

A CHRONICLE BOOK FOR WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE

SCENT of DECAY



WEREWOLF
THE APOCALYPSE





WEREWOLF

THE APOCALYPSE

ROTTING FROM THE INSIDE

Milton has become a company town, and that company is Pentex. Between the rent-a-cops, the wasp fomori and the malicious spirits life there gets harder every day. Can a single pack of Garou scrape off the rot and turn Milton into territory they actually want to hold? *Scent of Decay* presents three pre-written stories set in the same small town and scenes which can be included in any **Werewolf** chronicle:

- **The Break Room:** A corporate fulfillment center seeks productivity at a terrible human cost
- **Shadows on the Prison Walls:** A trickster spirit tries to use the Garou for their own ends
- **A Pound of Flesh:** A rival pack and their patron spirit challenge Milton's Garou
- Guidance for character creation and session zero, useful for running these stories or any others
- Plug-and-play scenes showing Garou relationships with humans and their world, suitable to drop into any story

Scent of Decay is a story supplement for **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, a Storytelling Game of Spiritual and Environmental Horror.



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Manufacturer: Renegade Games, LLC. 306N West El Norte Parkway #325, Escondido, California 92026.
Importers: Renegade France 52 Avenue Pierre Semard 94200 Ivry sur Seine France. P:+33 (0)1 77 37 60 47. Renegade Games, LLC. Solar House 915 High Road London, London, England N12 8QJ.
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Made in Dongguang China

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LOT # 031324-01 \$35.00
ISBN 978-1-957311-49-4
53500>



9 781957 311494



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A CHRONICLE BOOK FOR
WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE





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Every time their gazes tug down,
They think us monsters, then men,
Predators, then persons again,
Beasts, then beings,
Horrors & then humans.

-AMANDA GORMAN, "LUCENT"





Introduction

S*cent of Decay* is the first chronicle supplement for **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, 5th edition. It's a series of stories set in the small Midwestern American town of Milton, that link together into a chronicle that will take a pack from its formation, through claiming territory, through their first steps into the Umbra, and finally into the difficult and tense relations of the Garou Nation. The pack will face a Pentex Group front, a manipulative trickster spirit, and another pack of werewolves with a grudge. They'll earn Renown and maybe even a spirit ally and earn their place amongst the local Garou.

Milton's a deliberately easy place to adapt to your own preferred setting: there are small towns just like it — struggling to survive, exploited by corporate interests and selfish politicians — just about anywhere. We have no doubt you'll be able to adapt *Scent of Decay* to wherever you set your games without losing a thing. The stories that make up this chronicle are designed to work as consecutive chapters in a pack's tale, or to be separated by other stories of the Storyteller's own design.

Inside this book, you'll find:

Assembling the Pack: Advice on creating a set of characters who'll work well together, identifying

and respecting one another's strengths without ignoring tension. This chapter also contains some background information on Milton, which will be useful when creating characters for *Scent of Decay*.

The Break Room: The first story in the trilogy puts the pack up against a Pentex front turning human workers into wasp-like drones. Productivity is everything.

Shadows on the Prison Walls: The second story takes the pack into the Umbra to address some of the less obvious problems afflicting Milton, teaching them a lot about the power, and the agendas, of spirits in the process.

A Pound of Flesh: In the final story, the meddling of the pack's mentor gets them into trouble and places them in a challenge set by the Horned Serpent to make amends: find a local Kin before her First Change, and make sure her Rage doesn't undo all the pack's work.

The Weaver's World: An additional set of plug-and-play scenes addressing the challenges that Garou face when they interact with humans and their world. Run these scenes as part of a story, or feel free to draw inspiration from them for your own narratives. ■





CHAPTER ONE

Assembling THE Pack

The first step towards playing the stories in *Scent of Decay* is creating a pack. This chapter contains ideas you can implement as you're running your session zero for the game, as well as character creation options that tie the players' characters into the events of the stories in this book.

There's a parallel between putting together a pack, a group of Garou your players are going to portray in the game, and the task of assembling a troupe of players to play the game. The better your players gel together as a creative ensemble, the more fun you'll have with **Werewolf**.

Of course, the purpose of the group is different: The Garou seek to fight the pollution, greed and devastation pulling down everything around them while your troupe seeks to have a fun and fulfilling game experience together. Fortunately, there are activities you can do during the session zero that are useful for both fleshing out the in-game dynamics between the characters and building trust and understanding between the players.

SESSION ZERO

During session zero (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, pp. 203–205) you have two goals: character creation and making sure everybody is on the same page concerning the game you're about to play. You can find more information in the Appendix: Advice for Considerate Play in *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 320.

You can start working on the pack's in-game dynamics during session zero by helping the players form a tighter ensemble. After all, if the players feel good about each other, it's easier for that feeling to translate into the relationships between the characters as well.

A simple technique you can use to build the ensemble with your troupe is to do rounds where everyone answers a question. The answers are not meant as the start of a debate and you, the Storyteller, can even skip your turn if you wish. The goal is to listen to what your fellow players are saying so you get a better feeling for where they're coming from.

A good first question is simply:

- * Do you have any questions about **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**?

Depending on how the troupe answers, you can tailor the rest of the discussion to their interests.

Here are a few more questions:

- * What do you hope to experience from the pack dynamic? (As the Storyteller, you can elaborate on the question to help your troupe: Should the pack have a leader? If yes, what kind of responsibilities do they have? Should everyone have a unique role, or would you prefer a more fluid dynamic?)
- * What kind of positive themes do you wish to see between pack members? Are you interested in stories of camaraderie, trust, or the thrill of the fight that playing a werewolf pack makes possible?
- * What kind of tensions do you think would be fun to explore within the pack? Do pack members have differing moral opinions on how to fight for Gaia, when killing is or isn't justified, or should each pack member contribute equally? Or is tension built around something more personal, like each member's individual need for glory?

- * Is there anything you're afraid of happening that would diminish your experience of the game?
- * What makes you excited to play **Werewolf**?
- * Are there any movies, comics, books or the like that you've been thinking of as references regarding this game?
- * Is there something specific that you think would be cool if it happened, or that you'd enjoy experiencing in the game? For example, a struggle for who's in charge of the pack, delving into the spiritual mysteries of the Umbra or intrigue, drama, and betrayal among the Garou.

The last two questions are especially useful for the Storyteller, making it easier to tailor the content of the game to what the players are interested in experiencing.

Once you have characters and they've been introduced to the troupe, you can do a few more rounds specifically about them:

- * What kind of things do you wish to explore with this character?
- * Are there things you want to avoid playing with your character?
- * What's something that holds you together as a pack?

That last question may spark a discussion, and that's fine — desirable, in fact. Each pack has its own problems, but there are reasons they're sticking to each other, and it helps play to know what they are.

CONFLICT IN THE PACK

Playing conflict inside the pack can be great fun. The ahroun is just about to rip apart the employee of an oil company when the philodox intervenes, arguing that killing defenseless people is not what the Garou are supposed to do.

When such conflicts stay between characters, they can create powerful moments in the game. However, there's a danger that they sometimes bleed over into the relationship between the players. Intellectually we understand that play is just play but when someone is shouting in your face, it's easy to get angry for real.

Building trust inside the troupe in advance helps with this. It's also useful for the Storyteller to keep an eye out for the escalation of conflict beyond in-game events. If that happens, the Storyteller can seek to pre-emptively make the situation less emotional.

Here are a few ways you can do this:

- * **Involve game mechanics.** If the players have been discussing things as their characters, you can turn the situation into a roll. Ask both to roll for whatever they're arguing for.
- * **Ask the players how they see the scene progressing.** Ideally, they should suggest different possible outcomes. If they don't, you can offer some additional alternatives. This tends to take the player out of the emotional space of the characters and subtly gets the players to work together to sketch out the outcome of the scene. While the characters are in conflict, the players cooperate.
- * **Cut to another scene.** You can take a break from the scene to see what's happening with the rest of the pack and then cut back to the conflict. On the level of the characters this changes nothing but for the players, watching other troupe members play for a few minutes allows them to relax for a bit and come down from the conflict. It can also help them think about how their scene fits into the

wider story, instead of just how it's making them feel in the moment.

- * Finally, if the conflict escalates so that it causes actual, real anger, the Storyteller can **stop the game for a moment**. The participants should discuss what happened, facilitated by the Storyteller, and seek to de-escalate the conflict so that it doesn't harm the relationship they share as players. Mutual apologies are often a good start, even if it doesn't really feel anyone did anything wrong.

Note that sometimes the Storyteller is part of a difficult situation like this. In such a case, they should still stop play and try to emotionally de-escalate and smooth things over. It's difficult, but part of their job as facilitator is to be able to step back and do this. If it's not going well, consider asking another player to facilitate the discussion.





BUILDING UP YOUR PACKMATES

When you're playing an ahroun, it's fun to feel like an unstoppable engine of brutal violence. When your character is a ragabash, you want to feel like a clever troublemaker who's always one step ahead.

How do you make this happen?

When you play a game of **Werewolf** with your friends, you can build their characters up. When everyone does this to each other, the result is a pack of Garou who are all exactly as cool as you want them to be.

If you want to make this happen as a player, the first thing to do is simply to listen. Here are three examples of things your fellow players might say about their own characters:

- * "My character is a theurge. She's been forced to grow up too fast and although she has acquired hard-won wisdom, there's a sadness behind her eyes."
- * "I'm a Silver Fang, but I'm pretty young and I didn't have a lot growing up. Being called by the Falcon into this tribe has been a confusing experience and I'm worried I won't live up to the expectations everyone is placing on me."
- * "My wolf-born character is a bit of a dork, especially among humans and human-born, but in a fight he's unstoppable."

The key is to not only note details like tribe and auspice but also pay attention to the overall concept your fellow player has for their character. Then, during play, there are several things to do to build them up:

Give Spotlight: When the situation calls for someone to represent the pack at the moot, you turn to look at the Silver Fang expectantly. This way, their player can portray their uncertainty without that uncertainty causing them to lose the spotlight during play. There's no need to be subtle about this. Especially if you're playing online, where it's hard to read pauses and body language, you can just say out of character: "Hey, you're a great tracker, right? Do you want to handle this?"

Hype: Sometimes the simplest methods are the best. You can simply hype up another character in a social scene: "Black Spiral Dancers? Oh, my ahroun friend will make short work of those. Wait until you see him in action!"

React to Reinforce: You can make sure to react when something happens in the game to reinforce the character of your packmate. For example, your theurge friend is talking with a raccoon spirit and rolls exceptionally well. You can say: "I knew the spirits would recognize your wisdom!" This also applies when handling failure. The dice might go against your theurge friend, but it's important to rationalize what happened in character: "These spirits were especially challenging to deal with!" rather than: "You're a bad theurge and I'm going to handle the next negotiation."

The basic mechanism that makes this work is the idea that a lot of character identity is built together, as a group, and not just by the individual playing that character. A character whose concept, Attributes, Skills, and Merits all suggest charisma becomes the social animal they are if all the other characters and players treat them as such.

One auspice excels above all others when it comes to building up their packmates. That one is obviously galliard. When your job is to tell the stories of your pack at the moot, you have a wonderful opportunity to build up your friends in ways that support their character concepts. It doesn't have to be all that complicated: Simply make their successes sound as grand as possible, ideally in line with their character concepts. Out of character communication can really help here: Ask other players what they intended or were trying to achieve with a great deed, so you can give them their due in the retelling.



UNUSUAL PACKS

Typically, a pack consist of Garou from different auspices. This way, each player has their own area of expertise in which they can shine. However, you can also experiment with other compositions. In the World of Darkness, a pack rarely comprises exactly 5 Garou with one representing each auspice: it's an ideal that just doesn't occur that often. If the players are interested in trying out new things, or just don't want to forced into one particular choice, the troupe can create all sorts of combinations.

Here are a few possible concepts:

Two Ahrouns: There are two true warriors in the pack and there's always competition between them. Who gets the most kills, who manages to save more people, whose deeds are talked about at the moot?

The Ragabash Pack: Most if not all members of the pack are ragabash. They're known troublemakers, getting kicked out of moots and making practical jokes on the esteemed heroes of the Garou. Some want to kill them, others desire to point them in the direction of the enemy.

The Spirit Guardians: There are several theurges in the pack, and they have a sacred mission to work with a specific spirit and keep it friendly with the Garou. However, each theurge has their own ideas on how to do this best.

Rebuilding the Nation: The Garou Nation is in tatters, destroyed by the internal divisions among werewolves. Yet the dream of being united against the Wyrms still lives and is the purpose of this traveling pack consisting of a few philodoxes and their packmates. They move from sept to sept, trying to heal old wounds and get intransigent elder werewolves to talk to each other.

The Band: A couple of galliards is all it takes to put together a band and the traveling lifestyle of being on tour suits the hunt for the despoilers of Gaia. If you want to play to type, the characters can be a hardcore punk band. If you want contrast, they can be an austere electropop ensemble or a mellow hippie band.

When you have more than one character from the same auspice, make sure there's something that distinguishes them from each other. Each should have their own strengths so that it's still clear when they can have their moment to shine. Ideally, have players discuss this openly during session zero.

SCENT OF DECAY: TOWN AND SEPT

The typical character for the chronicle is probably going to be human-born and working class, since that's the milieu they live in. They're a pack responsible for a dying town hollowed out by parasitic corporations. That's not to say everyone should expect to play a character like that. Towns are more than demographic trends, and characters may not be locals at all, but it's a good indication of the type of humans who will be around the characters throughout the story, and from whom they might draw local contacts.

In terms of choice of auspice, all have their moments to shine. Ahrouns should find opportunities to rip enemies to shreds in the first story. In the second, galliard storytelling can come to the fore and theurges can be especially useful. In the third story, the social abilities of the philodox can be of crucial importance, as long as they're backed with a range of other abilities. And of course, in every story, a ragabash may invent new approaches that change the nature of the game. Every auspice, and every tribe, will work just fine for this chronicle. Ghost Council Garou might have an especially interesting time with the final story, as the tribe's Patron Spirit Horned Serpent makes an appearance. Once the players have named the pack their characters belong to, it's time to discuss the town they live in.

MILTON

A small former farming town in the Midwestern U.S., in long decline. If it fits your troupe, you can let the players choose background elements relevant to the story for their characters from the following list:

A Bad Job Market: You've tried to apply for work at the Val-MOR warehouse and fulfillment center and you've been rejected twice. It stings, especially because you know people who did get jobs there, one of whom is a former classmate of yours. You're not sure if he still works there.

Economic Warfare: After your Rite of Passage, you developed the idea that stealing from big companies was essentially economic warfare for the sake of Gaia, so you used to go to the local Val-MOR superstore for the purposes of petty theft. Since then, you may have started

to consider theft as unworthy of Gaia's warriors, or perhaps you still view such acts as entirely valid.

Working Security: You've worked at the local Val-MOR superstore as a security guard, doing a lot of excruciatingly boring night shifts where nothing happened. Sometimes you noticed people you knew stealing from the store and turned a blind eye. The company didn't pay you enough to turn on your community.

Cheering for the Home Team: Your family was always big on sports. Some of your fondest early memories are of everyone in your living room exploding into a cheer at the victory of a team you supported. Sometimes you went to see matches at the Val-MOR-sponsored Values Field. That was great!

Dead Center: Somehow Milton's downtown seemed much more alive in your memories of going there as a child. Now there are a lot of empty storefronts, just a couple of businesses like Red's Gas and Danielle's Restaurant still surviving.

All Cops Are Bastards: Or private security, in this case. Milton is too small of a municipality for its own police department. Formal investigations are officially under the County Sheriff's authority, but usually fall in practice to security firms hired by Val-MOR, since those resources are spread thin. They handle anything that threatens Val-MOR's interests. Locally, that means Noctis Security Solutions, a private security firm with ties to Pentex Group. They have an office at the Val-EVENMOR store. If you've grown up in the town or spent much time there, odds are you've been beat up at least once by one of their goons for a trivial reason like throwing a rock at their cars or just not fitting in.

If each character incorporates one element, all are connected to Milton. Feel free to adjust the elements so they fit the character concept. You should also consider how the characters' Advantages and Flaws tie with these elements or other features of Milton. Is a Garou's Day Job at the Val-MOR warehouse? Do they have an Ally or Enemy at Noctis? For more unusual character concepts, such as a Red Talon who only recently had their First Change or a Glass Walker high roller who recently came into town, you can find different ways of connecting them to the milieu.

For example, perhaps the Red Talon tried to fit into human society by taking a job as a security guard at the Val-MOR superstore, only to be fired because of insufficient understanding of workplace hierarchy. Or the Glass Walker may have hired Noctis Security Solutions for the protection of a property they bought in town, only to be horrified at how they beat up trespassing teenagers.



THE SEPT OF THE FAR WATCHER

It's an axiom among the Garou that there are not enough werewolves to fight all their enemies. For the Sept of the Far Watcher, that's long been apparent. The sept watches over a wide region, each of its packs assumed to be responsible for their own territory. You can ask for help but should always assume that your septmates are in the middle of their own desperate struggles, the same as you.

This is the sept the characters' pack belongs to.

The sept is named for a legendary Silent Strider of old, said to be one of its founders. In recent years, the name has become a joke among the sept's members: It covers so much territory, you only see your neighboring packs from afar. In this sense, the sept is more a formality than a community, a tacit agreement of cooperation between packs that don't meet all that often.

The sept's territory contains a small level 1 caern, the Glittering Glade, about an hour outside Milton. It's on brownfield land, abandoned mud and muck stained by industrial pollution. At night, it's apparent that the caern

is not completely dead when the last few luminescent insects crawl from their holes in the ground, momentarily distracting watchers from the devastation all around.

The sept is led by an aging Shadow Lord philodox, Rib-Bone Dariga. She has an imposing reputation, having grown up on the Kazakh Steppe before coming to the U.S. as a teenager and experiencing her First Change. Although she doesn't come across as a diplomat, she has a knack for bringing the packs together every once in a while, if only through intimidation.

Her own pack is called the Broken Fang and also features Mother Louise, the polar opposite of old Rib-Bone in attitude and approachability. Mother Louise is an ideal mentor figure for the characters: she's heavily involved in the entire chronicle, giving advice, making requests, and quietly shaping the characters' destiny. She is ideal for a character's Mentor Background and having her at the pack's back would be a great boon to them. For a chronicle centered on Milton, consider giving Mother Louise as a free 1-point Mentor to a suitable character. Her full profile is in 'The Break Room,' p. 36. ■

The Rakshaks

Milton used to be under the protection of a pack of Garou known as the Rakshaks, who have recently abandoned it to the predations of the Wyrms' servants. The players' characters' pack is free to move in on this unclaimed territory. The Rakshaks have a good reason for what they did, and they are the focus of the third story in this book, *A Pound of Flesh*. If you intend to run *Scent of Decay* as a chronicle, it is a good idea to foreshadow the return of the Rakshaks in the previous adventures. As members of the same sept, they might be even known to the characters, but as they are staying well away from Milton until the third story, they are not Relationship Map material.

You should also consider whether the pack want to make Milton their own territory or if they are here just to solve the immediate problems. In *A Pound of Flesh*, the Rakshaks will press their own claim on Milton, and more conflict means more story.



CHAPTER TWO

The Break Room

"The folks on the front lines—the ones who actually talk to the customer—are the only ones who really know what's going on out there."

—SAM WALTON

The Val-MOR corporation's fulfillment center is the biggest single employer in the small town of Milton. It's effectively a company town. Orders came down from Val-MOR's parent company, Pentex Group, to embark on a worker efficiency improvement plan — one of the rare Pentex operations that inflicts a supernatural, rather than banally capitalist, malaise. The program's linchpin is an artifact that lures Weaver-spirits corrupted by the Wyrms into the bodies of desperate workers to turn them into self-destructive, mindless servants. Slowly but surely, the program took hold and infected a significant number of workers with Banes.

Content Warnings

Body horror, lack of consent, dental gore, insects, mind control, restraints, violence towards animals (rats), torture.

THE FOE

Val-MOR is one of many giant big box store franchises. Most people dash in when they want to do a little one-stop shopping. They can pick up prescriptions, toilet paper, a toy for the kids, and anything else they can fit in one of the distinctive golden carts that litter the aisles. The Val-MOR store has become the heart of many small towns in the past few decades, usually by undercutting local merchants, paying off local officials, and hiding behind corporate lawyers.

These stores need vital logistical support (not to mention the online shopping of platform Val-MOR Xtra, which flourished over the past few years). That's where fulfillment centers come in. These massive warehouses keep the inventory flowing and make sure that shipments arrive on time. Often, they rely on human workers who pay the cost of fast shipping with overextended shifts, workplace injuries, and promises of stable work that never materialize.

Even under these unsustainable conditions, the revenue line must go up. When large fulfillment centers like Milton failed to drive profit, Val-MOR's corporate parent, Pentex Group, sent one of its Risk Management Specialists to Milton to try an unusual method of improving the warehouse's performance. He told local management he has access to a proprietary technique that raises the productivity of problem employees. Buried deep within the paperwork of this program is consenting to be turned into a fomor. One by one, the warehouse workers have been exposed to a piece of a Vaegesti Bane hive by the specialist, Mr. Davis Mersey. The results have been promising. Minimal exposure has achieved the expected results of better efficiency and the building of a hive mind connecting the workers. Those humans overexposed to the hive piece are transformed into wasp-husks, uncanny fomorian combinations of flesh, spirit, human, and wasp.

Those humans overexposed to the hive piece are transformed into uncanny combinations of flesh, spirit, human, and wasp.

The transformations at the warehouse have been mostly kept under wraps until now. At a recent Little League game, a confrontation between a parent and an official went viral when the parent manifested a large wasp stinger from her arm during the argument. Most folks who saw the video wrote off the so-called "Karen the Wasp Queen" video as a bit of special effects trickery, camera glitch, or as an ad for an upcoming horror film, but when the pack sees it, they know it's real. They head to Milton to investigate.

Exactly where they're coming from depends on the other stories you've run before this one, but it should be nearby, so that the pack don't need to worry about intruding on someone else's territory to get involved.

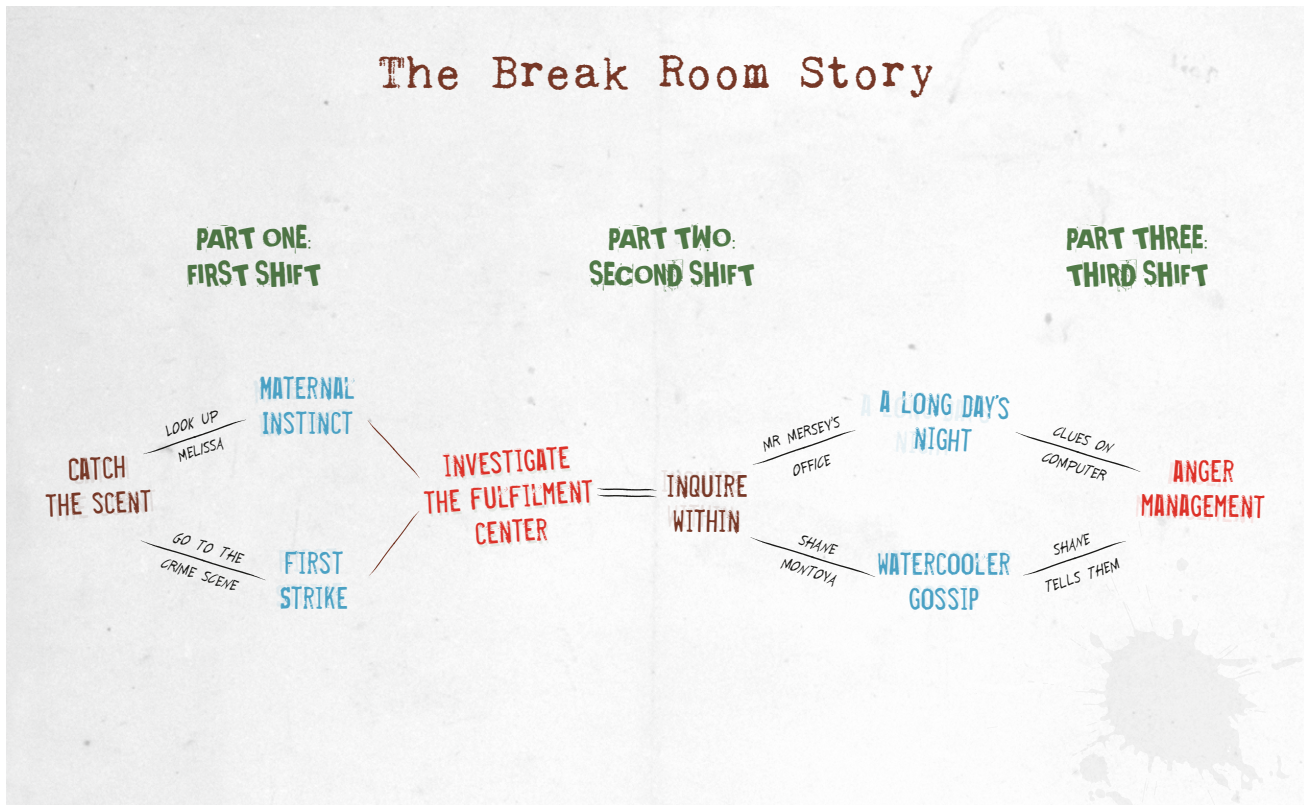
STORY STRUCTURE

This story has three chapters.

In "**Part One: First Shift**", the pack comes to Milton after seeing a viral video of a strange encounter during a kids' baseball game. Their inquiries reveal something strange is going on and it's connected to a nearby fulfillment center just off the highway.

In "**Part Two: Second Shift**", the pack investigates the warehouse. The Garou find more evidence of what's going on, along with uninfected humans who need their protection.

In "**Part Three: Third Shift**", the pack finds the artifact being used to infest the workers with Banes and change them into fomori. These spirits won't let them destroy it without a fight.



CATCH THE SCENT

The pack could come across the video of the manifestation on the internet. They might initially brush it off as a fake but someone close to them, which could be a local spirit ally or a Garou mentor, confirms it's real. Their Patron Spirit might even confirm it through a dream or vision, which amplifies the strangeness of what's going on. It also allows the Storyteller to give additional hints during the investigation with further visions.

If the pack is relatively new, they may be sent to investigate Milton by Mother Louise, a philodox Child of Gaia who lives in the area. She invites the pack to a dinner at her house and shows them the video. She believes this young pack needs some seasoning and getting to the bottom of what caused this intrusion of the spirit world is just the sort of experience they need. At the end of the dinner Mother Louise suggests they track down the woman in the video or visit the location where it was filmed. This approach highlights a bit of Garou politics and establishes the pack in sept intrigues.

A friend or ally that knows the true nature of one

of the Garou could come to them with details about the incident. This person recently moved to Milton and got a job at the fulfillment center. They've had a feeling something weird has been going on but had nothing beyond a vibe until the video spread through the town like wildfire. This approach puts the danger to mortals front and center which provides a chance for the pack to feel like protectors — but their friends may be endangered as the plot moves forward.

The pack might want to poke around the town to get an idea what's going on and might visit a location in search of Karen the Wasp Queen. Finding out her real name and where she lives gives characters that invested in Investigation and Persuasion dice pools a chance to flex their muscle. Use the difficulty of the Storyteller characters as a guide but still give the characters the information if they fail. Instead, the failure represents the townspeople feeling a little suspicious of these strangers asking questions. Raise the difficulty of that character's interactions with local Milton residents by 1 until the end of the story. A Brutal outcome might extend the penalty to the whole pack, raise the difficulty by 2, or have some other appropriate negative result.

Everytown, U.S.A

As written, we envision Milton as a small Mid-western American town near a large patch of nature like a state or national park. Fulfillment centers like the one at the heart of the story dot the countryside to ensure the forces of commerce keep moving. However, Milton can easily be moved and personalized to fit whatever territory your pack calls home. In a more densely urban environment such as Central Europe, or the U.S. East Coast, Milton could also be a stagnant suburb of a larger metropolis, one that the local police cannot be bothered with, possibly because they have been bribed not to. Fulfillment centers and similar complexes for storing and moving massive amounts of stuff are necessary infrastructure for consumer culture, but the center could also be a storage facility at the other end of the production chain, holding raw materials like rare earth minerals for shipping to manufacturing plants.

The state park can just as well be an empty industrial lot. The key elements of Milton are corporate exploitation and spiritual malaise, and those are in ample supply worldwide.

MILTON: A QUIET LITTLE MAIN STREET

The town of Milton exists a few minutes off a major highway. Old farmhouses and new construction dot the land. Milton proper has only one major street: Main Street. It was once a thriving small town center. It was dotted with local shops, places to eat and plenty of places to stop and sit for a bit. These local businesses sponsored events like parades and charity fund drives. Folks from the area could get together and talk over dripping ice cream cones and kids dashing around looking for Halloween candy. That dream has long since faded into the past.

Today, Milton suffers under the pall of stagnation and decay. About ten years ago, a Val-MOR opened at one end of Main Street. That store grew until it became a Val-EVENMor five years ago. What was once a discount store grew into a grocery, pharmacy, and a food court. All these expansions came at the expense of local businesses. They couldn't compete with the prices and the economic leverage that Val-MOR brought to bear as a national corporation. The town is sinking under a combination of corrupt, self-indulgent public officials and the inability to oppose the unregulated corporate interests that see Milton as either a profit center or a tax write-off.

Clock Tower: The main feature of Main Street is a miniature clock tower that sits in the center of a roundabout, built some 20 years ago in place of the town's only stoplight. The clock tower is modeled after the Rathaus-Glockenspiel in Munich, Germany. It was a gift from a wealthy resident, Miriam Kessler, upon her death. The clock tower stands thirty-two feet tall and chimes at noon on the weekdays and every daylight hour on Sundays. Kessler hoped the reproduction would spark a renaissance of Milton as a roadside attraction, but it never really came to fruition. It is also the focus of some unusual things in the Umbra. See p. 54 for details.

Diner: Danielle's Restaurant looks out over the clock tower. This coffee spot features faded pink chiffon decor heavy on fading painted flowers. It used to be full every morning but now mostly caters to senior citizens who don't want to get caught up in line at the Val-EVENMor chain coffee installation. There's a scattering of die-hard customers that come for the conversation over the coffee. This diner is one of the last bastions of open resentment towards Val-MOR in Milton.

Newspaper: *The Milton Gazetteer* makes its home in a small storefront sandwiched in between Danielle's and Red's Gas. There hasn't been a physical paper in years, but that hasn't stopped LaShonda Bryant from trying to make a go of it as an online paper for the past few years. LaShonda retired to Milton after accepting a buyout at her big city newspaper but can't seem to settle down into a life of leisure. She lives with her grandson, Mo, above the newspaper office.

Gas Station: Red's Gas has been around since Milton was mostly cow pasture. The new owners, Cahya and Putri Wenda, bought the station from Red's family shortly about five years ago. One of them is always on the premises, with various high school kids manning the counter. Cahya has a shotgun behind the counter but has never loaded or fired it. His wife, Putri, insists he keeps the shotgun shells in the safe.



New Age Store: 7-Uptown began as a New Wave healing store but Lyndzi Wigmore has changed the inventory multiple times to keep the place afloat. Currently, they offer handmade soaps and yarn and claim to have a section for each one of the chakras that give the shop its name. Lyndzi's studies of the occult and recreational drug use make them the one person in town most likely to accept discussion of wasp-Banes and other occult matters at face value. The shop likely still carries plenty of strange New Age supplies. Although they have no idea of the sacred or practical nature of these items, many of them could prove useful to the Garou, should the need for any rituals to fight the hive arise.

Bar: Ernie's, on the corner opposite Red's Gas, offers a place for people who want a quiet, third location to drink. Ernie is actually named Barry Cheek, but because he was too cheap to change the sign after he bought the bar, he's just accepted being called Ernie. Employees from both Val-MOR facilities have come here to unwind after their shifts. Ernie turns a blind eye to the underage employees drinking, though he won't serve them more than two drinks. Mr. Mersey has considered using this fact to turn Ernie into a spy for the company.

PART ONE: FIRST SHIFT

The pack arrives in Milton ready to investigate the strange reports of the fight at the Little League game. They can either track down the person involved in the altercation or check out the baseball field. Both routes offer clues that point to the fulfillment center.

MATERNAL INSTINCT

The parent involved in the baseball incident is Melissa Barnard. Folks in town are more than happy to gossip about her and even inform anyone asking about her that she lives on the south side of town, in the Liberty Bell Townhouses. The Little League official involved in the incident was with the visiting team and is no longer in Milton.

The townhouses were built nearly 50 years ago. A half dozen buildings scatter the length of Ross Avenue off Main Street. Each of these buildings contains two homes built side-by-side. They are a combination of brick facades, white siding and Colonial-style shutters and lines. The landlord makes little effort made to fix up these buildings, doing the bare minimum maintenance

to keep them from falling apart. The lawns are long and yellowed due to a lack of rain. It's as if these buildings were put here in anticipation of a new expansion of Milton that never really came, even when Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23 moved in down the road.

People Will Talk

A viral video like Karen the Wasp Queen shakes up a quiet town like Milton. Everyone has an opinion on it. If the Garou ask around, they'll hear all sorts of wild stories. These distortions offer the Storyteller to foreshadow some later story beats or point players towards other story elements. Folks might say it's a recruitment video for the fulfillment center. Others might point out how Melissa is probably just seeking attention for herself. Others take a sympathetic view knowing that she works long hours at the center and everyone who does is on edge. One of Danielle's regulars might even offer up their theory that the clock tower is some sort of corrupted spiritual beacon that needs to be cleansed through exorcism.

Melissa Barnard moved into one of the townhouses three years ago. She wanted to start over after a painful divorce and brought her nine-year-old son Sammy back to the small town where she grew up. She wasn't expecting it to have changed so much and didn't expect to struggle with money as much as she had. She works from home most days as a customer service representative taking calls for Val-MOR, but that isn't sufficient to cover her expenses. Now she also works part-time at the fulfillment center.

Even without the Vaegesti burrowing inside her, two jobs are taking their toll on her health. Melissa's long blond hair has begun to frizzle out and thin. She has a chronic runny nose that she hasn't been able to shake since she started working at the warehouse. Her eyes are outlined by dark circles, and she rarely wears anything besides gray sweatpants and long-sleeved shirts. Some days she's too tired to take off the bright-green high visibility vest she's required to wear inside the fulfillment center and sleeps in it.

Sammy, now twelve, has adjusted to his new life. He does well in school, plays Little League, and is generally well-liked by his peers and teachers. Some of that is because of his generally easygoing personality. He's mostly left to his own devices as his mother is either working at home, working at the fulfillment center, or sleeping. He's very observant and it should become clear to the pack that he's noticed things around Milton that the adults have not.

Even without the Vaegesti burrowing inside of her, two jobs are taking their toll on her health."

The main living area of the townhouse has become Melissa's office and often her bedroom. She's often too tired to make it to her room upstairs and crashes on the couch after her shifts in the warehouse. Laundry baskets flank the small dining table where she's set up her work from home office. The small kitchenette has pizza boxes and takeout containers scattered across every flat surface. Upstairs there are two bedrooms and a small bathroom. Melissa's room looks unused. Sammy's room is full of tween boy clutter dominated by a bulletin board full of cryptid printouts looming over his messy desk.

Talking to either Melissa or Sammy requires some sort of cover story. They won't open up just because they're asked about the video. It may seem risky, but Melissa has few friends outside of work. It takes a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 2) to get her to open up. A critical win on any of the interview questions means Melissa will keep answering questions unless the pack insults her or accuses her of lying. Pointing out that she's lying results in her asking the pack to leave at first and then threatening to call the police if they refuse. Garou using supernatural gifts, rites, or talismans that allow the Garou to perceive the Umbra, such as Shadow Sense, notice something unusual about Melissa. There is a spiritual presence that's bound to her, but the connection is spotty like a bad cell phone signal.

Melissa is terribly frightened about what happened at Values Field. Her hand is unbandaged, but she hides a scar near her wrist where the bone spur tore through her flesh. Noticing it requires a Wits + Medicine test (Difficulty 3). She's also lying about the answers to not remembering anything about what happened. A Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 3) alerts the investigator to the lie. After the first failure, Melissa abruptly declares she must get ready for work and pushes the pack members out the door.

Found Family

Kids offer unexpected insight because they see things from unique perspectives. Sammy not only has that perspective but because of his obsession with cryptids he's open to some of the broader ideas hidden in the World of Darkness. Storytellers looking to complicate the pack's mission might reveal that Sammy's ability to notice strange things is due to him being Kin. This complication can very effectively tie the werewolves to Milton for the rest of the chronicle.

Sammy is most comfortable talking out of earshot of his mom, either in his room or out back, for privacy. He takes out the garbage as an excuse. His answers are largely the same as hers. He's afraid of what's happened to her and willing to toe the line, backing up her claims that she doesn't remember much. He also offers the pack a second chance at answers if Melissa throws them out too early: the pack notices him taking out the garbage and lingering by the trash bins, trying to catch sight of them.

Melissa's Story

What's the last thing she remembers before the incident?

I just got so mad. Like, blackout angry. I don't know if it was because I was tired or what, but I really don't remember anything about it until Sammy and I were sitting in the car afterwards.

What does she attribute the stress to?

I'm kind of burning the candle at both ends here. I was hoping for a promotion at my work-from-home gig, but they keep telling me there's a hiring freeze. So I took up some hours at the fulfillment center.

Has she had any other weird experiences?

The fulfillment center is this big, open dark space. It's very easy to freak yourself out when you're picking things at night.

Has anyone else she knows had weird experiences?

Sometimes the other shift workers tell spooky stories at Ernie's (p. 19), but I think they're all made-up.

Has she done anything/been anywhere unusual lately?

I barely have time to sleep and eat. I don't have time for a vacation.

What happened at the Little League game?

You know, I barely remember. One of the kids slid into Sammy at second base a little hard and I was worried he got hurt. The umpire told me to calm down and that's the worst thing you can say to someone who's mad. Someone who's a mom and thinks her kid might be hurt? That's even worse.

Have you seen the video?

Yeah, some of my co-workers at the fulfillment center showed it to me on break. It's pretty embarrassing. Now I know how that girl in the meme where she's pointing at a cat feels.

How do you explain the bone spur?

It's wild what sort of special effects people can do on their home computers. Every time a new movie comes out there's someone who tries to fix the special effects with their own computer. A lot of times it does look better. So I'm not surprised how realistic my video looks.

What's going on with the scar?

I hurt it at work. My other work, at the fulfillment center. I cut myself with a box cutter while packing an order.

How long have you been working at the fulfillment center?

Almost a year. It sucks because I got my work-from-home job so I could have a more flexible schedule. Sammy's got a lot of stuff going on. It's nice to be able to pick him up from school, take him to Little League, and other after-school stuff. But it all costs money, so I started working warehouse shifts to be able to afford all that. Otherwise, I'm afraid he's going to melt into the couch and play video games all day.

Where is Sammy's dad?

Driving a truck somewhere? Forgive me if I don't want to discuss my divorce with strangers.



Each interview has its own challenges. Talking to Melissa means pushing her until risking that she shuts down completely and offers no more help. Sammy, on the other hand, is far too eager to provide answers. Failure when asking him questions still gets the answer but he asks the pack questions in return that should make them uncomfortable. These can range from probing questions about their cover story to ones that suggest Sammy's aware of their supernatural nature. Kids ask weird questions all the time, but these questions highlight that Sammy is very observant for a kid his age.

First Strike

Values Field feels a little too high-end for the Little League and kickball games that are played on-site. It was constructed a year after the fulfillment center went into operation. Val-MOR built and maintain it as an example of its commitment to corporate social responsibility, and as a tax write-off. What was once a wild pasture where kids could roam and play became a tightly manicured piece of property built for a tightly constrained use.

The field has shaded bleachers, electric lights, a video scoreboard, and a snack bar located behind home plate. The play area is surrounded by fences featuring ads for products like as Doritos and Red Bull. The small parking lot beyond the outfield is the one area that doesn't seem brand-new. The lines are faded and there are cracks in the pavement.

The area feels oddly sterile to the pack. A place like this should have pickup games going on in the afternoon and teenagers in the parking lot at night. No matter when the Garou visit, there's not a soul around. If they intentionally come to a scheduled match, they will soon notice that the audience is intently focused. Everyone is watching the game as if it has playoff implications.

The one being that takes notice of the pack is a horse-spirit named Knickerbocker. If the Garou enter the area in the Umbra, they will encounter him immediately. If not, Knickerbocker will possess the mustang plushie mascot of a concessions stand to talk with them. Knickerbocker has been around since before Values Field, before there was a fulfillment center, and before there was a Milton. The spirit knows something bad is going on in the fulfillment center but hasn't found out on his own. He used to commiserate with the other spirits that were displaced in the construction but one by one they stopped coming to Values Field.

He's also a cantankerous old jaggling that's unhappy with everything and everyone. He is bitter and lonely, but also sees something promising in the Garou. Knickerbocker wonders why they haven't shown up until now to investigate what's going on in town. He has information to share, but it will take a little time and effort to get it.

Foreshadowing

If you plan on running *A Pound of Flesh*, Knickerbocker makes a brief reference to another pack of werewolves who once called Milton their territory. It says the pack have let the town go to rack and ruin, and it thinks they might be dead ("and good riddance!"). It means the Rakshaks, who feature prominently in *A Pound of Flesh*.

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Knickerbocker's abrasive personality is the main challenge in learning what's going on in Milton. The horse-spirit is willing to cooperate, but he also insults anyone it thinks isn't respecting him. The pack needs a Wits + Politics or Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 3) to know the proper manner and deference needed to speak to such an old spirit. Failure means Knickerbocker still answers but adds withering insults about the Garou's manners, appearance, or effectiveness. He also stops talking with any Garou that's failed more times than their current Wisdom score. If the questioner scores a critical win during this interview, Knickerbocker is impressed by their questions and expresses a high opinion of the pack to other spirits he encounters. Upon a total failure, Knickerbocker's tone incenses the Garou to the point where they gain a point of Rage.

Knickerbocker's Story

Did you see what happened at the game?

Humans are loud and obnoxious. I hate how they come to my home and make such a ruckus. When it was the occasional mated pair it wasn't so bad, but now their voices muddle together into such noise and their emotions are so confusing. Why would they gather to trigger these false feelings? I did not see this manifestation, as I try to stay away from these gatherings. But I do remember at the last one a woman coming out to where the humans stable their metal head-shells. Fear billowed from her like a wildfire. Fear and shame.

Has there been unusual spirit activity?

Most of the spirits I knew have long since gone. I care too much about my home to leave even if it has been disfigured by the humans into this strange ritual space. But I hear new ones coming. They ride on the backs of some of the humans. Or in their heads. Insects, by the sound of it. I would wager they are the Weaver's spirits, fallen to the Wyrm. They have yet to build a hive around here. If I get too close to the humans they ride, I feel their wings beat and know they are ready to sting me. One, I could defeat. But many? All my wisdom would be lost. And many are coming.

Why have you stayed?

I have been part of these lands for centuries. I've seen you wolves come and go and humans come and stay. Why should I leave my home because they don't have proper manners? Even as they bring distasteful things, this is still my home. Carry the insects. Carry the Wyrm. Raze the wildflowers for their distracting games. I will be here.

What do you know about the Banes?

They are called the Vaegesti, and they belong to the Wyrm. They are new here, but I see them riding humans that come to the ritual and a few when I travel to the edge of their settlement. The humans they ride, they break their spirits until they do not remember there is such a thing as freedom. Something brought them here. Their master is here, somewhere. They may look like wasps, but they have no natural queen.

Is the Wyrm strong here?

The Wyrm is strong everywhere, cub. I much pre-

ferred the smell of wildflowers and animal droppings to the scent of dirt and stale popcorn. I can smell a little decay under the cut grass and the metal fences. It rises when the humans gather and falls when they thankfully leave. If I were you, though, I would turn my nose toward the great house of wares where many of these humans store their ridiculous tools. The wind carries a blackness on it that frightens me. I'll stick to my home; you fierce warriors should investigate.

The Wyrm is strong everywhere, cub.

How do you feel about the Garou?

You claim to be warriors, yet all you remember are your losses. You claim to be protectors, yet the Wyrm and the Weaver creep in everywhere. You claim your Mother is dying, and yet you do nothing in her memory. Well, now's your chance. There is something foul going on here, but it is not yet set in stone. The Earth is not completely blackened. The sun has not completely set. If you act, if you bleed and if you die, you may yet see your Mother smile upon you.





PART TWO: SECOND SHIFT

Val-MOR Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23 looks boring on the outside but there's something strange going on inside. The pack can bluff or sneak their way in to hopefully connect with one of the few workers that are still untouched by the Wyrms.

INQUIRE WITHIN

Val-MOR Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23 can be seen from the highway. It's a low, long building that suggests an alligator lurking in a bog. What once was a simple exit with a yield sign for Milton is now a signal light with multiple lanes for the trucks going to and from the center. The three-mile stretch between Milton and the center is slowly being built up with new apartments and a strip mall full of fast-food chains for Val-MOR personnel.

The center is not open to the public, though access isn't too hard to come by. The next scene (see 'In Through the Out Door') is for packs who try to covertly investigate the building. This scene discusses options for the pack bluffing their way through the front door. Garou might pose as safety inspectors, potential vendors, or even press doing a story polishing Val-MOR's image as a corporation that cares. Establishing a good cover story takes a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 3) with an Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 2) to establish credentials that hold up for a day or two of scrutiny. The Cobbler Advantage can bypass this roll. A critical win makes this fake ID ironclad for the remainder of this story.

The simplest way to get inside the building is by filling out a job application. The turnover rate at the fulfillment center is high and they are always looking for strong backs who'll accept minimum wage to pick,



pack, and load products. Passing the interview process requires a Composure + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 2). Shortly thereafter, the Garou is put on third shift at the warehouse, though if they scored a critical win on the interview roll, they get to pick whether they work days or nights.

Any Garou who take on a job will receive minimal training before being put on the floor. They must make a Stamina + Athletics roll (Difficulty 3) at the end of their shift or take a level of superficial Health damage, as they drudge through a long day of minimal breaks and impossible quotas. If they roll a total failure, they take two points instead. A critical win means they don't have to make this roll after a shift for a week. Any characters who have worked jobs with heavy physical labor (including Montoya [see p. 29]) will know that the workers shouldn't be feeling this fatigued after a shift. It's like the building is draining them.

The simplest way to get inside is by filling out a job application.

I Wouldn't Say I Missed It, Bob

Troupes that wish to inject a little dark humor into their chronicle could play out the final interview process for job-hunting Garou. For a scene, the Storyteller takes the role of the hiring manager while the other players each create a minor character that sits in on the interview such as a warehouse foreman, personnel manager, security lead, and so on. Encourage each of the minor characters to ask the applicant one question. If they come up blank, suggest they ask the strangest question they've ever heard in a real-life interview, something based on their own bleakest work experience, or go with a mostly irrelevant question they've heard dozens of times ("where do you see yourself in five years?"). Not only will this relieve the tension before the story takes a dark turn, it also fleshes out the warehouse with characters the Storyteller can reuse as unexpected allies, unfortunate victims, or innocent bystanders for the rest of the story.

INSIDE THE WAREHOUSE

The main floor is warehouse space. Countless racks of merchandise sprawl throughout this space. Each rack is three levels high, with the most common items on the first level and rarer items on the top shelf. These items require either a ladder or a mechanized basket called a picker to fetch. More valuable items like electronics are kept in a locked down area near the security office.

The top floor features the administrative offices. Much of this space has been empty for the past few years but has been slowly filling up. The facilities up here, like the lunch areas and the bathrooms, are in better shape than the ones on the warehouse floor. This causes some warehouse workers to sneak upstairs to use the bathroom or take a quick break. Storytellers looking for an opportunity to relieve tension with a fakeout scare could easily turn strange noises into the discovery of two warehouse workers sharing a quick lunch break hook-up.

A few things inside the building strike the pack as unusual. We've included several based on different approaches they might use and suggest you let the pack find one for free. One clue should be enough to tip the wolves off that something is amiss, but additional ones will help them prepare for the coming conflict. Additional clues should require some sort of roll, but the Storyteller should be flexible on exactly what traits to use. The goal here is to get clues into the players' hands and not force them to figure out what area they need to search or which character they need to speak to.

The revelations help set the mood and pace of the story. Dropping something obviously bad in the pack's lap right away means the story moves to a resolution quickly while smaller disturbing things give the characters time to discuss, theorize and feel unease. With this story likely to end in a glorious battle with Banes, it's okay to slowly ratchet up the tension now. This is our recommended order of revealing these clues. Feel free to omit, remix and add your own.

Side Hustle

Storytellers looking to add some personal stakes to the story should consider an unexpected encounter with a pack member's Touchstone or another Relationship Map connection. The fulfillment center is always hiring, and bumping into the character will complicate this scene no matter the approach the pack takes. The Touchstone took the job because they need more money, either to supplement their regular income, or because they lost their job and didn't tell the pack member yet.

Snack Time

Accidents are common in the warehouse. The characters come across a bulk box of mix-in flavor packets that burst open and scattered across the floor. Maintenance staff are called to pick up the packets. They toss any damaged ones, put the rest in a cart to send to be processed for loss management, but then the Bane-touched maintenance staffer — Barbara, according to her name tag — does something odd. She pockets two packets and then looks around before opening a third. She pours the entire packet of Gorilla Grape Wildwater Mix into her mouth and chews it down as she finishes her clean up. If the player makes a Composure + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3) they follow the worker to a hidden alcove on the floor where she will rapidly consume the rest of the packets. She will stop eating the powder if confronted and says that she cannot remember the last few minutes. She is not lying — she has not been here quite long enough to become a wasp-husk.

A Brush with Corporate

The Garou come across two floor managers giving a tour to a man in an expensive suit. The managers, **Michelle Weske 2** and **Axel Krammer 2**, are obviously deferential to the well-dressed man. A Wits + Awareness roll (Difficulty 3) lets a character overhear their conversation: the visitor is Mr. Mersey, and he's a Risk Management Specialist from the home office. Mersey and the floor managers are talking about something called EEEP and how it's working out. The managers are excited, though a Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 3) reveals their fear of Mr. Mersey and what they've seen of EEEP. If confronted alone, such as at their homes or in the parking lot, Weske and Krammer offer the same answers as Shane Montoya (see 'Watercooler Gossip'), though they don't know about the Break Room. On a critical win, Garou notices something odd; whenever Mr. Mersey smiles, he shows more teeth than a man should have.

A Long Day's Night

Mr. Mersey has an onsite office but it's very clear that despite having a private space he rarely spends much time in it. This is evident through the windows, but further investigation requires a Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 3) to pick the lock on the door. The first

noteworthy feature is a strange collection in the top drawer of his desk. Instead of pencils and pens, Mr. Mersey has half a dozen dental instruments. They're a prize from Doc's Dental (see 'You Deserve a Break Today', p. 30) that he fidgets with while working on his computer. The computer is the second prize. A Wits + Technology roll (Difficulty 3) accesses a spreadsheet being used to track the Experimental Employee Enhancement Program, or EEEP, with names, dates, and notes on each treatment. Mersey targets people who are desperate to keep their jobs. The spreadsheet links to additional data on each subject with notes from Mersey on what makes them most vulnerable. There are roughly a dozen members in the program which began four months ago, though only half have made it into the later rounds of treatment, and a total of four have completed it. Melissa's name is on the "second treatment" tab — and if the Garou dawdle in their investigation, she will soon be Mr. Mersey's fifth wasp-husk. If they fail the roll, they still get the information, but Mr. Mersey sees that someone else has accessed the files the next time he logs in. An accompanying file also contains an address on the Main Street — Doc's Dental.

Garou seeking the paperwork that the EEEP requires can find it here, if they think to ask Melissa, or on-site at Doc's Dental. It also turns up on a critical win on any Investigation rolls made in these locations. It's about ten pages of thick legal jargon but a Resolve + Occult roll (Difficulty 2) catches an unusual phrase buried in a subclause: Extraplanar-Enhanced Merge Subjects. The clause gives Mr. Mersey the right to bond the employee with a spirit as part of the program.

Stepping Sideways

The area of the fulfillment center has Gauntlet 2. Should the pack access it through the Rite of Shadow Passage, they come to an area of the Umbra where long shelves stretch off to infinity. The boxes contained on the shelves are labeled in a strange language. Some of them act unusual, as if they are breathing, or they growl if they are approached. Real-world locations that have a connection to the Vaegesti such as the closed-off restroom or Mr. Mersey's office a sticky film covering everything. There is a danger of running into Vaegesti (p. 38) or a confused machine-spirit. The former are actively hostile, the latter too simple to be of assistance. Spitemonger (see p. 62) is content with fulfillment center's current situation and will conceal itself from the Garou at this time.



IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR

The pack might decide breaking and entering is a better plan. They've got werewolf powers after all, so why not check out the place once most of the normal folks have gone home for the evening. Unfortunately, Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23 operates 24 hours a day, though there are fewer regular people in the facility at night. There are more supernatural beings there as well.

Getting In

The first level of security involves patrolling **Security Guards 2**. These patrols are often made up of felons unable to find work elsewhere or folks who couldn't make the cut for the state police. There are four patrols, each a pair of officers. Two patrols are outside; one generally stays at the front gate into the parking lot. Two patrols work the inside of the warehouse and a third is supposed to patrol the upper admin area. The guards are undertrained and underpaid, which makes them lax in their duties. They are just as likely to be catching a cigarette break or hanging out with friends on the night shift as they are making their appointed rounds. Human guards aren't much of an obstacle for werewolves but they may show up in an unexpected location. They can be both a barrier and a complication to the more unusual things the Garou may find here at night.

Atmosphere

At night, the fulfillment center has the feeling of a liminal space. It is a temple to the consumerism humanity has embraced but it's also a place where few humans actually go. It's a constant hub of motion yet there are quiet places where the Gauntlet is thin. These tensions are what made the location an excellent choice for Mr. Mersey's experiment. The Vaegesti thrive here because the Umbra is so close.

At night, the general spookiness of the building is enhanced. Though there are people on the floor keeping the operation running through the night, the other areas of the warehouse are now eerily still. The office floors feel extra quiet. The dining areas are strangely lit. Even the warehouse has more dark places, thanks to lighting that's either timed or on motion sensitive switches. These weird moments focus on things that happen during the night shift.

"At night the fulfillment center has the feeling of a liminal space."

Which One of Us is the Distraction?

Give players two options to choose from and they'll usually find a third. Some packs might try a plan that uses elements of both scenes. For example, a Garou might get a job at the center so they can leave a door unlocked for the rest of the pack to come in later in the evening. Splitting the pack offers the Storyteller a chance to heighten tension through careful pacing. Cutting back and forth between the groups, even if their scenes aren't strictly happening at the same time, keeps the story moving as everyone works to uncover the truth in the facility. It also keeps the players on the edge of their seats: did their packmate get a chance to leave that door open, or did they get caught? Is the break-in now a rescue? Keep everyone engaged by switching focus just as one group makes an important discovery or needs to make an important roll to keep their side of the investigation moving.

Fomori Patrol

Workers who have been fully possessed by Vaegesti emerge at night from the men's room that's been closed for maintenance. They stick to the shadows, a strange buzz and a flutter of twisted wings as the only evidence of their passing (but see p. 38 for a full description). These fomori serve Mr. Mersey by providing the loyalty and security minimum-wage guards can't offer. Garou who aren't careful run into one of these foul sentries, which calls other members of the hive to battle unless the pack slay it first.

Vermin Control

The fulfillment center has a rat problem. They come out at night to eat spilled foodstuffs. They are easily startled. The fomori, however, have started to hunt them for food and sport. Hungry fomori deliberately leave a mess on the floor somewhere. When the rats come to feast, the fomori pounces and grabs one. It then slowly pulls apart the squealing creature and devours it, fur and bones and all. If the Garou are carefully able to navigate the warehouse at night without failing a test, they come across a scene like this as their first encounter with a wasp-husk.

Closed for Maintenance

There are two sets of restrooms on the main floor. One is located by the security offices at the front. The other is located on the far end of the building. The men's room of the farther set has been closed off for a strange amount of time. Shift managers have been told it's for maintenance but the Garou (or Shane Montoya) will notice that it has been days. Characters who approach the restroom hear a strange humming or buzzing noise coming from behind the locked door. A Dexterity + Larceny (Difficulty 2; success opens the door undetected, but a failure gets through with a bit of noise) roll opens the door and reveals the horrible truth. The fomori have turned this into their hive. The inside of the restroom has been reshaped by dozens of cardboard boxes chewed up and spit out by the fomori. The room smells sickly sweet. They sleep here during the day and stalk the warehouse at night. Thus far, the incuriosity of the workers and the wasp-husks' natural stealth have kept them from being discovered by the mortal workers.

Memories of Spreadsheets

A slime trail dots the halls of the Accounts Receivable section of the office. Garou who make a Wits + Investigation or Survival roll (Difficulty 3) track the source to a fomor seated inside one of the cubicles. The wasp-husk used to work here before being possessed and a small part of it remembers its human life. It managed to turn on the computer and fill a spreadsheet with garbled characters. Now it's just sitting, staring at the screen, dribbling on the keyboard waiting for something to happen.

Stakeout

The Garou may also decide on an old-fashioned stakeout. Sitting in wait for a person of interest to leave the fulfillment center asks for patience, but a successful Stamina + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3) pays off. If this happens early on in their investigation, late at night they will spy Melissa Barnard leaving the center when she is jumped by wasp-husks, bagged, and shoved into a white van that drives off towards town. Following the van leads them to the Break Room. If you feel they have taken too long, they will instead see Mr. Mersey leave the center, likewise heading to the Break Room. His expensive suit, shoes, watch, aftershave, and Lexus make him stand out from the mass of underpaid employees.



WATERCOOLER GOSSIP

A handful of workers at the warehouse have yet to make a trip to the Break Room. Most of them keep their heads down in the name of keeping their jobs. Weird stuff happens at night all the time and they write off anything they've seen as strange dreams or hallucinations brought on by exhaustion and burnout. Working for a living at Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23 means taking as many hours as possible in a nearly silent, massive space. It doesn't take much more than a flickering light or a malfunctioning door at 3 AM to get the mind to play some surreal tricks.

However, there are a few employees who aren't willing to wave off the strange behaviors they've seen. **Shane Montoya 3**, a young worker hoping to pay for college by working intense hours for the next year or two, is one such person. While things have never been great inside the facility, he noticed big changes after a few employees started discussing how to unionize. Those employees either disappeared or rescinded their opinions soon after their second meeting. Shane attended the first but was too sick to make the second.

Now there's no talk of organizing. When he's brought it up to the union leaders, they brush it off or claim to not remember the meeting. He initially chalked this up to anti-union tactics but he's since encountered the same strangeness the werewolves have seen around the warehouse. He's also shadowed Mr. Mersey to the Break Room, located in the former Doc's Dental clinic on Main Street. He hasn't been able to get inside the building, but he knows that whatever happens inside, employees who go in come out different.

If the Garou try to pump other employees in the fulfillment center for information, they will soon encounter Shane. His response to a probing question is "Not here. 8 a.m., Values Field," and to get on with his work. If one of the Garou fails a test while doing something suspicious in the fulfillment center, they will also attract Shane's notice. In this case, Shane is working on the main floor when one of the Garou walks past and he slips a note into their pocket that reads "I have answers. 8 AM Values Field Red Car".

The cryptic message means to meet Shane in the Values Field parking lot at 8 AM the next morning.

Shane heads there directly after work in his red hatchback and waits for the pack. Shane gets out of the car to talk though he stays by the driver's side door just in case he needs to make a quick getaway. A Wits + Insight roll (Difficulty 2) shows he's nervous to share his information.

Shane looks like he's one size too small for this world. His hoodie is huge, his jeans are baggy, and he stomps around in hand-me-down work boots. His short hair has already started to thin. He has an easy smile when talking and nods as he listens. Though he does have an apartment closer to the fulfillment center he mostly lives out of his car because it's easier than going home. As he talks to the pack about what he's seen, he'll pause the conversation to dig around in his back seat for the relevant piece of evidence.

Shane looks like he's one size too small for this world.

Shane is cautiously optimistic the pack are friendly, but he has a small handgun in the front pocket of his hoodie just in case. Spotting the gun requires either a Wits + Awareness or Intelligence + Insight roll (Difficulty 3). If anyone mentions it to Shane, he admits he has it in case he needs to protect himself. He won't give it up unless it's physically taken away from him. He's not a very good shot but if he shoots one of the Garou, something has gone seriously wrong somewhere.

Shane doesn't really care about whatever story the pack cooked up as investigators. He mentions that he's noticed a lot of weird stuff and asks if they are there to help. Shane opens with the story about his co-workers trying to organize and how they've changed since then. He mentions how on lunch breaks nobody talks but occasionally the room breaks out into laughter like someone told a joke. The employees who used to go out after work now head home.

If the Garou bring up Mr. Mersey, Shane admits he followed him home one day. That's what he meant to do, but Mersey didn't end up at a house or a hotel room. Instead, he had keys to Doc's Dental, an old dentist's office located on Milton's Main Street. Shane couldn't get inside but he can confirm Mersey has returned to the dentist office a few times. He seems to be living there. He doesn't seem to go out to eat or anything either. He just orders delivery and stays in after work.



The Case of the Slippery Clues

Shane is a narrative backstop for packs that need another shot at picking up clues. It's possible that as soon as the Garou detect a whiff of the Wyrms in any of the previous scenes that they will pop their claws and start destroying anything in their way. Shane can deliver any information they might have missed along with the things he's discovered on his own. He's been conducting his own investigation about the strange events happening in the dark corners of Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23. Mersey knows he's close to the truth, so Shane's high on the list for a trip to the Break Room.

PART THREE: THIRD SHIFT

The Garou discover the location of the artifact infecting the people of Milton with Vaegesti. They also come face-to-face with wasp-husks, Mr. Mersey, and a chance to burn the agents of the Wyrms with their white-hot rage. There are a few ways the Garou can discover the Break Room. They can find out its location from Mr. Mersey's computer or by looking into real estate deals in town. Shane Montoya may have told them, or they may have staked out the fulfillment center.

YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY

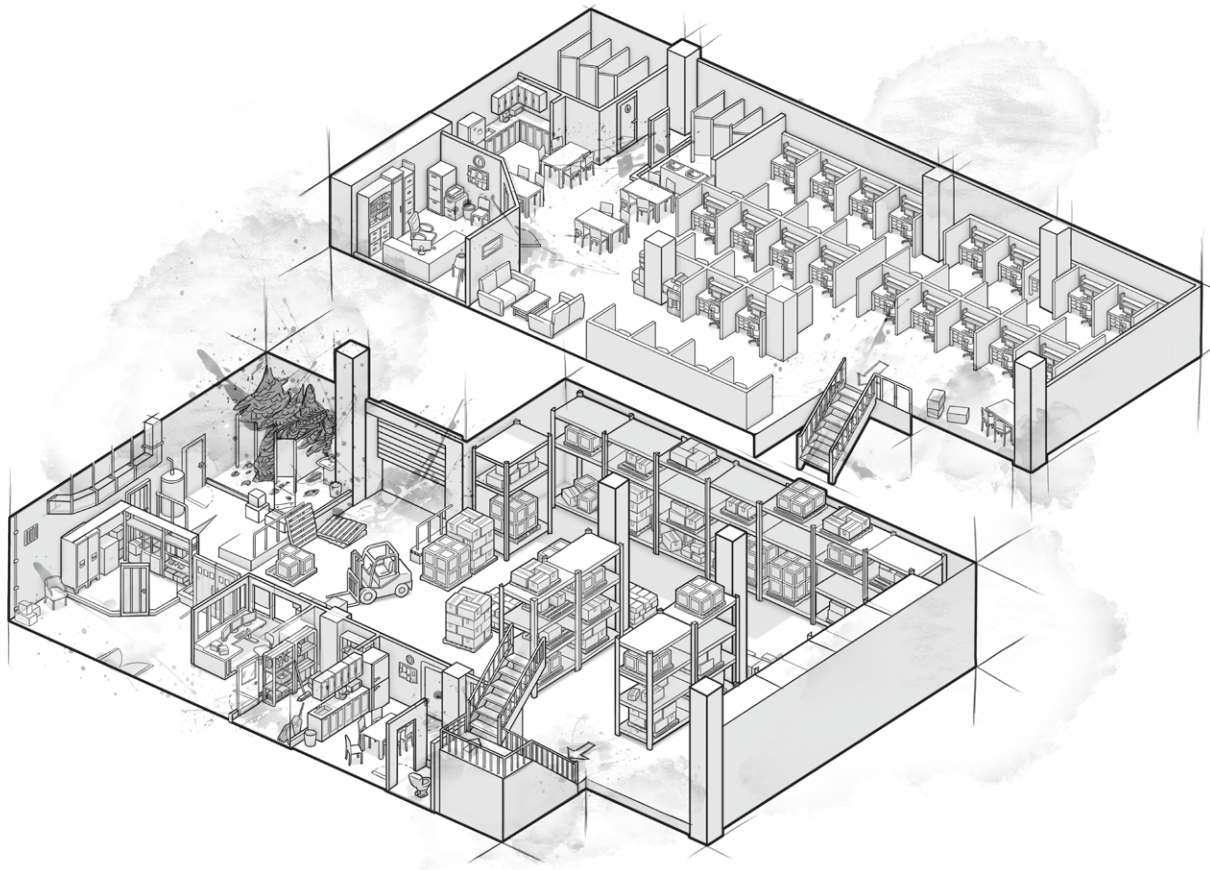
Doc's Dental had been part of Main Street for decades. Byron "Doc" Horbinski moved to Milton fresh out of dental school. Doc soon became a local fixture thanks to his central location and the time he would spend on the bench in front of his office talking with folks that passed by. Four years ago, Doc took a pair of devastating emotional punches; the Val-EVENMor dental office took most of his business at the same time as his wife of twenty-seven years passed away. He told his remaining patients he was leaving, sold the office space and his home to a local realtor and never looked back.

The office has been vacant since then. Mr. Mersey cut a deal with the owner for a briefcase full of cash to use the space for the EEEP. The Garou may discover these details if they think to look into Mersey's finances or recent property deals in town, with an Intelligence + Finance test (Difficulty 2). Mersey has tried to hide the details, but a town the size of Milton does not offer much haystack for a needle. Much of the office was left as it was when Doc retired. The Main Street facing side remains locked up with the entry door and the two small, high windows papered over. The letters of the "Doc's Dental" sign are gone but they still remain as legible smudges on the wall.

Mr. Mersey cut a deal with the owner for a briefcase full of cash.

The inside did not fare well in the intervening years. The waiting room decor has faded into sickly pale cracked leather couches and warped wooden panel walls. Smears of soot and smoke damage crawl up one corner of the room with ashes and singed scraps of waiting room magazines scattered across the floor. Through the receptionist's door there's a short hallway that leads to the dental workspace, a small office, and a cramped restroom. Mersey sleeps in on a couch in the office.

The wasp-husks have claimed this toilet, much like the one at the fulfillment center. The nest here was built with the various paper files Doc left behind, mixed in with the remaining magazines that weren't burned for warmth in the front office. This gives the strands an unnerving appearance of medical terminology mixed with the eyes of long-dead models. There is always one wasp-husk sentry on site. It sleeps upside down in the restroom. If they have been alerted, the fomor watches the pack and attempts an ambush if one member foolishly enters a room alone. If the pack members have kept silent, they can surprise the creature sleeping in here with a Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 4).



The one room that remains in something resembling its original form is the dentist's workspace. Mr. Mersey spent some time and money restoring the dental chair to infect employees with Vaegesti. He made two obvious modifications. The first was installing heavy-duty restraints on the chair for the arms, legs, and neck. The other was attaching the Vaegesti Shard into the overhead light. Even covered by a tattered black plastic bag when not in use, the talisman seems to be breathing. The plastic rustles softly as the throbbing mass it covers pushes against the bag and then rustles again when the mass pulls back.

The talisman is a wasp nest, possessed by a part of a Vaegesti hive in the Umbra. The piece has ended up in Mr. Mersey's possession. After some experimentation he realized that contact with the hive piece made humans much more susceptible to possession by Vaegesti, corrupted Weaver-spirits that represent self-destruction and attrition in service to the hive — for example, a corporate machine like Val-MOR. The fulfillment center workers, already exhausted and beaten down, unconsciously welcome them in.



The Experimental Employee Enhancement Program sounds like a harmless acronym, but it actually masks a campaign of torture. Mr. Mersey targets an employee to be ‘enhanced’. They are kidnapped after their shift by a pair of wasp-husks. The employee then gets a ride to Doc’s Dental, restrained and with a bag over their head. They are strapped into the chair and Mr. Mersey asks them a few questions before the process begins. The bag is removed from the employee’s head, as well as the bag covering the Shard. Ichor drips down from the talisman onto the employee, running down their face and body until it can find bare flesh to soak into. Most victims black out from the experience but those who don’t are helped along by an injected sedative ten minutes into the process. When the employee regains consciousness, they are back in their car, in the fulfillment center parking lot. It is also very likely that their next shift starts soon.

Note that the talisman doesn’t force Vaegesti into the employee’s body. It attracts Vaegesti to the employee, who’s already a husk oozing sadness, weariness, and desperation, unconsciously crying out for a spirit to fill their void. Mersey picks the most desperate employees for the program, making sure they sign a document claiming they consent to possession by a spirit. This is the true experiment here in Milton; how can Pentex bend (or break) the rules of bringing spirits into our world?

The ichor runs along the employee's form until it can find bare flesh to soak into the body.

The first time an employee goes through the EEEP they become Bane-brushed. They have contact with the Vaegesti called to the Wyrms hive. There’s a tenuous connection to everyone else that have bonded with Vaegesti. They work better together on the floor. They eat at the same times and watch the same streaming shows. A few even claim to be able to read the surface thoughts of other hive members. Wherever the hive dripped on their bodies, a large welt appeared. An Intelligence + Medicine roll (Difficulty 3) allows a character to carefully open the welt allowing the live wasp trapped inside to fly out. If left untreated, the welt disappears after a week, though the dead wasp matter remains trapped inside.

After a number of treatments equal to a person’s Composure, a Vaegesti takes up residence in the employee. The human is not aware they are sharing their body, though times of stress can cause the Bane to take over and their powers to manifest. Melissa was at this phase of the program when she was caught on video. Other manifestations range from wings tearing out of a victim’s back to a dozen wasps pouring out of their screaming mouth. These Bane-touched humans are usually aware that something is wrong with them but are in denial of what it is or how bad it might be. The largest physical indicator is a loss of fingernails. They pop off easily and grow back within a day or two.

The wasp-husks are made by employees who have been to the Break Room a number of times over their Composure score. They are fully-fledged fomori. They are going through massive transformations that turn them into walking wasp hives. They are covered in strange pungent goo, have insects crawling over their body and can barely speak with a harsh, buzzing voice.



They pass for human in poor light or at a distance which is why they're usually put on the night shift or used as shock troopers by Mr. Mersey to eliminate snoopers. Wasp-husks have a connection to the Vaegesti Shard and will know if it is in danger.

Does This Look Infected?

Once the Vaegesti Shard has been destroyed or cleansed, most Val-MOR employees return to normal. Those merely Bane-brushed do so on their own, while Bane-touched humans require a little extra attention at the cairn from Mother Louise to completely remove the spirit. Wasp-husks are too far gone to be saved, but never say never to players who want to make sure that every human comes out okay. If they decide they want to go on a trip to the Umbra to treat with a spirit capable of assisting them, the Storyteller should enjoy coming up with a dangerous quest worthy of much Renown.

Werewolves in the Chair

It's unlikely the players will let their characters go through even one round of the EEEP process, but stranger things have happened.

Garou who go through this process have an advantage. The Vaegesti cannot possess Garou because of their half-spirit nature. While this makes them immune to the EEEP it can draw suspicion if they go through the process and don't exhibit the proper behavior once they return to work. Faking their way through the workday requires a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 4). Failure means they get attacked by a pair of wasp-husks trying return the subject to the Break Room for another round of treatment.

The treatment is painful and requires a Composure + Stamina roll (Difficulty 3). Success gains the Garou a point of Rage for the harm inflicted by the Wasp-spirits. Failure inflicts a point of Aggravated Health damage and a point of Rage. A total failure gives the Garou two points of Aggravated Health damage and a point of Rage.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

If the pack lays claim to the Vaegesti Shard, Mr. Mersey soon knows from the wasp-husks and moves to get it back. There are a few ways out of this mess depending on how the pack handled themselves in other parts of the story. They might be able to save everyone that's been infested by the Shard. They might just be able to destroy it and stop any further Banes from claiming human prizes. The investigation is over. It's time to rage.

There are two main options during this battle. The first is that the pack decides to destroy the Vaegesti Shard on their own. This option puts them at the center of the action as they do their best to smash the evil talisman while fending off a desperate attack by Mr. Mersey and his fomori. There's a satisfying finality to smashing the Shard to bits, but it comes at a cost. Destroying the Shard means that any wasp-husks will stay that way until someone puts them out of their misery. Destroying the Shard takes an attack roll against a Difficulty of 2. The Shard is considered to have 20 health levels.

The other option is to protect the Shard until the pack can get it to someone who can purify it. Mother Louise is an obvious candidate, though any high-ranking Garou on the Relationship Map could fit into this role. It turns this action scene into more of a chase as the pack fends off the fomori to get the Shard to safety. While this puts the fate of the Shard out of the pack's hands, it can still lead to an exciting scene as they fight off the forces of the Wyrms while the ritual is performed.

Chases are contests (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 123) where one side is looking for five wins over the other. When one side has that win, the chase is over. Either the pack made it to the ritual site or the fomori have trapped the pack and they must fight to get free. A critical win immediately ends the chase in the winner's favor.

The investigation is over. It's time to rage.

Take a moment to consider how to play out a dynamic combat scene. Wherever it goes down, be it Main Street, Values Field, or Fulfillment Center VMX-BD23, think about the environment and how characters interact. A Garou could throw a tree. A fomor smashes through a shop window. Mr. Mersey ducks behind a parked car for cover. Introduce these elements during your descriptions of the scene and then have your characters use them to gain bonuses and better positioning. Your players should follow suit.

Some storytellers use maps and miniatures to visualize a big battle scene. There are plenty of street scenes available as maps and virtual tabletops. But even something sketched out on a dry erase grid can work. Add elements that the characters can interact with, such as places to take cover or improvised weapons. A park bench may just look like scenery but if a player rolls a critical win while smashing it over the head of a fomor, that's a memory your table will remember for years.

Other storytellers prefer a theater of the mind approach. The advantage here is one of abstraction and creating elements on the fly. Players can freely contribute their own ideas to the scene without getting bogged down in details and movement rules. Zones can be used to determine how far away everyone is from each other with anyone in the same zone able to attack with Melee or Brawl.

Return to Sender

Once the pack discovers the Vaegesti Shard, the likely conclusion is an epic battle between the pack, Mr. Mersey, and his wasp-husks. Chances are it begins in Doc's Dental and spills out onto Main Street. But there's also a possibility the pack decides to take the fight to the fulfillment center. That's okay; there should be enough detail in those scenes to offer up some ideas for complications during the battle. The information in this scene should still prove useful in later stories in the chronicle as Milton comes under their protection as their territory.

Mr. Mersey primarily goes after any Garou in crinos or wolf forms. However, he won't stick around to the bloody end. Reporting back to Pentex is more important than saving the EEEP. Knowing there's a pack in Milton allows him to plan his next project more wisely. If he's reduced to two health levels or his fomori have been destroyed, he will try to flee Milton.

The biggest threat to the pack are the wasp-husks. There are four wasp-husks as per Mr. Mersey's spreadsheet. Adjust this based on if the pack has killed any in earlier scenes. Their focus is on finding the Vaegesti Shard and getting it to safety. They gang up on anyone holding the Shard. If the pack has stashed it somewhere, one searches for it while the others battle the Garou.

The Wasp Queen Takes Her Crown

It's perfectly fine to run this final scene as a rip-roaring battle with raging werewolves cutting their way through gooey fomori and Pentex operatives. Storytellers who want to add an ethical complication could choose to send Melissa after the pack, having been transformed into a fomor while the pack was investigating the fulfillment center. If they find out her life is at stake, would they change their tactics? What happens to Sammy if he finds out they were responsible for his mother's death?

If the wasp-husks get the hive shard, they flee back to the fulfillment center to take it back to the Umbra. They can push through the thinner Gauntlet there and disappear into the spirit world. This marks the end of its influence on the people of Milton, though it also means the fomori also disappear into the Umbra, leaving behind their former lives. Those who have been touched by the Shard return to normal, eventually, though they never quite shake the dreams of flight or the weird humming sound they hear when driving past the fulfillment center.

The Bane-touched are the Wyrms' secret weapon.



FOLLOW THE TRAIL

If the pack don't purify or destroy the hive Shard it will return again someday, either in the hands of Mr. Mersey or his replacement. Word reaches the pack of a new infection in another fulfillment center somewhere in the country. If the pack investigates, they run into a pair of problems. First, Pentex knows they are coming and makes better preparations to defend the shard. Second, the pack that holds the territory doesn't want any help and views the Garou as hostile interlopers.

If the Vaegesti Shard ends up in the Garou's hands, they can deliver it to a nearby sept to be disposed of properly. Mother Louise can turn it into a talisman to treat any surviving wasp-husks. They can be human again, though they will bear mental and physical scars for the rest of their lives. The whole time Mother Louise has the Shard, the remaining wasp-husks make desperate attempts to get it back. It would be respectful for the pack to offer to defend her.

Shane Montoya discovers a knack for investigation. If he stays in contact with the pack, he proves to be a valuable ally by discovering other signs of weirdness in the area. Sammy Barnard is also well-placed to do this. Shane or Sammy's tips can lead to other stories in this collection or to original tales created by the Storyteller. Curiosity could also get Shane or Sammy in over their heads. They're still humans, after all, and the pack should feel a bit of responsibility for them — especially in Sammy's case.

Any evidence of a final battle on Main Street slowly fades thanks to the Delirium. It becomes something of an urban legend in town with BEARS ON MAIN STREET appearing in a page-two story of the nearest big city newspaper. The bear story gets embellished, retold, and even dressed up as a local festival around the same time next year. One of the Street Bear festival flyers is anonymously sent to one of the Garou with "You're Not a Bear, Are You?" written on the blank back.

ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

Mother Louise

Louise Redmond was born to a single Black mother and a large family, and struggled through a life of poverty in Detroit in the 1980's. Unlike many of her peers, however, her First Change brought a sense of awe rather than trauma or regrets. Children of Gaia gave her purpose. They connected her to every living thing on the planet.

The connection with Gaia meant that she mattered in this world. She lost many companions in the fight, but she never lost sight of how even small victories mattered in the face of Apocalypse. Now, as part of the sept outside Milton, she hopes to pass her knowledge on to the younger members.

Those who see Louise's kindness for weakness never make that mistake again. Beneath her wide smile and flowery blouses is the iron core of a battle-hardened Garou. She rarely takes to battle these days but if the need to protect someone arises, she will remind everyone why she's lived to be so well-renowned. She fights smarter, not harder, playing into her image as a soft mother figure to get close enough to the enemy to show them just how sharp her teeth are. She lives in a house by herself, about 20 minutes' drive from Milton.

Those who see Louise's kindness for weakness never make that mistake again.

Mother Louise (Homid Form*)

General Difficulty: 4/2

Tribe: Children of Gaia

Auspice: Theurge

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 5, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Occult 8, Leadership 8, Academics (Garou Lore) 8

Renown: Honor 3, Glory 2, Wisdom 4

Gifts: Calm the Furious Beast (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 167), Banish Spirit (p. 153), Ensnare Spirit (p. 152), Penumbral Senses (p. 147), Reveal Trauma (p. 168)

*Note: Please refer to *Werewolf the Apocalypse*, pp. 136–138 for potential modifications to dice pools should any Garou character shift their form during the story.



Melissa Barnard

Melissa is a single mother. She was born in Milton and moved back here after the failure of her marriage. She thought life in a small town would be easier. Instead, it was isolating. Most of the work was somehow connected to Val-MOR and she ended up working her way from the floor of the store to a work-from-home position. But it wasn't enough to comfortably support her son Sammy, so she ended up at the fulfillment center on nights and weekends.

Her brushes with the EEEP came from being late to work. Sometimes she overslept, sometimes she was struggling to hit her quota for customer service contacts. She feels fear and shame over what happened at the Little League game because she can't explain it, though some part of her knows it connects to her exposure to the Shard. The fear comes from manifesting the wasp-husk stinger. The shame comes from how much she enjoyed feeling the power and the sense of belonging amongst the other husks that infest the warehouse.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 2

Exceptional Dice Pools: Technology 6, Insight 6, Athletics 5

Davis Mersey

Davis knew he had to go to college. His parents said if they were going to keep paying his bills that's the least he could do. He took his school search seriously, though he was looking for party schools while his parents thought he was seriously weighing his academic choices. He settled on one that split the difference. After his MBA, Davis planned for an easy gig at his father's firm while coasting on his social standing and his family money. Then he got a call from a fintech recruiter.

Davis knew he had to go to college. His parents said if they were going to keep paying his bills that's the least he could do.

The money and the power were intoxicating, but they paled in comparison to what he saw on the private island the firm sent him to for his first work anniversary. In a narcotic haze, he glimpsed the infinity of the Umbra, slid naked through the gullet of the Wyrms and, most importantly, found a true purpose he didn't know he sought. He would help this fake old world die in the belly of the Wyrms and see its glorious rebirth. The Apocalypse is coming any day now. Knowing that he holds the power to start the end in one hand while he holds a beer in the other is the biggest rush he's ever felt.

The EEEP is Mr. Mersey's first special project. He traveled to the Home Office to get the Vaegesti Shard personally. The process and proximity changed him. Upon his return from the island, his teeth fell out and were replaced by shinier, sharper versions. He knows he's likely to encounter lupines during the field test and he's prepared himself as best he could. Even if they ruin the program, he knows just how to frame everything to his managers. The pack isn't a hated enemy or obstacle. They're a focus group.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 6, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl: 6, Firearms 7, Finance 8, Intimidation 8, Persuasion 8

Notes / Other Traits:

Winning Smile: Mr. Mersey's teeth do Aggravated damage to Garou.

Glock 43X: Mersey's gun has a magazine of 10 silver bullets that will do Aggravated damage if used on Garou.

Vaegesti

The Vaegesti were once Weaver-spirits, but have fallen under the Wyrms' influence, becoming Banes of self-destructive drudgery. They are relatively harmless to Garou. The hive shard in possession of Mr. Mersey summons them from the Umbra and puts them in close proximity with hosts that have been beaten down and desperate. They pour into the human through the shard and turn them into something akin to a walking wasp hive.

VAEGESTI SPIRIT

Power: 3/6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl (Stinger) +2, Athletics (Dodge) +4

Notes / Other Traits:

Stinger: +0 Aggravated damage.

WASP-HUSK FOMOR

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 2, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics 8, Awareness 6, Brawl 8, Intimidation 6, Melee 8, Stealth 8

Notes / Other Traits: See *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* p. 262 for more information on fomori. Wasp-husks have the following Traits:

* **Unnatural Weapons:** Wasp-husks deal +0 Aggravated damage against Garou with their natural weapon Brawl attacks.

* **Flight:** Husks may manifest insect-like wings from their backs. The wings allow them to fly short distances. While in the air, the difficulty to hit them increases by 1. ■





CHAPTER THREE



SHADOWS on the Prison Wall

"Goes out of tiger's mouth
Goes into wolf's mouth"

—MONGOLIAN PROVERB

Milton's malaise in the physical world bleeds into the Umbra. The spiritual world reflects the problems of Milton's decline. In the Umbra, homes and businesses are crumbling and rotting, with looming shadows and dead weeds everywhere. Wyrn-spirits lurk in those weeds and shadows, circling around homes and apartments occupied by hopeless and angry residents. Weaver-spirits bind up the areas controlled by out-of-town corporations, reflecting their relatively high security. As public spaces fall into disrepair, the Umbral locations become choked with twisted analogs of poisonous plants and looming, dying trees, flanked by cracked concrete and studded with pieces of broken pipes and dismal trash.

Halting Milton's collapse means confronting its spiritual problems as well as its physical ones, for the two feed into and reinforce one another. The Garou must find spirit allies if they are to have any chance at repairing Milton's woes.

Content Warnings

Depression/suicidal ideation, violence against unhoused people, harm against children, hate groups.

THE FOE

The pack's true foe is ignorance: the fledgling Garou need to understand why Milton suffers and how this poisons its Umbral reflection.

The pack can endlessly fight Banes- and Weaver-spirits, but more spirits always arrive to replace the fallen. They must address the root causes in addition to alleviating the symptoms.

Uncovering the problems in Milton pits the Garou against a range of mortal and spiritual enemies, but the final revelations about Milton are built around combating ignorance and learning about the place, its people, and its spiritual reflections. The final step in reversing the story of Milton's decline is in taking on and defeating the Wizené Raconteur, who has been manipulating them all along.

STORY STRUCTURE

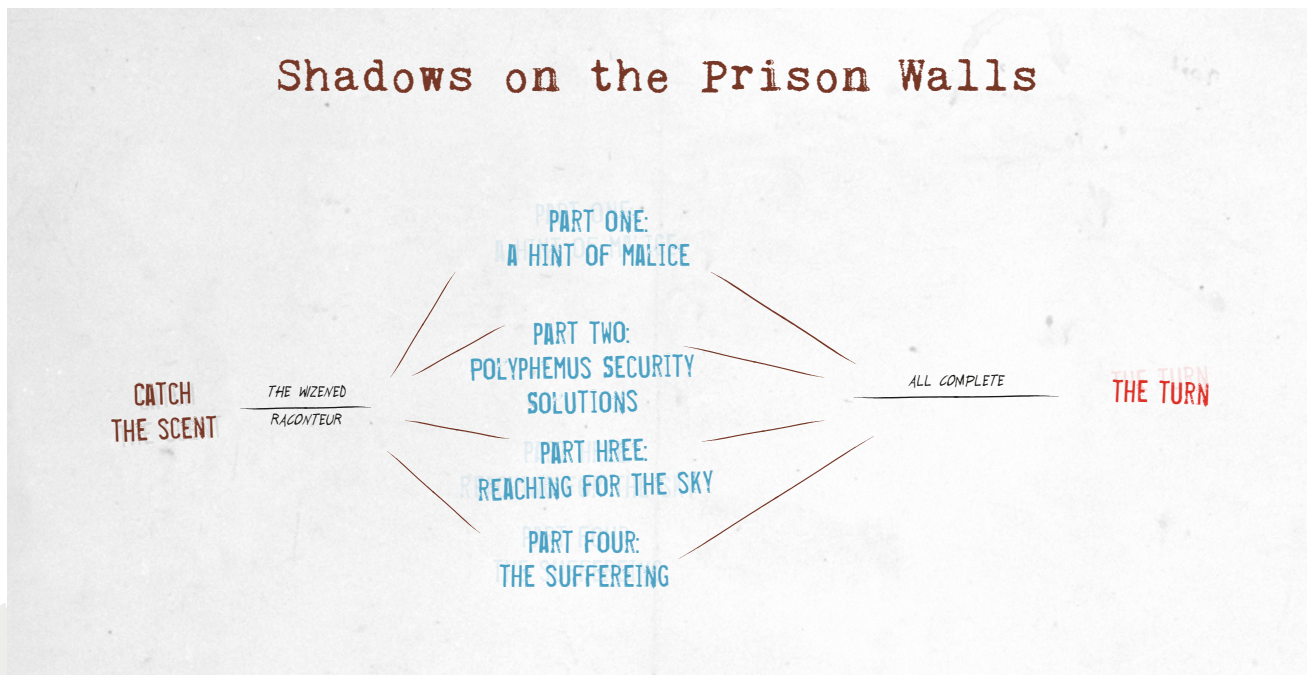
Shadows on the Prison Walls has a nonlinear structure. The introduction brings the pack into the Umbra but once they make their first tentative steps into the spirit world, they can address a variety of problems in Milton in any order. Sometimes, learning about one problem might help in dealing with another. Other times, the application of Rage can tear down a problem and lead directly to progress.

The pack learns where to go from a spiritual guide, the Wizené Raconteur, but their discoveries and challenges in the Umbra and in Milton lead to an eventual confrontation with that guide after they've experienced several different problems.

Pay special attention to the Antagonist Axes section of the *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* core rulebook, in Chapter Seven: Storytelling. The pack's journeys through the Umbra follow the structure of four different stories, each tied into Milton's local problems, corresponding to the four quadrants of the Antagonist Axes. The Wizené Raconteur explains the relevance of these, in a meta-commentary on the structure of the story — as the Umbra is, after all, the realm of symbols and context.

Each of the story's four key scenes is a different type of roleplaying experience, each of which maps onto the Antagonist Axis (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, pp. 211–212). 'A Hint of Malice' is an **individual active antagonist scene**; 'Polyphémus Security Solutions' is a systemic active antagonist scene; 'Reaching for the Sky' is a **passive individual scene**; and finally 'The Suffering' is a **passive systemic scene**. Finally, in 'The Turn', they will do battle with the Wizené Raconteur himself.

Because of the nonlinear structure of this section, it's not broken up into the usual division of chapters and scenes. Instead, the four principal scenes are all accessible in any order that the players want.





CATCH THE SCENT

In 'The Break Room,' the Garou established that they aren't afraid to take the fight to the Wyrn. Now they have to deal with the fallout from their last victory. The Val-MOR fulfillment center is at least temporarily unable to operate while an investigation looks into the destruction, including the deaths or disappearances of several workers. Hundreds of people are out of work for the duration. Main Street was likely the site of a rampage that leaves people with patchy, Delirium-riddled memories and trauma.

The spiritual pollution caused by all of Milton's troubles reflects in the Umbra, attracting harmful and destructive spirits. The Garou may or may not care about humans, but they must recognize that the humans in Milton are part of a broader spirit ecosystem, and balancing that ecosystem means helping the humans, whether the Garou want to or not.

Kick off the story with a meeting between the pack and Mother Louise (p. 36) to discuss the town's continuing problems. It's the pack's territory now, and their problems are its problems. Mother Louise opens by asking the Garou about the lay of the land. Give each player a chance to describe one house or shop, or other location in the town, and thereby to expand upon the area — the players can add their own flavor and interesting characters, within reason (it doesn't make sense for Milton to suddenly have a previously-unseen skyscraper, military base, or secret ninja lair).

Mother Louise goes on to explain that the desolation, the sense that the town is undergoing a slow, lingering death, is something the pack can only understand and solve in the Umbra. If none of the Garou know the Rite of Shadow Passage, Mother Louise offers to teach it to a member of the pack, or (if they lack the experience points to learn a Rite) to invoke it on their behalf. Being able to travel in and out of the Umbra of their own volition is a huge benefit in this story, so if a player wants to learn this rite immediately and pay it off with experience points at the end of the story, let them.

One Thing After Another

Shadows on the Prison Wall makes sense as a follow-up to *The Break Room*, but it doesn't have to be run that way. Have the Val-MOR fulfillment center close for some innocent reason (class-action lawsuit, cheaper labor elsewhere, a strike), decimating employment, and start with Mother Louise or another Garou on the Relationship Map explaining that if someone doesn't act soon, something revolting and evil will come to feed on all that misery and hopelessness like a fly landing on shit.

THE DOORSTEP

Wherever the pack chooses to enter the Umbra, they arrive in the shadow double of Milton. Mother Louise or another Mentor can direct them to perform the Rite of Shadow Passage at the Caern of the Glittering Glade, with its Gauntlet 2. Though in real world it is not close to Milton, in the Umbra the miles can be covered in a few minutes. In the Umbra, the sky is overcast and greenish, the town varies between leaning offices and shops and tiny, crumbling, sagging homes and apartments, and the ground is covered in cracked sidewalk with yellowed and dying grass growing between its concrete slabs. In places where Val-MOR lurked, like the fulfillment center and the Val-EVENMor store, the situation is even more extreme: buildings resemble crumbling castles with leering faces, clouds of polluted smoke follow around the dejected people moving along the streets and sidewalks, and vehicles, signs, and even streetlights seem leering and hateful.

In the Umbra, the sky is overcast and greenish, the town varies between tall, leaning offices and shops and tiny, crumbling, sagging homes and apartments, and the ground is covered in cracked sidewalk with yellowed and dying grass growing between its concrete slabs.



Off Main Street, the town's blight is less pronounced but still tangible. The small parks seem tired and worn, with faded grass and dying trees. A few tiny gafflings resembling squirrels and birds flit about here and there, but they are drab and rarely seen. The roiling overcast sky makes it impossible to find warm sunlight, and curling tendrils of spiritual gnats and mites seem to huddle around the unfortunate unhoused people who try to find rest on the park benches.

Wherever the pack arrives, they quickly draw the notice of local spirits. Place-spirits and animal-spirits flee from the Garou, hoping to avoid confrontation. It's clear that, no matter how noble their intentions, the Garou are interlopers here — they are not natives of the Umbra, and the spirits fear and mistrust them.

Packs who played through The Break Room have one potential ally here: Knickerbocker (p. 22), the horse spirit residing in Values Field. He's a cantankerous, proud old being and while he might have some good advice on treading lightly in the Umbra and not making enemies, he won't stoop to playing tour guide to a pack of cubs.

STATIC SIGNAL

As the Garou become accustomed to their surroundings, one spirit does approach them. Resembling a human in shabby clothes, threadbare fingerless knitted gloves, shoes with holes in them, and carrying a smooth walking stick, this spirit has one immediately distinctive feature: its head is an old CRT television set, screen fuzzing with gray static. The spirit stops a good twenty feet away from the pack, taps its walking stick, then waves to the Garou. The screen flickers to indicate a changing channel and then shows a yellow smiley face. This is the Wizeden Raconteur (see the 'Allies and Antagonists' section for the spirit's complete powers).



The Raconteur welcomes the pack to the Umbra, its voice coming out of the speakers on either side of the television screen. The Raconteur introduces itself politely and engages in conversation.

The Raconteur, in a meandering, roundabout exposition, explains that the Umbra around Milton suffers from many of the problems that plague the town. Just by looking around, the Garou can see all sorts of things are off-kilter. The Raconteur explains four different problems that might interest the Garou — corresponding to the four middle scenes of this story — and suggests that they might investigate the Umbra to find clues that can help them to deal with problems on the other side of the Gauntlet.

The Raconteur explains the four different challenges the pack needs to confront, but only in the vaguest of terms — it tells the pack that there are places to go to do important jobs but doesn't give specific details. The Garou can entice the Raconteur to share more clues by telling it stories in return — a bargain that the Raconteur is only too happy to offer. If the Garou tell stories of themselves, their pack, or their histories, the Raconteur responds with minor pieces of useful information, such as the nature of the foes that the Garou might encounter, or a bit about the neighborhood in question. The Raconteur can't give detailed information about any enemies but can offer suggestions about the kinds of hazards that the pack might face during each challenge. Note that the Garou can tell fake stories; the spirit doesn't care about the veracity, but rather about the act of storytelling. The Garou don't necessarily know this, though!

IMPORTANT! You, the Storyteller, know that the Raconteur is actually a hostile spirit, setting up the Garou for problems and failure, but the pack doesn't (yet). Portray the Wizeden Raconteur as a helpful local spirit, one willing to deal with the pack, a stroke of luck who can show them where to go to deal with their Umbral problems. Play the Raconteur as friendly, if a bit distracted or scatter-minded, and surprisingly helpful. Suspicious players might ask what the Raconteur gets from helping them — most spirits don't start out friendly to Garou, after all — and the Raconteur explains that the Banes and Weaver-spirits in the town threaten to destabilize the Umbra here, and that it is a spirit of stories, so it needs an audience. Just telling the Garou tales about the town gives the spirit a sense of purpose and direction, or so it claims. It's real difficult to get a read on an Umbral entity with a TV screen for a face.

The Raconteur has an affinity especially for stories of pain, suffering, and despair, but it cannot reject story notes that the Garou feed it. You should foreshadow this throughout this story and tell how the more alert Garou notice small changes in the Wizeden Raconteur as the stories it absorbs from the Garou change it. This will be important in the final battle.

“We're Going to Do It All at Once!”

Since all of Milton's troubles take place in or near the town, the pack can engage with multiple problems simultaneously. While dealing with the aggressive malice-spirit at the fulfillment center, for instance, they might notice scryers watching from Polyphemus Security Solutions. Intertwining these threads gives the players multiple directions to follow as the story develops, but also risks complicating scenes and causing the players to become paralyzed with indecision about their next action. If you're concerned about overloading the group with problems and choices, only introduce one or two of the scenes at a time. For an experienced team or one that relishes complex problems, you can run all four scenes in parallel, with the various Banes aiding each other and the pack's investigations crossing paths with multiple symptoms at once.



PART ONE: A HINT OF MALICE

The closed Val-MOR fulfillment center has become a site for loiterers — bored local teens, unhoused people looking for shelter, urban explorers, and assorted other trespassers. Val-MOR’s abuses, from the wasp-husks to the mundane exploitation, leave behind a patina of malice that augments the existing feelings of anger and frustration in all who pass by. The power of the malice in the facility attracted a strong Bitter Rage spirit named Spitemonger, whose presence fans the annoyance, anger, and sometimes violence of people nearby. Since nobody works there at the moment, it only has short-term visitors to prey on.

Unfortunately, Spitemonger’s influence pushes people who are already distressed or predisposed to mischief into violence that they might not otherwise commit. Fed by the hostility of those whom it influences, the Bane remains hidden at the site and causes its unsuspecting

prey to cause further harm to the town. Plus, the longer it’s there the more likely it is to find a human ready to welcome it into their body so it can hurt the town directly.

Seeds of Malevolence

The Wizenad Raconteur advises the pack “Read the news, keep informed about the world.” The first clue to this problem is a local news story (published on the Gazetteer’s webpage and making the rounds among the coffee chatter set at the town’s coffee franchises). A traveler with a flat tire, Carson Wojtek 2, pulled off the freeway to Milton near the Val-MOR fulfillment center. A local unhoused man, Eddie “Easy” Lugo, approached Carson while he was changing the tire. After an initial exchange of words, Carson found himself seized with sudden fear and hostility, and attacked and killed Eddie with a tire iron. Homicide is one of the few things important enough to make the state police to show



their faces in Milton, and Carson was arrested shortly thereafter. He is currently awaiting trial for murder.

The pack has several possible ways to proceed with their investigation.

THE ATTACKER

The attacker is Carson Wojtek, who was simply traveling through Milton en route to a nearby state park for a camping trip. Carson is currently in the state penitentiary while awaiting trial for murder, so the Garou need connections to find him — a police or legal Contact can dig up this information with ease, or one of the characters can find it out with an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 2).

Arranging an interview with Carson requires convincing his public defender they have a personal connection with the prisoner or arranging a visit with the jail under the pretense of being family or journalists (both Difficulty 3 Manipulation + Subterfuge, with possible legal complications on a failure).

Carson has little useful information. He's suspicious of the characters but should a member of the pack manage to convince Carson to open up (Charisma + Intimidation or Persuasion, Difficulty 4), the distraught man tells them that he doesn't know what came over him. Fearing for his life in the presence of a potentially dangerous person, he brandished his tire iron, then found himself repeatedly swinging at the victim. Otherwise, Carson leans on the self-defense angle, stating that he feared for his life because he didn't know this person, his car was not drivable, and he felt in imminent danger. He says that he doesn't recall striking repeatedly, only that he suddenly remembers stopping and standing over the motionless body.

Unless the pack managed to talk their way in without going through Carson's lawyer, the public defender also attends any interview, and cuts off any further questioning. If the pack manages to question Carson without the lawyer, he uneasily admits that he doesn't know what came over him: He has never felt that sense of pure, unadulterated rage, malice, and hate. It turned his vision red and overwhelmed him, and it wasn't until the deed was done that he suddenly came back to himself in a jarring state of disorientation.

Carson was, of course, influenced by Spitemonger, but he has no way to know that. His statement should make the Garou suspect outside influence and lead them back to the scene of the crime.

Carson's considered a flight risk, so he is being held without bail. Barring intervention by the Garou, he is eventually convicted of second-degree murder and spends the next twenty years in the state prison, so the pack can't simply wait for his release or bail him out.

THE VICTIM

The pack might (correctly) surmise that a trip to the Milton coroner's office is simpler than getting in to see the murderer. This jaunt puts the Garou in the heart of the decrepit town. Half of the old storefronts in the town center are empty, with "For Lease" signs in the windows. The town hall and courthouse are blocky and faded, with painted-over tags of graffiti in the alleys between them.

The victim of the killing, Eddie "Easy" Lugo, was an itinerant unhoused person at the time of his demise. Bribing or deceiving the coroner, a middle-aged white man named Joseph Thatcher who's also the town doctor (Manipulation + Streetwise or Resources, Difficulty 2), allows access to the autopsy records and a brief look at Easy's remains, but there's little to learn: Easy was bludgeoned to death with a tire iron, and the beating continued for several additional blows after he lost consciousness. He was found with only his worn clothes, a plastic lighter, a half-empty pack of cigarettes, and twelve dollars and sixty-three cents. There is no indication that Easy had a weapon or that he posed any threat.

Once the pack knows Easy's identity, they can learn more about his past by checking with the police for information about his record (Manipulation + Subterfuge, Difficulty 2, as this is an open murder case) or going through the town's old crime blotter and looking for his name (Intelligence + Investigation, Difficulty 1). Easy has a lengthy record of minor infractions, principally trespassing, petty theft, loitering, and one case of resisting arrest in which an overzealous officer dislocated his shoulder. Basically, he had the difficult life of an unhoused person, living rough in a society that criminalized his existence. The only lead here is in the other folks from his community: The other unhoused people of Milton, who have a small tent city not far from the fulfillment center.

Like many towns in the World of Darkness, Milton largely deals with the problem of unhoused people by pretending that they don't exist.

Milton largely deals with the problem of unhoused people by pretending that they don't exist. Bridges Loss Prevention usually displace them from locations where the rest of the public might have to acknowledge them. Polyphemus Security routinely raids their encampments and destroys their meager possessions. While the town church offers limited help to the unhoused, the town itself makes living rough a difficult proposition. As a result, unhoused people frequently find themselves living along overpasses or forested areas near the freeway, coming into Milton occasionally to scavenge for survival needs.

Easy lived in a tent in a collective of unhoused people near the freeway. Any investigation into Easy's past turns up this collection of the unhoused, an assortment of people who either by misfortune or by choice live in tents with a tenuous existence. The other dwellers of the encampment are observing a period of mourning for Easy and have not yet divided up his nonperishable stuff. Easy's possessions are still in his tent: a worn sleeping bag, a few stained changes of clothes, a battery-powered radio, some personal grooming effects and odds and ends. Nothing in his possessions suggests violence or interaction with the supernatural world.

Easy's former peers are reticent to discuss his demise, but they can be convinced with a Charisma + Persuasion, or Manipulation + Intimidation or Subterfuge, optionally + Resources for a bribe (Difficulty 2). They all agree Easy wasn't a threat to anyone and add that they've been staying away from the fulfillment center since its closure, as it seems to be a center point for "bad vibes." People seem to have more arguments in the area, and local teens come there to trespass or to rough up the unhoused. Like following up on Carson, all the clues lead back to the fulfillment center.

Unfulfillment

If the pack played The Break Room, they've already been to the Val-MOR fulfillment center and likely tangled with its corporate efficiency specialist, Mr. Mersey. The fulfillment center is closed, either due to the Garou's actions or for an unrelated reason (see 'Catch the Scent'). The fulfillment center's entry gates are closed, yellow police tape hangs in ribbons from the gate — already torn partially away — and a sign temporarily posted on the outer wall reads "We'll be back in business soon. Thank you for shopping at Val-MOR!" with a distressingly saccharine cartoon picture of a young Val-MOR employee holding up a thumb and grinning. Someone has spraypainted black Xs over the eyes of the cartoon

character. The security presence has been cut down to only four guards, two at the gate and two ostensibly on patrol but mostly smoking in the parking lot — the empty fulfillment center creeps them out.

The center is quiet. Electricity has been turned off and all doors are locked to guard the product still within. If the Garou go inside, the atmosphere is one of foreboding. Footsteps echo menacingly, and shadows seem long and pointed. A Resolve + Occult test, Difficulty 2, indicates some kind of supernatural presence is raising the Garou's hackles, but it either can't or won't manifest in the material world. The only way to confront it is in the Umbra. The Gauntlet in and around the fulfillment center is 2.

In the Umbra, the fulfillment center has become a hollow space, the walls seemingly bowed convex, the windows even narrower and taller, the shelving rising up to a ceiling shrouded in impenetrable shadow. Boxes of toys and clothes have garish, washed-out pictures on the sides identifying their contents and providing lurid advertising. Conveyor belts runs constantly and the loading workstations have heavy chains with manacles attached to them. The upstairs offices seem oddly distorted, with the surfaces clean and sparkling but their walls, doors, and framing twisted as if in a funhouse mirror. Tiny metal cocoons cling to the surfaces of computers, where dormant tech-spider spirits wait for the return of electricity.

Many of the fulfillment center's ground-floor rooms are forbidding wire-cage offices. The wire fencing of the office is rusty and looks almost bloody. Low tables with swiveling chairs sit empty in front of dead monitors that feel like the eyes of a sleeping monster. Pegboards hold uncomfortable back-braces and lifting belts that look more like torture implements than safety devices. Yellow paper slips cover the floor like dead leaves, each with unintelligible red marker writing on it. Posters on the walls depict faceless, armored security forces in threatening poses with captions like "IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, YOU ARE COMPLICIT" and "THE COMPANY IS GREATER THAN ANY ONE EMPLOYEE." Such props are Umbral manifestations of the company's attitudes, the subtext every worker feels plainly made visible in a place where their emotional resonance bubbles to the surface.

Spite monger makes its lair here, venturing forth to enjoy the malice from disputes and acts of petty vengeance between people near the center. Just as the Bane drew strength from the distress of Val-MOR employees sabotaging each other's work and snitching on



THE COMPANY IS
GREATER THAN ANY ONE

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING
YOU ARE COMPLIANT

DO IT!

THE COMPANY IS
GREATER THAN ANY ONE
EMPLOYEE

their associates, it now spreads its influence to find new victims. Banes can't create misery and malice where it doesn't exist, but they can fan the flames, and this Bane pushes victims until they break from exhaustion and desperation.

Spitemonger makes no attempt to hide. It first appears as a towering Val-MOR manager wearing a face-concealing helmet and surrounded by floating chains, but it quickly shifts through various forms, taking on the appearance of Carson, Easy, and finally the Garou with the highest Rage in the pack. It doesn't speak, but it taunts the Garou with gestures designed to infuriate. Once fighting starts, the Bane lashes out with its floating chains and a spiked nightstick.

Wire cage offices can only hold three people — or the Malice-Spirit and one other, or one Garou in crinos form — but the spirit gladly moves to follow enemies, and it's probably easier for the Garou to confront on the warehouse floor. Use the space here to flex the combat battlefield dramatically, as the Umbra seems to underscore the dangers of the location: The wire cages are claustrophobic, with sparks flying as the Spitemonger's chains ricochet off their walls, while in the open warehouse floor the Bane looms huge and monstrous, and every corner seems far away, as if the Garou are stuck in a vast, open space with no escape.

See 'Allies and Antagonists' for the full description of Spitemonger's powers. Pay special attention to how the Bane interacts with Rage dice: It is harder to defeat if the Garou have more Rage.

THAT'S A WRAP

Defeating Spitemonger is straightforward, and it settles the problems around the closed fulfillment center — for now. After the spirit's destroyed, the Wandering Raconteur waits outside of the center for the Garou to leave. (If the Garou shift back to the material world, they can have a wrap-up with Mother Louise instead. Either way, the gist of the wrap-up is the same.)

The pack earns praise for figuring out how to handle Spitemonger and releasing its hold on people passing by the area. Their associate specifically notes that learning to rein in Rage, and fighting with control, is important for using violence as a targeted tool rather than indiscriminate devastation. Success in battle gains Glory, but good judgment is far less common in Garou circles.

If the Garou haven't finished all four scenes, and don't have a new lead to follow, the Wized Raconteur provides one. If this is the fourth scene they have completed, proceed to 'The Turn'.

PART TWO: POLYPHEMUS SECURITY SOLUTIONS

Polyphemus Security Solutions was Val-MOR's security services provider. It's also another Pentex holding. Polyphemus serves as a private armed security company that contracts with businesses to provide patrols and surveillance. Though the Polyphemus branch in Milton is small, employing roughly a dozen guards and a handful of administrative personnel, it aggressively pursues contracts with the town and local businesses, claiming Milton is constantly at risk of being overrun by the "criminal element" and exaggerating or fabricating statistics about gun crime, youth vagrancy, and organized gangs from larger cities coming to the town to sell drugs and weapons. Polyphemus claims that they are the solution to these problems.

With its income from the fulfillment center disrupted, Polyphemus aggressively looks for other ways to generate revenue, which includes shaking down local businesses with vague threats of what might happen to them if they don't contract Polyphemus guards.

Polyphemus's actions lead to further malaise and oppression. People looking for work find it fairly easy to secure a part-time job with Polyphemus, so long as they are mobile and able to gain a registered security firearms license. (Polyphemus pays the up-front costs and recoups it from the employee's paycheck in installments, with interest.) Employees discover the limited available hours don't earn a living wage, and the company's culture pushes guards to be aggressive, suspicious, and threatening. Polyphemus guards who embrace this corporate culture attract the attention of Banes and, if they fully embrace their vices, risk becoming fomori. Those who don't wash out or get fired. Guards' best route to a bigger paycheck is a bonus for signing up new clients, incentivizing them to frighten local businesses and homeowners until they pay for protection.

The Wized Raconteur explains that Milton is a town living in fear, and the pack should try wandering around on Main Street after dark and see what comes calling. The Raconteur refuses to be more specific.

A Little Light Harassment

Most Polyphemus guards are regular humans, but five of them are Bane-touched — not quite full-fledged fomori, but almost there. Polyphemus guards on patrol wear jackets with a large Polyphemus Security Solutions patch on them, showing a picture of a pistol with an eye in the side of the barrel. The Bane-touched guards are the most



active in spreading the Polyphemus Security corporate culture, and they have a level of spiritual awareness that lets them smell Garou who have any amount of Rage. The Banes don't care what happens to the guards, so they nudge them into hostile, even self-destructive behaviors — like pulling a pistol on a Garou.

As the Garou go about the town looking for clues to the meaning of the Raconteur's comments, a pair of armed Polyphemus guards confronts them. The guards pull up in a security cruiser and, hands on their firearms, gruffly ask the Garou what they're doing in the neighborhood and ask to see I.D. One is a Bane-touched Polyphemus Security guard 4, while the other is a hapless Polyphemus Security novice 3. The Bane-touched guard can sense the Garou identity of any character with one or more Rage dice. See 'Allies and Antagonists' for more details about the Bane-touched Polyphemus guards.

The Bane-touched guard goes through the motions of checking the Garou's ID — if any — and makes snide comments about the “outsider,” with a note about folks coming from out of town and bringing crime with them. They chuckle at their own offensive humor, inviting the hapless novice to join in, which the novice does uneasily and hesitantly.

Garou who keep their wits about them realize Polyphemus guard services are not police or sheriffs, and they have no authority to arrest or even stop anyone. If the Garou stay calm, answer questions, don't push back, and have their ID in order, the guards eventually let them go, “with a warning,” and tell them they should keep moving on to the next town (even if they're locals). The Bane-touched guard tries to “accidentally” keep one of the Garou's IDs. Characters who challenge the guards' authority are asking for a longer stop and deliberate attempts to antagonize them into doing something violent so the Polyphemus guards can fight back.

The Garou can, of course, simply tear the guards limb from limb. The Bane-touched guard is a little tougher and quicker than a typical security guard, but the hapless Polyphemus novice is just a frail human. In fact, it's too easy, and doesn't solve the problem: The Bane shifts its attention to someone else on the staff, and the cycle of abuse continues unabated.

The important information from this encounter is that Polyphemus guards are engaging in a campaign of harassment against the residents of Milton.

Careful About That There Slander

The Polyphemus guards definitely imply that the Garou are troublemakers because they're outsiders and weirdos, but exercise caution about crossing the line into actual slurs about marginalized groups if your troupe wants to avoid these subjects. Those topics cut close to the bone for many people, and there's no need to subject your players to hateful rhetoric based on negative stereotypes if there is any doubt as to how this would be received. (See *Personal Boundaries* in Chapter Seven of *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*.)

Word on the Street

After their run-in with the Polyphemus guards, the Garou probably want to learn more about the security company. They can do some research online, asking the locals, or even visit the Polyphemus Security branch office near the Val-EVENMor store complex on Main Street.

Anyone can look up Polyphemus Security online, using a terminal in the library if they don't have smartphones or computers of their own. This provides the web page for Polyphemus Security Solutions and the address for the local office; the website has splashy advertising showing guards in uniform holding guns and misrepresented crime statistics claiming that the low price of a security contract is far offset by the savings from preventing crime.

Talking with locals is tougher: People are reticent to talk about Polyphemus Security, especially with strangers, and getting someone to open up requires a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 3) or a pre-existing good relationship with a local like Shane Montoya (see *The Break Room*). With success, the Garou learn that Polyphemus is known to many small local businesses because their guards swagger about in pairs and stop in to shops to “recommend” services. About a quarter of the businesses downtown have response contracts with Polyphemus, meaning that in the event of a break-in or alarm signal, Polyphemus dispatches armed guards to respond, promising a better response time than state police; in reality this is just a revenue stream for Polyphemus with very little cost on their side. The meaner, Bane-touched Polyphemus guards sometimes



roust unhoused folk or “suspicious” looking people, ordering them to move on from streets with businesses that have Polyphemus contracts and sending them to places that don’t — essentially, driving desperate or distressed people into places where they’ll cause locals to become nervous, and hopefully to encourage them to look to Polyphemus for protection.

The Polyphemus Security office is a squat building behind the Val-EVENMor store with a large painting on its windowed front showing the Polyphemus logo, the pistol with an eye on the side of the barrel. Steel bars protect the windows, even the large one in the front that prominently features the company logo. Inside, a large, rounded desk has a single Polyphemus Security administrator 3. On the day shift this is Eli, while evenings are worked by Jackson. Both men are normal humans, snappy and short-tempered. Guards come in and out on a regular cadence, paying little heed to visitors, going into back rooms through a heavy door with a magnetic lock, using key cards to enter. How matters proceed from there depends upon the pack’s approach.

Have Gun, Will Stalk

The Garou have several options for obtaining more information on Polyphemus Security. Remember Polyphemus employees do not know about the supernatural malaise that afflicts their company; they simply believe that they are acting in their own best interests.

Intimidate the administrator: The Garou can shake down the administrator for information, using Manipulation + Intimidation (Difficulty 2). The secretary says the company has 13 guards on staff, multiple contracts through the town, and a cordial relationship with the police — and points out that threatening a security firm comes with consequences. After the Garou finish asking questions, two Bane-touched Polyphemus guards 4 and two hapless Polyphemus novices 3 respond and demand the Garou leave under threat of police response.

Stakeout: Guards come and go, checking in, receiving assignments, and dropping off or picking up equipment as needed. There’s no obvious sign of a supernatural presence. In the Umbra, though, the office looks like a towering structure with a huge organic eye peering out from a rickety metallic tower on the top, showering a baleful green light over the entire Main Street. Small, wispy spirits — scryers, shaped like fist-sized



bloodshot lidless eyes with bat wings — flit about and occasionally hover near the shoulders of Polyphemus employees, whispering to them.

Subterfuge: Using Manipulation + Subterfuge (Difficulty 2), one of the characters can pose as a potential employee or client. On a failed roll, the administrator demands the Garou leave the premises. Even if the roll succeeds, the administrator is snippy and offers a clipboard of literature — either an application form or a list of contract options, depending upon the Garou’s deception. In the Umbra, whispering scryers flit about avoiding the Garou and whispering to any guard that passes through, causing them to frown and look at the Garou with disdain.

The Back Room: If the Garou get into the back, they find lockers, jackets, belts, nightsticks, zip ties, and other security paraphernalia, but no obvious signs of supernatural influence. In the Umbra, the back room holds a Dissonant Gestalt 4 spirit and several Scryer 1 spirits (double the number of characters in the pack; see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* pp. 251–252). These spirits influence employees, and the scryers follow guards or look for places where conflict can happen. Garou in the Umbra can engage these spirits, of course, but they’re symptoms, not the underlying problem.

Watching the Watchers

Once the pack starts investigating Polyphemus Security closely, the company watches them back. Scryer 1 spirits follow the Garou, learning where they stay, who they interact with, and what they do when they’re not shadowing the company and its employees. The spirits whisper their discoveries to Polyphemus guards and the Garou find themselves frequently crossing paths with Polyphemus employees on a mission to make their lives difficult.

In the Umbra, the scryer spirits are obvious and easily destroyed. More spirits form over time, though, with a new one coalescing in the Polyphemus Security offices every day to replace those that are lost.

Toppling the Tower

Fighting Polyphemus guards, administrators, and Banes is a temporary solution. The real problem is that the existence of Polyphemus Security and its corporate culture encourages and reinforces systemic oppression. If the Garou kill Polyphemus employees, the corporation turns it into a sales strategy: Warning local businesses that violent crime is spiking and they need to contract



Polyphemus Security guard services right now. To defeat this problem, the pack needs to find a way to remove the security company from the equation completely — to defund Polyphemus. Unless the Garou opt to solve the problem with violence, this is liable to take some time, and they may engage with some of Milton’s other problems as their solution unfolds.

Mass Murder: The pack may decide to simply murder every single person working for the corporation. It works: Polyphemus folds its branch office and leaves the city. They also know they have significant opposition. This information spreads throughout Pentex, and other subsidiaries with supernatural reach send agents to find out more about the Garou and cause problems for them in the future. Such mass murder brings with it the danger of hauglosk. It may also yield Glory.

Sabotaging Polyphemus: Tech-minded Garou might try erasing computer files, deleting employee records, or using social engineering to sabotage workplace connections and schedules. Treat this as an extended operation played out over three encounters, during which the pack must alter or destroy computer records (Intelligence + Technology, Difficulty 4), engineer disputes between employees (Manipulation + Subterfuge, Difficulty 3), and misdirect the spirit spies manipulating the company by leading them in false directions (Dexterity + Occult, Difficulty 3). Succeeding on all of these tasks has a big impact: Guards quit their jobs (sometimes with shouting matches and angry threats of lawsuits), schedules fall apart, and contracted services aren’t delivered, and the cordial relationship

with the state police frays as Polyphemus causes them more work rather than less. Within a week of success, the Polyphemus Security branch office closes. Guards lose their part-time jobs, causing hardship in the meantime, but the office no longer attracts spirits and no longer reinforces oppressive systems of surveillance. New spirits no longer form there and even the Bane-touched slowly shed the spirits' influence. This solution may yield Wisdom.

Rallying the Community: The Garou can bring the community together to oppose Polyphemus Security. Many locals already resent the corporation and its guards. Getting the community to come together to reject Polyphemus requires three operations. The pack must find alternative employment for people currently working for Polyphemus, so they leave willingly (Intelligence + Finance, optionally with Resources, Difficulty 4). They must convince local businesses to cancel their Polyphemus contracts (Charisma + Persuasion, Difficulty 3), by showing the company is extorting them for protection money and that if everyone cancels their contracts at once the company has no way to shake them all down anymore. The community must form a movement to publicly repudiate Polyphemus in a way that generates media attention and support (Charisma + Leadership, difficulty 4). If all of these tasks are completed, the community comes together to hold a series of protests outside of the Polyphemus offices. Guards quit very publicly and vocally, and several local businesses start pasting stickers labeled “NO POLYPHEMUS” on their windows and doors. Within a week, Polyphemus Security closes its branch office, but the community provides soft landings and alternative employment for former guards — some become individual security for local business, others find work in service, manual labor, or data entry. Nobody gets rich, but nobody gets hurt, either. Best of all, the Garou can obfuscate their involvement, looking like they're just concerned citizens in the middle of an unhappy community response, so they aren't singled out for later retribution by Polyphemus Security or other organizations. This solution may yield Honor.

Fully resolving the Polyphemus problem takes time, which affords the pack a chance to either take some downtime or pursue one of the other troubles in the town. After the dust clears, the pack chats with either the Wizeden Raconteur or Mother Louise. Either mentor-figure impresses upon them that they worked to serve the greater community through their actions but realized that they were constantly watched in the process. Thus,

no matter where they were, they always had to comport themselves as if being observed, and act in a way that would not cause suspicion. This, the pack is told, forms the underpinnings of Honor: Acting consistently as if you are always being watched by your ancestors, so that your actions should always be just, forthright, and well-intentioned.

If the Garou haven't finished all four scenes, they must consult with the Wizeden Raconteur once more and then pick their next lead. If this is the fourth scene they have completed, proceed to ‘The Turn’.

**The underpinnings of Honor:
Acting consistently as if
you are always being watched
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PART THREE: REACHING FOR THE SKY

In the material world, Milton is like any small town in the grips of recession: Businesses sputter along, but commercial areas bear many empty storefronts and “FOR LEASE” signs. Homes show wear and tear with minimal maintenance. Even the chain stores and restaurants by the fulfillment center have peeling paint and faded signs, as the town and its inhabitants struggle to make ends meet.

In the Umbra, the situation is much starker. Its downtown clock tower looms overhead as if bending toward the onlookers below, teetering and ready to fall. The sky is always dim and the sun angry red. Clouds vary between gray and green, reflecting the pollution of the urban space. Trash-spirits animate empty Styrofoam boxes, causing them to skitter away like spiders, and plastic bags, making them float off like jellyfish in the sky.

Gafflings of various sorts swarm about the buildings — Weaver-allied spirits connected to construction technology or electronic infrastructure, Wyrmspirits connected to businesses that generate pollution (whether physical or spiritual), some rare nature spirits such as bird- and rat-spirits adapted to the urban environment. Atop the clock tower, connected by steely threads of silk, is a great cocoon glowing with lambent silver energy.

The Purpose of the Climb

This scene presents lessons about interacting with spirits, but also gives the pack a chance to earn the respect and gifts of a powerful spirit (see ‘The Spirit Unbound’, p. 58). By interacting with other spirits along the way, the characters describe their thoughts, hopes, and fears. In doing so, they shape the eventual form of the spirit that they rescue. Was it always thus? Or did they shape it through their journey? In the Umbra, both might be true.

Encourage the players to talk about the spirit, to ask questions, even to put forward their own ideas of what it might be, how it came to be captured, and its relationship to other spirits and to the town of Milton. Encourage the players to draw inferences from the challenges they face, to guess at the nature of the spirit, and to push their foes for information by demanding that they tell it if their guesses are right: “Is it a helicopter? A coyote? An abstract figure representing the geometry of Milton?” Through their guesses, the players set the parameters for the spirit that they rescue.

Clever players might figure out that their speculations and stories are defining the final form of this spirit. There’s nothing strictly wrong with that — they’re engaged and paying attention, and that’s a good thing. If you want to surprise them, however, nothing stops you giving the spirit some tweaks and secrets.

Who Lives There?

The spirits around Milton are, like most spirits, cautious around the Garou, but they can be enticed to answer questions, especially if the Garou trade with them. These trades may seem insignificant or even comical: bird- and rat-spirits want tiny snacks (which may be challenging if the Garou didn’t bring these along in Dedicated clothing when they entered the Umbra!), Weaver-spirits ignore the Garou unless forcibly interrupted from their patterns of behavior, and Banes are generally hostile.

A test of Intelligence + Occult, Difficulty 2, hints at the possible outcomes of various interactions:

- * *Intimidation*: Garou can threaten a local jaggling for information. This isn’t hard — Charisma + Intimidation, Difficulty 2 — but doing so to any spirit, even a Bane, puts all of the other spirits on guard and increases the difficulty for all subsequent tests with spirits in Milton by 1.
- * *Persuasion*: The Garou can ask innocent questions, leading the spirits into giving away information. Minor spirits of the sort found here have very limited scopes of cognition and usually only answer questions about their immediate surroundings and interests. Thus, learning about the cocoon and the spirits around it means going through several interviews, piecing together tiny bits of information from successive spirits, as a Manipulation + Persuasion test with a Difficulty of 3.
- * *Chiminage*: Garou who know a little about spirit matters might choose to propitiate an important spirit in hopes of earning its favor. To do so, they must flag down one of the jaggings in the area, such as a racoon-spirit or even a building-spirit and offer it something of value. Offerings to spirits reflect their nature, and may take the form of a service, a sacrifice of an item, or a secret told openly. Typically, the chiminage requires the Garou to part with something valuable, whether that is a personal effect or their own reputation, and it carries over into the physical world: The character is giving up a personal item, or doing something that stays with them and becomes an embarrassing story for later. There is no test for this; if the Garou pay the chiminage, they earn a success. For this initial experience, the fledgling Garou pay a simple price. The influential spirit asks the Garou to perform services for the other, smaller spirits in the area, spirits who don’t have the power to help the Garou. The Garou must humble themselves by aiding small spirits by finding lost articles, bringing them food, or scouting out places for them to make new homes. None of these tasks are onerous, but they certainly feel like the mighty warriors of Gaia are being sent to perform trivial, sometimes even embarrassing, deeds.



Once the Garou decide on an approach, they learn more about the cocoon as they earn successes.

Initial success: “A great spirit once watched over this place, but with the imbalance of the Triat it was imprisoned and now slumbers fitfully above. To reach it, one must pass the spirits that keep it captive.”

+1 success: “The spirit imprisoned is probably powerful enough to escape, but it has chosen not to.”

+2 successes: “Both Wyrms and Weaver avoid the spirit, for it could destroy any of the minor spirits here.”

+3 successes: “With Wyrms and Weaver out of balance, Wyld must be resurgent, and only through change can the cocoon be opened.”

These clues provide the Garou with hints that the spirit could be a valuable ally, that it is not a Wyrmspirit or Weaver-spirit, and that the cocoon — symbol of an entity in change — indicates that the form that it takes when it escapes may not be the same as when it was first captured.



The Climb

Ascending the clock tower looks deceptively simple: A staircase circles up the tower. In the Umbra, there are no guards or locked doors to prevent the Garou from ascending. The climb is longer than it seems, though; in fact, it is as long as it needs to be, for the Garou to finish their learning tasks along the way. Performing the Rite of Shadow Passage at the top of the tower in the physical world will deliver them to its foot in the Umbra.

The pack must complete three successful interactions to reach the peak of the clock tower. After each ordeal, they continue climbing the seemingly endless stair. Have each player make a Stamina + Athletics roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of ordeals they’ve encountered so far. On a failure, the Garou takes one point of superficial Willpower damage. Note that the climb down is easy and fast, but the Garou must start over when they next return.

Each interaction provides a chance for the Garou to describe something about the cocooned spirit above. Pull from the suggested interactions below in any order or use those that connect to the skills players chose for their Garou — when a player spends their points on an ability, that’s a signal that they want to use it!

By the time the Garou reach the top of the tower, the players’ responses to questions about the cocooned spirit should have given you enough of an idea about what kind of spirit it will be. See *The Purpose of the Climb* sidebar for more information.

Fighting the Wyrms: Banes circle around the tower, taking the form of mutated, polluted animals or crumbling pieces of abandoned technology. This is a straightforward brawl against crawling Banes: One for each member of the pack, with a Power of 3–4 (based on your judgment of a given pack member’s combat ability). The Wyrmspirits hiss and taunt the Garou, telling them they’re nothing like the spirit above, that if it can be so easily dispatched, what chance do the Garou have? The Banes directly ask the Garou what they think the spirit is, what they think that it can do, so that you can push the players to guess at its nature.

Interrupting the Weaver: Machine-spirits (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 254) festoon the clock tower, representing signals sent by the cellular network attached to the tower and the electricity that powers the clock, which itself is an object of regimentation and order. The Weaver-spirits aren’t hostile, but they go about their business with precision, on a continuous schedule. Interruption makes them irritable, and the spirits



panic if they're prevented from carrying messages or completing tasks. The Garou can haggle with the spirits for information about the prisoner. They succeed in this interaction if they interrupt several Weaver-spirits at once — one for each Garou present — and combine their pieces of data to form a coherent chunk of information, using Intelligence + Technology, Intelligence + Occult, Manipulation + Etiquette (Difficulty 3), or other combinations appropriate for a character's approach to the problem for each spirit — doing so does, however, combine several small Weaver-spirits into a single Power 5 jaggling, whose reaction depends upon how the Garou treated its component parts.

Dealing with nature spirits: The spirits of birds, racoons, rats, and other urban scavengers sometimes flit about the clock tower or race up and down its sides. These spirits are skittish, unwilling to get within arm's reach. Nature spirits refer to the captive spirit as a “sibling-spirit,” “one like us,” “a great creature that waits for its rebirth.” Nature spirits willingly talk to Garou who offer to perform a kindness for their material relatives: feeding the pigeons in the park for a bird-spirit, finding an adoptive home for a cat-spirit, unlocking the lid of a trash bin for a racoon-spirit. These little tasks are not onerous but should place the Garou in an awkward position at some point after returning to the material world.

Climbing the outside of the tower: The Garou may realize that the stairs seem endless and decide to claw their way up the tower exterior. This takes a Strength + Athletics test, Difficulty 3, but it proves no easier: The tower itself seems to stretch on and on. On a failed test, the Garou must slip back in the windows to the stairway to remain safe; on a Brutal result, the Garou shatters the stone siding of the spiritual tower and falls, suffering four Health levels of superficial damage. As they climb, they see graffiti on the walls, snippets of names or descriptions, many of which seem to relate to the captive spirit in some way. Ask the players to describe the pieces of graffiti and the terms therein, then flavor them with your own interjections to indicate that these are words talking about the spirit above.

Making a deal: The pack might ask any local spirits to help them reach the spirit above. They ask the Garou why they want to reach it, what they think it is, and what they intend to do with it. These prompts offer the Garou chances to voice their thoughts about the spirit and their hopes for it. The spirits accept one level of superficial Willpower damage from each Garou in the pack in exchange for their help; the spirits then form a fanciful

way to help the Garou ascend, such as dragging the Garou up on a web of metal threads, or carrying them with a group of birds, or scrambling up the outside of the tower in a swarm of fuzzy animals that obscure the tower and make the end seem closer when they disperse.

Opening the Cocoon

Once the pack reaches the peak of the clock tower, they should have some idea of the cocooned spirit's nature. The cocoon itself surrounds the top of the tower above the clock, and naturally as the Garou finally reach the roof, the clock hands close in on midnight.

When the pack arrives, the cocoon shudders, then bulges erratically. The spirit inside is trying to come out, and the pack must help it. The spirit promises the Garou support and patronage if they help it free itself.

Though the Garou likely try to use claw and fang to rend the cocoon, they find that the fibers are tough and sticky, making it difficult to tear — it rebounds and fuses back together with each strike. Instead, the Garou must empower the spirit within. From the interior, its muted voice calls for aid, asking the Garou to grant it power — chiminage.

How the Garou grant chiminage depends upon the spirit's form. The spirit demands that they deal with the Watcher of Toil, a Psychomachia spirit (Power 6; *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 249): If the spirit is a warrior-spirit, it calls for direct confrontation; a spirit of occultism or wisdom asks that the pack discover the roots of the Psychomachia (which comes from a long history of labor exploitation in Milton); a spirit of healing or support demands that the pack rescue several nature-spirits from the Psychomachia before it can devour them. The pack remains in the Umbra for one last job, tracking the Psychomachia to its lair in the historical downtown district where the spirit lairs among the businesses that gained decades of profit from mistreating workers, then confronting it while fulfilling the spirit's request. In doing so, the pack makes its commitments to the spirit to earn its patronage.

Ways to find out where the Psychomachia comes from are asking other spirits — Knickerbocker (p. 22) knows a part of the story and will tell with a Wits + Politics or Manipulation + Etiquette test (Difficulty 3). Clever Garou may think to ask the Wizeden Raconteur. They may not realize it, but it is precisely the kind of tale that the story-spirit thrives on. Same skills apply as with Knickerbocker, but with Difficulty 2. Going to take a look at the Psychomachia in its lair will yield information with an Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3), but

this carries the risk of battle. The pack should discover information from at least two sources to fulfill the chiminage. The ways to find out should not be limited to these and if the players come up with something else, let them.

Rescuing nature spirits may be as simple as defeating the Psychomachia in combat but may also be accomplished by Dexterity + Stealth tests (Difficulty 3) to enter the Bane's lair unnoticed and Dexterity + Larceny or Intelligence + Occult tests (Difficulty 3) to free the three or four captured gafflings from their thorny cages.

The scene concludes when the pack finalizes its agreement — or releases the spirit without one (for instance, if they already have a Pact Spirit).

Through these insights they have gained Wisdom: truths can be changeable, the spirit world reflects and reinterprets the material, and spirits possess many aspects.

The Spirit Unbound

Once the spirit is released, the pack is free to return; the stairs of the clock tower now seem laughably short. The atmosphere downtown changes. Someone proposes a small downtown festival and soon the town's area seems more sedate, though not without its continuing struggles.

The recently freed spirit makes an excellent resource for one or more of the pack. It might distill a fragment of its power into a Talisman or enter a Spirit Pact (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, pp. 104–105). This is a powerful spirit, but it doesn't necessarily give the Garou access to much of its power; that depends on how many points they spend on a Background.

The pack's wrap-up with their mentor offers the insight that learning to navigate the spirit world involves engaging with subjectivity and malleability. Through these insights they have gained Wisdom: truths can be changeable, the spirit world reflects and reinterprets the material, and spirits possess many aspects.

If the Garou haven't finished all four scenes, they must consult with the Wizeden Raconteur again and pick their next lead. If this is the fourth scene they have completed, proceed to 'The Turn'.





PART FOUR: THE SUFFERING

The people of Milton are suffering from the economic recession, the influence of uncaring corporations, the failure of local government to address these problems, and the spiritual reflections of these challenges. Interacting with people who're dealing with economic hardship, depression, and repressive forces reinforces the effects and means that everyone lives under a constant pall.

The Garou may step into the Umbra in hopes of disincorporating the malevolent spirits that feed upon the despair of helpless humans, and they can offer temporary relief—most spirits attracted to humans in this way are small, with a Power of 1 or 2, though they can congregate in large numbers.

The problem, the pack soon discovers, is that negative spirits are a symptom. Negative events in the physical world flow into spiritual reflections, which attract spirits that then reinforce these travails.

In the Umbra, insubstantial, childlike shades under clouds of despair and more adult-sized ones followed by tiny bats of uncertainty wander the streets of Milton. These are not spirits, merely a spiritual reflection of the townsfolk's fears and anxieties.

Negative events in the physical world flow into spiritual reflections, which attract spirits that then reinforce these travails.

Addressing the Problem, Not the Symptom

The Garou can disperse spirits, even destroy a few that have taken up residence in important community sites like schools, churches, and the library, but to truly solve this issue, they must deal with the root causes in the material world: poverty, fear, anxiety, despair, and corruption.

This is an unstructured scene—let the players formulate a goal based on their character's interests, skills, and Touchstones. The pack needs to bring a glimmer of hope back to Milton. After all, the health of human communities reflects the health of Gaia. Have the Wizenéd Raconteur or Mother Louise provide them with some helpful wisdom if they're not getting the message.

The Garou could help by:

Aiding the unhoused: Milton has a small community of unhoused people, centered on a tent city on the outskirts of town. Local politicians consider unhoused people a blight on the town and give the police wide leeway to displace and arrest them, as well as all but eliminating resources to help them. Garou can strike up relationships with the unhoused, support local initiatives to provide housing and assistance, or just gift them a few warm meals. This is an especially relevant approach for Bone Gnawers, who often live in similar hardscrabble circumstances.

Shaping local politics: Milton's local politicians mostly hew to small-town conservatism and personal enrichment, some of them taking bribes or glad-handing development contracts to corporations in exchange for benefits. Garou don't have the temperament to run for office—one bout of uncontrolled Rage would end a political career—they can support better local candidates, starting with small changes like school boards and city controllers. Organizing with other humans fully integrates the Garou into the community. Plus, if a local leader proves intractable, the bear that mauled people on Main Street was never captured by animal control.

Facing down bigotry: People in areas of economic distress look for groups they can blame; groups with hostile agendas move to promote hateful rhetoric that exploits this tendency. In Milton, this takes the form of white nationalists and right-wing hate groups visiting downtown bars, rallies in the park, and flyers denouncing minority groups. The Garou should recognize this as poison when they see it. Humans using cosmetic differences as excuses to brutalize and murder one another is a tale as old as time, but it's also one that feeds the Wyrms—humanity engineering its own destruction. Garou can see this viscerally in the Umbra, as hateful rhetoric literally takes wing from angry speakers and sinks sharp claws into impressionable listeners. Garou may not care for humans, but this intra-human conflict feeds the Wyrms.

Encouraging community bonds: Especially for philodox and galliard Garou, community bonds are vital. Garou don't necessarily fit in the community, but they do interact with it, and they can encourage the people of the town to pay more attention to their neighbors, to form bonds of mutual aid and friendship, and to organize cooperative events, festivals, and cultural holidays between local businesses. Garou can flex their Allies and Contacts or make new connections to influence the local community.

The risk in these scenes is rarely physical, though the Garou might wind up tangling with dangerous spirits



or even fomori. Rather, the risk lies in the consequences of failure: Garou who can't affect meaningful change risk adding to their harano and hauglosk tracks, depending upon the nature of the conflict. If the Garou reason that ends justify the means and kill a corrupt local politician, that may push them towards hauglosk. If that politician is immediately replaced by someone even more venal, this engenders a sense of hopelessness that can contribute to harano.

Making Things Better, One Day at A Time

The Garou can't make Milton a Bane-free paradise where humans and Garou live in harmony with nature. Rather, the goal is for them to learn that human-Garou interaction is a delicate balance. Garou can't simply purge humanity and start over. That means that making the world better relies on nourishing small moments of brightness, encouraging the best qualities of the world while fighting against the worst. The Umbra reflects their actions in this regard: Humans who feel safe, curious, invigorated, attract benevolent spirits, and interact with each other in a more positive fashion. Community bonds form literal ties of threads, ribbons, and even lines of light in the Umbra as people forge a web of powerful connections.

The pack can't solve all of Milton's problems. The important realization here is that new problems will arise tomorrow but that doesn't mean solving problems now is worthless. The process of making the world better is a continual one, and one that passes on generationally. The Garou, to serve Gaia, tackle these problems according to their gifts and take each day as it comes. Assuming the problems of the world are insurmountable is the road to harano. Assuming every problem demands a violent solution is the road to hauglosk. Just as they balance human and wolf, flesh and spirit, the Garou must delicately balance hope and resolve.

Just as they balance human and wolf, flesh and spirit, the Garou must delicately balance hope and resolve.

A Brighter Day

Once the pack manages to intercede and steer at least two of the trouble spots to a better outcome, whether by serving as secret weapons for a community project or as claws of vengeance to protect the oppressed,

their mentor — the Wizenad Raconteur or Mother Louise — seeks them out to discuss their actions. Their mentor explains that the Garou walk among humanity, even if they aren't necessarily of humanity, and that the human world is an important arena in which to solve problems; that the material and spiritual worlds are strongly intertwined; and that the Garou's existence is a continual struggle for balance. They've learned to fight where they must, heal the world's wounds where they can, and see Gaia's presence in the changes to the Umbra when they act to repair a damaged world. In doing so, they've learned what it means to be Garou.

If the Garou haven't finished all four scenes, they must consult with the Wizenad Raconteur once more before picking their next lead. If this is the fourth scene they have completed, proceed to 'The Turn'.

The Turn

Once the Garou complete all four scenes, they're in for a nasty surprise.

The next time the pack enters the Umbra, the Wizenad Raconteur comes looking for them. The spirit congratulates them on their successes and recaps some of their high — and low — points. The television-face of the spirit shows footage of the Garou's travails.

Then, the spirit reveals its true agenda. The Wizenad Raconteur, as a story-spirit, feeds on the legends that Garou create. Everything that they have done reflects in the spirit world, and because their legends are tied to the spirit, they have given it power. Enough power, perhaps, to end their story — for all stories must end.

The Garou, the Raconteur says, have "walked the Spiral" with it symbolically, and now it is time for them to descend to its level. Having learned many lessons, as heroes do, they face their final test, and the antagonist — the Raconteur — demands that they must confront it. The Raconteur is convinced it has the power to destroy the pack and take their stories for itself, lending it incredible power.

Consult 'Allies and Antagonists' for the Raconteur's profile. Though the Garou can launch themselves into physical combat against it, the way to defeat the Raconteur is by recognizing it as a story-spirit. From their lessons in the Umbra, the Garou should understand now that the spirit adopts a certain role based on its nature, but that nature is malleable. If they fight it — especially if they lose to it — it takes on the role of undefeatable enemy. If they ply it with different stories, they can change its role.

As the Garou fight, the Wizeden Raconteur narrates its own actions, describing how it is going to tear them to pieces, absorb their legends, and write a tragedy that fuels its next conquest. Every time it strikes, it announces its action. It can't help but narrate.

If the Garou just aren't getting the message, you can always send Mother Louise into the fray to explain it to them — but if they went through all of this and didn't learn, they probably deserve a little bit of hurt!

To defeat the Raconteur, the Garou must counter its narration with narrative of their own: stories about their own actions and the past; about historical legends of the Garou, their own family sagas, even made-up stories of heroism and struggle against doom. The Raconteur cannot help but absorb these stories, and these reshape it. Stories about battle and glory make it vulnerable to attack, trickster stories make it easier to deceive the spirit. Stories about Honor, in the form of redemption, change, or learning cause the spirit to hesitate, reflecting upon its own role. Stories where the Garou lose make the Raconteur more powerful, as they conform to its chosen narrative.

Eventually, the Garou will destroy or reshape the Raconteur — or it will kill them. Either way, they solve the core problem of Milton's spirit world — a powerful spirit re-crafting and reciting the most haunting, most depressing, and most enraging stories, feeding back hate and anger, and amplifying it.

Once the Raconteur is defeated or changed, the spirit world finally reflects a shift in Milton's fortunes. The half-observed red sun peeks out from the clouds and rain finally falls, washing away the grime and grit. For at least one day, the people of Milton can't explain why, but they're having a good day, filled with happy or wistful memories and fanciful or funny stories.

FOLLOW THE TRAIL

Dealing with Milton's large crises opens the door to also dealing with some of the smaller ones, if the Garou want to follow up on their successes.

The spirit newly freed from its cocoon surely has additional tasks for the Garou, such as sending them to investigate or fight against another emerging problem caused by a visiting corporate consultant, a military exercise, or a collector looking to purchase stolen artifacts.

The pack may well want to delve into the Val-EVENMOR superstore itself in the Umbra, to see what horrors await there, a task complicated by the fact that it is centrally located in the town.

The Garou's actions in motivating the local community to organize may, of course, have extended consequences, and people that protested and showed up for rallies may ask the Garou for continued help with their problems.

ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

Spitemonger

Spitemonger, which inhabits the Val-MOR fulfillment center is a powerful version of a Bitter Rage spirit (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 245).

Power: 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight (Sore Spot) +4, Melee (Chains) +4, Persuasion (Provocation) +4

Notes / Other Traits:

Provoke: See *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 245.

Accelerating Rage: Each time a Garou scores a Brutal outcome while in Spitemonger's presence, it immediately regenerates one Health Level. The Malice-Spirit regenerates superficial damage first, then aggravated damage if none remains. This happens even when the attack is a critical hit against Spitemonger itself.

Chains of Malice: Each time a Garou with three or more Rage dice takes an action, Spitemonger makes an immediate melee attack against that Garou. This attack even strikes Garou that aren't in the same room, as long as they're in the same scene: chains come lashing out of shadows, air ducts, boxes, and dark corners to smash into the Garou.

Seething Armor: When attacked by a foe with three or more Rage dice, Spitemonger can never take more than one Health level of damage from the attack, even an indirect attack such as collapsing a wall on it or sniping it from long range.



Bane-Touched Polyphemus Security Guard

Polyphemus Security guards who embrace the company's surveillance and bullying become "Bane-touched," slightly infused with the energies of the Banes that are attracted to them. With enough exposure a guard could become a fomor, but even those with limited exposure become changed. To the guard, this seems like a natural progression of their training: They become hypervigilant, more aware of threats, stronger, faster, and tougher.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 4, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Investigation 6, Firearms 7, Melee 7

Notes / Other Traits:

Scent of Rage: Anyone with Rage dice within ten feet causes the Polyphemus Security guard to detect an undercurrent of something spicy and musky. Polyphemus guards only know this means trouble.

The Wizeden Raconteur

Looking like an old human with a bulky television for a head, the Wizeden Raconteur is a story-spirit. It absorbs and retells stories, showing them through pictures on its television screen and narrating through its speakers. While it presents itself as a talkative and neutral spirit, in the depressed and dysfunctional town of Milton it gains power through spreading stories of pain, suffering, outrage, and corruption — causing people to feel simultaneously angry and helpless. When it meets the pack, it sees them as a chance to greatly increase its power by casting them as "heroes" in an Umbral narrative, and then destroying them to spread a message of despair.

Power: 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Academics +2, Insight (Personal History) +4, Intimidation (Horror) +4, Performance (Drama) +4, Technology +2

Notes / Other Traits:

Create Allies: Once per scene, the Wizeden Raconteur can spend an action to narrate the formation of allies. These spirit-creatures literally crawl out of its screen, taking the form of pop culture characters. Roll the spirit's Performance pool; every two successes generate one ally, which counts as a Power 4 story elemental in its own right (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 261). Each ally spirit has one Exceptional Dice Pool at +2, themed according to its form: A movie superhero might have Brawl, a cowboy could have Firearms, and a sci-fi cyborg might have Technology. Since these are spirits, their weapons don't have to fit modern, real-world tech or physics. Typically, this is the first action that the Raconteur takes in a fight.

Change the Channel: By taking one point of superficial Willpower damage, the spirit can alter the Umbral scenery. The Raconteur narrates the shift in the battlefield, and suddenly the Garou find themselves fighting on a muddy medieval hill, inside of a high-rise apartment, or on the surface of an alien planet. This shift can increase the Difficulty of the players' characters' actions by 1 or create environmental hazards such as lava, quicksand, vacuum, or laser tripwires.

Yes, and...: The Raconteur cannot decline when someone else feeds it story notes. It must incorporate these into its story in some way. This makes it vulnerable to social attacks: Garou can use Charisma or Manipulation + Intimidation, Performance, Persuasion, or Subterfuge to alter the Raconteur's narrative. Treat these as attacks, against which the Raconteur defends with its Power. Hits inflict superficial Willpower damage to the Raconteur. If it runs out of Willpower instead of Health levels, the Raconteur submits to change and surrenders to the Garou, recognizing that their story is too strong for it to end here and now. ■



CHAPTER FOUR

A POUND OF FLESH

"A horse never runs so fast as when he has other horses to catch up and outpace."

—OVID

Many enemies oppose the player characters' pack. So far, they've faced the minions of the Wyrms and the enigmatic beings of the Umbra. Now they face their own reflections; a rival pack called the Rakshaks led by a Ghost Council philodox named Ridhaan Sachev who has a long history with the pack's mentor Mother Louise. The Rakshaks have different and conflicting approaches and the characters — through no fault of their own — have forced them to break a promise to Ridhaan's Patron Spirit. In addition, there's a lost Kin about to undergo her First Change, and the Wyrms could still sweep back into power in a heartbeat if the Garou can't resolve their differences.

If the pack played through the previous stories in *Scent of Decay*, their characters have come a long, long way from where they started. The Wyrms' grip on the town of Milton is weaker because of the things they've done.

That is the goal, right?
The thing that ties them to this endless drudgery, no matter how wretched the world gets?

Delaying the inevitable. Always.

But how best to serve? What happens when two packs decide on two different ways forward?

That is the central question of this story. How do the Garou handle conflict when they disagree on how to fight their battles? Must blood always be spilled when honor is at stake? How does a proud people stop the circle of violence that weakens them in their more important battles? How can you forgive and forget when rage is so central to your existence?

Content Warnings

Abuse of power, gore, themes of poverty

THE FOE

The opposing pack, the Rakshaks, are led by Ridhaan Sachdev, whose Patron Spirit is Horned Serpent. Just like the players' pack, the Rakshaks have their own war to fight. The decay of Milton was theirs to handle, and Horned Serpent's support hinged on the Rakshaks managing it just as the spirit required. Milton was meant to be a controlled learning ground. The Rakshaks were to watch from a distance and determine what would happen if Val-MOR got their way, study how they operate, and find weaknesses they could exploit to fight corporate evil elsewhere. A petri dish, if you will.

Ridhaan believes in one singular truth: knowledge is the answer. Unless they understand the Wyrms, Garou are trapped in a reactive position. With knowledge of their foe, they can fight back more effectively and proactively. Plenty of other Garou consider the Ghost's approach unconventional at best, and taboo at worst. For Horned Serpent's support, the Rakshaks must feed their Patron Spirit knowledge. They're expected to squeeze every bit of knowledge out of a situation so they may best apply it to future conflicts. As such, the pack's bond with Horned Serpent demands that they let the decay in Milton progress until they've learned everything they can from it, then defeat it themselves.

Thanks to the players, the Rakshaks can't make good on their promise to Horned Serpent. They blame Mother Louise: she knew the Rakshaks' obligations and she chose to ignore them; the players' pack was just her chosen tool. So it's Mother Louise they look to take their vengeance out upon.

Ridhaan and Mother Louise have a lot of history. Change the details to suit your chronicle and your interpretation of Mother Louise but emphasize that these two people once cared deeply about each other. Ridhaan could only turn on Mother Louise with the most compelling of reasons. Mother Louise's decision to ruin the Rakshaks' bond with Horned Serpent is exactly that. The Garou Nation is a complex society of proud, rage-fueled warriors. This is a story of what happens when the rage turns inward. Be fucking feral.

Ridhaan believes in one singular truth: knowledge is the answer.

Mother, No!

The pack has probably invested resources in a relationship with Mother Louise. As well as roleplaying and story beats they look back on fondly, players might have spent experience points on her as a Mentor or otherwise quantified her influence on the characters' lives.

There's a very real danger that Mother Louise dies at the end of this story. If she does, refund the players their experience points or allow them to pick a new Mentor in the next session, as per *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 97. Discuss how spending the returned experience points reflects how the character handles the loss of their friend and mentor.

STORY STRUCTURE

This story plays out over three chapters.

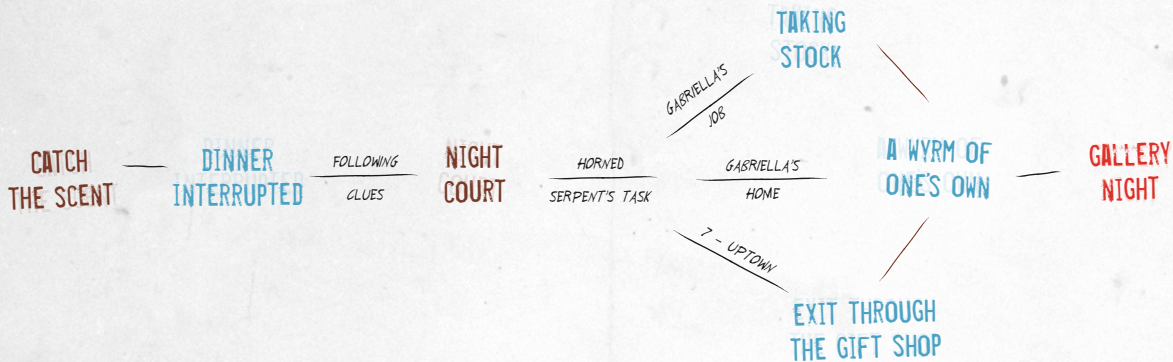
In 'Part One: Unearthed Secrets', the Pack find Mother Louise after she's been attacked by a rival pack called the Rakshaks. They discover the attack was a response to what they believed to be a slight to their honor. The Rakshak leader's Patron Spirit Horned Serpent intervenes to prevent further bloodshed by setting the packs a challenge to channel their conflict into a worthwhile cause. The pack which completes it first will find their honor restored.

In 'Part Two: Little Cub Lost', the Pack races against time — and the Rakshaks — to find Gabriella López, a young Kin whose First Change is imminent, and bring her into the Garou Nation. They learn about her life, struggles, and the dark path she may be embarking upon. They also brush up against the consequences of their actions in the previous stories.

In 'Part Three: Gallery Night', the packs converge on an art exhibition of Gabriella's work at 7-Uptown. She's been influenced by a spirit named Mirrormouth to try and open the membrane between our world and the Umbra. The spirit makes its move on Gallery Night and the resulting conflict between it and the two packs present triggers Gabriella's First Change as an additional complication.



A Pound of Flesh Story Map



CATCH THE SCENT

Kicking off this story requires getting the pack to visit Mother Louise. There are plenty of ways to do so, depending on their relationship with her.

If the pack is close to Mother Louise, she simply invites them to dinner. By the time they get to her home, Ridhaan has already paid her a visit. Their argument got heated, and he attacked her viciously. He left her for dead and the players' characters come upon Mother Louise's bloody, dying body amid the warzone of her kitchen.

If the pack's relationship with Mother Louise is less cordial, it's not so much an invitation as a summons.

Alternatively, Mother Louise might send a messenger spirit—a bird or rat spirit, most likely—to the pack, calling them to her after she's already been injured and needs their help. The spirit isn't sophisticated enough to explain what's going on, just repeating that Mother Louise needs the pack to come to her location immediately.

If the characters really don't want to meet up with Mother Louise, Rakshak member Malorie King figures out what Ridhaan is planning and, knowing the players' characters' pack has a link to Mother Louise, seeks out one of the pack members to tell them where he's gone and what he might do. She might also let it slip that the Rakshaks are in big trouble with Horned Serpent and that might drive him to do something desperate. The pack get to the scene after Ridhaan and the rest of the Rakshaks have left.

Tune In Next Week

Finding Mother Louise is an excellent cliffhanger to an episode. Consider positioning her meeting request as an epilogue to another story (*Shadows on the Prison Walls* is ideal). The players expect a happy ending hanging out with Mother Louise and instead stumble onto a scene of blood, violence, and vengeance. It's a hell of a way to make sure everyone comes back for the next game.

PART ONE: BEST FRIENDS, WORST ENEMIES

The pack discover Mother Louise has been ruthlessly attacked. They must scour her house for clues, discover who is responsible and confront the rival pack.

Sowing the Seeds

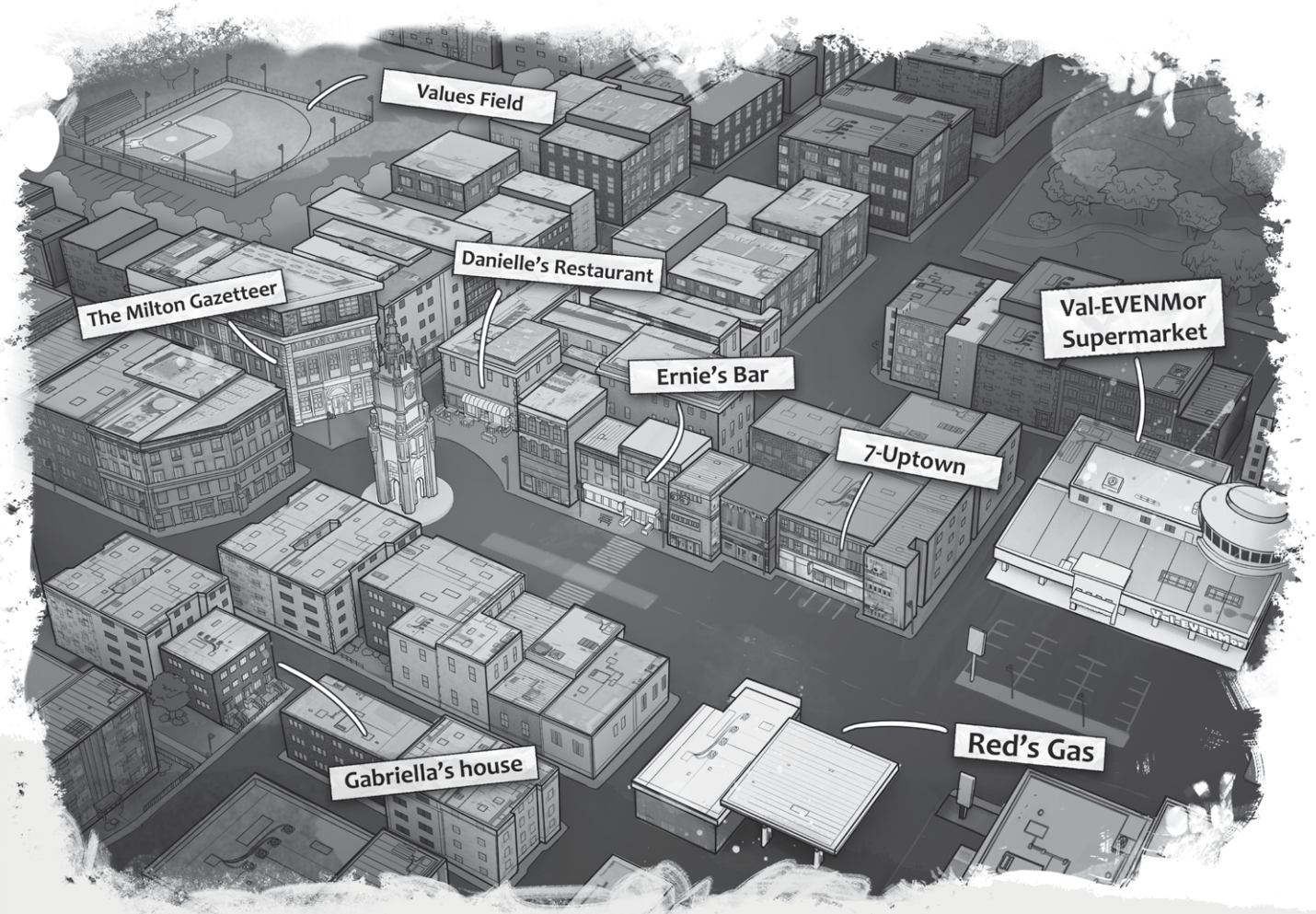
Storytellers looking to foreshadow the final conflict of this story might want to insert elements in earlier parts of the chronicle. Perhaps Mother Louise invites the pack over for dinner to discuss elements of their adventures and offer advice. The Wizeded Raconteur might refer to the Rakshaks during their journey through the Umbra. It might show the faces of the rival packmates that the Garou may not see until they confront the Rakshaks.

Dinner, Interrupted

Mother Louise lives in an old, one-story house in a small square of grounds. It's about twenty minutes' drive outside of Milton.

The first sign that something is wrong is the smell. A Wits + Awareness or Survival test (Difficulty 2) pulls out the smells of blood, wolves, and violence. A critical win on this test allows the Garou to catch Ridhaan's scent. They should recognize it immediately when they encounter him. The living room is in shambles. Furniture lies smashed against the walls, which are spiderwebbed with damage from huge fists and bodies slamming into them. The sofa's ruined, slashed open by massive claws. A lake of blood flows out of the kitchen.

Mother Louise lies on the kitchen floor. Various pots boil over containing the dinner she was making for the pack. She's bloody, having recently shifted back into glabro form. Her wounds are so severe they're testing her ability to regenerate them. She is trying to curl up into a ball but her body is not listening. A careful inspection reveals the fight wasn't one-sided. Mother Louise's hands are coated with someone else's blood.





Anyone who wants to help can use healing gifts or make an Intelligence + Medicine test (Difficulty 4). A win on this test brings Mother Louise around for a moment of lucidity. She grabs the arm of the Garou helping her. “You have to understand,” she says through ragged breathing, “Riddy is just trying to protect what he thinks is his. He’s just trying to do... the right... thing...” Louise fades back into unconsciousness.

Mother Louise’s home offers an opportunity for the pack to better understand her even while they investigate her attack. Mother Louise lives a simple, private life; her home is their first insight into the bonds she forged with their sept, her life before finding the sept, and a window into her relationships. Photographs, trinkets, and other ephemera are scattered around the house. The pack find a wide assortment of yarn in her bedroom, rolled carefully into balls. Amidst the wreckage of the living room is a half-complete knitted sweater, now completely past saving. Hanging picture frames throughout the house show faded moments from Mother Louise’s childhood, teenage years, and early adulthood; a cautious-looking young woman pictured against the backdrop of a run-down, industrial city.

A win on an Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) turns up a smashed picture frame that slid off the wall and behind the couch in the living room. The photo inside shows a deli in Detroit. A young Louise stands with an older black woman, wearing a server’s uniform. In another image, a South Asian man with graying hair and in a simple white button-down is resting his head on a younger-looking Mother Louise’s shoulder and smiling at the camera. A Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 2) lets a viewer notice a slight crease in the image from being folded over and then flattened out. If they take the image out and flip it, they see a faded, barely legible note written in wobbly handwriting:

"I hope you copied the recipes."

In Mother Louise’s study, a bulletin board is covered with newspaper articles, written letters, handwritten notes, and drawings (not all by the same artist) about Val-MOR, the Wizeden Raconteur and the Umbra around Milton. Some notes connect directly to each pack member, such as photos, documents, and sticky notes with bits of trivia about them. The Garou who sent them on a mission to deal with Milton’s problems so recently seems to have been tracking them all along.

If they spend time investigating this wall, the pack come across several interesting documents. One of these is a curt letter written in a clear hand, inviting the recipient to Smokey for a talk on the night of the half moon, signed “Ridhaan”. It is undated. In fact, it is from the moon past and Mother Louise did go, but the conversation led to nothing but more frustration. It is not a coincidence that the moon is again half full tonight. A Letter from Ridhaan

An Intelligence + Survival or Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 2) reveals Smokey is a rock formation in the nearby State Park that looks like an old-fashioned wide-brimmed park ranger hat. It’s a common hangout for local teens, popular social media profile picture, and a destination for hikers. Characters who’ve spent a lot of time around Milton know how to get there; anyone else can find the location online in about five seconds. Other Garou at the Sept of the Far Watcher know that Smokey is also a meeting place for a pack called the Rakshaks.

THE LEGEND BEGINS

Mother Louise’s bulletin board offers an opportunity for Storytellers to illustrate the impact the pack has had on Milton. Add in a story or two from the Milton Gazetteer detailing things that happened from the eyes of the normal humans who live here. There could be a flyer for the Main Street Bear Festival if things got bloody in the first chapter. A new dentist could have moved into Doc’s. As a bit of foreshadowing, there is a flyer for Gabriella’s art show; one last gift from Mother Louise.

The pack might be concerned with leaving Mother Louise in her current state. If they call in the emergency services, they should still have time to look at the bulletin board before they arrive. Mother Louise is taken to a nearby city hospital where her condition will be critical, but stable, for the rest of the story. Mother Louise isn’t happy about the pack’s decision: she’s gravely injured but her survival and then her relatively rapid healing raise questions from the medical personnel treating her. Any questions about what happened from mortal authorities can stay in the background unless the Storyteller wishes to introduce a complication to their efforts in locating Gabriella at an inopportune time.

Investigating Mother Louise’s home may leave the Garou with more questions than answers. As they scan through Mother Louise’s documents, they find she has been tracking the situation in Milton for far, far longer than she originally admitted to them all. This isn’t necessarily sinister, but it may come as a shock that she’s withheld information. If they search the yard, the pack



comes across some peculiar details: specks of blood, signs of struggle, and tire tracks that lead from behind Louise's garage back onto the highway heading out of town towards the State Park.

Night Court

The State Park near Milton offers access to a wide, open expanse of nature. The parking areas and rest stops are littered with unpleasant reminders of human existence. The bathrooms are in serious need of cleaning. Bottles and cans drift across the picnic areas pushed by angry winds. Away from these areas, however, the park's as free from human interference as anywhere in the region.

It's nightfall when the pack arrives near Smokey. In a nearby dirt and gravel parking area, the Rakshaks' three cars are parked facing the others to create a circle of headlights. Ridhaan, Malorie, and Saif are performing the Rite of Spirit Summoning to call their patron, Horned Serpent, so they can explain what Ridhaan did.

The characters can approach the Rakshaks in any number of ways but they come down to assaulting, ambushing, or addressing them. The scene can, and probably will, move through more than one of these approaches.

* **Assault:** If the player character pack attacks, Malorie and Saif fight back, shifting to crinos form if the players' characters do, while Ridhaan continues the Rite in homid form. After one round of combat, Horned Serpent manifests in the circle of headlights (see 'In the Presence of Greatness').

* **Ambush:** The pack may approach by stealth. The Rakshaks are focused on their rite which makes sneaking up on them a simple Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 2). Sneaking in closer gives the Garou two bonus dice to their first attack should they decide to ambush the Rakshaks. Anyone observing the ritual who makes an Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 2) determines that the trio are performing a Rite to call a spirit. The spoken elements of the Rite make frequent reference to "Horned Serpent, who waits for us beyond." Ridhaan's Patron Spirit will be joining them. Three or more successes tells them that this is more a formality than a command; the Rakshaks cannot possibly control something as powerful as Horned Serpent. An Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 2) tells an observer Ridhaan's nervous as hell; he's not looking forward to this encounter with his Patron.

* **Address:** The pack may approach to talk. If the pack found the photo of the deli, they recognize Ridhaan, though now his hair is fully gray and his face is seasoned with wrinkles and scars. Saif applauds their decorum and beckons them into the circle of headlights while Ridhaan continues performing the Rite. He tells them that Ridhaan about to speak with his Patron Spirit, Horned Serpent. He must explain himself to Horned Serpent, and he says the characters might as well hear the explanation too. An Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 2) tells an observer Ridhaan's nervous about this encounter with Horned Serpent. A margin of two or more tells them he's dreading it.

As Ridhaan completes the Rite, Saif explains the situation before Horned Serpent arrives. What Mother Louise and the pack have done in Milton violated his pack's bond to Horned Serpent. Louise knowingly sent the players to deal with the wasp-husks in the Val-MOR fulfillment center knowing Milton was the Rakshaks' territory. The Rakshaks made a pledge to Horned Serpent that they would observe and learn from Val-MOR's actions to better understand this particular form of Wyrms influence and how to fight it. Milton was not Louise's domain to meddle in, and when she did so, she damaged the bond shared by the Rakshaks, especially Ridhaan, and Horned Serpent.

IN THE PRESENCE OF GREATNESS

Horned Serpent is a subtle spirit. It stays outside of the circle, away from the car headlights (which seem brighter once Horned Serpent arrives, and the area outside them darker). The spirit circles the Garou as the discussion begins, accompanied by the sounds of a huge body slithering on the dirt and gravel of the parking lot. There is a smell of old growth, and the sound of water rippling as it moves. No matter how the Garou try, they will not be able to glimpse more than its silhouette limned in moonlight. Ridhaan summoned the spirit to make amends with it, but it addresses the assembled Garou before he can speak.

Horned Serpent speaks, in a sibilant whisper barely discernible from the crush of dirt and gravel. As quiet as it is, there is the power and authority of one who knows they do not need to raise their voice to be heard. "I will have an explanation for the affronts against my domain. Both this night and the previous. I shall hear three speak from each side. Rakshaks, you shall speak first."

The light where the headlights intersect brightens until it's as intense as a floodlight.

Horned Serpent doesn't answer questions unless a character makes a Charisma + Etiquette test (Difficulty 3), in which case it asks questions of its known. It asks why there is tension between the local Garou, why the Rakshaks have broken their promise to it, and why a former ally of the pack (Mother Louise) languishes close to death, a victim of the Rakshaks' fangs and claws. It knows the answers to these questions (and is angered by outright lies), but it wants everyone to be able to logically explain their actions. "Following orders" is not a good enough reason. If the Storyteller feels up to it, Horned Serpent might interject to ask further questions, or poke holes in the Garou's logic.

Each speaker takes a turn, alternating between packs (one Rakshak, one of the players' characters, etc.). Those not speaking may quietly discuss arguments and strategy amongst themselves (although Horned Serpent will hear everything they say). Each speaker on both sides must make their points by testing Intelligence + Persuasion or Wisdom (Difficulty 3). Keep track of the results.

Any Garou who scores a critical win truly impresses Horned Serpent. If they do not have Wisdom Renown, they may purchase one dot after this story at a -2 discount. If they do have Wisdom Renown, the cost to purchase the next dot with experience points is reduced to new rank $\times 4$ after this story only.

The Inside Wolf

Any Ghost Council characters in the players' pack are already familiar with Horned Serpent. They know how to address and appeal to it, which gives their words more weight. They get +2 dice on their test.

Ridhaan speaks first for the Rakshaks — Malorie and Saif physically step back as if to say this is Ridhaan's problem. He says much the same as he said to the player pack: he was sworn to serve Horned Serpent and carry out the task of observing the Wyrms' agents in Val-MOR. Mother Louise's intervention, using the other pack as her instrument, forced him to break that vow through no action or agency of his own. He presents letters that he and Mother Louise exchanged that reveal she was aware of the Rakshaks' pact with Horned Serpent. She knew this was not her territory and she sent the pack to act

without their consent, believing rapid action was more important than gathering information. Ridhaan chose to observe the Wyrms to learn more about it as he thought Horned Serpent would want to know more about the hive fragment Val-MOR were using (see The Break Room), how it worked, and therefore how to fight it.

Saif says Mother Louise disrespected the Rakshaks' competence and their ability as a pack to handle the threat before them in an appropriate manner. That's a grave transgression and had to be answered in full. Ridhaan was right to take vengeance on Mother Louise. Notably, Ridhaan looks extremely uncomfortable with that argument, and an Intelligence + Insight test tells the characters the guilt of what he did is eating at him.

Malorie is extremely reluctant to speak. Ridhaan must spend a few seconds encouraging her in a rough, urgent, whisper before she steps into the spotlight, covering her eyes. She says thousands of Garou who came before them threw themselves into the jaws of the Wyrms, like they could choke it to death on their corpses. Sacrificing Milton to learn more about their enemy sucks, but if it makes them better fighters, with better strategy, in future, isn't it worth it?

The players' characters might be aware of the ins and outs of Garou politics, or they might not. If the players are stuck, they can make an Intelligence + Occult or Politics test (Difficulty 2) to come up with one of the following arguments. Extra successes unlock additional arguments.

1. Mother Louise broke one tenet of the Litany — *Respect the Territory of Another* — but the Rakshaks broke the very first tenet by failing to *Combat the Wyrms Wherever It Dwells and Whenever It Thrives*.
2. Mother Louise should have faced justice before the Rakshaks and her sept. The case should have been debated and judged. By attacking her, the Rakshaks prove that even the Garou are not immune to the Wyrms' influence.
3. The Pack did not know what was happening and acted in good faith with the knowledge that they had. It would be unjust for Horned Serpent to punish them for Mother Louise's actions.

After hearing all three pairs of arguments, Horned Serpent takes a few moments to consider what each pack has said. It decides that a contest between the two packs will determine whom it sides with. Depending on how the arguments went, it will offer additional conditions.



“I have seen the evidence, heard the testimonies, and have given this thought,” says Horned Serpent. While Mother Louise’s condition concerns me, she is not a martyr, and the Rakshaks are not villains. This is not a simple question, and there is no simple answer.

“Both packs have shown an egregious lack of Wisdom,” Horned Serpent continues. “There is no denying this. Neither one is worthy of my gifts, nor of the territory you both claim. You will be given one opportunity to prove your worth. There is a Kin nearby who bears the name Gabriella López. Her First Change is imminent. The full moon is in two days, making it likely that this Kin may leave a trail of blood if left unchecked.

“Whoever finds her first, I will deem worthy to shepherd and protect this territory. True Wisdom is not found in charming a Kin to your cause, but in avoiding disaster. Failure to keep the Kin from doing grievous harm will mean both packs relinquish their stake over the territory. Know also that you are sworn in this contest to avoid further violence against each other. If you commit harm, you forfeit your claim.”

The status of Ridhaan’s bond with Horned Serpent, and additional rewards, depends on the result of the speeches.

- * If the player pack lost all three arguments, Ridhaan’s connection to Horned Serpent is restored. If the Rakshaks lose the contest, Horned Serpent will restore Mother Louise’s health. Otherwise, she will remain in a comatose state for the rest of her life.
- * If the pack won some arguments and lost others, Horned Serpent’s additional rewards depend on who recruits Gabriella first. If the pack does, Mother Louise is restored. If the Rakshaks do, Horned Serpent reconnects with Ridhaan.
- * If the pack won all three arguments, Mother Louise will be restored regardless of if they defeat the Rakshaks. However, the Rakshaks are in serious danger of losing renown in addition to Ridhaan’s Patron Spirit.

After Horned Serpent makes its declaration, it departs. Its absence feels like a great weight lifted off the Garou’s shoulders. After a few stunned moments, the race to find Gabriella is on.

Evidence suggests Gabriella's First Change is coming soon and that something else might be taking an interest in her.

PART TWO: LITTLE CUB LOST

In this chapter, the two packs race to find Gabriella López and win Horned Serpent’s challenge. Remind the players that even if they don’t want the territory, not stopping Gabriella’s First Change from gaining a body count violates another principle of the Litany: *The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted*.

They can investigate where she works, where she lives, and the location of her upcoming gallery show to find out more about her. Evidence suggests Gabriella’s First Change is coming soon and that something else might be taking an interest in her.

Neither Gabriella nor Ridhaan appears in this chapter. Ridhaan is either communing with Horned Serpent or fretting over whether he’s ruined that bond, and happy to let his packmates take the lead until then. Gabriella is on the move wrestling with symptoms of her impending First Change and the influence of Mirrormouth (see ‘Allies and Antagonists’). The pack won’t catch up to her until the next chapter.

Taking Stock

Gabriella’s whole life is traceable online. She’s active on several social media networks, though she mostly likes and comments on other people’s posts rather than making her own. When she does post, it’s pictures of abstract, deliberately ugly, mixed-media art — her own creations. Various posts show her as a frequent visitor to 7-Uptown on Main Street Milton. Gabriella is featured on the local Val-EVENMor retail store website in photos of a recent employee celebration.

The Val-EVENMor store is a big box store that sells everything from food, to clothes, to homewares. It’s bare and understaffed recently even though there are many people looking for work; after what happened to the fulfillment center, Val-MOR’s trying to quietly forget Milton even exists. Gabriella’s worked here since high school. She’s been saving to go away to art school.

The characters can access Gabriella’s employee records with an Intelligence + Technology test (Difficulty 3) on the computer in the manager’s office or the customer service/returns desk and get her address that way. Alternatively, they can work their way through the store’s employees until they get to Miles McKenny.

Most employees know Gabriella by name or recognize her picture, but few have any information on where she might be. The pack are eventually directed to Miles McKenny, who works in the women's clothing department. Miles is a rail-thin young Black man with thinning hair and a big, infectious laugh. During their interview Miles continues to fold and stock merchandise, occasionally pausing to help customers.



Miles McKenny: Questions

Do you know Gabriella López?

I guess? We used to work the same hours. She was in the Kids department, and I would usually be working in Women's Clothing. I used to help her straighten the toys before closing and she would knock on the changing rooms to make sure they were clear. Why, is she okay?

When was the last time you spoke with each other?

A while ago. Gabriella convinced Lyndzi Wigmore to host a gallery show for her art. She's talked about going to art school even though her parents want her to apply to Val-MOR's Business Internship Development program. She seemed tired but said she was looking forward to the show. She sounded excited to get going, I suppose. That's the last time I saw her or heard from her.

What is the Business Internal Development program?

It's one of those things where Val-MOR encourages people to take on extra work for free, so they are more likely to hire you to corporate. She didn't want to do it, but I think her parents were pressuring her because art is not a "real job." Who's ever paid off student loans selling oil paintings? Old white guys who've been dead for centuries don't count.

Do you know where she lives?

Yeah, she lives across the street from Liberty Bell Townhouses with her parents. I went over there a couple of times.

Where was she last seen?

She uploaded a photo to Grammable, and the geotag shows this place called 7-Uptown. A photo of her and the owner, Lyndzi Wigmore. That's the last location I've been able to find. She was a regular there, too. She was very excited Milton had a gallery now, even if it has to sell coffee too just to stay open.

Does she have any family?

Her folks travel a lot. She has the place all to herself. It must be nice to live rent-free and be a starving artist.



THE RAKSHAKS

Malorie King follows Gabriella's trail to her workplace. Rather than do the legwork, she elects to let the pack ask all the questions for her. Since the fulfillment center shut down and Polyphemus went belly-up (see *Shadows on the Prison Walls*) store security has been woefully understaffed. There's nobody in the small onsite security office so she quietly sets herself up inside when the other pack starts asking around. She convinces the tech-spirits that live in the area to help her out: instead of the grainy, silent camera footage the security office should have, she gets crystal clear visual and audio. She listens in on any conversations in the store. Anything that the Garou learn from Miles, she learns too. She does her best not to directly engage the pack.

The Garou might sense they're being watched if they make a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 3). On a win, they notice the security systems and electronics acting strangely around them. Cameras follow them, display TVs glitch when they talk near them, even toys might activate when they pass by. They can catch Malorie in the security office with a Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 4). Otherwise, by the time they get there all that's left is a sticky note that says "See you under the full moon" with a black lipstick kiss on it.

A Wurm of One's Own

The López home is a simple single-floor, ranch-style house with an attached garage on the right side. There's no car in the driveway and it looks like nobody is home. The doors are locked but the mailbox on the road is empty, so somebody must be collecting the post, at least.

HOME TURF

Once the pack reaches Gabriella's home, they can pick the lock and enter quietly with a Wits + Larceny test (Difficulty 2). If they fail, they still gain access to the building, but a neighbor calls the Sheriff's Department to send a cruiser to arrive at a most inopportune time. If Polyphemus Security is still around, the neighbor instead calls them. Gabriella is not returning home before the gallery opening. If the pack settles in for a stakeout, drop in Saif (see 'Saif's Offer' below) to present his offer. He should also suggest that the Garou find what clues they can and get moving. Time is a luxury they cannot afford.

Gabriella's room is the smaller of the house's two bedrooms. It's tiny and cramped even though the only large furniture is a bed and a desk. The walls are painted a dull beige color and the floor is covered with a cheap, gray carpet. The room is messy and cluttered, with clothes, books, papers, and other items scattered around. Gabriella's bed is covered in clothes, with a Val-EVENMor associate vest atop the pile. Along with old high school textbooks, her desk has a laptop, a thick, old sketchbook, a variety of poorly maintained stationery, and a framed photo of her family. Her closet is on the opposite wall, with a sliding door half open to reveal more clothes and shoes. There are also some posters on the walls, mostly art prints and heavy metal album covers.

In every textbook, the page borders are covered in doodles, sketches, and increasingly incoherent notes. These transition from floral borders, anatomy practice sketches of hands, and silly doodles, to violent scratches, muddied worm-like spiral shapes, and barely legible phrases. The black ink stands out harshly against the mundane, clinical subject matter that covers the rest of the textbooks. When closely inspected, the phrases that are still decipherable include "Feed the Mirrormouth" and "I hunger".

Like a Good Neighbor

Milton's small-town nature can help the Garou on their current mission. Melissa Barnard and her son, Sammy, also live at the Liberty Bell Townhouses. If things went well for them in *The Break Room*, the Barnards could provide information on Gabriella that the Garou missed in their search, and Sammy will absolutely agree to watch Gabriella for the pack. If you feel really generous, Melissa might even keep a spare key for the López family.

If things went poorly, the FOR RENT sign in front of their former home reminds the Garou of their past failures.



Inside Gabriella's sketchbook, there is a similar transition of art. With each turning page, the art becomes more and more unsettling: landscapes built of viscera, scratchy sketches of the moon with speckles of blood on the page, a field of rotting grain, and the silhouette of a large worm, strangling what looks to be sketches of her family. With a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 2), the Garou spots a sticky note in one of the textbooks that reads "don't forget, new password!"

The laptop itself is password-protected (MIRRORMOUTH). Hacking into it requires an Intelligence + Technology test (Difficulty 4). If the Pack gains access to Gabriella's laptop, they find the following information along with the usual assortment of data and software for a student artist:

A search history riddled with questions about night tremors, visions, and phantom pain. Research about Val-MOR's union busting tactics and other controversies.

Self-recorded vlogs that go back to four weeks ago and stop abruptly exactly two weeks ago. In most of them, she is documenting the strange experiences she's been going through, unsure of what lies ahead. Dreams of becoming a monster, of waking up amongst the bodies of her family, and of something physically tearing its way out of her skin — but she's the thing tearing, not the skin left behind. Most Garou don't get this much warning of their First Change, but it definitely sounds like Gabriella's is coming. She speaks about the tug from two opposite, larger-than-life forces: both call to the monster inside her. One pulls her towards desolation, the other towards preservation.

As the videos progress, Gabriella looks burnt-out; dark, sallow eyes, a slump in her posture, and a growing sense of despair. She mentions something called Mirrormouth. What she thinks is a recurring theme is actually a spirit of dreams, twisted by the Wyrms into an obsessive need to create, to the exclusion of all else. It's drawn to her nascent energy as a Garou. It's been driving her work. She can't paint anything else. She rebuilt her studio around it. She knows something will happen when she has her gallery opening on the night of the full moon. She's excited for the blister to finally burst... and terrified of what happens when it does.

THE GARAGE

Gabriella's transformed the garage into a studio. There's a workbench full of paint and supplies along the back wall. Flyers for the gallery show at 7-Uptown are stacked in one corner. A paint-stained drop tarp covers the floor. A half-finished project stands in the center of the room. It's a mirror, its glass smashed and rearranged in mosaic-style patterns. Half the frame is bordered in multiple rows of pointed teeth, sculpted from clay and painted an unsettling yellow. Nearby, broken pieces of another mirror lie on the ground.

A win on an Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) reveals UV paint marks around the doorway and windows. A blacklight bulb or Gifts such as Sharpened Senses shows the full scope of the UV artwork.

The revealed painting shows each doorway or window has a thin line of glow in the dark paint that connects it to the garage door arch. Rows upon rows of sharp, dagger-like teeth ring the edge of the garage door. To Garou using Gifts, there's a faint scent of rotting teeth and stinking, carrion-feeder breath.

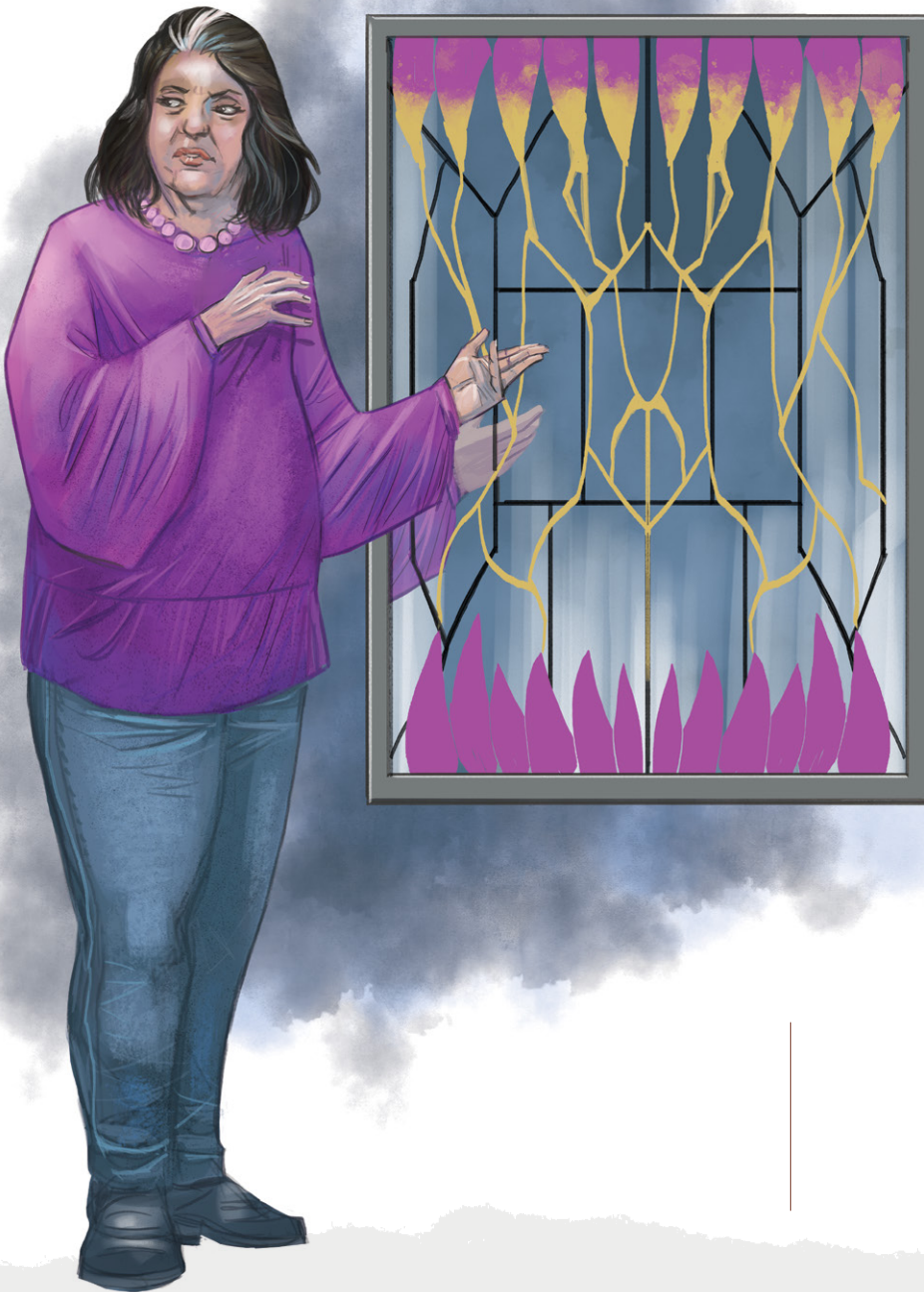
SAIF'S OFFER

When the pack is almost done searching the garage there's a loud banging on the garage door. Opening it up or heading out to the front long reveals Saif Sayeed waiting for the pack. He gestures broadly with open palms and deliberate movement. He's not here to fight. He's here to make them an offer. If there's no opportune moment to interrupt, have Saif waiting for the characters when they leave the house.

Saif talks about how important Horned Serpent is to his pack leader. He apologizes for the harm Ridhaan caused but points out that Ridhaan would only harm Mother Louise, one of the people he's closest to in the entire world, if he truly felt cornered, like he had no other

option. Ridhaan's a wreck, he explains. However 'Night Court' went down, he's scared his relationship with his Patron Spirit is ruined forever. Saif's not sure how Ridhaan's going to recover.

Saif offers the pack a deal. If they convince Gabriella to join the Rakshaks, he'll use his connections with the Silver Fangs to make sure the pack gets a plum new territory somewhere far away from Milton. It's a win-win for everyone in his eyes. Saif backs away and leaves, claiming the pack can decide to take the deal any time before Horned Serpent makes a decision.



If the pack takes the deal, it affects their Renown. Doing so causes Honor chagrin to each pack member. However, resolving the rivalry without bloodshed yields Wisdom. If the pack makes the deal but goes back on it, this still causes the chagrin but does not yield Wisdom. Anyone with no Honor to lose gains a two-dot Adversary flaw: word of their duplicitous nature spreads through Horned Serpent's children, and one of them swears revenge on Ridhaan's behalf.

Exit Through the Gift Shop

7-Uptown started out as a New Age store, but the owner, Lyndzi, has reinvented it many times. The stock changes on their whim but always revolves around non-traditional or homemade things like witchy occult products, organic fruit juices and handmade sweaters. The only thing people can reliably buy there is coffee.

The inside of the store features recycled shelving from other old businesses on Main Street. An old mechanical cash register sits on the end of a counter but behind it is a laptop and cashbox for actually handling purchases. The shop smells of candles and incense that come together in a heady but pleasant mishmash of sweet and musky scents. They are set up on an old votive candle stand that the owner recovered from a church.

Lyndzi Wigmore has dreams bigger than the town of Milton, but they are never going to leave their hometown. They wear flowy tops and blue jeans and dyes their graying black hair with a different colored streak every month or so. Like any small business owner, they are amiable and chatty, but what really gets them going is "weird" stuff. The book rack at the front of the store is full of paperbacks about occult ideas and alternate histories. They have read them all and are happy to discuss any of them, as well as quaint local legends.



Should the topic come up, Lyndzi believes the bears that attacked main street are examples of the earth striking back as a united organism against human greed. While they're not aware of the Garou or their worldview, they could become an ally for the pack if properly cultivated.

The one thing they're more excited about than occult theory is the upcoming art show they've arranged for Gabriella. Lyndzi bubbles over with praise for the young artist and makes sure each member of the pack takes home a flyer for the show (these are the same ones found in Gabriella's studio). If they already have some, Lyndzi gives them more to hand out around town.

They are reluctant to discuss the details of the show because they don't want to spoil anything, but a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 2) will tip them into talking so long as the pack members promise not to tell anyone else. If pack members purchase items from 7-Uptown, they gain +1 die to this roll. With a margin of 2 or more, Lyndzi can also be persuaded to show the Garou one of the pieces that they have in the back. "It's not just an art installation," they begin, "it's a battle of good versus evil!"

Each piece is weird, wonderful, and a little grotesque, Lyndzi explains. They helped Gabriella rescue mirrors from the trash to use in the installation, which is about the raging creativity inside the artist and its power to be either profound or overwhelming. Lyndzi's version of the story is inaccurate; Gabriella's not thinking clearly enough to explain her work, and Lyndzi's made some assumptions.

If Lyndzi agrees to show the Garou one of the pieces, they bring it from the back to the center of the shop and pull off the tarp.

Gabriella's Muse

Gabriella's paintings are all part of a Bane spirit called the Mirrormouth. The artist has painted and altered several mirrors to change how they reflect the person viewing the art. Mirrormouth wants to consume the souls of humans unworthy to gaze upon it.

The mirror is framed by two rows of sharp, purple teeth. Strange yellow blood drips from the teeth, running along the cracks in the central mirror. The cracks run through the center of the mouth like a stained-glass window. Lyndzi says the piece is called Bruised Cheek. A Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) notices the cracks in the mirror stop at the teeth even in areas where they should naturally play out to the edges of the mirror. An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3) reveals the paint in the cracks form a subtle rune that's used in spirit summoning rituals. Garou studying the mirror closely find themselves reaching out to touch the mirror. They can stop themselves with a Composure + Insight test (Difficulty 3) but nothing happens if they don't resist. The mirror's just a mirror. For now. A critical win on any of these tests reveals all these clues without needing to make the other tests.

After a while Lyndzi asks the pack to leave the shop so they can close early and get ready for the gallery opening.

PART THREE: GALLERY NIGHT

In the final chapter, the pack risks losing Mother Louise and perhaps even their place in Milton. They've moved carefully until now, but the finale of this story requires a show of strength and numbers. They must stop Gabriella's First Change from ending in carnage, prevent the Wyrms from gaining a new foothold in Milton, and maybe even win themselves a new pack member in the process.



The Finest Meats and Cheeses

7-Uptown opens at 6 PM the night of the show. Lyndzi's moved the displays of tarot decks and yarn to make room for Gabriella's work. They've left anything that could be considered art out for sale. They've set up a table in the middle of the space, covered it with a variety of scarves and fabric, and ordered a bunch of appetizers from Danielle's Restaurant. Gabriella's five pieces of art are scattered around the small shop, each covered with a bedsheet.

People straggle in gradually. They're here to support Gabriella, support Lyndzi, kill some time, or enjoy the free food.

The Rakshaks arrive together. Malorie immediately starts scooping up appetizers. If anyone asks, she's sure there's going to be a battle and doesn't want to fight on an empty stomach. She's friendly and cordial with a fatalistic glee that this will all end in bloodshed.

Saif shadows Gabriella. If the pack hasn't given him an answer to the offer he made in 'A Wurm of One's Own', he reminds them of it. He's full of impatient

tension, tired of waiting for events to run their course. He's fully expecting Gabriella's First Change to hit any time now, and he's ready to do whatever needs to be done to subdue her. He watches Gabriella like a hawk.

Ridhaan works his charms on Lyndzi. He is charming when he wants to be and if the pack met with Lyndzi before Gallery Night, they wave the pack over to meet him. Play up this awkward conversation for as long as it's fun. Then Lyndzi excuses themselves to begin the show.

Gabriella is here, though she is looking unwell. Her short, blue hair is freshly washed but her eyes are ringed with bags from lack of sleep. She's wearing a blazer over a vintage Baby Chorus punk band T-shirt. She's holding onto a plastic cup full of water with hands featuring chipped blue nail polish. If any of the pack members talk to her and mention anything about wolves or moons, she grabs their arm and squeezes hard enough to inflict a level of Superficial Health damage. "What do you know about what's happening to me?" she whispers. Before the Garou can answer, Lyndzi begins the show.

Too Many Mouths to Feed

Lyndzi picks up a small crystal bell near the register and rings it until the crowd quiets. They thank everyone for coming and introduces “talented up-and-coming local artist, Gabriella López,” to polite applause. Lyndzi walks to each painting and dramatically pulls off the covering in the order presented below. They say the painting’s name as they do this. Once all five paintings are revealed, they say “Ladies, gentlemen and patrons of the arts, I present, Mirrmouth.” Another round of applause breaks out.

There are five works of art, each painted on or incorporating an old mirror. Most are rectangular pieces of glass salvaged from dumpsters. The central piece is an old vanity mirror complete with a small desk for makeup. The edges of each mirror have been painted to look like a human, animal, or monstrous mouth. Standing in front of each piece puts the viewer’s head inside its jaws.

The paintings are:

- * **Bruised Cheek:** Details on this painting can be found in ‘Exit Through the Gift Shop,’ p. 77.
- * **Red Devil:** Sharp red teeth surround this painting with a spiraling tongue in the center. A Wits + Investigation or test (Difficulty 3) shows the tongue is textured with bumps and glands like a real tongue. An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3) reveals an attempt at the glyph for ‘hunger’ on the tongue.
- * **Harsh Morning:** This painting pictures a stylized lion’s head. A Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 3) notices the painting is quietly vibrating as if growling or purring. An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3) notices an inaccurate version of the Garou glyph for ‘pack’ struck through with blood.
- * **Marianas:** The mouth on this painting combines tentacles and teeth in varying shades of blue. A Wits + Investigation or Awareness test (Difficulty 3) notices the painting drips seawater onto the ground. An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3) sees a poorly rendered version of the glyph for ‘Umbra.’
- * **Vanity Values:** Bright red paint rims this mirror like lipstick and each corner is accented with a fang. With a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) the viewer notices a thin layer of red paint seems to cover their reflection. An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 3)

reveals a sloppily written glyph that could be one of movement or a transfer of power.

Each painting subtly compels the viewer to touch it unless they win a Composure + Insight test (Difficulty 3) to avoid doing so. Enough mortals fail this test automatically to start fueling Mirrmouth’s manifestation. It’s not a brief touch: once they touch it, the viewer is attached to the painting. Pulling someone free requires a Strength + Athletics or Strength + Brawl test (Difficulty 3). If the Garou start smashing the paintings while humans are still attached, Mirrmouth’s drain speeds up. The humans start to desiccate and wither, taking a number of Aggravated Health levels each turn equal to the number of paintings smashed.

Mirrmouth siphons life force from the physical contact (inflicting 1 Superficial damage on each victim) to move itself from its home in the Umbra closer to the real world. When all five paintings have been touched a few times, it can cross over. If the Garou do nothing or get caught up arguing with the Rakshaks or trying to win Gabriella over, Mirrmouth manifests after a few minutes, possessing the paintings or their remains, appearing as a swirling face made of mirror shards.

If a Garou touches a painting they gain a point of Rage and a vision of Mirrmouth (see p. @@). After a moment, Mirrmouth notices the Garou watching and grinds its teeth in anticipation of the earthly delights it will consume on this side of the Gauntlet.

Smashing a painting provides a quick and brutal solution to the problem. All it takes is a Strength + Brawl or Athletics test (Difficulty 2). Failure inflicts a point of Superficial damage. A Brutal outcome makes the damage Aggravated as a piece of spiritually infused glass lodges in the attacker’s body. If the Garou smashes the painting bare handed, they gain Rage as previously described.

After the Garou start smashing paintings, they have three turns to destroy them all, or Mirrmouth manifests in a swirling storm of glass shards, devouring the buffet table as it appears and then turning its hunger on the Garou. The mortal guests are oblivious to anything being wrong until the violence begins, at which point everyone not attached to an artwork except Lyndzi will flee the premises, screaming.

The Rakshaks figure out there’s something up with the paintings but jump to the wrong conclusion. They assume Lyndzi engineered this and turn on them, thinking their death will end the effect.



A Night on The Town

The guests at Gallery Night are background players but you should reintroduce characters from previous stories as curious onlookers and potential victims of Mirrmouth. Take note of which characters your players engaged with to determine who deserves a cameo here, and maybe a starring role as Mirrmouth Victim #1. Good options are Melissa and Sammy Barnard, Shane Montoya, and any characters on the Relationship Map.

Once the paintings or the manifested Mirrmouth are destroyed, Mirrmouth's scheme is over. Gabriella was cowering in the corner while both Garou packs leapt to action. But now, standing in the wreckage of the artwork she put her blood, sweat, and tears into, she feels one emotion: rage.

And there's enough of it to trigger her First Change.

Portrait of the Artist as an Angry Werewolf

While smashing the paintings keeps Mirrmouth from coming through the Gauntlet, it also incurs an unexpected consequence. Regardless of Mirrmouth's influence, Gabriella spent months working on those art pieces and on this show. Seeing all of it ruined is the catalyst that triggers her First Change. She lets out an ear-splitting howl and shifts into crinos form. She's in frenzy and she needs to be dealt with before she harms the people in the gallery. Gabriella first attacks the closest person that harmed one of her paintings. She only switches targets once she's been hurt, when she attacks the last person that harmed her. In crinos form, she rolls seven dice for all physical tests and has 10 Health levels. Her bite does +1 Aggravated and her claws +3 Superficial damage. See the full rules for crinos form and frenzy on pages 137–139 of *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* for more information on the conditions. Any humans still around fall under the Delirium.

Violence is the quick and easy answer. Even in crinos form one Garou can't stand for long against one pack,

let alone two. The challenge here is to apply the right amount of force without killing Gabriella. That's tricky in any fight, much less one against a werewolf using their power for the first time. A critical success or a Brutal outcome could kill her accidentally. Horned Serpent doesn't celebrate murder; it prizes Wisdom and expects both packs should be smart enough to judge their approach. If Gabriella dies, whichever pack landed the killing blow shoulders the blame for losing the contest.

Using Gifts or calming words to bring Gabriella back is difficult, but not impossible. Any attempt to talk her down, such as a test of Charisma + Persuasion, Charisma + Intimidation or Manipulation + Subterfuge has a high bar to clear. Not only are these tests Difficulty 5 but they need to be made successfully three times — without any acts of violence between tests — before Gabriella snaps out of frenzy. A critical win on these tests means Gabriella loses her next action as she tries to process what's being said. A Brutal outcome makes it impossible to keep trying to calm Gabriella. Anyone who contributes to calming her gets a +2 dice pool bonus to make additional tests as their voice cuts through the raw emotion and gives her will something to grasp.

The pack might decide to chase Gabriella out into the street or move her someplace where she can run wild until her rage burns itself out. Values Field, for example, is empty this evening and offers plenty of space and non-living things to smash. Herding her to a different area requires a Dexterity + Athletics, Strength + Brawl or Manipulation + Animal Ken test (Difficulty 3). A win gets Gabriella out into the street while five wins (either through a good margin or multiple tests) gets her to Values Field.

The Rakshaks fight alongside the pack to keep Gabriella from hurting everyone. If the pack takes too long to consider their options, the Rakshaks start the fight. Saif takes the lead here, shifting to hispo form, with Ridhaan sliding into a tactical role and Malorie supporting the others by ushering people out of the building (or keeping them inside if the fight spills out of 7-Uptown).

If the players' characters aren't involved in the fight, don't waste time rolling dice. If the pack looks like sitting this one out, consider upping the stakes by having Saif frenzy as well. Unless they intervene, the Rakshaks accidentally kill Gabriella after three turns.



Epilogue by Twilight

Once Gabriella is dealt with it's time to return to Horned Serpent to receive judgment. This scene takes place the evening after the gallery show, or even another day later, to give the pack a little time to recover and Gabriella a chance to consider which pack she wants to join. It takes place inside a ritual circle, as per 'Night Court' in Chapter One. If Ridhaan was killed, Malorie performs the rite.

The following guidelines help the Storyteller decide how Horned Serpent rules the outcome of the trial. They're not set in stone: adjust them however makes the most sense for your game. Gabriella might join the Rakshaks but consider one of the players' characters a friend or mentor. She might join the players' pack but blame them for the things she did in 'Gallery Night'. What's important here is bringing this story, and the chronicle, to a satisfying conclusion.

The path of peace: If the pack primarily used non-violent means to help Gabriella during her frenzy, she chooses to join them. She bears no grudge if they fought her in self-defense though she will have issues with any pack members who caused her a lasting wound or Aggravated damage. If a pack member wishes to take her on as a student or Ally, she will join their tribe. Otherwise, she wishes to seek out the Children of Gaia or Hart Wardens to hear more about how they serve Gaia. She may go away for a time to be taught by her chosen tribe.

Bloodshed: If the pack harmed Gabriella with the intent of taking her down as quickly as possible, she joins the Rakshaks. Her frenzy scared her and she doesn't want to be part of a pack that leaps into attack mode so easily. She believes that Ridhaan's approach is a better fit for her. She joins Malorie's tribe, the Glass Walkers. If the pack hurt Gabriella only after she harmed someone else, she's more forgiving.

A third way: If the packs spent more time fighting each other than helping her, Gabriella asks Horned Serpent if there's a third option. The Patron Spirit tells her she could seek her own place in the world, but it's not an easy path. She agrees and joins neither pack, opting to accompany Horned Serpent back to the Umbra and begin her life as a Garou there. In this case, Horned Serpent offers the pack something of a consolation prize; they can keep Milton as a territory or they can have Mother Louise back. The Rakshaks' prize is that Ridhaan gets to keep Horned Serpent as a Patron Spirit. Horned Serpent proclaims it will inform the spirits which packs claims Milton as its territory.

FOLLOW THE TRAIL

As *Scent of Decay* draws to a close, paths open up to future stories.

Now that the pack's claimed Milton, they have to hold it. Though they may have defeated the Wizeded Raconteur, there are still other spirits who think they can pull a fast one on this young pack of wolves.

Mother Louise's legacy looms over the pack. Was she keeping any other secrets? If she has old "friends" like the Rakshaks, what might her enemies be like? If Horned Serpent restored her to good health, she'll still need the pack's help in fending off old enemies that have heard about her weakened condition. If she's dead, the pack might get blindsided one day by something she thought she dealt with but didn't quite complete.

Gabriella needs help adjusting to her life as a Garou. If she chose to join the characters' pack, she can act as a sounding board for ideas and a chance for the Storyteller to consider the ethical challenges that arise from being a werewolf. If she joined the Rakshaks, she may return one day, regretting her choice and reigniting the rivalry between the two packs.

The Rakshaks remain rivals even if they parted on good terms. They bear a grudging respect for the players' characters, for now, though it wouldn't take much for that to bubble over into resentment if the pack flourishes in Milton and the Rakshaks' fortunes don't rise as fast. The Rakshaks would hate to ask the players' pack for aid with a future problem, but what better way to play up the tension of rivals than to force them to work together for the greater good?

There's a slim chance that the pack might prevent Mirrormouth from breaking out of the Umbra, but not destroy the paintings. If so, the Garou of Milton have a whole new problem to deal with — one that justifies a tense, fraught alliance between the players' pack and the Rakshaks.

ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

Mirrormouth

Mirrormouth is a Bane of greed. Its desire is simple: to eat, and eat, and eat, until there's nothing left to consume. It has no interest in Gabriella's art or anything else about her. It just thinks the young theurge-to-be is a good candidate to let it into the human world where it can plunder and devour in a place where there are few forces that could stop it.

Power: 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl +5, Intimidation +3

Other Traits:

Body of Shards: Mirrormouth's manifests in a cloud of sharp mirror shards that cut those who attack it. A Brutal outcome on a melee combat roll against Mirrormouth deals a point of Aggravated damage to the attacker. Mirrormouth itself takes the critical damage as normal.

Siphon Life: Gabriella's paintings serve as conduits to Mirrormouth. If any humans are attached to the paintings when Mirrormouth has manifested, they are automatically drained for as many points of Aggravated damage as there are destroyed paintings. Mirrormouth heals an amount of damage equal to the points drained, distributed equally between Health and Willpower. This ability does not allow either value to go over its maximum of 10.

Malorie King

Young, idealistic, and tech-savvy, Malorie King is a Glass Walker. Born into a wealthy family, she had access to the best education and resources. She excelled in engineering and computer science and was fascinated by the freedom she found on the internet. Access to never-ending information, a lack of respect for authority, and unbridled curiosity got Malorie into endless trouble, with mundane authorities before her First Change and with Pentex fronts afterward. Ridhaan offered her a place in his Pack and a chance to use her talents for a greater cause. Malorie is the Rakshaks' eyes and ears in the digital realm, hacking into systems, gathering information, and sabotaging threats.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 7, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 8, Technology 8, Stealth 6

Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Glass Walker

Renown: Glory 2, Honor 1, Wisdom 2

Gifts: Grasp from Beyond (p. 154), Open Seal (p. 150), Penumbral Senses (p. 147)

Saif Sayyed

Saif is charismatic, cunning, and brimming with charm. Born into an American-Pakistani family in the United States, Saif is the heir-apparent of a high-ranking Silver Fang who had his life laid out for him before he could consent to any of it. He was raised to be a future leader of his sept, but his progressive, risky ideas about how to fight the Wyrms led to a less than amicable parting. Saif advocated for a proactive and pragmatic approach, the use of human technology, and even the study of the Wyrms. Saif found himself branded as a traitor and a heretic by his elders, who feared Saif's influence on the other Garou in their tribe. On his wanderings after he was cast out, Saif met Ridhaan in Milton, and was impressed by his approach and his pact with the Horned Serpent.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 3, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 9, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Intimidation 8, Subterfuge 6

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Silver Fang

Renown: Glory 3, Honor 2, Wisdom 1

Gifts: Razor Claws (p. 162), Rapid Shift (p. 161), True Fear (p. 162)

Gabriella López

Gabriella López is an ambitious, smart, and driven young woman who graduated high school a year ago. Born and raised in Milton, she has experienced her entire life through the lens of a third-generation immigrant: comfortable, mostly with a lack of want, but never quite fitting in. Her parents, middle-aged American descendants of immigrants, work in sales and their jobs saddle them with constant travel. They provide well



for Gabriella but they also expect her to follow in their footsteps. Instead, she's trying to make her own way in the world. She wants to be an artist and got a job at the local Val-EVENMor store to save for art school. Her parents will only pay for a business college program.

Gabriella is on the verge of experiencing her First Change. She'll be a chosen champion of Gaia, Mother of the Earth. She'll also be a theurge, one who leans towards understanding and addressing spirits. Her impending transformation makes her restless and irritable and has her experiencing strange dreams and visions of bloodshed, viscera, and a yearning for revenge. Against what, exactly, she hasn't figured out yet.

Of course, working in the belly of the Wyrms does not make things easier. She's caught the notice of a spirit of greed called Mirrormouth. It's been sending compelling dreams to her to get her to perform a Rite that will allow it to cross over and devour Milton. Though the dreams have affected her work, Gabriella finds herself uneasy. She wonders if there is more to them than meets the eye.

Two paths that lie before Gabriella: she could become a wayward Garou that serves the Wyrms, or a fighter for Gaia. The events around her First Change will define her path forever.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 5, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft 8, Academics 8, Finance 6

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: To be Determined

Renown: Glory 0, Honor 0, Wisdom 0

Gifts: None

Ridhaan Sachdev

Ridhaan Sachdev, the son of an immigrant family, led a life of scarcity. Both his parents left India for the United States in pursuit of a better life for their son. They worked day jobs, night jobs, and all the jobs in between, leaving him with only vague fantasies of the American Dream.

His childhood was spent watching his parents suffer and toil, and his teenage years watching his father waste away, unable to afford treatment for a curable disease. Two decades of pain and rage finally coalesced over a single, fateful night. Gaia had chosen him. She felt his rage, and he felt hers.

Ridhaan is a leader and a problem-solver. He knew this to be true from the day he was accepted into an elite college's pre-med program, scholarship-supported, to the day he dropped out. He knew this before he experienced his First Change. He knows the only real way to solve a problem is to understand it fully: act in haste, repent at leisure, as the saying goes.

His first few years as a Garou were spent searching for meaning. He found Louise. Louise was a force of nature, and she taught him her ways. If he could ever claim to have loved someone, it would be her. Together, they would push back. Fight the Apocalypse. Do something meaningful.

Decades went by, and nothing worked. The fight was unending. The Apocalypse was imminent, and they had accomplished nothing. Ridhaan had to find out what they were missing. He sought out the Garou of the Ghost Council. Like him, they understood that knowledge came at a cost. It would extract a heavy toll, and he was prepared to pay it. Alas, Louise didn't understand the importance of studying the Wyrms, letting it fester, living in its belly. They parted ways. It was an amicable split until Louise began meddling in Ridhaan's observation of Milton. She wrecked his carefully laid plan, and — worse — she nearly cut him off from Horned Serpent, the only bond Ridhaan values more than his connection with Mother Louise.

General Difficulty: 5/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Mental 6, Social 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 7, Leadership 8, Etiquette 6, Insight 7

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Ghost Council

Renown: Glory 3, Honor 2, Wisdom 1

Gifts: Augur (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 170), Fangs of Judgment (p. 157), Porcupine's Reprisal (p. 156), Serpent's Coil (p. 170), Stare-down (p. 147) ■





APPENDIX

THE Weaver's World

From the heart of the city to the edges of civilization, every Garou was born entangled in some part of the Weaver's web. These scenes draw on strands of the web — human connections and problems — to challenge the pack. If the Garou can navigate them, they'll reap rewards. Fail, and they'll ruin lives.

This appendix is a collection of standalone scenes flexible enough to fit into the stories in this book or ones of your own making. These are best used between major story beats to further define how the pack fits into the

world of humans and how they stand apart. They're ready to use as-is, but you can tailor them to your stories by adjusting details as you see fit.

At the Storyteller's discretion, these scenes might allow the purchase of a single point of Glory, Honor, or Wisdom, depending on how the characters handle them.

A HARD BARGAIN

Cast: A boss with direct authority over the characters (3/2).

What Happened: At a character's day job, or at an organization the pack is infiltrating like a Pentex front, their boss praises their work they've done so far and offers them a new opportunity. It's under the table work; the boss wants them to spend some shifts loading and transporting unmarked bags and boxes to locations around the city. While the proposed work doesn't sound like anything that furthers the Wyrms' goals, it's highly suspicious. If they're infiltrating a Pentex front, it's almost certainly a cover for something terrible.

What Could Happen:

- * If the character or pack declines the work, it's not the end of the matter. The boss offers more incentives, questions why the character wouldn't take the work and escalates to subtle threats. They might have to engage in a Social Conflict to escape the boss's badgering.
- * Instead of leaning on the character or pack, the boss might pass on the job to a co-worker they know if they refuse it. The co-worker's enthusiastic about such a simple task for more pay, but it becomes clear that whatever is going on, it's not just physically taxing on them, it's morally taxing. Unless the characters find a way to get the co-worker out of this jam, their colleague is about to undergo a nervous breakdown or a Bane Spirit possession.
- * If the character or pack takes the work, they have a chance to investigate what they're transporting and why the company's involved with it. It's something distasteful, if not outright illegal or immoral. They might learn the company's involved in some kind of trafficking, whether that's bootleg merchandise, drugs, or even people. If the company's a Pentex front, it could be an illegal waste-dumping scheme, or even gathering offerings to a secret temple to Fly somewhere in town. Whatever it is, the characters have a chance to stop it from the inside.

Attribute Focus: Social





BARFIGHT

Cast: An Ally or a Contact, at least one human troublemaker (4/2 for a single antagonist, 3/2 for each member of a group), several human bystanders.

What Happened: The pack meets a Contact or Ally at a bar or other public place to discuss important business. The troublemaker approaches them, and they aren't interested in pleasant conversation. They have a bone to pick with the connection.

If the werewolves let loose, they can absolutely destroy the troublemaker, but they have to face the consequences: attention, Delirium, bodies to dispose of, or a reputation for letting things get out of hand.

What Could Happen:

- * If the pack isn't interested in talking things out, they can get right to business. The troublemaker and the pack enter a Physical conflict.
- * The troublemaker is an agent of a greater force that wants to intimidate the pack's connection. That force could be the story's antagonist or someone unrelated like a loan shark. The pack must prove they're the greater threat.
- * The troublemaker's mistaken the connection for someone else. After it's cleared up, they're still itching for some kind of conflict. The pack could redirect their aggression into less violent competition.

Attribute Focus: Physical or Social

CAMPFIRE SONGS

Cast: One or more Contacts, Allies, or Touchstones involved in an artistic community such as a local music scene.

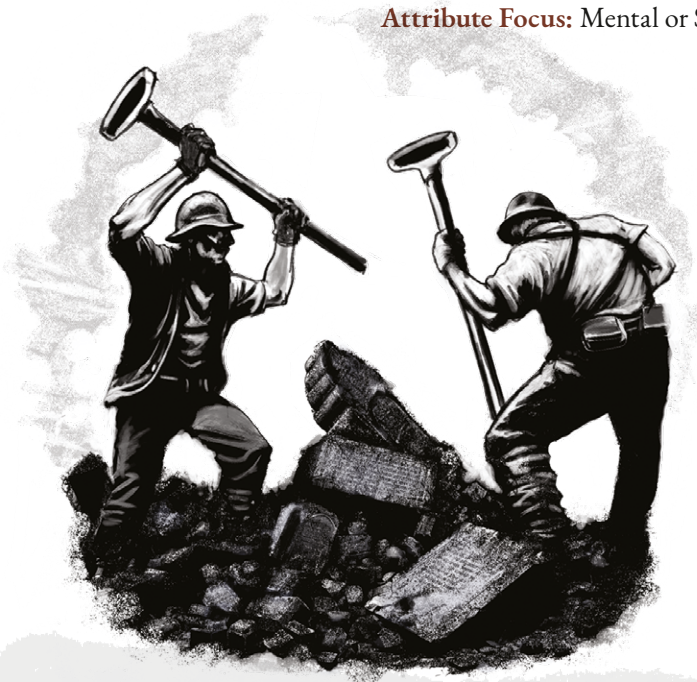
What Happened: The pack recently experienced a devastating loss or failure. A member of the pack's extended circle, an aspiring musician, catches on that the pack's bummed out and invites them to an upcoming performance at an open mic night held at a gazebo in the park. There's a good crowd, and everyone else is in high spirits.

If the pack doesn't know anyone musically inclined, this scene could take the form of any public arts display relevant to the pack's social circle, ideally one the pack themselves can take part in.

What Could Happen:

- * The pack is invited to take the stage. Even if they're not musicians, this could be a way to mourn their failure in a cathartic way. Their performance could be an ode to a peer they lost, a raucous song that almost sounds like furious howls, or even a secret call to action.
- * A boastful musician (who could even be their friend!), challenges their peers to a "friendly" musical duel. A musically talented member could show them up and gain some Contacts, Allies, or even a dot of Fame.
- * Their musician friend is hit with stage fright before their set. The pack must give them the encouragement they need to perform. It's a tiny victory, but it might be what the pack needs.

Attribute Focus: Mental or Social



CHAIN OF COMMAND

Cast: One supporter — a member of a group of Allies that a character commands, a fan attracted by a character's Fame (2/1).

What Happened: Sometime after a character uses their Allies or Fame to help the pack accomplish something, they receive a message from a member of the group or fanbase. The supporter feels used and claims others in the group feel the same way. If they're an Ally, they question why the group should follow the character. If they're a fan, they threaten to go public about what they were used for, which could also implicate the rest of the pack.

What Could Happen:

- * The supporter wants assurance that the character has their best interests at heart. The character can make a promise to aid them later, which could lead to a scene like 'Promises, Promises' (p. 93) in another story.
- * In conversing with the supporter, the character learns of an external force guiding them towards this conflict. It could be the antagonist of this story, a hint of a later antagonist, or just a caring friend or loved one who thinks getting mixed up with the character is dangerous or inadvisable.
- * The supporter wants compensation, recognition, or special privileges. The character can deal with the problem by giving in, but it leads to more demands further down the line.

Attribute Focus: Social or Mental

CODE OF SILENCE

Cast: Someone to get in trouble and need the pack to bail them out. They should be attached to a company or another large organization with secrets they'd rather not see made public.

What Happened: Someone close to the entire pack makes an anxious confession. Ever since they received a pay cut at work, they've been leaking their company's secrets online to the highest bidder. What was once giving away small secrets to make up the difference turned into divulging huge secrets for lucrative profits. Now, not only have they sold some information to some very bad people, but their name might have been exposed to their employer as a leaker. The connection is in danger no matter what they do, and they beg the pack to help them escape the consequences.

What Could Happen:

- * If they choose the connection cover up what they've done, they have their work cut out for them. A federal investigator, a company security officer, or an interested criminal party (3/2) is hot on the trail, looking to catch the pack in a lie.
- * The pack could decide to convince their friend to come clean, either for moral reasons or because they feel they'd be safer that way. If they attempt this, it's an arduous task. The friend spins the situation to depict themselves as completely in the right (and they just might be!), swears they'll never do something like this again, or might even threaten to sever their relationship with the pack.
- * Getting someone else to take care of the situation or brushing off their acquaintance only makes the problem worse in the long run. Unless the pack intervenes one way or another, the Storyteller character's deeds go public at the worst possible time.

Attribute Focus: Mental or Social



DESECRATION

Cast: Construction site security (3/2); optionally members of another pack.

What Happened: Following the cries of wounded spirits, the pack discovers that the Civil War-era graveyard at the edge of their territory is being desecrated by humans. A group of construction workers are knocking over tombstones and tearing apart graves as the start of a reforming the land into a dumpsite. This thriving portion of the Umbra will fall into ruin unless the pack gets to the bottom of this.

What Could Happen:

- * The pack could interrogate the workers and their manager. The humans could be intimidated into talking, or they could be convinced that the pack are the graveyard's landowners. If they're successful, they learn that the site was rapidly approved through clandestine deals up at City Hall. Could this desecration be more than just municipal apathy?
- * If the pack wants to put a stop to this right now, they could sabotage the project by driving off the workers or sabotaging their construction tools and machines. Gifts like *Curse of Aeolus* (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 164) or *Control Machine* (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 172) could come in handy if they aren't discovered by the site's oddly robust security.
- * The characters aren't the only werewolves on the scene. They discover another pack lying in wait, who have some very violent intentions for the desecrators. Does the pack unite with them to wreak havoc, fight to protect the ignorant, or drive the trespassers off their territory?

Attribute Focus: Physical or Social

FLOURISHING VICTORY

Cast: A Storyteller character the pack knew from a previous story; a Contact in communication with the Storyteller character.

What Happened: While patrolling their territory, the pack comes across an area they've cleansed of bane spirits, saved from the predations of Gaia's enemies, or rescued from another means of certain doom. This scene could also begin after a Contact is asked to send a message from an important SPC from a previous story, if any were aware of the pack's activities.

While the area might never know what truly happened, it's clear the pack's brought some good into the world.

What Could Happen:

- * The area feels more alive than ever before. Its fortunes have necessarily improved, and its population's mindset hasn't dramatically changed, but the pack feels a rising optimism in every person they meet. They might witness and increase in plant growth, or the arrival or friendlier spirits in the local Umbra.
- * The pack spots an SPC they encountered in a previous story. If the SPC knows who they are and what they've done, they have a chance to hear exactly how they've improved their life. Otherwise, they get a glimpse of their improvement from afar.
- * The pack discovers the signs of a predatory local real estate company moving into the area. The signs are vandalized by the locals. While this area won't be peaceful forever, the pack gets a clear sign that its residents have a lot of fight left in them.

Attribute Focus: Social, Mental, or Physical

FUZZY MEMORIES

Cast: A Storyteller character (2/1) present in a previous scene or story that experienced the Delirium (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 142).

What Happened: Sometime after a Physical Conflict scene, the climax of a previous story, or any other scene where the Delirium could afflict a bystander, a character is accosted somewhere close to their home or to the pack's base. The SPC confronting them is visibly distressed and lacking sleep. They claim that there's something about the character they can't quite remember. They're not willing to let them go, and they could be armed.

What Could Happen:

- * Gentle questioning reveals that though the Delirium eliminated all traces of the supernatural from their mind, the rationalization of the event left them traumatized and with vague enough memories of the pack to associate the trauma with them. An empathetic ear and dishonest tongue might defuse the situation.
- * The victim recorded the character's transformation, but the video is shaky, and their rationalized memories do not match what they've recorded. They're obsessed with the footage, but calmly explaining the disconnect could pacify them.
- * Intimidation or outright violence temporarily solves the problem. The SPC falls deeper into their anxiety and trauma. They may return in a later story as a hinderance, a monster hunter, or could be attached to a character as a Stalker.

Attribute Focus: Physical or Social

LINGERING FAILURE

Cast: A hapless long-term resident (2/1); an amateur occultist (3/2).

What Happened: The pack comes across a remote part of town, perhaps one the other packs consider "off-limits." Local legends among shared territories describe the land as the site where a legendary pack fell, the former dwelling of Fenris cultists, or where the Garou once committed an awful crime.

It's desolated in both the physical world and the Umbra. Its inhabitants live in desperation. Rot and disrepair creeps through its buildings. This place is a monument to the Garou Nation's failures, one of many.

This is a counterpart to Flourishing Victory (p. 91). The failure doesn't have to be one the pack committed, but if it is, this is a way to drive that home.

What Could Happen:

- * The pack encounters a long-term resident. They give a human perspective of the land's decline. The pack discovers this doesn't corroborate with the Garou's legends. Who's telling the truth?
- * An occultist, possessed by a spirit, mocks the pack and the Garou. If the pack exorcises them, they learn the occultist was trying to uncover supernatural activity before their possession. They could also wring a means to fix the land out of the humbled spirit.
- * They discover the Umbral desolation is spreading into other territories, including theirs. If the spread continues unabated, it might harm the entire city. They must unite the other packs and repair the damage the Garou caused, once and for all.

Attribute Focus: Physical or Social



PEP TALK

Cast: A Touchstone that looks up to their attached Character and knows the rest of the pack well enough to feel comfortable speaking to all of them at once.

What Happened: As the pack plans out their next move in a public place, a character's Touchstone approaches the pack for advice, seeking multiple opinions at once. They're planning a major career change, tossing aside what they see as a stifling job and embracing work closer to their hobby or passion. They're having second thoughts. Depending on what that new line of work is, it could be something that brings the Touchstone into safety... or puts them directly in harm's way. The pack has a chance to push the character in the right direction, or at least the right direction for them.

What Could Happen:

- * The Touchstone has a controlling boss or is too integral to the job to leave so easily. They're afraid superiors at their job might force them to stay, or retaliate and find an excuse to fire them before they get a two-weeks' notice in. The character must assuage their fears and might even provide help confronting their boss.
- * Not long after the Touchstone brings up the change, they laugh and play it off as a joke. They're clearly embarrassed or uncomfortable with the new line of work they're considering. Perhaps they think their hobby is too nerdy for the pack, or they're terrified they'll disapprove of the new career's real or imagined unsavory associations. The pack must discern why their demeanor has changed, and whether they should push past it.
- * Somewhere in the conversation, it becomes clear the change will bring the Touchstone to another character's rival, or an enemy of the entire pack. Perhaps they'll become co-workers, collaborate closely together, or even become their boss. The pack must decide whether the Touchstone's happiness outweighs their safety.

Attribute Focus: Social

PROMISES, PROMISES

Cast: A Criminal (*Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 291), and someone the pack owes a favor. If they don't already have a set Difficulty, it's 3/2. The nature of this scene could mean the connection already has ties to the underworld, but it's just as likely this person could be someone in over their head.

What Happened: The pack knew this day would come but didn't realize it'd be so soon — or like this. Someone they know reaches out via phone or text and says they're calling in a favor. They need the pack to accompany them to a shady hotel and help them negotiate a way out of a debt with a powerful criminal. It's dangerous work, but their help has been crucial to the pack's victories.

What Could Happen:

- * The associate wasn't being entirely truthful. They needed the pack as a distraction for their real task: eliminating their debt by robbing or defrauding the criminal. When the pack discovers this, this could reveal a new side to their associate and cast all their help in a much darker light. Would their associate ever defraud them?
- * The associate doesn't know it, but the meeting is a trap. The criminal was expecting to surround them and either intimidate them further or outright murder them. They weren't expecting the pack, and that shifts the balance of power. The associate truly can get out of their debt, but the pack might end up in the criminal's crosshairs in retaliation.
- * If the pack won't repay the favor exactly how the associate wants them to, they risk turning the associate into an Enemy, or losing their loyalty. They can avoid this by convincing their associate to let them approach the situation on their terms. The pack might have smarter or safer methods for getting the associate out of their debt or could use the freedom for more supernatural ways of solving the problem.

Attribute Focus: Social or Physical

SPOILS OF THE HUNT

Cast: An Ally or group of Allies. While they don't have to be fully aware that the characters are werewolves, this scene works best if the Allies participated in a pack's Conflict or major story beat in a previous scene.

What Happened: Immediately after a furious battle or arduous task, an Ally takes the pack out for a post-victory meal at an out-of-the-way diner they know. Compared to the other diners present, the pack and their associates are a sight to see; they're exhausted, and their Allies might be bruised and bandaged up. That doesn't matter now. It's time to eat.

What Could Happen:

- * The pack and their allies could get into an argument about who contributed the most to the conflict or task. Perhaps it was a bunch of jokes about who deserved the greatest portion of the "kill" that turned serious, or it's from an Ally feeling inferior. The argument must be settled before someone's temper goes off at the wrong time.
- * One of the other diners really wants to know what's up with the pack, and they're not picking up that they don't want to be bothered. They could make up story to appease them, talk about what happened with some important omissions to impress them, or try to scare the diner away.
- * Just as their meal arrives, someone else enters the diner. It's an Enemy of the pack, an agent of the story's Antagonist, or a survivor from the previous Conflict. The pack sees them, but they haven't yet seen the pack. They could choose to confront the hostile, find a way to get out quietly, or just eat in peace and trail them later.

Attribute Focus: Social

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Cast: A Storyteller character (2/1) working for a human or human-led antagonist in the current story. They may be working for the antagonist systemically (e.g. a blue-collar worker for a Pentex-held company) or personally (an assistant to a corrupt occultist).

What Happened: As the pack storms the home or headquarters of the story's antagonist, they come across one of their minors during the assault. They're human and not fully aware of what they're wrapped up in. All they know is that suddenly, they're face-to-face with a whole bunch of armed and dangerous individuals. They're clearly scared and could be capable of anything. They beg for mercy. Getting rid of them is easy for the pack... but do they have to?

What Could Happen:

- * Their pleas are legitimate. They've been abandoned by their boss, or in this moment they know where the true power lies. If the pack lets them go, showing mercy for mercy's sake could impress a spirit willing to grant a gift for the pack's trouble. If the pack isn't the empathetic type, the human offers incentives that lets them be a Contact or Ally in a future story. If that doesn't work, there's always one or more temporary Resource dots as bribery.
- * The pleas aren't legitimate. They're still loyal to their boss, they think they still have the upper hand, or they're just plain spiteful. If the pack lets them go, they'll sell out the pack at the first possible opportunity to the story's antagonist or another hostile power. They could show up in a future story as other henchmen or even an antagonist themselves.
- * Their pleas are legitimate, but it isn't the last the pack will see of the minion. They become obsessed with the incident. Maybe they want to know more about the strangers who turned their life upside down, or perhaps they're hoping for answers about what happened. If the pack used the Delirium to solve the problem, it's possible some memories linger, and they could return in a future story with a scene like Fuzzy Memories (p. 92).

Attribute Focus: Social ■



VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

HUNTER

THE RECKONING

WEREWOLF

THE APOCALYPSE

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