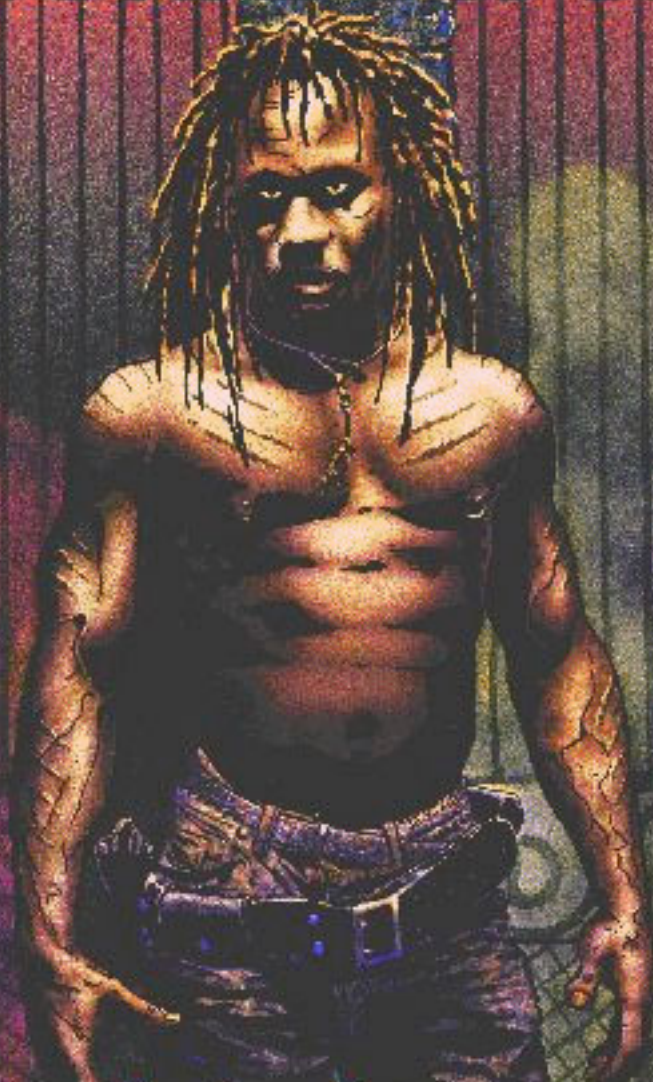


G U R P S

VOODOO

THE SHADOW WAR



BY C.J. CARELLA



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

G U R P S

V O O D O O

The Shadow War



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ISBN 1-55634-300-0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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INTRODUCTION

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the GURPS system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid. Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for GURPS, as well as information on our other lines: *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures* and more. It also covers top releases from other companies — Traveller, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, and many more.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all GURPS releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

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Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Illuminati Online. For those who have home computers, SJ Games has an online service with discussion areas for many games, including GURPS. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-448-8950, at up to 28.8K baud — or telnet to io.com. Give us a call! We also have conferences on CompuServe, GENie, and America Online.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* — e.g., p. B 102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. PS refers to *GURPS Psionics*, MA refers to *GURPS Martial Arts*.

The world of *GURPS Voodoo: The Shadow War* is not unlike our own. Innocent people are victimized by criminals, governments and other predators that can be called “human” only by a stretch of that word’s definition. Illegal drugs are an industry that produces more money than the GNP of many nations, and 12 years of the so-called “War on Drugs” have not come close to solving the problem. The “artworks” of serial killers are displayed in galleries, and murderers go free. But in the world portrayed in these pages, those crimes, wars and natural disasters are all pieces of a puzzle — moves in a planetwide game with the souls of humankind at stake. Those with the right talents can identify the people and entities that cause the chaos. They might even put a stop to it.

This book uses the myths of the mystical religion known as *Voudoun* and *Santeria*, placing the believers and practitioners of Voodoo in the middle of a cosmic struggle. The Shadow War is a conflict fought on many fronts. Voodoo Initiates have to contend with the Lodges — European magicians who have hidden their occult power and who consider themselves to be the secret masters of the Western World. Behind that conflict, some Initiates have begun to realize, lies a more basic struggle between humankind and beings that have no use for power or wealth — only for destruction.

Players can take the roles of Initiates in sorcery and spirit magic, confronting the forces trying to destroy the world. A new magic system simulates the way Voodoo priests, and the shamans of many ancient cultures, think magic works. The PCs will face political intrigue, ancient conspiracies, urban decay and violence, and supernatural monsters. They may be urban shamans using their power to fight the evil that lives in crumbling neighborhoods or crawls out of the sewers at night. Or they may be ordinary people who discover the horrors behind the scenes.

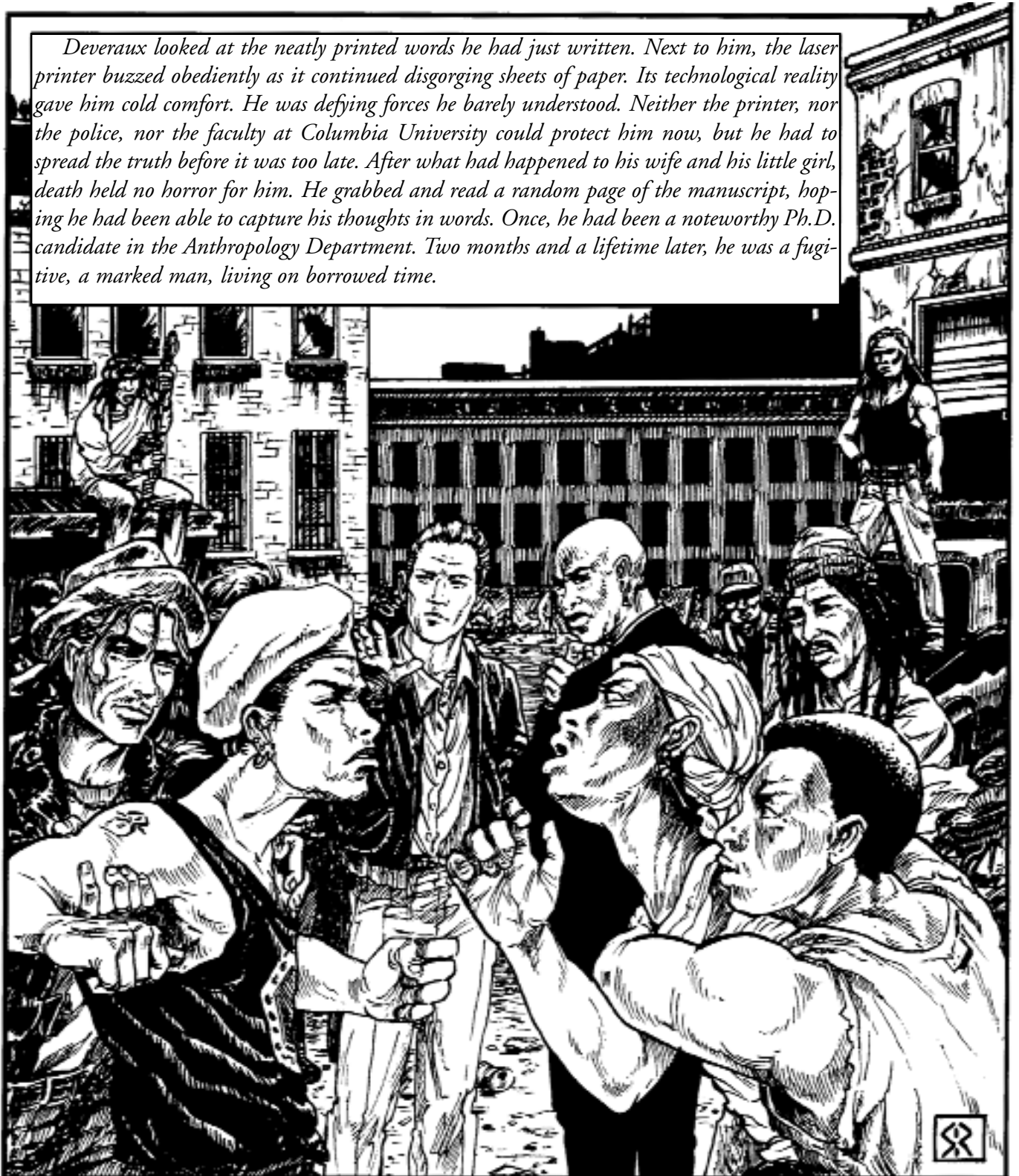
Unlike many “dark” RPGs, *GURPS Voodoo* is not about enduring the horror, but fighting it. The participants in the Shadow War are fighting to *win*. Human Spirit Warriors, monstrous In-Betweeners, renegades and even ghosts can join forces to stop the manipulators and deceivers that spread suffering through the world. The world of the Shadow War needs heroes, however frail or flawed. Your characters may be just the heroes it needs.

About the Author

C.J. Carella’s love affair with *GURPS* began with the publication of *Man to Man*, and he has never looked back. Born in New York, C.J. has lived in Peru, Venezuela, Connecticut and Florida. His writing credits include *GURPS Martial Arts*, *GURPS Imperial Rome* and *GURPS War Against the Chtorr* for Steve Jackson Games, as well as *Pantheons of the Megaverse* and *Rifts Mercenaries* for Palladium Books. He is now working full time as a freelance writer and game designer in New Haven, Connecticut; his last surviving cat is currently in exile.

1 THE SHADOW WAR

Deveraux looked at the neatly printed words he had just written. Next to him, the laser printer buzzed obediently as it continued disgorging sheets of paper. Its technological reality gave him cold comfort. He was defying forces he barely understood. Neither the printer, nor the police, nor the faculty at Columbia University could protect him now, but he had to spread the truth before it was too late. After what had happened to his wife and his little girl, death held no horror for him. He grabbed and read a random page of the manuscript, hoping he had been able to capture his thoughts in words. Once, he had been a noteworthy Ph.D. candidate in the Anthropology Department. Two months and a lifetime later, he was a fugitive, a marked man, living on borrowed time.





A Brief Disclaimer

Voodoo is more than a myth or a superstition; it is a religion with millions of followers. The Voodoo described in these pages is based on the magical side of that religion, and is not meant to portray the actual performance of Voodoo in the real world. Neither does this book describe actual magical rituals or other occult practices. Both the Lodges and the Mayombe are wholly fictional, and In-Betweeners are mythological creatures of African and Voodoo legend.

All the conspiracies mentioned in the book are the products of the author's fevered imagination. They are not meant to describe actual institutions or organizations, and any resemblances are purely FNORD.

Racial Issues

Many of the themes of *GURPS Voodoo* deal with racism. Slavery is not necessarily racist: many cultures have enslaved people of the same race. But slavery in North and South America was inherently racist. A century after its disappearance from the continent, its legacy lives on. In the context of the game, racism has supernatural consequences beyond the normal pain and misery it causes in the "real world."

Since the race issue can be sensitive, GMs and players must exercise their judgment in dealing with it. The Shadow War setting offers many opportunities to role-play characters from different racial and social backgrounds, and players and GMs may discover that it is tougher to roleplay a Haitian refugee than it is to play a Dwarf warrior in a fantasy setting. Falling into stereotypes is easy, but the author hopes that in the course of the game players will transcend them and create interesting, three-dimensional people.

"... Undoubtedly, you will think these the ravings of a lunatic. Do not be deceived, my friends. You will not find the names of evil in the *Malleus Malleficarum*, but you will hear them whispered among the denizens of our cities' worst slums — and in the halls of the powerful. What we conveniently relegate to the status of interesting superstitions are the forces that control our world. Our complacency is founded on ignorance, and it will not protect us or our children. A war is being waged; we read about the casualties every time we look at a newspaper, and we fail to understand, to even acknowledge..."

Impatiently, he plucked another sheet, this one fresh from the laser printer. "Chango and Oggun are not the Enemy. Neither are Hecate or Pan, although all these Powers exist. The Enemy's name has eluded me. Some call it *Mayombe*; others use the old epithets, the mistranslations of the Hebrew Bible that have blinded us. Beelzebub and Asmodeus are linguistic aberrations that do little to express the true monstrosities that revel in our crimes. Use those names if you will, but I shall use the Afro-American terminology..."

Deveraux shook his head. The paper was incoherent; it did sound like the ravings of an unhinged mind. He smiled, remembering his best source of information, the Haitian woman at the insane asylum who told him secrets despite the straitjacket and the heavy sedatives that bound her body and spirit. Perhaps insanity was the path to knowledge; certainly the discoveries he had made were best contemplated in a state of lunacy. But his erstwhile colleagues would not understand. He shrugged. Maybe one or two would be intrigued enough to follow the route toward Initiation; that was all he could hope for. He opened his E-mail program, and listed all the individuals and institutions he would target through the modem. Now all he had to do...

He froze. The door downstairs had banged open. He heard quick footsteps racing toward his office. Deveraux swung back to the computer; he moved and clicked the mouse with the desperate movements of a drowning man. Somebody knocked on the door just as he clicked the mouse on the last command. He switched the screen off and started to run to the fire escape outside the window.

An invisible force slammed into him, not painfully but hard enough to make him lose his balance and stagger against a desk. His eyes wide with terror, Deveraux understood how Jefferson had died four days before, when he "jumped" in front of the subway train. "Jumped" because nobody had been close enough to push him — at least, nobody that human eyes could see. He tried to continue to the window, and again his invisible tormentor pushed him back. This time, he heard faint echoes of childish laughter. The *loa* was taking perverse pleasure in thwarting him.

The door to his office was not kicked in. The knob turned gently, and with a click the latch slid aside. The door swung open, and the Smiling Man stepped inside. Deveraux's guts turned to ice; he fell to his knees, his legs suddenly too feeble to hold him. Rumor had not been enough to prepare him for the In-Betweeners' entrance. The man was wearing Deveraux's own face, twisted in an inhuman grimace. "Hello, Gerard," the creature said in a whispering voice. "I thought I should return this to you." With one swift motion, the Smiling Man pulled off the face, revealing the skinless, glistening flesh beneath. The skin-changer's smile displayed its teeth in all their sharpened, cannibal glory.

Deveraux had time for one short scream.

Next to the thrashing figures, unmindful of the blood spatters, the computer continued working silently, transmitting Deveraux's last paper...

GURPS Voodoo: The Shadow War is set in a world where the wildest imaginings of occultists. New Agers, and witch doctors are only fragments of a greater, more disturbing whole. Invisible entities share the earth with

humankind. They can and often do intervene in human affairs, at the behest of the few people who know how to petition them. Wishes can and often do come true — although often in ways not foreseen by the wishers. Curses and desires have unexpected consequences, and irrational faith can produce miracles — if one is prepared to pay the price. Hauntings, “demonic possession” and poltergeist activity are in fact the result of these entities’ actions.

Over the centuries, many people have learned to contact and deal with the invisible world. Some became high priests, saints and kings, while others worked in secret to escape persecution. In Europe, these powers were hidden and kept in the hands of a select few. These people have allowed the physical sciences unfettered development, but have purposely obscured the realms of religious thought and metaphysics, which are now largely the province of so-called primitive cultures. The secret magicians of the Western world used their powers to neutralize and discredit the shamans of other cultures.

But the old ways were not abandoned everywhere. The American continents, both North and South, became a place where different cultures and mystical heritages met and combined (see p. 9). In the Caribbean and parts of South America, this fusion combined powerful African traditions, European Christianity and occultism, and Native American animism. This potent blend, popularly known as *Voodoo*, has spawned one of the most dynamic mystical amalgams this planet has seen.

Now, the heirs of the Voodoo tradition must join forces with their former enemies and members of other traditions to confront supernatural predators. Voudounistas have been dragged into a secret war as old as humankind. Most of them only wish to practice their magical religion in peace, but the darker forces that manipulate the world have other plans.

BEHIND THE FACADE

To an observer, the world is a chaotic place, plagued by senseless killings and insane outbursts of violence. The authorities are unable to protect a large percentage of the population from crime, and many governments actively victimize their citizens. In America, the drug traffic, crime and urban decay have devastated most large cities. Sociologists, historians, politicians and economists have all offered explanations and solutions, none of which have worked.

In the world of the Shadow War, no earthly science will solve these problems; they originate from *supernatural* sources. Beings that feed on the evil that men do are secretly manipulating the world to perpetuate and aggravate that evil. These beings have granted their servants enormous power — for a price. They have many names, but are best known as the Corruptors, the Eaters of Life, the demiurges. Voodoo mythology calls them the *Mayombe*, the cannibal spirits. Only those with knowledge and understanding of the matters of the spirit will be able to help the world against these entities.

In the steamy jungles and on the sunny beaches of the Caribbean, devotees of strange gods dance, chant and perform colorful ceremonies. Tourists take their pictures, anthropologists study and label their culture, and the world at large ignores them. But these “superstitious” people know more about the way the world *really* works than any scientist. In their rituals lies the power to change the world — for good or for ill.

This is a world where no major event occurs without supernatural backing, where an evil Voodoo ritual killed JFK and where the U.S. and the former Soviet Union were created by the same team of sorcerous social scientists. Monsters that shed forms as easily as snakes shed their skins walk the streets of every major city, preying on the weak and defenseless. Most people live and die unaware of the true forces that determine their fates. In this world, prayers

The Many Names of Voodoo

The word “Voodoo” is an artificial term, popularized by European and American books and dime novels, for the African-American religions of Haiti. Many different terms have been coined for these religions, from the even more discredited “Hoodoo” to “Voudoun,” “Voudou” and “Voudu.” The last three are becoming more popular among scholars of the subject, especially since Voodoo is now used as a label for everything from magic rituals to dubious economic policies.

In this book, Voodoo is being used to indicate *all* African-American magical religions, and *Voudoun* refers specifically to the Haitian cult. *Santeria* is the Yoruba-influenced magical religion practiced in the Spanish Caribbean, *Obeah* the form found in the British West Indies, and *Macumbe* the Brazilian cult. For the purposes of this game, they are similar enough to be indistinguishable to outsiders.



Warriors and Avengers

An increasing number of younger Initiates are becoming aware of the stakes in the conflict, and are taking sides. While their elders and teachers want only to be left alone, these new magician-warriors try to unmask their enemies and thwart their plans. These warriors come from many traditions, from Voodoo sorcerers and Lodge magicians to native American shamans and Gypsy wizards. These Initiates often join forces with their former enemies in order to combat the greater evil. Their enemies are not only the evil Initiates and the Corruptors, but the more conservative Lodges and Voodoo societies, who are more concerned with holding on to their power and secrets than with saving the world.

In the Shadow War campaign, most PCs are Initiates who fight invisible powers they can perceive but not understand, relying on their abilities, wits and courage to face enemies who wield enormous financial, political and mystical power. Despite these odds, the Initiates stubbornly fight on, and sometimes win surprising victories.

can be answered, arcane rituals produce results, and faith can move mountains. But people have been deceived into first doubting and then disbelieving in the supernatural, so that an elite few can use those powers to control the rest.

There are many camps in this war. Many have tried not to take sides, concentrating on their own agendas, but neutrality is becoming increasingly hard to maintain. The followers of the Voodoo tradition are but one of the many groups that have discovered the secrets of the spirit world. Their tradition, tempered by centuries of suffering, is not the strongest, however. They are over-matched by the Lodges, the occult masters of the “civilized” world. Other shamanistic groups are involved, both as allies and enemies. Unfortunately, the Lodges, who could have been the leaders of the war against the Corruptors, spent most of the last few centuries persecuting and oppressing Voudounistas and other mystics. The war between the Voodoo societies and the Lodges has only benefited the Corruptors; their influence over humanity has grown so strong that the world is teetering on the edge of chaos.

The Spirit World

Invisible forces, largely unknown, dominate the world of the Shadow War. The spirit world can be reached by those with the will and the desire to do so. Sometimes the spirit world reaches out to unwilling or unknowing subjects, giving rise to legends of poltergeists, “demonic possessions” and hauntings. In the old times, people dealt with such intrusions by calling those with the knowledge to deal with them: priests, shamans and sorcerers. Today’s world, largely bereft of such protectors, suffers more than before.

There are many entities in the spirit world. The spirits of the dead are among their ranks, as are angels, demons and gods. The Voodoo tradition refers to all spiritual beings as *loas*. Most of these spirits can interact with the physical world only in limited and indirect ways. Many are not overly interested in our affairs, and must be coaxed or bribed to perform any deed.

A number of those invisible sentient forces, however, have learned to gain power by absorbing the psychic resonances of human pain, fear and despair. These malevolent creatures are instinctively attracted to places where atrocities are committed. The smaller and less intelligent sort simply flock around serial killers, concentration camps, battle sites and other sources of suffering. The more powerful ones make contact with humans and actively work to cause misery and destruction. These are the so-called Dark Gods, Corruptors, or Mayombe, diabolic entities intent on enslavement and torture. Finally, there are the In-Betweeners, creatures of both the physical and spiritual worlds — monsters, in short, able to prey on unsuspecting humans. Many of the “random” crimes of the modern age have been committed by In-Betweeners, or by humans worshipping the dark spirits that thrive on misery.

The Initiates

Some humans have developed a connection with the supernatural which allows them to perform incredible feats. These are the magicians, saints and witches of myth and legend. They have become Initiates in the mysteries of the spirit world. Initiation is a process



that re-creates the person; the alchemical transformation of lead into gold is a simple allegory of Initiation, in which the old self effectively “dies” and is reborn as a different, evolved person. The Initiation process can be induced through a number of orchestrated ordeals and rituals, or can



happen spontaneously. The consciousness of any human being who is exposed to a severe trauma is altered to such a degree that he may accidentally see a world that remains invisible to most of us. Therefore, one can find Initiates in the membership of secret societies or Voodoo temples — and also in insane asylums, concentration camps and other hellholes.

Initiates have varying degrees of power over the spirit world. With the proper training, they can see the future, heal the sick, control spirits and make their own luck. The sorcerer-priests of the Voodoo religions are by and large Initiates with intimate knowledge of the African spirit world. They are pillars of their communities, acting as advisors, arbiters and leaders. Theirs is a relatively mundane world, concerned mostly with everyday matters, occasionally manipulated in small ways through magic. Their traditional rivals are the organized magicians of the Western world — the Lodges, which wield enormous political power in addition to their occult knowledge. Their strife has lasted centuries, and still flares up in Third World conflicts, political maneuverings in the U.S. and Europe, and in the slums of most large cities.

The war has brought about disastrous alliances. Some Initiates deal with the Mayombe in an attempt to crush their enemies. While their fellow magicians bask in adulation and small comforts, these try to gain absolute power, no matter what the cost. The horrible suffering of the people of Haiti and the rest of the Americas is no accident, but the result of calculated moves on the part of these corrupt Initiates and their dark masters. The War on Drugs, political upheaval, the steady rise of crime and the survival of racism and hatred are all symptoms of the underlying Shadow War.

VOODOO

The magical religion of Voodoo is at the center of the Shadow War. A unique mixture of the beliefs of three continents, Voodoo has become one of the most powerful occult traditions in the world. Openly practiced by millions, it has a pantheon of spirits and godlike beings that those with the right power and knowledge can invoke for amazing results.

Loas

Loas, also known as *orishas* and *duppies*, are spiritual entities. They vary greatly in power and origins; some are godlike beings worshipped by millions of people, others are the alleged spirits of dead friends and relatives, honored by a single family or even one individual. The loas have the power to manipulate the world in diverse ways, and Initiates can use these spirits to achieve their ends. Many magic powers and rituals in *GURPS Voodoo* depend on these entities.

Syncretism

Syncretism may occur wherever two different cultures come into contact. It is an attempt to reconcile and mix together several different religious beliefs. Voodoo is one such attempt, combining Christian and African beliefs with a small dose of native American animism. It is far from the only one. Most religions in the ancient world never claimed to be the “only” or the “true” way (Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three notable exceptions), and thinkers and mystics often tried to mix and match elements of religions to get the best of all possible worlds.

Even the rise of Christianity did not stop syncretism. Faced with the might of Christianity (which at first was backed by the Roman Empire), many pagans adopted it as their religion — but added a few pieces of their own for good measure. Many pre-Christian altars and shrines became churches. The cult of the saints that is part and parcel of Catholicism was the perfect vehicle of syncretism: many of the old gods were thinly disguised as saints, with their attributes (and mystical powers) remaining unchanged. “Saint Bridget” of Ireland, for example, used to be the fire goddess Brigit, until she was syncretized into the Christian canon as the *saint* of fire.

The same thing happened to the religions African slaves brought to America. They saw the Catholic priests praying to a complex “pantheon” of saints, each representing different attributes or elements — in a way, not very different from their beliefs. While the Europeans punished any slave who clung to the old ways, they accepted acts of devotion to Christian symbols. African sorcerer-priests decided that there was power in these saints; the statues that the Christians prayed to seemed no different from their own idols. Christian prayers became powerful spells, cast under the unsuspecting eyes of colonial slave masters.

Voodoo in Everyday Life

Leonora crossed herself twice more, gathering her courage. The santero had clearly described what she needed to do if she wanted to end the curse. She shuddered. Mr. Gonzales was a barrister as well as a santero, and his advice to her in legal matters had always been impeccable. She had never sought his services as a santero, though: what use did she have for love philters and charms? Her looks and her natural charisma had gotten her all the attention she could ever want. And perhaps her looks were what had gotten her in trouble this time. Some jealous woman must have caught her husband or her boyfriend making eyes at Leonora, and had fixed a hex on her. The sudden illness, the bad luck, the little accidents — somebody had it in for her, and she needed protection.

She opened the small bag of aromatic herbs, and tossed them in boiling water. The familiarity of the process relaxed her somewhat. Why, she thought, this is just like following a recipe! When the infusion was ready, she sprinkled the four corners of her house while reciting the prayer Mr. Gonzales had written down for her. There. She had to repeat the procedure every day for a week, but she would be safe now. She still resolved to go to Church twice this Sunday, and pray to God to help Mr. Gonzales and his *orisha*. Satisfied, she sat down to watch the evening soaps on Univision.

Unseen and unheard by earthly senses, the harmful spirit screeched in pain and frustration when it tried to cross Leonora's threshold. The loa thrashed angrily in the mystic bonds, and then subsided. A harsh, commanding voice spoke, berating the spirit and giving it new orders. Then the loa was released. It headed back to the jealous woman who had purchased the curse, to return all the evil she had wished on Leonora, with interest.

The Voodoo religion has millions of followers from all walks of life. The vast majority of them are not magicians, nor do they have any special knowledge of the supernatural. For most of these people, the Shadow War is no less distant than for most other non-Initiates, although they are closer to the front lines than they would suspect.

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Types of Loas

Loas vary greatly in power, type and orientation. The term applies both to manifestations of mythological gods and to ancestral family spirits. The occultists who study these entities are evenly divided on the question of their origin. Some claim loas are manifestations of the “collective unconscious,” psychic creations given power by the faith of those who believe in them. Others claim these spirit beings are older than humankind, and are independent elemental forces from a higher plane of existence... above mere humans, but below the Omnipotent Deity. Regardless of which interpretation is true, the power of the loas is real; properly motivated, they can strike people dead, twist probability and cause — or avert — natural disasters. Voodoo Initiates are in constant contact with the loas, and through them can perform their “magic.”

The Ancient Gods

The most powerful loas are the deities of the Voodoo pantheons. There are many types of Voodoo gods; the gods of Haitian *Voudoun* have different names and properties than the *orishas* of *Santeria*, but they share the same traits. Each of these gods has control over certain elements, emotions and powers; the sorcerer or priest has to choose which deities to invoke in the preparation of his rituals.

The gods of Voodoo do not easily fit into categories of “good” and “evil.” They can be invoked to bring about either, and often act out of whim or malice. They do not tolerate disrespect or failure to fulfill bargains made with them, and will punish those who break their rules. The Voodoo gods are in some ways reminiscent of the Greek and Norse gods; they have human emotions, and like humans they can lose their tempers, become greedy or lecherous, and make mistakes. According to some students of Voodoo, the gods act as mirrors of their worshippers’ souls, bringing good or evil to match what is found in the heart of the summoner. Generally, however, all the Voodoo gods, even in their violent and tempestuous Petro aspects (see sidebar, p. 18) are the friends of humankind. They may act against individuals, and sometimes turn evil wishes back upon the ill-wisher, but they do not prey upon the whole species.

Besides gods, there are also minor loas that have no given names, but are known for their goals and aspects. All Initiates or potential Initiates have “guardian angels,” loas that follow and protect them. When properly identified and contacted, these loas become an important source of spiritual power. Other “nameless” loas include nature spirits, place guardians, and other elemental beings.

The Spirits of the Dead

The majority of loas, however, are not divine creatures but the spirits of dead people. These “ghosts” are honored and propitiated with ceremonies and kept “alive” in the minds of believers and Initiates. The more scientifically-oriented occultists believe that these spirits draw power from the recognition and worship of people. As a result, the spirits of many long-dead celebrities (including the infamous “Papa Doc” Duvalier) have become loas of some power. Some Initiates believe that many of the “Elvis sightings” that the tabloids love so much are actually spiritual manifestations of Elvis Presley the loa, deified by the adoration of millions.

According to the “collective consciousness” theorists, these loas are the creations of the believers, whose psychic desires coalesce into a spirit “creature” based on their hopes, ideals and desires. According to the mystics, these spirits stay on Earth because they are energized by their worshippers, but they are real, not psychic artifacts.

Priests and Magicians

The priests of Voodoo are Initiates or would-be Initiates who use rituals and ceremonies to appeal to and manipulate loas. These sorcerers do not work in hiding, and are not hated by the people around them. Quite the contrary: they are as much a part of some communities as a doctor or a lawyer would be. This is true not only in Third-World countries like Haiti and Jamaica, but in many areas in the “developed world.” Voodoo is alive and well in many communities in North America; it tends to exist in the poorer sections of society, unnoticed and scorned by the rest of population. In the *barrios* of New York, Little Haiti in Florida and the slums of Chicago, Voodoo priests, or *houngans*, ply their trade in the open.

Voodoo Initiates know the secrets of magic, both “white” and “black,” but are expected to use the latter only for defensive purposes. To do otherwise would turn the houngan into a *Bokkor* or palo mayombe sorcerer (see p. 37). The Voudounistas are the intermediaries between the loas and humanity, and use this supernatural link to heal disease, bring about good fortune, discover secrets and guard the community against evil spells and entities. At many times through the history of Voodoo, its priests have also been revolutionaries, warriors and heroes. As the power of the Corruptors grows, more priests have had to abandon their relatively comfortable and peaceful lives to try to stop the monsters.



Voodoo in Everyday Life (Continued)

As in most religions, believers vary in their degree of participation, knowledge and piousness. Some practice daily rituals and prayers to their patron spirits, and have some rudimentary knowledge of Voodoo magical ceremonies. Others use the magical religion only in times of need, seeking the help of a santero or houngan to deal with a specific problem. The vast majority participate in the most important public holidays and festivals, and occasional community rituals, but other than that Voodoo has no impact on their lives. Many pay their respects to both Voodoo and other “legitimate” religions like Catholicism. These people do not see a contradiction between the two religions, and like to hedge their metaphysical bets by praying to both the Christian God and the Voodoo loa. Voodoo is a personal religion on many levels: some families have a few personal loas, usually dead family members who are propitiated in private rituals.

A Voodoo believer is as likely (or sometimes more likely) to go to a houngan or santero as to a lawyer, cop or doctor. Whenever conventional means are insufficient to deal with a problem, Voudounistas consult their local priest. Many ceremonies are more effective if the subject actively participates in them, so people come from those experiences with some idea of how magic works. Still, most believers leave the supernatural in the hands of specialists.

Voodoo is not a highly organized religion. It does not exclude anybody, at least at the lower levels. A houngan will rarely ask clients if they are members of the Voodoo religion — the fact that they have come to him is enough proof of faith. Nonbelievers are often invited to public ceremonies, and allowed to watch some portions of the rituals, but are asked to leave for the remainder. And the practices of the secret societies are kept from the eyes of all nonmembers, believers or not.

Voudounistas take the existence of loas for granted, but usually believe In-Betweeners to be mythological. Exceptions to this rule are the more primitive areas of Haiti and the Caribbean, where people have more contact with the supernatural and where In-Betweeners are openly hunted down. For the most part, believers do not suspect the existence of the Shadow War, the Lodges, or the Corruptors. They may know little more than the average person, not enough to help them if they become embroiled in the secret conspiracies that rule the world.

Magic in

The Shadow War

The system described in Chapter 3 attempts to depict magic as many cultures, from native American animists to European witches to Voodoo priests, think it works. Unlike sword-and-sorcery magic, with fireball-tossing wizards and spectacular effects, the magic of the Shadow War is usually quieter, less obvious and harder to identify as supernatural. Voodoo magic (like other mystic systems such as European witchcraft) has two elements: applying one's will to determine the outcome of events, and controlling spirits to perform specific tasks. The line between the two elements is blurry (see the sidebar on p. 14), but they are what makes a magician able to affect the world without using physical means.

Using willpower to determine the outcome of events is the source of such disciplines as visualization and the power of positive thinking. Its principle is that the human will, properly trained, can create certainty out of randomness. By willing one of the many possible results to happen, the magician *makes* it occur. Note that this power cannot force the impossible to happen, only the *probable*. Also, most magic doesn't make events happen with absolute certainty, but simply increases the *likelihood* of the desired event. Small, individual events are easier to control than those that will affect large groups of people. It is easier to cause one person to suffer ill fortune than to curse an entire village. Intelligent beings are harder to affect than animals or inanimate object, as their willpower is often at odds with the intentions of the sorcerer. Still, mind over probability is a very powerful force, and has the advantage that most rational, scientifically-minded people will ignore the connection between the wish and the event.

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THE VOODOO CULTS

Several different types of Voodoo cults have developed during the centuries. In some areas of the Caribbean, the traditions of one African tribe or people tended to become dominant. Also, the culture of each colonial country (England, France, Portugal and Spain) influenced the slaves, often in unexpected ways. Although the rituals and ceremonies of all the different traditions work in the same manner, there are cultural differences between them, from which gods or saints they worship to the language they speak.

Furthermore, there are rivalries between the different cults that often preclude alliances. For example, a Voudoun *mambo*, or priestess, might not consider a Santeria *babalawo*, or high priest, to be her equal, and might treat him with distrust or even overt hostility. There are elements of racism involved as well: many Hispanic santeros are white, and thus suspect in the eyes of the predominantly black and mulatto Voudoun and Obeah practitioners. Voodoo cults tend to stay close to their communities, and distrust strangers, especially strangers who speak a different language and worship different loas.

Voudoun

Voudoun is the best known and most powerful Voodoo system in the Western Hemisphere. Allowed to develop in relative freedom in Haiti, this magical religion has the largest number of powerful Initiates. On an impoverished island where education and modern health services are almost nonexistent, Haiti's people have had to rely on magic for their survival. Hampered by curses and the insidious presence of the Mayombe, Voudoun practitioners have become resourceful and strong.

Besides Haiti, centers of Voudoun worship include the other French islands in the Caribbean (Guadelupe, St. Martin and Martinique, among others), and French Guyana in South America. In the United States, Louisiana is also an important Voudoun center, and a place of struggle between the Lodges and the Voudounistas. In the past 50 years, Haitian communities in New York, Florida and other East-Coast states have grown steadily, and a fair number of Voudoun Initiates arrived among the other refugees.

Voudoun largely uses the mythology of the Dahomey kingdoms of Africa, with elements of Catholicism, native American animism and popular culture mixed in. Their loas are very active, participating in ceremonies and holidays with amazing frequency. The followers of Voudoun experience the presence of their gods constantly, almost routinely. A common saying in Haiti is "Haiti is 60 percent Catholic, 40 percent Protestant, and 100 percent Voudoun." Most Voudoun believers consider themselves to be Catholics; the two religions are worshipped side by side in ways that confuse and frustrate Christian priests and preachers trying to eradicate heathen practices.

In general, Voudoun Initiates are widely held to be the most knowledgeable and powerful sorcerer-priests, because their beliefs were less diluted by Western influences and religions. Able to practice their craft more or less openly for nearly 200 years, the hougans have a long tradition of ritual and powers, and are often feared by other Voudounistas. The terrible conditions that Haiti has endured since its independence have led many Initiates to suspect that many Voudoun priests may be under the sway of the Corruptors, either unwittingly or willingly. Santeros and Obeah men often will keep their distance from hougans, and suspect them of serving the Mayombe until proven otherwise. The suspicion is not wholly unfounded; many so-called hougans use their Initiate powers to terrorize the populace and to create zombie servants



Shadow War

(see p. 37). Others have been allies of the many tyrants that have ruined Haiti during its 200-year history.

Houngans and Mambos

The “clergy” of Haitian Voudoun are called *houngans* (priests) and *mambos* (priestesses). They are Initiates with varying levels of power (usually relatively low), who concentrate on the more mundane pursuits of magic. They prescribe herbal medicines, simple rituals and amulets to solve the problems of their clients. They also are the organizers and leaders of many festivals and public religious celebrations and holidays. These holidays are celebrated with dances, during which the houngans and mambos call down manifestations of the loas, who take part in the festivities by possessing some of the revelers.

Besides dealing with the supernatural, houngans and mambos act as community leaders, sometimes arbitrating disputes before the contesting parties go to the authorities. In Haiti, many houngans *are* the authorities, holding public offices in addition to their priestly positions. As a result, the houngans are a powerful political force; every government in Haiti since the revolution (see sidebar, p. 21) has had to deal in some way with the priests of Voodoo, by either persecuting or empowering them. Many houngans have been subverted by evil spirits and have served the petty tyrants who have ruined Haiti, but most houngans and mambos are dedicated defenders of their communities. Regrettably, these powerful Initiates often concentrate on the fate of their villages or neighborhoods only, and ignore larger problems. As a result of their lack of unity, they are often overpowered or deceived by their enemies. “Papa Doc” Duvalier (see p. 110) rose to power with the support of many Voudoun priests, who were misled by his offers of power and protection.

Santeria and Macumbe

Santeria is common throughout Latin America, especially in areas with a large black or mulatto population, like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Colombia and Brazil.

The Voodoo forms that appeared in Spanish and Portuguese areas are different from French Voudoun, due to the nations and cultures that influenced them. Santeria and Macumbe are a product of Yoruba beliefs combined with Spanish Catholicism. The Yoruba and Dahomey kingdoms were often at odds in Africa, and their religious backgrounds are different. In the Spanish colonies, racism was less ingrained than in the French and English ones: the majority of the population was of mixed race, and skin color is not as important as it is elsewhere. Due to this, Santeria has a great number of white practitioners, and santeros are less reluctant to share their knowledge with Europeans (although they are heavily biased in favor of Hispanics). On the other hand, Santeria is less pervasive in everyday life; most people are good Catholics and the majority don't participate in Santeria rituals — unless they need help. Santeros keep a lower profile than Voudoun priests. There are fewer Santeria public holidays and rites, and the tools of worship are less prominently displayed in houses and public places.

That privacy is a result of centuries of persecution by the Spanish authorities and by the republican governments that followed them. Unlike Haiti, which was freed and largely dominated by black ex-slaves, the governments of most Latin American and Spanish Caribbean countries were controlled and influenced by the Lodges and the Catholic Church. Neither group was very tolerant of African religions.

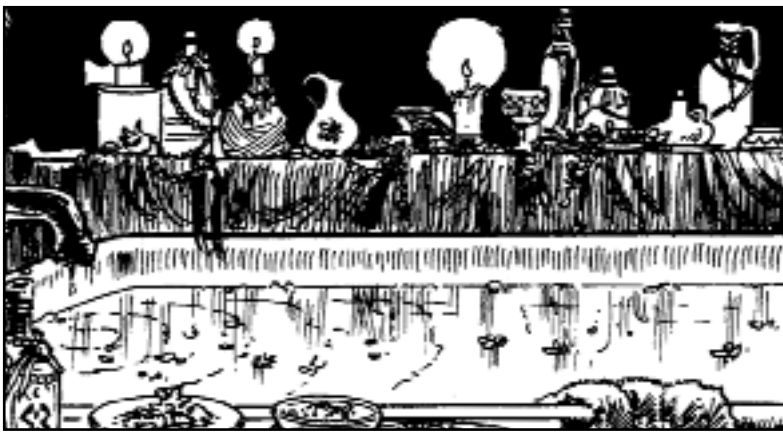
The basic tenets of Santeria are the same as those of Voudoun: spirits (called *orishas*) are all around us, and can communicate with and possess



Magic in The Shadow War (Continued)

Controlling or convincing spirits to perform specific tasks is closer to fantasy magic than is mind over probability. Spiritual entities can affect the world directly, albeit with difficulty. Poltergeist effects, apparitions, spontaneous human combustion and other supernatural phenomena can be caused with the help of spiritual assistants or servants. Magicians can also ask spirits to provide information, advice or even superhuman powers. The down side of dealing with spirits is that they cannot be treated as mindless sources of energy. Spirits have personalities and an alien sense of morality; many love to torment those who call on them. Unless the practitioner takes great care to appease or dominate these entities, they may destroy him.

GMs running a more “realistic” version of the Shadow War may wish to use only the mind-over-probability component of magic. They can use spirits as simple focuses of the caster's Will (see the *Psychic vs. Spiritual Magic* sidebar on p. 14). Magic rituals will be less powerful but more unobtrusive this way.



Psychic vs. Spiritual Magic

There are three schools of thought among Initiates as to the sources of magic. Most advocates of these ideas tend to be younger, less powerful Initiates — the true masters of arcane knowledge seem to be above such concerns. Most of these occult theorists belong to the Western Lodges, and often discover that the more they dwell on the subject, the more prone they are to fail at using magic. Perhaps this is a result of the “caterpillar syndrome,” named after the story of the caterpillar who, when asked how he could possibly coordinate all his legs, thought so much about it that he was never able to walk again!

The “psychic” school believes that all so-called magic powers come from the minds of human beings. Even gods and spirits are nothing more than expressions of the collective subconscious, and their names and invocations are a mere focus for the inner powers of a sorcerer. Spiritual entities have no personalities of their own, but what humans attribute to them. A true master does not need to rely on spirits to do as he wishes.

The “spiritual” camp holds just the opposite, that all magic powers come from spiritual sources. Humans only act as conduits for these energies, their souls acting as lenses that enhance the power of spirits. By manipulating spirits, the shaman can create powerful effects, including mind-over-probability powers (see sidebar, p. 12), which are not caused by the will of the magician but by his use of spirits to do his bidding. This means that the magician must remain on good terms with his spiritual patrons or risk losing all his powers.

The “moderate” school of magic believes that both psychic and spiritual elements are true, to a degree. Yes, a person’s will can affect events without the need for spirits. However, incorporeal entities do exist, and their collaboration is necessary to achieve the more powerful results. The beliefs of this school form the “default” magic setting of *GURPS Voodoo*.

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humans, as well as affect a person’s health and fortune. The Santeria initiation ceremonies dedicate the person to one of the major orishas, the ancient Yoruba gods. This dedication to one god does not preclude interacting or praying to others, but appeals to one’s patron orisha are more likely to be heeded. The orishas of the Santeria cosmology tend to be friendly, even loving, toward believers, but like all Voodoo gods, they are not above punishing or even destroying those who cross them.

Santeros and Babalawos

The santeros of the Spanish Caribbean are very similar to Haitian houngans. They are known as the “children of the orisha.” More powerful priests, known as *babalawos*, are usually the leaders of a Santeria house, the traditional gathering place of Initiate santeros.

Santeros have adopted many Spanish traditions and incorporated them into their hierarchy and customs. The godfather or godmother (*padrino* and *madrina*) relationship, which is very important in Hispanic culture, is established between a high-ranking santero and his students and acolytes. His “godchildren” must respect, obey and revere their teacher, who in turn must protect, guide and advise them. Ideally, absolute trust and respect cement this relationship. There is even a rule against marriage or sexual relations between the santero and his acolytes, which would symbolically constitute incest, and be punished by the orishas.

People in need visit a santero much as they would visit a doctor, a lawyer or a psychiatrist (and often for much the same reasons). The santero will then use divination and consultation with his spirit guides to delve into the causes of the problem, and seeks a solution, which may be mystical or mundane. Amulets, ritual baths with special oils and herbs, and potions are often prescribed, and act as symbolic ritual aids to focus the efforts of the santero’s will or that of his spirit allies (see Chapter 3). If a situation beyond his powers confronts him, the santero may refer the “patient” to a more powerful priest, or may ask for assistance from his house (see sidebar, p. 19).

Santeros charge a nominal fee for their services, usually a little above their expenses in preparing any material aids (although some santeros have been known to charge outrageous and clearly mercenary prices for their intervention). Usually, the Initiate has another job or runs an ordinary business, and does not rely on his powers to make a living. In some ways, santeros and *babalawos* are like comic-book superheroes, leading normal lives except when their special talents are needed.

Secret Societies

A subculture among the sorcerer-priests of Voodoo consists of secret groups that form an elite. Most houngans and santeros are not invited to their councils. These secret societies (known as *bizongues* or *cabildos*) have goals above and beyond providing minor cures and spiritual protection to the believers. The *bizongues* are major players in the Shadow War, on both sides of the conflict. These societies seek power, either as a means of achieving their goals, or for its own sake. Their purposes are shrouded in secrecy and vary from group to group.

Most people think that *bizongues* are relatively small groups, restricted to one place or locality; in reality, they form large networks that encompass hundreds or even thousands of members, both Initiates and non-Initiates. The

largest Voodoo societies are international organizations that wield enormous power, often without the knowledge of any but the highest-placed insiders.

Membership in a secret society carries some prestige (in many places membership is not a secret, only the society's actual activities). People know that attacking one member of a society is tantamount to declaring war on the entire group, so most of the time *bizongue* members are not bothered, even by the authorities. With this prestige comes a somewhat sinister reputation, however, and outsiders never completely trust secret-society members. In Haiti, when members of a Voodoo society walk the streets at night, people must turn their eyes and bow or kneel to them, or risk being attacked physically or magically.

Like many other fraternal societies, the *bizongues* pledge loyalty to the group in return for the group's protection. Members in need are helped in any way possible by the rest of the group, with the understanding that when the positions are reversed the member will also do everything in his power to assist the society or its other members. Some *bizongues* have political goals — supporting or overthrowing the government of a nation, or fighting for the rights of an oppressed minority, for example. Others are created for purposes that reach farther, such as fighting the Dark Gods and their servants. And some are the servants of the Corruptors, sometimes unknowingly. The secrecy that surrounds all *bizongues* makes it impossible to discover their purposes unless someone infiltrates their ranks — and even then, the spy would learn only what the members *think* the purpose of the society is.

Origins of the Bizongues

During the colonial period, the African slaves in the Americas did not submit meekly to servitude. Covert resistance, from North America to Brazil, ranged from passive sabotage to armed insurrections. Fearful of the latter, the slaver governments of the New World devised several laws designed to curtail any form of organization among their human property. But organization did occur, on two different fronts: African secret societies and the Maroon communities.

Psychic vs. Spiritual Magic (Continued)

GMs can choose either of the other cosmologies for their campaigns. A “psychic magic” campaign should eliminate the more fantastic elements of the Shadow War, such as In-Betweeners, the more cinematic Initiate powers (such as the Spirit Warrior advantage) and some magic rituals. The war will become less cosmic in scope: the Corruptors are only a manifestation of humankind's dark side, and they become less unknowable and daunting. The “spiritual magic” campaign is not too different from a “moderate” one, except that more emphasis should be placed on the erratic and willful nature of spirits. The chance of ritual failure or backfire would be a bit greater, as the spirit's good will, and not the character's will, is the determining factor.

Of course, neither the characters nor the players need be aware of the “truth,” and may approach the situation in as mystic or mundane a manner as will fit their characters.



Divination and Predestination in the Shadow War

One of the most common powers attributed to mystics and sorcerers is the ability to foretell the future. Voodoo practitioners are no exception. They use several divination rituals (see p. 77). In the Shadow War setting, however, the future — at least for Initiates — is not fixed or immutable. Most people are the victims of random chance; only a few select beings are masters of their own destinies, able to affect probability.

What this means in the game is that divination attempts that deal with general matters and ordinary people work with reasonable accuracy. The actions of Initiates (and entities such as In-Betweeners and spirits) cannot be so easily predicted, however. Initiates can change the future, and no prediction or divination attempt can account for the possible actions of Initiates and supernatural beings. When Initiates from two opposing sides prophesy victory for their side, their clashing wills are as much a factor as the physical resolution of the conflict. At best, prophecies of doom act as warnings, not actual predictions.

In game terms, GMs can throw around prophecies without worrying too much about whether or not they will be fulfilled. Any change in the forecasted events can be explained as Initiate intervention (hopefully the PCs'). On the other hand, just because Initiates can alter the future doesn't mean they will always be able to do so. The more momentous or far-reaching the event is, the more difficult it is to affect. See Chapter 3 for the actual game effects of divination rituals.



Secret societies were common in the West African kingdoms. Some were simple fraternal societies that took care of members in return for their support. Others had more mysterious — or sinister — purposes, ranging from secret religions to groups of assassins and sorcerers. Many members of these societies found themselves in slavery, managed to find each other, and renewed their bonds of allegiance. They became a shadowy community within the slave population, communicating through informal networks between plantations.

Many slaves, especially in Brazil and the Caribbean, managed to escape and live in freedom in the wilderness (see *Maroons*, p. 105). Often led by sorcerer-priests, these communities established a complex system of passwords and secret handshakes to identify members and root out government spies. Some of these methods originated in Africa and were part of the aforementioned secret societies. The Initiates living in the Maroon communities became war leaders and security enforcers, using their power to ferret out informants, and to damage their enemies indirectly. More than one slaveholder died from “accidents” that were the result of Initiate activity, despite the protection of the Lodges (see p. 24). Even after the Maroon communities rejoined the mainstream, their emphasis on secrecy made them the core of the Voodoo societies.

Within the colonies, many slaves became spontaneous Initiates, their powers often triggered by the brutal treatment of their owners. Some, like the infamous Boukman, became spiritual revolutionaries, and were crushed by the Lodge-backed Europeans. Others organized quieter, more subtle groups, shrouded in secrecy, collaborating with Maroon communities outside the cities and plantations and forming a secret mystic network within the slave compounds. Little by little, their growing power began to be felt.

In Haiti and other lands of the Caribbean, these secret societies have wielded enormous influence, starting revolutions, overthrowing and installing governments, and using their mystical and physical resources to pursue their goals. Although not quite as pervasive as the Lodges, the Voodoo societies have been behind many historical events, from plagues to wars. Today, the secret societies continue to operate. Some are very ancient, like the Dahomets and the Leopard Society (see pp. 19 and 20), and can trace their origins to ancient African kingdoms. Others have sprung up during the last four decades, the period in which the pace of the Shadow War reached a furious crescendo.

Organization

There are two levels of organization in most Voodoo societies: local and global. Most bizongues have a number of local chapters. This is the outermost layer of the Voodoo societies: groups that operate within one community, seemingly isolated from the rest of the world. These local groups in turn owe allegiance to a larger society that spans local and even national boundaries.

The bizongues have many layers of organization, and the lower echelons may not have any idea of the scope of the organization. As a society member rises in rank, he learns more about the ties between local and global groups, and is expected to fulfill the commands of both. The links between local and global societies are maintained through periodic meetings, which the leaders of the local bizongues must attend. The system is more informal and less strictly enforced than it sounds, however, and many local societies do little more than pay lip service to their allegiance to the larger whole. Sometimes, this informality ends when the global organization cracks down on unruly locals, killing or exiling their leaders.

A local bizongue is made up of one or more hounfors (usually five to a dozen); their hougans form in effect a larger hounfor, with a King and Queen (or sometimes a President or Emperor), and several officials, including a



Minister of War, a Prime Minister, and other positions, depending on the temperament of the society. The more traditional ones use African titles, while others mimic the colonial and post-colonial governments of the Caribbean. Membership includes both Initiates and non-Initiates, although the latter are usually relegated to the lower echelons of the organization.

Large bizongues identify each other through complex passwords, handshakes, and “passports.” These passports used to be (and still are in some areas) colored pieces of cardboard inscribed with mystical symbols. Technologically-adept Voudounistas now use more complex identification, including fake credit cards with an electronic signature identifying the carrier. Many of the handshakes and passwords are actually magical rituals (see p. 66) that identify impostors — even if they perform the ritual correctly. Many Voodoo societies have “treaties” with each other. Members are taught some basic passwords and given passports that allow them to meet with other societies, and even to request aid from them, depending on the nature of the treaty. There is, however, no overall ruling body that controls all the bizongues — or, if there is, it is very well hidden.

The process of selecting leaders varies from group to group. Most include rituals and the intervention of spirits. Contests of power and wit, inheritance from parent to child, and ballot elections are all used by one society or another.

Conclaves

Voodoo societies have periodic and special meetings. Regular meetings are held locally, and are only attended by the local bizongue members and the occasional guest. The heads of all local societies gather together at least once every two or three years. Failure to send at least a representative or substitute for the leader is considered to be a grave insult and punished accordingly. These conclaves consist of a number of ritual activities in which the leaders of the bizongue contact their spiritual guides, as well as more informal meetings to exchange information and set policies. The more powerful Voodoo societies do not meet physically; instead, at an appointed time, they all go into a trance and perform a ritual to send their consciousness to the dream world (see sidebar, p. 20), where they conduct their business unfettered by distance.

Emergency conclaves occur when a situation that threatens the whole society or a large sector thereof has arisen. A major natural disaster, a war, the discovery of a dangerous Corruptor, or a large-scale Lodge attack all qualify as reasons to call an emergency conclave.

Rules of the Societies

The actual by-laws of the Voodoo societies vary from one to the next, but some core rules are always followed. Mutual assistance and loyalty are the most

Intuitive Knowledge

One of the underlying ideas of *GURPS Voodoo* is the triumph of intuition over reason. A mystic must rely on his instincts and gut feelings to guide his actions, rather than on logical deduction and reasoning. Initiates are moved by invisible, incomprehensible forces which can be equated with Fate. For example: a Voodoo priest feels compelled to take a walk in Central Park one morning, although he has no particular reason or desire to do so. As he walks, he spots a woman who desperately needs help; the Voodoo Initiate can feel the presence of a malevolent spirit hovering over her. So, without hesitation, *knowing* that this woman's plight is the reason for his walk in the park, the priest approaches her, introduces himself, and offers his help.

While fate and gut feelings can be powerful guiding tools, GMs have to be careful about using them in roleplaying, or players will feel their characters have no freedom of choice. Some players resent being *told* what their characters feel (although realistic roleplaying should include some involuntary or unexpected emotions and reactions). If players feel their characters are puppets controlled by GM-fed “feelings,” they may start wondering whether their presence in the game is even necessary. The GM might as well play alone — which he may end up doing if the situation persists.

Judicious use of intuitive elements, however, can enhance the enjoyment of a game. The characters (and their players) will have a sense of purpose, that things are going to happen, heightening anticipation. Also, the GM can “reverse-engineer” fate based on the PCs' actions. Instead of telling a player that his Voodoo priest feels an urge to take a walk in the park, the GM could ask the player to describe his character's plans for the day, and arrange the fateful encounter sometime during the day's activities. Fate should play a role in the introductory stages of an adventure, but most of the important decisions and actions should be left in the hands of the PCs.

The Rada and Petro Rites

Within Voudoun, there are two distinct traditions, or ritual forms. Many houngans practice one or the other, and a few use both. One is more traditional and closely tied to the original African roots of Voudoun; the other, developed in colonial times, has a mixture of African and native American elements. The Rada rite is the traditional one from Dahomey; it is more benevolent, dedicated mostly to helpful, nonviolent magic used in everyday life. The Petro rite is more violent, concentrating on sorcery and harmful effects.

All the major loas have both a Rada aspect and a Petro aspect. The Rada aspect of the gods is peaceful. Rada rituals are commonly used to cure ills and to bring good luck. Appeals to the Petro aspect of the loas are used to cast curses and destroy enemies. The Petro loas are more dangerous to invoke and more difficult to control.

It is believed that a few of the Petro gods are not true loas, but evil Mayombe spirits (see p. 34). Despite the danger of dealing with those treacherous entities, many Voudoun priests do so, because the spells and rituals conducted in their names can be devastatingly effective.

important elements of the bizongues. Betrayal is severely punished, either with suspension, outright expulsion, or death for the most severe cases. Most societies hold that the contracts and agreements between the bizongue and its members supersede all other obligations. This is one of the reasons why many Initiates refuse to become full members of a Voodoo society: they may be asked to compromise their principles and other duties in order to serve the organization.

First and foremost is the oath of secrecy, which is often enforced by spirit guardians. Members cannot divulge any specific or important information of the Society to strangers, from the secret passwords and handshakes to the society's doings and goals. Nonmembers may be allowed to participate in some ceremonies, or given a few secret passwords or passports, but only when the whole society or its leaders allow it. Members are expected to lie and even perjure themselves in court in order to protect the society.

Mutual assistance is the second element. A member cannot refuse to help another — unless such assistance would be contrary to the interests of the society. This is ambiguous at best, and members often have to make judgment calls. Bizongue members help each other with money problems, major undertakings and direct threats. In particular, an injury to a group member is treated as an injury to the whole group, and dealt with accordingly.

Important Voodoo Societies

Described below are three of the largest Voodoo societies. Unlike the Lodges, few bizongues have an international scope and influence. On the other hand, that means that Voodoo society members enjoy more freedom than their European counterparts. Most Voodoo-practicing PCs will not belong to a secret society, while most Brethren PCs will.

The Lucumi

The Lucumi is the largest bizongue in the Americas, almost as large as one of the European Lodges, their equal in mystical power and perhaps in political influence as well. The Lucumi was founded by Initiates from all over the Americas, most of whom had arrived as slaves from Africa. These Initiates held long debates, conducted in the dream world (see p. 20) where distance and physical confinement were meaningless. The Voodoo priests saw two different possible futures: one in which children of all races worked in harmony, mixing their blood until no one race dominated — and another where white slaughtered black and vice versa, where genocidal wars shattered civilization and humankind was lost in a sea of hatred and self-destruction. The Lucumi bizongue was founded to prevent the coming of the second vision.

The Lucumi has been behind many black and mulatto rebellions. It supported the Haitian revolution at first, but withdrew, appalled, when its members saw the dark powers both sides were invoking. It assisted the Underground Railroad during the Civil War, and the Freedom Riders and Civil Rights movement during the 1960s. Its worst enemies have been the European Lodges, especially the Royalists (see p. 29). The Lucumi has worked hard to undermine Lodge control over world affairs and to curb its racist policies. In doing so, it lost sight of the true enemy, the Mayombe spirits.

By the 1980s, the Lucumi started to consider the possibility that the Lodges were not the true enemy, but merely the unwitting agents of a more powerful foe. While this bizongue has always been aware of the Mayombe's power, it now fears that the evil



spirits have been manipulating both the Lodges and the Voodoo societies into creating today's unstable situation. So far, however, most Lucumi hounfors content themselves with fighting the Lodges and the occasional outbreak of Mayombe malevolence.

Lucumi leaders are elected by the highest-ranking Initiates, at both the local and global levels. The oldest and most powerful leaders join the Dream Gathering, abandoning their bodies and taking permanent residence in the dream world, where they act as the ruling body of the organization. The ritual conclaves of the group always begin with a ritual revealing the split vision of the future that sparked the organization's foundation.

In the physical world, the Lucumi controls several black-owned corporations and publications, and has links to many government agencies and office-holders throughout the continents. All this translates to a great deal of financial and political power, which the Lucumi uses to fulfill its vision. A great deal of that power is squandered in struggles with the Lodges, however.

The Dahomets

During the 1810s, shortly after the Haitian revolution, the self-styled King Henry Christophe imported a number of African warriors from the Kingdom of Dahomey to act as his personal bodyguard. These Royal Dahomets used their war skills and their supernatural powers to subdue Christophe's enemies. The Royal Dahomets disappeared from history books in the year 1820, when Christophe committed suicide and his kingdom ceased to exist. In reality, however, the Dahomets remained a powerful presence in Haitian politics. These African mystical warriors and their descendants formed a close-knit secret society. Unlike most Haitian bizongues, the Dahomets act in total secrecy, never revealing the existence of their group to the world outside. Other Voodoo societies and the Lodges know of the existence of the Dahomets, but are in the dark as to their purpose and leadership. The Dahomets are masters of assassination and the application of violence and sorcery to produce results. It is believed that the Dahomets serve a powerful — but unknown — loa they brought from Africa with them. Some Voudounistas believe the bizongue's master is no loa, but a Mayombe spirit, or even a Devourer monster.



Hounfors

The hounfor (also known as *oum'phor* or *Humfo*) is the name given to the traditional Voodoo temple. Of late, the name has been given to any group of Voodoo Initiates or group of believers led by a Voodoo Initiate. In other words, a Voodoo temple is anywhere that a Voodoo magician is.

The traditional hounfor is an enclosed, often roofed courtyard where a number of altars to different gods are situated, and where offerings and mystical symbols are kept. At the center stands the *poteaumitan*, a post that represents the loa Damballah (see p. 87); sometimes more than one post is built into the hounfor, and in some places there is no physical post, but its position is drawn or otherwise marked on the floor.

In Haiti, hounfors are found in rural areas, sometimes in well-fortified compounds. In urban America, Voodoo Initiates have used abandoned buildings, small apartments, warehouses, basements and even sewer tunnels as their temples.

The newer meaning of hounfor as a group of people is more important in the Shadow War. Traditionally, a hounfor had two Voodoo priests, a houngan and a mambo (or sometimes only one of the two), and a number of non-Initiate acolytes and servants who acted as ritual assistants, domestic help and bodyguards. As the danger to Voodoo Initiates increases, however, they have started gathering in groups to protect themselves. Many of the younger Voudounistas (see p. 20) now gather in mystical gangs, which they also call hounfors. Hounfor members are supposed to treat each other as family members, with the most powerful (or only) Initiate taking the role of parent.

The Santeria House

The Santeria *casa*, or house, is where a santero lives or conducts his business. Like the Voudoun hounfor (see above), this term has now come to include any group of santero Initiates who gather together to practice their art or to assist each other. Santeria houses commonly center around a leader or elder, who is considered to be the master of the house. Traditionally, only one santero existed in a house; the rest of the household consisted of uninitiated assistants or bodyguards. The Shadow War's increasing ferocity has made it unsafe for Initiates to work alone, especially when they announce their existence openly as most santeros do. More and more houses now have two or more santeros working side by side.

The Dream World

In *GURPS Voodoo*, dreams are windows to the dream world, a chaotic place that is itself a window to the spirit world. Dreams can be a powerful source of visions and even encounters with supernatural entities. Certain magic rituals (see Chapter 3) allow characters to reach the dream world, or to affect the dreams of others.

In the dream world, the character's appearance will be determined by his own self-image; all his mental advantages and disadvantages should come into play. For example, an Overconfident character with several levels of Strong Will might look like a muscle-bound, super-heroic version of his normal self while traveling in the dream world. Movement there is always subjective, and determined by where the traveler is going and how much he wants to go there.

The dream world environment is always changing to fit the consciousness of the traveler. When somebody is alone, the dream world will reflect his memories, desires and current preoccupations — much like a normal dream. Figures and elements from his childhood might appear randomly, or interact with elements from his present. When more than one person is in the same “area,” elements from all their minds will surround them, always dominated by the highest Will.

This alternate plane of existence is an element of the Shadow War setting that can be used as often or as little as the GM wishes. Whole adventures can be run in the dream world and its ever-changing atmosphere. Visiting the dream world can provide an opportunity to delve into the PCs' subconscious and their pasts, both of which offer enormous roleplaying potential. Although usually these forays involve little danger, some of the more involved dream trips are risky and can result in injury or even death.

The Dahomets form a relatively small bizongue. It is impossible to estimate their exact number, but it cannot exceed a few hundred worldwide. All are experienced spirit warriors with superhuman powers, and at least some of their numbers are also advanced ritual magicians. They operate throughout the Caribbean, and have been occasionally linked to the drug trade, which reinforces the belief that this bizongue serves the Corruptors.

The Leopard Society

The Leopard Society traces its origins to West Africa, to a fierce people called the Efik, who dominated the slave trade. The Efik were controlled by the *Egbo*, secret societies that used the leopard as their symbol. Fierce warriors and magicians, the Egbo were greatly feared and respected. It is believed that one or more Egbo were sold into slavery and brought to America.

The current incarnation of the Leopard Society became active in the 19th century, when the danger of the Corruptors and the Lodges was growing anew. Unlike the original Egbo, the new Leopard Society is dedicated to fighting In-Betweeners, the Mayombe and the Lodges. Its members are expert poisoners and zombie-makers (see p. 80), but use those powers only against the servants of the Corruptors. They are very active in the Caribbean, but less so in the U.S., because the Lodges single the Leopards out and hunt them mercilessly within their borders. The Leopards' patron loas are Oggun and Legba (see pp. 91 and 87).

Over the last 40 years, many Leopard bizongues fell under the sway of “Papa Doc” Duvalier and threw their support behind that tyrant. These bizongues now worship “Papa Doc” as their patron loa. Others have worked for the Cuban government for decades. These corrupted bizongues used their powers against dissidents and helped spread terror in the name of Fidel, “Papa Doc” and “Baby Doc,” to the point that the latter renamed his own bodyguard for the Leopards. This internal strife has splintered the Leopard Society, so most local bizongues are independent in all but name.

The New Generation

As the bizongues and independent hounfours look for recruits from outside the traditional Voodoo communities, a new type of Initiate has become commonplace. These young mystics are no longer content with maintaining the status quo — a status quo that is in grave danger of being eradicated anyway. They see the chaos and horror surrounding them, and realize that dealing with it requires action, not words and simple rituals. Many of this generation of Initiates were exposed to the spirit world by circumstances, not ritual. Most of these incidents involved torture, violence and near-death experiences, many of which were caused by the depredations of the Corruptors. These Initiates have met the enemy face to face, and will not stop until they have dealt with it.

The traditional hounsans and santeros look upon these Initiates with a mixture of concern, annoyance, fear... and hope. Some of them have left their beloved hounfours and their position in communities that accept and appreciate them, and gone into alien lands to help their successors with their war. Others have all but disowned the rebels. They ignore the Shadow War, trying to deny the fact that a turned back is no defense against an assassin's knife.



Many new Voudounistas operate on their own, or in small independent groups. A few large organizations have been formed in recent times, and are gathering support and momentum every day.

The Protectors

These Initiates operate mostly in the U.S. and Canada. They are the sons and daughters of Haitian or Cuban emigrants who have knowledge of Voodoo theology and a Western education and world view, and they have combined the two in ways that often anger traditional Voudounistas. The Protectors concentrate on the fight against the Corruptors. Their goal is to clean up the slums of North America and to mend the ills of the Caribbean islands. Their weapons are Voodoo rituals, Initiate powers and political activism. Many of their members have become local and even national representatives, trying to achieve change through the system. Some of the more radical Protectors have lost faith in the system, however; they use all the means at their disposal to attack the sources of evil directly. Some of them worked with the Black Panthers and other extremist groups. Others continue their work in more covert ways.

The Protectors have streamlined Voodoo trappings and rituals. They recruit Initiates from all walks of life, and are less concerned with racial heritage than with political correctness (although some of the most radical factions are rabidly ethnocentric). Their hounfors contain a minimal amount of ritual symbols and decorations, but they seem to attract loas anyway. The Protectors hold no festivals or holidays, which are for the benefit of believers, not hounsans. Unlike traditional hounsans, the Protectors do not reveal themselves openly; they keep their mystic knowledge secret, much like the European Lodges. In this and other ways, the Protectors are clearly the most Westernized of all Voodoo societies, and are usually accused of being tools of the Lodges. In fact, they have formed tentative alliances with the Schismatics (see p. 32), and Initiates from both groups often work together. They have also joined forces with individual members of the Servants of Hecate (see sidebar, p. 28) and other non-Voodoo traditions, including several native American shamans. Among Voodoo societies, the Protectors and the Loa Lords are common allies, and they often work with the more traditional Lucumi. Individual hounsans shun the Protectors' company, however.

The Protectors are organized in chapters. Each chapter is in charge of a city or state; currently there are 17 chapters in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico, including New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Each chapter may have as few as one or as many as a dozen hounfors. Each hounfor operates alone, investigating unusual occurrences and attempting to deal with them. There are two levels of membership: Associates and Agents. Associates are usually non-Initiated people who act as informants, assistants and occasionally muscle. Agents are full-fledged members (almost exclusively Initiates) who form the actual hounfors. Many Associates work for utility companies, police and fire departments, and other services that put them in places where they can provide surveillance and information. Unless the hounfor needs immediate assistance, hounfor leaders report their activities to chapter heads once every few months.

The Electric Crossroads

Traditionally, Voodoo and witchcraft ceremonies were conducted in crossroads (some say for mystical reasons, while others claim that the crossroads provided many avenues of escape in case of discovery). As the first pathways of the electronic superhighway are being laid out, the more tech-oriented Voodoo Initiates have staked out a portion of cyberspace as their own. These "cyber-hounsans" often hold conclaves via electronic conferencing, never seeing each other's



Haiti and The Shadow War

Haiti is an unlikely but very powerful focal point of the Shadow War, for mystical reasons. The island is the poorest and least educated land of the Western Hemisphere, a stark legacy of slavery and colonialism. Yet as the most powerful center of Voodoo, the island's influence is totally disproportionate to its size and population. Some of the most powerful Initiates in the world dwell on isolated hills, living in primitive conditions as they work rituals that can affect whole continents. As a symbol for African-Americans, Haiti is both an example and a terrible warning.

Many Voodoo Initiates have heard a legend that explains Haiti's sorrows, a legend that no historian or anthropologist has ever heard, because it is jealously guarded. According to the tale, Haiti fell under the sway of a powerful Corruptor, a being of such might that its name remains unknown, perhaps forever unknowable.

In 1791, a hounsan called Boukman led a massive slave uprising against the northern settlements. Thousands of white slave owners were killed, and the area's most important city, Cape Francois, was besieged by a huge army of slaves and Maroons. The Lodge Initiates in the city were mostly members of the French Royalist Lodge, who had come to Haiti to escape the debacle of the French Revolution. They did their best to stop the attackers, but their spirit servants were destroyed or put to flight by the veritable army of loas that Boukman and his hounsans had raised. As the loas steadily wore down the mystic wards placed around the city, the desperate Europeans used forbidden rituals that included the sacrifice of 13 men, women and children, all slaves. The ritual made contact with a Mayombe spirit of incredible power. Many of the lower-level Initiates in the ritual circle died on the spot, or were driven mad by the sight of the entity. The rest appealed to the being for help. The entity agreed, on the condition that the Initiates grant it the right to dwell within the island. Faced with the threat of thousands of rebel slaves crying for their blood, the surviving Initiates agreed.

Continued on next page...



Haiti and The Shadow War (Continued)

Shortly afterward, the Lodges' wards failed and Boukman's warriors attacked, protected by charms that made bullets miss their targets (see p. 79), charms that had helped them overwhelm the other white townships. But, incredibly, the charms stopped working. Warriors who had been promised protection tumbled to the ground, shot dead. The amazed houngans tried to summon their loas — and failed; something had scared them away. The attack broke up, and the demoralized rebels were butchered by the colonists, who killed five blacks for every white who had died, making little distinction between rebels and innocent people of the wrong color.

As a huge Napoleonic army prepared to crush the Haitian Revolution 11 years later, a group of desperate houngans also turned away from their traditional loas and appealed to a greater power. Although they did not know it, the entity that responded to their summons was the same one that had assisted the Frenchmen at Cape Francois. A similar deal was made, and the Corruptor had leave to stay in Haiti from both the white and black inhabitants. Napoleon's armies fell prey to a number of plagues that bypassed the Lodges' wards of protection, and the decimated Europeans fell under the onslaught of the rebels. Haiti was freed, but at a terrible price. Its land was tainted, perhaps forever, by the presence of a Corruptor. As a result of the two pacts, its influence is now deeply entrenched in the island, from which waves of evil energy wash upon the shores of the Americas, Europe and Africa.

This tale is repeated by the Lucumi Society (see p. 18), and is also handed down by the Protectors and other bizongues. Initiates who see the series of disasters that have plagued Haiti believe it completely.

faces. Their information network is extensive, as many EC members are hackers or have contacts among hackers. Hacker Initiates use nasty rituals designed to cause system crashes. They have trained their spirit servants to understand and manipulate the world of binary code and electronic pathways, allowing them to perform feats normal hackers wouldn't dream of. It is said that some EC Initiates with the Spirit Form advantage can now perceive the computer network as a virtual-reality world not unlike the one described by cyberpunk fiction.

The EC's main goal is the spread of freedom — some might call it anarchy. They always seek to discover other people's secrets, bring down the mighty and help the downtrodden — and have fun while doing it. Of the Voodoo societies, the EC has the most racially diverse membership. Many members are Anglos, Asians or from other ethnic groups — the cyber-houngans don't discriminate, to the disgust of many other Voudounistas. Some of their members are physically disabled, outcasts or other socially dysfunctional people, many of whom have no life beyond what they see on their screens. The EC has many Initiates who come from other magical traditions, including Wiccans, Taoists and native Americans.

This society is spread throughout the world, but most of its members are in the U.S. and Europe. These Voodoo practitioners beat the Lodges in the information race, mostly because most successful hackers have little to do with the rarefied environment most Lodge members grow up in. Many hacker groups have ties to the EC, often through underground BBSs.

The Loa Lords

This movement was started in the late '70s by several Initiates from both the Protectors and the Lucumi who went into the mean streets of inner-city America looking for recruits. The result of their efforts was a covert network of street-smart Initiates, many with gang connections, who operate out of over 50 cities in the U.S. The membership of this bizongue comes from many different backgrounds. Most are blacks and Hispanics who have seen first-hand the work of the Corruptors in today's society.

Unlike the Protectors, who have ideological motives, the Loa Lords are driven by simpler urges: justice and revenge. The vast majority of them come from the lowest economic strata, and have grown up in violent, lawless areas. As a result of this common background, the Loa Lords are divided into two camps. One camp tends to rely on brute force, either physical or arcane, to do the job. The other believes violence often creates as many problems as it solves, and are among the most diplomatic and subtle Voudounistas of any tradition.

Many popular rap singers, Christian and Muslim preachers, and other community leaders and performers are secret Initiates who channel much of their money and influence to aid the more active members. Both the Lodges and the Corruptors target prominent Initiates with smear campaigns, criminal allegations and other means. Many prominent African-American figures with ties to the Loa Lords have been brought down by these covert attacks.

The Loas are waging a covert "war against drugs" of their own, targeting the largest suppliers and the spirits and In-Betweeners that lead the drug rings. Their executions and attacks are easily disguised as the activities of rival gangs or crime cartels, and they have been more effective than anything the other Voodoo societies have attempted. The less-violent Loa Lords use subtler means. A favorite tactic is to use rituals from the Path of Dreams (see p. 74) to

plague a drug pusher with nightmares, which often cause the target to stop his dealing and even to turn himself over to police.

The Loa Lords often work with Protector hounfors, although their down-to-earth practicality often clashes with the idealism of the latter group. The Loa Lord hounfors are usually organized like gangs, often with severe initiation rituals. Some Loa Lord gangs have accepted In-Betweeners into their groups once they have proven themselves, often keeping their nature a secret from other hounfors. Non-Initiates have sometimes risen to leadership positions on the strength of their skill and courage. Being in the front lines of the Shadow War has made the Loa Lords more likely to bend and break rules in order to get the job done.

THE LODGES

They call themselves the Lodges. They were the force behind the Inquisition, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution and most major conflicts and events since before the fall of the Roman Empire. They sabotaged the Ghost Dance, the Boxer Rebellion, and every mystical attempt of magical cultures to fight off European invaders. They have been the secret protectors of Western civilization for 1,000 years, and the secret masters of the world for longer than that. Humanity at large knows nothing about them, but they control the bulk of the financial, military and political power in the world — or at least think they do.

Most students of the occult believe that the West turned its back on mysticism and spiritualism in the period between the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, and that by the 20th century rationalism and materialism had all but killed religion and magic. For the most part, they would be right; the vast majority of people have embraced the material world and all but forgotten the spiritual one. However, the truth behind this half-truth is that a select group of Initiates have kept the occult traditions alive. In fact, their power is one of the reasons behind the victory of seemingly “secular” colonialism over peoples who had powerful Initiates and spirits protecting them. These Western Initiates not only have enormous magical power at their disposal, but they have conspired to keep this power in the hands of a tiny elite, deluding the rest of humanity into disbelieving their potential. To preserve their secrets, they have used their influence to discredit or destroy anyone who tried to study or publicize the arcane arts. The Lodges are the secret rulers of the world — or want to believe they are. In any event, they have been behind most political events in the last thousand years.



Reincarnation

Reincarnation, a process of death and rebirth in which a human soul is born time and time again and lives dozens or hundreds of lives, is an important theme of the Shadow War. A person's soul goes through a series of life cycles, in which the accumulated experiences of previous lives partially determine his personality and attitude in the current one.

The process involves groups of people, not just individuals. Former friends, lovers, and enemies are also reborn and carry instinctive feelings for the reincarnated person. Cases of love at first sight or instant dislike can result from shared experiences in past lives. Some individuals become wiser and stronger with each cycle, eventually attaining a state that carries them away from this reality. Others commit the same misdeeds over and over again, or grow more jaded and corrupt in each lifetime. In this worldview, people like Gandhi, Hitler or Ted Bundy are the product of successive lives of either improvement or decay.

The consequences of this are many. For example, the death penalty does little to eradicate future crime — the executed criminal will be born again and, if he never reformed, is likely to commit the same crimes 16 or 20 years later. Psychoanalysis may never cure mental disorders, because their roots go back several lifetimes: most psychiatrists would never consider the idea that events predating the patient's birth had an effect on his psyche. And finally, any betrayal or crimes committed in one life can catch up with the perpetrator on his next turn around the Wheel of Life, when his victims may not be helpless.

For game purposes, reincarnation and the transmigration of souls is assumed to be “real.” Players can create characters with this concept in mind; the players can, if they wish, develop several character histories over the centuries leading to their current incarnations. Gender, race and social status often change from life to life; the yuppie executive of today might have been a black woman in 1920s Missouri in a previous existence, and a Chinese fisherman in the life before — or he might come from a long line of white businessmen.

The Karmic Ties advantage (see p. 55) can produce a whole group of Allies and Enemies that could be *anybody* — a PC's next-door neighbors, the woman he shares an elevator with, or even his own son or daughter! Flashes of postcognition, gut feelings and strange visions can all add to the bizarre atmosphere of the Shadow War.

Gnosticism

A mystic movement that appeared sometime in the 2nd century A.D., its name comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which stands for secret or esoteric knowledge. The legendary founder of Gnosticism was the infamous sorcerer Simon Magus (see p. 25). This movement was influenced by several religions beside Christianity, including Judaism, Persian Zoroastrianism, and Greek philosophy. Denounced by Christian leaders as blasphemous and banned as heresy, Gnosticism disappeared as a public movement by the 4th century A.D.

Basic tenets of Gnosticism include the superiority of the spirit world to the material and the idea that the path to salvation lies in mystic self-discovery and occult knowledge, not in faith and following Christian dogma. Some Gnostics went even farther: they claimed that the material world was an evil place, created by lesser gods called the demiurges, and not by the one true God. Humans were prisoners, their immortal souls trapped and all but suffocated in their fleshly bodies. To break free from that prison, the Gnostics tried to gain enlightenment and eventually transcend the limits of flesh. In fact, early worshippers were promised eternal life, although ancient documents *claim* that all Gnostics died after a normal life span.

There were many different (and often opposing) Gnostic movements. Some claimed that the way to distance themselves from the material world was to retreat from it, living in total asceticism. Others, particularly the Carpocratians and the Cainites, claimed the reverse: in order to triumph over the material world, believers had to sample all vices and temptations. The second view proved to be very popular among some groups, but attracted pressure from the authorities. A whole Gnostic pantheon of mystical entities developed, including gods, devils and the Aeons or demiurges, the jailers of the human spirit (lately identified with the Corruptors — see p. 34).

In the Shadow War world, Gnostic teachings became the core around which the most powerful Lodges (see p. 28) were founded. Some Lodges fervently believe that Earth is a hellish place of torment, while others only pay lip service to the idea, or avoid the issue completely. Some Lodges (the Servants of Hecate among them) are not Gnostic, and have a more benign view of the world. All agree that the human spirit can, if properly trained in the secret ways, perform incredible feats.

Over the centuries, the Lodges have dominated the governments and religions of Europe, and continued doing so in the European colonies. However, the Lodges are not a monolithic group, and the different Orders have often fought among themselves as fiercely as when confronting outside threats. Their internal struggles for control were the hidden cause of the Moslem *jihads*, the Crusades, the Hundred Years' War, the Reformation, the witch hunts, the French and American Revolutions, and both world wars. The French and British Royal Lodges were particularly nationalistic, and bitter rivals. Each major Lodge controls some area of international power, and guards its rights jealously. The mantle of leadership has passed from one group to another, and enmity and intrigue mark all the relations between these groups.

Despite their rivalries, most traditional Lodges have a few things in common. For starters, most members, or Brethren, are fervent believers in the superiority of Western civilization (particularly, white *male* Western civilization) to all other cultures and nations. Many members are racists, anti-Semites and misogynists; in the 1930s and '40s, the members of the German lodges took those beliefs to their "logical" conclusion, leading to the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust (although other Lodges claim the Initiates involved were the dupes of an evil demiurge). Also, most Lodges are essentially elitist organizations: they believe that only a tiny percentage of the population has a chance to transcend the material bonds that keep the human soul imprisoned in this imperfect, twisted world (see *Gnosticism*, p. 24), and they care little about keeping the vast majority of the population ignorant of their potential.



The Lodges have generally supported a policy of European supremacy. They sent their Initiates with all the great colonial undertakings, from Columbus' voyages and the subsequent colonization of the Americas, to European incursions into Asia, Africa and Australia. Their efforts went toward neutralizing and destroying the mystical powers of other civilizations, leaving them vulnerable to the more advanced technology of the West. Their magical power was enough to neutralize native Initiates.

Not all Lodges (or Lodge members) are restricted by prejudice, however, and many have questioned the wisdom of their elders' policies. Many European traditions that were co-opted by the Lodges were never in agreement with the core beliefs or the actions of their more powerful counterparts (see the sidebars on pp. 28, 30, 31 and 32).

Many Brethren realize that they must overcome their prejudices and form alliances with other mystical traditions. They understand that the Shadow War is not a conflict between different peoples, but between humans and predatory alien entities. And in recent years, this newer generation of Lodge Initiates has formed its own splinter organizations (see *The Split*, p. 32).

Origins of the Lodges

Initiates and Initiate-led organizations are as old as humanity, but the quasi-mythical origins of the Lodges date back to Biblical times. The first official

Lodge is said to have been founded by Simon Magus, the sorcerer who in Christian tradition was brought low by the power of Saint Peter. Simon Magus created a network of mystical societies, co-opting many “mystery cults,” sorcerer circles and other organizations. The traditions of these societies were a mixture of Roman, Greek and Egyptian occult practices, with a leavening of Persian theology and Jewish mysticism.

The basic cosmology of the original Lodges was the mystical heresy known as Gnosticism (see sidebar, p. 24). Knowledge was shared, grudgingly at first, and then more willingly, as it became apparent that the alliance was working. Nonaligned groups were brutally suppressed as heretics or sorcerers, banned by law from practicing their arts. The alliance was kept a secret, and many false documents were disseminated to spread wrong information among the non-Initiated. These first Lodges were the first masters of the tactic of disinformation, and the wildly contradictory, often ridiculous notions that Western scholars have about ancient magical practices are a product of the Lodges’ efforts.

The Lodges had thoroughly infiltrated the Christian Church and the Roman Empire by the year 363, when the death of Emperor Julian the Apostate dealt the final blow to paganism. The majority of the population settled for promises of enlightenment and paradise after death, and the mystical elements of Christianity were suppressed. Direct communication with angels or the spirits of dead saints was left in the hands of the Church, isolating the people from contact with spirits. The few Initiates who displayed their powers openly were labeled “saints” (when they were good Lodge members) or “sorcerers” when they did not, and each was treated accordingly.

Organization

Each Lodge organizes itself as it wishes, and there is a great deal of variation among them. In general, they follow a complex network of hierarchy. There are a number of *degrees* or ranks, from the first degree, corresponding to beginning members, up to the tenth degree, the Lodge leaders. The word *degree* is often replaced by other terms in individual Lodges, but the principle, and the division into ten ranks — roughly based on the ten levels of the cabalistic Tree of Life, and on the ten levels of Initiation (see p. 58) — remain fairly unchanged. Lodge degrees do not exactly correspond with levels of the Initiation advantage. (See p. 54 for the Lodge Rank system and p. 55 for the Initiation advantage.)

Each Lodge is made up of smaller groups called councils or dioceses (a Roman term for district or province, now commonly used by the Catholic Church and the Roman and Royalist Lodges). Each council controls a geographical area, usually the equivalent of a state or district, although some rule over entire countries or groups of countries. Orders come down from the higher levels, and are expected to be followed precisely. Disobedience is investigated



History of the Lodges

For five centuries, the Lodges controlled all of Europe and parts of Africa and Asia under the banner of the Roman Empire. Success rarely breeds long-lasting peace. Eventually, the Lodges started fighting among themselves. Ambitious Initiates vied with each other for control of the Empire, leading to a number of civil wars. Others went over to the enemy, making alliances with Germanic pagan priests, Persian magi and Mongol shamans, among others.

Besides the infighting, the Lodges had other enemies. The decadence of the imperial court at Rome was a symptom of Corruptor infiltration. Emperors like Caligula and Nero were in the thrall of Dark Initiates who conducted gruesome rituals to increase their power. The Empire collapsed and the Dark Ages began.

The Middle Ages marked a period of fragmentation. Much valuable knowledge was lost, kept mostly in the hands of monks, hedge-wizards and wise women. Spontaneous Initiates, temporarily free of the control of the Lodges, were able to operate in the open, giving rise to many legends of saints and magicians. Individual societies claimed control over single kingdoms or regions of Europe, which split the Lodges into several factions. The papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, France and England were each under the control of feuding Lodges during the Middle Ages. Each group tried to influence and dominate the others, which led to much of the strife of the times.

The Roman Lodges, with their influence over the Roman Catholic Church, remained the most powerful force throughout the period. They tried to transform a religious institution into a political force. The upper echelons of the Church were filled with people of dubious religious convictions who were more interested in their own advancement than in any spiritual or moral matters. Most of the leaders of the Church were not Initiates, but ordinary people who rarely even knew of the Lodges’ existence. The true Lodge members often played the part of secretaries, personal attendants and other low-ranking clerical officials — most of whom tended to outlast their “superiors.”

Throughout these centuries of war, massacre and persecution, the Lodges were aware of evil spiritual entities and monsters who seemed to be attracted to the worst crimes and conflicts. Many Brethren battled the influence of the demiurges and hunted down any members who fell under the sway of those beings.

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History of the Lodges (Continued)

Despite their efforts, the Lodges failed to control the Corruptors. Several Lodge historians have discovered evidence showing that the Corruptors may have been manipulating the Lodges just as the Lodges manipulated non-Initiates, and that this manipulation continues to this day. The fact that the Lodges remained divided for nearly a thousand years after the fall of Rome is blamed on the demiurges.

It wasn't until the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (words that were coined by the Lodges to refer to their own achievements, and which were later used to define whole historical periods) that the Lodges managed to reorganize themselves and achieve a semblance of their previous level of control. Initiates became very influential among the nascent middle class. Among them were the masons, stonemasons and builders responsible for the huge cathedrals and buildings of the late Middle Ages. The builder guilds that came under the control of the Lodges tended to have fewer accidents and mishaps than the ones that didn't. To appease the spirits and the magicians who controlled them, the masons started conducting secret rituals, going so far as to use many occult symbols among the decorations of the churches and cathedrals they built. Eventually, Initiates from these guilds founded a number of occult fraternal societies that would become the core of the Enlightened Lodges.

The new generation of Lodges believed the Church and the monarchical system had become thoroughly corrupt, and attempted to reform or destroy them. Each side accused the other of being in league with the demiurges. Slowly but steadily, the rebels gained the upper hand during an uninterrupted series of conflicts — the Albigensian Crusade, the Hussite rebellion, the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War were all part of the same ongoing battle.

The war spread beyond Europe, to the Americas and parts of Africa and Asia. Initiates from other cultures joined in the conflict, often fighting Lodges from both sides.

All the Lodge factions agreed on one thing: independent Initiates were a danger to everyone. They were "wild cards" that could upset the balance of power, and were suspected of trafficking with the forces of darkness.

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by special Initiate Circles (see *The Wild Hunt*, p. 33) and dealt with swiftly. Each council is under the control of a leader (also known as a bishop). The leader must be an Initiate of the tenth degree (see p. 54); he usually listens to the opinion of all council members of the sixth degree or higher, and can be stripped of his rank by a unanimous vote from these members.

Beyond the hierarchical organization, most Lodges also have special teams that act as enforcers, spies and troubleshooters. These teams are known as circles, a term originally used for the gatherings where several Initiates combined forces to conduct powerful rituals. A circle is usually a small team of no more than 12 Initiates (usually fewer than six) who work together when the occasion demands. Circles are answerable to the council leader. A council usually controls two to ten circles.



Each council usually acts through one or more seemingly innocuous "clubs" with names like the Knights of America, the Fraternal Order of the Bison, or the Roundheads. They also control the leadership of several trade unions, police departments, and most local governments. Many important decisions and deals are made in the private rooms of "gentlemen's clubs" or after strange rituals in underground chambers are conducted. Most non-Initiate agents of the Lodges do not know about the occult powers of their superiors, and simply assume that their masters are influential but normal people.

Lodges use magic in subtle ways. Spirit servants (commonly called *animae* by Lodge practitioners) watch agents to prevent treachery. When bribes or threats are not enough to deal with an interloper, practitioners use ceremonial magic to create an "accident." When even that is not enough, or when there is no time to use magic, the Lodges will rely on direct violence, either using their own spirit warriors or ordinary assassins and thugs. For this last purpose, most councils have a small "stable" of trained killers, usually ex-military or ex-police members.

The Secret Masters

At the top of every Lodge organization stand the Secret Masters. These ancient Initiates are said to be incredibly powerful, able to kill a man with a glance and always surrounded by a small army of spirit guards. Very few people claim to have met any of the Secret Masters; most of those who do are liars. Only Lodge Initiates of the tenth degree can claim to have access to these shadowy personages, and none of them do, or even speak publicly about the subject. There are rumors that the Lucumi dream council (see p. 19) and the Secret Masters sometimes match their wills in magical duels in the dream world.

Over the years there has been constant speculation about the identities of the Secret Masters. Common names in the "guessing lists" of those who care

about such things include Simon Magus himself, still alive after 2,000 years; Emperor Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor; the medieval Jewish mystic Abulafia; Count Cagliostro, the Italian alchemist who claimed to be immortal; the Comte of Saint Germain, another self-styled immortal; the great Houdini; and the 19th-century occultist Aleister Crowley, among others.

The Lodges and the Mayombe

By sponsoring colonialism, the Lodges have unwittingly served the purposes of the African demiurges, the Mayombe. The racism and arrogance of these European mystics caused them to turn a blind eye to the atrocities committed in the name of God, king and country, and to the entities that feasted on these deeds. It is only during the past few decades that some Lodges have realized that the monsters growing stronger every day are, to a large degree, their creation. Even those who accept this fact are reluctant to do anything about it; instead, they cling to their power and studies, and try to pretend that the Shadow War does not involve them.

Suspicion grows among the lower levels of the Lodges that inhuman entities have infiltrated the higher levels and now dictate policies that strengthen the Corruptors. But institutions find it difficult to scrutinize themselves, and investigations into those allegations rarely go anywhere, especially among the older and most powerful Lodge Orders. Instead, many Initiates have severed their ties with the Lodges, maintaining their oaths of secrecy but no longer obeying orders (see *The Split*, p. 32).

The Lodges and the Voodoo Societies

The ruling Lodges have been enemies of Voodoo for centuries. The Brethren helped enslave millions of Africans and were behind policies of genocide and exploitation. Christian priests (controlled by the Roman Lodge) led the persecution of houngans and mambos, and executed many at the stake. To this day, the Lodges try to suppress Voudounistas, branding their arts “superstition,” manipulating animal-rights groups into going after Voodoo’s animal-sacrifice practices, and associating Voodoo with devil-worship and brutal murders. Assassinations and other direct attacks still continue, well-disguised as gang warfare and supposedly isolated cases of police brutality. Whenever the U.S. intervenes militarily in the Caribbean, some Lodges use the ensuing chaos to root out and kill as many Voudounistas as possible.

The Voodoo societies have responded in kind. Thousands of Lodge Initiates have been murdered, crippled or driven mad by Voodoo rituals or simple violence. Some Voudounistas have turned to the Mayombe to gain enough power to strike down their enemies. Europe and the U.S. have suffered plagues and natural disasters inflicted in retaliation for colonial abuses.

Of late, Initiates from both sides have pointed out that the true enemy is not



History of the Lodges (Continued)

To eliminate these independents, all the major Lodges started spreading the belief that supernatural powers did not exist, being the result of superstition — or, if they did exist, were evil forces that only brought damnation and misery. They continue to employ this two-pronged approach to this day. Non-Lodge Initiates had to choose between facing ridicule and persecution, joining a Lodge for protection, or hiding their powers from the world at large. Only a few independent Initiates remain (see *The Hermits*, p. 33).

By the end of the 19th century, the reformers had won. The Enlightened Lodges and their allies became the dominant force of Western civilization, and all their enemies were forced to accept their leadership. The Royal Lodges lost their influence over most countries, even those that retained a monarchical system. The royalists made their last stand in the U.S., during the Civil War. They lost. The Roman Lodges were stripped of political power until all they had left was the Vatican and their influence over most Christian organizations.

The reformers’ victory was short-lived, however. The 20th century, which had seemed to herald the rule of the European Lodges over the world, turned into a time of brutal wars, loss of power and prestige, and, most importantly, the Holocaust.

To ordinary people, the Holocaust was a crime of unimaginable proportions. To Initiates, it was something a thousand times worse. The Lodge members who helped crush the Nazis discovered evidence of a sacrificial ritual that, if successful, would have unleashed horrors against all of humankind. To this day, many Lodge members are haunted by the fact that the Corruptors were able to take over a whole nation, and use it to conquer most of Europe and threaten the entire planet. This convinced many that the Lodges’ control over world affairs was deeply flawed, and that the demiurges had been the true beneficiaries of the world order the Lodges had imposed.

Optimists believe that the Secret Masters (see p. 26) are following a plan that mere Initiates cannot comprehend; as long as Initiates continue obeying orders and protecting the Lodges’ control over world affairs, everything will turn out all right. The number of rebels who denounce the Lodges and their chiefs is increasing, however.

Other Lodge Orders

Besides the Roman, Royalist and Enlightened Lodges, other orders exist in the world. Listed below are some of the more important ones.

The Servants of Hecate

This Lodge's origins are lost in prehistory and the ancient fertility religions of the earliest civilizations, continuing in one form or another until the mystery cults of Roman times. Their traditions were based on the fertility cults of such gods as Dionysus, Isis and Pan, as well as Hecate. Many worshipped a nameless Goddess, sometimes identified with the moon or the earth itself. These ancient cults were dominated by female priestesses and magicians, and were persecuted after Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire.

The chaos of the early Middle Ages allowed many of these female Initiates to pursue their religion with a minimum of restrictions. During the Middle Ages, their Initiate abilities and practical, nonmagical skills of herbal medicine and midwifery made them influential members of their communities.

Until the late Middle Ages, there was no Servants of Hecate Lodge; this was a convenient label that the more organized Roman and Royal Lodges applied to all nonaligned groups dominated by women. The other Lodges viewed this female movement with suspicion and more than a little disgust — since their foundation, the Lodges had been almost wholly male-dominated, and extremely antagonistic toward women.

As the medieval Lodges became more organized and powerful, persecution once again became a possibility. In order to forestall this, many of the most prominent priestesses of the fertility cults formed a loose alliance, known as the Lodge of Hecate or the Servants of Hecate. Members included female Initiates among the Church and nobility, who had been refused a place in the established Lodges. The leader and founder of the Servants of Hecate was Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of the English king Henry II and mother of the powerful Angevin dynasty. Thanks to her power (both magical and mundane), the other Lodges grudgingly accepted the Servants of Hecate as near-equals. The male-dominated orders continued to fear and distrust this order and all it represented. The uneasy alliance lasted only a couple of centuries.

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human, and that they must join forces to fight the Corruptors. Nearly five centuries of hatred cannot be easily forgotten, however, and most truces between the Lodges and the bizongues are fragile and short-lived. Philosophical differences also prevent a strong coordinated effort: the Lodges' secretiveness conflicts with the openness of Voodoo.

The rebel Lodges (see p. 32) and the newer Voodoo societies are breaking away from this tradition of hatred and distrust. Showing little concern for what their elders think, this new generation of mystics and sorcerers turns its back on convention and often joins forces against the Corruptors' spreading influence.

Major Lodges

Listed below are some of the more important Lodges in existence. This is not an exhaustive list: more may appear in future supplements, and GMs are encouraged to make up their own Lodges to satisfy favorite conspiracy theories.

The Roman Lodge

The Roman Lodge is the oldest Lodge still active in the world. The first Lodge, founded by Simon Magus, was the power behind the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. With the rise of monarchies and the Royal Lodges (see below) during the early Middle Ages, the Roman Lodge lost a great deal of power, eventually losing its pre-eminence to the Enlightened Lodges.

The Roman Lodge is still an influential force behind the scenes in the Catholic Church. Many members are priests, bishops and cardinals. Although they leave most of the Church's business in the hands of Catholicism's visible leaders, they have a hidden agenda, unsuspected by even the highest ranks. Many leaders of the Opus Dei, a Catholic lay organization with millions of members worldwide, are Brethren, and they use this organization as their unwitting pawn for many purposes. Besides the Catholic Church, the Roman Lodge is secretly behind many fundamentalist Christian organizations, including many whose members would froth at the mouth at the suggestion that they have anything to do with Catholics!

The leadership of the Roman Lodge is divided into three camps. The first is made up of devoted Christians who believe that they are working for the salvation of humankind by strengthening the Church. Their main concerns are the moral purity of the believers and the defense of religious institutions. A second is dominated by Gnostics (see sidebar, p. 24) who cynically use religion to amass power for themselves. Unknown to most, a third faction made up of servants

of the demiurges has infiltrated the entire Lodge. These corrupted Initiates have instigated or abetted many crimes committed by men of the cloth. These three factions keep their identities secret — a seemingly pious Roman Brother might be a Gnostic at heart, or even a secret agent of the Corruptors.

All prominent and influential members of this organization are men. Most recruits are also men. The organization is extremely prejudiced





against women, whom members see as temptresses or as a simple means for the human race to reproduce itself. Brethren never trust female Initiates from other Lodges, and betray or insult them when possible. The Servants of Hecate and the Roman Lodge are bitter enemies.

The members of the Roman Lodge consider themselves the oldest, and therefore the most powerful society. Although they have lost much of their power over mundane politics, they can still exert enormous influence. This Lodge controls the Vatican Vaults, which among other things contain the largest occult library in the world.

The Royalist Lodge

As its name indicates, the Royalist Lodge believes in monarchy and the superiority of noble bloodlines. This Lodge first appeared in the early Middle Ages, when the Roman Empire collapsed as a result of civil strife (partly caused by Lodge rivalries) and barbarian invasions. Many Initiates, isolated from their peers, became advisors and ministers of the Germanic kings who took over most of Europe. By the 12th century, these Initiates had become the force behind the royal houses of the continent. Eventually, despite strong rivalries between competing monarchies, these Lodges started working together. Europe became a giant chessboard for the Royalist Lodge.

At first, there were many Royalist (or Royal) Lodges, each representing one nation, or even one dynastic family. The Royalist Lodge as it now exists was founded in self-defense, as revolutions threatened the well-being of all monarchies. This movement was led by members of the Cavaliers, the supporters of English King Charles I, during the English Civil War, and their ranks were swelled by their former enemies, the French, after the French Revolution. They have been active in European and colonial politics ever since, and their membership has extended to the descendants of all the fading European noble houses.

The power of the unified Royalist Lodge has declined since its creation. Its efforts did not stop the reforming efforts of the Enlightened Lodge (see p. 30), and it nearly collapsed during the world wars, which saw the fall or weakening of most monarchies in Europe. To survive, the Lodge threw its support behind *racial* claims of superiority. Accordingly, several white supremacist groups are secretly sponsored by the Royalists. The Ku Klux Klan was their brainchild; the uninitiated members of that organization ape the mystical organization and occult themes of their true masters. The Royalist Lodge fiercely opposed the independence of the European colonies. The post-war liberation of dozens of Third-World nations came as yet another blow to their standing.

Other Lodge Orders (Continued)

The final straw came during the Hundred Years' War, when a powerful female Initiate and military leader defeated the English invaders of France. Joan of Arc proved to be too great a threat to the established order, and the Lodges of Rome, England and France joined forces to crush her. They did this by branding her a witch and burning her at the stake. Shortly thereafter, one of her followers was discovered to be a secret follower of the demiurges, and a practitioner of human sacrifice and ritual torture. The male-dominated Lodges quickly concluded that the entire Lodge of Hecate was in league with the forces of evil, and targeted its members with a campaign of extermination. Of the thousands of victims claimed by the Inquisition, a sizable percentage were members of the Servants of Hecate. The vast majority, however, were non-Initiates who had the misfortune to be accused of practicing witchcraft.

Eventually, when the Lodges decided the Inquisition had gone too far, and Europe was ravaged by religious wars (many instigated by the Servants of Hecate in self-defense), they agreed upon a truce. The Servants of Hecate were once again welcomed into the fold. The order never forgot the betrayals and persecution, however. The Servants were among the first Lodges to support the Enlightened in their bid for power, and when the Enlightened proved to be just as sexist, turned against them, supporting groups like the Schismatics and other "rebels."

In the last few decades, many Servants have gone public; they are one of the forces behind the Wiccan movement and several New Age groups. The other Lodges have done their best to discredit these groups. The Lodges have succeeded in keeping the numbers of new Initiates small by diluting the true teachings of magic with a lot of unadulterated garbage, in an effort to drown the few nuggets of truth in a deluge of disinformation. Even so, the number of people exposed to the illuminating secrets of the Lodges has been steadily growing. At this point, the Servants are considered to be in rebellion against the other Lodges, but so far both sides have stopped short of directly attacking each other. This is likely to change in the near future, however.

This Lodge is also more open to other traditions of magic than the "average" order. Their eclectic and shamanistic origins are in some ways closer to the beliefs of Voodoo and native American animism than to the rigid ceremonial magic of the other Lodges. Alliances between Voodoo Initiates and circles of Hecate are becoming increasingly common.

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Other Lodge Orders (Continued)

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

According to mundane history, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in 1888 by Masons inspired by some Rosicrucian documents. It was influenced by the Kabbalistic, Egyptian and Greek mystical traditions. The truth is that the Order is much older, and has been in existence in one form or another since the beginning of the Christian Era.

This Lodge was very powerful during the last centuries of the Roman Empire. When the Muslims captured Egypt, however, the Order lost a great deal of power and knowledge, and became subordinate to the Roman and Royalist Lodges. Many members of the Enlightened Lodge (see p. 30) came originally from the Order of the Golden Dawn. Eventually, the Order followed in the Enlightened's footsteps, and helped overthrow the other Lodges.

This order went public in the 19th century when its leaders tried to spread mystic knowledge among the general public. The by-then predominantly British leadership believed that humankind (meaning, really, white male Anglo-Saxon kind) had reached a level of development and progress that made it ready for universal enlightenment. The attempt was a miserable failure, and although the order attracted a number of notable Victorians (including poet W.B. Yeats), the secret leadership of the organization let the order sink back into obscurity by the 1920s.

The Order of the Golden Dawn is one of the most influential Lodges in the English-speaking world. It has thoroughly infiltrated Freemasonry and many fraternal societies (at least those that aren't under the control of Corruptors), stealing them from the Enlightened. Despite this, it remains the Enlightened's staunchest ally.

Through its connections, Golden Dawn wields considerable political and financial power. Its Lodges recruit new Initiates from among the wealthy and the talented, with a preference for candidates who have both money and brains. The order also funds many groups dedicated to debunking and discrediting any attempts to bring occult knowledge to light.

Some of the members are ancient mystics, hundreds or even thousands of years old; it is rumored that Aleister Crowley is alive and well and one of the Secret Masters of the Golden Dawn.

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Most of the surviving Royalist Lodges are in Europe, trying to revive the concept of monarchy, or in the former colonies causing unrest and chaos, more to validate their racist theories than in any real hope of recapturing these "strays." A few Royalists are in North America, trying to create native-born "dynasties" of powerful industrialists and politicians — although they despair of working with the base, blunt and disgustingly plebeian American "commoners"; instead they concentrate on white-supremacy groups.



There is a disturbing, albeit unconfirmed, rumor about the Royalist Lodge. According to the story, an old and very powerful circle made a pact with a powerful demiurge, and cast a terrible curse on all the African peoples, a sorcerous Final Solution. As a result of the curse, a deadly, insidious plague appeared, first in Africa, and then in the American nation most closely connected to Africa — Haiti. The circle miscalculated, however, and AIDS soon spread to strike the Western world, affecting people of all races. It is said that all the Initiates involved in the ritual died horribly, of an accelerated version of the disease and its associated illnesses that killed them within hours. Royalists fervently deny the story — if only because they claim they wouldn't have botched the ritual. Another rumor blames a similar ritual for the spread of sickle-cell anemia among people of African descent.

The Enlightened

The Enlightened Lodge appeared near the end of the Middle Ages. In Italy, wealthy Initiates who sponsored the rediscovery of Greco-Roman culture spearheaded the movement to end the stagnant beliefs that shaped the world before then. Groups of artisans and middle-class Initiates, the force behind the trading guilds that dominated whole cities, reinforced these efforts. Non-Initiate support groups formed the first Masonic societies.

According to the secret records of the Enlightened, their Lodge was behind the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution and the general weakening of Church and monarchy that occurred between those two developments. There's even mention of an embarrassing moment in their history, circa 1776, when a misguided non-Initiated servant of the order went "public," in a weak attempt to recruit intellectuals into his own conspiracy to overthrow all European governments. These *Illuminati* espoused the same principles that the Enlightened Lodge was implementing. Being an essentially materialistic, nonmystical movement, however, it was doomed from the start. Not only did the conspiracy fail, it tipped off other Lodges about the Enlightened Lodge's plans, and set back those plans for several years. The struggle between the Enlightened and

their rivals caused much of the strife at the end of the 18th century (including a rushed American Revolution). By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Enlightened had won in North America and England and was becoming dominant in the rest of Europe. By the turn of this century the Enlightened was the most powerful Lodge in the world.

The Enlightened Lodge is progressive, and believes that ordinary people can be brought closer to Initiation through sociopolitical advances. Its members are not idealistic revolutionaries, however. For one, they are in no hurry — they are willing to spend centuries (and they have) testing different forms of government and social reform, until they come up with the right formula. They have finally consigned one of their experiments — communism — to the trash heap of history. Now if only the Powers controlling China would relent...

Racism is still very much a part of Enlightened calculations. Most of its leaders seek to better the white race first, and then turn their attention to the “less fortunate.” Although not as misogynistic as the Roman Lodge, it is still very much a gentlemen’s club, which only recently (and reluctantly) has started admitting women members; few of those have reached the higher levels of Initiation. They are also highly secretive, even among the top ranks of their own order, so that very few really know what the ultimate goals of the Enlightened are, and those who are think they do are often wrong. A few paranoid Initiates think the avowed goals of a harmonious society are nothing but a facade and that the true leaders of the Enlightened are Corruptor spirits or Devourer monsters.

The Dark Lodges

The Dark Lodges are groups of Western magicians who deal with evil spiritual entities. The line is sometimes blurry, and time and time again a seemingly dignified lodge is found to be in league with monstrous beings in the hopes of gaining greater power. The Dark Lodges represent the greatest danger to European mysticism, a hidden cancer that eats away at the self-styled “masters of the world.” These groups are feared the most because they deal with forces that even the Secret Masters only vaguely understand.

These Lodges have no names for themselves. They usually masquerade as members of one of the “mainstream” Lodges. However, their rituals often involve human sacrifice, torture, or worse. The “black magicians” collaborate with In-Betweeners, serial murderers, and other servants of the Corruptors. Many work alone or in small groups, sometimes taking over an entire neighborhood or small town, and transforming the helpless mortals around them into willing slaves.

It is becoming fashionable for Lodges to suspect other Lodges of being in league with the Corruptors. The Roman Lodge believes the Order of the Golden Dawn has been infiltrated, and vice versa. Younger Initiates fear the Secret

Other Lodge Orders (Continued)

Of late, the leaders of the order have become concerned about the growing dominance of the demiurges in the world. Their concern has prompted the creation of investigative and action teams; these groups are more often than not unwitting agents who do not even know of the order’s existence. Most are Initiates who are nudged in the direction of evil cults and other evil forces; what happens next, up to and including the demise of these agents, is carefully observed and documented by other order agents.

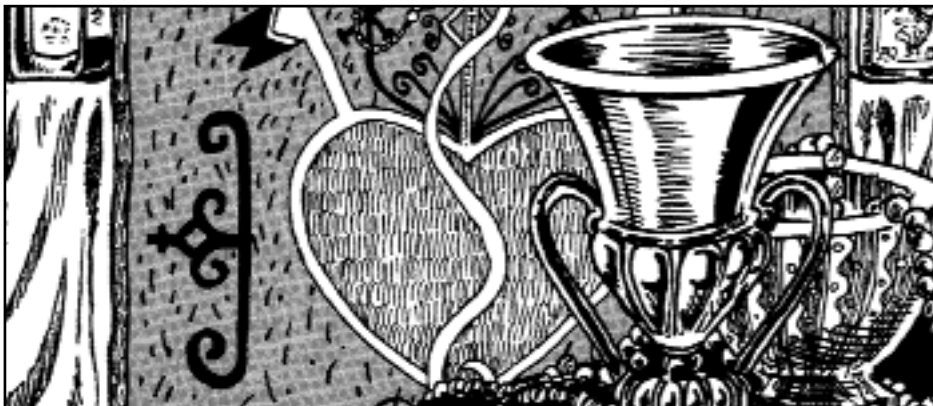
The Ophites

This Lodge first appeared in the 2nd century A.D., as a Gnostic sect that fervently espoused the theory that the material world was inherently evil (see sidebar, p. 24). They used the snake as their symbol, due to their reinterpretation of the story of Genesis. According to the Ophites, the serpent in the Garden of Eden angered the demiurges by granting Adam and Eve the gift of knowledge — a gift that put humankind on the path of Initiation, able to eventually escape the prison of the material world. Originally, the Ophites were extremely ascetic and tended to distance themselves from all mundane affairs, but they became more active after the Lodges absorbed most mystical movements sometime around the 4th century A.D.

This Lodge’s interest in the serpent as their spirit guide has led them to study other snake deities found in other mystical traditions. During these studies, the Ophites found common ground with the Voodoo Societies, many of which worship Damballah and Ayida-Wedo, the snake gods of wisdom. There are rumors of a secret alliance between the Ophites and some Voodoo bizongues.

The Ophites are the only Lodge that admits to having In-Betweeners among their ranks. Snake People Initiates (see p. 101) have been part of the Ophites for centuries. Where they come from, and how they are raised to be less bloodthirsty and murderous than In-Betweeners usually are, is unknown. Both facts have made the Ophites outcast among the Lodges. They have been spared from persecution thanks to their long tradition of valuable services to the Lodges, and the fact that no evidence of Corruptor influence has been discovered (other than the association with In-Betweeners, that is). Even so, the Ophites rank only slightly above “rebellious” Lodges like the Servants of Hecate or the Schismatics.

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Other Lodge Orders (Continued)

The Readers of the Kabbalah

This Lodge uses esoteric interpretations of the Old Testament as the focus of their Initiate rituals and powers. Most early Kabbalists were Jewish in origin, and its membership has been predominantly (but not exclusively) Jewish ever since. Kabbalists believe that the One God manifests itself through different symbols and forces. This mystic movement has some links with Gnosticism (see sidebar, p. 24), inasmuch as both traditions believe in the pursuit of secret, arcane knowledge as their goal. The Kabbalists base their study on the Hebrew Bible, not for its textual meaning, but in search of the hidden, symbolic and mystic meanings of each letter and each group of letters.

Although the Lodge was publicly a monotheistic movement, through the applications of symbols the Initiates made contact with a number of spirit entities. Their version of loa or animas were the *sephiroth*, entities that represent different aspects of the Creator. A debased version of the Kabbalist teachings was made public in the 13th century. However, much of their knowledge remains a secret even from other Lodges. Many of the anti-Semitic persecutions in Europe were instigated by jealous Lodges, and the anti-Semitism that mars many Lodges has made the Kabbalists outsiders, although still part of the system. The other Lodges often encouraged the myth of a “Jewish conspiracy,” to keep the Kabbalists “in their place.”

Among the Lodges, the Kabbalists were the least concerned with worldly affairs. The material world is in many ways beneath their contempt (which shows the influence of the Lodges’ original Gnostic teachings; see sidebar, p. 24). They were content with their mystical researches, although they would sometimes work with other Lodges against the demiurges and other evil beings. All this changed during World War II, when their Initiates, along with millions of Jews, were murdered by the Nazis. A powerful Kabbalistic circle made its stand in the Warsaw ghetto in the 1940s. Practitioners and inspired non-Initiates fought the German armies and their Corruptor leaders to the last breath.

Since the war ended, the Kabbalists have become very active in the war against evil entities, and devote much of their energy to ensuring that what happened in Europe will never occur again. They accuse the Enlightened (see p. 30) of failing miserably — or even of being behind the rise of Nazism. The most militant Kabbalist groups are the Israeli Lodges, who have been involved in their own Shadow War against their Islamic counterparts for over 50 years.

Masters may be the pawns of older, more powerful forces, while these recruits are carefully watched by their superiors, just in case they are spies from the Enemy. This atmosphere of paranoia is undermining the power of the Lodges, and augmenting the power of the Dark Lodges. See p. 38 for more information.

The Split

Over the last 50 years, the Lodges suffered a major crisis that led to a parting of the ways for many Brethren. The worst breaking point occurred at World War II, when the evil the German Lodges had instigated — or at the very least neglected to prevent — became apparent. For many younger Initiates, the horrors of Nazism completely shattered their faith in the current system. In their eyes, the Lodges had only worsened the condition of the world.

Some of the new generation dedicated themselves to the pursuit of power, pleasure, or sheer anarchy. Others decided to “clean house” among the Lodges and ferret out any secret servants of the demiurges. The traditional Lodges, especially the Enlightened, reacted violently against these rebels, and several circles left their former allies and formed Lodges of their own.

A number of new Lodges have appeared out of this split (see below). They sometimes have joined forces with Voodoo Societies or even the Red Sects — or sometimes with both. The situation threatens to degenerate into a four-way war. The traditional Lodges have persecuted the new ones, and former allies often kill or imprison their ex-members.

The Schismatics

The Schismatics have rebelled against the Lodges’ policies and concentrate their efforts on reversing them. Their ranks swelled during the 1960s, when the concepts of racism and colonialism became repugnant to many of the children of the Lodges. The Schismatics reject the idea that Western civilization, the white race and the male gender are intrinsically superior. They have even gone so far as to reject the Gnostic concept that the material world is an essentially evil creation. According to them, this belief only leads Initiates into a refusal to worry about the damage their actions inflict on the world, which is part of what makes the world a hellish place to live in.

In some ways, the Schismatics are the Enlightened of the 20th century. Like their predecessors, they believe that changing the world for the better is the path toward a higher plane of existence. They are prepared to do whatever it takes to achieve this end. The Schismatic Lodges operate in small groups, and have very little political or financial influence, however. Their well-meaning plans often run afoul of old Lodge conspiracies, Mayombe plots and some Voodoo societies. Their greatest successes have come in discovering and destroying In-Betweeners enclaves, and they were among the first to discover clues about the mysterious Murder Society (see p. 42).

This order has close ties with a few of the lesser Lodges, like the Servants of Hecate and the Ophites (see sidebars, pp. 28 and 31). The Schismatics and Servants of Hecate have secretly aided the feminist movement, often running counter to the plans of the Roman Lodge. Non-Initiated allies of the Schismatics tend to be political activists, journalists, media figures, consumer advocates and other reformers.

The Schismatics have also tried to forge alliances with Voodoo societies and other Third-World mystic traditions, but this has been difficult to achieve. Most traditional Voodoo societies are secretive and suspicious of these conciliatory strangers; sometimes they try to use these gullible Westerners for their own ends. Also, the Schismatics have found the complacency of many Voudounistas annoying. At this point, their closest allies are the Protectors (see p. 21), who

are themselves outcasts. Many mixed teams of Initiates from both traditions have formed, and are teaching each other secrets and rituals — something that many Lodges and bizongues will punish with death, should it be discovered.

The Crowley Society

“Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.” This is the motto of the Crowley Society, whose members style themselves after the “Great Beast” of the late 19th century, Aleister Crowley. One of the most notable members of the Order of the Golden Dawn (see p. 30), Crowley underwent several mystical ordeals and became a follower of Egyptian gods. He had a reputation for debauchery, which he reinforced by shocking displays of bad taste. Crowley was also the author of several books on magic and the occult, and his philosophies were far more complex than his detractors claimed. The Society is content to follow the form, not the substance, of Crowley’s teachings.

If the Crowley Society has any philosophical foundations, they come from the Carpocratian Gnostic belief that the way to break free of the slavery of the flesh lies in experiencing every sin and every vice (see sidebar, p. 24). The Society pays only lip service to any of these philosophies; members spend a good deal of their time on debauchery and experimentation with vices ranging from sadomasochism to designer drugs.

Despite (some say *because of*) this attitude, many Society members are powerful Initiates. A favorite ritual practice of theirs is to share control over their bodies with a spirit in partial or total possession (see p. 85) while intricate sexual acts are performed. The spirits are able to enjoy these pleasures, and many of them become quite loyal (some would say addicted) to their material “partners.” The members are devoted to such spirits as Dionysus, Pan, and others wild entities. It is rumored that the followers also consort with In-Betweeners such as the Cat People (see p. 100).

The other Lodges claim that this order has been taken over by the Corruptors. Strangely enough, however, Crowley Society members are constantly caught doing the right thing — destroying Dark Lodges, unmasking In-Betweeners, and even fighting the drug trade (if not drug use). The members don’t claim to have any goals other than achieving immediate gratification, but it seems that for them life is an eternal party, and the other Lodges, Dark or Light, are fun-spoilers to be dealt with in order to get back to the festivities.

The Wild Hunt

Styling themselves after the entourage of the horned god of Celtic and Germanic mythology, the Wild Hunt are the self-appointed cleansers of the Lodges. They come from all the traditional orders; what they have in common is their desire to root out the Corruptors’ pawns. They do this with fanatical — some say insane — dedication, without mercy or fear. Many of the members are spontaneous Initiates who gained their powers after horrible ordeals inflicted by servants of the Dark Gods, and they will never forget their pain, or feel sympathy for the suffering of the guilty.



Hermits

Western Initiates who learned their magic independently from the Lodges are known as hermits. When nonaligned practitioners were persecuted, a few powerful magicians hid from the rest of the world and continued their studies in secret, taking on a couple of students at most, sometimes handing down their knowledge to only one select pupil. Some Voodoo practitioners also practice their art independently, but they do not share the stigma of their Western counterparts. The hermits are not an organized group: they include ancient and powerful magicians, ambitious young Initiates with a couple of good rituals, and the last priests of long-forgotten spirits. Most of them are fairly powerful; they have to be to survive the persecution of the Lodges. A few are just lucky. All try to remain in the shadows and are distrustful of the organized mystical traditions.

Hermits sometimes get involved in the Shadow War, but they usually try to keep their anonymity. They rarely get involved with members of either the Lodges or Voodoo societies, unless they are masquerading as someone who belongs to those groups. Some recruit spontaneous Initiates or even In-Betweeners as their students or servants.

It is difficult sometimes to tell the difference between a hermit, a servant of the Corruptors, and a rebel from any of the common mystical traditions. The fact that each hermit behaves in a different manner makes it hard to generalize. The mainstream Lodges are invariably hostile to them. A few Schismatics considers them kindred spirits and actually seek them out, usually in vain. Many Voodoo societies make no distinction between hermits and Lodge members.

Who’s In Control?

The Shadow War revolves around the conspiracies of the diverse camps in the struggle to dominate the others. A number of “real-world” institutions will be under the control of one or more of these factions. Outlined below are some of the best-known groups and a few possibilities. The GM can pick and choose from these “rumors,” make up his own, or even mix them all together!

The U.S. Government

The Enlightened Lodge controls most of the government, especially Congress and the Executive Branch. The other Lodges all have a few pawns of their own, as do some powerful Voodoo bizongues like the Lucumi, but the Enlightened’s influence outweighs all the others put together.

Continued on next page...



Who's In Control? (Continued)

...or, the Enlightened think they control the government, but a Devourer, living beneath Washington D.C., subtly manipulates and twists the Lodge and their pawns to suit its own ends.

...or, the Enlightened lost control over the government a long time ago, and the Lodges, different Voodoo Societies, and the Corruptors control pieces of it, in constant struggle against each other. These struggles are one of the reasons Washington, D.C., is the murder capital of the world.

The FBI

The Enlightened Lodges control the FBI, and use it to help cover up all supernatural phenomena by declaring any such cases to be under federal jurisdiction and then suppressing all evidence.

...or, the head of the FBI since Hoover has been one In-Betweeners of incredible power. Each newly-appointed head is murdered and replaced by the shapeshifter, who continues directing the agency for its own unguessable purposes.

...or, many members of the FBI are inducted into a hidden cult that has managed to stay secret from the Lodges' scrutiny. This cult's influence has helped cover up the Murder Society (see p. 42) and many other Red Sects (see p. 37). Every year, thousands of ritual sacrifices are routinely "solved" by framing some unfortunate who happens to be convenient.

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Although not a part of any traditional Lodge, the Hunt is tolerated and even respected by the rest. Their goals and their judgment have so far been above reproach, although their methods are much too extreme for most. Their verdicts have been carried out without official reaction, although some Initiates and circles distrust them, and most council leaders claim the privilege of being informed before a sentence is executed in the area under their control, a rule the Hunt has scrupulously followed — except when the leader himself is the target.

The Hunt is only concerned with revenge and its own brand of justice. Its members arrive singly or in small groups to investigate Lodge Initiates who are suspected of collaborating with the Corruptors. If the investigations prove true, or if the suspect injures or attacks a Hunter, other members of the order will arrive, backed with a small army of familiar spirits, some of whom can possess dogs and turn them into monstrous hounds of supernatural strength and savagery. Their secondary targets are groups controlled by the Dark Lodges, the Red Sects and occasionally the Voodoo societies.

THE CORRUPTORS

Not all spirit entities are benevolent or indifferent toward humanity; some have established an unholy psychic link with the material world. Through this link, these spirits draw energy from human suffering and death. In Voodoo traditions, these creatures are known as the Mayombe, the soul eaters, the cannibal spirits. In the Western Lodges' cosmology, these Corruptors are the Dark Gods, the demi-urges, beings that keep humans imprisoned in the material world to feed on them more easily. Most occultists fear and hate them... yet the power they offer attracts many to their service.

The Corruptors are at least as old as humankind. Some occultists believe that the oldest and most powerful of them appeared in Africa when the ancestors of humans first developed a language and the capacity to contact the spirit world. Afterward, they followed humans wherever they went. Many remained in Africa, where they corrupted many tribes and kingdoms.

The Corruptors do not cause war, slavery or brutality in the world, but these things benefit them, and the powerful spirits often lend their support and power to those who will harm others. Theorists of the "psychic" school (see sidebar, p. 14) believe the Corruptors reflect humankind's dark side, that they are the creation of our own forbidden lusts, fears and desires, a manifestation of the monster inside us all. Other occultists scoff at this self-centered viewpoint; they claim that the Corruptors are older than humankind, perhaps older than life on Earth — primeval, incomprehensible forces alien to both normal spirits and mortals, with unknowable and horrifying goals.

These entities are both spiritual and physical: some Corruptors have material bodies, and are known as In-Betweeners. These are creatures able to walk among humans, but alien and monstrous, the origin of legends about monsters and bogey-men common to all cultures. The greatest of these In-Betweeners are known as Devourers, whose power and malevolence have Lovecraftian proportions.

Evil or ambitious Initiates often make pacts with Corruptors. This invariably results in the human sorcerer becoming a pawn of these beings, and a threat to the rest of humanity. The true Shadow War is the secret conflict waged against the Corruptors and their servants. Everybody is involved, whether he knows it or not.

The Corruptors and Slavery

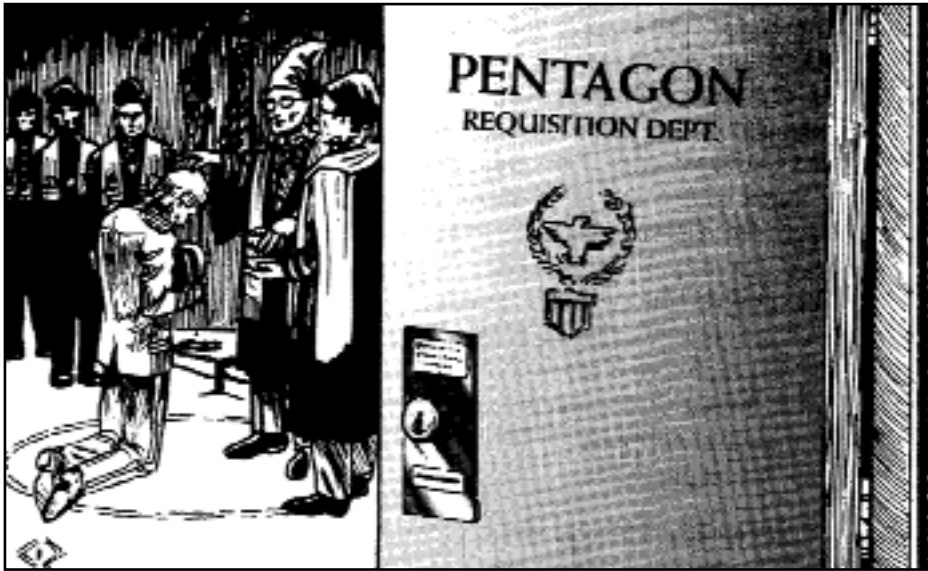
The African-based Corruptors (sometimes called the Mayombe) were a part of African mythology and religion. The well-established priesthoods of the

West African kingdoms did much to keep these evil gods and their creatures under control. Still, many evil secret societies infiltrated these ancient kingdoms, stirring up trouble with assassinations (mystical or mundane), disease and famines.

The Mayombe were involved in slavery in many ways. Many African slaver societies were under the sway of Mayombe spirits. Slavery was a common practice of the West African kingdoms of Dahomey and Yoruba. Captured enemy warriors (or even whole rival tribes), criminals, sorcerers and other undesirables were sold in great numbers to European flesh peddlers. Evil secret societies that worshipped Mayombe spirits often were in charge of capturing and selling slaves.

Greed was the motivating factor: Portuguese and Dutch slavers wanted labor to sell to Spanish, British and French colonies, and Dahomey and Yoruba kings wanted the gold, iron and gunpowder offered in return. Some Europeans conducted their own slaving raids into African territory, but, contrary to popular belief, slavery was not a Western invention — although Western slavers were among the most brutal and exploitative.

The horrors of slavery attracted the Mayombe spirits. The European slave ships were floating charnel houses in which tens of thousands died horribly — perfect feeding grounds for the Mayombe. Many spontaneous Initiates, their powers awakened by their terrible suffering, turned to these dark spirits to gain power. Sometimes, human servants of the Mayombe were also sold into slavery. That often happened when such sorcerers fell out of grace with a king or ruler, or when their crimes went beyond what the authorities could stomach. Afraid of killing these evil Initiates, the authorities sold them as slaves.



The Mayombe did not restrict themselves to African servants, however. Many turned their attention on the Europeans. Through dreams and visions, they used many slave owners' racism and sadism for their own purposes. More than one landowner in America became an unwitting priest of the Dark Gods, offering the lives and suffering of the men and women he "owned" as bloody sacrifices. The repeated astonishing acts of brutality practiced on the continent further sustained and strengthened the Corruptors.

European-based Corruptors were involved in both the slave trade and the genocide committed by European colonists in the Americas. It is rumored that the African, American and European spirits often fought among themselves for dominance over the continent. Others think that the Corruptors joined forces or

Who's In Control? (Continued)

The U.S. Armed Forces

The military is under the joint supervision of the Enlightened and Roman Lodges. The strictly regulated army life is more to the liking of the Roman Lodges; many of their Initiates choose the military over the clergy and rise through the ranks. West Point and most military academies are Enlightened strongholds where promising young men are introduced to the Lodges and Initiated. Occasionally, these Initiating rituals go wrong and people get hurt, but nobody who investigates these occurrences can handle the truth. An unnamed branch of the Special Forces, commonly mistaken for Delta Force, is made up exclusively of powerful spirit warriors who are routinely dispatched to deal with supernatural threats around the world. These threats include Initiated terrorist groups, In-Betweeners monsters and overly-successful Voodoo societies, among others. The Pentagon is one of the most powerful ritual temples in the world, and some of what goes on there at night would terrify the taxpayers.

...or, some of the military clubs and organizations that are supposedly under the control of the Lodges have been Corruptor tools for centuries. Among other things, their members engage in secret massacres of innocent people whenever they are stationed overseas. The killings are usually covered so well up that nobody ever suspects U.S. soldiers of being involved.

Japan

The Enlightened Lodge defeated the ancient Initiate groups of Japan after World War II. Although many mystical organizations remain influential in Japan, the local Enlightened chapter dominates the country's government and industry.

...or, the Japanese Enlightened Lodge has its own agenda, which may clash with that of the other Lodges. Maybe the older Initiate societies of Japan were able to successfully infiltrate and subvert the Enlightened.

...or, the Yakuza (Japanese Mafia), dominated by Initiates and *kami* spirits, is growing in power and challenging the Enlightened's control over the country.

The Court System

Nominally, the Lodges control the courts. They manage to exert enough influence to cover up any mention of supernatural events in court reports. They can also protect Lodge members from prosecution (unless they are from rival Lodges or Schismatics, in which case they are usually given stiff sentences and risk suffering "accidents" while in prison).

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Who's In Control? (Continued)

...or, the legal system was subverted by Mayombe spirits long ago, and twisted in such a way that the most dangerous criminals tend to go free or serve minimum sentences while small-time criminals are stuck with maximum terms, to the point that a car thief may do more jail time than a rapist or a murderer.

The Mafia

The Roman Lodge, or at least a few factions that have a great deal of independence, have nominally controlled the Italian mob. Each Mafia *familia* has certain duties to its Lodge patrons, but does what it pleases in every other respect, including making war against rival families — a practice the Roman Lodge allows as “healthy competition,” keeping the families strong and alert. The *cosa nostra* is organized along the same lines as the secret societies, with its own initiation rituals and oaths of silence. Their true Initiates are all “made men” (full members of the crime families); there aren't many of them, however, and their knowledge of ritual magic is relatively low. Promising Mafia Initiates are usually recruited by other elements of the Roman Lodges, as a way to keep true mystic powers from these potentially dangerous groups.

...or, this practice has backfired, and In-Betweeners or Corruptor spirits have infiltrated many Mafia families, which now pay only lip service to the Roman Lodge while pursuing different and very dangerous goals. The demiurges that now control the Mafia have granted great magical power to their servants; a large number of mob soldiers are spirit warriors or have other Initiate powers.

somehow *fused* into new, more powerful beings. The latter possibility seems closer to the truth, as the aspects of many Corruptor spirits and In-Betweeners resemble those of mythological beings from all three continents.

The Chaos Bringers

The colonial system of the Caribbean was inherently unstable, based on the enslavement and subservience of the majority of the population for the enrichment of a small minority. It is not surprising that for five centuries wars, insurrections and massacres have plagued Caribbean history. Governments institutionalized murder as a weapon of terror, and petty dictators used whatever means they had to crush their opponents. The Corruptors have also thrived on the political chaos in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than one political leader, including the Duvalier family and Fidel Castro, has been rumored to enjoy the protection of supernatural entities.

The Corruptors and their servants have often used the Lodges' policies to carry out their own plans. Using racism, greed and fear as their tools, they weakened European and North American civilization and devastated the Caribbean and South America. Mystics and magicians from both sides were fighting each other; they were too busy to discover and confront their true enemies.

The Drug Trade

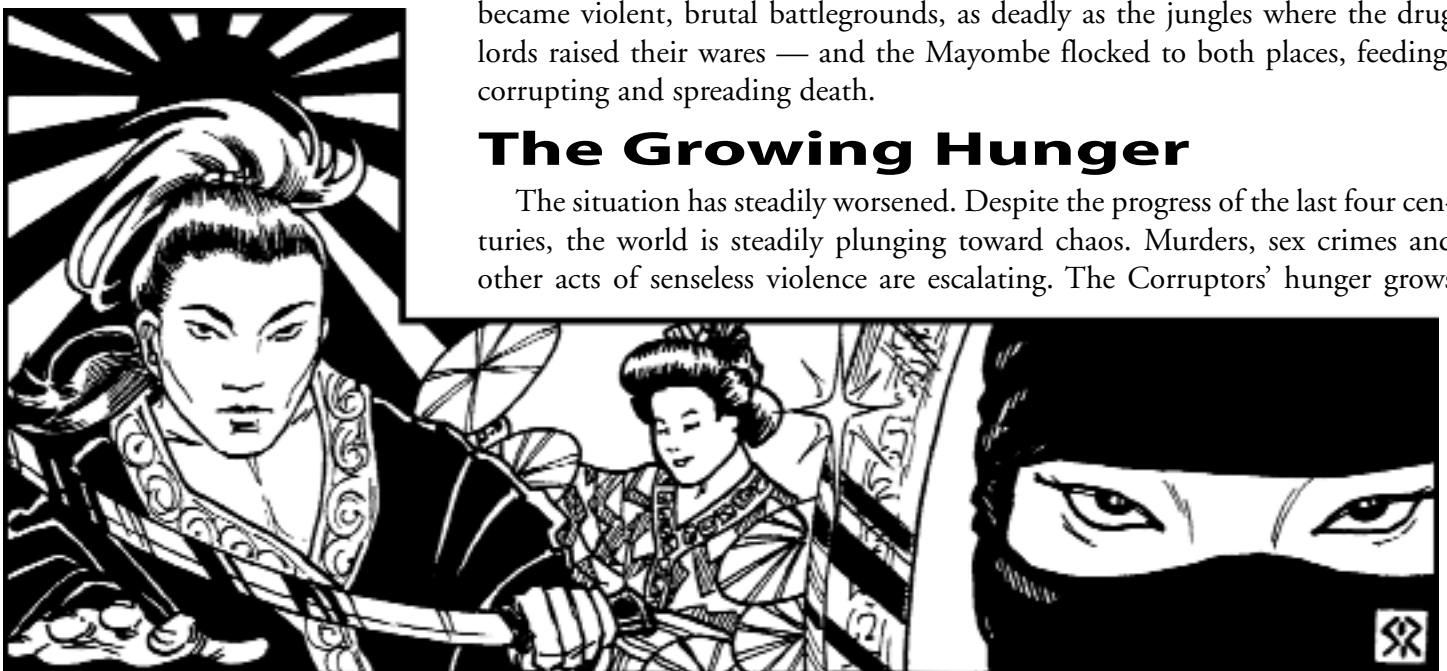
In a way, drugs have been a big business in the Caribbean for centuries. Addictive luxuries like tobacco, coffee, white sugar and alcohol have been among the main staples of Caribbean agriculture. Some occultists believe the Mayombe enjoyed the bitter irony of this — using slave labor to produce substances that would in turn enslave those who used them.

The 20th century, which saw the rise of democracy, independence and enlightenment, also saw the proliferation of recreational drugs — marijuana, cocaine and heroin, among others. The United States market for illegal drugs grew, and Latin American and Caribbean crime lords were all too ready to supply it.

In U.S. inner cities, the poor, many of them descendants of the slaves forcibly brought to America, suffered most from the drug trade. On one hand, drugs became a source of quick money, a powerful lure to unemployed and unemployable people. On the other hand, the violence that surrounds any sort of illegal trade, and the devastating effects of drug addiction, contributed to the urban decay that racism and greed had already started. The cities of America became violent, brutal battlegrounds, as deadly as the jungles where the drug lords raised their wares — and the Mayombe flocked to both places, feeding, corrupting and spreading death.

The Growing Hunger

The situation has steadily worsened. Despite the progress of the last four centuries, the world is steadily plunging toward chaos. Murders, sex crimes and other acts of senseless violence are escalating. The Corruptors' hunger grows





with each passing year. Some occultists fear that Mayombe influence will plunge the world into total chaos and anarchy. Already large areas of the U.S. are no longer subject to law and order; they are war zones where might makes right and ruthlessness is the way to power. The situation is much worse in other nations, where the criminals are in control of the courts and the government, and kill those who refuse to be bought.

The greatest danger is that the Mayombe always want *more*. Perhaps, if enough horror and suffering are inflicted on the world, these entities will be able to manifest physically, becoming more powerful than the oldest In-Betweeners, and able to devour humankind body and soul.

The Initiates and occultists who know this form a thin line of defense between these entities and the rest of the world. Tragically, most Initiates turn a blind eye to this conflict, and content themselves with treating the symptoms, fighting the small outbreaks of evil that come to their attention, while ignoring the larger struggle. Or worse, they use their powers for their own benefit, becoming unwitting pawns of the Corruptors. As the havoc these entities cause becomes more widespread, however, more and more mystic adepts are forced to choose sides in the ongoing war.

THE RED SECTS

The Red Sects are special secret societies dedicated to serving the Mayombe and other Corruptors in return for power. This name is what Voodoo practitioners call these diverse groups and is not what they call themselves; they go under hundreds of different titles and guises. They are made up of evil sorcerers, inhuman creatures and mortal dupes and pawns.

The Bokkor

The Bokkor (also known as *palo mayombe* or *mayomberos*) are the magical equivalent of hired assassins or thugs. They use their power to murder people at the behest of their clients. The Bokkor are tempters and corrupters; their clients often suffer as much as their intended victims. Their spiritual allies are demonic spirits that enjoy inflicting pain on helpless humans. Some mayomberos are even in league with the horrible abominations of flesh, the In-Betweeners — or they *become* In-Betweeners as result of their monstrous rituals. Many are the pawns of a Devourer (see p. 102), often without realizing it.

The Bokkor tend to be solitary practitioners, but they have links to other Red Sects, and often owe allegiance to more powerful groups or entities. They are not called on to fulfill those duties very frequently, however, and the mayomberos usually work on their own, leading a small group of minions and apprentices. They are a common fixture in South America and the Caribbean, and are becoming more common in the inner cities of the United States.

The Others

Besides the Voodoo societies, the Lodges and the Corruptors, many other mystical groups are involved in the Shadow War. There are as many magical traditions as there are human cultures in the world. Some of those have disappeared or been absorbed by more modern movements. Others carry on their ancient practices, and are likely to encounter other participants in the war.

Many native American shamans are active in the Shadow War. Most of them use their animistic magic to defend their ancestral lands from both the Lodges and the Corruptors. Some have decided to carry the fight to the enemy's lair, in the largest cities, where they have discovered secret programs of cultural genocide to be carried out against their people. These spirit warriors have sometimes joined forces with Voodoo Initiates.

The Islamic world was once held by the Lodges, and Sufi mystics often become Initiates of great power. There are several Islamic "Lodges" which have often made alliances and treaties with their Western counterparts. These Lodges are split along religious lines, with Sunni and Shiite equivalents. *GURPS Arabian Nights* has information on the history, religion and mystical beliefs of Islam. Forced into secrecy, an ancient order of Persian *magi* still survives in the Middle East, despite centuries of persecution.

There are many Western magical traditions, and not all of them are controlled by the Lodges (see *Hermits*, p. 33). One of the largest groups no longer allied with the Lodges is made up of Germanic rune magicians. These magicians were part of the Lodges until the World War II debacle, when their support of Nazism caused them to be hunted down. Only a few rune magicians survive, mostly practicing in secret.

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In-Betweeners

These beings are shapeshifters, able to transform into different people or animals, or grotesque combinations of the two. Many feed on human flesh, flavored with fear and pain. Their numbers are slowly increasing, becoming a greater danger with every passing year. Most In-Betweeners serve the Corruptors, either directly as cult or criminal leaders, or indirectly by spreading terror and death in their wakes. A few try to live independent lives or even oppose the machinations of the Mayombe and demiurges, but these are the exception.

The Others (Continued)

Most Celtic druidic orders, Old Religion worshippers and other ancient European traditions were absorbed by the Servants of Hecate under pressure from the other Lodges. Many independent groups still survive. Together with the Servants of Hecate, they have inspired many neo-pagan and witchcraft movements, trying to bring occult knowledge to the mainstream. Their efforts are hampered by campaigns of disinformation on the part of the Roman and Enlightened Lodges.

The Gypsies (or *Rom*) are the most powerful independent mystics of Europe. Despite centuries of persecution, the Gypsies have kept alive a powerful magical tradition. In fact, their powers are one of the reasons their culture has managed to survive despite the best efforts of the Lodges. It was no accident that the Nazis targeted the Gypsies for extermination. Today, many Gypsies wander across Europe and North America.

Western African Voodoo is still alive and well, and remains a powerful mystical tradition. Other regions of Africa use animistic shamanism, and even Muslim mysticism (see above). Africa is currently suffering multiple disasters caused by both Corruptor and Lodge intervention.

Asia was under the control of the Lodges for a brief time, but that continent's magical knowledge is vast and ancient, and has proven a match for anything Western magicians can produce. Asian Corruptors spirits have followed immigrants to America, where they have become a major influence over the U.S. West Coast. Tongs, triads and other secret societies have occult backing, and combine ancient rituals, martial arts and modern weaponry.

Initiates from all these traditions have joined the Shadow War. Misunderstandings and cultural differences often result in clashes among groups with the same goals. In recent years, however, growing desperation has led many spirit warriors to overcome their prejudices and forge alliances with fellow mystics.

The activities of the In-Betweeners vary as much as the creatures themselves. Many hide in dark places and content themselves with taking the occasional victim from among the swelling ranks of humanity. Some lead double lives, hiding their inhumanity; several have become famous politicians, performers, artists, or criminals. It is rumored that many historical figures, from ancient generals to great poets, have been In-Betweeners.

Many Initiates believe that, despite any good intentions, In-Betweeners are doomed to serve the forces of evil. Occultists blame this on the fact that In-Betweeners don't have a complete soul (see p. 83); some Initiates believe the shapeshifters have no soul at all. Since they are incapable of moving to a higher plane of existence, these creatures are bound by their lusts and base desires, and are eventually dominated by them. Many students of the supernatural disagree, however, and claim that In-Betweeners, despite their incompleteness, have the potential to become a force for good. Some In-Betweeners have joined Voodoo hounfours or Lodge circles, giving further credence to this theory.

Secret Societies

The Red Sects have their own equivalent of Lodges and Voodoo societies. Many masquerade as regular Lodges or *bizongues* (see *The Dark Lodges*, p. 31), infiltrating those organizations to manipulate them. Others are cults that perform ritual murder and torture to gain power. Unlike the *Bokkor*, these societies work in groups, and have a cult mentality, and are often fanatically devoted to their leader or patron spirit. Mayombe societies rely on non-Initiated servants and acolytes, used as cannon fodder or even as potential sacrificial victims. Other servants include politicians, public servants and other people in positions of power.

The organization and secretiveness of these groups vary widely. Some pretend to be religious sects, clubs and community organizations. Others keep their very existence quiet, and meet late at night in remote locations. Some groups are criminal in nature, participating in the drug or slave trade (see pp. 38 and 39). Sometimes, two Mayombe societies run afoul of each other. These encounters usually result in violence, but sometimes the leaders decide to join forces.

Other Servants

Not all servants of the Mayombe are magicians or creatures of magic. Most of their minions are normal people, unwittingly carrying out the dark designs of their overlords.

Drug Lords

The illegal drug trade produces billions of dollars in revenue every year, more than the total budget of many a small country. Most of that money ends up at the top of the criminal food chain, in the hands of the drug lords. The heads of Colombian drug cartels, the crime bosses in the U.S. and the Caribbean, and the smugglers from Jamaica, Haiti and Panama are millionaires or billionaires with enormous influence. Unknown to the press and the authorities, however, a force behind these drug lords subtly pulls their strings.

Almost every crime boss is under the indirect influence of a Corruptor servant, or even an In-Betweeners. Most drug lords are not Initiates, or even fully aware of the existence of supernatural forces (although many are superstitious enough to believe in them). Instead, the Corruptors usually control a trusted advisor or lieutenant. These men and women rise through the ranks of the drug trade with the help of their Initiate or In-Betweeners abilities, and eventually become the power behind the scenes, with their “suggestions” becoming orders. Alternatively, some drug lords end up hiring a *brujo* (a Spanish term that indicates any magician or sorcerer) to hedge their bets. To the surprise of these criminal leaders, the advice and predictions of these brujos are uncannily accurate and effective; eventually, these crime lords rely solely on the word of their “pet witches,” effectively making them the true leaders of the organization. The so-called “witches,” however, are actually Bokkor sorcerers, dedicated to the service of the Corruptors.



Time and time again, the drug lords are arrested or killed — and the drug trade goes on, because the true leadership of the cartels and crime gangs is always in the shadows, manipulating and controlling events from behind the scenes, finding new puppets to replace lost or unreliable ones. Sometimes, the actual leaders of the criminal organizations are supernatural beings — either In-Betweeners, humans possessed by a Corruptor spirit, or even a monstrous Devourer.

Of late, some drug organizations have become increasingly occult-oriented. They have used human sacrifices to gain the favor of their spiritual guides, and have sold drugs with supernatural as well as physical properties. Some of these drugs have allowed evil Mayombe spirits to possess unsuspecting users and reshape their minds and souls with visions of murder and violence.

Fighting the drug trade is very dangerous, even for Initiates. The crime rings have connections with the Mob, street gangs and even guerrilla armies in the Third World. They can afford the best in weapons and high-tech equipment, and their enforcers are brutal and merciless. Worst of all, they count several In-Betweeners and evil Initiates among their ranks.

The Slave Trade

Slavery is illegal in most parts of the world — but it has not ceased to exist. Before, the ostensible purpose of slavery was labor, but there was always an underlying sense of power and grandeur that came from *owning* another human being, of having the power of life and death over him... a power as sickening as it was tempting. Even today, many people long for that power. “White” slavers provide women and children for those who use them to satisfy their cravings. Pleasure has replaced labor as the excuse for slavery. Living play-

New Cambridge: A City of the Shadow War

Described below is New Cambridge, a fictional city on the East Coast. Its organizations and NPCs can be used in any campaign city, or as a model for other cities.

New Cambridge was founded in the early 18th century after several smaller settlements decided to join into one county. The town grew into a full city during the 19th century, when several manufacturing companies set up shop there. Like many other U.S. cities, the prosperity of the 19th and first half of the 20th century had been replaced by urban decay in the 1970s and ‘80s. Today, a large section of the city is in disrepair, troubled by unemployment, crime and discontent. The population in the slums is predominantly black and Hispanic. The police rarely venture there, and are not welcome when they do.

Voodoo in New Cambridge

Most Voodoo Initiates in New Cambridge practice Santeria (see p. 13). Many of the Hispanic citizens are good Catholics, but when confronted with bad luck or paranormal happenings, they often turn to the local santeros. There are ten santeros in the city (all but two of them are First or Second Level Initiates). The santeros work by themselves, and most of them only care about the well-being of the Hispanic community.

Additionally, four (originally six) Initiates of the Loa Lords bizongue (see p. 22) operate in the city. They are waging a quiet war against the local drug trade, and have discovered a powerful evil entity dwelling in the city. The first encounter with the minions of this entity killed two Initiates. One of them continues to fight alongside his companions — as a ghost. The Loa Lords have convinced a couple of the local santeros to lend a hand in the fight, but most of the others are too afraid of the entity and of possible persecution from the Lodges.

A hounfor of the Lucumi society (see p. 18) also operates in New Cambridge. The hounfor has three Initiates and several ordinary members. The Lucumi operates through several community organizations, including the local chapter of the NAACP, two co-op markets, and crime-watcher neighborhood associations. The Lucumi hounfor and the local Lodge Council are at odds over the city’s policies. The Lucumi concentrates most of its efforts on stopping policies that will further damage the African-American community in New Cambridge. They have been contacted by the Loa Lords about the presence of a powerful Corruptor. After conducting a few rituals that produced no evidence of such claims, the Lucumi hounfor has ignored the Loa Lords.

Continued on next page...

New Cambridge (Continued)

The Lodge Presence

The Lodge council of New Cambridge is dominated by the Order of the Golden Dawn. The council leader of New Cambridge, Roger McCormick, is an eighth-degree member of that Lodge. Of the 31 Lodge Initiates in the city, 12 belong to the Order. It is followed by the Roman Lodge, with eight Initiates, and the Enlightened, with four. The council controls the mayor's office, the police department, and the court system, mainly through the Knights of America and the Fraternal Order of the Bears, which are attended by many of the most prominent people in the city. The Roman Lodge dominates the religious life of the city, controlling the churches of all Christian denominations except the Unitarians. The Enlightened Lodge has some influence on local businessmen and controls all federal and state agencies in the city, including the local FBI offices.

A few dozen non-Initiates work directly for the Lodges, mainly as bodyguards, chauffeurs and assistants. The Order of the Golden Dawn also maintains a team of four ex-police officers, ostensibly working in a detective agency. This team acts as troubleshooters and, if necessary, enforcers. One of them is an Initiate spirit warrior; the rest are ordinary people. Most Lodge operations are done through "official" channels, however.

Besides McCormick, five Lodge Initiates sit on the council. Two of them are members of the Order of the Golden Dawn. The Roman and Enlightened Lodges have one representative each. The last seat is filled by a member of the Royalist Lodge.

The council is worried about the climbing crime rate. Even the doctored statistics the Lodges present to the public (the actual crime rate is much worse) show a dramatic increase in violent crimes, especially among the young. To respond to this, the council has expanded the size of the police department, and is planning to "gentrify" low-income neighborhoods by buying out residential buildings, evicting their inhabitants, and building shopping malls and condominiums. The council has investigated the possibility that Corruptor influence is responsible for the rise in violence, but three rituals designed to sense the presence of powerful entities produced no results.

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things can be purchased for money. With the help of the Corruptors, whole networks of white slavers and child molesters have been established across the world. Tens of thousands of children and adolescents disappear every year... and a sizable percentage end up in the hands of the latest generation of flesh peddlers.

At its lowest levels, prostitution has become another form of slavery. Human predators lure and seduce young people and then terrify them into submission, using drugs and violence to break their wills. This slavery goes on in our cities and towns. The laws that make prostitution illegal have achieved little more than preventing its regulation and control, leaving it in the hands of criminals. Prostitutes are also slaves in the sense that their social status is effectively reduced below that of "true" human beings. They are killed with relative impunity, and used without regard to their dignity. These slaves are the currency with which In-Betweeners and the Red Sects purchase the favor of the Corruptors.

Politicians

In the Shadow War, no public figure achieves any real measure of power without some form of mystical backing. Either the would-be leader is a powerful Initiate himself, or he is the puppet (knowingly or otherwise) of an Initiate, In-Betweeners, or occult society. "Independents" don't last long without being snared in a complex web of favors and obligations, whether by human agencies or more powerful, more mysterious forces. The Voodoo bizongues and the Lodges both control their share of politicians (the latter more than the former). So do the Red Sects.

The Corruptors prefer politicians whose words and actions will inspire chaos and violence. Their camp includes ultra-conservatives and revolutionaries, racists (and reverse racists), misogynists and radical feminists, fundamentalists railing about "Satan-spawned" ideas and secular humanists undermining spiritual concepts. Some of the most influential puppets of the Red Sects are among the most vociferous supporters of the war on drugs, and sponsors of the most repressive laws against "criminals," laws often used to violate the rights of innocent people. This spreads even more despair, distrust and hatred. Through the actions of those politicians, the poor and the social outcasts learn to fear the authorities as much as they hate criminals.



Many of these politicians are active servants of the Mayombe. Their rivals suffer mysterious accidents, or are brought down by scandals. They, on the other hand, are unimpeachable — those who try to dig dirt about them find nothing, or unpleasant events make them decide to stop looking. On certain nights of the year, outside the public eye, these powerful leaders gather in hidden places and conduct unspeakable rituals to maintain their power.

Much of the Shadow War hinges on this control of authorities. Despite their powers, Initiates cannot cure the ills of society by themselves; all sides need the power and

influence of politicians, and the struggle to be the force behind a given political leader is as fierce as it is secretive. Many of the sudden reversals in ideology or policy that Senators, mayors and even presidents undergo are the result of a new faction's victory over the previous controllers.

The Police

Most police officers are dedicated people trying to do a dangerous, difficult job despite being overworked, underpaid and distrusted, feared and looked down on by the very people they swear to protect. In their frustration, some cops see themselves as a group separate from the rest of society. This “us-against-them” mentality has all but destroyed the old concept of the policeman as a valued member of the community. The ensuing alienation between the police and the public benefits many factions of the Shadow War, but the Mayombe and the other evil entities have reaped the most rewards from it.

Some officers have become servants of the Corruptors. Several “fraternal orders” of police are fronts for supernatural cults. Through subtle manipulation, the Corruptors widen the gap between police and the population at large. Some acts of “police brutality” are carefully staged, or even elements of sacrificial rituals! Cops are discouraged from going after the true crime bosses, and any investigation that might lead to the discovery of supernatural agencies is cut short. Many cops rebel against those rules, and achieve results despite the interference of their superiors; they become targets for defamation campaigns, or even murder.

Some of the Mayombe are working toward the day when open warfare erupts in the city streets, and police departments become just more armed factions in the ensuing chaos. The Los Angeles riots were a dress rehearsal for a much larger tragedy — unless the Corruptors are stopped, whole cities may burn.

People dealing with (or even working for) police departments may run across these hidden conspiracies. Although the majority of cops are not servants of or even aware of the Corruptors, they will follow reasonable orders from superiors who *are* servants of the Mayombe. By pulling the right strings, the Red Sects can have well-armed and trained SWAT teams and riot squads at their disposal.

Cults

Cults, in the form of secret societies, religious groups, clubs and even openly “satanic” organizations, are all combatants in the Shadow War. The more obvious a cult is, however, the less likely it is to be powerful — unless the publicity is a facade covering a much larger conspiracy by hiding it in the open. Many cults form around a charismatic leader, who may or may not be an Initiate. Some are the creation of idealistic individuals; others are formed just to make money. A few have darker purposes.

If a cult is successful enough, one of the factions in the Shadow War will take an interest in the organization, and try to co-opt or neutralize it. Some cults



New Cambridge (Continued)

A small circle of Lodge rebels operates in New Cambridge. The circle is a mixed band of Initiates totaling six members of the Schismatics, the Servants of Hecate, and the Ophites. Three of the six teach or study at New Cambridge University; one is a journalist at the local paper, and two Servants of Hecate own a small occult bookstore. These Initiates also suspect that an evil entity is secretly controlling the city. They have yet to make contact with the Loa Lords.

The Corruptors

Despite what the Lucumi and the Lodges think, the Corruptors have a firm hold on New Cambridge. Ever since colonial times, evil spirits have played havoc with the inhabitants of the city. Unknown to all but a handful of people, a Dark Lodge brought a Devourer to New Cambridge during the 18th century. The creature has dwelled beneath the city since then, steadily growing in size and power.

Lodge leader Roger McCormick has been corrupted by that Devourer for several years. McCormick was contacted when he was a Third Level Initiate, barely inducted to the Lodge's Second Degree (see p. 54). He was offered more power than he could ever hope to get on his own. Thanks to the Devourer's help, McCormick rose both as an Initiate and a Lodge member, eventually reaching the leadership of the New Cambridge Lodges.

McCormick's intervention has prevented the Lodges' rituals from finding any trace of his master. He has also blocked any police investigation that would link over 70 murders of prostitutes and homeless people over the last ten years. These murders (and some 50 more that were never reported) were committed by the Sendings of the Devourer (see p. 103). The Sendings all look like ragged men with sharp metallic appendages instead of fingers. Occasional sightings have given rise to a whole body of urban legends centering around “Razorfingers.” Tales of Razorfingers have been in circulation for at least a hundred years, and reported sightings are greeted with incredulity by most.

Besides its Sendings, the Devourer controls a number of lesser Corruptor spirits, including a dozen or so Nkisi spirits (see p. 95). A small Red Sect led by an insane native American Initiate lives in the sewer system, occasionally coming out to grab a victim to sacrifice to their dark god. The local drug dealers are servants of other Corruptor spirits that dwell outside the city, and they include two Snake People In-Betweeners, neither of whom accept the leadership of the Devourer.

Continued on next page...

New Cambridge (Continued)

The Devourer's current plans include sparking a race riot in the city. A situation in which police officers will murder an innocent black youth is being carefully plotted, while a dozen minor incidents start building tension. The Lodges' plans for urban renewal are already creating a great deal of discontent among the city's poor. The Lucumi are unwittingly adding fuel to the flames by concentrating on the Lodges. Only the Loa Lords and the rebel Brethren have any chances of discovering and stopping the Devourer's plans.

become very powerful, with large memberships, financial assets, and a core membership of fanatical, dangerous individuals.

The cults that openly claim allegiance to supernatural forces are easy scapegoats for the real contestants in the war. Sometimes, however, a few of these seemingly demented and puny organizations *have* made contact with Something. Several so-called "natural" disasters occurred when a group of deranged or misguided individuals conducted a ritual at the worst possible astrological moment, or played the wrong record backward. Most fear these "wild cards" — except the Corruptors, who don't care where the killings and suffering come from, as long as they keep coming.

Serial Killers

The serial-killer problem is much bigger than even the most fanciful criminologists would have us believe. Over a thousand of these murderers plague North America alone, and many more are scattered around the world. Only a handful are caught every year. The others are too smart or too powerful. Many

are Initiates, using their powers to cover their tracks and prevent capture. Some even work in groups, coordinating their efforts much like a military unit. They are the masters of human sacrifice and torture, and they worship the most depraved spiritual entities.

Some Initiates have stumbled upon evidence of a "Murder Society," a well-organized network of serial killers, complete with safehouses and an "underground railroad." This Murder Society is said to have contacts within many political institutions, law enforcement agencies, and even the CIA and FBI. These contacts have arranged a massive coverup of serial killer activities, masking tens of thousands of killings under the guise of "disappearances." There is even talk of a thriving slave trade which abducts hundreds of "runaways" to "killing farms," where they are released in open areas, hunted down and disposed of in diverse creative and ritualistic ways.

Most occultists scoff at this idea. But many Initiates who have set out to investigate the rumors have disappeared...



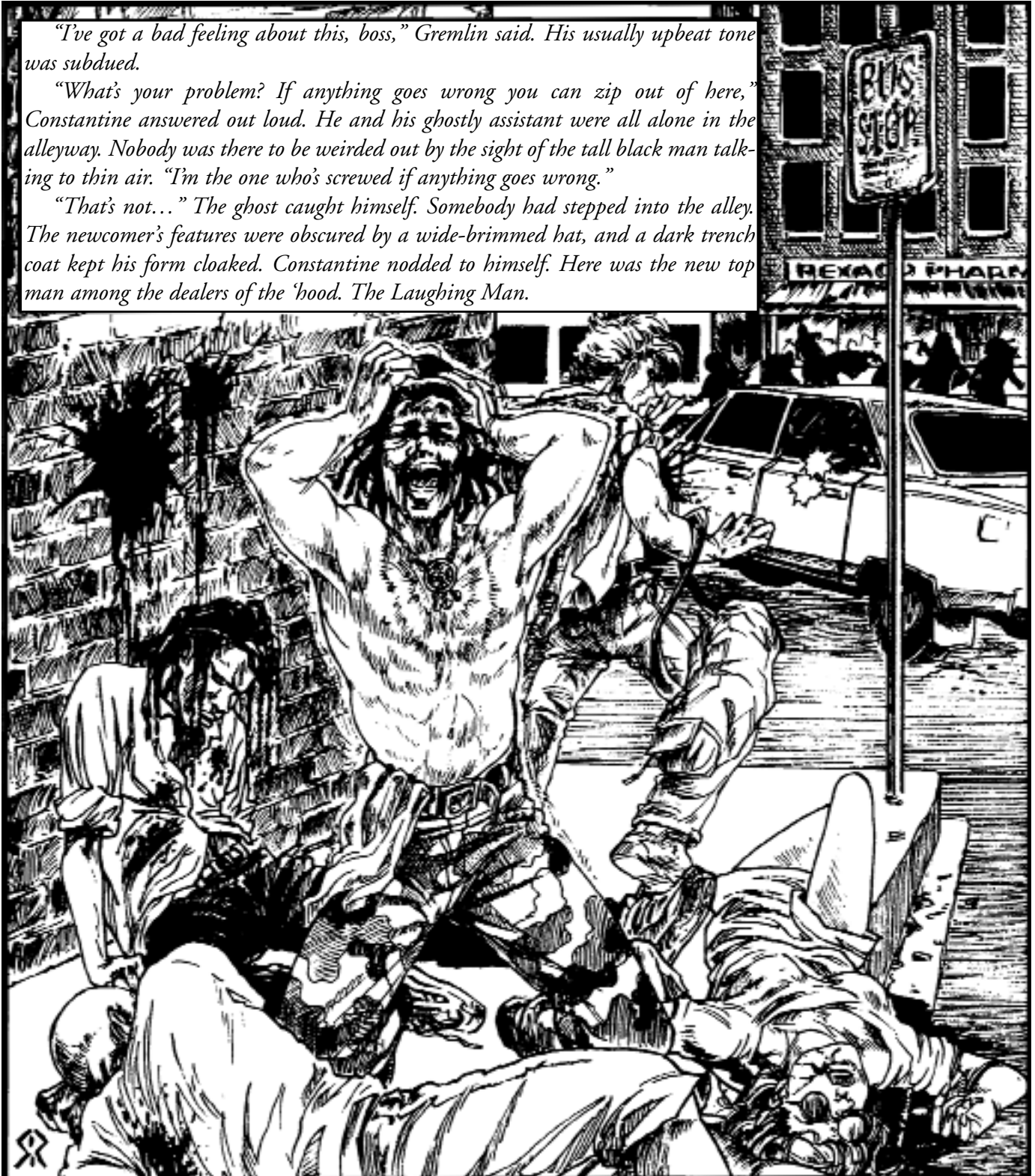
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CHARACTERS

"I've got a bad feeling about this, boss," Gremlin said. His usually upbeat tone was subdued.

"What's your problem? If anything goes wrong you can zip out of here," Constantine answered out loud. He and his ghostly assistant were all alone in the alleyway. Nobody was there to be weirded out by the sight of the tall black man talking to thin air. "I'm the one who's screwed if anything goes wrong."

"That's not..." The ghost caught himself. Somebody had stepped into the alley. The newcomer's features were obscured by a wide-brimmed hat, and a dark trench coat kept his form cloaked. Constantine nodded to himself. Here was the new top man among the dealers of the 'hood. The Laughing Man.



GURPS Magic in the Shadow War

The ritual- and spirit-based system that is used to simulate Voodoo and Lodge magic is in many ways incompatible with the “sword-and-sorcery” magic system used in other *GURPS* worlds. Spells like Zombie and Summon Spirit would contradict some of the basic tenets of the Shadow War game world, and incantations like Fireball and Flesh to Stone have no place in a contemporary dark-fantasy campaign.

If the GM and players decide to add “normal” magic to the campaign, it should be very rare and hard to find. In *GURPS Magic* terms, most of the world is a low-mana area, with pockets of no mana and a few small areas of normal mana. Spirit magic is not mana-dependent, since it uses spiritual forces that exist wherever human souls can. Initiation and Magical Aptitude are different advantages, the first one determining a person’s relation to the spirit world, the second his ability to manipulate magical energies. People could conceivably have both.

Alternatively, the GM can write a list of spells acceptable in the game world, or use the shamanistic magic system described in *GURPS Religion* instead of the one presented in Chapter 3. More players may recognize these magic systems.

The Astral Plane

The astral plane described in *GURPS Psionics* (see p. PS51) does not correspond directly to either the spirit world or the dream world (see sidebar, p. 20). The GM can treat the astral plane as a third “world” where both humans and spirits are occasional visitors, or he can disallow the Astral Projection power altogether. Another possibility is to treat the spirit, astral and dream worlds as “layers” of the same otherworldly realm.

Initiate Power List

Listed below are all the spirit powers available, divided into the Initiation Levels at which they become available.

<i>First Level</i> (p. 59)	<i>Fourth Level</i> (p. 60)
Autotrance	Extra Fatigue
Visualization	Spirit Ally Group
	Spirit Warrior
<i>Second Level</i> (p. 59)	
Channeling	<i>Fifth Level</i> (p. 61)
Mystic Symbol	Faith Healing
Spirit Advisor	Spirit Form
<i>Third Level</i> (p. 60)	<i>Sixth Level</i> (p. 62)
Metabolism Control	Unaging
Spirit Ally	
	<i>Seventh Level</i> (p. 62)
	All of the above.

“You’re the guy who’s been messing around my business,” the Laughing Man said. The smile on the thin, pale face was closer to a corpse’s frozen grimace than to any expression of human emotion. “I figured we could settle this situation right here, between the two of us.”

“Boss...” Gremlin started to say.

“Quiet,” Constantine answered. “I see him.” He started to pray silently. Maman Erzulie, protect your child. Father Oggun, grant me strength. Uncle Legba, open your gates. Protect your child in his time of need.

The Laughing Man took a couple steps toward Constantine. “You really think that little spirit friend of yours is going to stop me? Or your pathetic magic?” Something started twisting beneath the trench coat. A liquid, smacking sound came from beneath the garments — the sound of flesh wetly twisting into a new shape. “You don’t know what you’re messing with, boy.”

Ochosi, steady my aim. Change, lend me your fire. Loas, help me, for my need is great.

Constantine stood his ground as the thing that called itself the Laughing Man flung away the trench coat and stood revealed in all its inhuman, glistening shape. Distant neon lights shone on the wet, skinless surface of the In-Betweener. The abomination that lived off the flesh and souls of living beings. “This is going to be fun,” the creature said, its voice now choked by two rows of serrated teeth.



Ti Malice, grant me your cunning. Damballa, Ayida-Wedo, give me your wisdom. Oggun metal-maker, warrior god, your servant needs you NOW!

Blood pounded in Constantine’s temples. The throbbing reminded him of the Rada drums and the Initiation ceremony at Port-au-Prince, when the child that was Constantine became a man and touched a different plane of reality. Now, as then, he felt the cold presence of his patron, Oggun, becoming one with him and lending him the strength he needed. Power surged through him, and the world slowed to a crawl as his reflexes speeded up.

The Laughing Man had time to look surprised. Constantine was on him like a whirlwind, delivering a flying jump kick that would have snapped a man’s spine in two. The Laughing Man was not human, but it was staggered by the strength of the blow, delivered by an Initiate who was, for all practical purposes, an incarnation of Oggun, the god of iron and war.

The few people out on the street at that hour heard the sounds coming from the alley. They clutched their coats tightly around their bodies and walked away fast. They knew enough not to interfere. It didn’t pay to get involved in the Shadow War.



The setting of *GURPS Voodoo: The Shadow War* allows for an incredible diversity of characters, from intrepid normal people to superhuman shapeshifters. Depending on the style and scope of the campaign, many point totals and character types can be used.

Character Points

The Shadow War setting could be labeled “heroic dark fantasy.” Faced with supernatural threats and world-spanning conspiracies, the PCs should be larger-than-life heroes with just enough power to make themselves noticed, and maybe, if they are lucky and smart enough, to change the world. Alternatively, the GM may want a more low-key beginning. Depending on the scope of the campaign, several starting point totals are possible.

Normals Against the Supernatural — 100 Points

In this setting, the characters are “standard” *GURPS* heroes, above average but not overly powerful. The PCs could be beginning Initiates, or normal people encountering the supernatural for the first time. The GM has to be careful about the sort of challenges he throws at the party, unless he plans to run short-lived campaigns with shorter-lived characters. The protagonists should be largely ignorant of the Shadow War... too much knowledge can be lethal if they are not powerful enough to protect themselves.

In the Front Lines — 150-200 Points

At this point total, the heroes can be Initiates (probably no higher than Third Level) with a small assortment of rituals and special powers, or very competent or experienced non-Initiates. Voodoo priests can easily be built and played for this total. The PCs will know (or quickly discover) some of the intricacies of the Shadow War, and may live long enough to learn more, and even to hinder the plans of the Corruptors.

Spirit Warriors — 250-300 Points

The characters are Fourth or Fifth Level Initiates, with a full assortment of spirit powers, rituals and skills, or nonmystics with extraordinary attributes and skills. The GM might even consider allowing In-Betweeners PCs (see p. 49), supernatural beings who for some reason have decided to fight on the side of humankind. (For a campaign in which all the PCs are In-Betweeners, see p. 123.) The campaign could also include ghost characters (see p. 53). A spirit warrior campaign can be considered Cinematic (see p. 117); in this and other cinematic campaigns, GMs may consider raising the disadvantage totals to -80 points, or a single disadvantage of *any* value.

Spirit Masters — 400-500 Points

At this point level, the PCs can be very accomplished houngans or mambos, In-Betweeners, super-powerful spirit warriors, ghosts, or other influential participants in the Shadow War. Many of the contending factions of the war will view the characters’ actions — and their very existence — as a threat, and will force the PCs to take sides to survive. This point total is good for Cinematic campaigns that take the PCs straight into the heart of the conflict.

Psionics in the Shadow War

Psionics, as described in the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Psionics*, can be used more or less freely in the world of *GURPS Voodoo*. Initiates of the Third Level and up are effectively psis, due to the Empathy advantage and their intuitive, almost pre-cognitive abilities. Psis can be viewed as following an alternate path of Initiation, and can become active participants in the Shadow War.

To assimilate psis into the setting, a few rules on the interactions between psionics and the spirit world should be set up. Described below are a set of optional rules. The GM can adapt these rules to suit his campaign, or use his own. These are very general guidelines, and do not cover all the possible interactions between psi and spirit powers, which fall outside the scope of this book.

Suggested Powers and Power Levels

Some psi powers are more appropriate to the Shadow War setting than others. Astral Projection, ESP, Telepathy and Psychic Vampirism can fit in very well, although Power levels of 15 or higher should be discouraged or not allowed, to prevent psis from dominating the campaign. Psychokinesis and Electrokinetics are less appropriate, except at relatively low levels (Power 10 or less). GMs should not allow Teleportation, as it doesn’t work with the world concept.

This, of course, assumes that the Voodoo campaign is as described in Chapter 1. If the GM mixes elements of different campaign worlds (see the sidebars on pp. 116-123), he can pick and choose from any number of psi abilities, super powers and other strange powers to make the combination that fits his world view.

Psi and Spirits

Characters with Psi Sense can become aware of spiritual entities. This requires an active skill roll, however. Spirits wishing to avoid detection resist using their Wills (roll a Quick Contest between the two). Someone with Astral Sight (see p. PS11) will automatically detect spirit entities within his range. A character using Astral Projection will also see all spiritual entities within his line of sight — but most spirits will react poorly to this intrusion into their privacy. Astral travelers can interact with both spirits and Initiates who have entered the astral plane using the Spirit Form power.

CHARACTER TYPES

Artist

Caribbean artists have become famous worldwide. Many Haitians have used Voodoo motifs, from reproductions of *veve* ceremonial drawings to paintings or sculptures depicting Voodoo ceremonies, zombies and other mythical elements. Art creates powerful symbols, and in a world where magic exists, these symbols can produce spectacular effects, for good or ill. Some artists may be Initiates without realizing it, tapping into the spirit world for inspiration, and perhaps falling victim to forces they have contacted without understanding.

By the same token, many Western artists have traveled to the Caribbean in search of inspiration. They may find more than they bargained for.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Some artists have Empathy and Acute Vision. The fortunate ones will have a Patron to support them in their quest for fame and fortune. Most, however, will have Poverty until they are “discovered.” Then they will earn good Reputations and maybe a lot of money. Common flaws in artists include Alcoholism, Lecherousness and Manic-Depressive.

Skills: Artist, Sculpting, or both. Many artists have some professional or craft skills to supplement their income.

Charlatan

Most people who claim to have paranormal abilities are either deluded or fakes. The latter use tricks, performing skills and other con-man tools to fool the unwary and take their money. Unlike the stage magician (see *Magicians*, p. 49), the charlatan wants people to believe he has supernatural powers. This character can be, among other things, a medium-for-hire, a phony houngan, or a “psychic pal.” Some charlatans use their claims of paranormal powers to gain influence. Some might even be cult or religious leaders who are in the “business” for money and power. In the world of the Shadow War, charlatans always risk becoming involved in supernatural conflicts. For instance, if one of their clients has a serious problem that requires the services of a true Initiate, the false mystic may find himself in over his head. Some supernatural forces may also take a dim view of a mortal who takes their names in vain, and make their feelings known forcefully.

An amusing variant of this character is the Initiate who makes his living peddling false magicks, unaware that he has *real* powers. The Mayombe are very likely to discover his new talent and exploit it in the most destructive way possible. When his predictions start coming true, or he starts having real encounters with ghosts and spirits, his reputation as a con man may make it harder for him to find help. (Whoopi Goldberg’s character in the movie *Ghost* is a good example.)

Advantages and Disadvantages: Charisma and Voice are ideal to impress the gullible. Besides the almost-mandatory Greed, many con men have Enemies, either former victims or law enforcement agencies. Some charlatans are not complete fakes; they may have a few levels of psionic power or one or two levels of Initiation, and simply exaggerate and flaunt their powers to increase their wealth and influence.

Skills: Acting, Bard, Fast-Talk, Performance, Sleight of Hand and Ventriloquism are important abilities for maintaining the illusion. High-tech charlatans may have Electronics (Special

Effects) or Engineer (Special Effects). Most charlatans will have some level of Occultism, limited by their disbelief.

Cop

Police officers and detectives are very likely to become involved in the Shadow War. Their link to the streets places them right in the secret battleground of the Mayombe and the Initiates. Some cops may discover evidence of ritual murders and occult links to several crimes — only to be taken off the case. Dogged investigators suspecting a cover-up may discover that supernatural beings are in charge of the local PD. The police officers’ training and weapons may give them a small advantage when dealing with the supernatural, but they are often the least likely to accept that what they are facing cannot be explained away.

In some Third-World countries, policemen often act as a force of political oppression, and make better evil NPCs than player characters. But many are dedicated professionals who have to deal with political bosses, abusive foreign tourists that they must not offend, and a populace that distrusts them, not to mention well-armed criminals.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Legal Enforcement Powers will vary widely, from 5 points for U.S. cops to 15 points for the secret police in some countries. Some cops have Empathy and Intuition, which could put them on the path toward Initiation.

Skills: Area Knowledge, Criminology, Law and Streetwise. American cops will know Guns (Pistol and Shotgun), Shortsword (for billy clubs), and Electronics Operation (Communications). Many South American police officers use submachine guns and other paramilitary equipment.



Cultist

A member of a small and exclusive religious or pseudoreligious group, the cultist will usually believe in the supernatural, but more often than not will have a distorted view of the invisible world. Some Initiates have organized their own cults, using their mystical abilities to impress and awe their followers. Many cults have no direct link to the spirit world, but a Mayombe usually hovers in the background near violent or criminal ones. Many cultists withdraw from the mainstream world, or lead double lives. Cult leaders commonly foster an “us-versus-them” mentality among members, and a sense that the cultists have access to truths that the rest of the world cannot or will not understand.

Many cults are no more harmful than any other religious organization. Others brainwash members into surrendering all their material goods, frequently into the hands of the cult’s leadership. And darker cults commit atrocities in the name of diabolic entities — some of which may be real. In the Shadow War, many cults are pawns of either the Corruptors or the Lodges. The Mayombe sometimes take on the attributes of Judeo-Christian demons to ensnare would-be satanists. Some Lodges find it useful to keep a cult or two “on retainer,” controlling their leaders and using the cult as “muscle,” to commit crimes that are hard to trace back to the Lodges themselves. Note that most Voodoo hounfours are not cults; they have ties to a larger community, and are less exclusive than a true cult. The bizongue secret societies and the Lodges can be considered cults, however.

Cult brainwashing techniques include a starch-rich diet (which leaves people in a weakened state), drugs and “head games” designed to erode the member’s individuality. These experiences could trigger spontaneous Initiation in some cultists.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Cult leaders will often have Charisma, Voice and a good Appearance. Many are low-level Initiates. Cult members tend to have Fanaticism and Duties to the cult. Some have Gullibility or Weak Wills. Their dedication to the cult can sometimes contribute to their Absent-Mindedness. More extreme cultists will have several Delusions (“Our leader is the Messiah” or “We are the Elect of the Lord”). Some Delusions (“We are the warriors of Asmodeus”) might turn out to be true, although probably not in the way the cultist believes.

Skills: Cults often teach their members a few Craft skills to make the group self-sufficient and to produce salable items to supplement the cult’s income. Cultists may know some sort of Theology, although sometimes the teachings of the cult are such nonsensical and contradictory babble that they count more as Quirk than as skill!

Drug Dealer

In the streets of the inner city, more and more people turn to the drug trade to survive. The temptation of quick money is almost overwhelming; 16-year-olds have the choice of working at the local burger joint for minimum wage, or becoming a “mule” (drug courier) and making hundreds of dollars a day. The wealth and dangerous reputation of a drug dealer make him a respected (or at least feared) member of the community. The other side of the coin, of course, is that the dealer makes his money from the destruction of lives, and that his “career” is a hazardous and often short-lived one. In the world of the Shadow War, dealers are ultimately the pawns of the Mayombe and the Red Sects, but this connection is usually indirect. Drug dealers are more likely to become involved with Voudounistas, evil Initiates, and In-Betweeners, both as associates and enemies.

An ex-dealer PC who now works for a bizongue or other beneficent secret society could act as an infiltrator and pretend to continue his criminal career while he looks for information on the Mayombe. Alternatively, GMs and players who wish to explore the dark side of urban life can run a campaign centered on unrepentant dealers who become aware of the hidden forces controlling their world and who try to join or control them.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Street-bred dealers could have Combat Reflexes, High Pain Thresholds and Toughness. Successful dealers will have a good Reputation on the street, and even some degree of Status, as well as Wealth. This is balanced by a negative Reputation among law enforcement groups and Enemies (rival dealers). “Made” men (full-fledged members of a crime family) will have a Patron in the mob or the drug cartels. Dealers who acquire an Addiction to the merchandise don’t last long in the business. A near-death experience (an overdose, or a murder attempt, for example) could Initiate the dealer, opening his mind to a whole new world of dangers and opportunities. What he does with this knowledge is up to the player.

Skills: Streetwise is essential. Survival (Urban), Area Knowledge of the city’s seedier zones and Running are very common. Most dealers have at least a couple of weapon skills.

Expatriate

A common character in adventure stories is the American or European national who has made his life in an exotic foreign land. The Caribbean is full of these colorful characters, men and women who have “gone native” and often act as helpful guides (or opportunistic exploiters) of tourists, missionaries, explorers and other newcomers. The reasons for this exile in a foreign land can be many: love of adventure, a feeling of inadequacy in the “real” world, a shady past, or dangerous political activities. The person could be hiding from the authorities of his native country, or living in self-imposed exile after some tragedy he refuses to mention. He may have grown to love and respect the people of his new home, or he may be an overt or covert racist, paternalistic or contemptuous of the natives.



Expatriates can act as comic relief, or they can be useful additions to an adventuring party. Their years among people with strange customs and beliefs may have left them with enough mysterious beliefs to have an open mind about the supernatural — or they may even be full believers or Initiates. There are many stories about “white houngangs,” Westerners who settled in Haiti and learned the secrets of Voodoo. Some are obvious charlatans exploiting tourists who want to see a “real” Voodoo ceremony but prefer their houngangs to be English-speaking whites. Others may be everything they claim to be, and more.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Romantic expatriates can have dark Secrets and Enemies. Their years in the islands may have brought them to build a network of Contacts, which might give them Reputations as information sources. Many exiles are simply Lecherous or suffering from diverse Addictions, all easily satisfied in foreign lands with enough money and charm. Their tall tales about their life in the tropics could be the result of Compulsive Lying or Delusions, or might be the plain truth!

Skills: The archetypal expatriate is highly skilled in Area Knowledge, Carousing, Sex Appeal, Streetwise and even Occultism. Many are ex-military, with a good assortment of combat skills, while others are former or practicing criminals with several Thief/Spy skills.

Gang Member

Street gangs have progressed from the rebellious youths of *West Side Story* to well-armed violent groups. Hailed in some quarters as the defenders and representatives of their neighborhoods (they are a political force in some cities), they are feared for their involvement in drug and weapon trafficking, protection rackets and other criminal activity. In some ways, gangs mimic secret societies, with strict initiation rites and oaths of secrecy and mutual assistance — oaths enforced with deadly violence.

Many gangs are unwitting pawns of the Corruptors, used to further terror and instability, manipulating children into killing children. Some gang members have turned their back on all spiritual matters. Others have followed twisted and perverted forms of old traditions, effectively playing into the hands of the Mayombe. But there are exceptions; some gangs are formed for self-defense, and sometimes an Initiate is at hand to guide these would-be warriors.

Ex-gang members, like ex-drug dealers (see p. 47) also make viable PCs, with the connections, street smarts and credibility to get along in the urban jungle; this can be leavened with occult knowledge and Initiate powers. The Loa Lords (see p. 22) have many contacts among street gangs, since many of them started out as (or continue to be) gang members.

Advantages and Disadvantages: A gang member can treat his gang as an Ally Group or Patron, depending on his status in it. All gang members owe a -10- or -15-point Duty to their gang, and violations of this can bring very nasty consequences. The police and rival gangs can be taken as Enemies.

Skills: Gang members will have at least one or two Combat/Weapon skills. Some are accomplished martial artists, but most make do with knives and guns. Other skills include Savoir-Faire (Gangs), Streetwise, Survival (Urban), and diverse Thief/Spy skills. The character's Area Knowledge skill will also let him determine the "turfs" of rival gangs.



"Gifted" Child

These are young children who have somehow acquired Initiate powers (see p. 58). The psychic child is a common theme in horror fiction; usually abuse or other traumatic events trigger latent powers or open the child's mind to the supernatural. Alternatively, trauma might awaken a past life's personality, and the child might share the memories (and Initiate powers) of his past self. Roleplaying a 30-year-old Initiate from an ancient culture who wakes up inside a child's body could be a challenge!

Children will usually have below-average physical and mental stats (refer to the table on p. B14 to determine the base attributes of a child character). However, a little child who had the Spirit Warrior power (see p. 61) might be able to throw a full-grown man through a plate-glass window! More importantly, children are little more than property in the eyes of the law, and will be at the mercy of adults who have total control over their lives (and sometimes even their deaths). Like a slave, a child has to learn to manipulate the situation to his advantage; unable to escape the control of adults, he has to outwit them.

Runaway children with Initiate powers are more closely related to the Homeless character type (see below). In this case their situation is compounded; not only are the authorities looking for them, but on the streets they are at the mercy of all the monsters (human or otherwise) who prey on the young. In the same vein, a street urchin, raised on the streets and well-trained in thievery and other questionable skills, would fit admirably in the Shadow War world.

For inspiration on roleplaying children in horror campaigns, read Stephen King's *It* and *The Talisman*, and the short story *The Body* (which inspired the movie *Stand by Me*).

Advantages and Disadvantages: The GM may allow points for the disadvantage of playing a small child. Use the Youth disadvantage on p. B29, but remove the -6-point limit; an 8-year-old, for example would have a -20-point disadvantage. Other children can be Allies or Enemies, but unless their point totals are also exceptional, their point worth will be minimal. A child with an adult's mind might suffer from Split Personality (see p. 56 for further uses of that disadvantage). Very young children, or street children, may also suffer Illiteracy.

Skills: Children should not have many points invested in skills (the GM should enforce the suggested age-determined point limits on p. B43). Also, most skills will be inappropriate for young children. Most Combat/Weapon, Social and Craft skills are unrealistic for little kids, although 10- to 14-year-olds may learn a fair assortment by that age. The Reawakened advantage, however, can help justify just about anything.

Homeless

The cities of North America are filled with thousands of people who, for any number of reasons, have no place to live. Young runaways with nowhere to go, older people with nobody to help them and the mentally ill dwell in makeshift shelters, condemned buildings, abandoned subway tunnels or even the sewers. Preyed upon by criminals and persecuted by the authorities, many suffer from mental illness or diverse addictions. Most don't survive for long.

In the *GURPS Voodoo* world, the homeless are often exposed to the supernatural conflicts of the Shadow War. They have the dubious honor of witnessing amazing sights, from In-Betweeners that crave human flesh to the "miracles" of powerful urban shamans. Since nobody will believe them, the homeless must deal with these situations as best they can. Some of them become Initiates spontaneously, and try to defend their fellows from the depredations of their enemies. Recently, some



unconventional Voodoo societies (see *The Protectors* and *The Loa Lords*, pp. 21 and 22) have started recruiting new Initiates from among the most downtrodden classes.

Homeless PCs can be anything from carefree independents to tragic victims. Other possible “archetypes” include Viet Nam vets suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcoholic “bums” and street children. A more unusual type of homeless character is the modern-day hermit, a mystic who has chosen to live in squalor in the city, much as his ancient counterparts would go into the desert. These urban mystics may be very powerful Initiates under their ragged clothing and apparently miserable lifestyle.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Most homeless people suffer from Poverty and low Status levels. They also share a Social Stigma, ranging from -5 points (second-class citizens, the objects of pity), to -15 points (feared and shunned outsiders that “decent” citizens avoid at all costs). Many homeless people also suffer severe Delusions, Addictions and other mental problems such as Flashbacks (see p. B240) and Voices (see p. 56). Initiation is a strong possibility.

Skills: Some homeless pick up Streetwise and Survival (Urban). Area Knowledge of the city (usually limited to lower-class neighborhoods) is also common. Many homeless have skills from their previous lives.

In-Betweeners

These beings do not quite belong to either the material or the spirit world. The majority are shape-changers, able to shift between two or more forms, most of which are inhuman and grotesque. All are physically superior to humans and very hard to kill by normal means. For the most part, they lead lonely lives, often hunting normal humans for amusement or sustenance. Damned by many religions, feared as monsters by most humans, In-Betweeners can be interesting, and often tragic, characters.

Before allowing In-Betweeners into a campaign, the GM should make sure the creature will fit in with the rest of the group — or at least that it will be able to fool the other PCs (not necessarily the players) into accepting it as a normal human being. An interesting subplot would have the other PCs befriend the In-Betweeners and then learn to their horror that he is a being

that they have sworn to hunt down. If the presence of such a character would unbalance the party or cause problems with the main thrust of the campaign, however, the GM should not allow it.

More ideas on running an In-Betweeners campaign, or games with such creatures as some of the PCs, can be found on p. 123.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Besides the superhuman powers and weaknesses, described in Chapter 4, most In-Betweeners’ very existence is a dangerous Secret. Enemies will be common, and Patrons will not hesitate to demand a tough Duty in return for support. Some In-Betweeners may reach high levels of Status and Wealth in human society. Their allegedly soulless nature is often “proved” by many nasty disadvantages, including Bloodlust and Sadism, although PC In-Betweeners trying to control their natures may have strong Senses of Duty, Codes of Honor, Honesty and even Pacifism.

Skills: Most In-Betweeners live for hundreds of years, accumulating any number of skills. Acting and Disguise are very common and useful to In-Betweeners trying to lead normal lives.

Journalist

Many of the events of the Shadow War — gangland murders, bizarre cult activities and dubious political maneuverings — are newsworthy. Reporters digging to uncover the true story may discover things too incredible to print, except in the more sensationalistic tabloids. Some of their street contacts may turn out to be Initiates of any of the factions of the war, or secretly In-Betweeners monsters. A reporter may discover that he has been manipulated, that someone has been feeding him information to bring down a political figure who was in the way, to discredit a police officer who was getting too close to the truth, or to publish inflammatory reports that cause violent demonstrations. Attempts to find out who was pulling his strings may take the journalist into the world’s supernatural underside.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Journalists may have their employers as Patrons, with their power and frequency of appearance determined by the Reputations of the journalists. Even the most famous journalists tend to have average or low levels of Wealth — unless they work in television, in which case the money’s good, but their Appearance should be as well; Charisma helps, too. Investigative reporters quickly accumulate Contacts and Enemies. Alertness, Danger Sense, Empathy and Intuition are all useful and commonly found in cinematic journalists. Addictions, Impulsiveness and Overconfidence are also common.

Skills: Research and Writing are basic. Journalists on the crime beat soon pick up Streetwise and perhaps a smattering of Criminology or Law. TV reporters sometimes are more actors than journalists, with higher skills in Bard and Performance than in anything related to discovering the truth. Investigative reporters may find Detect Lies and even Shadowing and Stealth useful. Visual reporters may have good levels in Electronics Operation (Video Camera) and Photography.

Magician

There are two types of magician in the Shadow War setting: the true users of magic and the stage magicians who fool the eye with skill and special effects. There is, however, a great deal of overlap. In the world of the Shadow War, many if not most stage magicians are Initiates with ties to some mystical organization.



Their constant travels around the world, and the fact that they can easily explain away unusual occurrences around them as tricks or publicity stunts, make them ideal agents and enforcers for the Lodges, Voudounistas, the Red Sects and other occult societies. Unknown to the general public, many stage magicians use spirit allies to help them accomplish the seemingly impossible. Of late, some Lodge-backed magicians have worked to discredit psychics and occult phenomena, helping cover up the powers that gave them fame and fortune.

Non-Initiate stage magicians are baffled by some tricks of their supernaturally-gifted colleagues. Some of them may try too hard to discover secrets and find that real magic *does* exist! A stage magician with an impressive bag of tricks might make an interesting addition to a party of mostly supernatural PCs; if their rituals or spirit familiars fail them, a little old-fashioned leg-erdemain and skill might do the trick.

“True” magicians tend to use ceremonial magic (see sidebar, p. 66), as opposed to shamans and witches (see p. 52), who rely on spontaneous magic. Those who aren’t affiliated with the Lodges usually learned their trade from one of the mysterious hermits (see sidebar, p. 33). Lodge-trained magicians are often highly educated in both mundane and arcane subjects.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Stage magicians are extraordinary individuals even if they aren’t Initiates. Common among them are advantages like Alertness, Combat Reflexes (allowing them to react quickly to the unexpected), Double-Jointed and Peripheral Vision. Charisma and good Appearance levels are helpful in gaining public recognition. Highly successful magicians can be Very Wealthy or Filthy Rich, but for every one of those there are dozens if not hundreds of Struggling or Poor magicians. Two rival magicians can be Enemies (and imagine the point cost of an Enemy magician who happens to be a powerful In-Between-er).

Skills: Escape, Lockpicking, Pickpocket and Sleight of Hand are the basic “tools of the trade.” Acting, Bard and Performance are necessary to entertain the public between tricks. Some mundane magicians may have a fair knowledge of Occultism, even if it’s only the usual (and distorted) information available to the

general public. Acrobatics and Jumping can be useful for some of the more physically challenging tricks. Stage magicians who include animals in their tricks will need Animal Handling. Stealth may help the magician sneak by the viewers while their attention is diverted by a carefully contrived distraction.

Mambo/Houngan

These Voodoo practitioners (also known as babalawos, santeros and obeah men) are a combination of healer, priest, mediator and even policeman. Houngans serve both the loas and their communities. In *GURPS Voodoo*, their supernatural abilities are very real, and their rituals and powers allow them to perform incredible feats, from causing deadly “accidents” to curing injuries and disease. In many places across the Caribbean and in the U.S., Voodoo priests are respected

and revered by large segments of the community. The growing fierceness of the Shadow War has forced many of these Voudounistas to abandon their relatively safe and stable lives and enter the fray with all the power they can muster.

Houngans and mambos are among the central characters of this game setting. Their powers and mystical abilities are detailed in Chapter 3, and the loas they worship are described in Chapter 4. Keep in mind that most Voodoo priests are not dedicated sorcerers with great ambitions and ideals, but surprisingly mundane men and women who use their talents much as a gifted mechanic uses his. The ones who become involved in the struggle against the Mayombe are extraordinary individuals even among that select group. When confronted with the monstrous denizens of the world of the Shadow War, most houngans will be uniquely prepared to deal with them.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Most houngans and mambos have the Initiation advantage, usually at the First to Third Level (see p. 55). They may also have several Initiate powers (see pp. 59-60), including Channeling, Faith Healing and Spirit Allies. Extraordinary houngans and mambos may also have the Spirit Warrior advantage.

In most Haitian, Hispanic and West Indian communities, they have a good Reputation and even some degree of Status. Some Voodoo priests become Wealthy, but most have low to average Wealth levels — the loas frown on the use of powers for personal aggrandizement. Other people may regard these practitioners with a mixture of contempt and fear (-2 to -4 Reputation for unbelievers). Their position in their communities may allow Voudounistas to have Allies, Ally Groups, Contacts and Patrons. In the U.S., most houngans will belong to a minority group (with the accompanying Social Stigma), and may find many Enemies among the Lodges, local authorities and animal-rights activists (most Voodoo cults practice animal sacrifice, to the horror of people who can’t stomach the use of mice in experiments).

Skills: Theology (Voodoo or a more specialized variety like Santeria, Voudoun or Obeah) and Ritual Magic (see p. 57) are essential; Theology will double as Occultism when dealing

with entities that are part of Voodoo belief, but houngans who have encountered foreign supernatural threats may pick up general Occultism as well. Most Voodoo priests have good skill levels in Bard, Dancing and Performing, as well as one or two Musical Instruments. Their knowledge in herbal medicine can give them some degree of First Aid or even Physician — and some Voodoo practitioners also keep up with Western medicine and may be full-fledged doctors as well as “medicine men.” Voodoo priests are also very knowledgeable about the use of Poisons and may use them instead of magic to deal with the community’s enemies. The creation of zombies (see p. 80) actually requires both exotic nerve poisons and magic rituals.

Medium/New Ager

Spiritualists are a semi-independent group of occultists with their own methods of contacting spirits. Long suppressed or ridiculed by Lodge-backed scientists and journalists, many mediums continue plying their mystical trade to this day. While many are fakers or self-deluded (see *Charlatans*, p. 46), others are true Initiates of often surprising power. Mediums use seances, ouija boards and other methods to contact spirits; sometimes their mystical lines may hook entities capable of dragging them into the Shadow War.

A subset of this type is heir to the 19th- and early-20th-century parlor spiritualist — the New Age channeler or amateur occultist. Like their predecessors, channelers are plagued by impostors and the scorn of Western thought. Their New Age ideals lead them to explore different traditions of mysticism, which may bring a meeting or even an alliance with Voudounistas, renegade Brethren or other mystics. Some New Agers have contacts among neopagans and witches (see *Shamans/Witches*, p. 52). Of course, the New Ager’s somewhat rosy view of the spirit world and the afterlife will be brutally shattered by his first encounter with a Corruptor, or, worse, an In-Between monster!

Advantages and Disadvantages: Most legitimate mediums have the First or Second Level of Initiation and the Channeling and Spirit Advisor advantages. Dilettantes may have high Wealth levels. Even Initiate mediums may have Delusions of grandeur or may overestimate their power, resulting in Overconfidence or even Megalomania! Some New Agers have a Sense of Duty toward all living things, a Vow of vegetarianism, and an over-optimistic view of life that can become a full-fledged Gullible disadvantage.

Skills: Occultism is likely. A few will know Ritual Magic and a few rituals, although most will rely on Initiate powers. Several Theology skills specializing in cults, “mystery religions” and other “light” occult organizations are common. Many New Agers are successful professionals in diverse fields, with high skill levels.



Some are also political activists, with Diplomacy, Leadership and Politics.

Parapsychologist

This subset of the scientist type (see p. 52) is open-minded enough to seriously attempt to understand unexplained phenomena. Although several so-called parapsychologists are actually professional debunkers knowingly or unwittingly controlled by the Lodges, most are sincere individuals who brave professional ridicule to explore the unknown. Regrettably, they, too, may bring along too many prejudices and a refusal to accept that which cannot be seen or measured — a refusal that won’t protect them.

Most parapsychologists try to conduct experiments in controlled environments. Unfortunately, most Initiates are unwilling to cooperate to the degree that science demands. Also, parapsychologists often try to find explanations that do not rely on such unscientific concepts as “gods” or “spirits.” The words “noncorporeal manifestation of symbolic psychic expression” sound better to them than “loa.” Also, these researchers rarely entertain the notion that these noncorporeal manifestations may be able to reach out and *hurt* somebody, and that studying something is no protection against its attacks. Some parapsychologists are rudely awakened to the realities of the Shadow War, however, and they trade their microphones, videotapes and motion detectors for religious symbols and strings of colored beads.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Some parapsychologists can be spontaneous Initiates — in fact, their skepticism combined with their power may drive spirits away, thereby “proving” their nonexistence! Others may have enough Intuition to go on with their research even if they discover no tangible results at first. Any researcher who conclusively proves that the spirit world exists will automatically make an Enemy of the Lodges, which will methodically destroy his career and his life — unless the parapsychologist makes some good Allies or Contacts among the occult community. Most will have a rich Patron or Wealth of their own — it’s hard to get funding for non-standard science.

Skills: Researchers often have Physician and Psychology, which allow them to separate the unexplainable from the merely pathological. To try to capture the occult, many develop a high skill in diverse Electronics Operation (Sensor Systems) skills, as well as Photography. Some will have a working knowledge of Occultism, even if they don’t believe in the supernatural.

Priest

This character type covers the priests of “mainstream” religions, especially Christianity. The magician-priests of Voodoo are described under *Mambo/Houngan*, (p. 50). Priests of other “primitive” religions are described in *Shamans/Witches*, (p. 52). Priests of any religion have the potential to be linked to the supernatural, thus earning a place in the Shadow Wars. Initiate Christian priests are a possibility, but may be controversial in some gaming groups. In the context of the game, Initiate priests use their powers by appealing to whatever power they recognize, from saints and angels to the Supreme Deity, which enable them to perform exorcisms, blessings or other “miracles.” The Catholic Church treats all claims of miraculous feats with extreme caution. (In the world of the Shadow War, the Roman Lodge has huge influence in *all* Christian organizations, and Initiate priests are usually quickly co-opted into the Lodge or admonished to abandon their powers.)

Advantages and Disadvantages: Besides Clerical Investment, priests have a Duty to their church and several Vows. Religious Intolerance used to be common, and still is in some quarters.

Skills: Theology, of course. Many modern-day priests also take courses in Psychology and Sociology, the better to deal with the problems of their parishioners. Bard, Leadership, Performance and Writing are all useful, as well. Initiate Christian priests who use prayers and religious rites to heal, exorcise evil spirits, and similar “miracles” may have the equivalent of the Ritual Magic and Path skills (see pp. 57 and 67).

Prostitute

Prostitutes of both sexes are a permanent fixture in low-income neighborhoods throughout the world. Many prostitutes are teenage runaways who have fallen prey to pimps who enslave and abuse them. Their lives are short and brutal, frequently ending in drug overdoses, illness or violence. In the Shadow War setting, prostitutes also have to contend with predatory In-Betweeners and evil cultists looking for human sacrifices. The authorities seldom work very hard to solve the murder of a prostitute, and disappearances are rarely reported, let alone investigated.

Besides being ideal victims, however, the exposure to horror and violence can push these young men and women into spontaneous Initiation (see p. 58). Some of the new Voodoo societies and rebel Lodges are trying to protect and recruit prostitutes, denying victims to the servants of the Corruptors. Former prostitutes can be cynical, bitter people trying to forget their pasts, or they may have become stronger people from their ordeals.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Appearance can range from average to Beautiful or Very Beautiful (good looks don't last long in the Life, however). A pimp can be a minor Patron, but usually he is simply someone the hookers owe a Duty to. Many streetwalkers have one or more Addictions, often forced upon them by their “employers.” Independents who refuse to work for a pimp may find themselves with a nasty Enemy. A Social Stigma (second-class citizen) may also be appropriate.



Skills: Erotic Art, Sex Appeal and Streetwise. Street-smart pros may also have a Weapons skill or two (usually Pistol and Knife), Running, Survival (Urban) and Shadowing.

Refugee

Cuban exiles, Haitian boat-people and other people fleeing their native lands for fear of persecution or poverty are a common sight on the news. The refugee is faced with the daunting task of starting over, where the language and the customs are different and the local populace may be hostile. In the U.S., most of these refugees cannot enter the country legally. Those who manage to get past the Coast Guard or the Border Patrol usually have to work for minimum wage, are often exploited or abused and always live in fear of immigration agencies.

Some refugees are Initiates, either through their ordeals in escaping their country of origin, or true shamans or houngans who had to flee persecution at home. Upon arrival in the U.S., they will discover that many of the evil entities they knew at home are also here.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Refugees are usually Poor or Dead Broke. They may suffer a Social Stigma ranging from Minority to Outsider. Immigration agencies can be Enemies.

Skills: Refugees come from all walks of life; their varied Professional or Craft skills will reflect their backgrounds.

Scientist/Professor

Due to the centuries-long efforts of the Lodges (see p. 23) to discredit mysticism and spiritualism, the scientific and academic communities and the occult have an uneasy relationship at best. Still, researchers may come across events and situations that Western science cannot explain. Besides parapsychologists (see p. 51), scientists likely to become embroiled in the Shadow War include: anthropologists (field research on primitive cultures, or gangs, or the underworld, may anger an Initiate, with terrifying results); archaeologists (digging up the wrong ancient artifact can be harmful to your health); physicists (experiments in advanced quantum mechanics and particle physics may attract spirit entities); and doctors, especially psychiatrists, who may find their skills insufficient to save patients targeted by supernatural forces.

Once confronted with evidence of paranormal events, scientists may still try to make sense of them in a logical, ordered way, using terms like “collective unconscious” in an attempt to define, label and pigeonhole the supernatural — not that doing so will protect anyone! Most advocates of the “psychic” explanation of magic (see sidebar, p. 14) were originally scientists.

Advantages and Disadvantages: The average scientist does not have Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator and Absent-Mindedness, but a cinematic scientist might. Most scientists will share the Delusion “There is no such thing as the supernatural” (worth -10 points in *GURPS Voodoo*). A university or a research institute can act as a Patron. Rival scientists count as Enemies, although they are more likely to try to discredit and humiliate the scientist than to kill him.

Skills: Besides one scientific discipline at a high level (15+), Research, Writing and Teaching are very common. Some will know several languages, many of which may be used for occult purposes. Historians, anthropologists and archaeologists may have Occultism, even if they do not believe in the occult.

Shaman/Witch

Besides the houngans and mambos (see p. 50), Initiates from other traditions are also involved in the Shadow War. Non-Western mystics include native American shamans,

Buddhist holy men, and Gypsy sorcerers. Wiccan witches, although loosely associated with the Lodges through the Servants of Hecate (see p. 28), can also be considered independent. All these Initiates can take sides in the conflict or stay neutral. More information on those magical traditions will be provided in future supplements or articles, but GMs and players can base those Initiates on the information given here.

Shamans and witches often cross paths with Voudounistas and the Lodges. Alliances between those groups are becoming increasingly common, despite distrust and fear of the unknown.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Initiation and several Initiate powers are common. The average shaman will be a First to Third Level Initiate with such powers as Autotrance, Channeling, Spirit Advisor and Spirit Ally. Among their own people, shamans will have a good Reputation and some Status. On the other hand, they may suffer a Social Stigma in the mainstream. Witches are often mistaken for satanists (an error that the other Lodges often encourage) and treated as such; this counts as a bad Reputation (-2 to -4) among many people. Secret societies, covens or circles can be the source of Allies or Ally Groups. The Corruptors, other Lodges, Voodoo societies and the Red Sects can become Enemies.

Skills: Ritual Magic (Shamanism or Witchcraft) and several Paths and rituals are common (see Chapter 3). Occultism and Theology are common, as are Bard, Dancing and Performance.

Singer/Performer

Music is an important part of the Caribbean (and Voodoo). Early Voodoo practitioners disguised their ceremonies as simple dances. In Haiti, Cuba and Jamaica, wandering black minstrels/sorcerers traveled from one plantation to the next, entertaining the owners while gaining status among the slaves. In later years, the Caribbean's salsa, mambo, calypso and reggae have each had their moments of fame in international music circles. Like many other natives of the Caribbean, singers and performers often have some ties to Voodoo, either as believers or actual priests. In the inner city, many young Initiates have turned to rap music as their medium of expression, even using it for some of their rituals. With their sometimes shady pasts, many reggae and rap performers may have closer links to the Shadow War than anybody would guess.

Almost since its beginning, over 30 years ago, rock-and-roll was denounced as the devil's music and its records were burned in public ceremonies. Many heavy-metal bands have acquired reputations as devil worshippers, and everybody's heard about what happens when you play some records backwards... Some of these allegations may have roots in reality.

A traveling band of singer-mystics could make an interesting adventuring party. Their careers would serve as a perfect cover for going to different places. The PCs would have to deal not only with the Corruptors, but also with performances, record contracts, auditions and unscrupulous record companies.

Advantages and Disadvantages: A good Appearance, Charisma, Musical Ability and Voice are all common. Unfortunately, so are Lecherousness and Addictions (even if only to caffeine and nicotine). Wealth levels and Reputation run the whole gamut from Dead Broke unknowns to Multimillionaire megastars. Initiate singers who use their Spirit Warrior powers to enhance their performance are possible, but are likely to attract the attention of the Lodges and the Corruptors before long, gaining Enemies.

Skills: One or more Musical Instruments, Poetry, Singing and possibly Bard and Dancing. Years of touring might give the singer several Area Knowledge skills.

Soldier

The military plays a role in the Shadow War. Soldiers of all countries are under the influence of the Lodges through Masonic or Mason-like societies. Others join even darker cults. It could be argued that the military, with its isolation from "normal" life, distinctive uniforms and ranks, and sense of group solidarity, is in some ways a cult itself. Whoever controls it has all the resources of the military at his command...

Soldiers may have horrifying experiences that lead to accidental Initiation. Military men from other countries might have even closer contacts with the Voodoo societies, the Mayombe or the Lodges. Some troopers might be secret In-Betweeners, hiding behind fatigues. Special-ops teams sent against terrorists may run into dangers their training lessons never mentioned. Elite military units may be caught in the games of the Lodges, and may discover that some hidden agency is running the military and perhaps the whole U.S. government.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Military Rank, Patron (the military) and diverse levels of Duty are universal. Cinematic soldiers are combat monsters with all the typical advantages of the type (Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Toughness and such). It is believed that the Lodges have sponsored their own special-ops teams made up of Spirit Warriors.

Skills: *GURPS Special Ops* is recommended for GMs and players wishing to flesh out soldier PCs. Common skills include Savoir-Faire (Military), basic weapon and vehicle skills, Survival for several types of terrain, and some technical skills like Electronics Operation (Communications).

Spirit

In the Shadow War, it is possible to play a ghost or other incorporeal entity (see p. 83). These entities can interact with the material world, but with great effort, and most people cannot perceive them under normal circumstances. Still, a spirit PC can create challenging and interesting roleplaying situations. Some ghosts may want to return to the material world, either by becoming an In-Betweeners (a very rare and costly process, impossible for "young" spirits), or by gaining permanent possession of a living body. The quest for a material host can become the focus of a metaphysical campaign. Other ghosts may need to perform one important task before departing for the Great Beyond.



Ghosts can be affected by magical rituals, including those that can summon, control or repel them (an Initiated priest could “exorcise” a ghost from an area or a possessed victim).

A spirit PC could join a group of Initiates. The Initiates would be able to see and interact with the spirit, and the powers of the disembodied person would come in handy to supplement the rituals and other abilities of the flesh-and-blood characters. Add an In-Betweeners or two and the party might think it is ready to handle anything.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Spirits will have the Ghost advantage (see p. 55), which includes all the basic abilities of ghosts and other beings. Allies and Patrons can include mortal

Initiates and secret societies, or more powerful loas and spirit beings.

GMs should disallow any disadvantages that are meaningless to an incorporeal being. Wealth and social disadvantages, for example, should not be allowed, or allowed at a reduced point value. Enemies must be able to interact with the spirit world — the ghost of a police officer cannot count the Mafia as an Enemy — unless the Mafia has some contacts with Initiates or supernatural beings.

Skills: Ghosts will have the same skills they had in life. Some will become adepts at Shapeshifting (see p. 57), allowing them to reshape their ectoplasmic selves.

ADVANTAGES

Clerical Investment

See p. B19

In the Shadow War world, the Clerical Investment advantage does *not* confer special abilities. Many religious figures, however, have the Initiate advantage at various levels (see p. 58). Christian Initiates of the appropriate level are able to conduct exorcisms and even perform “miracles,” either by using Initiate powers or by learning Ritual Magic (see Chapter 3). In the 20th century, however, clerics with unusual abilities are likely to be greeted with suspicion and skepticism by their superiors. The Lodges’ influence over most organized Christian churches ensures that the Initiate is quickly co-opted — or that his reputation and career are quickly destroyed.

Established houngans and mambos have the Clerical Investment advantage, and have a +1 bonus from most coreligionists. “Bush priests” and other underground houngans are less well-respected, and do not have this advantage.

Patron

See p. B24

A single houngan or Lodge Initiate is worth 15 to 25 points, depending on his power (a Seventh Level Initiate, for instance, should be worth 20 to 25 points). A hounfor or circle is worth 25 to 30 points. An entire Lodge or Voodoo bizongue will have a base cost of 35 to 40 points.

Rank (Lodges)

See p. B22

Equivalent to Military Rank, this applies to the Lodges’ rigid hierarchical structure, which is divided into degrees, ranging from first to tenth, and ranks, ranging from first through eighth. The degrees correspond to political rather than mystical power (although the two are related). Two Brethren of the same rank have similar prestige, but the Brother of higher degree has more organizational power. A Sixth Level Initiate is eligible for any Lodge rank except that of Secret Master (see p. 26). By the same token, some very powerful Initiates have relatively low rank. Not all Lodges follow this system, but the more powerful ones do. Listed below are the ranks, as well as the degrees and levels of Initiation required to reach each.

Rank 8: Secret Master (Archmagus). Beyond the degree system. Must be Seventh Level Initiate or higher.

Rank 7: Tenth degree Brother (Archbishop, Master, or Magus). Must be Sixth Level Initiate or higher. Brethren of the tenth degree usually command Lodges at a national level.

Rank 6: Ninth and eighth degree Brother (Bishop, Teacher, or Magister). Must be Fifth Level Initiate or higher. This rank is given to members in charge of cities or small countries.

Rank 5: Seven and sixth degree Brother (Knight, Trainer, or Adept). Must be Fourth Level Initiate or higher. This rank is given to members in charge of a large Lodge circle or a small city or town.

Rank 4: Fifth and fourth degree Brother (Priest, Journeyman, or Acolyte). Must be Third Level Initiate or higher. This rank confers full membership in the Lodges.

Rank 3: Third degree Brother (Novice, Apprentice, or Servant). Must be Second Level Initiate or higher. This rank is granted to a member who is ready for membership but has to prove himself in the service of the Lodges. Third degree members will rarely know the full scope and power of the Lodges.

Rank 2: Second degree Brother (Lay Brother, Applicant, or Beginner). Must be First Level Initiate or higher. At this rank, the member is often kept in the dark about the size and purposes of the Lodges. Second degree members are only supposed to know about low-ranking members (fourth degree or lower). Those who try to learn more risk expulsion or worse.

Rank 1: First degree Brother (Layman, Ignoramus, or Mundane). No Initiation is required. First degree members only know they have been inducted into a secret and very powerful organization. Most do not even know about its supernatural elements. The first rank, however, includes very wealthy and influential people, trained specialists and professionals of several fields, and other useful pawns.



NEW ADVANTAGES

Ghost

100/130 points

A character with this advantage is a disembodied spirit comprising the person's "base" soul (see p. 83). The spirit is invisible and intangible to the physical world — only Initiates and other spirit entities can sense his presence. Through the expenditure of Fatigue, however, he can affect the physical world for short periods of time, possess people, and even temporarily create a material body (see pp. 84-86).

Most ghosts have a very short life span, even if they survive the initial shock of death (see below). Every month, they must make a Will roll (remember that a 14 or higher is an automatic miss); a missed roll reduces their HT by one. Modifiers (these *will* affect the 14 maximum): +2 if the ghost has a compelling reason to stay on Earth; +2 if the ghost stays within 50 yards of the place of his death (if it was a traumatic event like a murder or a violent accident), or some other psychically-rich area (such as a "haunted" house, a battle site, an extremely violent murder scene, etc.) for the whole month, +1 to +5 if the deceased is being paid respects and remembered by friends or family members. If these cumulative bonuses add up to +3, the Will rolls to maintain HT fail only on a roll higher than the modified Will roll, or a 17 or 18, whichever is lower. If the bonuses total +5 or more, the spirit doesn't have to make Will rolls that month. Some ghosts make deals with Initiates or more powerful spirits (such as the Major Manifestations of loas, animas and other entities), exchanging their services in return for the energy to stay in the world. A ghost that finds a way to stay on the material plane indefinitely must pay an additional 30 points and come up with an appropriate explanation. Possible means for a ghost to avoid dissolution include making a deal with an Initiate of Fourth Level or higher, with the mortal acting as a psychic anchor for the spirit in return for its service. Some very old and powerful spirits started out as ghosts and have become godlike forces over time.

Becoming a Ghost during Play: A character who is killed during the game may continue as a ghost, at the GM's discretion. The point cost of the advantage can be paid with saved or future experience points, or the character may gain one or two new disadvantages. (Or he may lose some advantages: logical losses would include any Wealth and Status he had in life — you can't take it with you, after all.) Most ghosts simply dissipate at the moment of death, going to the Great Beyond or being reborn into a human body (see sidebar, p. 23); they must make a Will roll to resist this. At first, a new ghost will be extremely weak: he starts with 1 Fatigue, and regains it at the rate of 1 Fatigue per day until he is back at full strength, at which point he regains Fatigue normally (see p. B134).

Initiation

This advantage, an Unusual Background, connects a person with the supernatural. See pp. 58-63.

Variable



Karmic Ties

Reincarnation has a place in the Voodoo cosmology (see the sidebar on p. 23). Many Voodoo practitioners believe that there are many elements to the soul, and that at least some of them are reincarnated. Some people are connected by their *karma* — the freight of good and bad experience from past lives. Karmic ties create instant liking or dislike for a stranger, regardless of reaction rolls. Such a person should be evaluated as a Dependent, Ally, Patron or Enemy, whichever seems appropriate. A Karmic Tie may link a character to an NPC, or two players may agree that their PCs are so linked. This advantage can explain why an established group of friends (or even a hounfor or Lodge circle) allows a stranger to join them.

Treat Karmic Ties as normal Ally, Ally Group, Dependent, Patron and Enemy advantages or disadvantages. The only difference is that the person may not know about these allies or enemies until he meets them face to face. The character will feel just as strongly about these "strangers" as he would about a normal NPC of that type, so the point cost remains the same.

Reawakened

Reincarnation is a "fact" in the world of *GURPS Voodoo*, and some people's memories of previous existences survive rebirth (see sidebar, p. 23). If combined with Split Personality, for example, one personality could belong to the PC's previous life. A person with Reawakened can "remember" skills and even mystic rituals learned during other life cycles. These skills and rituals must be purchased normally: this Unusual Background advantage explains how the PC learned them, but does not grant him any point cost breaks.

Variable

10 points

DISADVANTAGES

Cursed

See p. B240

In the world of the Shadow War, curses almost invariably have a spiritual source. Maybe a previous incarnation made enemies among some powerful loas and you must find a way to make amends. An Initiate can tell if a person is Cursed by making an IQ roll; determining the cause will require lengthy mystical detective work. A Cursed Initiate will feel the weight of the curse like a physical burden, and can feel the malevolent will behind his plight every time something happens to him. This might translate into an echo of hysterical laughter whenever the GM applies the disadvantage's effects, or some other equally disturbing (or annoying) manifestation.

Enemies

See p. B39

A Lodge circle, a Voodoo hounfor or a criminal group led by In-Betweeners (medium-sized groups with formidable and superhuman individuals) would be worth -30 points. To have an entire Lodge Order or Voodoo bizongue after you would have a base cost of -40 points. The Mayombe or Corruptors range in base cost from -20 to -40, depending on the actual entities involved. Having *all* Corruptors as enemies would have a base cost of -60 points, and would require a very good story explaining what you have done to anger all the evil entities in the world; your life expectancy could be measured in hours.

Jinxed

See p. B241

Initiates can sense a jinx (treat the Jinxed person as a supernatural manifestation for sensing and range purposes), but their IQ rolls are at the same penalty as any other rolls around him. The cause of the Jinx may be spiritual (and thus "treatable") or might be the result of dormant Initiate powers. In any case, those who can sense the jinx will avoid him like the plague, and may even take stronger measures to deal with him.



Split Personality

See p. B37

In the *GURPS Voodoo* setting, the -15 point version of this disadvantage could mean that two souls or spirits are inhabiting the same body. One of them could be an old wandering spirit, enabling a player to take on the roles of, for example, an 18th-century Voodoo priest and a modern college student. Another possibility would be to create a character who is sometimes possessed by a personality from a previous life (see sidebar, p. 85).

NEW DISADVANTAGES

Voices

-5, -10, or -15 points

This disadvantage is similar to Flashbacks (see p. B240), but is limited to auditory effects. You are plagued by whispered phrases coming out of nowhere. The phrases can be unintelligible, or may be the same words over and over. The more extreme voices will make horrible demands, asking you to commit murder or suicide! Eventually, your sanity (such as it is) will start eroding. You will hear Voices on a roll of 6 or less on 3d. Roll once per day or during stressful situations, at the GM's whim.

Annoying voices: You hear them, but are reasonably sure that they are not real, and they do not harm you directly (although most people who see you reacting to unheard noises will have a -2 reaction to you). **-5 points.**

Disturbing voices: The voices can drown out normal sounds, and will startle and frighten you. **-10 points.**

Diabolical voices: These are the typical "voices that tell you to kill" or perform other terrible deed. People in extreme emotional situations or under the influence of some controlled substance may need to make a Will roll to avoid carrying out the "orders" (GM's discretion). **-15 points.**

The voices can be either the result of mental problems, or a limited form of possession. In the second case, no amount of psychotherapy will find the causes of the voices, let alone cure them. Electroshock therapy might drive the evil spirits away (much as beating possessed people in medieval times was supposed to drive the "demons" off), although that particular treatment might also do as much harm as good. If an exorcism or similar ritual (Mastery and Turn the Spirit, for example) is performed successfully (the GM determines how hard the spirits are to dislodge), you are cured and have to buy off the disadvantage.

SKILLS

Theology

Certain theologies (Voodoo and Lodges especially) can act as Occultism on rolls dealing with supernatural creatures, but they

See p. B62

won't help people dealing with entities not described in their religious teachings.

NEW SKILLS

Erotic Art (Physical/Hard)

Prerequisite: Sex Appeal-13

This represents a general knowledge of advanced sexual technique. The exact game effects are left to the GM's discretion.

Currently this skill is only common in certain Eastern cultures, most notably followers of Tantric Hinduism. Those proficient in it may prefer spontaneity to technique with people they are personally fond of.

Ritual Magic (Mental/Very Hard)

No Default; Must Specialize

This skill reflects an understanding of the intellectual and mystical process involved in conducting magical rituals (see p. 66). On a successful skill roll, you can understand the purposes of a ritual being conducted in your presence, as well as the types of entity being summoned. You must specialize in a specific form of magic. Specializations include Voodoo, Lodges, Witchcraft, Native American, and so on. Each type defaults to another at -5. The processes involved are roughly the same, but the actual rituals and spirits involved are quite different.

The Ritual Magic skill is a prerequisite to use any of the five Paths of magic (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, each of the Paths defaults to Ritual Magic-6 (to a maximum level of 14). This means that anyone with the Ritual Magic skill can conduct any ceremony he can envision — although this does not necessarily mean it will be effective!

Example: Pierre, a houngan, has Ritual Magic (Voodoo)-17. He hasn't practiced healing magic, but his knowledge of Ritual Magic gives him a default of Path of Health-11. If he tried to heal somebody, his default on the Succor ritual would be a 7 — he'd better roll well!

Shapeshifting (Mental/Hard)

No Default

This is the skill of molding your body and features into another shape. This skill is only available to beings of spirit (see p. 86 and pp. 98-103), who can easily alter their shape. This includes some In-Betweeners, ghosts and other spirits, and Initiates who travel to the dream world (see sidebar, p. 20) or who have the Spirit Form advantage (see p. 62). On a successful skill roll, you can bring about the desired change to your form over the next three seconds.

Depending on the form desired, the GM may add penalties to the skill. Small changes (slightly altering facial features, or making the body 1 or 2 inches taller, for instance) have no penalty. Significant changes require rolls at -2 (changing race and gender) to -8 (to becoming a member of another species). When picking the skill, you can select one form besides your usual one that you can take without penalty. Add an additional form for every 8 levels in the skill.

Characters with a skill of 20 or higher in this skill have mastered the art of shapeshifting. If spirits, they can reshape their features into any form, no matter how ludicrous, as long as their

Defaults to Acrobatics-5

basic form remains relatively unchanged. Cartoon-like effects become possible on a simple skill roll, and can appear immediately (eyes growing to the size of plates, jaws literally falling out of their faces, and so on; consult *Toon* for inspiration). The GM can outlaw this "special effect" rule if it threatens the tone of the campaign, of course.

Vever Drawing (Mental/Hard)

Defaults to

Ritual Magic (Voodoo)-4

This is the art of making a *vever* — an intricate symbol that is drawn on the floor of the Voodoo temple or in places where a ritual is being conducted. The drawing is made by sprinkling a ceremonial powder (materials commonly used include cornmeal, wheatmeal and even gunpowder) on the ground in the appropriate pattern. The skill determines both knowledge of the symbols and the ability to draw them; people with Ritual Magic (Voodoo) will know the symbols, but may find it hard to draw them by sprinkling powder.

These symbols help in conducting rituals. For every 2 points by which an Initiate makes his Vever Drawing roll, add +1 to the ritual conducted over it. A vever must be redrawn each time it is used for another ritual. Vevers can be drawn with nontraditional powders such as chalk, paint or even spray paint, but they are usually less effective: the bonus becomes +1 for every 3 points of success of the Vever Drawing roll. (However, some urban loas, especially evil ones, actually react *better* to such substances.)



INITIATION

This advantage determines the strength of a character's connection with the supernatural. His level of Initiation determines the degree to which he can sense, communicate with and tap into the invisible forces worshipped by Voodoo or other mystic traditions. The magic system described in Chapter 3 hinges on Initiation; the higher someone's Initiation, the greater the effectiveness of his rituals and talismans. The greatest saints and mystics of the world had high levels of Initiation (a Tenth Level Initiate would be a modern-day Buddha or Mohammed). All the powers described have certain levels of Initiation as a prerequisite.

But Initiation is a mixed blessing. The constant connection to the invisible world affects the lives of those who have it. Other Initiates, as well as supernatural entities, will sense their presence

and seek them out, for good or ill. After attaining the Fourth or Fifth Level of Initiation, a person will lose all chance of leading a normal life. He will be able to see and hear things to which the rest of the world is oblivious. Many will think him mad, and the awe or fear he inspires in most people may make them hostile.

Most high-level Initiates prefer anonymity, acting from the shadows, hiding behind secret societies and leading double lives. Most public figures of the occult world are either charlatans or low-level Initiates seeking glory and fortune to compensate for their lack of true power. The truly powerful have no need for fame; some live on the streets and alleyways of cities, in insane asylums, or in isolated areas in the wilderness.

GAINING INITIATION

People undergo Initiation in a number of different ways. During character creation, note the manner in which a PC becomes an Initiate, because that will determine which abilities should be available to him.

Mystic Learning

The Initiate has learned the ways of mysticism through study. This usually requires that he be a member of a hounfor, a Lodge, a witches' coven, or some other magical group. Alternatively, he may have a Patron who is an Initiate himself. His learning will include the mythology and symbolism of his teacher's tradition. A Voodoo Initiate will become acquainted with loa (see p. 86), while a Lodge acolyte will know the names and properties of diverse genii and daemons. One advantage of gaining Initiation through training is that the Initiate will also be able to learn the rituals that his teacher or tradition knows.

Past Lives

The character was an Initiate in a past life, and a brush with the supernatural awakened the subconscious abilities of his previous incarnation. This requires the Reawakened advantage (see p. 55). The Initiate can pick a number of abilities and rituals retained through reincarnation. The GM will have to determine how much knowledge the Initiate's previous self had; to learn more, the Initiate will need to seek teachers. Calling on the powers of past lives also will bring the older personality to the fore (see *Reincarnation*, p. 23).

Severe Trauma

The victims of cruel imprisonment, torture, child abuse, near-death experiences and other severe shocks to one's body or mind can also forge a link with the supernatural. This will often be mixed with a number of Delusions and other psychological problems. In the Shadow War universe, abused children who

develop multiple personalities may actually be channeling one or more spirits who are linked to the child's body, for good or ill. These forced Initiates have all the raw power of their mystic counterparts, but don't know any rituals or Paths; their connections to the spirit world are largely instinctive. Unless they find a teacher, spontaneous Initiates cannot purchase the Ritual Magic skill or learn any rituals or Paths; they can, however, buy Initiate powers according to their Initiation Level.

Gaining Initiation During Play

At the GM's discretion, PCs exposed to the Shadow War may become Initiates in the course of a campaign. A severe enough trauma in the course of an adventure could result in a mystical revelation that leaves the person with the First or Second Level of Initiation. The advantage should be paid off with earned or saved character points, or by acquiring a new disadvantage.



LEVELS OF INITIATION

Initiation is purchased in levels, also called circles or grades. The prices are not cumulative; that is, to purchase the Fifth Level of Initiation, you don't have to pay for levels 1-4 first, but simply the listed price for Fifth Level. Characters wishing to advance to a higher level need only pay the point cost difference between

their current level of Initiation and the higher one. The Seventh Level and beyond are not recommended for beginning characters even in a Cinematic campaign, and Ninth Level Initiates work much better as NPCs than as player characters, unless the playing group enjoys playing at near-divine power levels.

Following the description of each Level, the powers that are available to Initiates of that level are listed. Keep in mind that Initiates do not automatically acquire these powers by reaching the required level of Initiation, but must purchase them separately. Some high-level Initiates have no special powers, and depend on their inherent abilities and learned rituals. Alternatively, some Initiates do not know any magic rituals, relying instead on their powers.

In addition to the abilities and powers listed below, Initiates add their Level to their Will when resisting hostile rituals or spirit activities.

Distribution of Levels of Initiation

Level	Average Frequency	Number Worldwide
2nd	1 in 7,500	666,666 (!)
3rd	1 in 25,000	200,000
4th	1 in 50,000	100,000
5th	1 in 100,000	50,000
6th	1 in 500,000	10,000
7th	1 in 5,000,000	1,000
8th	1 in 10,000,000	500
9th	1 in 250,000,000	20? Who knows?
10th	Who knows?	

The frequency of Initiates in a campaign will be higher than that presented in this table, for one basic reason: Initiation draws people together. It's rare to find Initiates above First Level, but when they're found, they're frequently found together.

First Level

5 points

At this level, you are aware of the supernatural, although only at a very basic, intuitive level. A successful IQ roll allows you to sense any spirit presences, or to detect another Initiate, within IQ/2 yards. This manifests as a "gut feeling," a tingling sensation, or some other indirect means. A failed roll reveals nothing; a critical failure will mislead your senses. If an intense supernatural event is taking place within your sensory range, the GM may roll secretly against your IQ to see if you sense it. At this level, any rituals and ceremonies you learn will work, but you will be at -3 IQ to perform them (see p. 67).

Autotrance

5 points

You find it very easy to enter a trance. You may enter a trance state on a successful IQ roll, within the space of a minute. While in a trance, you are at +2 to any ritual rolls. This bonus also applies to rolls to activate any Initiate powers, including Channeling, Faith Healing, Spirit Warrior and Visualization. While in a trance, however, you are effectively unconscious to the world around you. You must make a successful IQ roll whenever you wish to leave a trance. Awakening from the trance is necessary before any activated power can take effect. You may only attempt this roll once every 5 minutes. Each additional attempt per hour is at -1 from the previous attempt.

This advantage is useful to houngans and those in meditative disciplines. People with this ability may find that they tend to slip out of awareness of their immediate surroundings quite easily.

Visualization

10 points

By visualizing yourself successfully performing a task, you improve your chance of doing so. Your will is focused on increasing the probabilities of success.



This ability requires one minute of concentration. The visualization must be detailed and involve a clear and specific action, which makes it useless in combat, where circumstances are always changing. The closer the mental picture of the task is to the actual circumstances, the greater the bonus. The player must describe the scene he visualizes (he can include senses other than sight!) and the results he hopes to achieve. After concentrating, he rolls against his Will + Initiation Level. He gets a +1 bonus to the desired action for every point by which the roll succeeds — as long as the circumstances correspond almost exactly to the visualization. If they are not quite the same, halve the bonus (to a minimum of +1); if something is clearly different, divide the bonus by three (no minimum). The GM can give an additional bonus, up to +2, or any amount of penalty, for a good or bad description!

Example: Rico, Initiated cat burglar extraordinaire, intends to enter a house and try to open a safe. Before going there, he spends several minutes visualizing himself kneeling by the safe (a Contact has provided several pictures of it, so he has a good idea of what it looks like) and deftly working out the combination. His combined Will and Initiation Level add up to 17; he makes his roll by 5. Rico gets past the house's security system and reaches the safe. It looks exactly as he pictured it, and he gets to work in the same manner he had visualized. He gets the +5 bonus. If some detail had changed (somebody had painted the safe a different color, for instance), the bonus would be reduced to +2. And if something were truly different (the safe had an added security device, for example), the bonus would be only +1.

Second Level

15 points

Your link with the supernatural is stronger, and you are able to sense spiritual manifestations within IQ yards with an IQ roll as above. Furthermore, this link gives you a +2 or -2 on reaction rolls, due to the feelings you evoke in people around you. Those who share your religion or belief system will feel some sort of attraction to you, while unbelievers, people with fragile egos, and members of an antagonistic group or religion will unconsciously dislike you. The reaction roll modifier is always positive in potential combat or Intimidation rolls; if nothing else, you can always inspire fear in others. You can learn and perform rituals and ceremonies at no penalty.

Most real mediums and spiritualists are Second Level

Initiates, as are about half of all true hounngans, shamans and practicing witches. Spirits can use these Initiates as a means of communication. Initiates have often forged a long-term link to one or two entities.

Channeling **10 points**

You become a conduit for the spirit world, allowing spirit entities to speak through you. You fall into a trance (achieved through several seconds of concentration and a Will roll, or Will+2 if you have the Autotrance power), after which any spirit in the immediate area can enter your body and use it to speak or write messages. This is a minor possession, but the spirit can only use your body to communicate; attempts at full possession while you are in a trance are possible (see p. 85), but you resist at +5 in addition to any other Initiation bonuses. When combined with the Spirit Advisor power, this power lets you choose one specific spirit to channel. After the trance is achieved, roll the Spirit Advisor's frequency of appearance number to see if it manifests itself. If the advisor does not appear, a random spirit may take its place.

While in a trance, you are unaware of the world around you. The GM controls what the spirit possessing you does or says; the spirit will answer questions put to it by others, but there is no guarantee that it will tell the truth.

Mystic Symbol **10 points/level**

Most trained Initiates receive specially-consecrated objects of power whenever they reach a new threshold in their Initiation process. For Voudounistas, these include instruments like the *asson*, a calabash rattle filled with snake vertebrae that symbolizes their rank among hounngans, or special necklaces. Lodge symbols include chalices, wands, or swords and knives inscribed with occult markings. The Roman Lodges favor holy symbols like crucifixes and relics.

A mystic symbol acts as a focus for your Will, granting a bonus of +1 per level on any ritual casting roll. The mystic symbol also helps resistance rolls, adding +1 to any rolls to resist possession attempts, hostile rituals and any attack that can be resisted by your mind. The maximum bonus that can be purchased is +5, and the total bonus cannot exceed your Initiation level. Anyone who gains enough points to raise his Initiation by one level can increase the power of his mystic symbol by undergoing a new dedication ceremony and spending the character points. If the symbol is stolen or destroyed, you lose those points unless you manage to recover or repair it.

Spirit Advisor **Variable**

You have a spirit "friend" that shares its wisdom with you. This can be the ghost of a relative, a manifestation of a previous incarnation, your Genius (see p. 97), a minor loa or an anima. The spirit advisor is roleplayed by the GM and should be built like any other NPC. Unlike an ally, the spirit advisor is not expected to fight, but simply to provide information and advice. Most spirit advisors have the equivalent of Occultism-16 and may have two or three Scientific or Professional skills at a high level. The GM can use the spirit advisor to give warnings, clues, and other valuable information. Generally, the advice of the spirit should be good, although it may be colored by the entity's prejudices.

The base cost of this power is 10 points. Use the Frequency of Appearance Modifiers on p. B23 to determine the actual cost.



Third Level **40 points**

You now actually *see* more of the world's supernatural forces than do most other humans. You automatically get the Empathy advantage (if you already have it, deduct 15 points from the cost of this advantage). You can sense paranormal manifestations within IQ yards (no roll required), and can pinpoint their source on an IQ roll (sentient manifestations and other Initiates can try to hide themselves by a Quick Contest of Wills with you). A Third Level Initiate can communicate with spirits directly, hearing their words (if they speak to him, that is). Even without using ceremonies, you can try to command spirits within your sensory range (this requires a Quick Contest between the spirit's Will and your Will-3). As at the Second Level, you inspire instinctive feelings (both positive and negative) in those around you; the reaction modifier is +3 or -3, as above. Voodoo Initiates can learn to manufacture the special poison used in making zombies.

Metabolism Control **5 points/level**

Your link to the supernatural allows you to manipulate your own body's involuntary biological functions such as pulse, blood flow, digestion and respiration. This allows you to enter a death-like trance; a physician must win a Quick Contest of Skills (Physician-2 vs. HT + Metabolism Control) to realize you are not dead. While in this state you are unaware of your physical surroundings, but can "see" and communicate with spirit entities within your range. You may set a mental "alarm clock" to awaken you after a certain amount of time has passed. You will automatically awaken if you take any damage.

Each level of Metabolism Control reduces the amount of air, food or water you normally need to stay alive (see pp. B122 and B128). Each level doubles the time that you can safely go without air, food or water. The maximum level of Metabolism Control available to an Initiate is equal to *half* his level of Initiation.

Spirit Ally

This special version of the Ally advantage found on p. B23 works as described in the *Basic Set*, but the Ally is a spirit entity, usually a loa or anima. Base a spirit ally's cost on its general power level: minor manifestations have a base cost of 10 points, moderate ones cost 15 points and major manifestations cost 25 points. Frequency of appearance modifies these costs as on p. B23. If the spirit ally is a ghost, determine its point value normally; use the rules on p. B23.

Fourth Level

You can actually see and hear spirits within IQ yards and sense supernatural manifestations within IQx5 yards; both abilities are automatic unless the spirits try to remain hidden (requiring a Quick Contest of Wills, as above). You automatically have Empathy and Intuition (if you already have these advantages, deduct their costs from the advantage value). You can purchase the Spirit Warrior power (which allows you to use some of the powers of a given loa, daemon or spirit) at this level. All the other advantages and disadvantages of the Third Level of Initiation also apply at this level.

Fourth Level Initiates risk losing their sanity, at least as the mundane world perceives it. They are aware of things that are invisible to most of humanity, and may start having difficulty distinguishing between the material and spiritual worlds. Many unfortunate Initiates have been diagnosed as schizophrenics and institutionalized. Unlike true schizophrenics, however, their affliction is not treatable with drugs, so they are likely to be permanently locked away in insane asylums, where malevolent spirits often prey upon them. At this level, you can dispense with one element of mystical rituals without suffering penalties (see p. 68).

Extra Fatigue

Your Fatigue is higher than normal for your ST. You can run farther and fight longer than others, and you have more power available for magical spells. Extra Fatigue goes into a separate pool that can be used to sustain Initiate powers, psionics, extra effort or magical spells. This pool recharges at the same rate as normal Fatigue, but will only begin to regain points after regular Fatigue (based on ST) has been completely regained.

Spirit Ally Group

A group of spirits can be purchased as an Ally Group (see p. B232), but their point cost is higher than normal. First of all, the numbers of a Spirit Ally group are always the lowest amount given on each entry (that is, a small group is only 2 spirits, a medium-sized group is 6, and so on). Only minor manifestations can be purchased as an Ally Group, and the base point cost of the advantage is *doubled*.

Spirit Warrior

This power allows you to take on the abilities of a possessing spirit while remaining in control of your faculties. These abilities include increased strength and endurance, new skills (or higher levels in known skills) and increased resistance to injury (possessed people are known to resist exposure to fire and other physical ordeals). Your ST usually rises to superhuman levels (this does not affect your Fatigue total). A number of advantages (and also disadvantages — see below) are granted for the period in which you invoke the power of your patron spirit. Skill increases are expressed in a number of character points that go into temporarily “buying” or increasing the skills levels indicated.

Example: The loa Ochosi grants his Spirit Warriors 8 points in the Tracking skill. If you didn't have Tracking, the 8 points give

Variable

you Tracking skill at IQ+3; if you had Tracking at IQ+1 (costing 4 points), the extra 8 points would raise your skill to IQ+5 (12 points), and so on. If some points are left over but are not enough to reach the next skill level, they are “lost” until you raise your skill level normally.

Your control over your own mind allows you to be possessed without losing consciousness or freedom of will. You are not completely in control, however; enough of the loa's or spirit's personality will filter through to give you mental or even physical disadvantages associated with the spirit. These changes in personality, speech patterns and attitudes must be roleplayed fully, or the next time you may find it more difficult to invoke your spiritual patron.

Summoning and temporarily absorbing a loa or genius are not automatic abilities: you must persuade the spirit to enter your body. To call upon this power, you must concentrate for one second, after which the GM makes a reaction roll. Add your Level of Initiation to the reaction roll. On a Good or better result, you are endowed with the Spirit Warrior powers. Other modifiers:

A ceremony of summoning lasting 10 minutes: +4.

Going against the spirit's ideals, morals: -2 to -6 (GM's discretion).

Summoning a spirit when an antagonistic entity is in the same area: -4 to +4, depending on the spirit's temperament and your relationship with the other spirit (warrior spirits will welcome the opportunity to attack their enemies, but will be reluctant to work with them).

The spiritual investment will last one minute, at which time a new reaction roll must be made, with a -1 penalty for every minute after the first. The possession drains you physically, at the rate of 1 Fatigue per minute; pay this energy cost when you dismiss the spirit. If Fatigue is reduced below 0 in this manner, any extra Fatigue will be taken off HT instead, which may lead you to unconsciousness, injury or even death after the possession ends.

Loas and spirits are listed in Chapter 4; each grants different powers to its “mounts” and warriors. Those powers, and the point cost for each, are given for each spirit. This advantage cannot be taken for more than one spirit; a Spirit Warrior is dedicated to one loa or spirit, and cannot divide his loyalties. To figure the point cost of a given Spirit Warrior advantage, add the points for all the advantages and skills it grants, and then reduce it by 30% (round in your favor). ST bonuses cost 5 points per +1 ST. The 30% discount reflects the fact that these advantages only function for short periods of time, cost fatigue, and depend on the good will of a spirit.

Fifth Level

100 points

You can summon spirits without using rituals if you know the spirit's name. Only minor manifestations of spirit entities can be summoned at this level, and unwilling spirits resist with their Wills. You can purchase the Spirit Form power at this level. Besides Intuition and Empathy, you also gain the Danger Sense advantage, plus +1 Charisma (in addition to the +3/-3 reaction roll modifiers). You can conduct rituals without worrying about two of the three elements normally necessary (see p. 68).

Fifth Level Initiates are instinctively drawn to situations and places that offer challenges or opportunities, as determined by their goals and personalities. For example, a houngan with a Sense of Duty to children will gravitate to places where children need help; a serial killer for the Mayombe will be attracted to places where he can easily find victims. Once an Initiate has been in a county- or city-wide area for more than 12 hours, this instinct operates. At this level and above, an Initiate will be forced to take

sides in the Shadow War; neutrality is impossible, as all sides involved will try to co-opt, manipulate or destroy him.

Faith Healing

30 points

You can heal people without resorting to a ritual, using your mystical influence to channel spiritual energy into the body of a patient. You can heal up to HT/2 points of damage on a successful Will roll. Each use of this power costs 5 Fatigue points; if you exceed your limits or are reduced to 0 Fatigue, you pass out; if you attempt to spend more Fatigue than you have, you fall into a coma that lasts 1d hours for every Fatigue point over your capacity that you spent.

Faith healing can cure disease and repair crippled limbs. You cannot, however, replace *missing* limbs; you can restore a lame leg to full use, but cannot regrow a severed one from thin air. The roll to cure a disease is up to the GM; it could range from +1 to cure the common cold to -15 to heal an AIDS sufferer. The Fatigue cost to heal disease is equal to *twice* the penalty applied to the Will roll (minimum of 1). Crippled limbs are restored on a Will-5 roll, at the cost of 10 Fatigue. Halve this if the crippling was not permanent (see p. B129).

These healing powers do not come directly from you, but from spiritual entities, be they angels, loas or daemons, that are aligned with you. If you somehow alienate these supernatural allies, you will temporarily lose your powers. Under some circumstances (if you behave in a manner contrary to the spirits' interests or moral codes, for example), the GM may require a reaction roll before you can attempt a healing act. For instance, attempting to heal an "unbeliever" or enemy of the mystical order may require a Good or better reaction. If you have the Spirit Ally or Spirit Ally Group powers, your reaction rolls get a +2 bonus; friendly spirits are more likely to overlook transgressions.

Spirit Form

100 points

This power allows you to leave your body and travel away from it as an incorporeal spirit! Your body lapses into a deep sleep while your consciousness soars through the world invisible and intangible. This is *not* a form of astral projection; the spirit is still in the material world, but is an entity of spiritual energy. While in this state, you can move in any direction at a maximum speed equal to *twice* your normal Move plus your level of Initiation (use your normal Move to determine Dodge and initiative, however). You can also expend 1 Fatigue per hour to stay connected enough to "hitch a ride" inside a vehicle. You can see everything in the real world, as well as any spirit entities there. You can enter the spirit world or the astral plane (see p. 44) with a Will roll. The spirit form has the same stats as your material body, with 1 level of Extra Fatigue per level of Initiation. While in this state, you have all the spirit abilities listed in Chapter 4.

The maximum safe range you can travel from your body while in spirit form is equal to (Level of Initiation×10) miles. Going beyond that distance can make it difficult to return to your body. While inside the safe range, you can instantly return to your body, even if you are miles away. Returning to your body from beyond that range requires an IQ roll, at -1 per 10 miles beyond the safe limit. A failure means you must either try again in an hour, or travel back at normal speed until you can see your body — if you have traveled very far, this may take a long time.

An Initiate can leave his body safely for one hour. Every ten minutes past the first hour costs him a Fatigue point. When Fatigue is reduced to 0, the Initiate's body falls into a coma and starts deteriorating rapidly, losing 1 hit point every five minutes. This loss of

Fatigue and Health does not affect the spirit form, but the person is aware of it, not matter how far he has traveled.

Sixth Level

130 points

You can produce the effects of any ritual you know without actually performing it or using any material symbols to channel your power. This takes only a few seconds of concentration, during which you visualize the ritual or symbol. All other abilities are as for the Fifth Level, with the addition of one more level of Charisma (for a total of +2 Charisma). You can purchase the Unaging advantage at additional cost; some high-level Initiates have lived for centuries, among them Cagliostro and the Comte de Saint Germain (see p. 27).

Unaging

15 points

You will never grow old. Your age is fixed at any point you choose and never changes. You do not have to make any aging rolls. A character with this advantage cannot get any points by taking the Age disadvantage.

This power is similar to Longevity (p. B21), and GMs may allow a character whose Unusual Background justifies it to buy it at the start of the game. Anyone who does not buy it at that time, however, must wait until the Sixth Level of Initiation.

Seventh Level

200 points

You gain an entourage of permanently-bound minor loas, anima or daemons. These spirits will obey you even if it means their dissipation. You can bind up to IQ-8 spirits to your service; this is the equivalent of a Spirit Ally Group (see p. 61). You can also summon major manifestations of loas or demiurges without using or knowing a ritual.

Eighth Level

250 points

You can now dissipate spirits through the force of your will alone. This requires a Quick Contest (your Will versus the greater of the spirit's ST or Will); each point by which you win the contest inflicts 1 point of damage to the spirit. A spirit reduced to -HT points in this way is dissipated *permanently*, ceasing to exist altogether. You are also at +5 to resist any attempt to influence and dominate you (whether through rituals, psionic powers or even social skills).

Ninth Level

350 points

Your influence over the invisible forces is such that you inadvertently affect the lives of those around you. Unless you are in total control of your emotions (determined by a Will-6 roll every hour you are in contact with others), you must make a reaction roll toward the people around you. On a Poor or Worse reaction, the unfortunate who offended you will be struck by a curse, usually a Journeyman's Curse or Malaise curse (see pp. 76 and 75). An Excellent reaction will result in a Stroke of Luck blessing (see p. 77). You can literally perform miracles through the spirit entities you control or influence. Normal people who attack you are at -6 to all attack and defense rolls! Hostile spirits, except the most powerful, usually flee from you.

Ninth Level initiates are the highest-level that the PCs are likely to meet, except perhaps at the climax of a campaign.

Tenth Level

450 points

You gain 5 levels of Strong Will, Charisma +4 (for a total of Charisma +6), and a Spirit Ally Group of IQ×2 spirits. You are almost impossible to harm or kill unless you do not resist or the attackers are powerful Initiates or supernatural beings. Normal mortals must make a Will-5 roll just to contemplate

harming you; even then, their attacks succeed only on a critical success! Any other roll means the attack is thwarted in diverse improbable ways (all the bullets are duds, the detonators don't work, martial artists slip on banana peels, and so on). You are a savior or a monster, kept in check only by other Initiates.

No one knows how many Tenth Level Initiates are alive today. Some claim that only one or two appear every few centuries; others say there may be a few dozen alive at a time... some hundreds or thousands of years old!

These Initiates are characters of 1,000 points or more, and should be treated as forces of Nature rather than regular NPCs. The PCs will probably never meet one, but may run across impostors who claim to have this much power. The real ones may live in remote areas, or in the worst slums of the U.S. and Europe. They may align themselves with the Lodges or the Voudounistas — or may control them for their own purposes.

Current events suggest the awful possibility that at least one Tenth Level Initiate serves the Corruptors. In that case, the whole focus of the campaign may be to find and defeat him.

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Described below are three sample characters usable in a Voodoo campaign. Sheila Brown is a 100-point witch usable in a “normals versus the supernatural” campaign (see p. 116). Joshua Carson is a 300-point Spirit Warrior, and Orion is a 450-point Initiate for a Cinematic campaign.

Sheila Brown, Initiate of the Servants of Hecate

Age 21; 5'3", 102 lbs.; short red hair, green eyes and freckles.

ST 9 [-10] IQ 14 [45] Basic Speed 5.25

DX 10 [0] HT 11 [10] Move 5

Point Total: 100

Advantages

Attractive [5]

Common Sense [10]

Initiation (Second Level) [15]

Patron (Local Circle, on a 6 or less) [8]

Disadvantages

Duty (Servants of Hecate, on 9 or less) [-5]

Pacifism (Self-defense only) [-15]

Sense of Duty (Humankind) [-15]

Stubborn [-5]

Quirks

Fervent anti-smoker [-1]

Even-tempered and “mellow” [-1]

Cat lover [-1]

T'ai Chi enthusiast [-1]

Dislikes loud “macho” men [-1]

Initiate Powers

Autotrance [5]; Channeling [10]

Paths and Rituals

Path of Protection-14 [8]; Curse Sanctum-14 [0]; Reversal of Fortune-12 [2]; Path of Luck-13 [4]; Stroke of Luck-13 [2]; Path of Health-12 [2]; Analeptic-12 [0]; Succor-9 [2]; Path of Dreams-9 [0]; Path of the Spirit-9 [0].

Skills

Administration-13 [1]; Judo-10 [4]; Literature-13 [2]; Occultism-14 [4]; Ritual Magic (Witchcraft)-15 [12]; Teaching-15 [4]; Theology (Neopaganism)-16 [8]

Sheila Brown was a quiet, shy and bookish teenager when she first met her “crazy” aunt Ingrid. Sheila's yuppie parents had nothing but contempt for Ingrid, who had dropped out of college and become a “witch.” Against her parents' wishes, Sheila

started corresponding with Ingrid. Through the letters, Sheila learned a great deal about the Goddess, the power of magic and the spirit world. She didn't really believe in all of it until tragedy struck her family. Sheila's father, a prominent lawyer, had unwittingly thwarted a corrupt Lodge Initiate. In retribution, the Brown family was struck by a number of curses. Within a week, Sheila's father was severely injured in a car accident, her mother lost her job, and Sheila herself came down with pneumonia. To top it all, Sheila had an overwhelming feeling that all these calamities had been deliberately inflicted on her family.

The next week, Ingrid arrived; she had sensed the danger threatening her niece and her sibling. Ingrid revealed that she was a member of the Servants of Hecate, an ancient secret society. She recognized Sheila's potential for Initiation, and offered to train her after they had overcome the curses on her family. Sheila assisted Ingrid in conducting several counter-rituals that culminated in the “accidental” death of the evil Initiate. A year later, 18-year-old Sheila left her parents' home and moved in with Ingrid and her coven. Three years later, Sheila is a full-fledged member of the Servants of Hecate.

Joshua Carson, Spirit Warrior

Mid-twenties; 5'11, 175 lbs.; black, athletic, brown eyes, very short black hair and a trimmed beard. His chest and back are crisscrossed with knife scars, the result of torture (see below).

ST 12 [20] IQ 13 [30] Basic Speed 6.25

DX 13 [30] HT 12 [20] Move 7

Point Total: 300

Advantages

Initiation (Fourth Level) [70]

Patron (Loa Lords, on a 9 or less) [25]

Reputation +2 (local gangs) [5]

Disadvantages

Addiction (Cigarettes) [-5]

Code of Honor (Pirate) [-5]

Duty (Loa Lords) [-15]

Social Stigma (Minority) [-10]

Quirks

Hides his gentle nature behind a “tough guy” facade [-1]

Hates drugs (except tobacco) and drug users [-1]

Funny and outgoing when relaxing among friends [-1]

Dislikes handguns and prefers to rely on hand-to-hand combat [-1]

Distrusts magic (he doesn't consider what he does to be magic) [-1]

Initiate Powers

Metabolism Control +1 [5]; Spirit Advisor (the ghost of his friend Roach, on a 12 or less) [20]; Spirit Warrior (Oggun) [113]. When Oggun manifests through Joshua, his stats change to ST 22, DX 17 and HT 16, with proportionate increases in skills, Move and hand-to-hand damage.

Paths and Rituals

None.

Skills

Brawling-16 [8]; Dancing-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; Guns (Pistol)-16 [2]; Intimidation-13 [2]; Knife-14 [2]; Running-12 [2]; Streetwise-16 [8]; Survival (Urban)-16 [8]; Theology (Voodoo)-14 [6]

Joshua Carson has a reputation as somebody you don't want to irritate; people on the street think he's an enforcer for the Mob, or maybe Jamaican dealers. In reality, he is one of the Loa Lords, and his prey are drug dealers and other servants of the Mayombe. Joshua grew up in the mean streets of Chicago. His mother managed to protect him until he was 13, when he had to choose between joining a gang and dying. He and his best friend, Terrence "Roach" Jackson, got caught wearing their gang colors on the wrong side of the street. The rival gang decided to get creative. Roach was tortured to death; Joshua saw his friend die, and then his captors started working on him. In a trance induced by agony, Joshua had a vision of a powerful African warrior, who offered him salvation in return for service. Joshua agreed, and Oggun took possession of his body, breaking free from his captors and killing them with his bare hands.

That day marked the beginning of Joshua's Initiation. To his amazement, the ghost of his dead friend Roach contacted him; he had remained in the material world, and stayed nearby, providing a steady stream of jokes and quaint advice. Soon after the event, Joshua was contacted by the Loa Lords, who had sensed his connection to Oggun. Since then, Joshua has become a dedicated warrior, hunting down and destroying Corruptor spirits and In-Betweeners.

Orion, Wild Hunt Initiate

Age 28; well-muscled, 6', 155 lbs.; long black hair and eyes. He typically wears leather jacket, jeans and biker boots. His eyes have a feral, savage glint.

ST 13 [30] IQ 13 [30] **Basic Speed** 6.25
DX 14 [45] HT 11 [10] **Move** 6

Point Total: 450

Advantages

Ally (450-point Voodoo priest, on a 6 or less) [20]
Initiation (Fifth Level) [100]
Strong Will +3 [15]
Rank 2 (Wild Hunt) [10]

Disadvantages

Bloodlust [-10]
Duty (Wild Hunt) [-15]
Flashbacks (The Thing in the Cellar) [-5]
Obsession (Destroy the Corruptors) [-15]
On the Edge [-15]
Secret (Alliance with Voodoo society) [-20]

Quirks

Former Yuppie, now he bases his wardrobe on the TV show *Renegade* [-1]

Cold and reserved, even to friends [-1]

Likes to possess deserving targets, then use their bodies as expendable pawns [-1]

Doesn't drink [-1]

Will work with anybody (even In-Betweeners) to destroy Corruptor spirits and their servants [-1]

Initiate Powers

Extra Fatigue +5 [15]; Spirit Form [100]; Spirit Warrior (Genius) [66]. When using his Spirit Warrior powers, Orion's stats are changed to ST 19 DX 16 and HT 15, and his skills, Move and hand-to-hand damage go up accordingly. While in spirit form, he has all the abilities described on p. 84, including the power to possess other people and create a solid body for his spirit.

Paths and Rituals

Path of the Spirit-15 [16]; Dominion-14 [4]; Turn the Spirit-14 [2]; Beckon-15 [0]; Invoke-13 [2]

Skills

Detect Lies-14 [6]; Fast-Talk-12 [2]; Guns (Pistol)-16 [1]; (Assault Rifle)-16 [1]; (Shotgun)-16 [1]; Interrogation-15 [6]; Karate-16 [16]; Knife-16 [4]; Knife Throwing-15 [2]; Motorcycle-17 [8]; Occultism-15 [8]; Ritual Magic (Lodges)-15 [16]; Stealth-14 [2]; Streetwise-12 [1]; Theology (Lodges)-14 [6]

Arthur Hawthorn was born into the Shadow War, the son of a prominent member of the Enlightened Lodge (see p. 30). Through his father's influence, Arthur was inducted into the Lodges, where he soon rose to the fourth degree in rank (see p. 54). He showed an aptitude for magic, specializing in Soul rituals. He became an authority in the field of the occult, but had little practical experience. All this changed six years ago, when he and the rest of his circle were assigned to root out a renegade Initiate suspected of practicing human sacrifice. The accusations were all too accurate: the Initiate's country home had been turned into a charnel house in which dozens of victims had been horribly butchered. Arthur was the first to enter the cellar and confront a twisted In-Betweeners monster that sat in the center of the room, bloated with human flesh. The brutal scene scarred Arthur's mind forever.

Abandoning his mystical studies, he used his Lodge contacts to train himself in the arts of warfare. The Lodge expected him to become one of their enforcers; instead, he changed his name to Orion, after the mythological hunter, and abandoned the Enlightened Lodge, forsaking his rank. He then tried to join the Wild Hunt (see p. 33). The Hunt greeted him with suspicion, making him a probationary member and sending him on solitary missions.

Despite his training and Initiate powers, Arthur would have been easy prey for the Corruptors if he hadn't been helped by a Voodoo Spirit Warrior of the Protectors bizongue (see p. 21). Since then, he has remained in contact with his newfound friend, feeding him information about the Lodges and Corruptor activity in return for assistance in hunting down his enemies. If the Wild Hunt discovers he has betrayed their secrets to outsiders, he faces expulsion and possibly death. Arthur doesn't care. He lives to destroy the abominations that ravaged his peace of mind, and he will do whatever it takes to accomplish that goal.

O'Brien concentrated on not looking at his watch. Jamal was late, and checking the time every five minutes wasn't going to change a thing. The overweight detective shifted uncomfortably in the small car. Foreigners don't build cars worth a damn, he thought; silently he cursed the Department for buying Japanese. O'Brien started tapping his fingers on the steering wheel. Jamal, his junkie informant, had sounded frantic on the phone. Something big had gone down, but Jamal wouldn't talk about it. "I gotta show you, or you gonna call me crazy," was all he had said. So now O'Brien had waited in their regular meeting place for 20 minutes, watching the junkies and the hookers perform their endless parade. If it had been anyone else, O'Brien would have driven away ten minutes ago. But Jamal had given him good information in the past, and the little junkie might be the key to discovering who had been taking over the drug trade on the whole Lower East Side. Over 30 murders in a month were directly linked to the takeover. Some very creative, very strange murders, and nine deaths that had to be murders, no matter what the coroners said. "Made" people didn't start dropping like flies, even if it looked like heart attacks and weird tropical diseases, without a good reason.



“Ceremonial” and Improvised Magic

Some magical traditions (including Voodoo and Lodge practitioners, among others) distinguish between “ceremonial” or rigid magic and “spontaneous” or improvised magic. Both use the magic system described here, but with different emphasis.

Most Lodge initiates (except the Servants of Hecate — see p. 28) are ceremonialists, sticking to specific rituals to achieve the desired end. The Voodoo tradition tends to be more spontaneous, although individual houngans may master several ceremonial rituals and rely on them.

In game terms, a ceremonialist will buy up his skill in all the ceremonies he uses, usually having them at the same level or close to the level of the basic Path skill. A spontaneous magician, on the other hand, will tend to have very high levels in the Ritual Magic and basic Path skills, and will use many rituals at default value. The spontaneous magician will be able to improvise ritual elements to deal with the unexpected. The ceremonialist’s well-rehearsed rituals will often be more powerful.

Sensing Ritual Effects

Francois leaped over the black pig blocking the dirt road, causing the animal to run away, snorting indignantly. The houngan landed gracefully, a smile on his lips. Not bad for an old man, eh? His young students, the ones who wanted him to retire and let them take over the hounfor, should have seen it. He...

*A wave of dizziness washed over Francois. He staggered under a feeling of unwholeness. At the corner of his eye, a vague shadow flickered and was gone. Francois looked to both sides of the road, but saw no one. Then he realized the shadow had been a *nkisi*, an evil spirit not worthy of the name loa. He had been cursed, by someone who was able to pierce through his amulets and defenses.*

Initiates, especially those who actually practice magic, always know if they have been cursed. This knowledge can save their lives — or fill their last days with anguish.

When an Initiate is cursed, he feels the metaphysical attack, often as pain or nausea. Higher-level Initiates may see the spirits that carried out the instructions; more powerful Initiates can see and attack them before they can proceed with the curse.

If the Initiate does not have the power or skills to remove the curse, its presence will oppress him, as a weight dragging him down. A cursed Initiate is prone to nightmares, fits of depression, or nasty mood swings. These can be roleplayed, or the GM may assign one or two mental disadvantages that the character will suffer until the curse is lifted: some possibilities include Bad Temper, Berserk, Manic-Depressive and Paranoia.

Magic

Another five minutes went by. That did it. Grumbling, O’Brien started the car. Turning the key in the ignition produced no effect, not even a cough from the engine. Cursing, the detective got out and opened the hood of the car —

And saw Jamal’s head, brutally jammed in where the battery should be.

The face was bloody and battered, but he could still make out his informant’s face, mouth gaping in an endless silent scream. “Jesus.” O’Brien turned away from the car, fighting the heavens. He hadn’t stepped out of the car. How...?

“Bad things happen to betrayers, mon.” O’Brien turned toward the voice. The man standing in front of him looked like the stereotypical Rasta-man, complete with dreadlocks and colorful beret, but there was something about him that O’Brien had never seen before. Just looking at the stranger made the detective feel like a small child confronting an unknown adult. Instinctively, he reached for his service pistol. He tried to steady the weapon with both hands, but his left arm wasn’t working right, so he aimed one-handed at the man. “Who the hell are you?”

*The Rasta-man smiled a dazzling, gold-toothed grin. “I be your Death.” Pain and nausea hit O’Brien like sledgehammers. The gun clattered to the pavement. He fell to his knees, clutching his chest. His vision swam hazily, but he could still see the man clearly. Now there were *things* floating around him, humanoid shapes made up of black light. O’Brien tried to scream in terror, but he couldn’t draw any breath in. The Rasta-man started to laugh. It was the last sound O’Brien heard.*

The magical powers of the Shadow War setting are not the typical fantasy spells and incantations of sword-and-sorcery game worlds, where mages throw fireballs and raise the dead with a few gestures. Instead, magic is a subtle, complicated process. But in some ways, it is far more powerful than what any fantasy magician can do. The magic described below depends on rituals designed to produce effective results, and is divided into five basic Paths or areas of interest. These Paths represent the knowledge of how to appeal to the powers of the magician’s will and to that of the spirits of his cosmology. All magicians have some skill in all five Paths, although some may specialize in one or two areas, and have only the most rudimentary skill in the others.

African-oriented Voodoo magic and the Western magic of the Lodges work in the same way. Ironically, most practitioners of either Voodoo or Lodge magic will be quick to deride the other style as inferior, and will bristle at the idea that, essentially, they are doing the same thing by different names!

Conducting Rituals

Most rituals and ceremonies have five separate steps (see below), each designed to focus the will of the caster. The more advanced Initiates can eliminate some or most steps from a ceremony and still make it effective, but most magicians who take such shortcuts risk having the ritual fail or backfire. Different schools of magic change the elements or the exact order of each step, but for the most part they are always present.

Repetition is an important element of most ceremonies. The same phrases, songs or actions are repeated over and over throughout the steps of the ritual. The constant repetition helps the magician reach a state of trance in which he is aware of nothing but the ritual itself. Free of distractions, the mind of the magician is able to tap into the spirit world and draw the power necessary to affect the world.

Preparation: The magician readies himself, the subject of the ritual and the place where the ritual will take place. Voudoun practitioners, for example, draw vevers, elaborate symbols, on the ground with cornmeal or more exotic powders. Lodge magicians paint or carve pentagrams, circles or other geometrical patterns. Santeros take ritual baths and anoint themselves with special oils to



purify themselves before the ritual. During the preparation, the material components of the ritual (see p. 70) are assembled and readied for use. Chanting and musical instruments are commonly used during this step: the Lodges prefer Gregorian chant, while Voudounistas use drums.

Invocation: When all is ready, the magician will call to him the spirit or spirits involved in the ceremony. This process often begins during the preparation, but continues beyond it — the chanting or ritual activity is repeated throughout the ceremony. During the invocation, the name of the spirit or spirits involved or a symbolic representation is used. Initiates of the Second Level or higher will sense the presence of the spirits invoked when (and if) they show up.

Wish: The ritual caster must express what he wants the ritual to accomplish. This can be a simple, direct petition (“Oggun, destroy this enemy”), or something more complicated, such as linking a symbol of the invoked spirit with the subject of the ritual. During a harmful ritual, for example, the magician destroys or damages some representation of the victim. Some exorcisms use a ritual bath, symbolizing the cleansing of the alien presence. While the symbolic event is being depicted, the invocation activity continues, and is often linked to the wish.

Offering: Most rituals add an offering of some sort to convince the spirits to carry out the ritual’s goal. The offering can be a sacrifice of some sort, or something less tangible, like a pledge of servitude or a prayer of thanks.

Dismissal: Once the wish is made, the ritual concludes with the dismissal of the invoked spirits. Most of the time this is the easiest part of the ritual. Some magicians, however (Lodge members most commonly), deal with hostile spirits who may resist dismissal and try to attack their summoner. The dismissal is also an important component of harmful rituals, because the magician must take steps to shield himself and his client from the effects of the ceremony.

Learning the Paths

The prerequisite for any and all Paths is the Ritual Magic skill (see p. 57). This skill gives the basic understanding of how magic works, the cosmology of a magic “system” (Voodoo, Lodge, or others), and the way to conduct rituals effectively. The Ritual Magic skill gives the student the potential to conduct rituals without any further training. Furthermore, no Path skill can be higher than the practitioner’s Ritual Magic skill — to advance, he must first improve his basic knowledge. (He must spend at least 1 character point on the Ritual Magic skill.)

Each Path skill is a Mental/Very Hard skill. The Path skill level is used when conducting rituals. All Paths default to Ritual Magic-6 (to a maximum default level of 14); they can be improved from the default (see sidebar, p. B45).

Example: Miles Andre, a devotee of Baron Samedi, has Ritual Magic-17 and Path of Luck-16. He has spent character points to raise his Path of Luck level above the default of 10. His level in the Path of Luck cannot rise above 17 until he raises his level in Ritual Magic; once he does, he may pay points to raise his level in the Path of Luck.

Knowledge Without Initiation

Doctor Fuller wiped his forehead. Once again he imagined what his colleagues would think of him now — a respected college professor, on his hands and knees, drawing mystic symbols with colored cornmeal purchased at a Santeria store ten blocks away. Then the thought faded, replaced by a feeling of urgency. He didn’t care about anything other than stopping the curse that was killing him. He hoped that 15 years studying the rituals of Voudoun practitioners had given him enough knowledge about magic.

He looked at his living room. The furniture had been pushed into the corners, the expensive carpets unceremoniously rolled back. Vevers were drawn at strategic points, just as he had seen old houngans do in Haiti. But most disturbing to his colleagues would have been the live chicken hobbled next to Fuller, and the carving knife lying nearby. After seeing his life slowly being destroyed, Fuller was taking no chances. His Creole was passable; soon he started the incantations, combining the chants he had heard with improvisations...

Fuller has IQ 15, but is not an Initiate. However, his years of study have given him Ritual Magic (Voodoo)-14, and Vever Drawing-14. He is trying to cast a Dispel Curse on himself. The penalties to his default roll are as follows: the Path of Protection defaults to Ritual Magic-6 (modified skill of 8); Dispel Curse defaults to Path of Protection-4 (modified skill of 4). The only chance he has lies in ritual preparations. Fortunately, Fuller has learned to draw vevers well (see p. 57). He makes his Vever Drawing roll by 6, which adds +3 to his roll (raising it to 7). Drawing the vevers also quickly “consecrates” his living room (-1 penalty). Fuller is in too much of a hurry to take days in the ritual, so he gets no bonuses for extra time. In terms of symbolic representations, he is in luck: since he is the recipient of the ritual, he automatically gains +4 to the roll (raising his skill to 11). He has manufactured a crude *asson* (see p. 70), which eliminates any penalties for the lack of spiritual symbols.

Finally, Fuller sacrifices an animal, a white hen: the GM rules this is good for a +2 bonus. Normally, that would raise the ritual roll to 13, but since Fuller has no Initiation, his ritual skill can never exceed 12. So 12 is the final modified skill. (If he were trying to learn the ritual, he would do so at -5 IQ!) The roll has to defeat the curse, which was cast at a modified skill of 15.

Fuller’s player rolls a 7, making it by 5; the GM rolls an 11 for the curse’s caster, making it by 4. Fuller’s improvisation has succeeded — for now.

Initiation Without Knowledge

Julio leaped from his bed, clawing at the air. In his mind's eye he could see the thwarted Nkisi spirit, fleeing after the failed possession attempt. The Initiate swore. The bastards had his number, all right. Two attempts in one week, even after he went into hiding. And Carmela, the only one who could perform a ritual of protection, would not be back for a week. He couldn't wait a week...

Since joining the Loa Lords, Julio had helped in countless rituals. He knew the basics, but had lacked the interest to delve into magic. He much preferred to leave his body and become a living ghost to torment his enemies. He didn't dare do that now, while his body lay unprotected in a motel room.

At the end of his improvised ritual, Julio fell back on the bed. Pain wracked his body; a nosebleed stained the pillow. Lacking any other sacrifice to appease the spirits, he had given of himself to the loas, and they had accepted some of his life force as payment. He would be protected for the rest of the night, but his sleep would not be restful.

Julio is a Sixth Level Initiate who never learned any rituals; to protect himself, he is trying to cast Repel Spirit on himself for a day. Several years of assisting with rituals have given him some skill in Ritual Magic (skill level 16). By default, his Path of the Spirit skill is 10 (Ritual Magic-6) and his skill with Repel Spirit is 8 (Path of the Spirit-2). He has no penalties for conducting the ritual on unconsecrated grounds, due to his powerful link to the supernatural (see *Initiation Levels*, p. 58). As the recipient of the ritual, he is at +4 (total skill of 12), but he wants the ritual to last 24 hours, which will give him a -2 penalty (bringing the roll down to 10).

Finally, Julio spends 5 HT (reducing himself from 13 to 8 hit points) for a total roll of 15. The ritual is successful, and hostile spirits will have to overcome it to try to approach him, but Julio is badly hurt, and in agonizing pain. The cure may be worse than the disease...



Each Path (Dream, Health, Luck, Protection and Spirit) has a number of rituals, each of which produces a specific effect. These rituals default to the appropriate Path at a level of -3 to -8 (see the specific rituals). Any default penalty can be bought off: each 2 character points eliminate -1 penalty. An Initiate cannot have more skill with a ritual than he has with the Path that controls it.

Example: Miles Andre wishes to master the specific ritual Malediction (which defaults to Path of Luck-6). He starts with a base skill of 10; he can raise this by spending 2 points per level, to a maximum of 16 (for 12 points). Every time he improves his Path of Luck skill by one, his Malediction skill level will also go up by 1. After reaching level 16, he will not be able to raise his skill with the Malediction ritual until his level in the Path of Luck rises above 16.

Initiation and Paths

A person's Initiation level is very important when he learns ritual magic. Non-Initiates can learn ceremonies, but are at -5 IQ! This makes their default to the Ritual Magic skill (which would be effectively reduced to Ritual Magic skill *minus* 11) virtually useless. Furthermore, the maximum skill level they can have with any Path is 12 (they must still spend a minimum of 1 character point, no matter how high their IQs). First Level Initiates can learn Paths, but at -3 IQ (they have no maximum skill level, however). Second Level Initiates and higher can learn Paths at no penalty.

Rituals require a number of elements (see below) for successful performance. At the Fourth Level, the Initiate can choose to reduce or eliminate one of the requirements at no penalty. Fifth Level Initiates can do the same with two ritual elements, and Sixth Level and higher Initiates can dispense with *all* the trappings of ritual — they can visualize a ritual in a few seconds, and it works as if they had physically performed it.

Ritual Elements

All rituals require three basic elements: time to conduct the ritual, a consecrated area attuned to the spirits, and a number of material components. Normally, ritual magic is an involved process that takes a great deal of time and effort, unlike sword-and-sorcery spells that can be cast in the middle of a fight. These elements act as a focus for the caster's will, making it easier to concentrate and achieve results; in the right quality or quantity, ritual elements can grant bonuses to the Path rolls. After eliminating any negative modifiers, all combined bonuses from elaborate ritual elements cannot exceed +15.

It is possible, in an emergency, to dispense with these components. In theory, none of the elements of a ritual is necessary. Doing without them is possible, but modifies all Path rolls negatively. Cumulative penalties for lack of the appropriate elements have no limit: ill-prepared Initiates could have penalties of -15 or more!

Time

Rituals are meant to be conducted over a period of minutes, hours, or even days. This is required to set in motion the wheels of supernatural intervention. Repetition acts to focus the caster's will and energy. Even after the ritual is over, the effects may not take place immediately. Most blessings and curses (see *The Path of Luck*, below), for example, take days to occur. The delay between a ritual and its effects is out of the magician's hands, but the time to perform a ritual isn't. Most rituals will take between 10 minutes and one hour to complete. More complex and powerful rituals may take several hours, or even days, to complete.

Most of the time spent on the ritual deals with repetitive activities like chanting and dancing. Eliminating these elements makes the ritual more difficult (-2 to all Path rolls) but reduces the time to a mere 1d+2 minutes (time varies with each hurried ceremony). Reducing the ritual time to 1d seconds (basically just enough time for the magician to visualize the intended result and concentrate on it) puts him at -5 on all rolls.

On the other hand, putting extra time and care into a ritual will raise the chances of its success. Repeating the same ritual once a day for several days gives a +1 modifier to the effect for every two days of ritual casting. The caster must dedicate at least half an hour a day to the ritual to gain this bonus. Extended rituals (more than three times the minimum time requirements) add +2 to all rolls. The effects will still not take place until the ceremony is over, whether it takes hours or days to complete.

Example: Miles, the Baron Samedi houngan, is going to send a Malediction against a corrupt cop who is extracting protection money from the neighborhood. If he were in a hurry, he might conduct the ritual in as little as five or six seconds. His effective skill, however, would go down from 16 to 11, making it very likely that the victim would resist the effects, or, worse, that Miles wouldn't be able to protect himself against the effects of the ritual! Erring on the side of caution, Miles decides to take the long and sure way. Having acquired clippings of the policeman's hair at the local barber shop, Miles weaves a complex ritual which he conducts every day for eight days. At the end of this time, he makes his ritual rolls, which now have an effective level of 20! Predictably, the ritual works perfectly. Over the next two weeks, the cop is suspended on suspicion of corruption, his wife kicks him out of the house, and he finally falls down a fire escape into a dumpster and breaks his neck.

Consecrated Ground

Traditional temples were considered to be consecrated ground. This is an area specially dedicated to rituals, and specially attuned to receive spirits. This requirement is not hard to fulfill. An unmodified Ritual Magic roll and a service lasting 1d minutes (this time cannot be reduced), including placing candles, *vever* drawings, esoteric symbols and the like in a defined area, will effectively consecrate it for ritual purposes, although only for one ritual, and with a -1 penalty. Properly consecrating the grounds for the ritual will require at least an hour's ceremony performed every day for a week, in order to cleanse the area of any negative influences that might exist there. An Initiate who must conduct a ritual without consecrated ground will have a flat -5 penalty.

A place that is constantly blessed and part of rituals will eventually acquire a mystical "charge" that facilitates any ritual conducted within its boundaries (see table, p. 81). Old hounfours or other mystic areas or temples (used for 20 years or more) grant a +1 to all ritual rolls. Historical ritual places (used for 100 years or more) give a +3 to rolls. Truly powerful mystical centers like Stonehenge (or any area used for 1,000 years or more) give a +5 to all ritual rolls. But these areas are usually claimed and controlled by an Initiate group that takes a dim

Knowledge With Initiation

Leigh opened the door just as Conrad collapsed. She caught him, noticing the blood soaking his shirt, staining her bathrobe, the carpet.

"What happened?"

"Shot..." Conrad's eyes rolled up in his head. He passed out.

Leigh was much stronger than she looked. She managed to place his body on the large sofa in her living room. Conrad loved to play superhero, using his Initiate powers in ways the Lodge frowned upon. Now she would have to help him, and cover up for him, or he would be in deep trouble. If only she weren't in love with the fool...

At least it looked like the bullet had gone clean through. Her knowledge of healing rituals was limited. Open wounds were normally beyond her skills. But she had to try.

Leigh is a Fourth Level Lodge Initiate. She knows ritual magic and several rituals, but they don't include Succor. Since Leigh has Path of Healing-16, her Succor default is a 12. The living room is often used for rituals, so she has no penalties for unconsecrated ground, and the ritual is at +4 because Conrad is physically present. She also has a very old ash wand, used as a symbol of Hecate, which gives her a +1 to ritual rolls.

At the end of the ritual, Leigh (who also has First Aid) has managed to restore 3 hit points (Conrad was at -2 points out of a normal HT of 12). Her modified ritual roll is 17; her player rolls a 12, making it by 5 points. For the next 5 days, Conrad will make six HT+1 rolls a day to recover from his injury. He will be fully recovered before the ritual lapses.

Roleplaying Rituals

The actual steps of a ritual are mechanistic, even boring. GMs should emphasize the occult significance of rituals, rather than the process itself. The ritual connects the Initiate to the spirit world, opening a window into the supernatural. When the ritual works, it translates participants to an altered state of consciousness. Strange things can occur while the ceremony is conducted; this is particularly true of more powerful or intricate rituals.

Sometimes the magician sees images from the past or future. These may relate to the purpose of the ritual. For example, a magician cursing an enemy might see flashes of past encounters with him. These images could either reinforce any animosity he feels for the target, or make him waver (by showing a positive side of the victim, for example). Or he might see his target (or himself!) being struck down by misfortune.

Continued on next page...

Roleplaying Rituals (Continued)

The flashbacks could become even more extreme, becoming full-fledged hallucinations. The caster could suddenly find himself clad in furs, performing the ceremony in a cold cavern while a sabertooth tiger roars in the distance, or dancing around a bonfire in a tropical jungle, or even performing the ritual on a virtual-reality computer while floating in low Earth orbit. The images can belong to past incarnations of the Initiate, or even pieces of the lives of other people involved in the ritual (such as the magician's client or target).

The act of summoning spirits can often attract other entities unintentionally. If the Initiate is not working in a warded area (see p. 78), he may be visited by the ghosts of relatives or acquaintances, other loas and even hostile spirits! Most of the time, the interlopers will make only a brief appearance (just long enough to speak a sentence or let the magician catch a glimpse of them) and then they will be gone. These apparitions provide a good opportunity for GMs to drop hints, warnings, or red herrings.

GMs can either roll randomly for these events using the Flashbacks disadvantage (p. B240) or throw them in at his whim. The most extreme disruptions might require the magician to make a Ritual Magic or Will roll to continue performing the ceremony. Throwing in these situations once in a while will make rituals the uncertain, powerful events they should be, rather than a purely mechanical activity.

Mystic Symbols

Some common ritual aids used by Voodoo and Lodge magicians are described below, along with their uses.

Asson: This hollowed-out calabash filled with snake vertebrae symbolizes the loa Damballah and Ayida-Wedo (see p. 87). During the ceremony, the magician paces or dances through the ritual area, shaking the rattle and invoking the names of Damballah and other loas. A consecrated rattle (see the Mystic Symbol advantage, p. 60) is an effective exorcism tool, used to expel evil spirits from an area or person in the name of the snake gods.

Broom: This humble domestic tool has a place in Voodoo and among some Lodge practitioners (especially the Old-Religion-influenced Servants of Hecate — see p. 28). Users sweep an area with a consecrated broom to represent removing bad influences, curses, or antagonistic spirits from the place. Similarly, miniature brooms are used to exorcise evil spirits from the sick.

Continued on next page...

view of outsiders using the place for their own purposes. (Stonehenge, for example, is the “property” of the Lodges, and woe to any unauthorized Initiate caught in the area at any time, let alone trying to conduct a ritual!)

Material Components

Material components include representations of the target and of the spirits involved in the ritual, sacrificial offerings, and occult badges of office. They can be as simple as a photograph, a small necklace, a candy bar and a ring, or as complex and bulky as a life-sized mannequin, a fully-stocked temple with statues and paintings, a small herd of animals and a set of robes, wands and staves. Simple ritual components allow the magician to conduct the ritual at no penalty, while very elaborate preparations provide several bonuses (see table, p. 81).

Symbolic representations are necessary when the subject is the unwilling target of a ritual effect; willing recipients do not require special symbols for the ritual to work. Conducting a ritual without a good symbolic representation of the target has a penalty of -2 (if at least a good drawing of the person is available) to -6 (if only the subject's name is known). Pieces of clothing or small articles belonging to the victim grant no bonus or penalty. Nail or hair clippings give a +1 bonus. Very good representations (photographs and blood samples) add +2 to skill level. A DNA sample (either an actual distilled laboratory sample or a computerized diagram of it) or video tape of the subject adds +3 to ritual rolls. Having the person present during the ritual puts the Initiate at +4 skill. This +4 applies only to potentially harmful rituals in which he presents a clearly unwilling victim to the spirits; part of the ritual would consist of painting the person's body with arcane symbols, or mystically “marking” it in some way. (Obviously, he would have to restrain or perhaps deceive the person as to the real purpose of the ritual).

Symbols of the spirits involved are also important. Even a drawing, an amulet or a talisman depicting the loa or spirits invoked will allow the ritual to be conducted without penalty. Having no representation of the spirits puts the Initiate at a -3 penalty to his Path rolls. Very detailed symbols such as sculptures and paintings give a bonus of +1 to +3.

Sacrifices are never necessary (and there is no penalty for not having them), but can help make the spirits more inclined to aid the magician in his task. Offerings of food, drink and cigars, among other things, can appease Voodoo spirits — spirits can taste or otherwise experience the offerings, by virtue of their being offered. The sacrifice of live animals also helps gain the attention of spirits. Food offerings provide bonuses of +1 or +2, while animal sacrifices may grant a bonus of +2 to +4 (if both food and animals are offered, only the higher bonus counts). Animal sacrifices may lead to trouble with the authorities, animal protection groups and other outsiders; Voodoo practitioners in the Western world who are discovered performing such sacrifices are often suspected of demon-worship and of plotting to sacrifice humans as well as animals. Human sacrifices, however, only attract Corruptor spirits, granting bonuses of +1 to +5 per person sacrificed. A human sacrifice conducted while contacting non-Corruptor spirits bestows an equivalent *penalty* to the ritual roll — the negative psychic energies of the sacrifice scare off or disgust the spirits!

It is possible for Initiates to make a sacrifice of *themselves* to gain skill bonuses. This is something that is only done *in extremis*, under very desperate circumstances, because it is likely to have permanent effects on the caster's health. For every *two* HT points “spent” during the performance of a ritual, the caster gets a +1 to any ritual roll. At the end of the ritual, whether it is successful or not, the character will receive wounds totalling the HT lost; these usually materialize as internal bleeding, bruises, tears of blood, stigmata, but may instead manifest as starvation or dehydration. These bonuses do *not* count

against the +15 maximum bonus; the Initiate can add a bonus equal to his HT (meaning he will be reduced to -HT by doing this).

Whenever a magician sacrifices his life force in this way, however, he must make aging rolls for all his stats (see p. B83), without adding any tech level, Longevity or Unaging bonuses. Multiple self-sacrifices in a short period of time (GM's decision) will give penalties to the roll of from -1 to -5!

Resistance Rolls

Hostile rituals are always resisted; non-Initiates roll a Quick Contest between the modified Path roll and the victim's Will; additionally, ordinary people may receive a penalty to their Will rolls depending on the strength of the ritual. Resistance rolls work differently for Initiates, who resist with their unmodified Will plus their level of Initiation. Many Path of Protection rituals resist hostile rituals with their own ritual skill level.

The subject only resists beneficial rituals when he is unaware of the ceremony. In that case, he subconsciously senses the supernatural intrusion in his life, and instinctively resists it, as above, but his Will is reduced by 4.

Causing fear and unease in a subject can weaken his ability to resist. Many Voudounistas and other magicians announce curses and other hostile rituals by leaving ritual elements where the target can see them (dead chickens, *vever* drawn on the victim's doorstep, etc.). This intimidation attempt may backfire, however. Whenever a curse is "announced" in this way, make a reaction roll for the subject, modified from +5 to -5 depending on how intimidating the "announcement" is and whether the person believes in the supernatural (most Westerners will react at -1 to -3 against such threats, while a superstitious person would react at +5). On a Good or better reaction, the victim is intimidated and is at -2 to resist the ritual. On a Poor or worse reaction, the target's reaction is the exact *opposite* of what was expected, and he resists at +3 to Will!

Multiple Targets Modifiers

Some rituals can affect a group of people, or even a whole nation or continent! When casting a ritual for or against a group, the caster or casters can define the targets, from a generic "everyone in the city" to "all redheads in the city" or "all redheads named Diana in the city." Base the penalty applied to the roll on the total number of people that meet the magician's specifications — a very general curse is likely to blow up in the caster's face! The penalties for very large groups are prohibitive for most lone magicians (but see *Combined Efforts*, below). Use the following table to determine the penalty for affecting a group of people:

Size of Group	Roll Penalty	Size of Group	Roll Penalty
2 to 5	-4	501-1,000	-30
6-10	-8	1,001-5,000	-34
11-20	-12	5,000-20,000	-38
21-50	-14	20,000-50,000	-42
51-100	-18	51,000-100,000	-44.
101-200	-22	+ every doubling	an additional-4
201-500	-26		

Groups resist with a single roll of 12 if the population affected has few or no Initiates, at 14 if at least 10% of the population has been Initiated, and at 16 if over 20% of the group are Initiates. Groups made up entirely of Initiates, however, use the resistance roll of their most powerful member. Almost 1% of the world's population has the equivalent of First Level Initiation. Other Initiates represent a much smaller percentage — about .02% combined (or one in 5,000), so the GM can assume a resistance roll of 12 for most situations.

Mystic Symbols (Continued)

Chalice: Cups, bottles and drinking glasses are used by most mystical traditions. The legend of the Holy Grail may have originated from ancient Lodge practices. Chalices hold the blood of sacrificial animals, or some liquid that symbolizes a spirit. Lodge chalices are usually very ornate, made of silver or gold and inscribed with mystical symbols. Voodoo cups are simpler, made out of wood, glass or clay.

Diloggun: The *diloggun* are 18 sea-shells used for divination. This works in a manner similar to the *I Ching*: each pattern refers to one phrase or saying, which is then interpreted according to the situation.

Eleke: Also known as *collares* (Spanish for necklaces), *elekes* are beaded strings used as sacred necklaces or bracelets in Santeria. Each *eleke* is dedicated to a specific *orisha*: the most common necklaces belong to Obatala (white beads), Elegguia (red and black beads), Oshun (amber beads) and Chango (red and white beads). *Elekes* are used as protective amulets (and are often consecrated with rituals of Protection or Luck). In rituals, the santero will wear the necklaces of the spirits he wishes to contact.

Herbs: Voodoo is at its roots a nature religion, and considers certain plants, herbs and fruits to have mystical properties. They are used in rituals both as symbols of the loa and for direct medicinal purposes. Many Voodoo Initiates also know a great deal of herbal and traditional medicine.

Sword: The sword is an important symbol of Western mysticism, and also has a place in Voodoo magic. The Brethren usually use long daggers, while Voudounistas use knives or machetes. Western magicians carve runes and arcane symbols on their blades, while Voodoo practitioners make drawings of Oggun (see p. 91) on the blade's handle.

Potions: Both the Lodges and Voudounistas make use of potions, philters and oils in their rituals. As with herbal medicines, potions have both symbolic and practical purposes. Many potions contain hallucinogens to help the Initiate attain an altered state of awareness, or narcotics to reduce the defenses of a victim. A little poison sometimes enhances a curse: witches and Voudounistas have both been accused of being poisoners as well as magicians, not entirely without cause. The act of imbibing a potion (whether or not it is chemically effective) serves as a powerful symbol of accepting or "inviting in" the spiritual forces that will carry out one's desire.

Examples of Rituals In Play

Leon completed the incantation. "Come on!" he shouted in heavily accented Creole. "Come here, Rupert! By Baron Samedi, I command you. By Baron Cimetie, I call you to my side. By Legba, I open the doorways for you."

A tingling feeling over Leon's scalp presaged the arrival of the ghost. His supernatural senses soon allowed him to see Rupert's translucent form standing before him. The ghost was angry at being summoned, angrier still to see that his summoner was an old enemy. He coiled to strike at the houngan, but Leon had been preparing for this moment for quite some time. "By Baron Samedi, I bind you!" Leon yelled. Rupert screamed in rage when he found himself unable to attack. "You now owe me six services, Rupert," Leon said with a nasty smile. He found it very poetic, using the ghost of a drug dealer against other drug dealers...

Leon is a Fourth Level Initiate with Path of the Spirit-17, Beckon-17 and Mastery-16. His target is the ghost of Rupert Molina, a recently-dead crack dealer with a Will of 14.

Leon casts the ritual over a period of an hour (no modifiers). He is on consecrated ground (the apartment is his "temple," but not long enough to grant any bonuses). His *asson* counts as a spiritual symbol. Before conducting the ritual, Leon acquired the blood-stained shirt Rupert was wearing when he was killed; since this object is intimately related to Rupert, the GM rules the shirt gives Leon a +3 bonus to the ritual roll. No other modifiers apply.

Leon calls on Baron Samedi and other loa of the dead to help him summon the ghost, and on Legba to allow it passage between the lands of the living and the lands of the dead. Leon rolls against his modified Command skill (a 20), and makes the roll by 9 points. Rupert resists at Will-3 (a total of 11); he rolls an 8 and loses. The ghost comes to Leon's presence.

Leon then completes the Mastery ritual he had combined with the summoning. His modified skill is 19, against Rupert's Will of 14. Leon rolls a 10; Rupert rolls an 11: Leon wins the contest by 6 points, which means Rupert must perform six tasks for the houngan.

Leon plans to use Rupert to produce minor poltergeist effects to terrify some small-time dealers plaguing his neighborhood.

Continued on next page...

Even if the ritual succeeds, it may not affect everyone in the group. Groups of 10 people or fewer will always be affected. In groups between 10 and 100, the total number of people affected is equal to 10 people or *half* the total (75% on a critical success), whichever is greater, plus one person per point by which the ritual roll was made. Only 20% of groups bigger than 100 are affected (40% on a critical success), plus 2% per point by which the ritual roll was made (round up).

Example: Claudius the Adept, Seventh Level Initiate of the demiurges, curses a small Middle American town that dared offend his magnificence. He decides to send a Malaise curse down on them; his Path of Health skill is 24, and he has specialized in Malaise so that his skill level in that ritual is 23. He takes his time and uses a number of ritual aids, multiple castings and a number of animal sacrifices (mutilating locally-owned cattle), for a total bonus of +12; that gives him a base roll of 35. Since this is a small place, he casts the curse on all males aged 20-40 in the town. There are 89 such people, so the penalty is -18, which reduces the base roll to 17. The GM rules that there are enough minor spontaneous Initiates in town to give the group a resistance roll of 14. Claudius wins the Quick Contest by 6 points (a roll of 8 versus an 11), so half of the 89 adults, plus 6, a total of 50 people, fall prey to a nasty disease that strikes all of them within the week. The mystery plague sabotages the local economy as the town grinds to a halt. Only a handful of the victims die, but damage to the town's finances and morale is severe.

Combined Efforts

When two or more sorcerers or priests combine their efforts, they can attempt very powerful rituals. Many ritual effects, especially those which affect a great number of people or a large geographical area (see above), can have skill penalties that range from -20 to -100 or more! These are obviously beyond the power of a single caster. When a group of casters attempts a potent feat, the skill penalty is divided evenly among the casters (rounded up). Furthermore, the number of points by which their combined rolls are made (after calculating penalties) are added together to determine the total effect of the combined ritual. Only penalties related to the ritual effect (multiple targets, area and duration) can be shared in this way. Default penalties and penalties caused by not using proper ritual elements (see p. 68) apply equally to each caster; by the same token, bonuses granted by ritual elements are also applied individually.

The casters must conduct the ritual at the same time. They can be in different places, but if they are out of each other's sight they all are at -1 skill. If they are in different places but have contacted each other through the dream world (see p. 20), they have no penalty. At the end of the ritual, everyone rolls against the appropriate ritual skill. If any of the casters fails his roll, the whole ritual fails. Any critical failures also affect the entire group. Effects that require a resistance roll use the *average* of all modified skill levels involved, at +1 for every caster involved, in the contest against the victim's Will (see p. 71).

Besides these dangers, the casters are very vulnerable to treachery from within. The link between them can be used as a conduit for attack. If one of the Initiates involved in the combined ritual casts a harmful ritual at another participant, the original ritual fails automatically and the subject gets no resistance roll!

Example: Six Voodoo Initiates wish to create a sanctuary where anybody who is not a member of their hounfor will be struck by a Malediction. Their skill levels in Malediction or the Path of Luck defaults are (from greatest to least) 17, 16, 15, 15, 13 and 12. The area protected has a radius of 5 yards (no modifier), and will last two months (-12). The Initiates' careful use of ritual elements gives each of them a bonus of +4 to their roll. The -12 penalty is divided evenly among the six Initiates (-2 to each), for a net bonus of +2. All of

the rolls are successful, and a Malediction curse with an effective skill level of 27 (their average modified skill of 15, +2 per caster involved) will strike any outsider who enters the place.

Area and Duration Modifiers

Some rituals can be cast to affect a given *area*, for a given period of time. Anybody who enters the area or who performs certain activities in the area will be affected by the ritual as if it had been cast on him personally. The ritual involves mystically defining the affected area's boundaries, using drawings, mystical cornerstones and similar elements.

During the ceremony, the magician must determine what activity must occur in the area to trigger the ritual effect. Some examples: a sacred site protected by a powerful curse that affects anyone who disturbs it; a small stream that grants the effects of a Path of Health ritual of the caster's choice to anyone who drinks of it; a doorway enchanted so that crossing it will summon a hostile loa; and so on.

Conducting a ritual over a large place will require the efforts of several magicians working together. The modifiers for "area-effect" rituals are determined by the radius of the area affected:

5 yards or less: no modifier.

5 to 10 yards: -1

10+ yards (to 100 yards): -1 per 10-yard increase (-10 for a 100-yard radius).

101 to 200 yards: -1 per 25-yard increase (total of -14 for a 200-yard radius).

200+ yards: -4 per 100-yard increase.

Duration determines how long the ritual effects last once the area is defined. Very powerful groups of magicians can affect an area for years or even centuries!

Up to 12 hours: no modifier

Up to 1 day: -2

Up to 1 week: -4

Up to a month: -8

Additional months (up to a year): -1 per week (a year would be at -52!)

Each additional year: -4 per year.

Area-effect ceremonies require one roll, after all penalties have been set, to determine if the ritual works. When the effects should be triggered, roll again against the modified ritual roll to determine whether the effect will work at that time. A critical failure on any of these triggered rolls causes the ritual effect to stop working for 1d weeks — or altogether, if the duration is less than that time.

Creating New Rituals

The rituals described here cannot include all possible magical effects. GMs and players are encouraged to develop new rituals.

When designing a ritual, determine its type, power and effects. Each basic Path deals with an area of magic; the new ritual should fit into one (or more) of those Paths. A hostile ritual will require two rolls to cast (see p. 74) and must win against the target's Will. Powerful rituals will impose penalties on the victim's resistance rolls, but will have a steeper default. The default penalty for rituals ranges from -1 (for very simple and basic rituals) to -10 (for the most powerful).

Improvising Rituals

By definition, any ritual that is rolled from a default is improvised; the caster is using his knowledge of ritual magic, expressed as his skill in Ritual Magic and the basic Path skills. The Initiate may also try to use defaults to create effects not described in the examples here. The GM should follow the rules on creating new rituals (see above) to set the default level for the improvised ritual.

Examples of Rituals In Play (Continued)

Little Chango smiled bitterly as he walked toward Senator Doherty's podium. The man would pay this day for his crimes, the Initiate swore to himself. He had prepared himself, called upon him the darker aspects of his namesake, Chango, to power the deadly ritual. All he had to do was lock eyes with the Senator, and revenge would be his.

Reporters and well-wishers crowded around the senator. Little Chango plowed relentlessly through them. Almost there... One of the Secret Service men noticed something wrong in the purposeful approach, and started to react to it. Too late. Little Chango's glance met Doherty's. Death leaped toward the Senator...

...And coiled back upon Little Chango! Pain exploded in his chest as his aging heart collapsed. He fell to his knees. How? Why? Then, too late to help him, he sensed the invisible presence hovering over Doherty, who stood unharmed, feigning concern for the dying black man at his feet. The American had his own loas, and they had protected him. Little Chango's last moments were filled with pain, bitterness and surprise...

Little Chango is a Third Level Initiate with a Will of 16, Path of Health-18 and Evil Eye-17. He prepared his killing ritual on consecrated ground, with proper ritual tools, taking the required time, and using the senator's picture to symbolize his target (good for a +2 bonus). His modified skill roll is a 20. On making eye contact with the senator, he would have entered into a Quick Contest of Wills to carry out the Evil Eye (see p. 75). Instead he ran afoul of the Reversal of Fortune charm protecting the Senator. A Lodge circle pooled its efforts on the Reversal of Fortune; their average skill with the ritual was 16, and there were seven of them, for a total ritual strength of 23.

A Quick Contest between Little Chango's Evil Eye-20 and the Lodge circle's Reversal of Fortune-23 followed. Little Chango's player rolls a 14; the GM rolls a 12. The houngan loses and his own ritual affect him. He made his first roll against Evil Eye by 10 points; now he must make a HT-10 roll to resist its effects. Needing a 4 or less, he rolls a 16 — a critical failure. The GM rules that the Evil Eye will kill Little Chango in HT/2 *minutes* instead of hours.

RITUALS

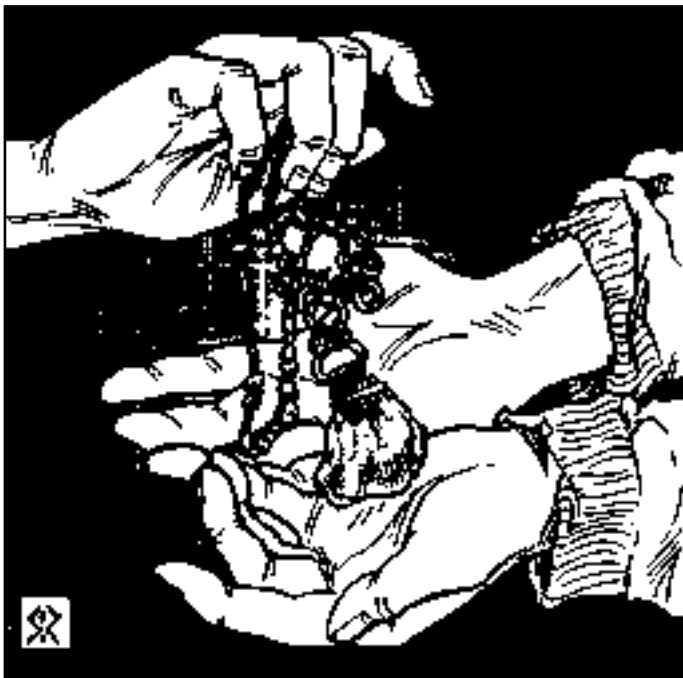
Listed below are the five basic Paths, and some sample rituals. This list is not exhaustive; GMs are encouraged to create more rituals, determining default levels by the power of the effects. All curses and hostile rituals require two rolls: one to conduct the attack successfully, and the other to shield the caster and his client from the effects of the ritual. The forces the ritual unleashes are as likely to affect their creator as their target.

Some rituals are called one name by Voudounistas, and another by Brethren. In some cases, these names reveal philosophical differences between the two camps; the Lodges tend to be much more authoritarian when dealing with spirits, for instance. Where two names are given, the first is the Voudounista name.

Charms

Many rituals are conducted around a charm, a small object empowered to grant benefits or protection. Only one charm of each type can be worn at a time. Many protection charms will break if their effects have lapsed or if they fail in their purpose. Accidentally or purposefully breaking the object will also negate its beneficial effects. Most charms also work best when worn in direct contact with the skin, and at all times.

Both Voodoo and Lodge charms tend to be pieces of jewelry. Necklaces, pendants, earrings and bracelets are the most common. Voodoo charms are commonly hand-made of wood, sea shells, feathers and bone. The Lodges favor precious stones and metals, especially bronze and silver. The intrinsic value of the object is not a factor in the power and effectiveness of the charm. The only factors are the power of the ritual caster, and, in some cases, the Initiation level of the wearer.



The Path of Dreams

Through the use of these rituals, magicians gain access to the dream world (see p. 20), which in turns enables them to reach and manipulate other people's dreams, as well as their own.

While in the dream world, the caster can conduct other rituals, although these will only affect any "dream selves" in the area, and not the physical bodies of normal people; thus, a Health rit-

ual would heal the target's dream persona, but not his physical body.

Dreamwalk

Defaults to unmodified Path of Dreams

After conducting this hour-long ritual, the magician enters a trance. After a period of disorientation, he will start to dream. At first the caster himself will determine the surroundings (see sidebar, p. 20), but encounters with other travelers in the dream world may change the scene. The sojourn to the dream world can last as long as the magician wills it; to leave, all that is necessary is a Path of Dreams roll — unless an outside force is attempting to detain the visitor there (see below).

Dream Shackles

Defaults to Path of Dreams-8

This powerful ritual will imprison the soul of the subject in the dream world for an extended period of time. The target will find himself unable to wake, and will wander in the dream world while his body remains in a deep sleep. The ritual will take effect the next time the target falls asleep, or immediately if the hour-long ritual is conducted while he is asleep. The imprisonment period will last two hours for every point by which the magician wins the contest between his Dream Shackles roll and the target's Will or Path of Dreams skill (whichever is greater). During that time, other Dream rituals can affect the victim, and he will not be able to wake up. Also, his body will be helpless against physical attacks — if his room were set on fire, he would burn or suffocate to death without being able to awaken.

Dream Visitor

Defaults to Path of Dreams-2

The magician can enter someone else's dream. The subject must be asleep while this 10-minute ritual is conducted, and resists with his Will. If the ritual is successful, the caster falls into a trance and, after a brief sojourn in the dream world, will enter the subject's dreams (a side effect of this ritual is that the subject will immediately fall into REM sleep after its successful completion). Once there, the caster can try to reshape elements of the dream by imposing his will on the environment. The traveler can send messages, deliver warnings, create pleasant images or inflict nightmares on the dreamer. The dreamer will always remember the content of these dreams.

Dream Sanctum

Defaults to Path of Dreams-3 or Path of Protection-6

A dream sanctum is usually created around an object or area (see p. 73) in the material world to resist intrusions or attacks from the dream world. If the subject moves away from the protected space by a Dream ritual, his dream self is vulnerable to attack in the dream world.

Night Terrors

Defaults to Path of Dreams-5

This ritual inflicts terrifying nightmares on the victim the next time he goes to sleep. He resists normally (see p. 71). The ritual takes 1d hours to cast; during that time, the caster visualizes the basic elements of the nightmare. The nightmare itself lasts 1d minutes; during that time, the subject's body becomes totally rigid. Even if the target realizes he is suffering a night-



mare, waking up before the dream is over requires a Will roll at -6. At the end of the dream, the target must make a Fright Check, at -2 for every point by which the caster won the contest. Failed Fright Checks may result in psychological or even physical damage (see p. B94).

If the ritual is used successfully against the same target for several consecutive days, the Fright Checks become more severe, suffering an additional -1 per day. Some Initiates have driven a subject insane, or even killed him, by repeated use of Night Terrors.

The Path of Health

These ceremonies can be used for good or ill, to cure disease or inflict it. The principles are the same, so skill at healing also means skill at hurting.

Succor *Defaults to Path of Health-4*

This ritual includes dressing an open wound and applying a plaster of curative herbs, sugar (which helps clot the blood) and other substances that also act as rudimentary antiseptics. This takes 5d minutes. At the end of the ritual, the wounds are considered to be bandaged, and if the caster has First Aid, they gain the benefits of a successful First Aid roll at the appropriate tech level (see p. B128). The caster then rolls against his Succor skill; on a successful roll, the effects of the ritual will last for one day per point by which the roll was made (a minimum of 1 day). A failure means the patient will receive no extraordinary benefits.

The effects of the ritual depend on the Initiation level of the caster. If the caster was of the Third Level or below, the subject makes three HT+1 rolls per day to regain lost hit points. For a Fourth Level Initiate, the subject gets to make six HT+1 rolls per day to recover from injuries. Having a higher-level Initiate conduct the ritual will allow one HT+1 roll every two hours.

Evil Eye *Defaults to Path of Health-7*

This is one of the most powerful Health ceremonies, but is very risky. The caster must conduct the ritual upon himself, invoking a powerful spirit and temporarily binding it to his per-

son. This ritual takes one hour to conduct. At any time during the next 24 hours, the caster can try to kill one person with a glance!

At any time after the ritual is done, the magician can activate the spell by making eye contact with his target. The caster and the quarry roll a Quick Contest of Wills + Initiation Levels (if any). If the caster wins, the target has to make a HT roll at -1 for every point by which the Evil Eye roll was made. If the subject makes his HT roll, he is wracked by nausea and a feeling of general illness; his ST and DX are reduced by 2d each, and if either attribute is reduced to 0, the target passes out.

On a failure, a severe effect strikes his body: the actual symptoms may be those of a heart attack, a stroke, kidney failure or any such sudden ailment. He is immediately reduced to 0 HT and collapses. If First Aid is not applied in HT minutes, he will die. The same will happen if he does not receive medical attention at TL 6 or better (or magical assistance as described below) in HT hours. Even then, his survival will be in the hands of the attending physicians:

they must make two rolls, one against Physician-4 and one against Surgery-4. If an Initiate uses his powers to help, the victim may have a greater chance. A Dose ritual (see below) or a Faith Healing roll can substitute for the medical treatment.

If the attacker loses in the Quick Contest, he is affected in exactly the same manner as if he had been the target: as usual, the spirits invoked in this ritual are not terribly particular about who they destroy! Ties bring about no result. Whatever the outcome, the ritual will only affect one person; it works well for assassinations, but not against a mob or more than one foe.

Malaise *Defaults to Path of Health-5*

This ritual inflicts a disease on the subject. Depending on the skill and the intent of the caster, this illness can be light, severe or life-threatening. Like most of these curses, two rolls must be made, the second to protect caster and client from the disease spirits they have invoked. The subject resists with Will and his Level of Initiation, if any. A successful Malaise roll will infect the target with a disease of some sort (see p. B133). Every two full points by which the magician won the contest modifies the HT roll to resist the disease's effects by -1 (if the contest was won by less than 2 points, the victim resists the disease with his unmodified HT). Medical attention will help in the usual way, unless the caster won the contest with a critical success, in which case the disease will be extremely rare or resistant to normal antibiotics. The caster cannot specify the nature of the disease (that is up to the spirits, and the GM).

Vitality *Defaults to Path of Health-3 or Path of Protection-4*

Commonly used on an amulet or charm, Vitality protects the subject from illness. The amulet created by this 2-hour-long ritual will protect the wearer against one possible infection or contagion (see p. B133); the subject will not be infected by the disease unless he rolls a critical failure on a HT roll. If the wearer is the target of a Malaise or Evil Eye ritual, the hostile ritual must first win a Quick Contest against the Vitality ritual before attempting to affect the target.



Chaperone (Palladium)

**Defaults to
Path of Luck-3**

This one-shot amulet of protection, commonly shaped like a sword or cross, will safeguard the wearer against one danger, threat or curse. Investing it with spiritual powers requires an hour-long ceremony. The charm must be worn next to the skin. The wearer may be the only survivor of a train wreck, or untouched by a drive-by shooting that hits other bystanders. Also, any minor or moderate curse (such as Journeyman's Curse and other rituals that do not directly threaten the life or soul of the victim) will automatically fail against the protected party. When the charm has acted, it will break and become useless. Charms cannot be saved or hoarded; only one charm can be made for one person at any given time, and no other can be created until he has used up the previous one.

Against a major curse like Malediction, or a ritual cast by a powerful Initiate (Fourth Level or greater), the charm will only delay the mystical attack. This delay is equal to 1d days per Level of Initiation of the creator of the charm. During that period, the wearer of the charm will be plagued by nightmares that indicate he is beset by antagonistic spirits, barely kept at bay by the charm. (He may seek help in time, if he understands the dreams!)

Journeyman's Curse

**Defaults to Path of
Luck-3**

This ritual harms a person in the performance of his job. The ritual takes about six hours to perform, spread over six days. If the first ritual roll is successful, the subject will suffer a mishap at work at some time in the following 3d days. Specifics are up to the GM (the boss walks in while the target naps on the job, his computer loses a week's worth of work, the dog eats his performance report), but the result is equal to a failure on the Jobs Table. This can range from a mere loss of income to actual injury, depending on the job. A critical success with the ritual results in a critical failure for the target on the Jobs Table — the mishap is so severe that it severely injures him, or causes him to lose his job.

If the second roll fails (whether the first one succeeded or not), a spiritual backlash affects both client and caster. Thus, if the first roll was a critical success and the second a critical failure, *both* the client and the target suffer the equivalent of a critical failure on the Jobs Table! Such is the nature of magic in the Shadow War.

Money Maker (Windfall)

**Defaults to
Path of Luck-2**

This ritual consists of associating several symbols of financial prosperity with the subject of the ritual. Within 2d days of its successful completion, the subject will receive an amount of money equivalent to one-fourth his monthly income (or \$100, whichever is greater), multiplied by the amount of the roll's success. The money doesn't materialize out of thin air; instead, the person benefits from some stroke of luck (he wins the lottery, he gets an unexpected inheritance, an old debt is paid back, and so on). A critical success brings him the equivalent of two months' income (or \$1,000, whichever is greater), multiplied by the amount of the roll's success.

A failure simply means that no money is forthcoming. A critical failure works the other way, with the subject losing money at the same rate he would have gained it on a normal success. Or he may get money through a stroke of bad luck (for instance, a loved one dies and the insurance pays off).

Dose(Analeptic)

**Defaults to unmodified
Path of Health**

This ritual can cure disease and any long-term ailment (from arthritis to a heart condition). The severity of the ailment and the physical condition of the patient determine the difficulty of the ritual (a cancer-ravaged body is much harder to help than that of an 18-year-old athlete). The ritual is conducted around the patient, lasts 1d hours, and includes the use of aromatic herbs and oils on the affected body parts. At the end of the ritual, the caster makes his roll. On a success, the symptoms and eventually the disease are eradicated over a period of 3d days.

Modifiers: The ritual has a base penalty of (patient's HT-12); if the patient has a HT of 12 or higher, there is no bonus or penalty. Add the caster's Level of Initiation to the roll. He is at +1 against simple ailments (common cold, mild allergies, minor infections). Moderate ones (bronchitis, moderate infections, fevers, smallpox) he cures at no penalty. Tougher ailments like malaria, tuberculosis, and severe infections put him at -4. Against a congenital heart condition he would be at -7, and against AIDS he would be at -15!

The Path of Luck

These ceremonies directly affect probability (see sidebar, p. 12), as directed by the will of the caster and the power of his spiritual assistants. Both good luck (blessings) and bad luck (curses) can be "created" through the effects of these rituals. The weather can also be affected in this way, although it requires a great deal of effort. Luck ceremonies also allow the magician to get visions of the future, although such predictions are not always reliable (see sidebar, p. 16). Listed below are several common examples.

Rainmaker

Defaults to Path of Luck-5

This ritual, and all weather rituals, increase the probability of a desired climate change. The ritual affects an area, but does not use the area modifiers on p. 73. Instead, a successful ritual will affect a radius of (caster's Initiation Level/2) miles. For every point by which he makes the ritual roll, add +1 to the chance of rain. The GM must decide what the normal chance of rain was in the first place, and convert the percentage to a 3d roll (use the chart on p. B45). The effects of the ritual will occur in 12 hours; if the caster wants rain sooner, he is at -1 for each hour he wants to subtract from the total; when reduced to one hour, each minute subtracted from that hour increases the penalty by -1. Having the rain occur one minute after the ritual is complete would put him at -70!

Malediction

This powerful ritual has great risks for the caster and the client. Its object is to bring great harm upon the target, leading to his ruin, injury — and probable death. The second roll (see p. 74) is done at -2 skill (for a total default value of Path of Luck-10!) As with all rituals of this type, the GM should make this second roll in secret. Normal humans resist the ritual with Will-2.

Starting the night the ritual is completed, nightmares plague the victim for several days. These nightmares will have elements of the sorcery, and may give the victim clues to the identity of the people wishing him harm. Within a week of the last day of the ritual, the first effects will become apparent. Misfortune will hound the target. The first consequence will be the equivalent of a critical failure on the Jobs Table. After 1d days, he will offend or otherwise drive away most relatives and friends: make a reaction roll for every person or group the person associates with, at -2 per point the ritual roll was made by. On a Bad or worse roll, friends and loved ones will turn their backs on him. He could cause this with an inadvertent offense, or unlucky “accidents” (his wife discovers that he had an affair years ago and leaves him, he runs over his best friend’s dog, and so on).

Finally, 1d days after that, the victim will suffer a horrible accident or act of random violence (a car accident, a fall down a skyscraper elevator shaft, a blow from a falling safe, a run-in with a marauding band of fanatics, or some such mishap). As a result, the victim will take the equivalent of 3d of damage per point of the ritual roll’s success (minimum 3d)!

At any point during the Malediction, the victim may realize he is the focus of a curse, and seek help from a houngan or other occult practitioner (see *Path of Protection*, p. 78), who might save the victim before the most serious effects take place. The Malediction ritual is very strong, however, and protective ceremonies are at -4 against it! If he finds the caster and somehow persuades him to lift the curse, the effects on the victim will stop — and will then affect the client (since sometimes the caster and the client are the same person, the caster may be very reluctant to do this). The most drastic solution is to kill the caster before the Malediction runs its course... this will also lift the spell. In some cultures, the community considers killing a witch suspected of casting a Malediction on the murderer to be self-defense.

Stroke of Luck

Defaults to Path of Luck-1

This is a simple but broad ritual designed to solve a minor problem or grant the subject a measure of good fortune. The ritual takes about ten minutes to conduct, and often involves anointing the recipient’s head with special oils to make him attractive to protective and beneficial spirits.

Over the next 2d days, the subject will enjoy one small success or lucky break for every two points of the ritual roll’s success (at least one). Alternatively, one problem in his personal or professional life will be solved. Some examples: a co-worker who was previously rude or uncooperative apologizes and acts friendlier; he finds a \$20 bill on the street; he decides not to order the three-alarm chili at the new Tex-Mex restaurant, and avoids a violent bout of stomach trouble.

The effects of this ritual will not be spectacular or life-changing; neither will they protect against life-or-death situations, although the ritual might (GM’s option) tilt the balance in his favor — say, an assassin’s bullet misses his heart, leaving him seriously wounded, but still alive. Any such intervention will “use up” the effects of the ritual, no matter how many “breaks” were left.

If the subject of the ritual is an Initiate, add his Initiation Level to the ritual roll.

Defaults to Path of Luck-8

Vision of Luck

This divination ritual shows whether good or bad luck awaits the subject in the future. Results are usually vague, and describe what may happen if the subject picks a course of action. Most of these rituals use aids such as Tarot cards, conch shells, animal entrails, etc. On a successful roll, the caster will get an answer to a question pertaining to the consequences of an action. The answer will tend to be simple, preferably limited to one or two words or a short answer. For example, if the question were “Should I return to Haiti?” some possible answers could be “No,” “It’s dangerous,” “Yes, but great danger awaits,” and so on.

Lost and Found (Locate)

Defaults to Path of Luck-5

This ritual can be used to find both people and objects. The ritual lasts 10 minutes, and its effects apply to one person (who may or may not be the caster). On a success, every two points the ritual roll was made by (minimum of +1) give the recipient a +1 to any search rolls (using Alertness, IQ, Area Knowledge or any other applicable skills) relating to the ritual’s target. This bonus acts as a “gut feeling” indicating whether the searcher’s efforts are aimed in the right direction, increasing the likelihood that the search will be successful. The effects of the ritual last until the object or person is found, or until 2d days have passed without success.

The Path of Protection

Protection ceremonies keep spiritual or physical threats away from the subject.

Curse Sanctum

Defaults to unmodified Path of Protection

This is the simplest ritual of protection, and is cast periodically on people who fear they may become the target of a curse. Most Initiates who are active in the Shadow War cast it on themselves as a matter of course, as a first line of defense against magical attacks. It simply sets up a spiritual barrier around the subject, helping dispel negative psychic impulses from rituals or hostile spirits.





The Curse Sanctum ritual takes one hour to conduct. On a successful roll, the first hostile ritual that tries to affect the subject must first win a Contest of Skills with Curse Sanctum; roll every hour until one ritual or the other fails. Even if the Curse Sanctum ritual fails to protect the subject, it will delay hostile magic rituals for 1d-1 days.

Soul Cleansing

This ritual eliminates any ongoing curse (such as a Malediction or Malaise) that is currently affecting the subject, if it wins a Quick Contest of Skills with the hostile ritual. The sooner this ritual is conducted, the easier it is to defeat the curse. If conducted when the first symptoms appear, the Soul Cleansing is at +3 in the Quick Contest of skills. On the other hand, if the curse is already close to its final stages, rolls to dispel it are at -3. Even if the Soul Cleansing fails, the caster may (on a successful Occultism or Theology roll) find out something about the source of the curse.

Reversal of Fortune

This protection ritual can redirect an attacking hostile ritual. Two rolls are involved, one to “fix” the protection ritual on the subject, and another to resist the first hostile ritual directed at him. If the Reversal ritual wins a Quick Contest of skills, the hostile ritual affects its caster as if he had been the subject.

Some Voodoo bizongues call this ritual Curse Mirror, and cast the ritual on a charm, usually a mirror. Only one blessed mirror can be carried at the time. The ritual works as above, but if it loses the contest, the mirror shatters, warning the recipient that his defenses have been pierced.

Sanctuary (Aegis)

This very powerful area-effect ritual (see p. 73), when cast at a high enough Power level, virtually guarantees that no hostile rituals or spirit entities will enter the protected area. The caster determines the Power of a sanctuary. Subtract this Power from any ritual roll directed across the ward’s boundaries, or from the Will of a spirit attempting to enter or leave the area (the spirit must roll against his modified Will to penetrate the barrier). Hostile In-Betweeners can roll against their modified ST or Will, whichever is greater, to try to enter a protected area.

In addition to normal duration and area penalties, the ritual is at -1 per 2 Power levels of the refuge. Wards can be as powerful as the magician can make them; Powers of 30+ are not uncommon among areas that are important to a Lodge circle or Voodoo hounfor.

Sanctuaries are not impregnable, however. Hostile spirits can slowly wear them down and eventually break through. For every (Sanctuary Power level) Fatigue points that a spirit spends, the spell’s Power drops by 1, for that spirit only. If (Power level) spirits all manage to reduce a ward’s Power by 1, then the overall level is reduced for *every* spirit or hostile ritual! If enough loas or animas attack a barrier, it will collapse in short order. In-Betweeners are even worse; they can inflict Thrust damage on the barrier once per second, reducing its power by 1 for every (Power level) points of damage they inflict on it! This reduction only affects the In-Betweeners, however; no other spirits or In-Betweeners will benefit from it.

Example: A Power 20 Sanctuary will be reduced to Power 19 if a spirit spends 20 Fatigue to weaken it; this reduction only affects that individual spirit. If 20 spirits each spend 20 Fatigue, they can permanently reduce the overall power of the Sanctuary to 19; if they did this once a day, the ward would collapse in

Defaults to Path of Protection-4

Defaults to Path of Protection-4

Defaults to Path of Protection-3

under three weeks, or drop to an ineffective Power level even sooner.

Once a ward is set up, a new one cannot replace it unless the first is removed by another ritual (which takes 10 minutes). This means that a group of Initiates who are besieged by hostile spirits cannot keep recasting the Sanctuary ritual to keep them out. The casters of the original ritual can check the state of the spell by making an unmodified Path of Protection roll: they will perceive it as an energy sphere, and can sense any weakening in it.

Ghost Shirt (Achilles' Shield)

**Defaults to
Path of Luck-7**

This blessing works to turn away bullets, spears and other ranged attacks. The ritual doesn't magically deflect bullets; instead, it reduces the chances that they will hit someone. Since most war injuries result from random events (shrapnel, fire that is not aimed at a particular person, etc.), the spell will be very effective at keeping people from being hurt in combat, but will do little in the way of defending them from attacks deliberately aimed at them. Furthermore, it is not the caster's but the recipient's link to the supernatural that determines the effectiveness of this ritual!

The ritual empowers a charm, which the subject must wear next to his skin. The charm will only work for the person it was made for; anybody who steals the amulet will get no benefits from it. The modifiers on p. 73 determine the duration of the protection.

If cast on a non-Initiate, the ritual will prevent random attacks from hitting him, unless the attack roll was a critical success. It will not affect deliberate attacks (during a duel, or if a sniper specifically aims at the subject, for example).

If the subject is a First to Third Level Initiate, the spell protects him from random attacks completely (no attack that wasn't specifically intended to hit *him* will ever hurt him — he will never be an “innocent bystander,” or hit by “friendly fire”). Even deliberate attacks are at -3 to hit. Deliberate attacks on Fourth or Fifth Level Initiates are at -5 to hit. Sixth Level Initiates or higher become nearly invulnerable to ranged attacks — only a critical success will hit them! Any other attack roll will result in a miss, or even a critical failure, depending on the situation.

This ritual does not protect against hand-to-hand attacks, which require a deliberation and effort of will that magic rituals cannot easily deflect.

Anti-colonial movements, from the Ghost Dancers to the Chinese Boxers, used many versions of this ritual; they worked until the Lodges neutralized them with their own powers.

The Path of the Spirit

This Path deals with all rituals relating to the spirit world. Spirit rituals affect loas, animas and other spirits, as well as the souls of humans, both living and dead.

Spirit Searcher

**Defaults to
Path of the Spirit-4**

A spirit is summoned to search for a person or object. The ritual lasts 3d minutes; the caster is at an additional -2 if no symbolic representations of the object or person to be found

are used. (This -2 applies even if the Initiate can normally disregard material elements.) Other modifiers: -1 to -5 if the object or person is very well hidden; if this ritual seeks an Initiate without his consent, he can resist it with Will plus Initiation Level. And any protection ritual that keeps spirits away will also work against Spirit Searcher.

The ritual summons a minor loa or anima, who forges a link with the target of the ritual, and will “home in” on it supernaturally. Often, the ritual uses some tool to help guide the caster toward the target. Typical tools include a pendulum (which swings faster the closer it gets to the target), a magnetic compass (which aims in the direction of the target) or a dowsing rod.

Mastery (Dominion)

**Defaults to
Path of the Spirit-3**

This ritual is usually “tacked on” to a summoning ritual to make sure that the spirit being brought into the caster's presence follows his orders. The caster can command the spirit to perform one task for every point by which he wins the resisted ritual roll (see p. 71). A task can be any short action in a combat situation, or one long action otherwise. The caster must specify what spirit powers the entity must use to accomplish the task. If the spirit is unable to comply (for example, if the caster asks it to do some feat it doesn't have enough Fatigue to accomplish), the ritual will fail automatically.

“Instant” versions of this ritual allow high-powered Initiates to direct spirits for effects like a sword-and-sorcery “spell” — for example, commanding a spirit to throw objects at the target, or having several spirits lift him so he can “fly” through the air, and other superhuman feats. Chapter 4 lists the abilities of spirit entities.





Ritual of Slaying

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-5

This ritual will sever an In-Betweeners' connections to both the spiritual and material world, damaging or even destroying the creature. The ritual has a penalty equal to the total ST and HT of the monster! This means that only a group of magicians has any hope of destroying the more powerful In-Betweeners. Also, the In-Betweeners must be present for the ritual to work at all — and unless the ritual is quick, the creature must be restrained in some way. In addition to these penalties, the ritual is resisted normally (see p. 71). For every point by which the ritual roll beat the resistance roll, the target takes 1d of damage; if this damage reduces the monster's HT (not hit points) to 0, the brute is utterly destroyed.

Ritual of Banishment

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-4

This works like the Ritual of Slaying, but it affects spirit entities such as loas, animae or ghosts.

Soul Zombie **Defaults to Path of the Spirit-6**

This ritual and the similar Raise Zombie (see below) are commonly taught in the Voodoo tradition of magic, although other cultures use similar versions. The Soul Zombie ritual captures the soul of the target, making him vulnerable to the magician's influence. If the resisted ritual roll is successful, the target will resist any other hostile ritual the magician aims at him at -10 to Will! He imprisons the soul of the victim in a bottle or similar container; breaking the bottle will release the soul and eliminate the resistance penalty.

If a victim of this ritual is killed, his ghost must remain on Earth, under the magician's control, until he releases the soul.

Raise Zombie

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-4

This ritual requires a special poison, made from a number of strange ingredients (among them the poisonous glands of a blowfish). Only Voodoo Initiates of the Third Level or higher know how to manufacture it. The poison can be ingested, used as a blood agent, or breathed in as a powder. Within HT hours of being exposed to the poison, the victim collapses for 36-HT hours; he retains full consciousness, but cannot move. His breathing slows to the point that it cannot be normally recorded; neither will a heartbeat register. This deathlike state is so profound that most doctors will only detect signs of life on an unmodified roll of 3 or 4 against their Diagnostic skill! Informed doctors will discover their patient is still alive on a Diagnosis-5 roll.

The victim, still fully aware of what is going on around him, is usually declared dead and buried. Many victims lose their sanity at this point, but if rescued have a chance of resuming normal lives. The second component of the ritual precludes this, however. While the victim is buried and helpless, the Raise Zombie ritual is conducted; due to the situation, he resists at Will-5. If successful, the ritual transforms the victim into an obedient automaton with High Pain Threshold and 10

levels of Weak Will! Then the magician and his assistants unearth him, to become the slave of his creator. Zombies are sometimes possessed by minor spirits, raising their strength and endurance. Most often they are used as beasts of burden or sold as slaves.

Turn the Beast

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-3 or Path of Protection-6

This ritual can be conducted on a person or an area. Any In-Betweeners or Devourers must win a Quick Contest between the ritual level and its Will-5, or it will find it too painful to face the person or enter the protected area. Even if the creature overcomes the ritual, it will be at -1 DX and IQ as long as it remains within the ritual's area of effect. The area protecting an individual is equal to (subject's Will/3) yards; area-effect rituals use the rules on p. 73.

Turn the Spirit

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-2

The ritual makes it painful and difficult for spirits to approach the protected area or person. It works like Turn the Beast (see above) but on spiritual entities. When successfully cast on a person possessed by a spirit, this ritual will expel the spirit from its victim.

Command (Beckon)

Defaults to unmodified Path of the Spirit

This ritual will summon minor manifestations of loas and gods (see Chapter 4), minor spirit servants, ghosts and similar entities. The caster must know the name of the entity being summoned. Willing beings will appear on a successful roll, but reluctant spirits (and most are reluctant) resist with their Will-3. The spirit will appear in the area, and may or may not be com-

municative or helpful. A spirit can be summoned to appear within a warded area (see p. 78), provided the caster that summoned the spirit was one of the refuge's creators.

Call (Invoke) Defaults to Path of the Spirit-4

This summons moderate manifestations of spirits.

Invite (Summon)

Defaults to Path of the Spirit-7

The caster summons the greater manifestations of loas and gods — and then must figure out how to deal with the arrivals, since such spirits take a dim view of being called without their consent.

RITUALS MODIFIERS TABLE

<i>Element</i>	<i>Bonuses/Penalty</i>	<i>Size of Group</i>	<i>Roll Penalty</i>	<i>Size of Group</i>	<i>Roll Penalty</i>
Time		51-100	-18	5,000-20,000	-38
Reducing time to 1d+2 minutes	-1 to ritual roll	20,000-50,000	-42	51,000-100,000	-44
Reducing time to 1d seconds	-5 to ritual roll	+ every doubling thereafter	an additional -4		
Taking normal amount of time	No bonus/penalty	Area Modifiers			
Repeating ritual daily for several days	+1 for every two days	<i>Area</i>			
Extending ritual (three times required time)	+2 to ritual roll	5 yards or less no modifier.			
Consecrated Ground		5 to 10 yards -1			
No consecrated ground	-5 to ritual rolls	10+ yards (to 100 yards) -1 per 10-yard increase (-10 for a 100-yard radius).			
Make-shift consecration (1d-minute ceremony)	-1 to ritual rolls	101 to 200 yards -1 per 25-yard increase (-14 for a 200-yard radius)			
Consecrated ground	No bonus or penalty	200+ yards -4 per 100-yard increase			
Old mystic area (20 years or more)	+1 to ritual rolls	Duration Modifiers			
Traditional worship site (50 years or more)	+2 to ritual rolls	<i>Length of Time</i>			
Historical ritual place (100 years or more)	+3 to ritual rolls	Up to 12 hours no modifier			
Timeworn religious center (500 years or more)	+4 to ritual rolls	Up to 1 day -2			
Truly ancient ritual space (over 1,000 years old)	+5 to ritual rolls	Up to 1 week -4			
		Up to a month -8			
		Additional months (to 1 year) -4 per month (-52 for a full year!)			
		Each additional year -4 per year			
Material Components					
<i>Symbolic Representations:</i>					
None	-6 to ritual rolls				
Minimal (drawing)	-2 to ritual rolls				
Small belonging/piece of clothing	No bonus or penalty				
Hair or fingernail clippings	+1 to ritual rolls				
Photographs or blood samples	+2 to ritual rolls				
DNA sample or video of target	+3 to ritual rolls				
Target is present at the ceremony	+4 to ritual rolls				
<i>Spiritual Symbols:</i>					
No symbols	-3 to ritual rolls				
Amulet, talisman or drawing	No bonus or penalty				
Detailed symbols (engraved drawings, sculptures, idols)	+1 to +3 to ritual rolls				
<i>Sacrifices:</i>					
No sacrifice	No bonus or penalty				
Food, drink or stimulants	+1 to +2 to ritual rolls				
Animal sacrifices	+2 to +4 to ritual rolls				
Human sacrifices					
to Corruptor spirits	+1 to +5 to ritual rolls				
to all other spirits	-5 to ritual rolls				
Self-sacrifice	+1/2 hit points lost				
Multiple Targets Modifiers					
<i>Size of Group</i>	<i>Roll Penalty</i>	<i>Size of Group</i>	<i>Roll Penalty</i>		
2 to 5	-4	101-200	-22		
6-10	-8	201-500	-26		
11-20	-12	501-1,000	-30		
21-50	-14	1,001-5,000	-34		



Being dead isn't easy, I can tell you.

It happened two — no, three years ago. I was 19 then. My best friend and I went out in his father's car. We had a few drinks, made a couple of unsuccessful passes at some college girls, got back on the road, and never saw the drag racer that slammed into us. We both died, but I don't know what happened to my friend. Me, I stayed around. When it was time to walk into the Light, I panicked and tried to come back to my body, but it was flatlined for good by the time I got back.

It was a nice funeral. I even cried a little.



Things weren't all that bad at first. Ghosts can go anywhere, and I always wanted to travel. I've seen some sights — California, New York City. I hiked to Mexico, but the spooks there gave me a bad feeling. I even tried going to the moon once, but after three days of floating in empty space I panicked and came back down. Then I sneaked into airplanes, saw Europe and other parts of the world. It was fun.

But I started running into the Others.

It stood to reason. There had to be other ghosts floating around, right? Some weren't very different from me — people who didn't know why the hell they were here, but didn't want to go Beyond to find out if it was better, or who wanted to do something before moving on. Others, though, were not even human. And they can kill you if you get in their way — really kill you, shred your spirit flesh so you never come back. I learned to avoid them, or to smile and nod when they talked to me, no matter how crazy they sounded.

Finally, not even a year after my second "birth," I saw a guy staring at me. A living guy, looking straight at me. That scared the hell out of me, so I decided to run through a few walls, put some distance between me and him. I start to do that, and then these two glowing blue snakes cut me off. The little snake spirits walked me back to the guy, who introduced himself. His name was Papa Gerome, and he

was a Voodoo guy. He and many others could see ghosts — could control them, too. He needed my help in a few things, and I gave him a hand of my own free will. We've kind of become friends, but life has been more complicated ever since.

Not too long afterwards, I saw something that wasn't a ghost, but wasn't a man, either. It looked like a man and talked like a man — it convinced a bum to follow it to a dark alley. I just happened to be around, and the vibes I got from the "guy" aroused my curiosity. So I got to see its flesh sort of melt and change into something else altogether — something that felt like a spirit but was solid. Something that ripped the poor bum's heart out and ate it while it was still beating.

*My Voodoo friend later told me of *loup-garous* and skin changers, of things that were neither humans nor loas, adept in sorcery, always hungry for human flesh. I helped him and his friends find and kill the monster I saw. Since then, I've stuck close to my living friends. Not even a ghost can be safe in this world.*

In the Voodoo setting, many intelligent creatures share the world with humankind. Some are invisible spirits. Others are all-too-tangible monsters.

SPIRIT ENTITIES

Spirits are incorporeal creatures made up of psychic energy. These beings cannot be perceived by normal means, except when they spend energy to manifest themselves in the material world. Described below are the powers common to all spirit entities. All loas, ghosts and other spirits have these abilities, plus whatever special attributes or powers are mentioned in their individual descriptions.

Elements of the Soul

In the Shadow War setting, all living things have souls, the basic energy that provides individuality, mind and vitality. The souls of intelligent beings are made up of several different elements, each of which could be considered a separate spirit. Many cultures have made this discovery, from the Egyptians to the Voodoo cults. The Lodges also learned this, but spent their energies suppressing this knowledge in the West.

For game purposes, every living person has two souls, the "essential" soul, known in Voodoo terminology as the *gros-bon-ange* (literally, "big good angel") and the "base" or individual soul (the *petit-bon-ange* or "little good angel"). The first is the true source of life, the soul as understood by Christianity and Buddhism, which may or may not go through a cycle of reincarnation or move on to a higher plane of existence when its host body dies. The "base" soul is the secondary spirit that is shaped by the person's life; it contains that life's memories, likes, dislikes and personality. This base soul is the one encountered in the form of ghosts, poltergeists, minor loas and animae. There are other soul components, including the ancestral or family soul (the *genius*), but in the game these are considered separate entities.

When the person dies, the base soul lingers on the Earth for a while, and then dissipates — unless its existence is perpetuated through an expenditure of energy (see the Ghost advantage, p. 55). The source of this energy can be a strong psychic imprint (such as that left at places where atrocities are committed), or the attention of living people. Cultures that honor or worship their

dead keep these souls alive. Some very strong-willed base souls, or those motivated by very powerful desires and wants (such as love, revenge or hatred) may manage to prolong their existence even without an outside power source to keep them going.

Attributes

All spirits have the same attributes as humans: ST, DX, IQ, and HT. When confronted in the spirit world or the dream world, these attributes define what the spirit can and cannot do. When interacting with the material world, however, spirits must spend energy. This is expressed as a Fatigue cost. Fatigue is the most important attribute of a spirit; the older and most powerful



spiritual entities may have a Fatigue in the hundreds. The average tends to be closer to human normal, however: 10-20 Fatigue. Spirits recover Fatigue normally (see p. B134). The next most important traits are Will and Alertness; these are often higher than the spirit's IQ. A spirit uses Will to resist attempts to control or expel it, and Alertness to detect hidden supernatural entities.

Special Sources of Fatigue

Spirits can tap into some places or people to obtain Fatigue quickly. They can use this siphoned Fatigue to replenish their total Fatigue pools or to power the abilities listed below. Some places have strong psychic imprints, and can provide a spirit with an additional 5-30 Fatigue per day (determined by the GM based on the strength of the place's imprint). They include accident and battle sites, places where death or insanity are commonplace (such as hospitals or prisons), and the locations of particularly brutal crimes. This energy can only be tapped into if the spirit is in the area; haunted houses occur when one or more spirits make their home in an energy-rich place.

Initiates and psychics can also provide a spirit with extra Fatigue. First Level Initiates can be "tapped" for Fatigue without their knowledge if the spirit wins a Quick Contest of Wills; up to 1/2 of the victim's Fatigue can be stolen in this way, once per day. Higher-level Initiates have enough control over their link to the supernatural to prevent such actions. Finally, acts of worship from a great number of people allow spirits to gain between 20 and 100 additional Fatigue per day, depending on the number of worshippers. All the major manifestations of loas and Lodge gods can tap into an energy amount equivalent to twice their normal Fatigue pools once per day!



Spirit Abilities

All spirits, from the humblest ghost or minor apparition to the most powerful loas, share a number of abilities that allow them to interact with the material world.

Perception

Spirits can see, smell and hear normally. Their sense of touch is very limited unless they materialize (see below). They can even taste objects to a limited degree, especially objects that have been offered to them in a ritual; this is why food offerings are one of the easiest ways to bribe spirits.

Their senses go beyond the normal human range, however. All spirits have the equivalent of the Empathy advantage, and can sense strong emotions in humans by "seeing" their auras. Through the same sense, they can detect Initiates, In-Betweeners and other supernatural beings. If any of those beings tries to "dampen" their auras to hide their true nature, a Quick Contest between the spirit's Alertness and the subject's Will + Level of Initiation is rolled to determine whether the spirit sees through the charade.

Spirits also have the ability to "hear" their names whenever they are ritually invoked. This covers a wide range of situations, from a relative reminiscing at a ghost's tombstone, to a medium attempting to channel a departed one's soul, to a sorcerer's ritual of summoning. If many such invocations are made at the same time, the spirit will be inundated by a babel of voices, all calling its name! Loas and gods are not bothered by this, however.

Movement

Spirits have a Move (determined normally for the ghosts of humans). Since they are not bound by physical limits, a spirit can move in any direction, in the air, and through walls. Spirits can also instantly transport themselves across any distance to certain specific places (usually no more than one or two), such as the place of death in the case of a ghost. They can also travel instantly (if they so will it) to the presence of someone who is ritually invoking their names (see above).

A spirit can also "hitch a ride" inside a vehicle. This requires a minimum expenditure of Fatigue (1 per hour) to connect with the material world enough to remain within the vehicle.

Although physical barriers do not impede the spirits' passage, many mystical wards and blocks will keep them out. Outside of those places (and there aren't many of them), spirits are perfect spies, able to enter undetected and see and hear whatever they want.

Communication

Spirits can project their thoughts as speech and hear thoughts directed at them. This process works almost exactly like telepathy, except that the communication is not stopped by psionic Mind Shields, and neither the spirit nor the people he's communicating with can read thoughts or do anything other than "speak" to each other. Also, communication between a spirit and a normal non-Initiated person costs 1 Fatigue per short sentence (a few second's worth of talk) the spirit says. Initiates of the Third Level and higher can talk to spirits at no penalty.

Evil spirits sometimes use this power to "plant" thoughts in a mortal's head. Although these voices do not control a person's actions, they can sometimes trigger repressed anger or fear, and cause people to do things they otherwise wouldn't.

Dream Travel

Spirits do not sleep or dream themselves, but they can enter the dreams of a living person, or become material in the dream world (see p. 20). In either case, the spirit becomes solid and bound to the physical laws of that realm. Entering and leaving a dream or the dream world requires a Will roll and costs 1 Fatigue. When inside a person's dream, the spirit can communicate with the dreamer, and even alter the elements of the dream to suit its purposes, but nothing the spirit can do in a dream will affect the dreamer physically. At worst, the spirit can create a terrifying nightmare that causes the victim to make a Fright Check upon waking. The penalty to the Fright Check will be determined by the content of the nightmare and the victim's personality (GM's call). A severe enough scare could harm the victim, and repeated nightmares could damage his mental stability.

Possession

All spirits have the ability to displace a living being's soul, thereby taking control of his body. Most possessions are temporary. In Voodoo terms, the spirits (loas) are said to "mount" their worshippers, who are called the "horses of the gods."

When a person is possessed, the spirit's vital energy usually infuses his body with greater strength, speed and endurance. Loas and other spirits with special possession powers can grant a number of powers to the bodies they possess. Most spirits, however, are limited to small increases of ST, DX and HT, based on their own attributes. The possessed body's ST is raised by 1/5 the spirit's ST (not Fatigue); his DX is raised by 1/8 of the spirit's DX, and HT increases by 1/8 of the spirit's attribute.

Possession is resolved as a Quick Contest of Wills, and can only be attempted once per day on any given person. If the spirit wins, he gains control over the body for 3d seconds. This action costs 5 Fatigue points. On a tie, the victim suffers from the equivalent of the Split Personality disadvantage (with the subject in control, not the spirit) for the same length of time.

The spirit can try to extend the possession by taking a penalty to its Will roll and spending extra Fatigue. Taking possession for 3d *minutes* is done at -2 Will, and costs 7 Fatigue. Attempts to possess for 3d *hours* will be at -4 Will and cost 10 Fatigue. A similar number of days has a -8 penalty and a cost of 15 Fatigue.

A critical success on the spirit's part (or a critical failure by the victim) will double the length of the possession. A critical failure by the spirit or a critical success on the resistance roll will cost the spirit 3d Fatigue (in addition to the normal cost) and render it incapable of attempting to possess anybody for 3d days.

The subject's state of mind and physical circumstances will give modifiers to the possession attempt. If the subject's soul has left his body (through the use of Initiate powers or a near-death experience, for instance), the spirit's roll is at +8. If the victim is undergoing a painful or terrifying ordeal (torture, sexual molestation or starvation), the spirit is at +6. If the target is in an altered state of mind (from drugs, alcohol, fevers, etc.) the spirit has a +4 to its roll. Even a willing person gets a resistance roll (representing an instinctive reluctance to lose control), but the spirit's roll is at +10! Each previously successful possession by that spirit of that subject gives the spirit a +1 to its roll (maximum bonus of +3).

Initiation is a double-edged sword when it comes to possession: the Initiates' link to the supernatural acts like a conductor in the presence of an electrical charge, making possession easier — but at the same time it helps him to resist involuntary takeovers. In game terms, a spirit attempting to possess an Initiate gets a +3 bonus — but the subject adds his Level of Initiation to his resistance rolls. This means that First and



Second Level Initiates are more vulnerable to possession than normal people, Third Level Initiates have roughly the same chances of avoiding it, and Fourth Level and higher Initiates have a greater chance to resist involuntary possessions.

The Poltergeist Effect

This power allows the spirit to use some of its energy to manipulate objects in the real world. By spending Fatigue, the spirit can move objects, throw punches and perform other physical actions. The Fatigue cost is great, however, so most spirits are only capable of affecting very small objects for short periods of time. Each *action* the spirit attempts will cost it Fatigue. The effective ST and DX the spirit applies in the world determine this cost; this ST and DX can exceed the spirit's "natural" attributes. An action costs 1 Fatigue per 2 ST levels. DX costs 1 Fatigue for a base level of 10 and 1 Fatigue for every 2 additional DX levels.

Example: A ghost wants to throw a 1-lb book across a room (4 yards). Checking on the *Throwing Distance Table* on p. B90, the GM determines that ST 2 would be enough, so it costs the ghost 1 Fatigue. To have a reasonable accuracy, the ghost gives the action an effective DX of 12, for an additional 2 Fatigue and a total cost of 3 Fatigue. The book goes sailing across the room, scaring the spit out of the living occupants. If the ghost wants to throw several books over the next few seconds, he will have to spend 3 Fatigue every turn.

With enough Fatigue, a spirit can perform a number of effects, slamming doors, writing on typewriters or computers, or even pushing or punching people. A direct attack does Thrust-3 damage based on the ST of the effect.

Altering Probability

Spirits have the power to channel their wills to affect the outcome of an event. The effects of this power depend on the intended result and the amount of Fatigue the spirit spends. Greater loas and other powerful spirits are much more adept than normal spirits at altering probability; for them, use the magic rules found in Chapter 3.

Normal spirits must first win a Quick Contest of Wills with the target, unless the spirit is trying to *help* the subject, in which case only an unopposed Will roll is required. A positive or negative modifier to any one roll can be applied on a success, at 2 Fatigue per +1 or -1 (maximum +/-10, for 20 Fatigue); this

includes short actions, long actions, or such things as rolls on the Job Table. Activities that are not normally resolved by random rolls may be affected in this way, but the GM must assess the base probability for success or failure before assessing the bonus or penalty. The Probability of Success chart on p. B45 is a good guide to determine the probability of an event.

Use of this power requires a great deal of imagination on the part of the GM and players. Anybody who's had a bad day knows the myriad of little things that can go wrong in the course of normal life, and can draw on those experiences for inspiration.

Example: Casper-G, a ghost working with one of the Loa Lords, is charged with making a city official late for a lunch appointment (one of the LLs is going to impersonate the official). The GM judges that, normally, a victim would have a 70% chance of making it in time (there is a chance of traffic jams and other delays during lunch hour, after all). Checking on the Probability of Success Table, 70% is equivalent to a roll of 12 on 3d. Casper-G decides to spend 16 Fatigue for a -8 penalty. The ghost wins the Contest of Wills. The normal chance of 12 is now reduced to 4; not surprisingly, the roll fails. Everything goes wrong for the victim; his car battery dies and he needs a jumpstart, he gets caught in a traffic jam, and when he tries a different route, he gets a flat tire! By the time he makes it to the appointment, he's two hours late and the impersonator has fulfilled his goal.

Materialization

Spirits can also temporarily assume a material or semi-material form. There are three levels of materialization, ranging from sound effects to actual solidity. Most spirits don't have the energy necessary to become fully solid. Full materialization is also dangerous for the spirit because physical attacks can hurt or destroy it. The levels of materialization are as follows:

Sound: The spirit uses enough energy to produce disembodied sounds. Simple sounds (moans and howls) are easier than complex noises or speech. Producing simple sounds costs 1 Fatigue per 10 seconds. Speech or complex sounds cost 1 Fatigue per second, and a Will roll to make the right sounds or say the words clearly.

Visual Effects: The spirit can cause a visual manifestation of its form to appear. This form has no solidity or appreciable weight, and is usually translucent unless the spirit spends extra Fatigue to make it appear solid. This costs 1 Fatigue per 5 seconds, doubled if the spirit wants to appear solid. No roll is necessary if the spirit uses its true shape. Attempts to modify this shape require a roll against the Shapeshifting skill (see p. 57).

Full Materialization: This effect is very costly, but it temporarily provides the spirit with a material body. Full Materialization costs 1 Fatigue point for every two levels in each physical stat (ST, DX and HT) rounded up. The physical stats of this body cannot



exceed the limits of the spirit's true form, but they can be lower. Clothing appears around the subject at no additional cost, but other objects (including weapons and armor) cost 1 Fatigue per pound of weight. This energy cost must be paid after each minute.

Usually, only one shape (for ghosts, the shape they had in life) can be materialized; the Shapeshifting skill does *not* apply to Materialization. Some spirits have more than one shape (animals or different human forms, for example). Each form must be purchased as a Mental/Very Hard skill (for PC spirits), which must be rolled against to assume that form. The stats of the form are determined with Fatigue as above.

Example: Raymond, the 300-year old ghost of a buccaneer, has 30 Fatigue points. He decides to materialize, complete with his old boarding saber and flintlock pistol, in front of the crazy treasure hunters who are digging around his secret burial place. He has ST 13, DX 12 and HT 14. This comes to 39 points, which rounded up will cost him 20 Fatigue. The saber and the fully loaded flintlock pistol weigh 5 pounds, so the total cost for the materialization is 25 Fatigue. For one minute, Raymond can physically attack the intruders.

Other Powers

Certain loas, daemons and animae have powers and abilities beyond those described above; these are detailed in the individual entries. GMs creating their own spirits can find other possible powers in sourcebooks like *GURPS Supers* or *GURPS Fantasy Folk*. Unless otherwise noted in the description, any spirit power that can be resisted by Will also gets a bonus equal to the Level of Initiation of the target.

THE VOODOO PANTHEON

The loas of the Voodoo cosmology have personalities, divine attributes and symbols, and other religious trappings. They cannot be considered individuals, however, because they can manifest themselves in many places at once, and their personalities and appearances vary. Each loa seems to be a *group* of associated spirits with similar (but not identical) powers and personalities. Like all greater spirits, loas have three different manifestation levels: minor, moderate and major. There is a level beyond a major manifestation, which hounsans believe to be the one true shape of each god. Such a manifestation appears seldom, if ever: its

attributes, especially ST, Fatigue and HT, are at least ten times that of a major manifestation!

Most loas have more than one aspect, including the Petro and Rada (see p. 18), determined by their various areas of influence. A loa appearing in a dream to give advice, for example, will be a lot more coherent and rational than one possessing a devotee. When roleplaying loas in a game, the GM must keep in mind this diversity within each of the "gods." The emotional content of their presence should be as important as their words.

Legba

Minor Manifestation

ST: 30 IQ: 12 Will: 13
DX: 12 HT: 10 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 7/7 Fatigue: 40

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 40 IQ: 14 Will: 16
DX: 14 HT: 14 Alertness: 15
Move/Dodge: 8/8 Fatigue: 80

Major Manifestation

ST: 90 IQ: 20 Will: 22
DX: 15 HT: 20 Alertness: 21
Move/Dodge: 9/9 Fatigue: 120

Legba is the loa of magic, protector of the home and deity of crossroads, the favorite meeting place of sorcerers. Worshipped in Santeria as Eleggua, he has the same properties in both religions. He is also identified with Saint Anthony. In Voodoo myth, Legba acts as the interpreter of the gods; without his permission no loa can be contacted. Most Voodoo rituals include a salutation of Legba, entreating him to remove the barrier between the spirit and material worlds. Legba is one of the three leaders of the pantheon, together with Damballa and Ayida-Wedo (see below). In his aspect of the guardian of gates, crossroads and barriers, he is often invoked to protect homes and sacred places.

As the intermediary between loas and men, Legba is considered a friend of humankind. He also is an enemy of In-Betweeners (who usurp his place at the crossroads between Spirit and Matter) and Devourers (who violate the barriers between worlds). A Legba manifestation will always react at -8 to either. Legba Spirit Warriors are at +4 to invoke their powers if they are about to fight an In-Betweeners or Devourer.

Legba is also a loa of justice, and often punishes transgressors with humiliating mishaps. Those suffering from a rash of bad luck may have offended Legba somehow. In Santeria, Legba/Eleggua is one of the Three Warriors of Voodoo (together with Oggun and Ochosi), and his intervention in this aspect is also helpful in matters of war or violence.

Legba is usually depicted as an old, frail-looking old man, usually leaning on a cane for support. This appearance is deceiving, for he is said to be the strongest Voodoo god. If encountered in the dream world, the loa usually guards a gate or door, or can be found at a crossroads; often the loa will not allow the traveler to pass unless he defeats the spirit in a contest of wits or strength. When he mounts a human being, the possessed person displays incredible physical strength. The traditional colors of the god are red and black.

Special Power: All manifestations of Legba can hinder any attempt to pass through a gate of any kind, from physical doors to those between the material and dream worlds. For every Fatigue point spent in this way, the spirit gives a -2 penalty to any roll made to cross the barrier. Crossing a physical threshold requires a Will or ST roll (whichever is greater), at the penalty determined above. Attempts to leave or enter another world will require Will or appropriate ritual rolls, also at the penalty the spirit sets.

Possession Effects

People possessed by Legba are at +20 ST (100 points) and have +4 DR (12 points). They also get an instinctive understanding of all barriers and doors, effectively giving them 16 points in the

Lockpicking skill. Of late, however, the god has also granted a similar benefit to the Electronics (Security Systems) and Computer Hacking skills; Spirit Warriors can choose any of the three as their gift, or split the 16 points among them. The person's appearance is altered subtly, giving people around him the impression that he is a much older person: tiny wrinkles will form on his face, and he will acquire a stooped posture. Spirit Warriors of Legba will notice their hair growing prematurely gray or white (-1-point disadvantage).

Regular Legba mounts sometimes go into convulsions or become completely rigid; people trying to overpower them will have to contend with the superhuman strength of the possessed victim. They walk with a limp and speak with the voice of a wizened old man. Also, Legba mounts are prone to being possessed by any nearby loa as soon as the god leaves them; on a roll of 7 or less on two dice, a victim of possession by Legba will be taken over by another loa. Spirit Warriors are not affected by this side effect.

Becoming a Legba Spirit Warrior costs 89 points (90 for those whose hair is already gray or white).

Damballa and Ayida-Wedo

Minor Manifestation

ST: 10 IQ: 14 Will: 14
DX: 13 HT: 12 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 7/7 Fatigue: 40

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 20 IQ: 16 Will: 18
DX: 14 HT: 13 Alertness: 19
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 70

Major Manifestation

ST: 40 IQ: 19 Will: 20
DX: 15 HT: 18 Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 8/8 Fatigue: 110



Damballa is a snake god; he and his wife (or female aspect) Ayida-Wedo are the Divine Snakes of Voodoo ritual and protectors of humankind. Damballa and Ayida-Wedo are two powerful deities that are intrinsically linked to each other, and often are fused into one entity. Many instruments of Voodoo ceremonies, including the *asson* or ceremonial rattle, are symbolic representations of the two gods. The snake cult is one of the most ancient in the world, and Damballa/Ayida-Wedo is one of the most powerful deities in the Voodoo pantheon. In some tales, the two are credited with the creation of the world and are considered the parents or at least guides of the other gods.

Damballa is a bringer of knowledge, more approachable than Legba. He is also a bringer of good fortune and wealth. He is also a deity of rivers, lakes and other bodies of fresh water, and a symbol of nature and trees. The snake is an old phallic symbol, and believers also appeal to Damballa in matters of love. Prayers to the two gods are often conducted under a tree, their symbolic dwelling place. This loa is sometimes worshipped by Snake People In-Betweeners (see p. 101), although Damballa will not tolerate any worshipper tainted by the Corruptors, and is a fierce enemy of the Mayombe.

The god is depicted as a snake, sometimes a python, boa or giant king cobra, and his speech is marked by hisses and clicks. His symbolic color is white or silver. Ayida-Wedo is associated with the rainbow and its multicolored hues. In the dream world their manifestations often look like energy serpents, streaking through the air, curled on top of a tree, or navigating a river.

Possession Effects

People possessed by Damballa or Ayida-Wedo are +5 ST (25 points), +3 DX (30 points), and +2 DR (6 points). They acquire the equivalent of the Double-Jointed advantage (5 points) and have 4 points each in the Climbing and Swimming skills. While under the influence of the serpent gods, normal speech is impos-

sible; the mount communicates with hisses and clicks. Even Spirit Warriors find their speech impaired (treat as the Stuttering disadvantage for -10 points). The mounts of Damballa and Ayida-Wedo usually try to climb to a high place and remain “coiled” on the perch, hissing and clicking, or move with the swaying, undulating movements of a serpent.

Being a Spirit Warrior of Damballa and Ayida-Wedo costs 45 points.

Erzulie

Minor Manifestation

ST: 10	IQ: 12	Will: 14
DX: 11	HT: 10	Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 5/6	Fatigue: 25	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 18	IQ: 14	Will: 16
DX: 13	HT: 14	Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 7/7	Fatigue: 50	

Major Manifestation

ST: 25	IQ: 17	Will: 18
DX: 15	HT: 18	Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 9/9	Fatigue: 70	

Erzulie (also known as Ezili) is a goddess of many aspects. Her manifestations are varied: as a loa of beauty, lust and love, she appears as a young mulatto woman. As a symbol of vengeance and discord, she is depicted as a withered old crone wielding two snakes as weapons. In her Petro aspects as Erzulie the Red or Erzulie the Black-hearted, her beauty is marred by savagery and madness. Erzulie is a prime example of the fickle, elemental nature of the loas; like the Greek gods, Erzulie is more concerned with her whims and emotions than with laws or principles. Notoriously lecherous, in the Voodoo tales Erzulie is depicted dallying with many of the other loas, including Damballa, Legba and the Guede gods. Her manifestations are beings of passion, not reason, and must be dealt with on that basis.

Erzulie influences matters of the heart. In her violent aspects, she punishes wrongdoers, in nasty and creative ways. In some of her tamer forms, she appears as a mature, wise woman, and is sometimes identified with the Virgin Mary — to the horror of Catholic priests!

Encountering this loa in the dream world will usually lead to an attempted seduction or some other sexual game, designed to either dominate or frustrate the target. Alternatively, Erzulie in her avenger aspect may seek to torment the dreamer for past sins and transgressions, often recreating the victim's crimes.

Special Power: Erzulie can use her unearthly beauty and raw sexuality to temporarily dazzle her targets, including other spirits. By spending 2 Fatigue and winning a Quick Contest of Wills (people with the Lecherous disadvantage resist at -5 Will), she can mentally stun the victim (male or female) for 1d seconds during which he is consumed by lust; after the 1d seconds, roll against IQ every second to recover.



Possession Effects

Anybody — man or woman — possessed by Erzulie will behave in a feminine way. Depending on the aspect of the possessing loa, the mount will either behave like a young seductress, an old wise woman, or a nagging hag. The possessed usually fall prey to frenzied, erotic dancing and contortions. Her most common aspect is the young sensual female; while being mounted by Erzulie the Seductress, the person has ST +3 (15 points), DX +2 (20 points), +5 Charisma (25 points), and DR +2 (6 points). The mount also acquires 8 points in both the Dancing and Sex Appeal skills (16 points). Most Erzulie Spirit Warriors are women or male cross-dressers; the Spirit Warrior must be wearing make-up and feminine clothing to invoke her powers. He or she also acquires the Lecherous disadvantage (-15 points).

The Erzulie Spirit Warrior advantage costs 47 points (57 if the character already had the Lecherous disadvantage).

Obatala

Minor Manifestation

ST: 12 IQ: 16 Will: 17
DX: 12 HT: 11 Alertness: 18
Move/Dodge: 6/6 Fatigue: 30

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 13 IQ: 18 Will: 20
DX: 14 HT: 14 Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 60

Major Manifestation

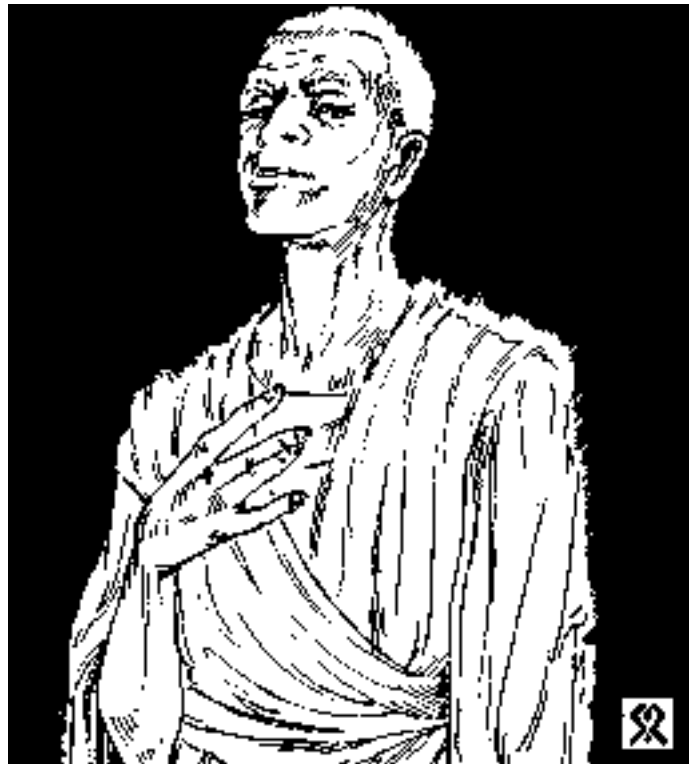
ST: 20 IQ: 21 Will: 24
DX: 15 HT: 20 Alertness: 22
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 100

Obatala is one of the chief gods of the Santeria cosmology. He is the loa of purity, and is represented as a mulatto dressed in pure white clothes. Albinos are held in particular regard by Obatala; many Spirit Warriors and devotees of the god have this disadvantage. Obatala is also considered a deity of the mind, and a protector against hostile possession and the influence of the Corruptors. The loa also opposes all polluters and despoilers, supernatural or mundane.

Almost all the aspects of Obatala are benevolent. He represents peace and harmony, and his power is invoked to prevent conflicts from flaring up. This loa is one of the most active enemies of the Mayombe, and rituals and invocations in his name used against those enemies are performed at +1 to skill.

Obatala's symbolic color is white; cotton fabrics, powdered eggshells and coconut milk can all be used as symbolic representations of the god. In the dream world, his surroundings are usually calm pastoral scenes or white clouds.

Special Power: Obatala can induce a sense of peace and well-being in his target, soothing anger and making violence less likely. By spending 3 Fatigue, any of the manifestations can infuse one person with these feelings after winning a Quick Contest of Wills (people with Bad Temper, Bloodlust and Sadism resist at +2; Berserk characters resist at +5; Pacifists of any kind resist at -4). If the Obatala loa wins, the target's anger evaporates and he is more amenable to reason; a berserker will snap out of his mindless state, and he will try to seek peaceful solutions to a conflict. Moderate and Major Manifestations can extend this calming influence to more than one target, at the cost of 1 extra Fatigue and -1 to Will per additional subject.



Possession Effects

Mounts of Obatala are at ST +4 (20 points), HT +3 (30 points) and DR +2 (6 points). They acquire the Immunity to Disease advantage (10 points). The possessed will take off any colored clothes, leaving on only white garments (if he was wearing no white clothing, he will undress completely). Spirit Warriors will have the quirks "compulsive cleaner" and "always wears white" (-2 points). If the GM allows psionics in his campaign (see p. 45), those mounted by Obatala may have 8 levels in Telepathy (40 points) and 4 points each in the psi skills Telereceive and Mind Shield (8 points).

Being an Obatala Spirit Warrior costs 45 points (38 points if he already has Immunity to Disease). If the psi powers are also granted, add 33 points to the cost.

Chango

Minor Manifestation

ST: 15 IQ: 13 Will: 15
DX: 14 HT: 14 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 8/8 Fatigue: 30

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 20 IQ: 13 Will: 16
DX: 16 HT: 17 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 9/9 Fatigue: 50

Major Manifestation

ST: 45 IQ: 14 Will: 19
DX: 17 HT: 22 Alertness: 15
Move/Dodge: 9/9 Fatigue: 85

Chango (also known as Shango or Sango) is the Voodoo loa of lightning, volcanoes and fire. Uncontrolled energy is his aspect. According to some Voodoo priests, Chango and his rival Oggun are the patron deities of Western science (although the Lodges might disagree) — their enormous power is often used with little regard to the consequences. Chango is a fiery-tempered warrior god who is easily swayed by anger, jealousy



and lust. He is an insatiable lover and a savage fighter, and his symbols are the sword, the double-headed axe, and the color red. He is identified with Saint Barbara, the Christian patroness of gunpowder, and as such is said to have great influence over handguns and explosives (which are traditionally known as “thunder sticks” or “thunder weapons”). Chango’s dream-world manifestations usually take the shape of a fiery-eyed black man, sometimes with reddish hair, either living on top of a thundercloud or presiding over a live volcano or a forest fire.

Chango’s loas are summoned to control or harm enemies, and to protect against such attacks. Like an explosive, however, Chango is as likely to harm the user as the intended target, so extra care must be used when trying to send the loa on a harmful mission. The Petro aspect of the god (see p. 18) appreciates revenge as a motive to harm somebody, and is more likely to respond to such calls. Even Chango is not willing to accept any task that will directly further the ends of the Corruptors, however, and anybody who summons the loa for such tasks is likely to end up on the receiving end of the loa’s wrath.

Special Powers: Fire Powers: Chango can start fires by spending Fatigue. Flammables (spilled gasoline, dry leaves, tinder and anything that could start burning by coming into contact with a spark or burning cigarette) can be ignited at the cost of 3 Fatigue. For 5 Fatigue, a floating flame that inflicts 1d damage and burns any moderate flammables it touches can be created for one second; this flame will bypass all armor or protection if used against a living thing.

Lightning Powers: Chango loas have power over lightning and electricity. During an ongoing electrical storm, the loa can call lightning down on a target by winning a Quick Contest of Wills and spending 8 Fatigue. Damage from the lightning bolt varies widely (people struck by lightning can be burnt to a crisp or escape with little more than singed eyebrows). Roll 1d: this determines how many dice of damage are inflicted by the bolt. Chango can also manipulate the energy of electrical appliances, causing them to malfunction or even conduct lethal amounts to current to people touching them. Temporary malfunctions cost 3 Fatigue each; permanent damage costs 3 to 20 Fatigue, depending on the size and complexity of the machine. Causing

an electrical appliance to deliver a lethal shock (inflicting 3d to 10d damage, depending on the situation) costs 10 Fatigue.

Gun Control: As a god of fire and thunder, Chango can influence the functioning of handguns and explosives. By spending 2 Fatigue, the loa can cause a gun or an explosive detonator to malfunction (treat it as a dud round), or to fire at +1 accuracy and +1 damage. For 6 Fatigue, the loa can increase the range and damage of any chemical slugthrower by 25% (round up) or +1 per die, whichever is more.

Possession Effects

A “horse” of Chango has ST +10 (50 points), DX +3 (30 points), HT +2 (20 points), DR +4 against everything (12 points), and an additional 10 DR against fire and electricity (20 points). Spirit Warriors suffer from the disadvantages Bad Temper (-10 points) and Lecherousness (-15 points) while channeling the god’s powers. Possessed victims tend to dance and leap wildly, and to perform such feats as plunging their hands into boiling water, eating lit cigars, and soaking their arms in alcohol and lighting them — all without suffering ill effects. The voices of the possessed become deep and thunderous, eerily so when the mount is a woman or young child. If the GM allows psionic powers in his campaign, he may include 6 levels of Psychokinesis Power (Pyrokinesis only, 24 points), 8 points in the Pyrokinesis skill, 5 levels of Electrokinetics (20 points) and 8 points each in the Surge and Lightning skills (16 points; seep. PS12).

Becoming a Chango Spirit Warrior costs 75 points (82 if the character already had Bad Temper, 85 if he had Lecherousness, and 92 points if he had both). If the psionic powers are available, add an additional 48 points to the total.

Orunla

Minor Manifestation

ST: 10	IQ: 15	Will: 17
DX: 10	HT: 12	Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 5/6	Fatigue: 35	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 13	IQ: 18	Will: 20
DX: 12	HT: 14	Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 7/7	Fatigue: 75	

Major Manifestation

ST: 16	IQ: 20	Will: 23
DX: 14	HT: 18	Alertness: 24
Move/Dodge: 8/8	Fatigue: 110	

Orunla (also known as Orunmila) is the loa of divination, with mastery over all time, past, present and future. Unlike most of the loas, this god rarely possesses humans, except the babalawos or high priests that act as the loa’s mouthpieces. He is the mystical keeper of the Tables of Ifa, a divination tool used by Santeria. It is said that the visions of the future that gave birth to the Lucumi secret society (see p. 18) were a revelation from Orunla, and the Lucumi hold that loa in the highest regard.

This loa has no physical description. In the dream world his presence is detected when the dreamer finds himself surrounded by flashbacks and future visions that come and go around him like lightning strikes; dreamers risk being swept away by these visions (make a Will roll to avoid becoming entranced).

Orunla and Legba/Eleggua are said to be close friends and allies. The two loas tend to occupy themselves in weighty mat-

ers, thus standing apart from the often-frivolous and fickle Voodoo gods. Orunla tends not to act directly against the Corruptors and other threats, but will often give warnings, clues and information helpful to those who fight them.

Special Powers: By spending 4 Fatigue and winning a Quick Contest of Wills, Orunla can show an opponent a terrifying image out of the subject's past or future, either a traumatic memory, a glimpse of a horrible possible future, or even an event from a past life! The victim must make a Fright Check at -4 (or the amount by which he lost the Contest of Wills, whichever is higher) to shake off the effects of the image. The loa can also transmit similar temporal flashes to people with the purpose of informing, not scaring them. A person given to flashes of pre-cognition or telemetry (sensing past events at a location) might have an Orunla loa hovering over him.

Possession Effects

Orunla doesn't commonly possess people. Instead, Initiate Voodoo priests with the Channeling or Autotrance advantages (see p. 59) act as the conduits for the god's voice, much like the ancient oracles of Greek mythology. While being channeled, Orunla's voice is loud and curt, and very male, regardless of the gender of the channeler.

Oggun

Minor Manifestation

ST: 20 IQ: 12 Will: 16
DX: 16 HT: 16 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 25

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 40 IQ: 13 Will: 18
DX: 18 HT: 18 Alertness: 15
Move/Dodge: 9/9 Fatigue: 50

Major Manifestation

ST: 60 IQ: 14 Will: 19
DX: 19 HT: 24 Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 9/10 Fatigue: 90

Oggun (also known as Ogu) is a god of war and metals. A ferocious god and one of the Three Warriors of Santeria, Oggun is known for his strength and battle prowess as well as his lack of good sense. Like Chango, his disregard for forethought is compared with the mindless, relentless energies released by science. Among other things, Oggun is said to have power over cars, trains, and all metal vehicles, and is the patron spirit of policemen and soldiers. His Petro aspect symbolizes violence in all its myriad forms, for both good and ill, and in this aspect he is often found near Corruptor spirits or their works. The loa is also a god of healing, attacking disease with the same vigor he shows against other enemies; he is often invoked as a guardian or protector. Carelessly-worded curses involving Oggun can lead to terrible disasters — a death curse against one person could cause a train derailment that kills dozens of innocent people.

This loa is usually depicted dressed as a Napoleonic-era officer, or a bare-chested African warrior wearing red bandanas around his head and arms. His symbol is a knife or machete, often wielded by possessed devotees in their holy dances. If the loa is met in the dream world, the dreamer is likely to find himself in the middle of a bloody battle site, usually some of the nastier clashes between the Napoleonic armies and Haiti's freedom

fighters. The battle may be going on around him, or it may be already over, the ground littered with corpses. Oggun is allied with Legba and Ochosi, and the Three Warriors are often invoked together to work against powerful threats or curses.

Special Power: Oggun can "possess" any metal engine and take control of it. This special form of possession works just like the spirit power of possession (see p. 85), but the object makes no resistance roll. An Oggun loa could take control of a car and drive it off the road, for example, or cause a factory machine to work in reverse.

Possession Effects

When Oggun mounts a person, he gains +10 ST (50 points), +4 DX (45 points), +4 HT (45 points) and +7 DR (21 points). The "horse" is also given Combat Reflexes (15 points) and 16 points to put into any weapon skill that is appropriate to the moment (if the possessed or Spirit Warrior has no weapons available, for example, the 16 points would go to an unarmed combat skill; if an improvised club could be found, the 16 points would grant him the Broadsword or Shortsword skill, and so on). Possessed subjects swagger and yell loudly, using the obscene language and gestures of a soldier or sailor. Spirit Warriors get the Bloodlust (-10 points) and Overconfidence (-10 points) disadvantages, as well as the Odious Personal Habit: Constant Swearing and Profanity (-10 points).

It costs 113 points to be an Oggun Spirit Warrior (120 if the person already had one of the three advantages above, 127 if he had two, and 134 if he had all three).



Ochosi

Minor Manifestation

ST: 17 IQ: 14 Will: 16
DX: 15 HT: 14 Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 25

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 25 IQ: 15 Will: 18
DX: 17 HT: 19 Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 50

Major Manifestation

ST: 40 IQ: 17 Will: 20
DX: 18 HT: 21 Alertness: 22
Move/Dodge: 9/10 Fatigue: 80

Ochosi is the loa of hunting, healers and herbalists. An ancient nature deity, he is no longer worshipped in Africa — the region where his cult was most firmly entrenched was destroyed, the survivors sold into slavery. His influence has grown beyond forests and the wilderness, however, and he is now also patron of new buildings and cities. His contacts with other nature deities give him influence over medicine and healing. The loa's most important aspect is that of hunter, and he is depicted as a young warrior wielding an iron crossbow. In the dream world Ochosi loas surround themselves with a jungle habitat and usually sneak up on dreamers before identifying themselves. The loa has a reputation for being overconfident and acting rashly; in many stories he gets himself into trouble because of this.

Ochosi is the third of the Three Warriors of the Santeria tradition. New Initiates to the cult undergo a ceremony that places them under the protection of Legba, Oggun and Ochosi. Ochosi is one of the most implacable enemies of both the Lodges and the Mayombe, as most of his worshippers suffered directly at the hands of both groups. People who wish to work with the Lodges or avoid conflict with the Corruptors risk foregoing Ochosi's favor. Of the two enemies, Ochosi hates the Corruptors more, however, and he may turn a blind eye to a temporary truce with the Western magicians if doing so will gain an advantage against

the evil spirits.

Special Power: Ochosi can track down a target anywhere on Earth or in the dream world, by spending 2 Fatigue and winning a Quick Contest (Ochosi's Alertness versus the target's Will).

Possession Effects

Ochosi does not regularly possess unwitting "horses," but many Spirit Warriors choose him as patron. His Spirit Warriors have ST +6 (30 points), DX +2 (20 points), HT +1 (10 points) DR +4 (12 points) and Alertness +4 (20 points). The warrior gains 8 points each in the skills Tracking, Stealth, Survival (Jungle) and Throwing (32 points). He also gets the disadvantages Overconfidence (-10 points) and Impulsive (-10 points).

Being an Ochosi Spirit Warrior costs 73 points (80 if the person already has either of the above disadvantages, and 87 points if he has both).

The Guede Triad:

Baron Samedi, Baron Cimetie and Captain Zombi

Minor Manifestation

ST: 16 IQ: 14 Will: 16
DX: 14 HT: 14 Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 7/7 Fatigue: 30

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 24 IQ: 16 Will: 18
DX: 16 HT: 18 Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 8/8 Fatigue: 45

Major Manifestation

ST: 35 IQ: 18 Will: 20
DX: 17 HT: 20 Alertness: 19
Move/Dodge: 9/9 Fatigue: 70

The Guede Triad are fearsome loas who might be related to the Mayombe but are regularly worshipped by Voudounistas. Baron Samedi, Baron Cimetie and Captain Zombi are so similar in attributes and realm of influence as to be nearly indistinguishable. Baron Samedi is the best known and most feared of the three. Wearing a top hat, black clothes and dark glasses, often depicted with a whitened face or even a fleshless skull, Baron Samedi is said to preside over the time between the death of Christ and his resurrection, the godless time of the dead. This death god is not only a source of fear, however, but of trickery and some amusement. During certain festivals, his mounts walk around with the tools of the grave digger, shouting obscene puns and playing practical jokes on passersby. The three death gods are portrayed as irreverent tricksters. By accepting their mortality, followers of the Guedes gain a surprising degree of strength and courage. Having laughed in the face of death, these darkly humorous Voudounistas fear little else. Some Initiates who follow the two Barons and the Captain turn out to be implacable enemies of the Corruptors. On the other hand, the tyrant "Papa Doc" Duvalier (see p. 110) and his dread secret police aped Baron Samedi's black garb to intimidate the populace.

Encountering any of the three Guedes in the dream world is always a nightmarish experience. Their favorite dwelling place is a desecrated cemetery; the loas often make their entrance by clawing their way out of a grave. Their presences usually smell (faintly or strongly, depending on the mood of the loas) of



decomposition and moist earth. Captain Zombi is usually dressed in military garb (ancient or contemporary), with an emaciated face, sunken eyes and lips drawn back in a sardonic grin. Baron Cimetie also favors top hats, sometimes white in color, and tattered frock coats or dress-coats, with neatly starched collars. The three are easily amused, finding something to laugh about under the most morbid circumstances.

Special Power: These three loas can create a powerful illusion that the victim has been killed. The illusion works like a flashback — the victim suddenly finds himself in a terrifying scene where he is dying, usually horribly. This power costs 3 Fatigue and a Quick Contest of Wills. The victim must make a Fright Check at -2 (plus the amount he lost the Contest by) and will be mentally stunned for 1 second even if he succeeds.

Possession Effects

The mounts of the Guedes act in wild and unpredictable ways, snatching food and drink out of people's hands, dancing lasciviously and making dirty jokes and puns. The gods and their followers are known as liars, thieves and vagrants. Spirit Warriors of any of the three tend to be drifters and outsiders, often distrusted and feared by other Voudounistas. The Guede gods grant their followers ST +10 (50 points), DX +1 (10 points), HT +4 (45 points) and DR +5 (15 points). The Spirit Warrior's features grow haggard and gaunt; people react at -2 to him (-10 points). He will acquire the disadvantages Kleptomania (-15 points), Compulsive Lying (-15 points) and Odious Personal Habit: Filthy Language (-5 points, not quite as severe as the profanity that afflicts Spirit Warriors of Oggun). Most Spirit Warriors of Baron Samedi and his "brothers" are somewhat obsessed by death and other morbid themes.

The Baron Samedi Spirit Warrior package costs 52 points (63 if the Warrior already has Kleptomania or Compulsive Lying, and 73 points if he has both).



Other Gods

There are literally hundreds of other loas. Some examples include Loco, the loa of trees and plants; Simbi, a river god or goddess; Oshun, another river goddess; and Agau, loa of earthquakes. GMs wishing to use other Voodoo gods can extrapolate from the descriptions given above to determine the attributes and possession effects of those spirits.

Guardian Spirits

Voudounistas believe that everyone is guarded by a loa. Initiates can choose any loa listed above as an active guardian spirit. Generally, these "guardian angels" make perfect Spirit Advisors, Spirit Allies and grant the Spirit Warrior advantage.

THE MAYOMBE

The Mayombe don't have a pantheon per se, but consist of a number of evil entities identified by Voodoo mythology. They are seldom worshipped by true Voudounistas, and are the patrons of Bokkor and insane cultists. Unlike even the most impulsive loa, the Mayombe spirits are positively malevolent, seeking with all their power to harm all human beings. They work best as agents of sorcerers, because they can use the human caster's imagination and willpower to cause even more misery.

While the Mayombe can grant Initiates their own version of the Spirit Warrior powers (see p. 61), the point cost of their Spirit Warrior packages is not included. Anybody who invokes their powers will soon lose his free will and sanity, sinking by a vicious cycle into depravity.

Zarabanda

Minor Manifestation

ST: 18	IQ: 13	Will: 15
DX: 15	HT: 16	Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 7/8	Fatigue: 25	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 35	IQ: 14	Will: 18
DX: 18	HT: 18	Alertness: 15
Move/Dodge: 9/9	Fatigue: 45	

Major Manifestation

ST: 55	IQ: 14	Will: 19
DX: 20	HT: 23	Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 10/10	Fatigue: 85	

Zarabanda is an ancient African deity that has been corrupted by the worship of the Red Sects. This Corruptor is a deity of war and destruction, in some ways similar to Oggun but without any of Oggun's redeeming qualities. Bokkor invoke Zarabanda for curses and death rituals, most of which involve human sacrifice. Spirit Warriors of Zarabanda are berserkers given to bouts of cannibalism and ritual mutilation. Many serial killers become Zarabanda worshippers and use the power of the Mayombe to help them with their crimes.



Manifestations of Zarabanda often use the poltergeist effect to commit murders, usually at the behest of a Dark Initiate. They typically push people off balconies or down flights of stairs, or cause their victims to lose control of their cars or vehicles. Zarabanda spirits look like blood-spattered African warriors, wielding machetes in both hands, or a spear. In the dream world, they are usually surrounded by scenes of massacres.

Special Power: Zarabanda spirits can send negative emotions to anyone within IQ yards of them by spending 5 Fatigue and making a Will roll. Anyone in the area will gain the Bad Temper disadvantage; those who already had Bad Temper gain the Berserk disadvantage, and people with Berserk will make Will rolls at -5 to resist losing control. All reaction rolls will be at -4, and people will be generally hostile and short-tempered.

Possession Effects

Zarabanda's "horses" have ST +10, DX +2, IQ -1, HT +3 and DR 4; additionally, they get 8 points to put into any combat/weapon skill appropriate at the time of the possession or invocation. They have the disadvantages Berserk and Bloodlust. Spirit Warriors of Zarabanda permanently acquire Berserk and Bloodlust even when not invoking the Mayombe's powers. After several years of exposure to the monstrous entity, many also acquire the Murder Addiction disadvantage (see p. 99).

Ikku (Death)

Minor Manifestation

ST: 15	IQ: 14	Will: 16
DX: 15	HT: 13	Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 7/7	Fatigue: 25	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 25	IQ: 16	Will: 18
DX: 15	HT: 15	Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 7/8	Fatigue: 40	

Major Manifestation

ST: 40	IQ: 18	Will: 20
DX: 16	HT: 20	Alertness: 19
Move/Dodge: 9/9	Fatigue: 75	

Ikku is a Yoruba death god sometimes identified with the Guede gods (see above). No longer worshipped in the Voodoo pantheon, this entity is now a powerful Mayombe spirit that uses disease and decay to inflict fear. Ikku is invoked by Bokkor sorcerers to cast such rituals as Evil Eye and Malediction (see pp. 75 and 77). Many death cults have sprung up around Ikku. Most members are non-Initiates led by a low-level mystic whom Ikku soon comes to control completely. Typical Ikku cults appear both among inner-city gang members and upper-middle class teenagers. The Mayombe appears to selected members in dreams, offering them great power in return for human sacrifices. Those who accept the promise gather in groups of two or more and plan ritualistic murders. In nice suburban neighborhoods, the victims are usually other teenagers, or small children. In the slums, the cults target the homeless, prostitutes and anybody they catch walking the streets late at night. Most of these cults are discovered after killing only one or two people, but some of them have been very successful, especially in large cities where victims can disappear without causing an uproar.

Some Initiates believe that Ikku and Mbua (see below) are behind the Murder Society (see p. 42). Either would favor it, and they may have joined forces in the undertaking.

Special Power: Ikku can cast the Malaise ritual (see p. 75) in 1d seconds, at the cost of 10 Fatigue.

Possession Effects

People possessed by or invoking Ikku are at ST +6, DX +2, HT +5 and DR +4. They get 8 points in each of the following skills: Stealth, Escape and Knife. On the other hand, they acquire the Sadism disadvantage as long as Ikku inhabits their bodies. Spirit Warriors of Ikku must take a -15-point "Vow: Sacrifice one victim a month," in order to keep their power.

Mbua

Minor Manifestation

ST: 18	IQ: 14	Will: 16
DX: 14	HT: 15	Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 7/8	Fatigue: 24	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 30	IQ: 15	Will: 18
DX: 16	HT: 18	Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 8/9	Fatigue: 50	

Major Manifestation

ST: 50	IQ: 17	Will: 20
DX: 17	HT: 20	Alertness: 21
Move/Dodge: 9/10	Fatigue: 75	

Mbua is one of the most powerful Mayombe. Also known as the Killer, it was once invoked to give strength to hunters, not unlike Ochosi (see above). Mbua is now a Cannibal Spirit, and symbolizes the Hunters of Men — assassins, serial killers, and other human predators. Mbua has a number of aspects, all based on the idea of humans killing or otherwise exploiting their fellows. Some of his puppets include thrill-seekers who pay enormous sums of money to travel to remote Third-World countries and engage in human hunting games. Serial killers are his favorites, of course, as well as slavers of any kind.

This Mayombe takes on the appearance of the Great White Hunter, complete with safari clothes and a rifle; most Initiates who see him assume from his looks that he is a European spirit, which makes it easy for him to manipulate racist humans to his own purposes. His symbols include knives, nets and snares. His Spirit Warriors can recognize each other instantly, and often work together. Traveling gangs of killers scour the roads of the U.S. and Canada, making stops where they snatch a victim or two, and then moving on, burying the bodies in remote places many miles away. Mbuu's followers in police departments destroy any evidence or clues linking the killings and disappearances to his roving gangs.

Possession Effects

Mbuu never possesses people without their consent. His Spirit Warriors have ST +10, DX +4, HT +3 and DR +5. When infused by Mbuu's presence, they also have Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense and High Pain Threshold, as well as Bloodlust and Sadism. The moment they accept Mbuu as their patron spirit, they automatically become murder addicts (see p. 99). Many of them also fall prey to a number of Delusions and Odious Personal Habits, including Cannibalism (-15 points).

The Kiyumbe

ST: 16 IQ: 7 Will: 14
 DX: 14 HT: 15 Alertness: 14
 Move/Dodge: 6/6 Fatigue: 25

The Kiyumbe are a special form of ghost, which Bokkor sorcerers create by conducting a hideous ritual with the remains of a recently-buried corpse. The Bokkor invokes the base soul of the corpse (see p. 83) and enslaves it. The ghost's personality is eradicated; all it has left is rage and bloodlust. Most of the time, Kiyumbes can be found in the service of powerful Bokkors or greater Mayombe spirits, but occasionally the spirit's master is killed and the Kiyumbe is left to its own devices. Independent Kiyumbes wander the world, attracted to places where death and suffering are the norms; thus, one can find them in emergency wards, insane asylums and prisons, among others.

Possession Effects

A human possessed by a Kiyumbe gains ST +5, HT +1 and DR 2. He also acquires the Berserk disadvantage and immedi-



ately goes into a rage, attacking the people nearest to him. Nobody willingly invokes a Kiyumbe, because the spirit's mindless rage always overcomes the subject.

The Nkisi

ST: 18 IQ: 15 Will: 16
 DX: 16 HT: 16 Alertness: 16
 Move/Dodge: 8/8 Fatigue: 35

The Nkisi are very intelligent and malicious Mayombe spirits. They are favorite familiars of the Bokkor, and often materialize as cats, dogs, rats or snakes that the sorcerer keeps as pets. The Nkisi can also be on their own, corrupting smalltime mystics, criminals and other dupes. On some occasions, a Nkisi controls a local drug ring or becomes the "patron" of a street gang. These malevolent spirits are the most common threat Initiates face when confronting street crime. The spirits travel singly or in small groups, and sometimes can be found controlling a group of Kiyumbe spirits, ghosts they have enslaved, or even In-Betweeners.

Possession Effects

Nkisi mounts have ST +5, DX +2 and HT +2. They get no other advantages or disadvantages. These spirits never grant humans Spirit Warrior powers; they always want to be in control.

THE PANTHEON OF LODGES

The Lodges are in contact with spiritual entities recognized in the Greco-Roman religions. A few groups, including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see p. 30) also follow some Egyptian gods. This syncretism of pantheons has existed since the founding of the secret alliance, and has continued throughout the centuries. There is a branch of the Lodges that uses Norse mythology as its power source, but little is known about it.

Unlike the Voodoo gods, only a few of the spirits the Lodges contact engage in ritual possession. Most Lodge Spirit Warriors draw on their personal genius (see below) for spiritual power, rather than their deities. Also, most Lodge gods rarely take an active part in world affair; the lesser spirits like the animae, daemons and genii are the workhorses of Lodge magic. It is said that most elder gods talk only with the Lodges' Secret Masters (see p. 26).

Abraxas

Minor Manifestation

ST: 17 IQ: 14 Will: 16
DX: 13 HT: 14 Alertness: 15
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 40

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 30 IQ: 16 Will: 18
DX: 16 HT: 16 Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 80

Major Manifestation

ST: 50 IQ: 20 Will: 21
DX: 17 HT: 20 Alertness: 20
Move/Dodge: 9/10 Fatigue: 120

This Gnostic spirit is a powerful guide and a favorite of mystics studying and meditating to gain higher Levels of Initiation. Sometimes the god's manifestations engage in metaphysical challenges with Initiates in the dream world. Abraxas is most often

invoked in protection and divination rituals, and his symbols appear in protective amulets and mystic symbols. The seven Greek letters that form the word Abraxas have a numerical value of 365; thus, this god is associated with the days of the year.

There are many forms to this entity, including a humanoid made out of solid light and a multi-limbed snake. In the latter form, Abraxas has been associated with the snake of the garden of Eden, worshipped by the Ophite Gnostics (see p. 31) and sometimes associated with the Voodoo loa Damballa (see p. 87). It may be possible that Damballa and Abraxas are the same entity; if so, this link might help bridge differences between the Lodges and the Voudounistas.

The similarities may mean nothing, however. Abraxas, unlike Damballa, never possesses humans, nor grants them any Spirit Warrior powers. Also, Abraxas is rarely concerned with events that occur in the material world; the spirit seems to be above everything pertaining to matter. Some Schismatics claim that Abraxas is a hidden Corruptor, hiding its true agenda behind a curtain of mysticism.

Pan

Minor Manifestation

ST: 13 IQ: 14 Will: 15
DX: 14 HT: 12 Alertness: 14
Move/Dodge: 6/7 Fatigue: 28

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 25 IQ: 16 Will: 17
DX: 18 HT: 16 Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 46

Major Manifestation

ST: 40 IQ: 17 Will: 19
DX: 21 HT: 17 Alertness: 18
Move/Dodge: 10/10 Fatigue: 75

This goat-man deity, an ancient nature god of pre-Hellenistic times, has survived through millennia in Europe and the Middle East. He is associated with the Horned God of Celtic mythology and was identified as the Christian Devil by the Church. While outlawing his worship in public, the Lodges continued invoking the spirit in private. Pan is a popular spirit for any ritual that involves emotion or pleasure.

The Crowley Society (see p. 33) have adopted Pan as their patron, and are often surrounded by a small flock of minor manifestations of the spirit (commonly referred to as satyrs). He is also commonly invoked by the Servants of Hecate (see p. 28), and is the only male spirit that Lodge generally uses.

Pan appears as a short man with goat legs and horns and a lascivious expression. In the dream world he surrounds himself in a party atmosphere with plenty of female company, food and drink. Those who encounter the god there must make a Will roll or lose track of time, becoming "stuck" in the dream party for 1d hours before realizing it!

Special Powers: By making a Will roll and spending 6 Fatigue, a spirit of Pan can reduce inhibitions and induce a mild state of sexual desire in everyone in an area of IQ yards. People will behave as if they had the Lecherousness disadvantage (those who already have it will be at -4 to Will rolls to resist their impulses), and everybody will have the equivalent of +1



Charisma, seeming more attractive to everyone else. Sex Appeal rolls will be made at +2 to skill.

Also, Pan can emit a psychic “shout” that causes fear in one or several victims. By spending 4 Fatigue and winning a Quick Contest of Wills with a target, he forces the target to make a Fright Check at -1 for every point the Contest was won by.

Possession Effects

Pan is one of the few Lodge deities that still regularly “mounts” worshippers, granting them +3 ST (15 points), +3 DX (30 points), +2 HT (20 points) and +1 DR (3 points). The mount gains the advantage Charisma +2 (10 points), the Lecherousness (-15 points) and Compulsive Carousing (-5 points) disadvantages, and 8 points each in the Musical Instrument: Flute, Sex-Appeal and Carousing skills (24 points).

Being a Spirit Warrior of Pan costs 57 points (68 if the person was already Lecherous, 61 if he already had Compulsive Carousing, and 71 if he had both).

Animae

ST: 16 IQ: 15 Will: 17
DX: 15 HT: 14 Alertness: 16
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 35

These spirits are the common allies of Lodge Initiates. Intelligent and powerful, they often take the shape of angelic beings, or of solid white, vaguely humanoid figures. Their pretty appearance belies their cold-blooded attitude: animae follow the orders of their summoner and are not above killing or otherwise harming humans or spirits. The Lodges often use animae as sentinels; the spirits can be found patrolling the manors, country houses and penthouses where the mystical elite lives. Powerful Initiates usually have a bodyguard of four or five of these spirits.

Animae are only rarely encountered outside the service of an Initiate. Independents are distrusted, because they are most likely on a long-range mission from their true master, and are only pretending to be on their own.

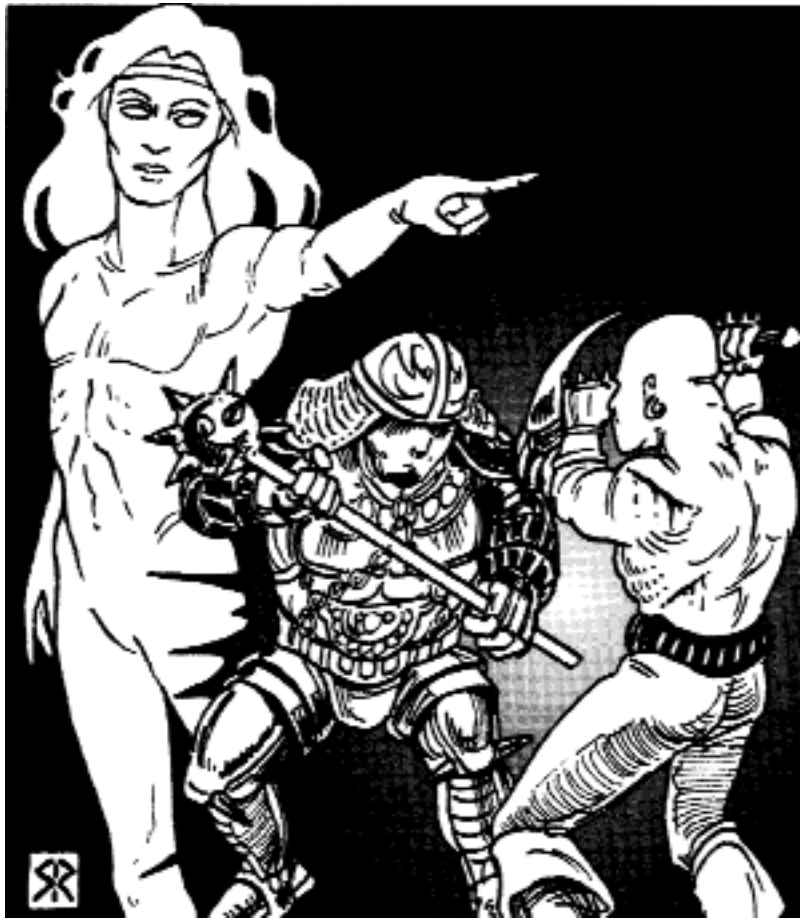
Possession Effects

Animae don't have any special possession powers like loas do; when they take over a human body, it gains +3 ST and +1 DX (see p. 85). No other advantages or disadvantages are acquired by the host body. Animae never grant Spirit Warrior powers to Initiates.

Daemons

ST: 20 IQ: 10 Will: 14
DX: 15 HT: 17 Alertness: 12
Move/Dodge: 8/9 Fatigue: 50

Daemons should not be confused with *demons*, although the two terms have similar origins. The word *daemon* was used in Greek mythology and philosophy to describe spiritual beings that were less powerful than gods. When Christianity outlawed Greek deities, it used a modified version of the term to encompass all pagan gods and spirits. The daemons of the Lodges are rather brutish spirits that are used for straightforward missions and as spiritual shock troops. These beings are not expected to



provide good advice or information, but to follow orders to the latter.

Commonly, daemons appear as featureless humanoids in metal armor, with a heavier build than animae, and usually with red and black skins. Daemons can be placed under the control of an anima, and often a team of one spirit of each type is sent on missions that require both brains and muscle.

Possession Effects

Daemon-possessed humans acquire ST +4, DX +1 and HT +2, but no special advantages or disadvantages. Like animae, daemons never grant Spirit Warrior Powers.

Genii

ST: 15 IQ: 16 Will: 17
DX: 14 HT: 16 Alertness: 17
Move/Dodge: 7/8 Fatigue: 30

The genii are a special type of anima-like spirit that accompany and protect an individual. Initiates can contact and tap into the powers of these “guardian angels,” who are the equivalent of Voodoo’s guardian spirits (see p. 93). A genius exists around a person of a particular family from his birth, but will only introduce itself to First Level or higher Initiates. Genii make good Spirit Advisors and Allies. Initiates should avoid getting these spirits destroyed, because finding a new genius is extremely difficult — it involves a search to find a spirit capable of forming a strong relationship with not only the Initiate, but his entire lineage. Most Lodge Spirit Warriors channel the powers of their genius.

These spirits usually look like idealized versions of their human proteges, but their hair is white and their eyes are featureless silver orbs. They are very loyal to those they protect (characters who decide to have a genius must purchase them as Spirit Allies; consider the genius as a minor manifestation).



Possession Effects

Initiates with the Spirit Warrior advantage (see p. 61) can invest themselves with the powers of their genius. The controlled possession will grant them +6 ST (30 points), +2 DX (20 points) and +4 HT (45 points). Genii never possess anybody other than their proteges. Being a Spirit Warrior of one's genius costs 66 points.

IN-BETWEENERS

In-Betweeners are creatures that are not wholly spiritual or material, but a combination of both. All living beings have spiritual elements — what most religions call the soul — but their forms are bound to material reality. In-Betweeners are not bound by physical laws; their forms and powers transcend those limits. However, these beings are not spirits, either, but entities trapped inside a physical shell, supernatural but still material. Even for Initiates, who deal with non-corporeal beings, In-Betweeners are a mystery. Their origins are as varied as their shapes; most occultists believe they are created when powerful spirits manifest themselves physically on the material plane. Unfortunately, most of these beings are considered to be malevolent, the servants of the Mayombe and the demiurges.

Whether In-Betweeners are actual monsters or simply a different form of life is debatable, however. They are undoubtedly alien, and their hungers and desires are different from most normal life forms. Most In-Betweeners are beings who sense and somehow derive nourishment from human emotions, much as some spirits do. The sensation these beings experience when “tasting” their favored emotion is not unlike sexual release, or satisfying hunger. A few of them can actually feed on the psychic emanations of dying humans; these are the most dangerous ones, although this craving is more an addiction than an actual need, and some In-Betweeners are known to have broken that habit. It is widely believed that In-Betweeners are incapable of feeling true emotions. This is contradicted by tales of In-Betweeners who fall in love with mortals and try to live normal lives with them — although most of the tales end tragically when the In-Beweeners finds himself unable to control his inhuman urges.

Entities

Demiurges

Minor Manifestation

ST: 12-16	IQ: 12-14	Will: 13-15
DX: 12-13	HT: 10-14	Alertness: 13-15
Move/Dodge: 6-8/6-8	Fatigue: 30-40	

Moderate Manifestation

ST: 20-40	IQ: 14-17	Will: 14-18
DX: 13-16	HT: 14-17	Alertness: 14-19
Move/Dodge: 7-9/7-9	Fatigue: 45-80	

Major Manifestation

ST: 30-100+	IQ: 18-24	Will: 19-25
DX: 14-22	HT: 18-24	Alertness: 19-25
Move/Dodge: 8-10/8-10	Fatigue: 60-120+	

The demiurges are not worshipped or invoked; they are the Corruptors of the Lodge system of beliefs. According to Gnostic theology (see sidebar, p. 24), the material world is the creation of the demiurges, imperfect gods that made an imperfect universe. When Lodge Initiates encountered evil spirits, they named them after those entities. The Brethren believe that the demiurges' goal is to keep humans imprisoned in the material world, hindering Initiation by making humans fall prey to greed and petty lusts and desires.

True or not, the demiurges, like all other Corruptors, are dedicated to the destruction of human life and dignity. The templates given above can be applied to other Mayombe as well. Possession effects vary from spirit to spirit, but usually include high levels of ST, DX and HT, high DR, two or three advantages or skills and several mental disadvantages.

These creatures are very rare, but their numbers have been increasing steadily over the past century. Initiates suspect their proliferation is due to the negative psychic energy the Mayombe and other evil spirits have been spreading. A few occultists even suspect that many of these In-Betweeners are *born*, not made: they are believed to be the result of multiple incarnations in which the evil of the Corruptors has twisted the victim's soul to the point that it has warped his body as well.

The majority of In-Betweeners, however, are created when a spiritual entity becomes fused with a material one, usually but not necessarily a human being. Although they have a soul, humans and all “natural” creatures are material beings animated with a sliver of spiritual stuff; the In-Betweeners are a true mixture of the two, and thus have superhuman powers. Voodoo mythology has many stories about beings whose malleable flesh can be changed into different shapes, predators who eat human flesh and are controlled by alien lusts.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Listed below are some of the powers most In-Beweeners species share. GMs who want to allow In-Beweeners PCs (or who wish to fully develop In-Beweeners races) will find the point costs listed therein. Due to their mixed origins, In-Beweeners can see spirit entities as well as they can perceive the material world. Furthermore, they can attack and harm spirits with their hands or claws, which tends to terrify most loas and daemons (the more violent ones will do everything in their

power to destroy the In-Betweeners, however). By the same token, spirit entities can harm the In-Betweeners without spending Fatigue to manipulate the physical world.

Almost all In-Betweeners have above-average or superhuman strength and endurance (represented as bonuses to ST and HT); other attributes are also affected. All of them can sense human emotions to some degree; some can discriminate between those emotions to determine what people are feeling (the Empathy advantage). No In-Betweeners need to eat or drink normally, but they have to be in contact with people's emotions daily, or they start suffering from the effects of starvation (see p. B128). In-Betweeners can only be found around humans, unless they place themselves in suspended animation (those few species that can do so, that is). One need balances out the lack of the other, so there is no point cost or penalty for it.

This link to human emotions makes In-Betweeners creatures of passion rather than reason. They react to people's feelings rather than to their words or even actions. Common disadvantages among In-Betweeners include Bad Temper, Impulsive, and diverse Compulsive Behaviors. Their quest for new emotional heights make these creatures willing to try new experiences, and one can find them among the most adventurous humans, trying anything from bungee jumping to bizarre sexual experiments.

Some In-Betweeners also share the following two advantages and disadvantage.

In-Betweeners Invulnerability **60 points**

Popular myths to the contrary, the In-Betweeners are not immune to most forms of conventional damage. Their dual natures, however, makes them impervious to pain, and very hard to kill. The body of an In-Betweeners must be *completely* destroyed in order to dispel its essence from the material world. Bullets and impaling weapons are notoriously ineffective against these creatures, because they have no true physical organs to be destroyed. As a result, bullets and impaling attacks inflict only 1 point per die of damage. Bullet damage is modified by type (hollow-points will do 2 points of damage per die, for example) and by caliber (.40 or greater caliber bullets inflict 1.5 points of damage per die, and so on). Cutting and crushing attacks, fire and explosives all inflict normal damage (in science-fiction campaigns GMs may rule that certain types of energy weapons also inflict minimum damage — maybe In-Betweeners' bodies are naturally transparent to some laser or particle-beam frequencies). Attacks aimed at vital organs have no special effect; the creatures have none.

The entire body of an In-Betweeners is destroyed when the creature is reduced to $-HT \times 10$ points. Until that point, it will continue to be active. Limbs can be crippled, but they must be literally hacked off — an In-Betweeners' limb is considered crippled when it has taken $2 \times HT$ damage, not before. Additionally, some In-Betweeners can regenerate (see below).

Regeneration **25/50/100 points**

In-Betweeners recover from damage much faster than normal people. This does not allow them to regrow lost limbs. They automatically have the Rapid Healing advantage (p. B22) at no extra cost. Cost of this advantage depends on the speed of the regeneration:

Regular Regeneration: It recovers 1 HT (or hit point) per hour. 25 points.

Fast Regeneration: It recovers from injury almost immediately, regaining 1 HT per minute. 50 points.

Instant Regeneration: It heals almost as quickly as it's damaged, at the rate of 1 HT per turn. 100 points.

Murder Addiction **-60 points**

This supernatural addiction only affects some In-Betweeners, and humans who have been tainted by the Corruptors. The mechanics of this disadvantage work exactly as described on p. B30, but instead of using a drug, the sufferer must commit murder. Killing in self-defense does not count; the murder addict has to stalk and attack somebody who does not pose a threat to his life (although enemies and potential threats can be selected). The murder has to be committed in cold blood and the victim must be within eyesight of the killer, preferably but not necessarily at arm's length (bombs are too impersonal, although using a sniper rifle wouldn't be). Upon committing the crime, the addict feels a surge of almost sexual pleasure as the fleeting spirit of his victim momentarily touches him.

Withdrawal rolls are at -10 for this affliction. If the murder addict suppresses his urge, or is stranded in a place where no victims are available, he may die. Characters with these disadvantage can take Bloodlust and Sadism, but the point values of those disadvantages go down to -5 and -10 points respectively.

Murder Addiction is a devastating disadvantage. The sufferer can never hope to live a normal life; at best, he must lead a double life to satisfy his cravings. Generally, the murder addict will spare anybody toward whom he feels a Sense of Duty, but if left with no other available victims, he must make a Will-5 roll to avoid giving in to his murderous urges! Many In-Betweeners are born with this inhuman urge; a few manage to overcome it (buying off the disadvantage during character creation or going through withdrawal in the course of play). The struggle to suppress this addiction, or an attempt to channel it in some way can be the focus of an In-Betweeners campaign (see p. 123).



Creating In-Betweeners

Most of the In-Beweeners types listed below are drawn from Voodoo mythology. GMs wishing to create In-Beweeners from other backgrounds can draw inspiration from the examples below. The opening set of attributes is for simple In-Beweeners NPCs that GMs can randomly roll up. The attributes and point costs at the end can be used to create detailed NPCs or PCs.

Bird People

ST: 12-22 (2d+10) IQ: 10-20 (2d+8)
DX: 15-20 (14+1d) HT: 12-23 (2d+10)
Move/Dodge: Variable PD/DR: 0/0

Legends of bird shapeshifters are well-known among Voodoo worshippers. Children and young people are warned against being caught in the open at night, lest the bird men carry them off. The warnings, and the legends, are true. These rare In-Beweeners are common in Haiti and other Caribbean islands, where they tend to live in remote mountain areas, making just enough kills to satisfy their hunger. Of late, Bird People have made their way to the U.S. and Canada, where they take refuge in low-income neighborhoods and prey on the dregs of society.

The Bird People are among the most savage and bloodthirsty In-Beweeners monsters. Their craving for death goes beyond the psychological; it is a physical need. If a bird man does not kill at least once per week, it suffers (see the Murder Addiction disadvantage, p. 99); several months without kills can destroy it.

Most of these creatures are lone predators, avoiding the company of humans, spirits and other In-Beweeners except as prey. In cities, they tend to adopt the lifestyles of homeless people, dressed in rags and never staying in one place for long. Whenever possible, they set their “nests” at the top of abandoned or unfinished buildings; high-rises are their favorite. Although they are loners and lack ambition in the human sense, Bird People are intelligent and take care not to reveal their presence. They only take flight in the middle of the night, avoid well-lit areas, and confine their hunting to places where they are hard to find. Occasionally, a Bird Man will fall under the sway of an Initiate, a spirit, or even a persuasive



mundane, and act as a bodyguard or enforcer for his new ally. If the GM allows a Bird Man in the campaign, he might require an Unusual Background to explain its unusual behavior, and its Murder Addiction disadvantage should be bought off.

Bird People have a true, animal-like form, which resembles a feathered man with “wings” (like the membranes “flying” mammals use to fly) under his arms, and a beaked face, and a human shape, acquired at birth, which they cannot alter. These creatures can shift between forms at will and instantaneously, so the powers of either are always at their disposal. None of their attributes change in either form, only their appearance.

Anger and surprise can cause a Bird Man to reveal his true form — on a failed Will roll if surprised or annoyed, the creature may spontaneously grow a beak or claws, or its hair may turn into feathers. These shifts will cause a Fright Check at -3 on any normal human who witnesses them.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Bird People have +5 ST, +3 DX, and +3 HT. They can fly at twice their normal Move rate. In their bird form (which they can assume instantly), they have sharp claws that inflict thrust/impaling or swing/cutting damage, and their beaks do thrust/impaling damage. They have Empathy, In-Beweeners Invulnerability and Regular Regeneration, and the Bloodlust, Impulsive and Murder Addiction disadvantages. Fire is very harmful to Bird People, inflicting an extra 2d damage (-20 points). Total cost to play a Bird Man is 155 points.

Cat People

ST: 12-22 (2d+10) IQ: 11-16 (1d+10)
DX: 12-22 (2d+10) HT: 12-17 (1d+11)
Move/Dodge: Variable PD/DR: 0/0

These In-Beweeners are well-known in both Western and African culture. Some of the more amazing tales of witches’ familiars actually described Cat People servants of powerful Initiates. Carried off to America in slave ships, the Cat People have haunted the wilderness of the Caribbean, and now have made their home in urban sprawls. Cat People are extremely intelligent and ambitious, and can blend into human society, hiding their inhumanity and using their talents to accumulate wealth and luxuries. Most of the time, they go into the criminal trades, partly because their inhuman lusts are more apt to be noticed among normal company.

Cat People are not murder addicts, but do feel pleasure when exposed to a human’s pain and fear (treat as the Sadism disadvantage). Many of these In-Beweeners can be found working for the porn industry (especially those angles under the sway of the Corruptors, such as snuff films and kiddie porn), or in the drug trade as enforcers and assassins. A few Cat People have overcome their taste for pain and lead relatively normal lives; some of these have even joined the Shadow War against the Mayombe.

A Cat Man’s true form is that of a fur-covered humanoid with feline features. They have one normal human form, determined at birth, and can take the shape of a small cat. They shift forms almost instantly, to the point that their human and feline shapes are more of a special effect — almost an illusion — than separate forms.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Cat People have ST +4, DX +4, and HT +2. They have the advantages Combat Reflexes, Double-Jointed, Empathy, In-Beweeners Invulnerability, Night Vision and Fast Regeneration, and the Sadism disadvantage. They have retractable claws that do swing/cutting or

thrust/impaling damage, and their teeth are sharp enough to inflict cutting damage based on their ST (see p. B140).

Playing a member of the Cat People costs 270 points.

Skin-Changers

ST: 20-30 (2d+18) IQ: 10-20 (2d+8)
DX: 15-20 (1d+14) HT: 15-20 (1d+14)
Move/Dodge: Variable PD/DR: 0/0

Skin-Changers are a special brand of In-Betweeners. Their forms are plastic and malleable, unbound by physical laws. The true shape of the shifters is gruesome: they resemble skinless men and women, with constantly swirling muscle tissue and blood running through their bodies. Seeing a shapeshifter in its normal form calls for a Fright Check at -3. The creatures keep one or more skins neatly folded inside liquid-filled jars. When wishing to assume a shape, they simply take the skin (or pelt or feathers in the case of animal shapes), and put it on; the shapeshifter's flesh and bone twists and sometimes tears to accommodate the "garment" — humans viewing the process must make Fright Checks, at -5. Skin-Changers start out with one human skin and one animal skin; both are gifts that resulted when they were summoned. As they progress in age and power, they "collect" many more forms. The attributes of Skin-Changers don't change, only their appearance. There are a few Skin-Changers who over the centuries have amassed collections of hundreds of skins of all types! The extra skins are kept in jars, preserved in some noxious liquid or another. Sometimes, the odor of these preservatives (a faint antiseptic stench) follows these creatures, despite their attempts to hide it under perfumes and powders. Underlying it is the smell of decay. A smell roll at -7 is necessary to detect the unusual odor, followed by an IQ roll to interpret it correctly.

Skin-changers are among the most successful In-Betweeners in human society. They can be found as crime lords, businessmen, gang leaders and professionals. With their knowledge of ritual magic, they can pass as Initiates, and it is believed that some Skin-Changers have infiltrated both the Lodges and some Voodoo Societies.

Skin-Changers have ST +10, DX +4, IQ +2 and HT +5. In addition to their monstrous powers and superhuman physical attributes, Skin-Changers have the abilities of a Third Level Initiate, know several rituals and can get Initiate powers (but cannot advance to higher levels of Initiation). They have the advantages Empathy, In-Beweenner Invulnerability, Instant Regeneration and Unaging, as well as the Murder Addiction and Sadism disadvantages. These creatures are too powerful to be considered player characters, so no point total is given for them.

Snake People

ST: 15-25 (2d+13) IQ: 10-20 (2d+8)
DX: 15-20 (1d+14) HT: 14-24 (2d+12)
Move/Dodge: Varies PD/DR: 0/2 *
Damage: see description

Snake People are the fusion of a human and a serpent spirit, although some can also be born from a normal human union, perhaps as the reincarnation of a badly-damaged soul. These creatures are powerful sorcerers and predators, able to mimic normal humans and to transform into any snake species they know of. These creatures live among the rest of humankind, preying on their unsuspecting neighbors for a few years before moving on. A few of them turn to outright serial killing to satisfy their murderous needs. Most Snake People, however, are sadis-



tic manipulators, using their command over the spirit world to turn people against each other. In the past, powerful Snake People have built kingdoms and even empires around themselves; the actions of these beings may have influenced some of the legends of dragons and tempting snakes.

The number of Snake People has steadily risen; many are being born to human families, their powers manifesting in a manner similar to Initiation (see p. 58). A few have been able to resist their predatory impulses, and have joined the fight against the Corruptors. These exceptions to the rule often find themselves hunted by Initiates and In-Betweeners from both sides of the struggle, unless they hide their true nature from their allies. The Order of Ophites (see p. 31) is the only Lodge that is known to have Snake People as members.

The Snake Man's natural form is that of a hairless humanoid with scaly growths around its face and limbs (these scaly patches sometimes become visible when a Snake Man's concentration wavers; see below). They have long, hollow fangs and yellow eyes with vertically-slitted pupils. Their tongues are long, thin and forked. Their bite injects a poisonous substance that wracks the body with pain, coagulates blood and weakens blood vessels. Victims take 4d damage from the bite and are at -4 DX for an hour, and also must make a HT-4 roll every hour after the first to avoid taking extra damage (after one success, no further rolls are necessary). The venom's symptoms can be mistaken for a heart attack or a stroke. Only if the coroner is specifically looking for traces of poison can he make a Forensics roll at -6 to realize a foreign agent was introduced into the blood.

In addition to their shape-shifting powers, poison and superhuman strength, these creatures have the powers and abilities of Third Level Initiates (see p. 60). Like many In-Betweeners, they are almost impossible to kill, and they regenerate damage at the rate of 1 hit point per hour. Snake People do not age after reaching adulthood; some have survived for several centuries, becoming extremely powerful beings.

Snake People PCs: The Snake People race is only viable in high-point campaigns. They have ST +5, DX +2, HT +2, In-

Betweener Invulnerability, Regular Regeneration, Unaging, Venom (worth 80 points) and DR 2. They are also the equivalent of Third Level Initiates (40 Points); they can learn rituals normally and purchase allowable Initiate powers, but can never reach a higher level of Initiation. There is no point cost for their three shapes, as their powers remain the same in all three (in snake form, they have no limbs, but can climb and crawl into small spaces, which more or less balances out).

Their racial disadvantages are Sadism, Bloodlust, and the Odious Personal Habit: Prefers to eat small living animals (-5 points). Their natural forms are Hideous, but since they have a form that is totally human, they can usually conceal it (if the Snake Man fails an IQ roll, he may sometimes reveal scaly patches); it is worth only -5 points. They are also vulnerable to fire (fire and flame attacks inflict an extra 3d damage, a disadvantage

worth -30 points). Finally, they dislike sunlight, but suffer no damage from it (equivalent to a Racial Quirk, -1 point). The total cost of the Snake People racial package is 225 points.

The Tontons Makouts

ST: 20-25 (1d+19)

IQ: 9-14 (1d+8)

DX: 13-18 (1d+12)

HT: 14-24 (2d+12)

Move/Dodge: Varies

PD/DR: 0/2 (see description)

Damage: see description

The murderous enforcers of the Duvalier era (see p. 110) were named after the bogeyman of Voodoo legend. The Tontons Makouts' natural form is that of a brutish, thick-limbed creature with coarse features and leathery skin. These In-Betweeners have a human form that is usually also ugly and ungainly. The creatures have a low intellect and few virtues other than their great strength. They are smart enough to hide their true identities and to serve any Initiate or In-Betweeners that can successfully intimidate them.

Most of these creatures remain in Haiti and other Caribbean islands. Some of "Papa Doc's" thugs were real Tontons Makouts, and when the Duvaliers fell, angry Voudounistas rooted out and killed many of the creatures. Some of the Dark Initiates escaped to the U.S. with their monster servants in tow. A few Tontons Makouts operate independently in the U.S., but they are often captured or destroyed, and only the Lodges' diligent cover-up of all supernatural happenings have prevented their existence from becoming public knowledge.

Advantages and Disadvantages: The Tontons Makouts has ST +10, DX +2, IQ -1 and HT +3. Their bodies have DR 2, and they have High Pain Threshold, In-Betweeners Invulnerability and Regular Regeneration. Their inherent disadvantages include Bad Temper, Gluttony, Hideous Appearance (both in human and monster form) and Murder Addiction. The Tontons Makouts package costs 96 points.



DEVOURERS

These entities are the ultimate In-Betweeners, and some Initiates claim they are the true enemies of humankind. In the Gnostic cosmology, they are our jailers, keeping our spirits imprisoned in a world of tortured flesh and misery. Voodoo legends do not attempt to understand their motivations — they are monsters, to be slain if possible, avoided otherwise.

Very few actual encounters with Devourers have been recorded — mostly because eyewitnesses seldom survive meeting them. Almost any place with a high incidence of crime, poverty and despair could house a Devourer, but never more than one; these entities are fiercely territorial. Many Initiates scoff at the tales as mere superstition. Those who know better never willingly cross paths with these entities. Even the greater manifestations of the loas are said to think twice before confronting a Devourer. In the Lodges' cosmology, the Devourers are the incarnations of demi-urges and virtually invincible.

The Devourers can be considered Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know. Their true shapes vary, but they are always monstrous: the legends mention twisted giant insectoids drip-

ping black ichor, tentacled mounds of oozing flesh, and 20-foot-tall bloated humanoids with enormous mouths. Some tales claim that their shapes are determined by the fears of those who behold them.

Devourers tend to make their homes beneath cities or towns, hidden in the sewer system, underground caverns, subway tunnels, or even burrows in the concrete bowels of a metropolis. They do not seek those places; in fact, the Devourers are incredibly old, possibly older than any human civilization. According to the legends, the Devourers attract humans to their lairs, and cities are built around them. Some occultists claim that every major city has a Devourer dwelling in its bowels. In-Betweeners and Corruptor spirits in the area must become subservient to the Devourer or risk being destroyed. Every time a Devourer has been discovered alongside Mayombe or In-Betweeners, the latter have always been in its service — maybe the Devourers are the true masters of the Corruptors.

The Devourers' homes are well-hidden and protected. From there, they send out smaller versions of themselves

(called *Sendings* — see p. 103), each able to take on any shape they wish, from wisps of wind to superhuman monsters. The Sendings roam the streets, killing people to satisfy their creator's cravings. These Sendings (a Devourer can support as many as five Sendings at a time) can only hurt their victims by taking on a physical form, and can therefore be hurt or destroyed by physical means. Destroying a Sending will hurt a Devourer, inflicting 5d damage to the monster. Destroying several Sendings in a row will seriously weaken the creature, allowing a powerful group of Initiates and Spirits to destroy its physical body. More often than not, however, the Devourer will go into hiding, deceiving its enemies into thinking that the Sendings were the only monsters. Their lairs are very hard to discover. While the overall aura of malevolence surrounding its area of influence will be apparent to any Initiate or sensitive person, most physical or spiritual measures will fail to detect the exact source of the evil. Spirit searchers can be easily slain by the Devourer or its minions, and the monster can hide its presence from any technological sensors.

Physically, a Devourer and its Sendings are daunting enemies. The Devourer's power over people's minds and souls is even greater. The entity can communicate thoughts and emotions to unaware humans, sometimes making its victims think the thoughts are their own. Although the monster cannot control minds, it can nudge people into going a little bit further than they had intended — turning a brawl into a knife fight, a violent argument into a murder, a hidden obsession into a crime of passion.

The statistics below represent the true shape of a Devourer, which is usually gigantic and monstrous.

ST: 80-150+ IQ: 16-26 Will: IQ+6
 DX: 12-22 HT: 18-30/100+ Alertness: IQ+5
 Move/Dodge: 1-6/0-4 PD/DR: 4/8* Fatigue: As ST
 Damage: 9d to 16d cut*

Special Powers: Like all In-Betweeners, Devourers have an uncanny resistance to harm, even for a creature their size. A Devourer's physical form is not destroyed until it has been reduced to HTx20. Furthermore, any normal physical damage (from guns, knives, laser beams, etc.) is divided by 10 before applying it to the creature's hit points (but after subtracting DR). The Devourers also regenerate damage at an incredible rate, regaining HT/2 hit points every second! People relying on guns to deal with a Devourer will find themselves hopelessly out-matched.

Devourers have a form of telepathy that allows them to contact and influence minds. The range of this power is IQx5 miles. Conversations can be carried on in this manner, but the Devourer cannot read the person's inner thoughts, only his surface thoughts (such as unspoken reactions to its words). Emotional impulses can also be sent in this way, exactly like a spirit's communication powers (see p. 84). Although Devourers cannot read minds, they can sense people's basic intentions and personalities (roughly equivalent to the Empathy advantage), and their transmissions always exploit the victim's worst weakness. Neither Mind Shield nor Initiate powers nor rituals protect against this form of communication, but a telepath

or an Initiate will always be aware that someone else is sending these thoughts or emotions to them, and that they aren't their own.

Weaknesses: Attacks by spirit beings will hurt the Devourer's form, just as they would any In-Betweeners (see p. 99); this damage is *not* divided by 10 before applying it to the creature's hit points. By the same token, however, the Devourer can shred a spirit with ease, and all attacks a Devourer inflicts on a spirit do double damage! Hand-to-hand attacks by Spirit Warriors or In-Betweeners also do full damage, but weapons wielded by them will not.

The Ritual of Slaying (see p. 80) will affect a Devourer, but since the rituals are at a penalty equal to the creature's ST and HT, it would take several dozen Initiates to conduct the ritual successfully.

Sendings

ST: 16-40 IQ: * Will: *
 DX: 15-20 HT: 15-25 Alertness: *
 Move/Dodge: var. PD/DR: 0-4/0-8 Fatigue: 16-40
 Damage: var.

The Sendings have the same statistics in both spiritual and physical form. They are In-Betweeners, and their minds are the Devourer, which can in effect act as a separate individual for each of these manifestations. The IQ, Will and Alertness of all Sendings are equal to the creating Devourer's IQ-2. These beings can assume any shape they wish, from perfectly humanoid creatures to grotesque monsters. Their size tends to be within human proportions. When a Sending assumes a physical form, it is forced to retain that form for about an hour before being able to change. When in a physical form, they have the In-Betweeners Invulnerability and Instant Regeneration advantages.



5 LANDS OF VOODOO

Voodoo originated in the Caribbean, the site of many historical dramas and tragedies. From savage Indian wars to the European discovery of America to the infamous pirate raids of the Age of Sail, the lush tropical islands and coastlines touched by the Caribbean Sea are now known most for tourist resorts or Third-World chaos. Once they were a treasure trove where whole generations of Spanish, English and French colonists amassed enormous fortunes and became a new order of aristocracy, mostly by exploiting slave labor at enormous human expense. People from four continents met and settled there, their beliefs and cultures often clashing and eventually mixing. Removed from civilization, isolated by the treacherous seas, the Caribbean lands knew only the law of the strongest.



History of the Caribbean

To fully develop the six centuries of known Caribbean history would take a book in itself. What follows is a brief overview of the events that shaped the Caribbean region. GMs wishing to develop a historical campaign are encouraged to research further and to refer to other *GURPS* historical worldbooks (see sidebar, p. 107).

Pre-Columbian Beginnings

Before the Europeans arrived in the Americas, the Caribbean was already seething with conflict. The original inhabitants, the Arawak tribes commonly known as the *Tainos*, had been savagely invaded by another Indian group, the ferocious Caribs, whose name would be given to the sea they navigated as the first of a long line of marauders. The Arawaks, semi-nomadic tribesmen who lived by hunting, fishing and the planting and harvesting of manioc, were more peaceful than the Caribs, who were a warrior culture even reputed to eat human flesh (the Arawak name for the Carib is the origin of the term “cannibal”). Cannibalism was used mostly for ritual purposes, but contributed to their fearsome reputation. The Sea Caribs lived to raid and enslave weaker tribes, to the point that only males of the tribe spoke the Carib language (the females learned Arawak, the language of slaves). It should be noted that other Carib-speaking tribes existed in continental South America, and they tended to be less aggressive than their sea-faring cousins.

The great cultural centers of pre-Columbian times were located in the areas corresponding to modern Mexico and Guatemala, where several cultures thrived, the best-known being the Aztec and the Maya. There was little contact between those urban cultures and the Caribbean tribes, save for the occasional raid and some limited trade.

Maroons

The word *Maroon* comes from the Spanish *cimarron*, a term that referred to escaped slaves who hid in the wilderness. These Maroons were common on every Caribbean island, as well as in Venezuela, Brazil and the Guyanas. Many Maroon communities were able to live independently for centuries in Haiti and Jamaica; there were semi-independent Maroon communities in Jamaica as late as the 1930s! Sometimes they formed alliances with Indian tribes; often, however, the two fought each other as well as their European enemies.

Despite the best efforts of colonial authorities, many Maroon communities thrived, often with the secret assistance of slaves within the plantation system, who organized support networks and passed on food, farming supplies and even weapons to their free comrades. In some places, the colonial governments were forced to make peace treaties with these powerful tribes.

The Maroon communities were often led by a priest-chieftain. Many African traditions and rituals were kept alive in these settlements. The Maroons, many of them former members of African secret societies (see p. 14), reinstated their practices, and created some new ones, in order to avoid being infiltrated by colonial spies. A system of passwords, secret handshakes and even written passports was established among Maroon communities in the Caribbean. Escaped slaves who wished to join were subjected to complex, mystical initiation rites, designed to root out informers. In many cases, fear and superstition broke the will of spies, who confessed and were executed or cast out (in the world of the Shadow War, the rituals worked and pointed out anyone with treachery in his heart).

During the Haitian revolution, the Maroon settlements fought alongside the rebellious slaves, and they may have provided much of the leadership and fighting strength that won the war. The Maroons may have also originated many of the Voodoo rituals that survive to this day. Free from supervision by European slave masters, the Maroons were able to continue their mystic practices without interference. It is also believed that the Maroons formed the core of the secret societies that remain an influential force in Haiti to this day.



America in the Caribbean

Since the 1820s, the U.S. has claimed that the Caribbean is an area under its protection and influence. By the end of the 19th century, America had the sea power to back up that claim, starting with the Spanish-American war. The Marines were dispatched to many “banana republics” to restore order and safeguard American and European interests. Haiti suffered a particularly prolonged occupation, from 1915 to 1934. To make matters worse, most of the marines assigned to duty in Haiti were recruited from the Southern states because they “knew how to deal with the coloreds.”

Racism in Haiti had been a subtle affair in which the mixed-race elite considered itself superior to the black majority, and where a French-educated black man could mix into upper-class society and be considered mulatto. To many Americans, they were all the same, and were treated with the same degree of contempt and paternalism. Contact with the local population was kept at a minimum; the troops took care of enforcing security and hunting bandits and rebels down, but didn't fraternize with the population. Haitians were not allowed into American and European clubs, segregated in their own land. The resentment that this treatment created has yet to die down, almost six decades later.

The U.S. occupation did achieve a lot of positive results, however; roads were built, health services were greatly improved, and material conditions improved over all. On the occult side, the occupation was a major chapter of the Shadow War, with the Lodges and the Voodoo societies battling each other savagely. The Corruptors' influence over the armed forces inspired a number of massacres in the remote Haitian hinterland, forever forgotten by everyone but the ghosts of their victims.

Discovery and Conquest

In 1492, a misguided Italian adventurer on three ships paid for by the Spanish monarchs arrived at a small Caribbean island in the Bahamas. Believing he had reached the coasts of Asia, Christopher Columbus discovered a new land for the war-torn Europeans to conquer. It took less than a year to realize that the new lands were not Asia, but a whole new continent. In 1494, Spain and Portugal, with the support of the Pope, divided the New World between themselves, but most of the early conquests were made by the Spaniards, with the Portuguese concentrating on Africa and only later colonizing what would become Brazil.

The Spanish *conquista* was perceived as a holy crusade to redeem new lands and people for the Church. Like many crusades, it provided a perfect excuse for brutality and the fulfillment of greed. Fulfilling all legalities in the medieval tradition, the Spanish read out loud (in Spanish) a proclamation claiming an area in the name of king and country and warning the uncomprehending Indians that any resistance would be met with violence. After the legal requirements had been met, the Spanish soldiers would attack and massacre or enslave the inhabitants.

The Arawak Indians, already weakened by the Caribs, were enslaved and put to work in mines, plantations and in the dangerous task of diving for pearls. The Caribs were either exterminated or forced to flee to the mainland. In a matter of decades hundreds of tribes vanished, to the point that no native peoples survived in the Caribbean isles by the late 18th century. On the mainland, Spanish adventurers, bringing plague and gunpowder with them, soon toppled the Aztec and Inca civilizations, and plundered the mineral wealth of those countries. Enormous fortunes were made in a matter of years by soldiers of fortune with little lineage or scruples, but with noble titles they bought with plundered gold. Their success stories inspired more Europeans to travel to America, but soon the dreams of mountains of gold faded away. In the Caribbean islands, the little gold, silver and pearls were quickly drained, and the colonists turned to the land to produce wealth, planting a number of cash crops. These plantations required a lot of labor, and the surviving Indians were conscripted to work in *encomiendas* — farming estates where the European owner was entrusted with the care and education of a group of Indians in return for their labor. Needless to say, little care and education was provided, and the labor exacted from the natives proved to be murderous.

A Dominican missionary, Friar Bartolome de las Casas, became an influential voice against the mistreatment of the natives. Among the many solutions he proposed to the Indian problem, Las Casas suggested that slaves from Africa could be imported to fill the Europeans' need for cheap labor. Of all his recommendations, this one was the only one

the Spanish colonists adopted — mostly because the local labor pool had all but disappeared already.

Despite papal rulings, both England and France eventually secured footholds in America, followed shortly by the Dutch. Any dreams of quick fortunes were swiftly shattered; in terms of mineral wealth, the Spanish got by far the best lands very quickly, and the other European nations had to settle with starting their own farming communi-





ties. North America, seen as a cold and inhospitable land, was settled largely by fringe religious groups fleeing persecution. The British, French and Dutch Caribbean islands, on the other hand, followed the Spanish example, setting up plantations dedicated to indigo, sugar, coffee and tobacco. At first, indentured servants from Europe were brought over, paid miserable wages, and worked to death, proving that exploitation and greed know no color. However, it soon became more cost-effective to purchase slave labor from Africa.

Piracy and Plantations

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, a plantation culture was born in the Caribbean. Hundreds of thousands of African slaves were brought over. The life expectancy of most slaves on plantations could be measured in months; records show that the slave population remained the same for several decades, *despite* the fact that shiploads of new slaves arrived constantly — they died as fast as their ranks were replenished. Torture, including whipping, branding and mutilation, was applied to punish laziness, escape attempts, or insolence. Some colonial records show that many planters routinely tortured their slaves as a form of amusement, although any such cases that came to light were met with disapproval and even the occasional fine; for all their crimes, the planters were white men who could not be held accountable for crimes against “inferiors.” Striking a white man, repeated escape attempts or inciting rebellion were all punished with death, often contrived in horrible manners, including dismemberment, burning alive and flaying.

Many of the crops these islands produced (especially white sugar, the most addictive foodstuff ever developed) became an important part of the Europeans’ lives, and the owners of the plantations became enormously wealthy, buying out smaller planters and expanding their lands until they covered most of the arable land on the islands. In many places, the land was so thoroughly dedicated to cash crops that not enough other food was grown to support the population, and it had to be imported from Europe or North America. The planter class became a new aristocracy, its members dressing in the latest fashions, sending their children to schools in Europe, and eventually returning triumphantly to Europe, leaving the care of their properties in the hand of managers. On the plantation, the law was in the hand of the leader or owner. Plantation magnates ruled over their domains like medieval feudal lords, answering to no one but their fellow planters and a weak colonial government. The few times that the European governors tried to rein in the local magnates, a

Historical Sourcebooks

GURPS has books on a number of historical periods and places. Many of these sourcebooks can be used to set up a Shadow War campaign in another historical period.

GURPS Ice Age

Adventurous GMs could replace the shamanistic magic system in the *Ice Age* supplement with a version based on the system in this book. Peopled with a rich totemistic spirit pantheon, the adventures of cavemen and women would have greater mystical overtones.

GURPS Imperial Rome

The Lodges came into being during the Late Imperial period (third century A.D. or so). A Lodge campaign can be set in the decadent Empire, with Initiates trying to save (or control) Rome. For those who want to inject the Voodoo elements of the Shadow War, characters from Africa with Voodoo-like abilities can also be introduced.

GURPS Middle Ages

In the Shadow War, the Crusades were caused, among other things, by rivalries between the Lodges controlling the Muslim kingdoms, Byzantium and the European realms. Initiate PCs can participate in the conflict, battling their rivals with sword and rituals. The Knights Templar were controlled by a powerful Lodge, until, some say, it turned to the Dark Gods. Many Lodge members, however, believe that the Templars were destroyed for political reasons. Which version is true? The GM can set a campaign around the last days of the Order of the Temple. Of course, maybe the Templars were not destroyed, and simply went underground...

GURPS Swashbucklers

Voodoo was born in the Caribbean. Voodoo Initiates can crew pirate ships, using their powers to supplement broadsides and sabers on the Spanish Main. An interesting campaign casts the PCs as slaves being transported in a ship; using their Initiate powers, they engineer a mutiny and take over the vessel. Where do they go from here? Do they attempt to return to Africa? Do they reach the mainland and try the Maroon life? Or do they decide to give the Europeans a small taste of terror?

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Historical Sourcebooks (Continued)

Mystic pirates are also possible. Many tales tell of pirate captains who had a dark-skinned “advisor” with strange abilities. Initiates fleeing the European wars may have no recourse but to turn outlaw, coming into conflict with both the Lodges they fled from and the Voodoo priests of the New World.

Europe in the Age of Sail was a land going through “interesting times.” The Reformation and Counter-Reformation were tearing the land apart. The Masons, led by the Enlightened Lodges, were attempting to destroy the Church and the monarchies it supported. A good source of ideas for a mystical Swashbuckling campaign set in Europe is Robert Anton Wilson’s *Historical Illuminatus!* series.

powerful backlash resulted — many so-called “independence movements” were reactions against attempts to curb the power of the local elite. In England, the West Indies planters became a very influential government lobby, doing their best to prevent reform of the slave institution.

Social conditions in the Caribbean developed a rabid, tenacious sense of racism. Hundreds of books, pamphlets and treatises explaining the inferiority of black people were published by colonials or colonial-supported thinkers. A complex racial system developed to separate whites, mulattos and blacks, with over a hundred sub-races determined by the amount of white blood a person had, such as “quadroons” (one-quarter white, three-quarters black). This system clearly conveyed that the closer a person’s lineage was to pure white, the better that person was. Many mulatto populations in the Caribbean, usually freed from servitude and forming a small “middle class,” bought into this belief system, in which they felt superior to their “blacker” brethren. Eventually, even after whites were expelled or no longer pre-eminent in the Caribbean, racial tension between mulatto and black populations remained.

As some Europeans turned to agriculture as a source of wealth, others turned to plunder. Government-sponsored piracy became popular in Europe at the end of the Middle

Ages, and the Age of Sail only made it more popular. Governments gave private ships and crews license to make war against vessels of enemy nations in exchange for a share of the booty. French and English corsairs operating from small Caribbean islands raided rich Spanish galleons carrying the mineral wealth of the Americas. Many of these “privateers” continued their rampage even after their licenses were revoked, becoming outlaws in everyone’s eyes. Between the 17th and 18th centuries, pirates became widespread in the Caribbean, using Tortuga and Jamaica as their base of operations. By the late 1700s, however, all nations persecuted pirates, who had to abandon the Caribbean.

The Rise of Nations

The 19th century saw the collapse of the Spanish empire. One by one, the colonies in South and Central America rebelled against European rule. The Haiti revolution was unique for many reasons. First of all, it was a genuinely popular rebellion pitting the black majority against the white slave-owning class. The revolt was supported by Maroon tribes (see p. 105) and eventually

by the mulatto middle class. It had religious overtones: Voodoo Africans against Catholic Europeans. The Vatican refused to recognize Haiti and for nearly 60 years there was no official Catholic presence on the island. Unlike the Haitian revolution, most of the South American wars of independence were not slave uprisings; the native elite (usually white or mulatto) of the colonies, inspired by the ideals of the French and American revolutions, were the leaders. In some cases, ex-slaves initially fought in the name of Spain against the local aristocracy that had exploited them. By the turn of the century, all Spanish colonies in the New World were lost, the last, Cuba and Puerto Rico, during the Spanish-American War.

The remaining British and French colonies in the Caribbean survived the independence movements well until the mid-20th century, and some of them still remain colonies.

The 20th Century

For the Caribbean, the 20th century saw little in the way of change. Dictators continued to control most countries, and poverty only became more pronounced as the prices of raw materials (the principal exports of the Caribbean islands) dropped in the world market. Some islands became tourists havens, others joined the drug trade and became money-laundering banking centers. Cuba became an important player in Caribbean politics when its new dictator aligned himself with the Soviet bloc instead of the U.S., causing first an aborted U.S.-backed invasion and then an international crisis that nearly led to World War III. Haiti lingered under a series of dictators and 19 years of U.S. occupation (see sidebar, p. 106).



GURPS Cliffhangers

The evil Voodoo priest is a staple of pulp fiction, as are mysterious cults, strange monsters and many other elements of *GURPS Voodoo*. Initiates could make excellent “mystery men” with unusual powers and abilities, while the Mayombe, In-Betweeners and Devourers are powerful villains. The 1930s and 1940s were turbulent times in which the conspiracies of the Lodges came to a terrible conclusion in Nazi Germany. During part of that period, U.S. Marines were occupying Haiti. This could introduce many American servicemen to the powers of Voodoo. What unearthly knowledge might they take home after that tour of duty?

The more upbeat tone of most Cliffhanger campaigns might be welcomed by players and GMs who find the occult themes in *GURPS Voodoo* interesting but who are tired of “dark” RPGs. With narrow escapes, incredible feats and good guys triumphing over bad more often than not, the Cliffhanger style is more light-hearted (and to some people more fun) than the shadowy, ambivalent situation described in this book.

GURPS Religion

This sourcebook can be useful to further define the cosmology of the world of the Shadow War. GMs wishing to use the spiritual magic found in this book in a fantasy setting of their own creation would benefit from the ideas on pantheon construction found in *GURPS Religion*. Also, if a GM decides to use the traditional *GURPS* magic system in the *GURPS Voodoo* setting, the shamanistic and clerical magic systems in that book will provide him with good ideas to replace the rituals in this one.

Two of the sample religions in *GURPS Religion*, the Flatliners (p. R144) and the Disciplines of Change (p. R151), would be easy to convert to the *GURPS Voodoo* format, and would make interesting additions to the Shadow War, especially in a futuristic or cyberpunk setting. The Flatliners (net shamans using virtual reality as a path to mystical consciousness) would be excellent Initiates.

GURPS Horror

The setting of *GURPS Voodoo* is a horror setting, but it can be spiced up with more things that go bump in the night. Vampires, were-creatures and other monsters (see *GURPS Creatures of the Night* for a wide selection of scary critters) might swell the ranks of In-Betweeners (see p. 98). The Mayombe and the Devourers could be Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know, or be opposed by them for their own dark purposes. More interestingly, the Cabal (see p. H32) could be the Lodges' preeminent rival. It wouldn't be very hard to make the Cabal an Initiated organization that also recruits psi and In-Betweeners into its ranks. Whether the Cabal serves the Dark Gods, the Mayombe or are what they claim they are — a self-protection society — is for the GM to know and the PCs to find out. Initiated PCs could be members of the Cabal, or its enemies. Unlike typical horror PCs, Initiates may survive an encounter with this organization, although their lives are sure to become more interesting afterward...

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CARRIBBEAN OCCULT HISTORY

In the context of this book, many of the conflicts that shook the Caribbean in its 500-year history were part and parcel of the Shadow War. With the Lodges, the Mayombe and the Voudounistas pulling the strings of world leaders everywhere, few events in the world of politics, finance and crime take place without being influenced by some or all of the competing factions.

The Dark Side of Colonialism

Over 20 million men and women were enslaved and taken to America. At least one-fifth died en route, and maybe another half perished after a few months or years of deadly labor and torture. The racism and subhuman conditions that were inherent in slavery crushed the morale of the rest.

From a supernatural point of view, slavery was one of the worst cases of human sacrifice in history, topped only recently by the Holocaust. The fact that most of the perpetrators were unaware of what they were doing did not help in the slightest. The sacrifice acted as a titanic summoning ritual, and evil entities answered the summons by the thousands. Their influence continues to be felt centuries later.

Voodoo Revolutions

The Haitian revolution was led by Voodoo priests and magicians, many of whom originated in the independent Maroon communities of ex-slaves in the wilderness (see sidebar, p. 105). In the world of the Shadow War, the loa's intervention sparked plagues that decimated the French armies, and inspired the slave population to rise up in arms and defeat a better-equipped army. Under

the physical struggle was a mystic war between the houngans and the Lodges, particularly factions from the Order of the Enlightened (see p. 30). But beneath that was the constant influence of the Mayombe and other Corruptor spirits (see sidebar, p. 21).

"Papa Doc" Duvalier

In 1957, Francois Duvalier, a U.S.-trained doctor with a reputation for honesty and lack of political ambition, was selected by the Haitian elite as their candidate. He won the elections by a large majority against a mulatto candidate (Duvalier, who was black, was seen by the population at large as a man of the people). The transformation that followed has led some Initiates to believe that the man was possessed by a Mayombe spirit, perhaps the very one that was summoned in 1791 (see sidebar, p. 21). During the elections, Duvalier was sympathetic to a number of Voodoo houngans, which led the Haitian Catholic church to accuse him of being a "Voodoo candidate" despite his hot denials. In spite of (or perhaps because of) these accusations, Duvalier won the elections.





Whatever his convictions before assuming the presidency, “Papa Doc” (as his Voudounista supporters nicknamed him) quickly became a staunch supporter of Voodoo. Duvalier started dressing in black and wearing “shades,” a clear symbol of the dreaded loa Baron Samedi. Many hounsans joined his private security force, the Tontons Makouts, although it is said that most of these hounsans were actually Bokkor — secret servants of the Mayombe. Given that the Tontons Makouts became a force of political terrorism, the charge seems likely. Over the decade and a half of the first Duvalier regime, the group murdered dozens of people every week, leaving their bodies on the streets as reminder of the dangers of subversion. Suspected rebels and random victims were picked up, beaten and tortured. The lucky ones were dumped back on the streets. The rest disappeared, or were found dead the next morning. Using violence and Voodoo curses, the Tontons Makouts quickly killed most Haitian intellectuals or forced them to flee.

Among other things, Papa Doc destroyed health services in Haiti, exiling or killing most doctors, to the point that in 1982 the country had fewer than 1,000 physicians to take care of over 6,000,000 people! Disease remains rampant in Haiti; the efforts of hounsans are not enough to stop it without the support of a decent health system.

Besides engaging in political terrorism to remain in power, Duvalier, his cronies and later his son Jean-Claude (alias “Baby Doc”) looted the nation. The Duvalier system has been known as “the Kleptocracy.” Everybody who had any authority robbed, cheated or extorted as much money as he could and put it in foreign banks, with the result that Haiti is now the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. Most bizongue members (those who were not allied with Duvalier, that is) believe that the man was a low-level Initiate who made a pact with the Corruptors for enormous power in return for his services as both a butcher and a despoiler.

GURPS Horror (Continued)

The time periods described in the *GURPS Horror* sourcebook all make very interesting campaign settings. In the Victorian era the Lodges achieved their goal of unification, and many occult societies made public appearances (including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, described on p. 30). This period also marked the last serious, accredited attempt by science to try to understand the supernatural — an attempt that the Lodges thoroughly discredited.

The PCs can be either European or West Indian Initiates, and the campaign can be set anywhere from the foggy streets of London to the exotic plantation islands of the Caribbean. The Roaring ‘20s were also a time when spiritualism was all the rage, and many spontaneous Initiates became public celebrities. Furthermore, Prohibition might be part of the Shadow War, much like the drug war. In the world of Voodoo, “a demon in every bottle” might *not* be merely an expression... Mob figures, including the infamous Al Capone, might be the tools of Corruptor spirits. Voodoo Initiates in the U.S. would have to deal with racism and prejudice; the Ku Klux Klan, with its own supernatural backing, was a strong and visible force during this period, and could make a nasty adversary.



GURPS Martial Arts

Cinematic martial arts powers have a place in the Shadow War setting. The Trained by a Master advantage represents a different path of Initiation, one dedicated to developing a person's inner strength, rather than his connection to outside forces. The two advantages are not incompatible, and Initiates can also be master martial artists, and vice versa. Most martial arts masters are unaware of the invisible entities that permeate the world, but their enhanced Chi allows them to resist attacks from spiritual manifestations: people Trained by a Master resist any possession, harmful ritual or spell at +2 to their resistance rolls. At least a handful of Ninth Level Initiates will be found somewhere in Asia, where their mastery of Chi and the spirit world make them superhuman entities totally unconcerned with worldly matters.

Voodoo practitioners would be most likely to learn Capoeira (see p. MA58), the combat system imported by African slaves to Brazil. Initiates who travel throughout the world seeking more enlightenment could have mastered any Asian styles. Many Lodge members spent a great deal of time in Asia as protectors of the colonial establishment; they may have picked up any Chinese style.

Martial arts clans could become players in the Shadow War. Maybe a number of undying Secret Masters have their own plans to shape the future of humankind, plans that run counter to those of the Lodges and the bizongues. Any two groups could forge an alliance against the third, only to break it when it became advantageous to do so. Evil martial artist clans who secretly serve the Mayombe or their Oriental counterparts could control the Asian drug lords.

In view of Duvalier's savagery, President Kennedy suspended all financial aid to Haiti. Over the next few months, a number of Bokkor and Duvalier himself participated in a powerful occult ritual. On November 22, 1963, a confused man named Lee Harvey Oswald, acting on his own, managed to elude the FBI (who had been looking for him for over a week) and bypass the physical and mystical safeguards protecting the president. With a few rifle shots, he carried out the results of a lethal curse cast from Haiti. November 22 happens to be a powerful Voodoo date; it was on November 22 that Boukman's fateful rebellion exploded (see p. 21). Duvalier's lucky number was also 22. Upon Kennedy's death, the electricity went out in Port-au-Prince — except at the National Palace, where lights illuminated the celebration going on at the Duvalier camp. President Johnson restored financial aid to Haiti shortly afterward.

Castro the Brujo

Between 1956 and 1959, a handful of guerrillas hiding in the mountains managed to gain tremendous popular support both at home and abroad, and overthrew Fulgencio Batista, then dictator of Cuba. Castro's triumph was so unlikely that many people in Cuba believe that he is a powerful *brujo* with supernatural powers. In the world of the Shadow War, that is exactly the case.

Fidel Castro, like any good Marxist intellectual, had a complete disdain for superstition — until he had a vision in the Sierra Maestra. A powerful Mayombe appeared to Castro in dreams, and the revolutionary and the spirit made a deal. Shortly afterward, an American reporter gave Castro the international exposure he needed to increase support. A string of miraculous victories against the government and a surge in public discontent placed him in power. The shootings and executions that followed were the beginning of the sacrificial payment.

The new leader skillfully maneuvered the two chapters of the Order of the Enlightened (see p. 30) that controlled the U.S. and the Soviet Union, respectively, playing one against the other and managing to remain non-aligned to the U.S., a unique achievement for the time. The dictator had a scare when he miscalculated (or perhaps his spirit advisor misled him) and almost plunged the world into a nuclear war. As a result, he now suspects that his benefactor is more malevolent than he had thought.

Meanwhile, Cuba has been a bastion of Corruptor activity. Drug traffickers, terrorists and other tools of the Corruptors have found safe havens on the island. Cuban money (or Soviet, really) has paid for a number of covert operations. Helped by the secrecy that surrounds all dictatorial governments, In-Betweeners and evil Initiates have preyed upon many innocent people — they have wiped out whole villages without either the international press or the surrounding population being aware of it. And many of the "Marielito" refugees who arrived to the U.S. in the 1980s were not quite human...

6

CAMPAIGNS



The *GURPS Voodoo* setting can be used for a wide variety of campaigns. Investigation, political intrigue, horror and action are all possible. Campaigns can revolve around world-spanning conspiracies or individual menaces. The ideas of the campaign can be as mystical or as realistic as the GM wishes.

Campaign Setting

Selecting the place for the campaign to start will determine the types of PC that can realistically participate and the initial threats and opportunities the characters will encounter. The campaign location need not be fixed in one place, of course. Globe-trotting campaigns can be a lot of fun, provided they do not place too much strain on the GM.

The Caribbean

The home of Voodoo, the Caribbean is exotic enough to be mysterious, but familiar to the many people who have vacationed there or seen it portrayed in movies or books. The islands and the South American coastline are all places with a great deal of adventuring potential. Characters in the Caribbean can deal with drug-dealing Colombian, Haitian and Jamaican gangs, dictatorial governments in several nations, and widespread corruption in the rest, not to mention the occult forces that dwell beneath the sunny beaches and palm tree facades. Characters of all races and backgrounds fit in, although Americans will usually be met with a mixture of suspicion and hospitality. The most important forces in the area will be the Voodoo Societies and the Corruptor-controlled Red Sects, although the Lodges retain a strong presence among the ruling classes in most countries of the Caribbean.

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Time Period

The “default” setting for the Shadow War is the present day, but GMs and players need not limit themselves to the 20th century. Voodoo and the Shadow War have existed for hundreds of years, and can be played on a number of time periods. GMs wishing to try some of the options given below might want to pick up some *GURPS* sourcebooks dealing with those time periods (see sidebar, p. 107).

Conquest and Piracy (1500-1700)

This is the period of the European settlement of the American continents. The first African slaves appeared within decades of the arrival of Europeans to the New World. As the native population in the Caribbean and North America was either pushed into the wilderness or exterminated, imported slaves were brought in to take their place as cheap labor. Many sorcerer-priests from the Dahomey or Yoruba kingdoms arrived in this first wave of slaves, their arcane knowledge still pure and fresh in their minds. Europe was torn by religious wars, and the Inquisition scoured both Europe and the Americas in search of heretics and sorcerers.

Initiates from either the Voodoo or Lodge traditions may have played a role in this setting. The brutality of the conquest attracted a number of evil spirits and In-Betweeners, and a number of terrifying situations could be presented against the backdrop of a wild, untamed land. The Golden Age of piracy also started during this period. Swashbuckling adventuring could be combined with the occult elements of the Shadow War.

The Age of Slavery (1700-1860)

During this period, slave plantations became the dominant economic factor on the American continents. Millions of people were brought over, many of whom died after suffering years of hellish mistreatment. Voodoo in its myriad forms was born during this period, as was the nation of Haiti. The Lodges’ internal struggles reached a high point that ended in the Enlightened-sponsored revolutions in North and South America and the severe weakening of the European monarchies. Throughout this time, the power of the Corruptors grew by leaps and bounds, twisting the high-brow ideals of reformers and revolutionaries and worsening the lot of both slaves and freed-men.

Religion was slowly replaced by Reason during this period. Belief in the power of witchcraft and sorcery was on the wane, and by the 1850s it became the province of the superstitious and ignorant — just as the Lodges had planned. Meanwhile, Voodoo became an important political force in Haiti and a secret underground movement throughout the rest of the continent. All the major participants in the Shadow War faced each other during this period.

Possible characters during this period include “illuminated” Europeans, fierce Maroon warriors, the last remnants of the pirates of the Caribbean, slaves with mystic abilities, and In-Betweeners fleeing the persecution of the Lodges in Europe. Warriors, rebels, smugglers and scholars all navigated the Caribbean, searching for many things and often encountering the unexpected.



Gunboat Diplomacy and Banana Republics (1860-1950)

Slavery was eradicated from the continent between 1860-1900, but not without a great deal of pain and suffering. The Civil War and dozens of other conflicts wracked the continent, killing millions and plunging much of the land into chaos and anarchy. The Corruptors controlled whole nations by manipulating the strongmen in power.

This 90-year period saw the rise of the U.S. as the dominant power in the Caribbean, a rise that climaxed in the Spanish-American War. U.S. gunboats and Marines often invaded nations (including Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua) to restore order and enforce foreign debt payments. The Lodges controlling the U.S. clashed with Voodoo societies in many places.

The 20th century heralded the rise of science and technology and the further distancing between “civilized” man and the spiritual matters. The Lodges seemed to reign supreme, until the debacle of the world wars shook their confidence.

Many interesting characters and situations can be developed during this time. Victorian-era adventuring is perfectly possible over the first half of this period. The British West Indies can act as a link between fog-shrouded London and the strange rituals conducted by the shores of the Caribbean. Explorers and anthropologists visit many primitive cultures and try to make sense of their beliefs, always working on the assumption that they are false. Those who learn differently are quickly silenced or discredited by the Lodges. The two World Wars turned the Caribbean into a hotbed of espionage and intrigue for over two decades, with German, British and American spies running circles around the locals and each other, while unknown to them several Lodges pulled their strings...

Modern Times (1950-Present)

The post-war era saw the collapse of European imperialism. Except for a few French, British and Dutch possessions in the Caribbean, many of which were independent in all but name, by the 1970s all of the European colonies in the Caribbean were free to pursue their own destinies. The U.S., after its bitter experiences in Vietnam, steered away from intervening in the Caribbean until the 1980s, when it once again took action in places like Grenada, Panama — and Haiti.

Campaign Setting (Continued)

Although the information in Chapter Six will be useful to GMs conducting a campaign in the Caribbean, more information may be necessary to flesh out the setting. The bibliography (p. 126) includes several books, movies and TV shows that can help garnish additional background material. Tourist brochures, encyclopedias and newspaper clippings can fill in the gaps. A good source of adventures can be found in the international news. Any news story dealing with the Caribbean can be given occult causes and underlying forces. A hurricane hits a small island? The GM can decide which occult group would have wanted that to happen. Maybe it was meant to strike the U.S., but the Lodges’ protection wards caused it to turn back against the casters. If so, maybe the Initiates who started it are hungry for revenge. A party of Lodge loyalists might go there to put an end to their plans. A group of Voodoo radicals would travel there to meet potential allies. And either might find out that the entity that started the hurricane is neither human nor interested in anything other than the souls of the unsuspecting arrivals...

Urban America

The inner cities of the U.S. are an important battleground of the Shadow War. The Corruptor spirits are feeding off the destruction of a whole generation of Americans who grow up in ignorance and squalor, surrounded by drugs and violence and abandoned or further oppressed by the Lodge-controlled government. In-Betweeners and Devourers prey on the bodies and souls of innocent people, their crimes lost among the statistics of disappearances, runaways and unsolved crimes. The U.S., with its size and freedom, is an ideal place to hide in, and many powerful people and things that look like people walk among the unsuspecting citizenry.

Running a U.S.-based campaign makes life much easier for the GM. A campaign can center around the Shadow War’s battles in the gaming group’s home town, or a city the players are all familiar with. Even if more remote areas are selected, there is a wealth of information available. For all of its familiarity, the U.S. of the Shadow War will be perceived in a different light. The seeming failure of government and society is no longer a faceless problem, but the result of dark forces that can be confronted, and maybe defeated. Beneath the illusions of progress and science lies a dangerous truth that characters will discover and maybe bring into the light.

GURPS Fantasy

On p. 44, it is suggested that standard *GURPS* magic not be used in the *GURPS Voodoo* setting. In a medieval-like fantasy world, however, it might be less difficult to mix the typical “fireball and lightning bolt” magic with the spirit-based mystic system in this book. For example, the Initiate system could be used as a system of “clerical” or shamanistic magic, completely different from mana-based magic. Initiates, mages and mundanes can team up and combine forces.

The World of Yrth is a fully-developed fantasy setting where humans from Earth’s Middle Ages were transported to another world by a mystical Banestorm. There they find themselves involved with a number of fantasy races and end up re-enacting the Crusades time and time again for the next eight hundred years. What if a number of Initiates came along for the ride? The Lodges might still be firmly entrenched in both the Church and such governments as the Megalos Empire and Al-Haz. The miracles of priests, imams and sufis could be the result of Initiate powers expressed through religious faith. The second wave of Banestorm migrations that peopled the Principality of Araterre (see p. F57) could have included African slaves with their knowledge of Voodoo practices.

The other fantasy world in the *GURPS* system is the dark setting of *The Mad Lands*, a bleak world where the only “gods” are totally alien, possibly insane and clearly murderous entities, where one’s bad thoughts and desires can lead to his transformation into a monster, and where a few tribes of primitive humans struggle for survival against insurmountable odds. The spirit-magic system of *GURPS Voodoo* would go against the principles of this world, where the only spirit entities are malevolent monsters. The many creatures described in the book would make great In-Betweeners to people the world of the Shadow War, however. And some GMs might want to introduce Initiates to the Mad Lands: they could be members of a separate tribe that serves beneficial spirits or loas and is dedicated to fighting the evil gods. In that case, they would have to fight both monsters and the other Mad Lander tribes, who view any use of magic as intrinsically evil.



Haiti fell under the sway of “Papa Doc” Duvalier (p. 110), and has yet to recover from the experience. The constant persecution and the state of terror the Duvalier regime inflicted upon the populace led to massive migrations from the country. Tens of thousands of “boat people” risked their lives on the chancy sea voyage to the U.S., and now many of them live in Florida and other states.

In the occult world, the Lodges have lost control of their creations, and are beginning to realize they may have been someone else’s puppets all along. A new wave of interest in spiritual matters has swept the world, including psychic research, New Age mysticism, and the rise of self-styled “witches.”

And Beyond...

And there is no need to limit oneself to a contemporary or historical setting. What about the near future? If today’s trends continue, with quantum leaps in technology and complete stagnation in the field of the human mind and soul, the world is likely to become the dystopian nightmares of cyberpunk literature. Alternatively, the campaign could be set on a not-too-distant future where the Mayombe have won and the world is under the control of inhuman monsters. The good thing about a futuristic campaign is that it is only limited by the GM’s imagination. By the same token, the GM will have fewer sources available to him, unless he plans to take elements from other dark future settings, such as the forthcoming *GURPS Cthulhupunk*.

Campaign Style

Many different styles of gaming will suit *GURPS Voodoo: The Shadow War*. Both thoughtful-realistic and action-packed cinematic games are possible in this setting. It is up to the GM to find a style that will work for him and his gaming group.

The “Psychic” Campaign

This style treats the supernatural as a very mysterious, subtle force. Even when magical forces and spirits are involved, the results will be ambiguous enough to leave skeptics unconvinced. A ritual is conducted one dark night; some days later, a man dies. Are the two events related, or is it merely coincidence or the result of more direct action? The Initiates know the ritual was responsible; the materialists will deny it; neither side can muster enough proof to convince the other. This is a low-key, Gothic campaign where atmosphere and psychological horror are the main elements.

In the “psychic” campaign the GM should remove the flashier and more cinematic elements of the Voodoo setting. Initiate “super” powers like Spirit Warrior, Metabolism Control or Faith Healing should be eliminated; even the In-Betweeners (see p. 98) should be used sparingly, or not at all. The spirits and loas should be kept at very low power levels, with just enough energy to create small, low-key effects, but no more. Many of the psychic struggles will be resolved in dreams, visions, and other subjective phenomena, the kind of stuff most skeptics would dismiss as psychological delusions. For the people involved, however, the phenomena will be real enough; their sanity, and even their lives, can be destroyed by the invisible forces that modern science does not recognize.

Recommended point totals for this campaign are 100-150 points, with 40 points in disadvantages (see p. 45 for different point allotments). The characters should be low-level Initiates; some or all the PCs could be normal people.

Advantages: This campaign will have a more “realistic” feel; in fact, this is how many occultists believe magic works in the real world. Roleplaying and problem-solving, rather than action, will be the main focus of the game.

Disadvantages: Many of the Shadow War elements in the Voodoo campaign will be unsuitable for this campaign.

The Spirit Warrior Campaign

This is the “default” setting for *GURPS Voodoo*. Magic is still a hidden force, but its effects are not ambiguous to anyone who witnesses them firsthand. Initiates can perform superhuman feats, spirits can possess humans, destroy property and even kill, and monstrous In-Betweeners stalk the night. The only reason the “civilized world” is not recoiling in fear from these supernatural events is that the Powers That Be have been suppressing and discrediting reports of these events, and that the wielders of occult powers are careful about public displays. Even so, many people outside the mainstream, from Third World people to the inhabitants of the slums to the readers of tabloids, are aware that there are invisible, terrible things out there. In this world, the more educated and rational a person is, the less aware he is of the true order of the world — and the more vulnerable he becomes to the occult, should he cross paths with it.

All or most of the PCs should be Initiates; their extraordinary abilities will be more than matched by the formidable adversaries they will face, from malevolent spirits to criminal organizations to inhuman creatures. The stories can deal with conflict, mystic discovery, political and supernatural intrigue, and unearthing the evil conspiracies that threaten the world.

Advantages: This is the dark, heroic Shadow War as it was meant to be played. The characters are on a journey of self-discovery and advancement, while they battle enemies of epic proportions for very high stakes. If the PCs are dedicated and capable enough, they can make a difference — although the odds are against them.

Disadvantages: Point-optimizers and hack-and-slashers can try to get

GURPS Vampire, Werewolf and Mage

The dark fantasy series *The World of Darkness*, created by the White Wolf Game Studio and adapted to *GURPS*, depicts a contemporary Earth beset by supernatural forces. Superficially, there are many resemblances between that setting and the world of the Shadow War, which may lead GMs and players to try to combine the two. Before doing so, however, it would be best to decide how the underlying principles behind the two settings fit each other.

Of the themes of the World of Darkness, *GURPS Vampire* is the easiest one to fit in. The Lodges, the Voodoo Societies, the Palo Mayombe and the Vampire Clans could occasionally cross paths with each other. In the Shadow War cosmology, vampires would be a special type of In-Betweeners, one probably created by the demiurges (see p. 98). Initiates would be the “magi” that Vampires fear, and the Tremere Clan (see *GURPS Vampire*, p. 128) was the result of a group of Initiates, maybe a whole Lodge, that transformed into creatures of the night. Many vampires are involved in criminal activities, and will come face to face with Initiates fighting on both sides of the War on Drugs. The In-Betweeners would be powerful foes sure to bring fear to even a Cainite’s cold heart. Or perhaps the whole vampire Jyhad is not run by ancient vampires, as the vampires think, but by monstrous Devourers (see p. 102) who secretly pull the strings of their undead puppets for their own nefarious purposes. Cainities discovering this might end up forging alliances with living Initiates to battle this common threat.

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GURPS Vampire, Werewolf and Mage (Continued)

GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse is slightly more problematic — the Garou have their own version of the spirit world and mystical powers, a version that is different, and not wholly compatible with the Initiates' magic. Still, with some adjustments, the two cosmologies can be mixed together. Werewolves would be a unique form of In-Betweeners (or a special race altogether), serving the spirit force of Gaia (an entity recognized by both the Voodoo and Lodge pantheons). Their enemy, the Wyrms, would be identified as some sort of evil demiurge, perhaps even the master demiurge itself. Initiates could be the Garou's allies — or their lethal enemies. Some advantages from *GURPS Werewolf* and maybe even some Gifts, could be purchased by Initiates. The GM should decide which spirit system he wants to use to describe all spirit entities in the game; a mixture of the two is unlikely to work well.

The third book of the series, *GURPS Mage*, deals with a magic system that is wholly unlike both standard *GURPS Magic* and the system described in *GURPS Voodoo*. Not only that, but the world of *GURPS Mage*, where four different groups fight for control over reality itself, is very hard to combine with the Manicheistic perspective of *GURPS Voodoo*.

To make the combination work, both game worlds would have to be altered a great deal. Initiates would be a separate type of magician, one who channels the power of the spirit world indirectly, unlike the Mages, who alter reality itself by force of will. The Mages' great enemy, the Technomancy, has tried to suppress both mages and Initiates; the Lodges in Europe and the Voodoo cults have battled each other, the Technomancy and the Mage Traditions over the centuries. The Mayombe can be identified with the Nephandi (evil mages and demons) found in *GURPS Mage*. Initiates would have close ties with the Dreamspeakers, a Mage Tradition deeply linked with the spirit world.

As in *GURPS Werewolf*, the GM will have to decide what elements of both worlds exist in the combination, and which rules to use. Combining the two magic systems would be tricky but not impossible; it is recommended that the Initiates' control over probability (see p. 12) be allowed to neutralize *GURPS Mage's* Coincidental Magick powers, thus giving the two kinds of practitioners a more nearly equal footing.

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away with murder. GMs have to be careful or combat monsters may overrun the campaign — although that may not be a terrible thing as long as everyone is having fun. Of course, the GM can always *kill* particularly abusive characters — in the Shadow War, there will always be someone, or something, more powerful than anything that can be created with character points, and the setting can be as lethal as the GM wants it to be.

The Secret Masters

As above, but the characters are very powerful Initiates or In-Betweeners who quickly become, or already are major players in the Shadow War. They know more about the conspiracies controlling the world than anybody except the conspirators themselves. Although they are not in the top echelons of the occult orders that control the world, they are close enough to become a threat.

An interesting variation of this campaign is a game in which all the PCs, either through Initiate or In-Betweeners powers, are effectively immortal (or at least Unaging). The game could start hundreds of years in the past, and then jump decades between adventures, until reaching the 20th century (or it could continue into the future). The characters can have truly complex relationships as the result of centuries of plots, alliances and betrayals. Imagine, for example, a party made up of an ex-medieval monk, a 300-year-old slave, a Hispanic freedom fighter who has participated in every revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries, an 18th century "illuminated" French nobleman and a Maroon leader who has spent centuries living in the Amazonian rain forest — all of whom must join forces in the 1990s to fight a diabolic In-Betweeners who has crossed each of their paths at least once in their pasts.



Advantages: For fans of complex characters, here is an opportunity to emulate the doings of a Cagliostro or Comte de Saint-Germain, and their Voodoo counterpart Boukman the houngan warrior. GMs and players who enjoy being involved in Byzantine conspiracies played against historical backgrounds will have a field day. At this level, the Shadow War might be won or lost in the course of the campaign.

Disadvantages: Juggling all the different backgrounds, spiritual and physical NPCs, and the strange politics of a macrocosmically-run Shadow War can be overwhelming. It may be hard to sustain the drama after some time — but then again, what role-playing campaign lasts forever?

CAMPAIGN THEMES

Outlined below are some campaign ideas for the Voodoo setting. These themes need not be mutually exclusive, of course, and one campaign theme may evolve into a different one as the PCs' goals change. A good source for adventure ideas for any of the themes below is the news: any piece of news, from an innocent social announcement to crime or political stories can be used as the basis of a scenario or even a whole campaign. All the GM needs to do is figure out what factions of the Shadow War could be behind (or in opposition to) the news story. Or he could go farther and connect several news stories — what is the connection between a Fraternal Society of Caribou meeting, a rash of bad weather in the area, the decline of wheat prices, and the disappearance of a coed? That's for the GM to know and the PCs to find out...

Discovering the Conspiracies

This is an Illuminati-style campaign (see sidebar, p. 122). The PCs start gradually discovering that the world has a dark, unknown underbelly. A sample storyline might feature a murder investigation that reveals a link to several other killings: the PCs quickly conclude they are on the track of a serial murderer. But all the suspects have an alibi for at least one or two killings; maybe two or even three people are working together. Then the investigators discover that all the suspects are involved with a little-known club; further probing reveals that the club is a front for a strange cult... But the trackers are ordered to stop investigating the club. When they persist, a new suspect promptly appears and confesses to all the killings. Case closed? The PCs gather enough clues to point the finger at the cult as the culprit, but they are confronted by a massive cover-up, as the body count climbs. And all this happens before their encounter with the skin-changing leader of the cult...

In this campaign, the players should not be made aware they are playing a *GURPS Voodoo: TSW* game. The adventure can start as a police, espionage, or any other contemporary campaign (or even a historical one set sometime in the past: see the sidebar on p. 107). As the game progresses, the PCs start discovering the outer layers of the Shadow War, and the horrors of a world controlled by supernatural forces will become apparent little by little. The more they delve into the murky waters of the conspiracy, the bigger it becomes. At first, it may seem to be a political plot, monstrous but still more or less believable... but then strange, unexplainable events will hint towards more sinister, metaphysical causes.



GURPS Vampire, Werewolf and Mage (Continued)

The combination of all these storylines can provide many interesting developments, with Initiates, In-Betweeners, Spirits, Werewolves, Vampires and Magi working with and against each other. Or the GM can bring monsters and entities from the other books into his campaign for extra spice. PCs from the different backgrounds can all be mixed together, but the GM will have to come up with a storyline that keeps in mind the desires and goals of all the diverse characters while remaining contrived and non-artificial — a difficult goal. The approach that might work best is to restrict PC types to one or two backgrounds, and only introduce the others sparingly as NPC allies or threats.

GURPS Cyberpunk and Cyberworld

The Shadow War is a dark fantasy setting. Placing it in the dark future of cyberpunk is easy, and may add even more excitement into a campaign. Initiates not only have to worry about evil spirits; there are the cybered-up street gangs that control the drug trade, the megacorps, who may know more than they are saying, and a savage, disintegrating world that is driving the Mayombe and other Dark Gods into a feeding frenzy. A cybered-up street samurai can match a Spirit Warrior or even an In-Between monster in hand to hand combat; on the other hand, the younger Initiates may opt for bionic implants to help them in their struggle, and just imagine the chaos an Initiate netrunner can break in the Net with the help of the proper rituals.

GMs could introduce the *GURPS Voodoo* concepts in an existing cyberpunk campaign. Maybe the PCs' last caper led to their discovery of this Masonic organization that seems to have links with several major megacorps. They dig deeper, and end up witnessing a ceremony where the CEOs of a good chunk of the Fortune 1000 line-up all dress up in funny cloaks and start chanting and summoning all these funky dancing lights. A few days later, the PCs start having strange nightmares, and bad things start happening to them. The only person who seems willing to help them is that quirky old Haitian that everyone thinks is nuts...

The *GURPS Cyberworld* campaign world can be easily converted into a futuristic *GURPS Voodoo* campaign. The class-system and neo-feudalism of the dictatorial United States described in that book could easily have been the product of a Royalist Lodge (see p. 29) conspiracy, thoroughly perverted by Corruptor spirits. The fact that one of the first actions of the conspiracy was to ban all occult organizations (see p. CW11) fits right into the cosmology of the Shadow War. The Cuban revolutionaries fighting the U.S. government would probably have many santeros among their ranks. And Haiti probably remains a magic island of great mystical power but cursed by the Mayombe.



Since the PCs will be uncovering only the outer layers of the Shadow War (at first), they will not face the full power of the Red Sects or the Lodges. Unless the campaign is one of hopelessness, the characters should have a chance of making some discoveries and escaping with their lives. They won't be able to make their findings public, but they will at least have some idea of what is going on, and what to do about it. A successful discovery campaign can evolve into one of the other themes below. By then, the PCs will be a little wiser, a little tougher, and some might be on the way of Initiation.

War Against the Mayombe

In this campaign, some or all the PCs are Voodoo Initiates dedicated to fighting the Corruptors. How much the characters know about the enemy is up to the GM. The heroes can get their information from spirit advisors, divination rituals, Initiate powers or actual detective work. They may try to destroy, discredit or somehow neutralize the pawns of the Mayombe. Or the war could be a defensive one, in which the adventurers are the target, and have to run, hide, or fight back to stay alive.

Discovering the enemy may be harder than it seems; the Corruptors and their servants are adept at hiding behind seemingly respectable fronts. Once the source of evil has been identified, dealing with it can lead to conflict with the authorities. For instance, a cult leader may turn out to be the local Deputy Mayor, or Chief of Police: if the PCs kill him, their pictures may end up on *America's Most Wanted*, doubly so if any of them is known to have occult associations. If they do not want to deal with headlines like "Satanic Cult Involved in Terrorist Assassination," the characters will have to plan their moves carefully. Ritual magic might achieve what physical violence could not, but the Mayombe have a great deal of mystical power.

Voodoo vs. the Lodges

The Mayombe and the Red Sects are not the only enemies of the Voodoo Societies. The Lodges continue to persecute all non-aligned mystics, and their efforts at keeping occult knowledge from the majority of the populace run counter to Voodoo's practice of working (more or less) in the open. In fact, most traditional Voodoo societies pay little attention to the Mayombe and consider the Lodges to be their true enemies.

The struggle between the African and European mystical tradition is waged on many fronts. Initiates from both sides try to gain control of political and financial institutions, a fight that the Lodges had been winning until the 1960s, when the Voodoo societies led a number of successful coups against bastions of white power. Many political scandals, assassinations, successes and falls from grace have been the result of rituals, curses, and supernatural maneuvering, coupled with mundane intrigue and conspiracy.

For example, a PC hounfor or circle may try to take control of a public office, say the District Attorney or even the city major. A carefully placed curse or even more subtle use of ritual magic should take care of the current officeholder — but first the would-be kingmakers must deal with whomever put the incumbent in that position in the first place. Almost no political figure in the Shadow War rises to power without the backing of one of the supernatural factions that control the world, so only rarely can a direct mystical attack succeed, unless it is powerful and devious enough to get past any magical defenses set around the target.

More direct conflict is also possible, including eco-terrorism, Robin Hood-style strikes against the rich and famous, or old-fashioned witch hunting. Most of these acts must be committed in relative secrecy, since the PCs are unlikely to have control over the law-enforcement agencies that will deal with violent acts.

The PCs can be on either side of the conflict. Lodge PCs may believe they are protecting civilization from marauders and anarchists, while Voodoo Initiates will see themselves as freedom fighters facing an evil empire. Lodge characters will have to deal with intrigue from rival Orders, and Voodooists may be confronted by other bizongues; both may run into Corruptor plots — perhaps the Lodge Circle that is hunting down the PCs is actually controlled by a Mayombe spirit! For GMs with enough players and time available, it would be possible to run two parallel campaigns where one group plays Lodge characters while the other makes up a Voodoo hounfor. The PCs from each side might see the handiwork of the other occasionally, and the two groups might meet during a special game session: whether the meeting degenerates into a physical and magical slugfest or cautious cooperation (see below) will depend on their earlier actions.

GURPS Psionics/The Phoenix Project

The possible interactions between psi and the mystic powers of *GURPS Voodoo* are explored on p. 45. A campaign where psis and Initiates work together would have a greater variety of situations and goals. It is recommended, however, that extra-high psi power and skill levels not be allowed; a roof of 15 or even 20 should be adequate, without turning the campaign into a supers game.

The sample campaign world in *GURPS Psionics*, the world of the Phoenix Project, can be integrated into the Shadow War fairly easily, and it would provide an excellent source of conflict and intrigue for Initiates and their newfound psi allies. In the combined world, the Lodges are behind the Psiberocracy (see p. PS121), the government inside the government that is responsible for psi research, control, and the cover-up of both. Psis are also the target of the Red Sects, the Dark Lodges and other servants of the evil entities of the Shadow War — the psychic energies provided by the corruption or sacrifice of psis are a preferred source of nourishment for those entities! Psis may end up seeking Initiate allies for survival sake.

The government agencies that deal with psionics (ESP and Psibercorps) are also charged with persecuting “non-aligned” Initiates; Voodoo organizations are a favorite target. Armed with accusations of animal sacrifices, health code violations and even charges of cannibalism, ritual murder and worse, impassive government agencies conduct raids into the sanctuaries of houngangs and mambos.

At the same time, the psis of the Phoenix Project discover that there are powers and beings out there that fall outside the purview of psionic effects. How would a group of psi rebels react when confronting a Bird-Man, or some other In-Betweeners? Precognitive dreams may warn characters of the danger of the Mayombe. A mixed party of Initiates and psis would have the best chance of facing their enemies.



Uneasy Alliances

In this campaign, the characters are from both the Lodges and the Voodoo Societies (with maybe one or two In-Betweeners or spontaneous Initiates). The party members have to overcome their prejudice to face the greater threat of the Corruptors. This can be very difficult, as their respective teachers and mentors are unlikely to approve of the company the characters keep. Some of the characters could be suspected of spying on the others (in fact, some of them might have started the alliance with that purpose in mind; whether the would-be spy carries out his orders or forges a lasting friendship with his companions is up to the PC).

There are several instances where PCs of both groups can work together, though. The Lodge Schismatics and the Voodoo Protectors often join forces on specific projects. An enemy that menaces a whole city (a Devourer, a super-powerful but insane Initiate, or a group of alien spirit entities) could force all the local magicians and supernatural creatures to pool their resources. After the crisis is over, some characters might decide to continue the partnership.

True Independents

GURPS Voodoo characters don't have to be associated to either the Lodges or the Voodoo Societies. It is possible, albeit difficult, to remain relatively independent from the factions of the Shadow War — remaining out of the war itself is a different matter, however. Possible independents include spontaneous Initiates, mystics who are trained secretly by renegade members or either the European or Voodoo traditions, In-Betweeners who are rejected and hunted by both groups, and ghosts with their own goals. These characters, either by choice or circumstances, are not aligned with any of the major power groups, but still have to deal with their conflicts.

The reaction of the Powers that Be to these independents will range from wary acceptance to bloodthirsty persecution. If the PCs are powerful, resourceful and, most importantly, *smart* enough, they could survive without sacrificing their independence, keeping to the shadows and attracting as little attention as possible while pursuing their goals.

GURPS Illuminati

GURPS Voodoo: The Shadow War is an Illuminated campaign. In this case, the three groups of “secret masters” controlling the world are the Lodges, the servants of the Dark Gods, and the Voodoo Societies (alongside other mystic groups). The Lodges were behind the Bavarian Illuminati, Freemasonry, the Rosicrucians, and many other hidden organizations. At least, that's the official secret history of the world. And, on the other hand, there may be more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in the Lodges' philosophy. Maybe, there are other forces in the world that have been manipulating the Lodges into manipulating the rest of the world... Can you say FNORD? I knew you could...

Maybe the Alphans are messing around the Earth, and the Lodges, bound as they are in their mystical cosmology, cannot deal with them. Or it could be the Society of Assassins, who also have their own Initiates working for them. Or, in the basement of some New England university, a super-computer becomes self-aware *and* Initiated; its network of young hackers don't know who their benefactor is, and how “he” is providing them with the codes and passwords they use to hack where they please, but they are eager to do what he wants...

In a truly Illuminated campaign, the PCs, even if Initiated, will only have a piece of the whole puzzle. They may be threatened (and occasionally helped) from unexpected quarters. Or they make totally unexpected discoveries — maybe it turns out that the DEA is bankrolling drug traffic and overlooking the bigger traders while coming down on smaller independents, for example. Or it turns out that a popular toy company's lead product, Captain Blitz's Silver Helmet, is actually some sort of evil fetish: come next summer solstice, every child wearing the helmet will die horribly, fueling the arrival of some monstrous Thing That Man Was Not Meant to Know. How do the PCs stop the ritual and unmask the toy company? Who is controlling the company, and why?



I, Monster

This is a campaign where all or most of the PCs are In-Betweeners, creatures of the spirit and physical realms. These entities have superhuman powers, but their true alienness comes from their lusts and desires, which are different and often more intense than those of normal living creatures. Unlike humans, In-Betweeners feel no hunger — at least not in the usual sense. They are intensely psychic creatures that derive some sort of nourishment from what humans around them feel. Most of them center their whole lives seeking this psychic nourishment; they are beings of passion to a much greater degree than any natural species. They are not like humans, but they need their company for nourishment. Many see normal people as little more than cattle, while others try to find a middle ground between preying on humankind and finding a place within it.

Truly roleplaying these creatures can be challenging. An In-Betweeners campaign could easily turn into a Supers/Horror crossover, with the emphasis being placed on the superhuman powers of the creatures. A mega-violent campaign detailing the crimes of a gang of In-Betweeners might be entertaining for some gaming groups as well. On the other hand, the game could deal with In-Betweeners trying to come to terms with what they are, to forge relationship with normal people, or take a stand in the Shadow War.

Back from the Dead

In this campaign, the group is made up of ghosts — the GM might instruct the players to create 100-point characters and then run a game that leads to their deaths and their subsequent existence as disembodied specters. One or two PCs could be Initiates who can interact both with the spirit characters and the material world; another possibility would be a group of In-Betweeners and ghosts who together haunt (or protect) a neighborhood.

The reasons for ghosts to continue their existence on Earth will probably influence the campaign. If the characters want to accomplish a task before going on to their final reward (or to reincarnate back into a human form), then the game should revolve around their efforts to fulfill their goals. Others may simply enjoy the freedom of their new form and may wish to stick around for a while, testing their abilities.

The Paths of Magic

This campaign concentrates on the mystical advancements of the PCs. They can be the disciples of a powerful Initiate, or an ancient spirit, learning the ways of magic and Initiation. The learning process will include a number of tests, which may entail travel to remote places, the retrieval (or theft) of ancient books and artifacts, and mystical vision quests in the dream realm. As payment for their lessons, the pupils might also have to perform services for their teacher, services that will most likely involve them with the other factions of the Shadow War.



GURPS Supers

Although *GURPS Voodoo* deals with often superhuman characters and enemies, it is not a “four color” campaign background with caped crusaders flying through the air and exchanging smart one-liners in between super-punches. On the other hand, the upper spectrum of power in this setting (Spirit Warriors with superhuman strength and the power to throw lightning bolts or flame jets) is close enough to the supers ideas to permit some interactions. A “realistic” super campaign (the *GURPS Wild Cards* setting, for instance) could be mixed in with elements from the Shadow War world.

An interesting possibility would be to take a “typical” superhero world and give it a supernatural origin. Maybe all these costumed heroes are actually In-Betweeners, their “mutations” the result of unknown rituals conducted just before the births of the supers. Who is creating the supers? The Lodges (or the Corruptors) might have been trying to build an army of super-powerful servants — maybe one day, the right words of power will be whispered, and all the super-powered characters in the planet, heroes and villains both, will suddenly become blank-eyed, utterly obedient slaves, or, worse, revealed to be sadistic mass murderers without any regard for normal humans’ life or dignity.

Perhaps the only “supers” untouched by this ritual are Initiates, who now must go underground and fight the new overlords of the world. In this world, costumed characters would be the enemy, and the fearful normals would be little more than slaves, regularly sacrificed by the thousands to feed the inhuman monsters that rule over all. Such a world would be even more bleak than the one described in this pages: the *Marshall Law* comic book would be good inspiration for a dystopian four-color world where so-called super-heroes are nothing more than insane beings with enormous power. The stakes of this new Shadow War would be even higher, and the enemy tougher — but more easily recognized.

APPENDICES

TIMELINE

1000 B.C. to 1500 A.D. — Diverse Indian tribes, primarily the Caribs and Arawak, spread across the Caribbean islands. The Caribs arrive later, and tend to prey on the more peaceful Arawak.

1492 — Columbus reaches a small island in Las Bahamas; Europeans discover the Americas. Haiti and Cuba are among the places discovered.

1493 — A Papal Bull divides the New World between Spain and Portugal.

1493-1504 — Columbus' next four voyages discover most major Caribbean islands.

1506 — First sugar mills open in Hispaniola (formerly Haiti). First pirate attacks on the Spanish colonies, by French ships.

1510 — Spain authorizes its New World colonies to import slaves from Africa. Portuguese ships bring over 20 million slaves; many of them die shortly after arrival due to lethal working conditions.

1562 — The English corsair John Hawkins joins the slave trade, breaking the Portuguese monopoly.

1588 — The invincible Armada is destroyed by the English, breaking Spanish domination of the oceans.

1623 — First English colony in the Caribbean is founded in St. Kitts.

1645 — Sugar plantations become a major source of wealth for English and French colonies, increasing the demand for African slaves.

1685 — The *Code Noire* is established for the French colonies, laying down certain rules for the treatment of slaves; indiscriminate killings are outlawed, but the penalties for rebelliousness include death by torture.

1751-1757 — Francois Macandal, a maroon houngan, leads a rebellion in Haiti that leaves thousands dead but is suppressed by the colonists.

1760 — A major revolt in Jamaica is barely contained (if it had triumphed, Jamaica would have been the first black free nation in the New World).

1791 — Boukman, another houngan, starts a massive rebellion that is suppressed but begins the process that liberates Haiti.

1798-1804 — A new black and mulatto rebellion expels the French from Haiti, making it the first black republic in the New World.

1810-1821 — Venezuela and Colombia declare independence and defeat the Spanish colonials.

1822 — Haiti conquers the Dominican Republic, the Spanish-speaking half of the island.

1834-1838 — Slavery is abolished in British Guyana, and thousands of East Indians from Asia are brought to work as low-wage workers.

1844 — The Dominican Republic expels the Haitian conquerors and becomes an independent nation.

1848 — France abolishes slavery throughout its colonies.

1860 — The Vatican re-establishes formal relations with Haiti, and Catholic priests return to the island.

1868-1878 — Spanish army defeats Cuban revolution.

1886 — Slavery is abolished in Cuba.

1895 — New revolt explodes in Cuba.

1898 — The sinking of the U.S. battleship *Maine* is used as an excuse for the U.S. to declare war on Spain. The U.S. destroys the Spanish Navy and conquers Cuba, the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico.

1901 — Platt Amendment gives the U.S. the right to intervene in Cuba, a right the U.S. exercises in 1906-1909.

1914-1918 — World War I. The U.S. enters the war in 1917.

1912 — Haitian president Cincinnatus Leconte dies in an explosion that destroys the Presidential Palace and kills over 300 people.

1915 — A frenzied mob drags new Haitian ruler Guillaume Sam into the street and tears him apart. Chaos and anarchy prompt U.S. intervention.

1915-1934 — The U.S. occupies Haiti when anarchy on the island prevents international debts from being collected. The Spanish half of the island is also occupied in 1916-1924. Marine officers serve as military governors and U.S. envoys control the government. Several revolts against the occupation are suppressed.

1917 — St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix and the Virgin Islands are purchased by the U.S. for 25 million dollars.

1930 — Rafael Trujillo becomes the dictatorial leader of the Dominican Republic, and lasts until 1961.

1937 — Trujillo orders the massacre of over 20,000 Haitian residents in the Dominican Republic.

1939-1945 — World War II. The United States enters the war in 1941.

1940 — Fulgencio Batista becomes first president and then dictator of Cuba.



1956 — Fidel Castro lands in Cuba and hides in the Sierra Maestra.

1957 — Francois Duvalier becomes the president of Haiti.

1959 — Fidel Castro overthrows Batista and takes power.

1961 — Trujillo is assassinated.

The U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs fails spectacularly. The invaders, mostly Cuban exiles, are killed or captured as promised U.S. air and sea support never materializes.

1962 — Cuban Missile Crisis: Soviet emplacements of nuclear weapons in Cuba prompts a U.S. blockade of the island and nearly sparks World War III.

1963-1965 — Civil war in the Dominican Republic prompts U.S. intervention to restore order.

1971 — “Papa Doc” Francois Duvalier dies and leaves power to his son, “Baby Doc” Jean-Claude Duvalier, who leaves the country 15 years later in the face of political unrest.

1990-1991 — Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected President of Haiti and overthrown nine months later. Thousands of Haitians fleeing the political chaos attempt to reach the U.S. shores; many die in the attempt. A U.N. embargo fails to impress the coup leaders.

1994 — Last-minute negotiations avert U.S. invasion of Haiti. American troops land; coup leaders leave power before the end of the year.



GLOSSARY

Asson: Voodoo calabash rattle, filled with snake bones, used in ceremonies.

Anima: A spirit servant of the Lodges.

Babalawo: High priest of Santeria.

Bokkor: Evil Voodoo sorcerer.

Bizongue: A Voodoo secret society.

Corruptor: Any evil spirit that draws energy from human suffering.

Daemon: In Greek mythology, a minor spirit. Also, a spirit entity that serves Lodge magicians.

Devourer: A giant In-Between monster that controls smaller versions of itself, called Sendings.

Demiurge: In Gnostic mythology, the evil creator of the material world. This name is also applied to Corruptor spirits.

Genius: In Roman mythology, the protecting spirit of each family line. In the Lodges, a guardian spirit.

Gnosticism: An ancient Christian heresy that claims that salvation is only possible by the mystical discovery of Gnosis (esoteric knowledge), and that the material world is the creation of an evil entity.

Hounfor: Voodoo temple. Also, a group of Voodoo practitioners.

Houngan: Voodoo priest or magician.

In-Between: Creature of both material and spiritual components, often able to shift forms, with inhuman abilities and lusts.

Initiate: A human who can see, communicate and control supernatural forces.

Loa: Voodoo spirit. Also, a god of Voodoo cosmology.

Lodges: Name given to a number of European secret societies that practice sorcery and mysticism. The Lodges have kept magic a secret from Western Civilization to preserve their power.

Mambo: Voodoo priestess or magician.

Maroon: Escaped slave who lives in the wilderness.

Mayombe: Voodoo name for the Corruptor spirits (see above).

Nkisi: An evil African spirit.

Orisha: Voodoo spirit; the Santeria term for loa (above).

Petro: The more violent and bloodthirsty aspect of Voodoo loas (see *Rada*).

Rada: The traditional Voodoo rite. Also, the more sedate and benevolent aspect of the Voodoo loas.

Santeria: Form of Voodoo practiced in the Spanish-speaking regions of America.

Santero/santera: Practitioner of Santeria, the equivalent of a houngan or mambo.

Vever: Mystical drawing used to invoke Voodoo loas.

Voodoo: A mystical religion that combines African and European elements, developed among the slave population of America.

Voudoun: The version of Voodoo practiced in the French-speaking Americas, particularly in Haiti.

Voudounista: Practitioner of Voodoo.



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Edwards, Michael. *The Dark Side of History*. A good source of ideas for occult movements in Europe.

Gonzales-Wippler, Migene. *Santeria: African Magic in Latin America* and *The Santeria Experience*. An overview of Santeria, the Hispanic version of Voodoo. Provides a great deal of useful information.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse*. An account of the 1930s travels of American traveler Zora Neale Hurston to both Haiti and Jamaica, with a good deal of information on Voodoo and secret societies.

LaGuerre, Michael. *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*. An excellent overview of the influence of Voodoo on the Haitian revolution and Haiti's subsequent political system.

Metraux, Alfred. *Voodoo in Haiti*.

Rigaud, Milo. *Secrets of Voodoo*.

Seabrook, William. *The Magic Island*. A classic account of the situation in Haiti during the American occupation, with a great deal of information about Voodoo practices.

Fiction

Barker, Clive. *Cabal*. Many ideas for In-Betweener monsters.

Davis, Wade. *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. The fictionalized account of a search for the chemical components of the zombie powder. The movie has little to do with the events of the book, but it's also recommended.

Eco, Umberto. *Foucault's Pendulum*. Voodoo, European secret societies, and all the conspiracy theories you might want.

Gibson, William. *Count Zero*. Cyberpunk meets Voodoo.

Gold, Herbert. *Best Nightmare on Earth: A Life in Haiti*. An often-humorous portrayal of life in Haiti from the 1950s to the end of the '80s, including the whole Duvalier dynasty.

King, Stephen. *Christine, It, Salem's Lot, The Shining* and *The Stand*. Great sources for horror motifs, mysticism, and the differences between intuitive and rational knowledge.

Lackey, Mercedes (with Larry Dixon, Ellen Guon, Holly Lisle and Mark Shepherd). *The Serrated Edge* series. These novels deal mostly with elves in 20th-century America, but also touch on ghosts, nature spirits, mages, secret conspiracies and other themes that can inspire *GURPS Voodoo* GMs and players. Her Diana Tregarde books, which deal with a witch detective, may be of even greater interest.

Michener, James. *Caribbean*. Historical fiction vignettes from the islands.

Morrell, David. *The Fraternity of the Stone*. Deals with a secret society within the Church, dedicated to assassinating enemies of Christianity. A good source of ideas for GMs wishing to expand on the Roman Lodges.

Powers, Tim. *On Stranger Tides*. Voodoo and pirates; not a well-known book, but well-done.

Movies

Angel Heart

The Believers

Cast a Deadly Spell. Alternate Earth where magic works, and zombies are used as slave labor.

The Crow

Ghost

Lair of the White Worm

Live and Let Die.. James Bond film. Distorted, but fun

Manitou

Nightbreed. Based on Clive Barker's *Cabal*.

The Serpent and the Rainbow

Sleepwalkers

Wolfen. Native American shamans fight evil spirits in the city.

Television

It

Miami Vice

The Stand

Tales From the Crypt

The Twilight Zone

The X-Files



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