

And that, I think, was the handle—that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting — on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave. . . .

— Hunter S. Thompson,
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

Through the Ebon Gate

An adventure for *Geist: the Sin-Eaters* using the Storytelling Adventure System

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STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM		
SCENES	MENTAL	●●●●○
10	PHYSICAL	●●●●○
	SOCIAL	●●●○
	XP LEVEL	0-34



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Sin-Eaters know that their strange existence is a complicated one. They stand at the crossroads between life and death and endure all the complications of both. But there are others, desperate for something to believe in, who believe that a Sin-Eater's bond with her geist is a blessed state of unification and a triumph over the limitations of the human form.

These souls make up the brethren of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. They have been told that their path lies not in life or death, but in a divine state somewhere in between. Those who have only experienced one life cannot achieve true enlightenment. The sacred symbiosis of spirit and flesh must be achieved to take the next step. Sin-Eaters are their saints, their bodhisattvas. The brethren are told that they must step through the black gate to reach their potential. They are told that this is humanity's next step – humanity's destiny.

They are misled.

Introduction

Through the Ebon Gate is a Storytelling Adventure System story for **Geist: the Sin-Eaters**. It's essentially a kit to running this story for your troupe, which means only you, as the Storyteller, should read it. Like a kit, **Through the Ebon Gate** contains all the parts to build a story. The tools you use to build it are the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Geist: the Sin-Eaters**, as well as the usual pencils, paper and dice. When you get your troupe together, you'll use these parts and tools to build a story, but how you put everything together is up to you. It depends on what you're trying to do, whether it's a stand-alone scenario designed for an evening or two of entertainment or a story in an ongoing **Geist** chronicle. The only right way is whatever ends up being fun for you and your troupe.

Treatment

Through the Ebon Gate opens at a carnival gathering. Sin-Eaters mingle and carouse, make deals, stoke rivalries and build bonds between krewes. In the midst of the festivities, a passenger train derails, flung off the rails by an explosion in the engine. The cars slide into the gathering, loosing chaos and death on the Sin-Eaters' celebration of life. As the krewes investigate, they find a strange inverted sigil that means "shattering" in a vulgar corruption of the Old Tongue.

The train's destruction was caused by a member of the Black Gate cult who died on the train, trying to become a Sin-Eater and impress those in attendance at the carnival. Mateo, the suicide bomber, is distraught over his failure and wracked with guilt over what he's done. He was misled. As the krewes begin to search for the rest of the cult, they run across Marci, another member of the church who has been deftly manipulated into killing herself to find Mateo, whom she loves. She's wearing an

extremely unstable vest of explosives, putting herself, the krewes, and innocent bystanders at risk. After the krewes deal with her, whether they save her or not, they approach the church's meeting place, an antique bookstore in a strip mall storefront. Agents of the Lost Minister, the shade who is using the Seekers for his own ends, ambush the characters along the way.

Once there, the leader of the cult, Uriah Long, tries to explain the cult's beliefs. The characters have to convince him to take them to see the Minister, which he does by divining the nearest **Avernian Gate**. The gate he leads the characters to requires them to board the spirit of the train that crashed in the beginning, leading them onto a train ride into the underworld, where they are attacked by a swarm of the minister's guardians before they finally get to confront the Lost Minister in a chapel made of bone and iron.

Theme: A Shattered Reflection

Sin-Eaters didn't ask to become what they are. The Bound had no way of knowing what lay ahead when Death's cold hand brushed them. The Event was, in nearly every case, unintentional. Geists are not summoned. And yet, the brethren of the **Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit** dream of becoming essentially the same thing. They even try, in their own warped way, to help others become like the Bound. Worse, they worship Sin-Eaters because of their symbiotic relationship, their "divine" transcendence over life and death. The horrific acts they commit are done for what they consider to be the right reasons, but they don't really understand the essence of being a Sin-Eater. So why do they act as such a temptation for Sin-Eaters? Worship, adoration and admiration are hard things to shake off. More than one of the Bound has found herself surrounded by sycophants who expect great things from their unwitting leader. Remember, though, nothing is more dangerous than a disillusioned follower.

ABOUT THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the free **SAS Guide**, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Here are some of the features available in **Through the Ebon Gate**:

- **Interactive links.** Clicking on anything in blue will take you directly to the section referenced, or to an appropriate character sheet or prop. It may also take you to an external website that could be useful.
- **Scenes.** Clicking on a scene name in the scene flowchart or the page number in the scene card will take you to the full write-up of the scene.
- **Bookmarks.** This PDF is fully bookmarked, so you can jump to major sections at any time when the file is open.

Mood: Thriller

The ghostly world of **Geist** is a mix of many moods. **Through the Ebon Gate** is designed to be a thriller. The characters are trying to follow a trail of death back to its source, a cult of misled humans who worship ghosts and see Sin-Eaters as the spiritual culmination of mankind's divine potential. Over the course of the story, the krewe will have to negotiate with a suicidal girl who holds the fate of hundreds of people in her grief-stricken hands. They'll have to fight guardians of the Underworld on a train of the dead, and they'll confront a maddened ghost in his inner sanctum, a twisted and shifting chapel of bones. All the while, the mood should remain tense and urgent. The clock is ticking, and there's no telling what will happen or who these deluded and desperate people will kill next.

A Chapter in Your Chronicle

Through the Ebon Gate is perfectly suited as a chapter in an ongoing chronicle. Existing inter-krewe relationships can be augmented or transformed, depending on the characters' actions throughout this story. The Black Gate cultists can be set up here as recurring foils for your troupe's characters, or they can be a small group that is cleaned up and never heard from again, depending on your needs. For that matter, depending on how your troupe handles the story, Uriah Long might himself become a Sin-Eater. If he escapes, whether it be by becoming Bound, sheer luck, or mercy on the part of the troupe, he could become a dangerous and possibly powerful long-term foe or an erstwhile ally seeking redemption.

A Story By Itself

Conversely, **Through the Ebon Gate** can easily work as a one-shot. By starting in medias res, with the characters already together and at the carnival, you neatly sidestep the awkward "origin of the krewe" portion of the story. The carnival itself is a good chance for the players to slip into the skin of their characters before the action starts moving. When the local, active cultists are defeated and the characters have won, you can fade to the closing credits with a clean ending.

Backstory and Set-up

The Old Laws may forbid congress between the living and the dead, but that does not mean it doesn't happen with frightening regularity. Shades intrude upon the living to pass on dire warnings, to protect their loved ones, to execute vicious and convoluted plans of vengeance upon those who have wronged them or simply to alleviate boredom.

Sin-Eaters are popular among the dead because they have the potential to act as agents among the living. To these ghosts, who either don't have the skills to pierce the veil or exist in fear of the Kerberos, Sin-Eaters are a kind of grey-market beacon of hope, a weird and wonderful loophole. Among the other ghosts, those who have forsaken the archaic laws of the Underworld in favor of directly possessing or otherwise communicating with the living, Sin-Eaters are generally more of a nuisance. They step in where they aren't wanted and interfere with vengeful plots and mischief alike.

Among the living, Sin-Eaters are largely unknown. There are those whose lives have been touched by a Sin-Eater – the widow who received a final message from her husband via an enigmatic medium, the grateful homeowner who is no longer haunted by vicious poltergeists, or a curious cop who knows she saw a perp die, only to see him alive and well weeks later. Most of the time, these incidents are isolated and quickly forgotten, swept under the carpet or just ignored. Sometimes though, there's a brush with the underworld – just enough to sweep the cobwebs from her eyes. Watching a Sin-Eater at work or simply being haunted by a ghost can leave someone forever changed in subtle, insidious ways. It is not enough to attract a geist when the time comes, but the knowledge that something lies on the other side – that the world is bigger than the box modern society tries to fit it into – is enough to nudge someone onto the path.

And always, when someone is lost and alone in an unknown place, someone else is waiting to prey upon them. Shades who whisper sweet and opportunistic lies, ghosts who build cults of willing vessels and agents from the broken detritus of humanity.

The Black Gate

Nobody in the cult calls it the Black Gate. Followers are "Seekers" of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. The Black Gate is a symbol to them, the doorway we pass through when we step from this life into the next. Once the Gate is opened, the brethren of the church believe that the soul is diminished by its transformation into the spiritual realm. One spirit, one soul, is not capable of returning to physical existence. To return, once you have crossed the threshold of the Black Gate, one must find equilibrium with another spirit, unifying and forming a stronger whole from the two parts. Once the spirits have melded and the person has returned, he is enhanced, augmented, better than he once was. This is the next step of human existence, the Seekers teach.

In a way, this portion of the religion reflects the Orphic traditions. Orpheans revered the mythical Orpheus, who travelled into the underworld and returned to write a series of hymns teaching humans how to overcome the travails of the dead and transcend the underworld. Devotees carved these instructions onto golden leaves, which they had buried with them, to remind their forgetful spirits of the loopholes and rules they could exploit in the afterlife. The Seekers of the Unified Spirit may have similarities to the Orphic Circle, and may even trace their roots to a radical splinter sect of the Orphean path, but they are no longer ideologically related.



A Seeker believes that he is at a spiritual dead end as long as there is only one soul inhabiting his body. To move on, to move forward, he must die and find his literal soul mate. Seekers often begin by opening themselves up to possession, allowing shades to take control. To some, this takes on an addictive quality. The abdication of responsibility is liberating, and they have an excuse for their lack of control. After a while, though, the temporary “bond” they create with the possessing spirit isn’t enough. Suicide among the inner circles of the church is not only common; it’s expected. But suicide is a selfish act. To move on and leave so many others trapped in this life is just wrong. Many members of the church choose to help others along to the next path, those who would be too frightened to do so themselves. So many Seekers try to take as many of the unenlightened along with them as they can. It’s the only way to show them, to make them believe.

Once they have been initiated as Seekers, members are taught about the Bound as if they are the ultimate expression of what they may become. To them, a Sin-Eater is a nearly perfect expression of their goals: a seamless, symbiotic relationship between a ghost and a physical host. Many members spend their lives trying to become Sin-Eaters. Most of them are missing a few key ingredients, however. They are not mediums or psychics, nor are they infused by deathly energy. They just don’t have what it takes to attract a geist. It’s not their fault, of course: most Sin-Eaters don’t even know how they attracted their partner.

But that doesn’t stop the cultists of the Black Gate from trying to transform themselves by bargaining with ghosts, giving themselves up for possession and worse, or (for those with the most dangerous kind of incomplete knowledge) even trying to orchestrate elaborate near-death experiences to attract a ghost at the critical moment. Worse, their belief system is such that they often try to help others free themselves from their limited mortal state at the same time, with or without their cooperation. A Black Gate cultist may cause a large pile-up on the freeway. Another may gather his friends or family and “free” them, one by one, before killing himself. Another cultist may hide a bomb in the bag under his chair in a mall food court, blowing himself and everyone near him into oblivion. Each of them leaves a sigil, reversed as in Tarot symbolism, burned into a piece of paper. The symbol means “shattering” in the Old Tongue, and is usually accompanied by a rambling note filled with death imagery.

There’s something darkly tempting about the idea that the Seekers worship Sin-Eaters. It’s an ego trip to know that someone thinks you’re special, and all too easy to fall into the trap of letting it go to your head. But when atrocities are done in your name – to please you – how do you extricate yourself? The sorts of people who advance into the upper echelons of the Black Gate are not the type to take it lightly when their “angel” isn’t having fun anymore. A Sin-Eater may be the object of their adoration, but that can quickly turn into a prison (or worse) when the Sin-Eater doesn’t live up to the cult’s expectations. When normal people who ignore the existence of ghosts and ignorantly prefer to live are reviled, how much worse is the Sin-Eater who values life over death and squanders the gifts they’ve been given by the “Shining Ones?”

PORTRAYING THE SEEKERS

There’s a difficult line here. We’re talking about domestic terrorists and, what’s more, we’re talking about them as if they’re flawed but ultimately misled and pathetic souls. This adventure does not exist to glorify or apologize for the actions of the few to hurt and drive fear into the hearts of the many.

Mainstream media has a tendency to make our villains shallow. We’re not comfortable seeing ourselves in the bad guys. But this is the World of Darkness, and here we’re allowed to look deeper, to find the squirming human soul at the heart of darkness. If you absolutely cannot stomach the idea of portraying the brethren of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit as normal people who have made a mistake, feel free to portray them as unrepentant murderers, or submerge their personalities and choices beneath a malicious possessing shade. The Seekers have a habit of allowing ghosts to possess them, similar to the vodoun cheval. It’s always possible that one of the Lost Minister’s agents is literally driving Mateo or Marci to murder.

Nobody’s going to tell you you’re doing it wrong. The ultimate goal here is for you and your friends to have a good time for a few nights.

The Cast

Mateo Ortiz, the Train Bomber

Quotes: "I was supposed to become like you!"

"No, this can't be right. Why did I fail?"

"I didn't hurt them, I gave them a chance."

Virtue: Justice. Mateo believes that we all reap our just rewards.

Vice: Sloth. Mateo tends to wait for things to come to him.

Background: Mateo has never known where he belonged. A talented athlete, he loved playing soccer, but lacked the drive and determination to turn pro. A handsome man, he was too shy and socially awkward to approach anyone he was attracted to. He worked one dead-end job at a sporting goods store and another at a gas station near his apartment. Mateo watched his life become a mediocre, tepid thing. He spent all his time working, just barely making ends meet. He had his own apartment, but he worked so much that he only was only really there when he was asleep.

Then, the insomnia came. He couldn't sleep, no matter what he tried. He tried pills, roots and homeopathic remedies - nothing worked. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw her standing there. The hag haunted him



for months. Her breath was like blood sloshing over rocks. Her cruel and wrinkled lips dripped with black, cancerous discharge. Mateo knew she wasn't a dream or a hallucination. Eventually he moved, but he still thought of her.

Then he met Marci, a girl who led him to the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. She introduced him to Uriah and the others, and Mateo finally found others who would listen and believe his story of the hag. In time, Mateo moved up through the ranks. Uriah told him about Sin-Eaters as the Lost Minister had told him, and eventually he was trusted with liberating the souls on the 815-passenger train by order of the Minister himself.

Description: In life, Mateo was a handsome young man, with tightly curled black hair and a soccer player's physique. In death, the force of the explosion that killed him twists his features. Gouges and burns have turned Mateo's face into a map of failed intent.

Storytelling Hints: You are in shock. Everything was supposed to change - you had a sense of purpose for the first time in your life, and yet you failed. It doesn't even occur to you that you might have been manipulated, or that the church might have the wrong answers. You failed the church. You are at fault. Now you torture yourself and wonder how things might have gone wrong. You're not worthy of unification, and you're definitely not worthy to speak to the player characters or other Sin-Eaters.

Marci Palmer

Quotes: "This wasn't supposed to happen."

"I'll find him. I'll bring him back."

"I won't look back."

Virtue: Hope. Though she has none currently, she prefers to see the light of hope in the world.

Vice: Envy. Marci has always secretly wished that she was more like the normal girls.

Background: Marci grew up in a pretty standard household: She lives with a stay-at-home mom, older sister and younger brother, both of whom got more attention from her mother than she did. Her father, though, taught political science at the local university, and doted on his middle child. She spent a lot of her formative years prowling the stacks at the university and listening to the college rock that she heard on the quad while her peers were shopping and obsessing over boy bands. When she actually got to college herself, she majored in English and worked as a barista in the campus coffee shop.

She was a grad student teaching Composition 101 in a classroom a floor above her father's when he had his heart attack. After his funeral, she bottled up, ignoring her family and becoming defensively snarky, afraid of getting close to someone else and losing them, too. She began spending her free time during the day at the university in her father's old office. The room, even stripped of his pictures and books, felt right to her in a way that her mother's house didn't. She felt like he was there for her, even though he was gone. Other members of the faculty didn't have the heart to kick her out, so she began to decorate the vacant



Uriah Long, the Conduit

Quotes: “You have been touched by divinity. Why would you keep others from having the same chance?”

“I’m only trying to help them find what they are looking for.”

“I’m afraid you don’t understand.”

Virtue: Faith. Uriah believes that this life and the next are connected by faith and belief.

Vice: Lust. Uriah has always lusted after forbidden knowledge.

Background: Uriah Long was born in the backwoods of southern Florida, where the Everglades touch the sinuous lines of the highway known as Alligator Alley. There, his batty, broken great-aunt Mary Constance raised him in a rotten, cluttered shotgun house after his parents died. He was home-schooled by the strange woman and taught her warped version of the Gospel.

Deep in the swamps, she showed him the old trees, and the remnants of things forgotten and dying. She told him that they were weak because heathens no longer worshipped them. Mary whispered this in front of the spirits of the swamp, disgusted by them. Uriah whispered back, awed. You must recognize in

URIAH’S DEATHLY ABILITIES

Gateseeker (●●● Mediumist Merit)

Prerequisites: Death Sight

Similar to Dowsing (see p. 38 of **Second Sight**), a Gateseeker is a medium who, by concentrating, may be drawn to an Avernian Gate. Once it is found, the character does not necessarily have any idea how to actually open the gate unless they have previously researched it or have been told how to do so by a Sin-Eater or ghost. The procedure is similar to dowsing. The medium must concentrate and enter a trance, wherein they wander blindly, drawn to the Gate. Some mediums use props, such as a dowsing rod made of bone, while others simply roll their eyes back in their head and lose themselves in the trance.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult

Action: Extended. The Storyteller determines the number of successes required, based on how well-hidden or distant the Avernian Gate is. A Gate hidden in a cemetery might require three successes, while one hidden in the boiler room of an old mall might require 10 or more. Each roll represents 30 minutes of seeking.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The medium is led on a wild goose chase far from his desired goal. He also loses all accumulated successes.

office with photos of her father and reminders of their relationship, and his office became hers. One afternoon, she felt his hand on her head, an echo of his affection. She kept going back, hoping to feel it again, and even began to sleep there sometimes.

Then she met Uriah, and he made her a believer. She listened to his stories, and tried to reach her father’s ghost. After a time, she brought Mateo into the church. The two of them spent a lot of time together, each of them carrying a torch for the other but both too shy to say anything. And now, she’s just looking for a way to tell him how she felt.

Description: Marci’s a cute girl, in that nerdy college girl way. She has a round face, framed by dark hair cut into a bob. She’s the kind of girl who wears a pair of thick-framed glasses for the look, even though she has perfectly serviceable contacts. She tends to wear clothes that don’t match in a quirky way, and ironic t-shirts with the logos of forgotten (or hideous) 80s or indie bands.

Storytelling Hints: You’re a sarcastically funny girl at the best of times. When the characters meet you, though, you’re lost in the depths of a vast grief. There is no hope or solace except doing what the Lost Minister has promised you if you carry out his wishes. You just have to do this one thing, and you can pass through the Black Gate and get your message to the two people who mean anything to you. You give lip service to the idea of coming back as a Sin-Eater (though you call them “Shining Ones,” like the rest of the Seekers), but really, when it comes down to it, you don’t care as long as you’re with Mateo and your father.