dream and within her sights] and read the hidden hopes and fears residing there. Tap one Spite for a Perception + Empathy roll



with a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. Each success grants Morrigan access to one of the target's hopes or fears or allows her to understand that hope or fear in more detail. Morrigan can also spend these successes on a one-for-one basis for any Social-related rolls involving the target to reduce the roll's difficulty or to add a die to the relevant dice pool), Terrible Fancy, Virus, Wail

THE BRASS RING

Sometimes, survival is its own reward. In this instance, the characters can celebrate the fact that they've become a large enough nuisance to merit special attention.

EPILOGUE

TEARING DOWN THE HOUSE

This isn't so much a story as it's information on Uriah Bishop and his Flatliner crony, Ethan Torrance (who appeared in the "Proof of Life" opening fiction of the **Orpheus** core book). We leave it to the Storyteller to determine when and where Uriah Bishop falls, given the characters will likely pursue him on their own timetable. We've already provided ample coverage on Bishop's cult, the Missionary Works of the Holy Ghost, and his agendas, so the characters can pursue this course of action at any time.

That said... saying you can bushwhack Uriah Bishop doesn't mean he'll go down easily. Ethan Torrance is with him practically every step of the way, and there're ghosts and Spectres to worry about as well. Most accompanying ghosts are likely within the four or five Vitality

range, with one or two at Vitality 5+. The Spectres, however, might include a Reaper or two. And when that's all said and done... there's Bishop, one of the first projectors around, left to fight. He's both powerful and experienced. If the crucible plans on eliminating Bishop, it'd best bring a dozen of its closest friends because it will be an ugly fight.

URIAH BISHOP

Uriah Bishop's history is provided in Chapter Two, under the Missionary Works' entry. It's important to note, however, that Bishop does not consider himself evil. Manipulative, yes... perhaps even a demagogue, but unlike many others who profess greatness, however, Uriah Bishop is great, and he is helping to save the world.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2



Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Empathy 4, Firearms 4, Intimidation 5, Intuition 4, Leadership 5, Occult 4, Security 3, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 4, Survival 2

Shade: Skinrider

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Director

Willpower: 10

Vitality: 9

Spite: 6

Offensive Abilities: Congeal, Contaminate, Forebode, Helter Skelter, Inhabit, Juggernaut, Puppetry, Storm-Wending, Unearthly Repose, Wail



ETHAN TORRANCE

Ethan Torrance found his way onto death row following a string of brutal robberies and murders. Since he was already at two strikes, Torrance had figured he'd strike out for the third and final time in style... and do so by fucking with people's heads. So, Torrance murdered people and hid several of his victims. After the judge sentenced him for execution in the deaths of 12 people, Torrance would wait for his appointed date and then admit to another murder. This delayed his execution while he led detectives to yet another buried body and another bout of due process.

Ethan Torrance fit the perfect profile for Orpheus Group, having survived multiple dates with death both in and out of jail. He never believed in God or followed anything relating to a divinity, however, and agreed to the experiment because Uriah Bishop convinced him to join. Torrance was and is an atheist, even after having met Bishop and listened to his sermons. The only epiphany Torrance enjoyed was the realization that Bishop was charismatic enough to lead other folks, thus making him a definite player.

Ethan Torrance has followed Bishop ever since, knowing that the self-styled prophet of Grandmother was always pulling a con job. Torrance likes working for the man and prefers to serve as his enforcer. He isn't subtle enough to run one of the cults, and he knows it.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5



Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Drive 3, Firearms 4, Intimidation 4, Melee 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 2

Shade: Poltergeist

Lament: Spirit

Nature: Follower

Willpower: 9

Vitality: 9

Spite: 7

Offensive Abilities: Anathema, Broadband Ghost, Congeal, Helter Skelter, Inhabit, Juggernaut, Puppetry, Witch's Nimbus



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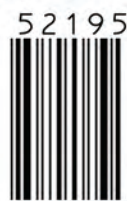
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