

spirit to a Garou or object. The spirit is then bound to perform a service, or to remain in the talen (one-shot magic item) until use of its powers releases it. It is considered immoral to bind a spirit in this manner for a long period of time, or when not absolutely necessary; spirits have feelings, too.

- The **Rite of the Questing Stone** (Level One Mystic Rite, p. 144) allows the user to find someone or something. The user must know the name of the object or individual he seeks, and having a piece of the object or person makes the rite a little easier.

- The **Rite of Talisman Dedication** (Level One Mystic Rite, p. 144) allows the user to dedicate object to his or herself, so that they remain with her in all forms, and may cross the Gauntlet. Fetishes and talens do this without being dedicated. A Garou may never have more objects bound to him or her in this fashion than her permanent Gnosis rating.

- The **Rite of Summoning** (Level Two Mystic Rite. pp. 145-46) calls a spirit to the user. The power of the spirit (and possibly other factors) determines the difficulty, and the number of successes (and possibly other factors) determines how friendly the spirit will be toward the caster.

- Any **Minor Rites** (pp. 152-53) are convenient, because they're cheap to learn and easy to use, and they grant specific benefits to the user that often come in handy.

## A Concept Guide for Beginners

by M<sup>re</sup> Rey B. Moyer

### **Garou**

Werewolf; more specifically, a werewolf who serves **Gaia**. "Garou" can be singular or plural; as the plural, it can mean many werewolves, or all werewolves as a whole. **Black Spiral Dancers** are usually not included as Garou.

### **Breed**

The species to which a **Garou** was born. Lupus Garou are born among wolves, Homid Garou are born among humans, and the infertile Metis Garou are born of the forbidden union between two Garou.

### **Auspice**

The moon phase under which a **Garou** is born, and the path ("character class") that is imposed as a result. **Garou** generally fit into their auspices naturally, but not always.

### **Tribe**

A cultural unit of werewolves. There are thirteen tribes of **Garou**, and the **Black Spiral Dancers** are the fourteenth. Every tribe has its own **totem**. Nearly all werewolves fit into a tribe; those that don't are called Ronin.

### **Litany**

The set of laws that all **Garou** are expected to follow.

### **Gaia**

The Earth Mother; Nature; the world; the Goddess. "Gaia" can mean the personification of abstract ideas, or literally the world including its parts. The **Garou** seek to protect Gaia from the **Wyrms**, whose destructive power threatens to destroy Her.

### **Sept**

A large group of **Garou** devoted to one purpose, often defending a single **caern**.

### **Caern**

A sacred location of much spiritual power and significance. A caern is usually defended by a **sept** of **Garou**, and is dedicated to a **totem**.

### **Umbra**

The spirit world; the Shadow; the mystic inner workings of reality. **Spirits** dwell in the Umbra, and **Garou** may enter it at will by passing through the Gauntlet, the barrier between the Umbra and the physical world.

### **Spirit**

A "creature" of spiritual matter, dwelling within the **Umbra**. Spirits generally serve either the **Wyld**, **Weaver**, or **Wyrms**, and their power and abilities vary widely.

### **Totem**

A powerful Incarna spirit that has adopted a group of **Garou**. Totems may adopt packs, **septs**, or entire **tribes**. Totems do not generally visit **Garou** directly, but send representative **spirits** called avatars.

### **Weaver**

The personified force of order, structure, stasis, and technology. The Weaver is considered an unwitting ally or a slave to the **Wyrms** by most **Garou**, and so is a sort of blameless cause of **Gaia's** trouble. Consequently, most **Garou** view the Weaver with suspicion, a useful but dangerous aspect of **Gaia**. At worst, the Weaver is responsible for the **Wyrms's** madness.

### **Wyld**

The personified force of creative chaos. The Wyld is associated with freedom, wilderness, randomness, and uncontrolled energy. It can be dangerously chaotic, but its diminished power in the modern world is considered even more dangerous by the **Garou**, as the **Weaver** and **Wyrms** have overpowered it.

by all auspices ... although they will still be judged on a case-by-case basis. Mystic Rites, Seasonal Rites, and Caern Rites are considered the domain of the Theurge, and Rites of Accord and Rites of Punishment are the domain of the Philodox. For more information on rites and your auspice role, see *W:tA*, p. 139, "Auspice Roles".

### How Do I Get Rites?

· To start the game with rites, take the Rites background. For every dot you take in Rites, you'll know one level of rites. So, if you take three dots in Rites, you can learn three level one rites. Or a level one and a level two rite. Or a level three rite. You get the idea, three levels worth. Minor Rites count as half a level each, so you can get two of those per dot. Remember, you'll still have to obey the limit set by your Rituals score.

· To get rites later on, you must learn them. Rites have no experience point cost. To learn a rite, you must have an adequate Rituals score, and you must convince someone who knows the rite to teach it to you. Among other things, you'll have to demonstrate to your teacher that you deserve the knowledge, and that it fits within your auspice.

· It is possible to perform rites that you've participated in, but haven't learned properly. The difficulty is three higher than normal, and you must spend double the amount of Gnosis points required, if any. Such an attempt, however, may be construed by elders as sacrilegious.

### What Rites Should I Learn?

· All rites serve a function in Garou society. By providing this list, I don't mean to suggest that the others are less important. It's just that some rites seem to be especially useful to a questing pack, and some seem absolutely essential to certain auspice roles. Some that I left off the list, such as the Rites of Renown, are really important to functioning in Garou society, but not until higher ranks, at least two or three.

· The **Gathering for the Departed** (Level One Rite of Death, p. 143) is a good rite for at least a couple of pack mates to know. It is essentially a funeral rite for a member of the pack, that aids in their journey to the spirit world, and may enhance the strength their reincarnation as a Past Life.

· The **Rite of Binding** (Level One Mystic Rite, p. 144) binds a



- The performance of the rite has other material and performance components. The knowledge of the rite is passed down as a tradition, and the form varies depending on the tribe, and even the breed, auspice, sept, and individuals, involved. Accordingly, the components are largely left up to the imagination of the player; there might be a lowered difficulty for the roll if the storyteller thinks you do an especially good job role-playing the performance of the rite.

- A rite takes ten minutes per level to perform, while Minor Rites take from two to five minutes.

### What Rites Can I Learn?

- First off, you're limited to rites of a certain level equal to your Rituals score. If you have no Rituals score, you may not learn any rites, even Minor Rites. If you have a Rituals score of one, you can learn Minor Rites and level one rites. If you have a score of three, you can learn Minor Rites, level one rites, level two rites, and level three rites. And so on.

- Learning and performing any rite is considered an act strongly tied to your auspice role. Therefore, you should be careful to learn only rites that could be used within the role of your own auspice, and to only use the rites in a fashion appropriate to your auspice. In general, Minor Rites and Mystic Rites may be learned

### Wurm

The personified force of death, decay, disease, and corruption. The **Garou** consider the Wurm to be evil, driven mad by entanglement in the **Weaver's** webs, and threatening to **Gaia**.

### Black Spiral Dancers

A **tribe** of werewolves that serves the **Wurm**. Once the noble White Howlers, the Black Spiral Dancers represent the frightful danger of corruption. Many have bat-like features, such as long ears and membranous wings under their arms, and their tribal **totem** is Whippoorwill.

### Bane

A **spirit** in service to the **Wurm**. Banes vary in power and abilities, but all are dangerous enemies of **Gaia** and the **Garou**.

### Fomor

A **Wurm**-tainted human, possessed by a **Bane** and granted weird, often disgusting powers by the dark **spirit**. The plural is “fomori.”



## Building and Playing a Quality Character

by M<sup>c</sup>Rey B. Moyer

What's the secret to a quality character? What's the magic formula? Hell, I don't know. It's probably player experience. If you've role-played for a while, you've come to know which of your characters have been successful and why, which have been unsuccessful and why, and you've had a chance to see other players make some memorable characters and some memorable failures. Really, there's no replacement for this kind of learning.

But I'm a pretty experienced player, too. I'm going to toss out some dos and don'ts for good characters that I've learned over the years, and hopefully they can help you along.

- **Come up with the background before the stats.** Stats are just a skeleton on which to hang a character ... but it's a good idea to know what you need to hang up before you build the skeleton. You don't need to have every detail fully described on paper before you come up with stats. But you ought to have something in mind before you fill in any dots.

White Wolf has "finishing touches" last in the character generation process. But a lot of these -- check out the list of "Questions and Answers" in *W:tA*, pp. 82-83 -- are good things to think about before you start. Some of these will change as you make the character, but many will help you get started and will give you ideas about developing a strong concept. Which brings me to my next point....

- **Develop a strong concept.** Okay, easier said than done -- but this is *really* important. A strong concept is reasonable for the power level of the character, has room for growth, makes the character playable in the group and the setting, and raises opportunities for memorable role-playing. A strong concept is *not* a gimmick, is *not* overwhelming to a well-rounded character, and does *not* overpower every other character in the group, hogging the spotlight *constantly*. NPCs are often unbalanced, gimmicky characters, and that's okay, because it makes them memorable, and they're usually not around for very long. But playing an unbalanced character personality gets harder and harder for a player as the game goes on. Again, experience is going to help you a lot here.

## The Rite Stuff

by M<sup>c</sup>Rey B. Moyer

Ultimately, knowing everything there is to know about rite rules is pretty simple, and won't require much reading, maybe two pages' worth. Read the **Rituals Knowledge description** (p. 110), the **Rites Background description** (pp. 112-13), and the **rules for rites** (pp. 137-39). When you've read that, you'll know all the rules, you just won't know the specific rites.

This essay starts by summarizing the rules, in a format that you might find friendlier than the one in the book. But it can't replace the info there; this is just a summary. At the end of the essay, you'll find my list of *really* useful rites, rites that the pack should probably have access to through one member or another. Here I include a summary of what each essential rite does, but again you'll want to go to the book for the complete rules.

### What Is a Rite?

- A rite is a ritual that has a direct, tangible effect. For the *Mage* fans out there, Garou rites are static magic. They do alter reality, but they do it in a natural, cause-and-effect way.

- Most rites have a level, from one to five. Generally, higher level rites are more powerful and complex. Minor Rites don't actually have a level.

- There are several kinds of rites: **Rites of Accord** (pp. 139-40), **Caern Rites** (pp. 140-42), **Rites of Death** (p. 143), **Mystic Rites** (pp. 143-46), **Punishment Rites** (pp. 146-48), **Rites of Renown** (pp. 148-50), **Seasonal Rites** (pp. 150-51), and **Minor Rites** (pp. 152-53).

- In general, a rite is led by a ritemaster (who generally spends one Gnosis) who knows the rite, assisted by at least two other Garou who don't need to know the rite. All Garou present must participate in the rite, and additional Garou who are present and contribute Gnosis can lower the difficulty. See *W:tA*, p. 138, "Enacting a Rite" for more details.

- A rite generally requires some sort of sacred item, often a talen, fetish, or some natural object that has never been touched by minions of the Wyrms or by human hands. The item can normally be reused.

change for the alpha making sure that no other pack mate dominates the beta. In large packs, wolves other than the alpha may also form such alliances with submissive wolves, adding another layer of complexity to the pack mind.

Keeping all of this in mind should help you role-play a Garou character more creatively and realistically. But keep in mind that this should not take up your entire game. Your first responsibility as a player is to the story, and infighting in your pack should not take up the whole game session. Really, if you make one in-pack power play per session, that's probably a little too much. Also, this shouldn't be an antagonistic exercise, simply the Garou's instinctive need to have a place in a hierarchy. You should always be watching, ready to role-play and help the plot with your sense of the pack's dynamics, ready to increase your pack status only at a dramatically appropriate moment.



You'll probably need to take everything else on this list into account -- and a lot more -- before you can invent a good concept. But if you have a good concept -- one that is not dependent on traits such as tribe, auspice, and breed, but *does* work well with those traits -- you'll be well on your way to having a good character.

Knowing the rules and stats can help here. You can build an entire character concept around a cool Background, Merit, or Flaw. And high stats, even low stats, can imply something about the character's concept. Which moves us along....

• **Make the numbers mean something.** A lot of storytellers try to de-emphasize stats and numbers; I don't. I believe that stats and numbers are an important part of a good character, if the numbers interact well with the "deeper" side of

the character. If you have some idea of a background and concept, the character sheet will practically fill *itself* out. The key here is that the character isn't just a bunch of numbers with no well-rounded concept to make them mean something, nor is the character just a really good idea that doesn't translate into numbers. When you make the two work together, both will be stronger.

You'll also want to figure out what the stats mean, and where they came from. With Background points, this is an obvious need; you've got to figure out what your Contacts, Fetish, Kinfolk, and Resources points mean before you can even *use* them in the game. But more basic stats, especially if they're particularly high or low, need a story too. Perhaps your Ragabash has a Strength of five because he's been pumping iron nonstop in the state pen for ten years. Maybe your Glass Walker has a four in Linguistics because she's a globetrotting business woman. Or your Silver Fang is so confident that Leadership comes naturally to the tribe that she hasn't bothered to develop the Skill ... and has a score of zero! All of these stats suggest a back story that will strongly affect the character. If you can do this for your character, you've found the secret to tying stats and concept together.

- **Be a part of the story.** This is an ongoing process, but it's something you can start doing even at character generation. Backgrounds, Merits, and Flaws are particularly good ways to get involved in the story right away. Try asking the storyteller if there's something that you can do during character generation to help the story. If there is, the storyteller will be grateful for the opportunity to make his or her hooks work without much effort ... and you'll be in the limelight right away! If not, you can still take story-strong stats, and it'll make for interesting play. And perhaps they'll be more useful to the storyteller later on, as the plot develops.

- **Be part of the pack.** This is another one that involves constant and ongoing effort, but can be built into a quality character. If your character *doesn't* work well with the pack, a good storyteller will tend to ignore your character, making the game a real drag for you. A bad storyteller will get bogged down in your solo shenanigans and will ignore the other characters, making the game a real drag for everyone else. Bottom line: you're there to have fun, and to help create a good story so that everyone else can have fun. The best way to do both is to be involved with the pack as a whole, and

in mind that wolves accept it much more easily. A wolf will not accept being dominated by a wolf that is inferior, but once dominance is established it is usually accepted gracefully. Usually.

The establishing of dominance is another complex point. Rank often stipulates the dominance-submission relationship between two Garou, but when two Garou are equal in rank the *challenge* is the method for deciding dominance. Challenges may be very informal, or extremely ritualized. It may be a matter of one Garou taking control in a given situation, and another accepting him or her as naturally superior given the circumstances. But if dominance is contested a facedown may occur, or another Garou may be called upon to judge some sort of contest. In general, combat is avoided, as no one really wants to injure a pack mate ... they just want to put them in their place without wasting too much time and energy. Among animals, including wolves, challenges generally progress from a show of strength (facedowns, growling, threat displays, puffing up), to a contest of strength (shoving, chasing), to non-damaging ritualized combat (throating, knock-downs, head butting), then rarely to serious fighting.



Another complex feature of wolf packs is the tendency for members to form alliances. A dominant wolf picks a submissive ally who watches his back in exchange for improved status. The most widely known example of this is the beta. An alpha wolf, the wolf no pack mate can dominate, is the leader. But he or she will often pick a beta who is not necessarily the second-most-dominating wolf in the pack. The beta helps the alpha maintain dominant status, in ex-

# The Pack Mind: Dominance and Challenge

by M<sup>c</sup>Rey B. Moyer

As a Garou, as part wolf, you are a member of a pack. To some degree, you instinctively need the pack ... and it needs you. If you are a Lupus, the pack mentality is strong, for you have grown up with it all your life. If you are Homid, the natural Garou instincts may be buried under years of cultural programming. But at your essential level, the pack you adopt is your family. To leave them is to deny yourself. To lose them is to lose your soul.

That should be simple for most players to understand. In my experience, however, many players don't stop to think about other aspects of the pack mind. While the concept of the alpha and the advantages of teamwork are obvious, it is also important to keep in mind the fundamentally wolfish concept of *dominance* when dealing with your pack.

It is simply not possible for two wolves to interact without one being established as dominant, and the other as submissive. That will be true of Garou within the pack and without. This simple fact, easy to understand, has many complex implications. It means that you have a place in a hierarchy in your pack. You should have a list -- conscious for you but probably unconscious to your character -- of which of your pack mates are dominant and submissive to you. Still, this is pretty simple; characters are either one or the other.

It gets complex when trying to figure out the hierarchy. Wolves try to establish a linear "pecking order," but it's not that easy. If a pack mate submissive to you dominates a wolf to whom you are submissive, that makes you submissive to that wolf, automatically. If you are able to dominate that wolf still, you move up your own position in the hierarchy ... but your relationship with other pack mates will change accordingly. The hierarchical relationship may never really be figured out, but all pack mates will instinctively try to make it linear and simple. This will make interacting with other player characters an interesting and complex exercise.

It may be difficult for humans to accept domination. But keep

to encourage others to participate.

You can do this by getting together with the other players and developing an overall pack concept when the game begins. Or, if you're joining an existing pack, get a feel for the pack's dynamics, methods, and goals. A quality character fills the pack's needs, adds to the dynamic in interesting ways, and most importantly has good reasons to *be a member of the team*.

• **Develop separate inner and outer selves.** A quality character has depth, and a deep character has an obvious layer and *at least one* inner layer. Your Nature and Demeanor are good springboards here. Your Demeanor is your outward appearance, how you interact with other characters, the impression that you carry, your *apparent* motivations. A deep character has an entirely different inner self, the Nature. But a character still acts upon his or her inner self, even while trying to maintain the Demeanor. This *doesn't* mean plotting against other players -- a pet peeve of mine -- but it *does* involve keeping inner thoughts and motivations a secret. Don't explain every thought process, every emotion that your character feels. Just act on them. The impression you create will be that of a complex character.

There also has to be a reason for the different layers. Why does the character want (perhaps unconsciously) to portray a personality that is different from his or her true Nature? Is the Nature weak? Does it need to be "protected" by a tough outer shell? Does the character have an inner secret, a phobia, a weakness, a dark side? Perhaps the character just thinks (again, perhaps unconsciously) that others won't like or respect the inner self, and so he or she develops an outer self that seems more interesting. Perhaps the character has an inner self with strong feelings and motivations, but when he or she tries to express those inner feelings, they get confused and paint an entirely different picture. Or perhaps the character is really just devious.

At any rate, the character should be a psychological study for you, an interesting interplay of Nature and Demeanor ... but if you explain every inner thought, they are no longer inner thoughts. Played right, the layers form an interesting and complex character, without giving away your method and madness to other players.



# Preparing to Play Your Character

by M<sup>o</sup>Rey B. Moyer

## All Characters

- Read the basic rulebook, beginning to end.
- Read all of the Gifts for your breed, auspice, and tribe, to get a feel for the powers your character has access to.
- Borrow or buy the tribebook for the tribe you're playing and read it, beginning to end.
- Read the descriptions of tribal camps in the tribebook and in the *Player's Guide*. It's a great way to get a feel for the different philosophies and ideals within your tribe, and you might find one that appeals to your character.
- Read *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, by Edward Abbey.
- Read *Never Cry Wolf*, by Farley Mowat, or watch the movie.
- Watch *Thunderheart*.
- Respond to all the questions in the "Questions and Answers" section in *W:tA*, pp. 82-83. Write down your answers. Invent new questions and answer them, too. Review your answers before every game session to help you get into character.
- Write a story about your character's past.



The sourcebook *Umbrā: the Velvet Shadow* is also an important source of information on the Umbrā; the "Introduction" and "Chapter One: Cosmology" are good, compact sources of information, while "Chapter Two: Geography" goes into more detail on the Realms of the Near Umbrā. There's also a poster-sized map of the theoretical structure of the Umbrā in the back.

If you're interested in spirits, I highly recommend the sourcebook *Axis Mundi: the Book of Spirits*. "Introduction: Animism," "Chapter One: History," and "Chapter Two: The Pact" are all excellent, and should be required reading for anyone playing a Theurge.

## Conclusion

The spirit world is a useful aspect of the game, but it should not become utilitarian for your character. Above all, the Umbrā is shadow, mysterious, often frightening and enlightening. It is the dark recesses of the soul, the hidden nature of all things, and the open battleground of the Apocalypse. Tread here carefully, with open eyes and an open mind, prepared for infinite wonder and intensity. Every inch of the Umbrā has a story, and every trip across the Gauntlet should be a spirit quest.



its that represent major symbolic roles. The Incarna are not to be encountered in the Penumbra, though they may send Jagglings as their **avatars**, or representatives.

Spirits find their way across the Penumbra using **Airts**, paths that they can sense that often allow more rapid travel than is "realistically" possible; Garou can use these paths, but generally have no way of detecting them without a spirit's guidance.

The Penumbra by day is well lit, and relatively few spirits are active; most spirits hide away from daylight and their enemies. But the spirits that are active in the daytime are hunters, hostile spirits who are quick to attack other spirits and even Garou. At night, the Umbra is friendlier to the Garou, as Luna lights the landscape, and the nature spirits that are friendly to the Garou are more active. Nonetheless, the Umbra is never completely safe, for Banes and other dangerous spirits may always be skulking in the shadows.

### The Depths of the Umbra

The Penumbra mirrors every place on earth, but itself contains hidden doorways and secret portals, called **Anchorheads**, that lead to Umbral locations further beyond. At the **Near Umbra**, these places are called **Realms**, and represent worlds to themselves, each representative of definite ideals, each more or less allied with Weaver, Wyld, and Wyrms. Further out, the Umbra grows more and more fragmentary and complex. The Realms are replaced by smaller and less solid **Domains** and then **Epiphs**, areas constructed by powerful spiritual entities, or even by the dreams, philosophies, and fancies of individuals or groups of individuals in the physical world. The **Deep Umbra** itself is even more abstract, and at the furthest known reaches only the Weaver, Wyld, and Wyrms themselves exist.

### Additional Reading

The Umbra is a complex part of *Werewolf*, and I don't claim that I can clarify everything within a short essay such as this. But hopefully it helps a bit. For the official write-up in the game, check out "Chapter Seven: the Spirit World" in the main rulebook. This chapter covers the basics of philosophy, rules, and milieu for the Umbra, and covers the basics for dealing with spirits as well. Also, the Central Park sample setting in the rulebook includes a section entitled "Umbrascapes" on p. 282 in the appendix, which might be enlightening for its overview of one place in the Penumbra.

### Ragabash

- Once per day, question tradition. Then *answer* the question.
- Play a trick on someone with the goal of teaching them something. See how they like it.

### Theurge

- Contemplate spirituality.
- Read "Introduction: Animism," "Chapter One: History," and "Chapter Two: The Pact" from the *W:tA* sourcebook *Axis Mundi: the Book of Spirits*.
- Read *Black Elk Speaks*, by Black Elk, with John G. Neihardt.

### Philodox

- Look up "arbitration" in the dictionary. Look up "arbitrary".
- Contemplate justice.
- Contemplate fairness.
- Memorize the Litany.
- Read *Rites of Passage*, by Arnold Van Gennep.

### Galliard

- Make up a story or learn one from a book. Make it the kind of story you could tell at a moot, the kind that would be told by a Garou Galliard. If you'd like, share it with the other players, either by printing or photocopying the story, or by telling it.
- Read *The Power of Myth*, by Joseph Campbell, with Bill Moyers.
- Read *Reservation Blues*, by Sherman Alexie.

### Ahroun

- Contemplate violence. Contemplate the relationship between violence and Glory.
- Get to know the combat rules in the rulebook better than you do now. If you haven't picked out some special combat maneuvers, choose some now, according to the rules in *W:tA*, pp. 232-36.
- Watch *The Ghost and the Darkness*.
- Watch a Samurai movie.

# Garou Culture: The Warrior Tradition in a Modern Setting

by M<sup>c</sup>Rey B. Moyer

Garou culture is perhaps one of the more difficult aspects of *Werewolf* to understand, because it is so difficult to place. But I think truly understanding the mindset is worth a bit of effort. *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* draws heavily on the idea of a culture that demands much from the Garou, that forms the basis of their cosmology and beliefs. To understand the game more completely, consider a basic interplay of visions, two opposite ideas that contrast and blend to form one dissonant image of the Apocalypse. *Werewolf* is, in so many ways, about dualities, and understanding



its entirety; it is surrounded by embracing tree spirits, and it exudes a warm green glow that comforts you. It must be a beloved ancestral home, its spirits awakened by the emotional significance vested in it by the families who have lived here happily for years.

Across the street, the apartment complex, known as a hot-spot for crack dealers, is traced by a skeletal pattern of webbing, and it exudes a coldness, a predatory feel unique to the city's darker spots. In particular, an apartment on the third floor is cloaked in seething darkness, and taunting Banes (Wyrms spirits) peer out, giggling with a thin, screeching sound that you feel rather than hear. Perhaps this is the abode of a twisted crack dealer who trades his wares for brutal, meaningless sex from desperate junkies. Or perhaps it's the home of a predatory child molester, or a Dahmer-esque serial killer who lures his victims here to end their lives slowly. Even within the spiritually cool city, places like this abound, too numerous and fluid to track down and catalog.

You look to the west, where the Cascade Mountains rise. You could see the mountains from the physical world, but not like this. They are positively towering, glistening peaks that jut into a sky of infinite depth. Their flanks are carved by glassy glaciers, their relief stunning, their beauty in every way the epitome and exaggeration of their physical counterparts. In the lush green forests tucked in the hollows and foothills of the range, you know that a huge variety of animal, bird, insect, plant, and mineral spirits, along with many more, dwell in the primordial darkness or flit among the Umbral forest's canopy. There are Wyld places here, many untouched spiritual locales in isolated vales, many open meadows and dancing brooks that fairly vibrate with an intensity of life force. Other places echo the songs and departing footsteps of the spiritually aware peoples that lived in harmony with this place before Columbus shattered their nations, while still others are dark, frightening representations of humanity's fearful hatred of Nature, red in tooth and claw, places touched by Wyld and Wyrms alike.

## What All This Stuff Is

This sort of mirror-image landscape is the **Penumbra**, the "Earth's Shadow". Its form is composed of **Ephemera**, non-sentient spirit matter, and it is populated by **Gafflings**, generally non-sentient spirits who carry out functions often in service of more powerful spirits. **Jagglings** are more powerful and intelligent spirits that all serve the even more powerful **Incarna**, tremendous spir-

Umbral, for they are vacant of spiritual significance, while other objects and places will have Umbral counterparts with exaggerated features or even completely altered forms that reflect their more intense spiritual significance.

### What It Is Like When You Get There

Let's say, for example, you cross the Gauntlet in Bend, Oregon.

You make your way through the swirling, entangling miasma of the Gauntlet, and find yourself in the city's shadow. The real estate offices, McKenzie Outfitters, private homes, ski shops, and department stores are unrecognizable, replaced with edifices of silvery web material; most are devoid of spiritual importance, and so are represented merely by their functionality, with impassable walls, and channels for the influx of energy. A few quiet, unobtrusive Pattern Spiders (the Weaver's servants) maintain these buildings, but that office building under construction down the street is crawling with the spidery spirits as they more actively create order there.

The street itself is filled with frantic Pattern Spiders trying desperately to maintain order in Bend's heavy traffic; they swarm around traffic lights, intersections, the yellow and white stripes down the middle of the road, and the white stripes of crosswalks, as well as the asphalt itself.

Looking around, you see a small, two-story house down a side street, reflected into the Umbral in



this particular pair will help you role-play in this rich, dark, tragic setting.

First, Garou culture is a warrior culture, with emphasis on battle, heroism, tradition, animism, and the worship of Gaia, the Earth Mother. In this respect, it is what we might call "primitive" or tribal. The "fame or shame" nature of the Renown system calls to mind Anglo-Saxon and Viking stories, where a warrior seeks nothing more than a bit of comfort during a brutish, nasty, and short life that ends with glorious death in battle. This type of warrior culture concept is certainly part of Garou culture, but it's not the whole story. It certainly could be accurate for many Lupus, Red Talon, and Get of Fenris characters, but it falls short for most other types of characters.

That's because *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* is not played in an early medieval setting. It's very much a modern, often post-modern, setting. Most characters will be Homids, and many of these will have lived their lives up until the First Change as though they were normal humans. They will feel more connected with MTV than with the Goddess, more at home in a horror flick than the dark recesses of the Umbral. So for most characters the warrior culture won't come naturally. Indeed, they will find themselves in a new world they never new existed, suddenly wearing a body they've always been taught did not exist, thrust into an auspice role they probably couldn't care less about, expected to use their newfound abilities to fight insurmountable evil for some odd religion. While the cultural reprogramming that takes place during the Rite of Passage goes a long way toward drawing the character into the tradition of Garou culture, the character will still have a tough-to-override foundation of cultural programming that will often seem at odds with it.

Furthermore, Garou culture itself is something that has changed a lot from its "primitive" roots. The traditions may be ancient, but they too have grown through the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and all the other crises, tragedies, and changes that have made human cultures what they are today in-



stead of what they were thousands of years ago. Accordingly, Garou culture has evolved. Garou culture as it currently exists is facing, in fact, its greatest struggle, the Apocalypse. The Wyrms is winning, evil is widespread, infighting is nightmarishly rampant, and the Garou are a dying breed. Ancient lore is lost at an alarming rate, many warriors die or are turned to the side of the Wyrms, the world is corrupted more every hour, and all the Garou can do is fight the best that they know how, clinging to the Litany as if it can save them. Even the ancient, more-or-less continuous culture of the Garou cannot escape the influence of modern world.

The modern Garou, Gaia's warrior, has much to struggle with in these end times. Does he or she charge headlong into hopeless battles, or be mindful of self-preservation to protect the dwindling race? Challenge every transgression as a sign of the Wyrms in the ranks, or cleave to the most questionable allies as indispensable help and risk corruption of the People? Look too near, or too far? Be too suspicious, or too trusting? Fight too hard, or not hard enough? Which is worse, dishonor, surrender, death?

In these end times, nothing is certain. Tragedy is a possible ending to this story; all good epics end in tragedy. Some say it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game. Well, bullshit. The world is at stake here, and there might not be any right answers. If you die heroically like a good Garou warrior, right in step with tradition and legend, nobody will care when the world ends next week.

This has sent shock waves throughout good old traditional Garou warrior culture. When playing your character, remember that your tradition is proud and rich. But tradition hasn't been through hell -- until now. *Werewolf* should be *Beowulf* and *A Clockwork Orange* in equal measures.

When you understand that blend of glory and despair, heroics and fear, passion and agony, then you'll know the meaning of Rage.

## Into the Mirror: An Introduction to the Umbra

by M<sup>e</sup>Rey B. Moyer

The Garou are part of two worlds, the physical and the spiritual. That is, they literally have the power to move between the world we know and can touch, and its spiritual flip-side, the inner workings of the spiritual world, the **Umbra**.

### Stepping Sideways: Getting to the Spirit World

The physical world and the Umbra are divided by a barrier called the **Gauntlet**. The Gauntlet is strong around areas of technology (because of the calcifying actions of the Weaver), and weaker in natural areas or areas invested with much spiritual significance. When you want your character to cross the Gauntlet, he or she must look into a reflective surface, and you'll roll a number of dice equal to your permanent Gnosis score (the dots, not the boxes). The difficulty is determined by the strength of the Gauntlet in the area.

The Gauntlet is not like a doorway so much as it's like several layers of curtains. If you get lots of successes, you'll find your way through instantly. Fewer successes means you take longer to do it -- as long as five minutes -- and if you fail completely you'll be unable to try again for about an hour. If you botch, however, you're trapped in the Gauntlet, unable to find your way to the Umbra or back to the physical world! You'll be trapped there until somebody happens to cross the Gauntlet at exactly the same point ... or until some predatory, Gauntlet-skating spirit happens upon you.

Fortunately, it's often easier for a group to find its way through by having the character with the highest Gnosis lead the others through. Everybody find their way across at the same time depending on the number of successes rolled by the guide -- or everybody fails or gets caught if the guide rolls poorly!

Once you get to the other side, you'll find yourself in a world of concrete symbolism, a living material vision of the inner workings and imposed symbolism of the physical world. The technological and architectural constructs of humanity will be marked out by the Weaver's pattern webbing, a tangling of spiderweb-like spirit matter. Many objects from the physical world will be absent in the