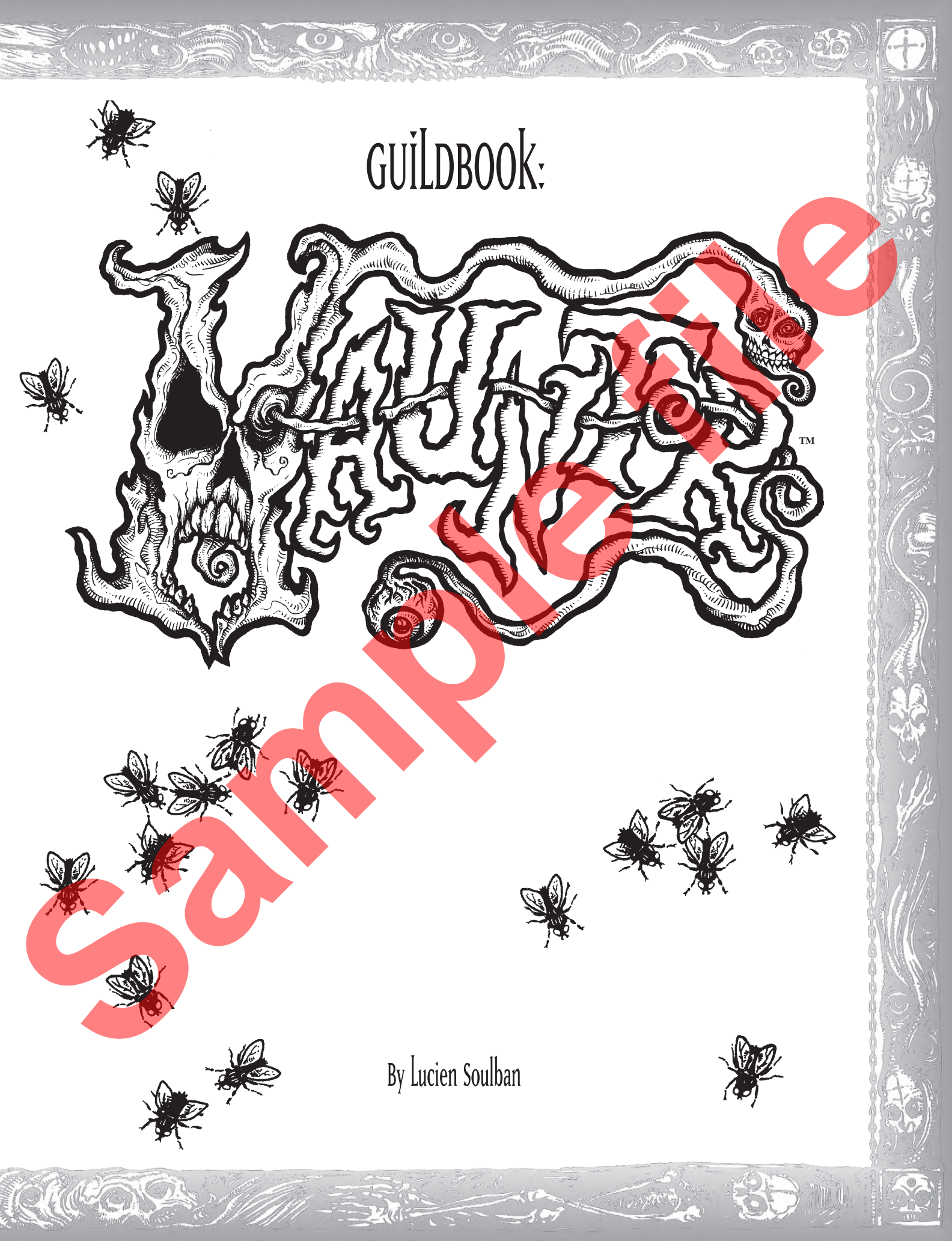


GUILDBOOK:



By Lucien Souiban







Ah, Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits — and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám,
Edward Fitzgerald, trans.

Credits

Written by: Lucien Soulban

Development by: Richard E. Dansky

Editing by: Cynthia Summers

Art Direction by: Lawrence Snelly

Art by: John Cobb, Fred Hooper, Darren Fryendall, Eric Lacombe and Henry Higgenbotham.

Front and Back Cover Design: Aileen Miles, Richard Thomas and Katie McCaskill.

Cover Art: John Cobb

Layout and typesetting by: Robby Poore

Special Thanks

Ethan "No Steenkin' White Howlers" **Skemp**, for taking care of my cat while I was away on vacation.

Jeff "Fish Betta Have My Money" **Holt**, for taking care of my cat during Roc of Ages.

Laura "Hi. What's Wrong?" **Perkinson**, for taking care of my cat while I was at my cousin's wedding.

Kathy "Something Rotten" **Ryan**, for taking care of my cat while I drove to New England for a LARP.

Phil "Award Lad" **Brucato**, for taking care of my cat while I was at Origins.

Wendy "Not as Cute as My Cat" **Blacksin**, for taking care of my cat over Thanksgiving.

Jane "Culpepper Memories" **Palmer**, for taking care of my cat during GenCon.

Cynthia "Late Night Rescue Squad" **Summers**, for ferrying me to the vet so I could take care of the beast that would become my cat.

Andrew "Demon Teddy Bear" **Bates**, for taking care of my cat while I was at NanCon.

Brian "Flammable Rewd Boy" **Glass**, for taking care of my cat during the ICC.

Clayton "It Hit Play!" **Oliver**, for taking care of my cat while I was in San Francisco.



WHITE WOLF PUI
2075 WEST PARK PL
SUITE G
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA

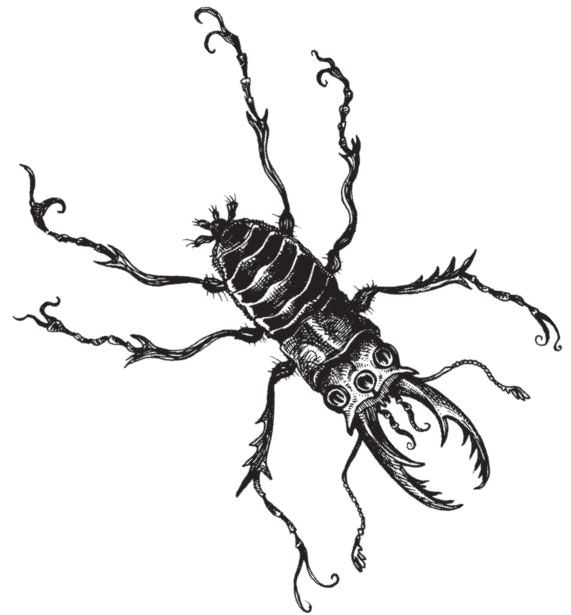
© 1997 White Wolf, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews. White Wolf is a registered trademark of White Wolf, Inc. All rights reserved. *Wraith the Oblivion*, *Guildbook Artificers*, *Wraith Players Guide*, *Guildbook Sandmen*, *Guildbook Masquers* and *Guildbook Haunters* are trademarks of White Wolf, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by White Wolf, Inc.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

Because of the mature themes involved, reader discretion is advised.

Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN CANADA.



Lord Ember created by Richard E. Dansky. Thusimos created by Beth Fisch. Midian created by Lucien Soulban.

GUILDBOOK:



Table of Contents

Ghost Story: A Road of Steel and Souls, Part IV	6
Chapter One: The Guild	11
Chapter Two: History	27
Chapter Three: It's All About the Wyld	41
Chapter Four: So You Want to be a Haunter...	53
Appendix: Our Soul	64



Ghost Story: A Road of Steel and Souls

Chapter 4: Midian's Game

niaG s'naidiM



Somewhere, on a hill of cracked earth, a house stood placidly beneath sandpaper skies. Its presence within the Shadowlands was betrayed by its unique condition. The lower half of the house did not exist there; having never been consumed by the flames that brought the remainder

of the building to this bleak place, it appeared hazy and translucent at best. A set of charred stairs served as the only passage from the open ground floor into the skeleton of the second story. The attic, however, floated above the ground like a dark dream, anchored to the hill by the odd support beam spearing the flesh of the earth.

Lord Ember observed the house carefully, studying it with somber curiosity. The parallel between the condition of the building and his own appearance did not escape him. Blackened and cracked by centuries in the forges, Lord Ember could blend in easily against the flame-licked wood of the floating attic, should he choose. It was ironic, seeing as there were very few places where he could blend in at all.

Frowning, the Guildmaster continued toward the farmhouse, taking time only to study the shadow of a fence that was not there. Without further hesitation, Lord Ember mounted the rickety stairs. The attic was devoid of furniture, save for a

table and two chairs, all covered with a thick layer of soot. One of the seats was taken by the Restless Midian, leader of an influential Hunter faction and the closest thing to a proper Guild representative that the Hunters possessed. Midian's attention was entirely focused on a chessboard that was marred by missing pieces and gap-toothed tiles; it looked as if the craftsman who had made the set had given up the job halfway through.

Midian himself was covered head to foot in strips of bandages, leaving only his face exposed. The illusion that Midian sat restless was due solely to his animated bindings as they moved over his frame in a slow danse macabre. His expressionless face revealed an even greater enigma. The mask that protected his identity, like a Caul of Stygian metal, was imbedded inches beneath his Corpus visage, and reflected the full range of emotional countenance that one would have expected from his true, but neutral face.

"Well?" spoke the mask of Midian. "Are you planning on studying me or do you wish to sit down?"

"I would prefer the latter," the Artificer answered. Midian motioned to the empty chair opposite, and moved the chess pieces back to their starting positions. Without comment, Lord Ember took up a black rook and examined it carefully. "One of your best pieces," commented Midian.

Ember nodded with a satisfied grin as a milky tear of Corpus rolled down the rook's face. "How is your collection proceeding, Midian?"

"People no longer wish to play me," he sighed with mock-sadness.

"Can you blame them? Those who lose end up as either a tile or a piece."

“Better a pawn here than in the other games being played,” Midian stated, and shrugged casually as he continued setting his half-finished board.

Ember regarded him with a stern glance. “Surely you don’t think I’m going to play against you, Haunter. I have no interest in ending up as one of your pieces.”

Midian looked up, his mask aghast with mock concern. “You cannot believe that I would do you any harm?” he chuckled. “Who then would I commission to forge new pieces for me? Lord knows your Artificers regard my kind with a great deal of suspicion, and finding someone as capable as you would be next to impossible. I promise you that no harm will befall you over this game of chess.” Lord Ember still looked vaguely unconvinced. Midian finally reached over, took Ember’s white king and placed it by the side of the board. “Feel better? You cannot lose without your king, and without mine—” Midian placed his black king on the table, “—neither can I.”

“Intriguing. What we have here, then, is a game that remains a perpetual stalemate.” Ember paused, considered. “Unless, of course, all the pieces are devoured? Your promise is not good enough, Midian. There are still degrees of victory and loss.”

“But you’re still going to play, aren’t you? You can’t resist the pull of this conversation or the direction it may take you in?”

“You mean the direction it may take the both of us in.”

“It’s all a matter of perception,” Midian said. He motioned to Ember to open play, his fingers toying with a pawn. “Besides,” he continued, “that’s what we are doing now, anyway.” Seeing Ember’s confusion, Midian clarified his statement. “I mean that we are playing without the benefit of a king or all the tiles in place.”

“You refer to the search for Charon?” Midian’s mask smiled as he contemplated the next move. “I was wondering about that. I hear you refused to send anyone from your Guild into the Labyrinth to investigate the Sandman Thusimos’ claim that Charon may be hidden there. Why? Frightened?”

Midian shook his head, his mask still smiling. “I have a healthy fear of the Labyrinth. Everyone should, after all. It is not fear, however, that is the issue in this case.”

“Then what is?”

“I have found that the best secrets are often uncovered where the arrows don’t point.”

Ember thought about Midian’s statement for a moment. “Then you don’t trust the Sandman?” he finally asked.

“Why should I? What reason have I been offered to place my trust in him? He isn’t the only one with information, you know.”

“If you know something else,” Ember cajoled in an ashen purr, “then I advise you to share it.”

With a look of innocent hurt on one face, Midian glanced up. “No threats, Ember. I am willing to share what I know.”

“Then speak.”

“Well, I would, but this conversation is disrupting your concentration. You just lost a pawn. Pity.”

Ember would have reached across the board for Midian’s throat, but he remembered how much of an appetite the Haunter’s Corpus rags were rumored to possess. “Enough games, Midian. What do you know?”

“Enough games? What do you think this entire quest for Charon is? Either you’ve decided to keep us distracted from your true intentions by distracting us with the idiotic rumor that Charon was betrayed, or someone is playing you for a fool.”

“Then you do know something?”

“If anything, I know that Charon is not in the Labyrinth.” Midian’s inner face smiled, a Cheshire grin.

Veins of angry red traced themselves out on the Artificer’s charred skin. “What makes you so sure?”

“A trade, Lord Artificer. What do you have that I could use?”

“Your worthless existence, Haunter!” roared Ember. “I was a power in Stygia when your 10-times grandfather was still painting himself blue, and I’ll be here long after you’re gone.”

Midian’s Corpus bandages slithered around his body like agitated snakes. The Haunter himself, however, remained calm, his mask an image of placid thought. “Perhaps you are good at politics, but games are actually my forté. Take this chess match, for example.

The white king is lacking from this equation.”

Lord Ember regarded the board for a moment, then commented, his tone much more subdued. “As is the black king. We’ve already been over this. Is there a point to your comment?”

“There is a balance to things. No gift is entirely beneficial, and no curse entirely destructive. As I’ve said, it’s all a matter of perspective. Charon is missing, correct?” Midian asked as he tapped the white king next to him with a spindly finger.



"Yes," Ember answered cautiously, unsure as to where this was leading.

"And if we are to assume that Charon is the white king in this equation, then my question to you is this: Who is playing the black king? It's a pertinent matter, I think."

Lord Ember sat back for a moment, allowing the question to sink in. "Gorool," he decided. "But they both vanished in the struggle."

"Did they really?" Midian purred like a great cat on the hunt. "Was Charon even destroyed, for that matter? At the moment of his great 'sacrifice,' we Haunters sensed something queer with the Shroud. Personally, I suspect the whole thing was a charade."

"You believe he stepped through?"

"Now I didn't say *that*, but why not?" replied Midian.

Visibly agitated, Lord Ember pondered the ramifications of the Haunter's statement. It was Midian who finally broke the resultant silence with a casual, "Which piece would you like to be?"

Lord Ember straightened up, his fierce scowl back in place. "So much for your 'word,' Midian. I thought you swore that no harm would befall me." The Artificer's words were sarcastic, but his hand strayed to the weighty hammer at his belt.

"I promised that no harm would befall you over this game of chess," the Haunter said as his arm swept over the board to impress his point, "but, you've lost the other game."

"What other game?" snapped Ember.

"The one we've been playing. This little exchange of information and your heavy-handed attempts to gain my secrets. We weren't playing the same game, you and I. It was all a matter of perception. Besides, I know you aren't Lord Ember. Checkmate!"

A moment of quiet draped the room as Midian regarded the imposter. "Come out, Sandman!" the Haunter commanded. "I know who you are, and I know this is only a dream."

Behind eyes that looked like Ember's, the Sandman bard Thusimos quickly regained his composure. He might have been uncovered as an imposter, but the fact that Midian hadn't called him by name was encouraging. The details of his identity were still secure. "How?" he asked.

"Simple," stated Midian. "My dreams are the only facet of my consciousness that remains intact. And do you know something else? I would destroy you for reminding me of that."

Thusimos smiled through Ember's cracked visage, and then vanished with a flourish.

Midian remained seated, regarding the now-empty chair across from him with a bored stare. Minutes — or perhaps hours — later, he finally addressed the black queen. "Thank you for the warning. I doubt I could have learned as much as I did had I not been so excellently prepared."

At the center of the board, the black queen moved under her own power, and turned to regard Midian for the first time. He could hear the faint clinking of chains.

"And I thank you." The piece spoke with a faint lilt, Midian noticed. "Witnessing that was... informative."

"It certainly was." Midian sat and brooded as silence settled around him again. It was long minutes before the queen spoke again.

"As per my last message, I wish to establish stronger lines of communication with your Guild. There is much, I think, that we could do for one another."

"I agree. However, make sure your man is subtle. The others aren't fools, and the last thing either of us needs is our alliance becoming public knowledge. Is there anything else?"

The queen frowned. "I am... confused about one matter." "That being?"

"Do you actually believe that Charon stepped through, back into the world of the Quick, or was that just another ruse?"

"I believe." Midian steepled his fingers, and his tired eyes stared down at the diminutive figure. "My suspicions were confirmed only now. The false Ember tipped his hand when he tried to gauge my reaction to his 'news.' I could see he was checking to see how much I knew, rather than trying to discern if I were telling the truth. But to answer your question, yes. I think that either Charon stepped through or..."

"Or what?" pressed the black queen.

"Or Gorool did." Both remained silent for a few moments, lost in their thoughts, before Midian spoke up again. "So, my lady, what will the Deathlords do now, since you have learned that your days of rule are numbered?"

"My dear Midian," she sighed, "that is not your concern."

"I agree, as long as you remember our deal. I want Charon or Gorool found and his body given to me for my board. I want it finished by the time I finally return to the land of the living."

"Do you still believe you can tear down the Shroud and cross over again?" the black queen asked with a bemused smile.

Midian's voice was grim, and terrifyingly lucid. "The Shroud *did* weaken when Charon fought Gorool. The Mandelbrots have shown me the proof. If Charon or Gorool's passing was capable of doing it once, imagine what might happen if either dies a second time. This opportunity will not escape us. When the moment of truth comes, we will be ready to travel through. We've been dead a very long time, and I for one have grown quite tired of it."

"And your dream visitor, the Sandman?"

"I think it may have been either Thusimos or Akhshephat. Either way, I claim him for my board."

"As what piece, if I may be so bold to ask?"

"Pawn."

The black queen surveyed the chess board with a troubled frown. "Pardon the question, Midian, but don't you already have a full complement of pawns?"

"My dear lady," Midian's translucent face and mask smiled in unison. "You can never have enough pawns."



$X^{238} + \cos$
 $+ (\sin^{32} \cdot \epsilon$
 $= k$

KAP

Hoop97



Chapter One: The Recruiting Process



Close Your Eyes



Can you close your eyes and trust the shadows not to move? Ziad Bennari could not. He sat in a decrepit chair in the middle of his room, ignoring the sink filled with stagnant water. From the moment the moon had crept quietly above the horizon, Ziad had remained in his chair,

fondling the silenced .38 pistol in his hand. No matter how long or how tightly he held the gun, the grip was always cold. This nagged at him.

Ziad left this place only when hunger fogged his vision. Even then, he would scour the trashcans of the nearby alley as quickly as he could, and then race back to the sanctuary of his room with his rancid bounty. The place reeked from the decomposing morsels of food hidden beneath his bed and the clothing he had worn countless times without washing. Stains of unknown origin marked the walls and floor; mold crept along the ceiling.

Tonight, just like every night, Ziad listened for the sounds of skittering, of countless tiny light legs scrambling on wood. Every night he could hear them, scuttling behind the walls, daring one another to go out, creeping forth into the dim light of his apartment.

When the roaches did appear, their little black bodies formed words on his fading wallpaper. In this manner, they spoke to him. They told him things, dark things. Sometimes, however, they would go too far and try to approach him. They died when they did this, though. Every time a cockroach came too close, it died. It didn't matter whether it was 10 feet away from him, five, one or even perched on his knee. He killed them all with the butt of his gun, or the sole of his shoe, or with his hand. Occasionally, he would shoot them, but that wasn't much of an option anymore. He was down to his last three bullets, so he had to be careful. He had to make two of them count.

An infinitesimal sound alerted him, and Ziad saw a cockroach running along the edge of the wall. He raised his gun and fired. The sound barely rippled through the room. The roach died, spattered across a hole in the wall larger than its body. Ziad checked his gun — two bullets left — and waited some more while the cockroaches spoke to him.

In the shadows of neither here nor there, Roachbud the Haunter chuckled to himself. His teeth clicked together in excitement as he formed another sentence for mad Ziad to read. Roachbud was on a recruitment drive. This was how he inducted his candidates into the Haunters.



The Guild tliuG ehT

Peeling Back the Skin

niS eht kcaB ginleep



We are the Haunters. We are a poem that dances to an invisible choreographer's whim, we are chaos by intention, we are madness in moderation. Of the Guilds, we are among the few that bear the distinction of being outlawed proudly. It suits our needs, as it will come to suit yours.

Now you may wonder why we are sharing this with you. It's simple. We are recruiters for our Guild, and it is our function to bring those of promise into our fold when they die. We know that you *think* that you are not yet dead, but really, you are. It's just a timing issue.

You will discover that time works to your advantage when you're a Haunter. It's all a matter of personal perception. Now, quit killing our goddamned roaches and listen.

Who We Are eW erA ohW

Many would have you believe that we ghosts are the Restless Dead, too embittered to let go of the real world. We don't like this definition. It makes victims of us too easily. A more accurate description would be to say that we are those who not only refuse to let go of the mortal coil, but who also strive to bring the Shroud down like a cheap Christmas tree on New Year's. We are not victims; we are wraiths who have decided on a grand and glorious goal. Unfortunately, we are too divided to reach it. Yet.

Reality was not always the harsh mistress it is now. Even Charon recognized this, back in the old days when the Shroud was just a mist. In time, however, the Shroud became bloated, mirroring the growing ignorance of the living and their precious Fog. The less the Quick wanted to learn about what frightened them, the stronger the Shroud grew.

We Haunters came from the ranks of those wraiths who not only saw the rift widen and the world of the living attempt leave us behind, but who were determined to rectify this situation. Our solution was to tear down the ubiquitous wall called the Shroud, and our target was humanity (for if mortals were the tailors who dictated the weave of the world, then they had to be shown that the fabric of their reality was not as well-crafted as

they had hoped). The struggle continues to this day, and when you die, you will join us and take up the same struggle we have fought through the centuries. Our aim is this: to unite the two worlds and take back what was once ours — the Skinlands. We do so by haunting the living and by reminding them that there is more to their lives than their petty little world. Mind by mind, we will show them the reality of terror, and thread by thread the Shroud will unravel. Then the worlds of the living and the dead will be one again, and we shall step from the Shadowlands into the sunlight, there to live once again.

Forever, perhaps. We shall see when it happens.

I will not delude you. The road has not been easy. We have always been a fractious bunch. As a Guild we have divided ourselves into various alliances that pursue the same goal, but do so by taking differing and, occasionally, opposing paths. From the maniacal Bedlameers to the practical Menagerians, from the cold-hearted Mandelbrots to the pious Dantes, we are all Haunters, but we march under the banners of unofficial alliances that keep us apart. In essence, we are often our own worst enemies.

Alliances sesailA

When the call came to form ourselves into a proper Guild, a variety of groups who practiced Pandemonium stepped forward and claimed the right to represent the general interests of all the Wylding's practitioners. In truth, we were never particular about who learned our Arcanos, so our membership was far-flung, diverse and unfortunately, disorganized. Slowly, due to the efforts of several influential wraiths (including Midian and Sweet Sorrow), some of the more glaring differences between one bunch of Haunters and another were ironed out. The factions ended up united by common goals and treaties, and transmogrified into a sanctioned Guild.

Despite our "official" unification, however, several alliances within the Guild retained their unique ideologies and maintained strong group identities. To this day, several factions exist within the Haunters, which we still call alliances. With exception to the Mandelbrots and Dantes, the ranks of these other groups are not rigid, and their continued existences are outgrowths of common interests or mutual views, as opposed to being the products of a directed agenda. In fact, many of these alliances have free-floating memberships ("Going to be a Menagerian this week, dear,"), and as such they are often derisively referred to as "clubs."

Although we are divided over the path we should travel in order to reach our goal, we are united in purpose. (One of the outcomes of the Conclave that first formed the Haunter's Guild was a statement of mutual purpose.) We all want to shred the Shroud, and once we do so, we wish our fellow Haunters to join us on the other side of its corpse. It's just that each of our alliances wishes to demonstrate conclusively that its path

was the correct one, and as such there's sometimes a bit of... sibling rivalry that springs up.

In any case, here are examples of some of the more powerful alliances within the Guild. We mention these in particular because they have managed, in some fashion or form, to advance our craft beyond its original state.

When dealing with alliances, there is one rule that always takes precedence above all other concerns: Even if you do not agree with another Haunter, you must still back him up against all aliens. If you are a Dante, you may argue with a Mandelbrot to your heart's content until the second a Spook walks into the room. Remember, we all come from the same roots, and we are all touched by the Wylding. None of the aliens will ever understand that.

The H.G. Dwellers

Other Aliases: The Puritans, Pandora Skia

This alliance is one of the oldest factions within the Haunters, and is the founding Circle of the Guild itself. This is the alliance we belong to, and it is the alliance that you will belong to as well.

What makes us all H.G. Dwellers is this: We subscribe to the notion that the hands of time can be forced back to a point before our deaths. We have seen other supernatural creatures manipulate time itself, and we believe we can do the same. And once we have wound back time to a point when we all live once again, then the sky will be the limit!

Initially, we were known as Pandora Skia, or Pandora's Shadow, an alliance dating back to the Golden Age of Athens (well before the birth of the Christian Messiah). We are best remembered for the haunting of Pandora, a tale that later came to serve as an allegory for the woes of the world. You will learn more about this when we teach you our history. For as long as we can remember, we have been among those who led the charge against the Shroud, and as the premier practitioners of the Wylding, we naturally took charge of the alliances when the Haunter's Guild became real. Much later, following the release of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, our name became what it is now, a reflection of the changing times and a tribute to one who understood somehow what we were about.

We are a small Circle. Our numbers have been shrinking as of late, that is true, but we are still recognized as the leaders of the Haunters by most of the Guilds. We regard many of our brethren to be fools for the paths they have chosen, but we do not hold that against them. We haunt ancient places, because people expect that sort of thing from ruined houses and old mansions. We find the Shroud in these areas is weaker, and thus the traces of our work cannot be erased so easily by the Fog. Otherwise, each of us strains against the clockwork of entropy as best we can, seeking to make the watch hands of the universe spin backward.