

HOMECOMING

The werewolves watched from the brush, covered in the foliage. They stood still and silent. The people laughed, hitched their packs onto their backs and talked about what they hoped to accomplish that weekend.

From a place that neither werewolf nor human could see, the spirits scrambled for their homes. The tree-spirits fastened their roots tightly to the soil, while the spirits of rabbit, squirrel, fox and bird fled to their dens. They knew what was coming. They had seen the spirits of greed flocking along with the humans, and had watched as murder-spirits, tiny red-brown creatures with hummingbird-like wings and sharp bat-teeth, clung to the brush near the werewolves.

One of the humans glanced to her left and cocked her head. She walked off the path toward the thick tangle of bushes where the werewolves lurked. Looking down at the plants, she ran her fingers across the leaves. Her fingers came back wet, sticky and red.

• • •

“Hey, Mike.” Judy turned and looked back at her boyfriend. “This look like blood to you?”

Mike trudged through the calf-high ground cover. Brambles cut at his shins. He was sorely regretting not wearing jeans. He looked down at Judy’s hand and then at the leaves she indicated. “Yeah, it does.”

“What from? You think someone’s hurt?”

Mike shrugged. “Probably a deer got bit or shot or something.” He looked around as though expecting to see a trail or even a wounded animal, but, quietly, he admitted that if it weren’t for the path leading back to the parking lot, he’d never find his way out of the forest. “Come on. We need to set up our tent before the Evening Fire tonight.”

Judy wiped her hand on the bandana hanging out of her pocket and followed him back to the path. She loved hiking and camping, and if this was the only way she’d get Mike into the woods, she could cope with a weekend of self-help blather.

Still... the blood bothered her. She wasn’t sure why. She had seen dead animals in the forest before, and Mike’s guess about a deer being injured made sense. But the blood had felt *warm*, as though it was fresh from an open vein. She looked back at the spot and thought she saw something move. Judy shuddered, and hurried to catch up with the others.

• • •

The werewolves withdrew, slinking through the brush and the shadows down a hill that human feet would have been hardpressed to traverse. They leaped across a shallow stream onto a sandy bank and took their birth forms.

“Tuck, you’re an idiot,” one of them said flatly.

Tucker adjusted his shirt. It was dirty. He didn’t understand how it could be clean before he changed shape and dirty afterwards, but there it was. “Screw you.”

“No, really,” she pressed. She stood up and stretched, and then crouched down to the stream. The wound on her left arm was healing nicely. She had nearly died in the fight with the thicket-spirit, but this wound was all that remained. She washed it in the stream and dug at the scab a bit. She hoped it would scar. “You didn’t think to check if anybody had the site reserved for this weekend?”

“Goddamn it, Shelly. I am not the only one who could have done that. I have been working my ass off to get ready for this. You could have checked, K.C. could have checked...”

A rather plump black man, lying on his back with his hands over his face, snorted. "Leave me out of this. You know I think everything's fine here the way it is."

Tucker waved a hand at him. "You're wrong, but that's nothing new. And it doesn't matter what you think. Crim agrees with me, and we're doing this. Tonight." He kicked a bit of sand at K.C. "Unless you'd like to argue with her about it."

K.C. gave a noncommittal grunt. He had argued with their alpha before, and come out the worse for it. He moved his hands and looked around the forest. This place was *fine*, he didn't know what the others were grousing about. Something about the Shadow, probably, but he'd be just as happy never going there again. What difference if a few spirits wanted to eat each other?

The three of them waited there. Crimson would be joining them soon. The forest noises echoed around them, interrupted every so often by the whoops and laughter of the humans.

"Don't know how we're going to do this with all those idiots out there," muttered Shelly. She ran her hand through her hair, feeling for the gash on her scalp. It was already gone. She sighed with disappointment.

"Gotta be tonight, huh?" muttered K.C.

Tucker just shook his head.

• • •

Crimson had been born Renate Long. She hated her name. She was black, but the name was German. She didn't know where her mother had heard it or why her father had capitulated, because they had both died before she was three days old. The hospital had burned, and she had been one of a handful to live through the fire.

She lived with her aunt and uncle, went to college for a month, then took her student loan money and left. She was living on the road, playing guitar on the street for extra cash, when the Change hit. She'd been in a New York subway station when it had happened, and when she came to, there was nothing but thick blood all around. *Crimson* had been her first thought, and so she took that name.

Crimson hated the woods at first. She'd grown up in the city, but ever since the Change she'd dreamed of the trees. She'd traveled out here to God's nowhere in hopes of figuring out what the hell the dreams meant, but she'd found the pack in-

stead. Maybe that *was* what they meant. She'd long ago decided that some Cahalith dream and some sing, and she wasn't a dreamer, thanks anyway.

She was in human form, standing the parking lot, running a pick through her hair. She'd been reading the pamphlet these crackers were handing out to other campers, something about a "forest seminar to reconnect with *who you truly are*." The pamphlet mentioned firewalking. It talked about losing all fear. Crimson read that, and her hands started to shake with Rage.

Fear tonight, she thought. Fear the moon.

• • •

Judy stood in front of a tree, a wooden arrow pressed against her throat. She took a step forward, felt a pinch of pain in her jugular notch, and then watched the arrow break. *This is really fucking stupid*, she thought.

All around her, other participants were exulting in their "triumph over fear." She heard someone say that he was ready to be a man now, not just a boy. She turned and looked at him. He looked about 30. Rolling her eyes, she looked around for Mike. He was still trying to work up the guts to step forward and break his arrow.

She walked over and shoved him lightly. The arrow snapped. He gave a yelp of surprise. Judy put a hand on his shoulder and whispered, "Mike, this is stupid. These are flimsy wooden arrows. What does this prove?"

He turned on her with that smug look she got when he talked about his latest self-help discovery. "It's about conquering fear," he said. "You step into danger, and then you break it. You put all your fear into that arrow and watch as you just walk through it."

Judy rubbed her temples. "But there's *no danger*. If the arrows had points, that would be dangerous."

Mike looked down and smiled. "Not all danger is danger you can see."

Judy shoved him lightly. "You're so full of shit. I'm gonna go grab some water. Want one?"

Mike nodded and grabbed a fresh arrow off the pile. All of the broken arrows would eventually be burned for the firewalking ceremony tonight. All of their fears would go up in smoke. Mike didn't consider himself a spiritual guy, but he liked the idea of burning up his fear.

Judy, meanwhile, pulled a bottle of water out of an ice-filled cooler. The water was part of the

fee for this seminar, otherwise she would never have stooped to drinking it. She took a long swig and then spit it out, retching. One of the seminar mods, an athletic man named Mr. Greene, looked over. "You OK?"

She spit again. "The water, it tastes like..." She looked down. It was just water. "Weird," she said. "Tastes weird."

Greene shrugged and went back to guiding arrows into people's throats. Judy suspected that the word had already gotten around about her. She hadn't chanted much during their Opening Circle, and Mike had said something to the seminar leader shortly thereafter. She wasn't concerned about that, though.

She took another sip of the water, carefully, and swished it between her teeth. It still tasted like blood.

• • •

The sun was beginning to set. The spirits flocked to the locus, and found people there. The locus was a stone in the center of the fire pit, a stone that had once been used to split the skull of an escaped slave crossing through this forest. The stone had been used to kill a child guilty of nothing but bastardry. The stone had cut the hands of a hundred campers as they tried to light fires here. The stone had decided it liked blood, and the spirits came here to feed every night.

Some of the spirits, curious about the humans, thought of crossing the Gauntlet. None of the spirits did. The werewolves were watching. They were *always* watching. The spirits remembered when one of them had slipped through the locus into Twilight and latched onto the body of a pet dog. One of the werewolves — the spirits didn't know her name, but in their tongue they called her *Sa Kul* — pounced on the dog and tore it to pieces. When the spirit fled back to the locus, the spirit found *Sa Kul's* pack waiting for it.

The spirits waited near the locus. The tiny red murder-spirits began to arrive, drawn to the promise of blood and death like the gnats to the humans' fire. The spirits crouched under trees and watched through the smoky, hazy lens of the blood-stone locus, now heated red by the fire atop it. Years of drinking its Essence had made even the squirrel-spirits a bit bloodthirsty, and as the gibbous moon rose, tinged with the ash of the fires, the spirits knew they would see blood tonight.

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"I cannot believe what you're asking us to do." Tucker shifted his weight nervously.

"Ain't asking." Crimson was squatting behind a tree, taking a piss. Normally, she'd shift to wolf form for that, but she wanted to keep talking, and she didn't have a good handle on the First Tongue.

"There must be 50 people."

"I don't give a shit, Tucker. You said this needed to be done. You said tonight was the night." She licked her lips. "Tonight is the night," she whispered.

Tucker looked helplessly at Shelly and K.C. Neither of them spoke. Shelly picked at the gash on her arm again and pulled out a thorn covered in blood and fat. K.C. just looked at his shoes. "Crim, don't you think someone's going to *notice* if we kill 50 people?"

Crimson stood and pulled up her weathered cutoffs. She walked around the tree to face her packmate. She could feel the moon rising, and it made her skin itch. She wanted to howl, to run, to fight a *fuck* and, most of all, to kill. She felt she could kill those people herself.

She took a deep breath and smelled the campfire smoke on the wind. It was pleasant — the humans had at least refrained from using lighter fluid. "They aren't going to turn up dead," she said. "We're going to drag them into the Shadow, one at a time, and let them go. *Then* we'll kill them." She stared past Tucker, off into the trees. "The stone's going to grow. I know it."

K.C. shuddered. "Shit, I don't want that thing to grow. It's already —"

Crimson pounced, her slim body swelling to the red-furred nightmare of her Urshul form. She pinned her packmate to the ground and snarled. "*Grows tonight*," she managed, calling on what little she knew of the *Uremehir*. "*Grows with blood and pain*." She let him up, and he slowly clambered to his feet. She took her birth form again.

Tucker walked behind Crimson and said softly, "You know it doesn't matter if we skip this tonight. We've been working at it. The Shadow's ready to change for us. We can finish it when they've gone."

The alpha turned on him. "I had a dream, Tucker," she rasped. "I dreamed of these assholes, I dreamed of them cutting themselves with plastic swords and breaking twigs but pretending they were solid wood. I dreamed of them setting fires and waving their hands through the smoke, and

pretending it made them brave. You know what I saw then?" Tucker shook his head, mouth open. His alpha *never* talked about her dreams. "I saw one of us rise up from the middle of the crowd, and she said *'I'll show you fear,'* and she reached out and started tearing them to pieces."

Crimson stepped back and addressed all three of them. "We'll take them into the Shadow, and we'll kill them there. We'll put out the fire with their blood and grind their bones down to sand. And then you" — she pointed at Tucker — "will say your words and finish the rite." She nodded, slowly at first, then vigorously. "Meet at the north end of the campsite in two hours. We'll start then. Then the forest will be what we want."

"What *you* want," whispered Tucker, but if Crimson heard, she didn't turn around.

• • •

The humans had raked the coals from their fires into a long strip. The leaders of the seminar had already strewn the path with several bags of dirt so as to avoid a brushfire. Now, the humans took turns walking across the coals.

Judy stood off to the side and watched. She hadn't walked yet, and was rather hoping she wouldn't have to. Not because she was afraid — quite the opposite. She knew that walking across wood coals wasn't likely to burn anyone's feet, and watched in mild amusement as the people stumbled across the coals as though they were performing miracles.

Mike, who had already walked the coals and jumped triumphantly into the trough of water at the end, came up to her. "Are you ready to do this?"

She looked at him with what she thought was a smirk, but he just looked frightened. "You do know that this isn't a big deal, right? You're not going to get hurt unless you stand still for a minute."

He coughed and looked at the ground. "Judy, I don't know what's the matter — "

"*Nothing is the matter,*" she snapped.

He looked up sharply. "Jesus. See, this is what I mean. You've been snapping at me like this every night this month."

Judy's eyes narrowed. "You're crazy," she hissed. "We've been fucking like rabbits every night this month."

"Yeah, that, too," he said. "But I feel like you're going to kill me as soon as we're finished. I don't know what the hell's wrong — "

"OK, Judy, your turn!" Greene had wandered over and grabbed Judy's shoulders, gently pushing her toward the coals. He didn't notice that Judy was panting slightly, or that her eyes had taken on an odd yellow cast. He'd probably have thought it was the moonlight, anyway.

• • •

Crimson was standing between the trees near the clearing that the seminar was using as their campsite. She gazed hungrily at the throngs of people. It would be difficult, she knew, to pull them all into the Shadow. She would kill the strongest and fastest here and take their bodies into the spirit wilds, then hunt down the others. She felt a string of drool roll down her chin. *Oh, yes,* she thought. *Just like the dream.*

Tucker was trying to find his voice. *This is wrong,* his mind kept screaming. *This is so wrong!* The hunter in him agreed. Hunting humans like this, for no reason, would only bring retribution, from other humans, other Uratha, even from the spirits. He considered terminating the rite, reversing all of the progress they'd made over the past few months... but could he even do that? Would the Shadow change to fit what they had wrought even without his entreaties now?

Shelly looked in disappointment at her arm. No scars. She *never* scarred anymore, no matter what she fought, no matter what bit her. She suspected silver would leave a scar, but she was too afraid to try. Maybe after the forest became bloody and vicious, all over instead of just at the locus, maybe then it would attract something strong enough to mark her.


K.C. stood a short way off from his pack. Like Tucker, he knew this was wrong, but he had seen the hungry look in his alpha's eyes and wanted to stay as far from her as possible. *I hate this place,* he thought. *I hate that rock. I hate those fucking spirits.*

Crimson glanced up and saw the moon. She felt strength course through her, and she threw back her head and screamed in joy, beginning the hunt.

• • •

Judy stood at the front of the path of coals. She felt heat. Smelled burning wood. Smelled sweat. Heard chanting. Saw light, fire, screaming faces, Mike's fear. Smelled... blood. Blood crackling and boiling on a heated stone.

She looked up and saw the gibbous moon, and heard... a howl. No, a scream. A loud, ecstatic



scream, the beginning of something, the jumping-off point of something hungry. The longest orgasm she'd ever heard. A tearful entreaty to something she'd never known.

She took a step, and stopped. She felt the coals begin to burn her feet, slowly, the pain rising up through the soles of her feet.

Greene reached out to grab her. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Keep walking."

Judy turned to him and picked him up by the jaw. She smelled burning hair, heard her clothes tearing. "I'll show you fear," she said, but the words came out slurred into a snarl.

• • •

The werewolves leapt from their hiding places and charged at the assembled humans... but they were already screaming in fear. Crimson looked around wildly, trying to figure out what was causing their panic. *It's not me*, she thought, and this realization stung. Tucker ran up behind her wearing the Urhan form and whined in confusion.

Then the pack heard the howl. It rose up from the clearing, drowned out the sounds of screaming humans, the night sounds of the forest, the crackling of the fire. The howl saturated the forest, turning every tree, leaf and twig to its haunting resonance. The howl chased the humans as they fled into the trees, falling down into the deep valley and slashing their flesh on the thickets. They looked back, trying to identify the beast behind them, but there was nothing but the howl.

Judy stood on the coals, now almost nine feet tall. She was covered in brown fur and lifted massive, muscular arms to the moon. She held in her claws Greene's lifeless body, and her lips were stained with his heart's blood.

The other four werewolves approached, awestruck by the power of her howl. Judy threw the body into the coals and leaped forward at the pack.

Crimson changed to Urshul form and pounced at Judy, intending, perhaps, to knock her down and subdue her. Judy saw the beast springing and reached forward, catching Crimson's massive body in her claws and throwing her toward the bonfire. Judy turned to the rest of the pack, blood on her fangs and *Kuruth* eating at her heart.

"It's all right," said Tucker. "It's over."

Judy stumbled, and dropped back into her human form. Crimson staggered over, shaking the embers from her fur, and managed to force herself into her Hishu form as well. The new Uratha

turned to the alpha, looked her up and down, and recognized her spiritual sister under the gibbous moon.

Tucker touched his alpha's shoulder. "This is enough," he said. "Please. We couldn't catch them if we tried, anyway, but this is enough. I can finish the rite."

Crimson hadn't taken her eyes off Judy. "Let's do it." She smiled, the disappointment of losing the hunt melting away. She felt the Cahalunim around her, around Judy, heard their distant screams and felt herself shudder as they sang. *She'll dream,*

Crimson thought, and felt a savage, pulsing joy in her heart. *She'll dream, and I'll sing. This place will be what we want.*

Judy, of course, did not know what they were talking about. She looked up again to the swelling moon, and then looked back at her sister. *I don't need to leave this place,* she thought. She glanced over to the fire pit and heard whispers of pain and fear on the stone inside. She tasted blood on her lips again, still warm, fresh from the vein, and, for some reason, she found herself smiling.



Sample file

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TERRITORIES™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE: HOW TO COMING	2
INTRODUCTION	10
CHAPTER ONE: DRAWING BORDERS (PLAYER DESIGN)	14
CHAPTER TWO: MAPPING THE LAND (STORYTELLING)	52
CHAPTER THREE: LINES IN THE SAND (SAMPLE TERRITORIES)	72

INTRODUCTION

“EACH ADVANTAGE OF PERMANENT VILLAGE LIFE HAS A CORRESPONDING DISADVANTAGE. DO PEOPLE CRAVE COMPANY? YES, BUT THEY ALSO GET ON EACH OTHER’S NERVES.”

— MARVIN HARRIS, *CANNIBALS AND KINGS*

The moon rises over the city, and a small group of people meet in a disused basement. After a moment of discussion, they shed their clothes, take on the forms of wolves and prowl the city. The streets beneath their feet are concrete, cracked and worn by weather and cars, but lead to gatherings of prey just as surely as a game trail in the forest. The Uratha patrol their territory, making sure that the prey remains prey and that the Uratha remain the predators.

Why do werewolves cling to the notion of keeping and protecting territory? Is it instinct from their lupine side? Possibly, but werewolves don’t simply hunt in their territories. They often protect their territories from incursions by Hosts, hostile spirits and other threats. Many packs police loci to make sure that spirits don’t slip into the material world and cause problems. This behavior doesn’t usually hinder a werewolf’s hunt, so why bother?

Uratha are not wolves or humans, but the Uratha have the instinct and drives of each. Their wolf nature tells them to hunt, to claim a territory and keep competing predators out. Their human side compels them to protect their territory, because if they do not, the pack and all it holds dear is at risk. Tribal imperatives figure into this equation, as well. The Hunters in Darkness are bound by their vow to let no sacred place in their territory be violated. A Blood Talon might never conceive of surrendering her home, no matter what the opposition.

Ask a werewolf why she claims territory, though, and the question might confuse her. The need for territory is basic, primal and, to the Uratha, a part of their identity.

THE TERRITORIAL CHRONICLE

That doesn’t mean, however, that a Werewolf chronicle has to take territory and the defense thereof as a theme. Doing so is very appropriate thematically, and has a lot of great story potential to

boot, and so territory and its role in the chronicle is the focus of this book.

We’ve already discussed, in brief, what drives Uratha to claim territories. The reasons that a pack does so, however, are ultimately their own. The more important question might be, from the standpoint of the game, why should Uratha characters worry about territory? Or, even more simply, why is such a chronicle fun?

WORLD BUILDING

Many players like the notion of designing their characters’ strongholds, even if that “stronghold” is actually a few city blocks. Knowing what’s contained in that area, what the characters’ meeting places and neutral ground are, where the characters go to relax or plan their hunts and what areas even they avoid makes the story come alive for the players. The territory, as will be discussed later in this book, is a character in the chronicle just as much as the werewolves and their enemies, and every character benefits from detail.

This detail does not have to be present at the start of the chronicle, of course. Just as characters grow and develop as players guide them through stories, spend experience points and learn about them, territories change as the Uratha interact with them. Indeed, looking at the initial notes on a territory and realizing how much the pack has changed things, for better or worse, can be an eye-opening experience for a player.

The territory can also be an extended metaphor for the pack. The notion that “the king is the land” is a bit extreme for our purposes, but it is certainly true that werewolves can influence the ambiance of their territories by changing the *Hisil*, driving off certain kinds of spirits and so on. The Rite of the Chosen Ground and Fortify the Border Marches are ways to influence the spiritscape of a territory, but the more well-defined that territory is, the more those rites mean. It’s one thing to say that the Gauntlet in the

area grows thicker, but quite another to say that bar fights in that area decline because the anger-spirits can no longer influence people as easily.

HOME IS WHERE THE HORROR IS

The horror genre is always more compelling when the protagonists have something at stake, something personal to lose. In *Werewolf*, the characters' main source of personal danger is often their own fury, which means that everything around them is in peril. Driving this home to the players, however, is much easier when the players (and the characters) are invested in the story and their surroundings. If the players put time and effort into detailing their packs' territory, they will probably be careful to avoid Death Rage when inside that territory, lest they destroy everything they've worked for. If the territory isn't fleshed out, though, and simply feels like "a city" or "a neighborhood," the perceived danger of *Kuruth* is severely lessened, and, therefore, so is the horror surrounding it.

This principle applies to external threats as well. Uratha shouldn't be willing to cut and run the minute something comes into their territory to threaten them. While a wise pack recognizes when it is overpowered, the characters should be able to use their knowledge of their territory, its geography and history, to repel invaders. The possibility that the characters could lose their homes to another pack or a stranger menace such as the Hosts or even an *idigam* should be enough to ground your chronicle in the genre of savage horror — but this requires that the players know what their characters are fighting for. That means that the territory needs to feel like *home* to the characters. When the players and the Storyteller are willing to put in the requisite amount of effort in order to evoke this feeling, however, the chronicle achieves a much greater level of drama and excitement. If the players feel that they know their characters' home, the players can share the characters' elation when they successfully fend off attackers or root out a persistent threat.

CHOOSING A TERRITORY

A few basic principles of territory choice, however, are worthy of consideration at the very beginning. What, for instance, does the pack's choice of territory say about that pack? A pack that goes out of its way to claim an urban territory might be composed of Uratha who grew up in large cities, but then they might also be Iron Masters who feel a spiritual compulsion to hunt in the concrete jungle. A pack

that will only claim a rural territory with a great deal of land might have too many members for a smaller hunting ground, or the members might be uncomfortable around each other and need the space. A pack with an enemy might claim territory near them to stage attacks.

Another important consideration when deciding upon a setting for a chronicle is whether that setting is meant to be a real place or a fictional city. Both approaches have their advantages and drawbacks, of course. Likewise, the troupe might wish their pack's territory to be in a milieu with which they are familiar, or a more exotic setting.

REALITY

The major advantage to using a real city is that most of the hard work — deciding on a city's population, major industry and geography — is already done for you. All you need to do is find an atlas or look online for a wealth of information about most cities. Chapter Two contains more information about researching cities and to what degree research is necessary, but the benefit of simply being able to look up such facts rather than make them up is clear. If the players are inclined to do this sort of research, using a real city is of even more benefit because it allows the players to find the nuances of the area that they find interesting on their own time.

Unfortunately, small towns don't normally get comprehensive treatment online, although information such as population numbers is usually possible to find. Still, the ability to find a street map of the territory and mark off areas that the characters have claimed, designated as neutral ground or still want to investigate saves a great deal of time for the Storyteller.

FAMILIARITY

Using the troupe's hometown or an area that all of the players know well can be a way to introduce a degree of verisimilitude into the chronicle. The players can picture their characters slinking down familiar streets, hunting through local parks or washing the blood from their fur in a nearby lake. Resources for the chronicle are only a short walk or drive away, and anyone the players meet on the street can serve as inspiration for Storyteller characters.

The problem with using such locales is that the players sometimes feel strange about introducing horror, death and savage fury into an area that they know personally. If you do use such a location, be sensitive to the players. Don't include people that the

troupe knows personally as Storyteller characters. While everyone involved understands (or should) that the game is fictional, hearing a description of someone that the *player* knows well being torn apart by a frenzied werewolf can still be a bit uncomfortable.

On the other hand, including such unpleasant details can be a way to drive home the threat under which the Uratha live, and can serve to heighten the drama of the chronicle. Just be receptive to the needs and comfort levels of the other players, and know when to back off.

FICTIONAL LOCALES

Working with a setting that the Storyteller or the entire troupe creates out of whole cloth takes quite a bit of effort, but can be very rewarding. If the troupe works together on creating the setting for the chronicle, the members know the setting well and will feel comfortable adding details along the way without worrying about contradiction from a real-world source. A fictional city can easily be based on an existing one (comic books, for instance, have been doing this for years). The troupe can use Paris, Los Angeles or even a smaller city such as Indianapolis or Sacramento as a basis, but change the name and any other details necessary to add a sense of discovery to the chronicle. If the chronicle takes place in a fictional city, the players never have to feel as though their characters' events are hampered by real-world events (the players really shouldn't feel that way anyway, but it's sometimes hard to shake such notions).

Creating a fictional city isn't easy, of course. Even if all the troupe does is pick a real city and change a few names around, the players still need to know enough about the city to set the chronicle there. It is possible, of course, to simply create a name and a skeletal history and make up the details as the chronicle progresses, but this can result in the city feeling false and rootless. That isn't the feeling that the troupe should be looking for in a territory-centered chronicle. Without the feeling of the area being "home" to the characters, the players might have trouble being invested in protecting it.

EXOTIC LOCALES

A strange and exotic territory presents a number of advantages to the troupe. For one thing, a territory with a distinct culture and flavor allows the players to consider what Uratha who grew up in that culture would be like. A Blood Talon Ithaeur raised on a Navajo reservation is likely to express his spirituality

and warrior's ethic in a very different way than one who grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Also, given the fantastic nature of Storytelling games, choosing a territory that is exotic and distinct from the troupe's experience is entirely appropriate. If the players all grew up in Midwestern suburbs, setting the chronicle in *any* big city can feel exotic. This brings up another point — "exotic" is a subjective term. What one player might find exotic and enticing, another player might find dull if she knows it well. (On the other hand, that dichotomy of knowledge can make for interesting roleplaying between the two players, as one learns about the other's culture.)

The biggest drawback to an exotic territory is the amount of work required to represent the territory fairly. If one of the players knows the area, the workload is lessened, but if none of the players have ever visited the area, the presentation can feel forced or artificial. This might not be something that concerns the troupe, especially if the players don't know the difference, but some players are more concerned than others with "accuracy."

In general, though, accurately presenting what an area is like in real life should take a backseat to the mood and feel of the World of Darkness. In real life, after all, werewolves, vampires and other monsters don't lurk in our shadows, and it's fair to assume that, in a world with such predators about, things would be subtly different. The important thing is to make the territory real to the players, and that often means getting at least a few of the details right.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter One: Drawing Borders discusses selecting territories and helps players be aware of the options for doing so and the advantages and drawbacks of various kinds of domains. This chapter also presents new game systems for representing territorial changes and evolution.

Chapter Two: Mapping the Land presents advice for the Storyteller on fleshing out existing territories and using the territory as a character in a chronicle. Also present are pointers for how territories can change with and without the characters' involvement and a list of potential encounters and events that the Storyteller can use to springboard stories.

Chapter Three: Lines in the Sand consists of five sample territories to use in your chronicles — a small town, a stretch of wilderness, a section of city, a swath of suburbia and a incipient war zone. These

places may serve either as refuges for the characters or as enticing goals for them to achieve. Some of these territories are written as specific places, but can easily be shifted to any locale that the chronicle requires. Other territories are more general, with no real geographical location intended but still full of easy-to-use hooks, characters and places worth fighting over.

INSPIRATIONS

The Shield: If there is a better example for a morally-conflicted pack of Uratha and their interac-

tions with their territory than Vic Mackey and his Strike Team, it hasn't revealed itself yet. *The Shield* is a violent and harsh look at the tradeoffs that police officers have to make while ruling their territory.

SimCity: The video game series. No, really. It only gives the bird's-eye view of a city and the level of control that a mayor or city manager might have. But the game's simulation does a good job of working through what would happen if a major new entity appears in town (police station, university, etc.) and what would happen if other areas are allowed to decay.



Sample file

