

I fucking hate Corax.

I know they're part of Gaia's Plan. I know they've been allies of the Lords as long as your ancestors can remember; they get along with my people okay too. I know they give us good info, at least when they're in the mood to do it.

But if I come across one I'm gonna kill the goddamned thing, because I also know they've fucked us. Not that it'll do any good at this point - the cat's already outta the bag and has shit everywhere. But maybe killing a Raven will make me feel a little better. Maybe it'll keep that particular bird from fucking up something else.

The Vanguard of Sirius was important, dammit. I'm not gonna say it was nice to use and lie to the mongrels and our own people. But it was the right thing to do. We took all these damned mutts running around and made something good from 'em. A lot of Debased that would've been major problems for the Garou Nation became assets instead, and you well know how damn much we need the help. Instead of dying from starvation, hunters and our kill-happy kin, our dog-bloods died in service to Mother Gaia. She wins, we win, they win - or at least, we all won, past tense. So what if the entire thing was a lie? So's the goddamned Veil, and no one's whining about that.

And for better than a decade it worked. It took so much to get the project off the ground. Truckloads of cash, pulling rank and kissing spirit ass, shooing other Garou away from our little operation, and (of course) the sacrifices we had to make to Sirius and then Dog for them to even consider accepting Debased children...

But it's all gone to hell now.

(Come to think of it, how do the Corax actually help? Is that a fair thing to ask? We're on the front lines fighting Spirals, fomori, leeches, destructive human "progress," and Gaia knows all what else. Garou after Garou falls in duty to Gaia, faster than we can make more of ourselves. Big surprise, we're dying. Meanwhile, the damned Fera hide, and whine about how much we suck based on shit that happened before Mesopotamia, and nurse their grudges when they're taking a break from fighting us. And the Ravens somehow fulfill their "purpose" by snooping, gossiping, joking, and mocking us right to our faces. Once in a while, they grace us with intel on our enemies that tends to gets yet more of us killed. But how did outing our operation help them or anyone else? That's what has me stumped. Sons of bitches, every last one of 'em.)

So now our little tribe project is now a loose cannon. The Vanguard of Sirius ain't listening to us anymore - hell, they hate us. Vanguard packs are still doing what they were before, except now they're more organized. Oh, and now they're openly fighting us too. They're not only surviving, they're doing just dandy. And, wonder of wonders, Sirius and their other totems seem to be supporting them against us.

To quote Dr. Frankenstein in our little Wolfman movie, we've created a monster.

The Vanguard is gonna have to sink or swim on its own; even if we felt like we owed these guys something (and I ain't feeling too charitable right now), they wouldn't accept our help at this point. Sorry our group's bleeding hearts didn't see it that way, but it's not like they have much to say about it now. I may have laid into 'em verbally, but let the record show I didn't lift a claw against anyone. That's not a dig at you, specifically, I'm just saying.

Dealing with the fallout is the best we can do now. No way we can salvage this. I can't imagine even the keenest of you Lords were able to spin this in any good way. Your tribe caught most of the flack for this, which may not be exactly fair, but be damned if I'm not taking advantage of that. You high-profiles like the limelight, and that means you can take the heat too. I took my own licks for this, and while I've not been declared Ronin, it's safe to say that I now have no future in my sept. I'm gonna wrap things up here, and maybe move somewhere secret and let all this die down. I'll probably die down before it does, but oh well. I gotta watch my own ass, you understand. Especially since what happened the last time we all got together.

It was nice working with you and the others, at least before our Masters thing all fell apart and we started killing each other. It was good while it lasted, and we accomplished a lot. But don't bother looking me up, okay?

Fucking Corax.

the VANGUARD of SIRIUS

A Werewolf the Apocalypse supplement by Steven Markley



The Veil within the Veil has been torn asunder, and the Garou Nation now knows of the Vanguard of Sirius. But rather than falling without its Masters or fleeing Garou persecution, the tribe is reborn. Gone are its naivete and sycophantic idealism. The Vanguard now has its own identity, one entirely independent of the Garou Nation it once emulated. Neither friends of the Nation, nor yet its enemies, the militant Vanguard is a wild card in the Apocalypse endgame.

Recent History

The Vanguard of Sirius's fortunes had improved lately, more than one might expect for a ragtag group of Debased and outcast werewolves directed by a hidden conspiracy of Garou. The pseudo-tribe's star began rising, despite previous years' lack of growth and the unrelenting conflict into which it was driven, thanks to far greater spiritual resources becoming available to them.

In August 2005, a spirit servant of Sirius led the Masters to a dormant caern just outside Sedona, Arizona, sacred land once attended by the great star-spirit. Six Masters and eight Vanguard elders performed the rituals to reawaken the site's energies and for Sirius to again adopt the land. The newly reborn Sky Lights Caern was then handed over to the Vanguard. The Masters explained to the Sirius the importance of maintaining the caern and keeping the area safe, clean and secret, drilling their new responsibilities into them. Then the Masters departed, leaving the caern in the hands of ranking Vanguard. Three packs took up permanent residence at the Sky Lights Caern for its care and upkeep, and visiting packs cycled in and out regularly.

Around this time, negotiations with the Beast Courts' Dog totem finally bore results. (See pg. 18 of **The Debased** for more on this.) Dog agreed to sponsor several Vanguard packs. For the first time, Vanguard enjoyed the patronage of a totem spirit other than Sirius, and Dog's packs proved capable and loyal. Encouraged by this precedent, Flea and Goat adopted several packs by the end of '06, to the delight of the tribe. This spurred the spirit community (especially spirits associated with these totems) to become more receptive of the Vanguard's mutts and once-Ronin. While they were nowhere close to universal acceptance, more spirits were willing to negotiate with the Vanguard instead of snubbing them entirely. This was parlayed into new Gifts, refined rites, and recognition of Vanguard rank and renown.

This turnaround in spirit relations had a huge impact on the Vanguard's morale and perception of itself as a legitimate tribe. And as they ever did, they worked tirelessly to prove themselves worthy of that status; certainly, they would soon stand beside the Garou Nation.

Then the Vanguard of Sirius was betrayed.

Rumors

In February 2006, perhaps a bit before, strange rumors about dog-blooded started circulating in certain Southwestern U.S. septs. As is often the case with rumors, some were pretty outrageous: an entire tribe of Debased, possibly serving the Wyrms; a Bone Gnawer-Debased "merger;" a great movement of vengeful Ronin; conspiracies between mongrel packs and ranking Garou; attempts by Spirals (or alternately, Shadow Lords) to undermine wolf Kin-folk of rival Garou by exposing them to breeding Debased.

Certain things set these accounts apart from other gossip of the sort, however. Rather than growing more convoluted and outrageous with each telling, these rumors soon pared down to one: there was a secret tribe of Debased sponsored by hidden elements within the Garou Nation. Instead of traded mostly among young, impressionable werewolves, rumors of this mutt tribe often started with high-ranking Garou and filtered down through the ranks. And finally, this disturbing idea this was soon discussed in septs all over North America (and even abroad), faster than Garou rumormongers could spread the tale... but not faster than Corax could, to whom the rumors could all be traced.

The rumors worried septs enough for them to start comparing notes and looking into the matter. There was enough corrobora-

tion to seriously concern the Garou. American septs began a coordinated effort to dig up the truth behind this supposed Debased tribe, despite efforts by several ranking werewolves to discourage this. Returning to the source of the rumors, Corax were pressed into coughing up more information. Mongrels were rounded up and interrogated, often brutally. Through these means and others, the truth came to light – not all of it, but enough to answer some questions. This intelligence was shared between septs and tribes in a rare display of Garou solidarity during the Spring of 2006.

The werewolves' fears were substantiated: a tribe of mutts really did exist, it was called the Vanguard of Sirius, and it was supported by a secretive cabal within the Garou Nation.

Revelation!

Paranoia was high within the Garou Nation by now, with dog-blooded and their activities on the minds of many. Renewed purges against mutts took place. Even mutts nominally accepted by their Garou septs were grilled on what they knew, and almost all were either banished or killed.

This investigative hysteria peaked in late March, when within a single week fourteen prominent werewolves – ten Shadow Lords, three Bone Gnawers and a single Child of Gaia – left their respective septs. They gave little warning for their departures, and offered spurious reasons if any. Curiously, they were among those that lobbied the most ardently against the Vanguard inquiries, and all but four hailed from whence the rumors started: the American Southwest. Eleven returned after a week or so, tight-lipped and some with fresh wounds. They were all questioned thoroughly; the Judges of Doom took special interest in the Shadow Lord suspects. Of the accused, a Bone Gnawer, the Child of Gaia and two Shadow Lords suffered great renown loss but were allowed to retain membership in their septs and tribes, while three Lords were cast out as Ronin and two others killed in brutal Punishment Rites. The remaining three werewolves fled judgment and were declared tribeless in absentia.

The Garou Nation – using information gained from their investigations and three now-forthcoming Masters – quickly focused attention on the Vanguard of Sirius. While hapless ferals bore the brunt of their efforts, several Sirius strongholds were rooted out. A few Ronin were targeted as well.

But not all Garou reacted so aggressively. Many were concerned about the Debased and the Vanguard tribe, but not all of them felt violence was the solution. The discovery of the Sirius led to an increased awareness of mongrels, and some werewolves pondered these matters carefully despite the pervasive atmosphere of fear and anger. Perhaps surprisingly, many thought that if the worst thing about dog-blooded was that they weren't part of Garou culture or defending Gaia, then organizing them in a tribal structure was a good idea. But the Masters' lies and secrecy turned many against the Sirius that might have been receptive to it (or at least the idea of it). As it stood, the Masters looked very guilty of something rotten, which cast suspicion on their ad-hoc tribe. Why hadn't the Masters trusted their fellow Garou with this? Did they have some sort of subversive agenda? And now that the secret of the Vanguard is out, what now?

The Garou Nation was divided over what to do. But no few werewolves saw the upstart tribe as a problem, and intended to deal with that problem by eliminating it.

Convocation

The Vanguard of Sirius didn't understand what happened at first. They had no idea anything was wrong until more than a month after the Masters deserted them. The Masters were always secretive and prone to staying gone months at a time between their appearances. The Sirius was a self-regulating entity that required little oversight from its creators, and operated as it always had from the Masters' dissolution in April until early June. The Sirius had no idea that anything was amiss until Garou started attacking them in formerly secure strongholds and along their customary routes.

Vanguard retreated in the face of the werewolf offensive, fleeing to tribal holdings. They found many had been compromised by hostile Garou. That they weren't to fight or harm Gaian Garou had been drilled into the Sirius, so many didn't fight back; those unable to flee or unwilling to defend themselves were slaughtered. Almost a quarter of the Vanguard were killed in this pogrom. Desperate and confused, the surviving Sirius traveled to the Sky Lights Caern, the tribe's spiritual home and the one location that remained secure, though it was a long and perilous journey for many.

Sky Light Caern arrivals were shocked to see other packs greeting them, all battle-weary and confused, and more Vanguard arrived at the sept continually. Ferals also filtered in, singly and in small groups; some tagged along with Sirius that met them along the way, while others came independently. Within two months, the entire surviving Vanguard of Sirius tribe had gathered at the Sky Lights caern. The tribe had been decimated by Garou attacks, but new recruits helped make up for the tribe's casualties. Experienced Sirius inducted feral newcomers into the tribe, while others licked their wounds, traded stories, and reinforced tribal bonds. The Vanguard were perplexed at a seeming united Garou offensive against them, and desperately awaited the masters' guidance and reassurance. The Masters would come, the tribe elders insisted – they *must*. They'd know what to do.

To say the Sky Lights Sept was overcrowded at this point would be an understatement. Better than two hundred Debased and a dozen werewolves swarmed the sweltering, desolate Sedona landscape. That, plus all the recent fighting and their not knowing what the hell was going on, led to hot tempers and stress for everyone, especially the caern's keepers. All these Sirius needed to eat, and they ranged into nearby subdivisions and Sedona proper for food once they picked clean the area's sparse wildlife. Trash bins were raided, pets disappeared, and houses and businesses alike were plundered. Despite the Sky Light Caern's isolation, this mass of people and dogs, plus the sudden crime wave, attracted attention from authorities and curious locals. People that investigated too close to the caern were chased away, assisted by the Delirium. Other people, nearly half a dozen, just... disappeared. Food was scarce, and many Vanguard were prone to turn the other way and not ask too many questions if there was no overt evidence of misconduct. But Dog's packs weren't as lenient, and a few suspected maneaters disappeared. Not much was said about that either.

Then two packs arrived from Atlanta with a story of betrayal, and with the klaive of the slain Master that tried to kill them... splattered with her blood and scent. The Vanguard of Sirius then knew anger and despair, for they knew the Masters and Garou Nation had turned against them.

Rage & Rebirth

The Vanguard of Sirius still had the patronage of Sirius and their other totems, who reaffirmed their dedication to them and Gaian ideals in the form of dreams and spirits. The Vanguard also had one another, united in their desire to survive. Many Sirius had only had contact with a few other packs and the odd elder or two, and were heartened to discover just how large their tribe was.

However, all this wasn't enough to salve the rising anger and despair in the tribe. Disillusioned, confused and embittered, the Sirius wanted to avenge themselves on the Garou Nation – those they so admired and served. Recent feral converts also had little reason to love Garou. Among those crying the most loudly for vengeance were Vanguard werewolves, once-Ronin that felt the Nation betrayed them yet again. A few voices of reason aside, the Sirius knew they had been fucked and wanted to put the Masters and the Garou Nation *paid*.

One might ask why the Vanguard didn't simply fall into anarchic chaos. It almost did. However, Debased are – underneath it all, and despite their crippled bodies and damaged souls – Garou. They're driven by the same instincts and need to belong, and on a deep level the tribe structure felt *right* to them. These mutts and ex-Ronin were entirely alone except for each other, and found solace the only way they could: as a tribe, gaining comfort and purpose in their beliefs and rites. Initiating feral newcomers also reinforced who and what the Sirius was. It helped that the Vanguard genuinely believed in Gaia and their tribe, and that their totems still believed in them. Anger didn't undermine their values, and in fact they emerged with stronger convictions than ever. The tribe was on their own now, after all, and they couldn't rely on the Masters to hold their hands and tuck them in at night.

Over the course of a few weeks, an overt transformation took place within the Vanguard. The tribe emerged from its tribulations whole... but hard-edged, bitter and paranoid. Its good nature, such as it was, was replaced with anger and fatalistic pragmatism. The Sirius no longer fawned over the Garou Nation or wanted its acceptance. Many were angry and wanted revenge, while others simply felt they could do better on their own and that they didn't need the damned Garou anymore.

In short, the Vanguard of Sirius had grown up.

First Blood is Drawn

Anger became outrage when three Uktena packs arrived at the Sky Lights Caern in late June, intending to secure it for their tribe. The Sept of the Roadrunner learned of the Sky Lights Caern from a deposed Master (one that ironically had helped reawaken it). The werewolves went prepared to fight, but expected little opposition, assured by their ex-Master informant that there could only be a few packs at the caern. A Ragabash erected an impromptu moon bridge to the heart of the caern, through which the three packs travelled... and into the midst of more than two hundred very irritated Vanguard, some with fresh memories of werewolf persecution.

Even the bravest of these Uktena felt an immediate retreat would be prudent. However, they never had the chance. Passions flared, and two of the invading packs, and much of the third, were torn apart by enraged Vanguard. (The Garou fought bravely, however, and took seven Sirius down with them.) Three wounded survivors were allowed to flee and deliver a message: "We are of Gaia, as you. Leave us alone."

Instead of keeping this to themselves, as Uktena usually do, the Roadrunner Sept shared the news with nearby Garou. The event was an embarrassment, but they felt it was less important to save face than to share this vital information (along with the Vanguard's message) with their kind. But the Roadrunner Uktena, and many others in the Garou Nation, had no intentions of leaving the Sirius alone – especially after those deformed dog-fuckers killed eleven Garou! They were frankly terrified at the prospect of having to face an army of Wyrmspawn in the desert, but such a force was far too dangerous to be left alone to build power and propagate. Talk was made of a great gathering of werewolves to face this new foe, but few septs could spare packs to rush the Sky Lights Caern; few Garou are idle in these times, after all.

Some Garou pointed out that nothing so far suggested the

Vanguard of Sirius served the Wyrms or was any threat. The new tribe could be potential allies – or at least not enemies – if they were left alone. However, others countered that if the Vanguard wasn't already suborned by the Wyrms, it was only a matter of time before it was. The mongrel tribe had already murdered Garou, what more proof does one need they're a threat?

Meanwhile, the Vanguard of Sirius didn't rest on its single victory. The Garou Nation was a looming threat. The Black Spiral Dancers were a greater concern, because they were established in the area and it was only a matter of time before that fell tribe took notice of the Sirius. The new tribe was safe as long as its entire population remained together, but clearly that wasn't an option: the better than two hundred Vanguard at the Sky Lights Caern were attracting unwanted mortal attention, food and water were becoming ever more scarce, and tension was high due to overcrowding and July heat. More and more fights broke out, and the tribe's new unity frayed around the edges. And the caern stank so damned bad by this point that even the spirits were complaining.

The tribe's leadership debated what to do until Molydeus, the warder for the Sky Lights Caern, offered a plan to resolve all three crises in one fell swoop. The possibility of failure or unforeseen complications could bring his ambitious design to ruin, but the tribe's leaders had no viable alternatives at this point, and they knew they had to act.



A Daring Plan

The Vanguard immediately began putting Molydeus' gambit into action: an all-out assault on the nearby Choked Gully Hive, after which the Vanguard would split into individual septs and secure territories previously held by the tribe.

This plan might sound foolhardy, even suicidal, but it was founded on sound reasoning. First, the Choked Gully Hive was less than forty miles from the Sky Lights Caern, too close for the sept's comfort. (This disturbing bit of information was provided by a recent convert, Gray.) Those Spirals would be a definite threat to the caern once they discovered it, if they hadn't already. The Vanguard wanted overwhelming numbers when facing the Spirals, but just waiting around until they were attacked wasn't an option. They had to press their advantage while the entire tribe was gathered, which meant initiating an attack immediately instead of playing defense at some unknown future date. The last thing the hive would expect is an unprecipitated frontal attack by a large force. If all went according to plan, the Spirals would be too surprised to mount an effective defense. Weasel had just started adopting Vanguard packs around this time, and her vicious children would be ideal for this fight.

Once the hive's inhabitants and defenses were defeated, the Vanguard would use a ritual to sever the Wyrms-totem's link to its pit. After this, explosives would be used to collapse its physical structure. Molydeus intended to be thorough.

The biggest hitch in Molydeus' plan is that Sirius weren't used to acting in large groups. They were more an unruly mob than soldiers, especially the new recruits. Such disorder might be sufficient if every Vanguard present attacked the hive, but half the tribe would remain behind to defend the Sky Lights Caern from opportunistic Garou. Both divisions, especially the one attacking the hive, would have to be organized and cohesive to be effective, and the window to whip the packs into fighting trim was small and closing by the day. So it was decided experienced Sirius would work with the rank and file, instilling discipline and drilling them on the tactics they'd employ.

Another concern was armament. The Black Spiral Dancers would certainly have many nasty fetishes and Gifts, as would any force of Garou that attacked the caern while the attackers were engaged at the hive. The Sirius had to shore up their arsenals on both fronts. Many Vanguard were trained in the use of firearms, and Molydeus had ideas on how to procure guns, with a specific pack in mind for the task.

In the first week of July, a little more than a week after the Vanguard slaughtered the three Garou packs, a Canid limped into the crowded Sky Lights Sept with the remnants of his once-strong pack behind him. The widely recognized Gray attracted a lot of attention, especially from ex-ferals. However, the old rogue was badly hurt, as were the three mutts with him. Gray's conspicuous disrespect for the local Garou factions had finally caught up with him and his pack.

The Vanguard elders offered Gray and his pack refuge, despite the fact he would almost certainly bring the attention of Spirals to the sept. This isn't what the Sirius needed or wanted at the time, but figured they could leverage that fact to encourage Gray's initiation. However, Gray asked if the tribe would accept him and his pack before they even broached the issue. An Athro by the name of Sun-Coat inquired to the sudden change of heart, asking Gray if desperation was so strong a motivation. Gray's answer was, "I don't want to die. But I would've joined you before. I was just waiting for you to quit licking the wolves' asses."

This frank answer satisfied the tribe elders and the rest of the Sirius. Gray and his pack were inducted into the Vanguard of Sirius that night.

Besides striking a blow to the Wyrms, the Vanguard hoped this attack would earn them the respect of the Garou Nation. Regardless how well the offensive was executed, many of them would die, and the tribe's elders hoped Gaian Garou would see that only a true enemy of the Wyrms would sacrifice so much to destroy a hive. If this initiative didn't appeal to the werewolves' sense of purpose and nobility, the Sirius would be satisfied to invoke fear: perhaps the Garou would be reluctant to provoke any force able to unleash such devastation on their foes. On the other end, the Spirals would certainly be outraged, but the Vanguard would eventually have to fight those Wyrmspawn anyway. In any case, as Molydeus saw it, a successful assault couldn't put the Vanguard in any worse position than it was in. A failed one... well, that was unthinkable. The very future of the tribe literally rode on the success of this strike.

And so the Vanguard of Sirius began preparing.

Gunrunners

In July of 2006, approximately 200 crates of guns, ammunition and grenades went missing from the Hawthorne Army Depot in Nevada, right under the noses of the military. The theft was discovered some time after the fact during a random spot check of the warehouses. More than two thirds of Building C27's contents were just *gone*. Security cameras had mysteriously stopped functioning during the theft, there was no record of anyone activating the keypad or magnetic card locks on the doors or loading bay, and no recent tire tracks were found leading to or from the building. It was as if the missing ordinance disappeared into thin air.

This provoked outrage, finger-pointing and (of course) conjecture. Details of this event soon leaked to the press despite the efforts of Hawthorne brass; it was wondered over in papers and on news programs, and featured as a running joke on *The Daily Show* for a few nights. It was, and remains, a favored topic in Nevada bars and living rooms. People blamed Al Qaeda operatives, domestic extremists, the mob, the Zionist Occupational Government, and of course the government itself. The military offered no explanations, though this surprised no one.

Hawthorne Army Depot was a vehicle and weapons depot for the U.S. Army, and to a lesser extent for the National Guard and Navy. It retained an array of equipment, much of it untouched and perfectly functional but outdated in light of newer artifice. In the wake of military cutbacks, Hawthorne was slowly being dismantled as its inventory and infrastructure were redistributed to other bases. But Hawthorne's brass continually used their political pull to block this process and redirect resources intended for other bases to theirs, delaying Hawthorne's inevitable closure. This bureaucratic chaos provided cover for a unique Vanguard of Sirius pack.

The Trojan Horses targeted Building C27, a warehouse on the northern side of the base containing ordinance twenty to thirty years old. Its contents were quite serviceable to Vanguard needs, and it wasn't as heavily guarded as the newer equipment. The pack approached the site through the Penumbra from a nearby highway. To secure their route, the Horses had to fight their way through Pattern Spiders and other Weaver-spirits, and clear paths through thick webs spun around the base; the pack's Glass Walker origins served it well here. They subverted video surveillance and, using a powerful variant of the Rite of Talisman Dedication, transferred most of the warehouse's contents to the Penumbra. The pack carried their bounty through the Umbra to a tractor trailer concealed just off the highway; even with the entire pack behind the effort, it took two days of trips back and forth to move all the ordinance. The equipment was then transferred back to the physical world and loaded onto the truck. Thus enriched, the pack traveled south to Sedona.

This operation took three days from start to finish, and the Vanguard found itself much better armed.

Misunderstanding

In early August, the Vanguard of Sirius had the physical world and Umbra both locked down at the Sky Lights Caern; not so much as a gnat (or gnat-spirit) could get in or out without the tribe knowing about it. However, they couldn't guard against intruders from the Dark Umbra: the decaying plane of ghosts, shadows and the echoes of what once was. Few of Gaia's children even consider this realm, much less employ or defend against it. But the Silent Striders do, and a member of that tribe used the Vanguard's blind spot to her advantage.

Whispers of Duat rode out to Sedona on her Harley, and walked into the desert on foot. Once within a few miles of the Sky Lights Caern, she entered the Underworld through a tribal rite. The plane blew with psychic debris and tormented ghosts, making the way to the caern difficult and painful. Everything was obscured in darkness, and the endless howls and screams made it impossible to hear more than snippets. Dark Umbral storms of blood and pain scoured her flesh, despite protective rites. But Whispers of Duat clearly saw an obscene number of dog-blooded gathered on the sacred land, engaging in mock battles. Guns were everywhere. And what little conversation the Ragabash was able to make out worried her greatly.

After a harrowing day and night of eavesdropping from behind the Shroud (which was all she could endure), Whispers of Duat took what she pieced together to the Sept of the Roadrunner: the Vanguard were mobilized and aggressive, and the entire tribe was planning to travel to the Choked Gully Pit on the first Saturday of August – only eight days away. The conclusion Whispers and the Uktena at that sept drew was that the Vanguard was sore at the Garou Nation (probably because they tried taking their caern recently), and the mongrel tribe was planning to make contact with the Spirals, perhaps to recruit them as allies or even join them. The training was likely for assaults on nearby Garou septs.

Whispers of Duat's assumptions were obviously very wrong. But in this Silent Strider's defense, it's very difficult for anyone to glean precise information over the constant screams of damned souls, agony of razor-edged winds and Spectre attacks (try it sometime); other means of spying on the Sirius wasn't an option for her. Had she remained longer and heard more, the New Moon might have been able to form a more accurate picture of what was really going on. But Whispers felt time was of the essence and wanted to take her findings back to the Roadrunner Sept as quickly as possible.

Not that any of this has redeemed her reputation.

This news spread like wildfire across the Southwestern septs. The Garou Nation's worst fears had been realized. Even the Vanguard's apologists quieted down and agreed this was very, very bad. The Roadrunner Sept appealed for help from nearby septs throughout the Southwest.

Within three days, five werewolf packs from other septs had gathered at the Roadrunner Caern, ready to join forces with the sept and face this new threat; a pack each of Get of Fenris, Children of Gaia and Black Furies, as well as two mixed-tribe packs, stood with the Uktena.

But the assembled Garou soon bogged down in debate over how to deal with the situation. Some wanted to take the caern while it was deserted (or while they thought it would be), securing that land and guarding it against the return of the rogue tribe. Others wanted to attack the Sirius and/or the Spirals right then. After two days of debate, the Uktena Josh Creek declared sabotaging the Vanguard-Spiral meeting would be the wisest tactic, as too much was at stake to allow the forces to merge. Attacking either group at

this point would be suicidal, and might actually encourage the alliance they're trying to prevent. The Sky Lights Caern may be guarded or already spiritually compromised, and even if neither was the case, it's not like they (plus any number of other packs) would be able to protect the caern from the combined forces of the Sirius and the Dancers.

The Galliard Angela Skydancer took upon herself the job of pitching Molydeus' plan to the Vanguard of Sirius without provoking mass desertion. Brutal honesty was how she did it.

Once all the Vanguard ranging around the Sedona area were rounded up, Skydancer explained, in broad terms, how the half the Sirius would assault the Hive of the Choked Gully while the second force would remain behind to defend the caern. (She left the tactical details to others.) The impassioned werewolf left nothing open to debate or negotiation – in simple and direct language, she told those gathered what must be done to ensure their tribe's survival. Though brave and loyal, the Sirius all knew dread at was expected of them. And so did Angela. The Galliard didn't sugarcoat or dance around the issue; she frankly told the Vanguard many of them would die. But unlike the Masters, Skydancer didn't fill their heads with lies of glory or false hope. Their objectives would be clear, and the result of their sacrifice would be a surviv-

So it was decided: the five visiting packs, plus the one the Roadrunner Sept could spare, would leave in two days for the Hive of the Choked Gully and do everything in their power to prevent an alliance between the Vanguard and the Spirals. The Garou knew were too few to stop either force by itself, much less their combined power, but they had to do *something*.

ing and independent Vanguard of Sirius, not some pie-in-the-sky promise of submission to the Garou Nation. And, again unlike the Masters, the leaders would fight beside their troops.

With tears in her eyes, Angela told them she knew what their tribe was asking of them, but it was worth their sacrifice, and she will do no less. She ended her speech with a mournful howl, honoring the heroes that would fall in the conflict to come.

Skydancer howled alone at first. Then, from among the assembled throng, a lone dog-blood howled. They were answered by three other mutts, and then more still, until the entire tribe was howling and baying as one, more than two hundred fifty voices and hearts adding to the chorus. The haunting requiem carried through the cold desert air and to the outskirts of Sedona, and all that heard it shuddered or tossed beneath their covers.

Much of the tribe's doubt and bitterness was eased in that moment, if only briefly.

The Choked Gully Conflict

Railroad tracks run northwest through Sedona, eventually turning east at Flagstaff and passing within a half mile of the Hive of the Choked Gully, once a mine. The ruins of a small train depot still stands where copper ore was loaded onto cars. While Calderwell Copper went under in 1982, freight trains still run by regularly.

One of those trains was the Vanguard of Sirius' way to the hive. In the wee hours of the morning, the Redeemed (Molydeus' pack) and sixteen other packs – one hundred and fifteen Vanguard in all – snuck aboard a stopped Illinois Central train in a Sedona trainyard. It passed by the Calderwell Copper depot just after 5:00 am, where the force hopped off. After everyone gathered, they formed ranks. The ten packs with dedicated munitions checked and loaded their weapons, while the seven packs armed with fetishes and talens Stepped Sideways. Split between two worlds but acting as one, the Sirius force charged the Wyrms-infested mine.

This onrush was noticed by two: a bored Black Spiral sentry hunting small game in the desert, and the Uktena Ragabash Sage Trail, securely hidden behind some scrub nearby. The surprised Spiral issued a clarion warning howl before the Sirius packs tore her apart. Sage Trail didn't see this, too busy beating tail to alert the six Gaian werewolf packs camped out nearby.

Roused from sleep or routine, the Dancers were startled and wary. No one ever came out here; even other Spirals rarely visited the forlorn and remote desert pit. Still, the hive mobilized, with Spirals grabbing weapons and fetishes. Six packs rushed outside, greeted by the first rays of dawn peeking over the horizon... and a mass of charging foes. The enraged defenders ran to meet them, howling exultations to the Wyrms. The Vanguard unloaded salvos of bullets into the charging monsters, killing several and wounding many more. Sirius surrounded their slaving bullet-ridden foes as they closed, moving in and attacking. The Spirals fought back hard, crushing Vanguard with terrible strength and ruinous Gifts.

It was over in less than a minute. Fifteen Vanguard lay dead... as well as all twenty-seven Spirals that charged them. (Pressed on all sides as they were, frenzied Spirals did as much damage to their own as to the Sirius.) A single Theurge tended the wounds of his comrades as best he could.

By now, the five Gaian Garou packs had stopped short their own war-charge. They could do nothing but stand and stare

from afar, jaws agape.

The Vanguard still able to fight Stepped Sideways, joining Umbral forces engaging Banes, Spirals and the animate spirit-vines infesting the pit's Penumbra. As before, the Sirius used their superior numbers and tactics to great effect, encircling their opponents and attacking in deadly tandem. The outer Umbral defenses fell quickly, and the mass of Vanguard charged the pit's heart.

They knew the strongest defenders would be here, and they weren't disappointed. Three powerful Spiral packs wielding potent Gifts, plus an assortment of Bane allies and fomori, were prepared to meet the invaders. However, the Sirius feared neither pain nor death, and they rushed to battle even as they were torn asunder. Thirteen died, and many more were wounded... but the Vanguard destroyed every Wyrms-thrall in that bloody battle. The only Sirius that didn't fight were the Dead Dogs pack, who stepped forward as the last Spiral had her throat torn out.

Most Vanguard able to leave the polluted cavern carried their dead and wounded back to the surface, though a few stayed near the pit's heart in case some other threat presented itself. Those too wounded to be moved grit their teeth and assisted in the Dead Dogs' rite to eliminate the Bane-totem's connection to the pit and dispel its corrupt spiritual energies. The solemn ritual was uninterrupted. All Vanguard in attendance gave up Gnosis, and some their very lives, to provide the energy for the rite. A half-hour and four dead Sirius later, the rite succeeded – the land became dormant as the spiritual umbilicus tethering the totem to the site was severed.

The exhausted ritualists rejoined their brethren across the Gauntlet. After the Spirals' bodies were looted and tossed into the mine, concussion grenades were lobbed deep into the tunnels, collapsing the rickety and poorly maintained structure. The pit was entirely destroyed (along with a single brave but foolhardy Vanguard that mistimed a grenade throw).

The surviving Vanguard, reunited, sounded short dirges for their dead, mournful howls and bays intermixing. Just off Interstate 40, two miles away, Kinfolk waited in cattle trailers to drive the warriors back to the Sky Lights Caern. Thirty-two dead, as well as twenty or so severely wounded, were respectfully carried by their brothers and sisters. They limped southeast, leaving their proving ground behind them.

Only for six Garou packs to step into their path.

Recrimination

The werewolves had been lying in wait, ready to sabotage the Vanguard's meeting with the Spirals however they could. Once they realized what was really going on, it was too late for them to join the fight (though some sorely wanted to).

The force's valiance and skill in battle impressed even the least forgiving Garou present. They saw warriors willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to destroy a hive, redeemed Ronin and dog-blooded invoking Gaia as they fought and died. They knew they had misjudged and underestimated the Vanguard. The twenty-four werewolves respectfully approached the Sirius leaving the unmade pit. Here was a pivotal opportunity for the rift between the Garou Nation and Vanguard of Sirius to be healed, at least partially, and for understanding to prevail.

But that was all washed away in blood.

Automatic gunfire shattered the silence as bullets tore into shocked Garou, killing four. War-weary Sirius gathered with their packmates, dropping dead and wounded as they shifted for battle, as did the werewolves. Before the outraged Garou could mount an organized counterattack or defense, a Vanguard threw a grenade into their midst, killing five more (most of the Black Fury pack) and wounding several others. The Sirius quickly closed and ripped into the stunned and wounded werewolves. Eleven more Vanguard fell in the frenzied battle, but (as with their attack on the Spirals) they dealt more death than they suffered. Mindfully or in the throes of Fox Frenzy, the defeated Garou scattered; those that didn't run (including every Fenrir) fell. In total, nineteen werewolves died.

The Entrail Renders and the Jaws of Flea started to pursue the fleeing Garou, but Molydeus ordered them to stop. The veteran mutt was livid at his troops for starting a needless fight and creating even more Vanguard casualties. This was precisely what they did *not* need. But the time for recriminations was later. Molydeus reorganized his battered troops and prepared them to move out, distributing the new bodies between them. But before leaving, he took several ritualists aside.

Sage Trail was one of the twelve Garou that survived, and the first to return to the site of the battle. The New Moon found the bodies of his Garou allies (two of which were packmates) laid respectfully under a rock shelving, protected from the worst of the sun. Fetishes had been laid beside their owners, and there were signs of hurried funerary rites performed over the departed. Garou glyphs scrawled hastily into the nearby patch of ground stated simply: *Leave us alone.*

Torn between fury and great sadness, the Uktena left to find other survivors.

Aftermath

The Vanguard of Sirius force, reduced by more than half, returned to the Caern of the Sky Lights to lick their wounds and reforge tribal bonds. Rites of Death were performed for martyrs and those that gave their lives for the rite that cleansed the pit, their bodies buried within the bawn. (Even the poor mutt that killed him-

Why?!

The pack that opened fire, the Entrail Renders, disliked Garou even more than most Vanguard. But that alone wouldn't have been enough to provoke them had they not honestly felt threatened.

Aggressive and nasty even at the best of times, these children of Weasel were stoked from that morning's fight and had never known non-Vanguard werewolves to be anything but aggressors. The approaching Garou packs were clearly enemies to them, and their preemptive strike was self-defense.

Many Sirius present were confused and angered by the Renders' actions, but felt they had no choice but to support their allies. But other mongrels had similar bad experiences with werewolves and joined the slaughter without hesitation.

self with the grenade was honored.) Renown was recognized, and promotions were rife that day... as well as reprimands. The tribe emerged scarred but whole. Sadness hung over the tribe, but also grim determination and the sense of a new beginning.

The tribe started forming groups of twenty to forty around ranking Vanguard, which headed for familiar territories or for areas they were confident they could hold and defend; these became the new Vanguard septs. Sirius too wounded to travel remained at the Sky Lights Caern until they could rejoin their packs or make the trek to the septs of their choice, though several ended up staying. In a week and a half, only forty-two Vanguard remained at the caern, becoming the current Sky Lights Sept. The tribe's greatest heroes remained, knowing they'd be needed to defend and maintain this sacred land. This disbursement was difficult in some respects, as the tribe was family and closer to one another than ever before. But everyone was relieved too – to say the Sky Lights Sept had been overcrowded would be an understatement, and familiarity had bred plenty of contempt. Everyone appreciated the breathing room.

Over the next several months, Vanguard septs all over grew from new waves of conscripts. Ferals joined in increasing numbers since the tribe's rebirth. More Garou also approached Sirius septs, not only Ronin but defectors from the Garou Nation. These turncoats were greeted with suspicion, as the Vanguard was paranoid about infiltrators from the Garou Nation and the Spiral Dancers – and rightly so, as several false claimants had already been caught in the act and killed for their trouble. But once their good faith was affirmed, these expatriates were gladly accepted into the fold.

Accounts of the Choked Gully Conflict were told and retold by many Garou, which often emphasized the Vanguard's murderous aggression toward the packs that tried to befriend them. The Garou reacted in a variety of ways, as one might expect; different werewolves' perceptions of the new tribe are discussed forthcoming. There have been few significant conflicts between the Garou Nation and the Vanguard of Sirius thus far, though several deadly skirmishes have broken out amidst a lot of aggressive posturing.

The Hive of the Choked Gully

Calderwell Copper was founded in 1958 by Preston Calderwell, a Korean War veteran that rolled profits from precious metal futures into Arizona land where copper veins were found. Preston Calderwell was no fomor, Black Spiral Dancer Kinfolk or Wyrms-driven sociopathic ghoul-Nephandus. Further, his company never even registered a blip on Pentex's radar. By all accounts, Preston was a moral individual, a devout Catholic and family man. That he purchased and mined a dormant caern was an accident. Calderwell was more ethical than many; he treated his employees fairly and offered better insurance than many other employers. If Calderwell Copper inflicted untold damage to the desert ecosystem or compromised the health of his workers, it wasn't because the company took shortcuts or engaged in illegal practices, or Heaven forbid because it *tried* fouling things up – Calderwell Copper faithfully followed the environmental regulations of the '50s and '60s, lax though they were. In fact, Preston Calderwell ended up closing his own mine because of his ethics: he couldn't afford the massive price tag to upgrade to the EPA's new standards, especially in the face of employees' growing medical expenses. Rather than cut corners, pay off regulators or sell to a less scrupulous company, Preston dissolved his company in 1982.

But by then the damage had been done. The demesne had been strip-mined, contamination had seeped into the groundwater, and the once-sleeping harvest-spirit once sacred to Yavapai shamans was irreversibly warped by the toxins that saturated the land. By the time the Black Spiral Dancers stumbled upon the corrupted caern, it had already functionally become a pit. All the mad Garou had to do was form an alliance with the poisoned totem that now called itself Stranglevine, consecrate the land in the name of the Wyrms, and move in. Spirals are quite happy to conquer and corrupt caerns, but it's just gravy when one just falls into their laps.

The Hive of the Choked Gully had a strong following, but never claimed the infamy many other hives did. Choked Gully werewolves gladly killed Gaian Garou, spread pollution and did other things to serve the Wyrms' interests, but such terrorist acts were rare. Even contact with other Spirals was infrequent. Most of these Spirals' efforts were spent tending the strange, blighted vines that grew in and around the mine. Stranglevine wanted its twisted botanists to encourage their growth there and in other areas. These aggressive vines killed and blighted other vegetation, leached the soil, and were toxic to animals. Further, the bizarre Banes in service to Stranglevine could affect the physical world

and manifest more easily in areas these mutant plants had overrun.

The Garou of the Choked Gully Hive had access to a few unique and bizarre Gifts due to their association with Stranglevine. Its bastards could cause blighted roots to sprout in the muscles of their foes and leech soil to boost their own healing ability.

While still polluted and irrevocably tainted, the Choked Gully's pit is now destroyed. Even if some Wyrms minion manages to unearth the mine, it's spiritually dead and holds no power; the rite the Sirius performed tore away Stranglevine's connection to the area. However, the bizarre plants spawned by the totem continue to grow around the mine, and the great Bane may yet retain a tenuous connection to the world through them.

Pit: The pit encompassed the mine tunnels and the area immediately surrounding the mine. Its heart was a cavern saturated with metallic runoff and diesel fuel used to power machinery. The Spirals installed hydroponic lights and put potting soil in the mine's caverns and tunnels to encourage growth of vines within the mine itself.

Level: 2

Gauntlet: 4

Type: Organism

Totem: Stranglevine, a Bane-Incarna that embodies the slow, aggressive fecundity of parasitic plants that overtake and destroy other vegetation. Stranglevine was once a verdant Gaian spirit and still has strong associations with the Wyld. The totem never consciously embraced its corruption, and is suffering and insane rather than purposely malevolent; still, Stranglevine's nature and actions are now clearly of the Wyrms.

Stranglevine has avoided inclusion within the community of Wyrms Incarna the Black Spiral Dancers serve, as it doesn't recognize any kinship with these spirits. The totem has no following anymore, as its bastards were slaughtered almost to the last at the mine; it remains to be seen if anyone else contacts Stranglevine or if it seeks out other followers.

Tribal Structure: The hive's members were exclusively Black Spiral Dancers, attended by Banes and fomori. It boasted 49 members before its destruction. Two were gone when the hive fell, and later returned to find their allies killed and the pit obliterated. Their current whereabouts and activities are unknown, but one former member has been sighted in the Trinity Hive area.

Leader: Glahriska'ha, metis Galliard, led the hive for two years before the Vanguard destroyed it and killed her.

The Vanguard Today

Activities

Most of the Vanguard of Sirius' efforts are applied in two arenas: to secure their areas from the Wyrms and other threats (often Garou), and to improve the status of their septs and the tribe as a whole. The tribe has become a wild card in these final days before the Apocalypse, a tribe outside the Garou Nation with Gaian ideals and aims.

The Vanguard and Nation aren't friends, however – yet nor are they truly enemies. There's bad blood between them, but also grudging respect. The Sirius finds itself in a crucial period, recently independent and discovering its own identity... but ironically, it's only grown as the tribe emulates the values and practices of the Garou they resent. Meanwhile, the Garou Nation's collective shock at the Sirius' origins and existence hasn't worn off yet, and bloodshed and other recent events have confused issues even more. The situation is far too new for any definitive predictions on how it will all turn out.

However, current trends aren't particularly encouraging. While the Garou Nation as a whole isn't planning any united offensive against the Vanguard of Sirius as of now, Garou don't trust them, and many Garou see them as enemies. The werewolf deaths at the Sky Lights Caern and Choked Gully galls many, especially those that lost packmates and friends in those fights. The Vanguard definitely has more werewolf foes than friends, though most Garou haven't yet made up their minds how to feel about the freakish tribe. But recent metis defections to the Sirius have them worried. They don't want sept or tribe secrets falling into the hands of this strange new faction (even if they didn't really appreciate those that left). Serious talk has been made of “retrieving” these lost Garou, or at

least finding out what they're doing running around with the Vanguard. Some are glad that recreant Garou now have a viable option other than becoming Ronin or joining the Black Spiral Dancers or the forlorn lives of Ronin, but they don't express this unpopular sentiment aloud often. Everyone agrees that it's better for werewolves to stay in the Garou Nation and that desertions are taking place at all is a bad thing.

When Sirius and Garou packs meet – whether by chance or design – teeth are bared, threats are traded and everyone walks away. At least usually. When fights do happen, angry wounds and sore feelings are the most common result; usually (but not always), punches are pulled, as everyone is reluctant to kill those who are, underneath it all, their Gaian brothers and sisters. But this isn't always the case. All told, thirty or so individuals have died in skirmishes since Choked Gully (with deaths split about evenly between both sides), and this seems to be snowballing into spates of revenge killings and more fights. But amidst the conflict and posturing, random acts of coexistence and level-headed discussions have erupted between isolated groups, which surprises and confuses everyone.

The Vanguard of Sirius has packs that hunt down problem ferals, and they're good at what they do. Ferals are to be recruited if possible, and the tribe gets a lot of its converts this way. Those that don't want to join up are left in peace unless they're doing things they ought not – maneating, violating the Veil, consorting with the Wyrms' minions, and the like. Such recreant mutts are summarily killed. This may seem uncharacteristic of Canids once ferals themselves, but the Sirius is heavily invested in survival, and bad dogs that can't learn new tricks can screw things up for everyone. Veil breeches and other problems involving ferals are almost nonexistent in territories the Vanguard holds.

Big Dogs With Big Guns

Back when the Vanguard of Sirius were the Masters' expendable soldiers, and honestly not worth equipping with fetishes, the Vanguard relied heavily on firearms. Things aren't much different now. Some Sirius have produced their own spirit-powered items, but the tribe as a whole is adopting this practice slowly. Their movement toward a spiritual perspective from a militaristic and materialistic one is gradual, especially since many Vanguard haven't the Gnosis to spare for fetish creation. So the Sirius still prefer guns.

This technophilia might seem odd for a tribe composed overwhelmingly of canis Debased. However, dog-blooded seem to adapt to guns and other forms of technology quickly. Some assume this is because mongrels are used to being around people and their devices before the First Change, but while this might be true for sectaries born into tribe-run facilities, feral converts that have had little contact with people learn tech easily too. (In game terms, no, players of canis characters can't use their initial Ability dot spreads for Firearms or other tech-related Abilities. But they have good justification to purchase these Abilities with freebie and experience points.)

In any case, it doesn't take much to teach mutts to point and shoot. What's a lot harder is getting the damned things to take care of the equipment. Many Sirius, until taught better, will drop their guns and leave them behind after they run out of ammo; some never get the hang of reloading weapons and fumble with clips in the heat of battle. Still others use their guns as clubs or find other ways to foul them up. Friendly fire, especially during training, is routine. And maintaining, cleaning and repairing firearms are beyond all but the brightest canis – those thankless tasks are usually left to gunbunny Kinfolk. Tribe leaders are happy if their trigger-

happy soldiers bring their guns back intact, and try not to ask too much else of them.

Meeting the growing tribe's need for firearms is a challenge. Sirius are rough on their toys, necessitating frequent replacements. However, many of the Vanguard's weapon suppliers evaporated with the Masters. Homids and Kinfolk try to establish associations with gun runners, but can only buy a few weapons at a time – the ever-flowing coffers of the Masters are gone too. The tribe isn't below stealing weapons (like they did from Hawthorne Army Depot), but this is dangerous and is prone to attract unwanted attention. So septs try to conserve what guns they have, and maintenance is a full-time job for whoever is stuck with it. Some Sirius have stumbled upon a novel idea: more than half of the fetishes created by the tribe members are guns. These items are never left behind on the field, and are wielded with pride by those lucky dogs that have them. The Greenie Gun is a popular weapon for new recruits (see Fetishes & Talens, pg. 33).

Despite all this, most Vanguard of Sirius septs consider it well worth the cost of supplying firearms and ammunition to their troops, and at least half a given pack will be armed and trained in the use of guns. Sirius have a marked preference for high-caliber handguns, fully automatic weapons and shotguns, due to their stopping power. One soldier with a gun is dangerous, but Sirius expecting a fight typically travel in large, multi-pack mobs, and the firepower ten (or more!) can lay down is frightening. The foes they typically face – Spirals and other werewolves – can shrug off a few bullets, but only the toughest can withstand a salvo. After emptying their clips, Vanguard close with any foes still standing before they can heal or retreat.

Numbers & Growth

The Vanguard of Sirius is growing – not dramatically, especially in light of recent deaths, but the increase is substantial and enough to ensure the tribe's continued survival into the near future. Factoring in conversions and stepped-up reproduction, and their almost three dozen Garou members, as of early 2010 the tribe numbers just over 430. (This doesn't include the tribe's initiated Kinfolk.) This is a significant number considering Shifter populations, and many Garou would be very concerned if they knew how just large the Vanguard is.

Fighting Smarter

Back when they were running things, the Masters drove the Vanguard to death, quite literally. They relentlessly sent them against Black Spiral Dancers, Banes, vampires, fomori and various other threats. Sirius died by the dozens, hundreds. This staggering mortality rate slowed the Vanguard's growth by the mid-1990s, and after the turn of the millennium the *faux* tribe began shrinking. The Vanguard weren't stupid, and experienced members of the tribe (the ones that survived that long) pleaded with the Masters to change or scale back their tactics. This was met with variations on “we know best” and promises that their sacrifices served Gaia and would ensure the Sirius' inclusion within the Garou Nation. Vanguard knew little except for what the Masters told them, and so most towed the line they were handed. Most, but not all – over the years, a steady trickle of defectors snuck away before being fed into the Masters' meat grinder.

Now, after the Vanguard have earned their independence, they've had a chance to reflect on past events with a clearer, more worldly perspective. And one conclusion many Sirius have drawn horrifies them: the original purpose of the Vanguard of Sirius was population control. The entire operation was a strategy to draw and contain feral dog-blooded and Ronin, then eliminate them in a controlled manner. That the Vanguard did damage to the Wyrms' forces could well have been a secondary benefit to the Masters. Not all Sirius agree with this galling theory, but many do, and the very possibility feeds their bitterness towards the Garou. (This is somewhat unfair: except for the Masters, no one in the Garou Nation had any idea the Sirius even existed until 2006. Now whether they would have supported such a genocidal initiative had they known of it, though, is open for debate.)

Mulling over the past stirs up resentment, but it also provides valuable object lessons for contemporary Sirius. Gone are the days of attacking enemies in suicidal waves. Vanguard pick their battles and rely on overwhelming numbers and intelligent tactics to assure victory. While a single pack can easily rub out a bad feral, fomori or Spiral scout, Sirius that discover a significant Wyrms' menace or other threat will round up reinforcements and come back *en masse* to kick the hell out of it. So while Vanguard still die in the line of duty, they do so in far fewer numbers than they used to, and this reduced attrition is behind much of the tribe's growth.

Feral Converts

The Sirius can thank unwitting Garou for some of its new members. Many werewolves have stepped up their pogrom of the Debased since learning of the Vanguard, seeing the proliferation and activities of the dog-blooded as a major problem. Ferals have born the brunt of their aggression, though Garou Nation lapdogs were also exiled or run off *en masse*. This has reduced the number of ferals in many areas, and sent others fleeing for any safe haven. The Vanguard of Sirius is happy to adopt these refugees and channel their fresh hate into acceptable avenues. Sirius are proactive recruiters, as they always were, and they encourage promising ferals to join the tribe.

Strength in Numbers

A tactic that has become popular since Choked Gully is *mobbing*: two or more Sirius packs, or even an entire sept, overwhelming their opposition through sheer numbers. The tribe has adopted mobbing out of fear, experience and a healthy dose of overcompensation. When a Vanguard pack finds trouble (something they're good at), they typically retreat until they can return with another pack or two and overwhelm the problem.

Honorable? Probably not, but there's no denying the effectiveness of mobbing, as it's behind nearly all the tribe's recent victories. Vanguard never hesitate to swarm Spirals or anything that “smells Wyrms” and rip them to shreds; the idea of fighting fair against the Wyrms (or anyone) is laughable to them. Mobbing is also a great way to intimidate werewolves, whom the Sirius are usually content to merely bully and harass. (Of course, some Garou prefer fight to flight; an experienced and disciplined Fenrir pack recently prevailed against a force of Vanguard nearly three times its number, losing only two members and killing six mutts before the dismayed Sirius retreated.)

There are several reasons Garou haven't picked up on mobbing. For one, they simply don't have the numbers for many multipack strike forces; even Spirals aren't enjoying the growth the Sirius has lately. Even where werewolf populations are strong septs are reluctant to leave themselves vulnerable by sending two or three packs away. Meanwhile, many Vanguard have little better to do than wander around and pick fights; defending caerns is a non-issue for them, and a bunch of monsters born as dogs aren't going to have jobs or much of a life. So a Sirius sept can often afford to devote itself entirely to hounding its enemies or making new ones. So for now, the Sirius hold the mob advantage.

Tribe Loyalty

The tribe's renewed identity and focus inspires a great deal of pride. Vanguard are every bit as committed to their tribe as Garou are to theirs, and are in many ways more unified. They've adopted a justified siege mentality, arming themselves against the Wyrms, the Garou Nation, Fera and everyone else in the World of Darkness if necessary. Spirit allies aside, the Vanguard of Sirius can only rely on each other.

There are now almost no desertions from the tribe, unlike in years past. In fact, several former deserters have quietly returned to the fold in light of recent events. Few questions are asked of these recidivists as long as they display proper loyalty henceforth, as the Sirius can use every-one they can get now. No one really blames them for fleeing the Masters anyway.

Breeding

With no Masters to enforce “only the alpha may breed,” that practice has quietly died. Vanguard dog-blooded now breed as prodigiously as ferals. The mongrel tribe holds more stray dog populations than it did before, and has founded several new human Kinfolk bloodlines. More than four dozen new Vanguard of Sirius have been created through these lines.

However, most new Vanguard hail from septs founded around kennels, breeder mills or veterinary clinics, staffed and stocked with Kinfolk). Here the next generation of Sirius are bred, the tribe closely monitoring birth-deaths to predict which pups will breed true. The Vanguard have agents working within animal control agencies near their septs to retrieve Kinfolk dogs and the odd feral, as well as secure potential breeding stock. For creatures born and raised as dogs, their treatment of their breeders might seem callous, especially considering the number of dogs that die birthing litters of pups. However, few argue with results: between 2007 and 2010, 180 Debased Sirius bred true in Sirius-run facilities.

Garou Converts

An influx of Garou has enriched the Vanguard of Sirius, due in large part to the tribe's new found fame (and infamy). The Masters actively sought Ronin to round out their pet tribe's ranks, but their need to keep their operation secret meant many potential recruits never heard of the Vanguard. So perhaps it's no surprise that the tribe has experienced an inrush of Ronin in the years since it was ousted.

More noteworthy is the fact that almost two dozen werewolves have left the Garou Nation for the Vanguard of Sirius. Most of them are metis, figuring that between two tribes composed largely of deformed mutants that welcome defectors, the Sirius is clearly the lesser evil. However, others have joined the new tribe for their own reasons, a brooding black-furred lupus notable among them. Finally, a Garou has recently underwent her First Change as a Vanguard, which is regarded as a very good portent by the tribe.

The tribe's Garou don't enjoy quite the preferential status they once did. The Debased compulsion to submit to werewolves is still there, but Vanguard Garou can't rely on that alone to inspire the respect and authority of their mongrel brethren. Some even catch flack from Canids that hold grudges for werewolves, though this resentment doesn't progress beyond threats and posturing. But these Garou still offer a great deal to their tribe and get their due respect. They claim many leadership positions in their packs and septs, far out of proportion to their numbers – even without the Masters' fast track to shoo them in. The Warriors of Gaia don't need handouts or kip-ups.

Dangers

The Vanguard's new fame works in its favor, but it also makes it a target. While the tribe wants new members, it has become far more selective since its reformation; the Sirius isn't so desperate as to allow ingress to malignant elements.

On the feral front, would-be recruits that are excessively Wyrn-tainted, have a known appetite for long pig, or are otherwise deemed inappropriate for the tribe are turned away; those believed too much of a threat to be allowed to live are quietly killed.

The tribe's infamy brings the potential for infiltration and subversion. Since Choked Gully, agents from the Garou Nation and Black Spiral Dancers (both Garou and lapdogs), plus a single Nuwisha, have tried joining the tribe; these false claimants were revealed during their Rites of Welcome. Their maimed bodies were left near their respective territories to warn away other would-be infiltrators. While this angering these groups, this has also made them reluctant to send other agents.

Organization & Distribution

The Vanguard of Sirius, once spread over North America with the occasional export pack, has lost much of its former range and mobility. The tribe has gathered in force in the Western U.S., with some presence in the Southeast and Mexico. The Sirius vigorously defends – and so far has held – its territories, and aggressively expands wherever it can.

The Vanguard political body has become more complex and stratified. There are several reasons for this. It's a genuine tribe now, for one, and not the mock-up it once was, and has had years to mature and grow. Its septs are self-directed entities, yet maintain their identities as Sirius and keep in frequent contact with their fellows. And rank and renown mean more than they once did, providing a clear chain of command.

Interestingly, Goat's cunning packs are partly responsible for the tribe's political sophistication. They boast influence within the tribe greater than their numbers might suggest, and often attain prominence quickly. Children of the other totems, particularly

Sirius and Dog, note this trend and are playing catch-up, learning the tricks Goat's children employ. All this politicking adds vitality and dynamism to the tribe, and power plays and political games are already the rule in the young tribe. The Sirius presents a united front to outsiders, but that doesn't mean they all get along, and internal competition can be brutal.

Packs

Like Garou, the foundation of Vanguard of Sirius society is the pack. Due to their totem bonds, Vanguard are able to bond and cooperate on a deeper and more fundamental way than an aggregate of ferals, and are every bit as united as true werewolves in this regard. (In game terms, Vanguard packs can opt to act on the same initiative and use pack tactics, unlike ferals. See pg. 194 and 212-213 of the **Werewolf** corebook. Also, the **Players Guide to Garou** explores pack tactics in some detail, pgs. 79-81.)

The Vanguard's Canids recognize their relative weakness in comparison to Garou; while no slouches, most mongrels suffer from debasements, and otherwise simply don't have their werewolf progenitors' physical and spiritual might. So they compensate with greater numbers: in the wake of increased Garou aggression, the average Sirius pack is six to eight members strong. Numerical superiority makes up for the raw power individual members may lack, and has tipped the scales in favor of the mutts in several conflicts.

Septs

Vanguard septs are more tight coalitions of four or five packs bound by tribe than anything Garou recognize as septs. The elders of a given sept can either be the highest-ranking pack or a selection of ranking members from multiple packs, depending on the preferences of that group. Sirius septs are very informal, and rarely have defined offices (Warder, Wyrm Foe, Talesinger, Master of the Challenge, etc.); instead, sept members gravitate toward the roles for which they're best suited.

Only the Sky Lights Sept is founded on a caern. The lack of caerns cripples the tribe spiritually, but it offers one significant advantage: mobility. Sirius septs that are attacked or that draw unwanted attention are able to pick up and relocate when necessary, unlike caern-bound Garou. A sept can stand and fight, of course, especially when defending important territory. But few Vanguard put down roots in an area, making them hard to fight or pin down. Some septs are nomadic, staying steps ahead of any problems. Other Vanguard groups are geographically stable because they're well-hidden, dwell where Garou or others don't strongly object to their presence, or are established someplace important (such as a kennel or an area where there's a strong concentration of dog Kinfolk). Most septs fall between these two extremes, establishing themselves and moving when they feel the need.

Vanguard of Sirius septs maintain contact with one another through nomadic packs and scouts; these claim membership in no single sept, and move from one to the next. Spirit messengers are sometimes used as well. Septs keep each other apprised of current events; sept moves and relocations; renown; and intel on Garou, Wyrm foes and other troublemakers. The Sky Lights Sept is the hub of this information network, and most tribe news comes from or ends up here.

The largest Vanguard septs are in Sedona and Prescott (AZ), New Orleans (LA), Memphis (TN), Arlington (TX), and Guadalajara, Mexico.

Kinfolk

The Vanguard of Sirius rely on their Kinfolk heavily, more than Garou and other Shifters in some respects. Vanguard kin are a diverse lot, and include human relatives of both dog-blooded and Garou, a great many dogs, and even a few wolves.

Human Kinfolk are split evenly between Garou kin introduced by werewolf defectors and Debased Kinfolk, though there's not yet many of either. Sirius Garou make subtle efforts to make sure these lines don't mix, and the vectors among them don't breed with "untainted" Garou Kinfolk. As the Masters before them, these werewolves intend to keep a strain of pure Garou in the Vanguard, and don't intend to contaminate their race further – after all, Garou are the ones in danger of going extinct, not dog-blooded. However, they try not to be heavy-handed or obvious about this: the Garou are a small minority in the Vanguard, and it wouldn't behoove them to bring the wrath of their own tribe upon themselves.

Human Kinfolk provide invaluable support for the tribe. Homids of any sort in the Vanguard are spread very thinly – there's less than forty, total – and there's a lot dog-born Canids simply can't do. This is where Kinfolk come in. They interact with the human community (from the street to political offices); they purchase and maintain guns, land and other necessities; they offer medical and veterinary care; they teach canis technical skills and human culture; they provide transportation; and they help produce the next generation of Vanguard, either directly (as breeding stock) or indirectly (running kennels). A few competent and zealous Kinfolk tag along with packs, but the majority of them are content to remain behind the scenes and make sure everything goes smoothly for the Sirius in the human world, and this is where they're most valuable.

The Sky Lights Sept

This sept is the largest Vanguard of Sirius sept and the only one founded on a caern. It serves as the political and spiritual center for the tribe, representing its legitimacy and identity. No moon bridges lead to or from the caern, as there are no other Vanguard caerns for it to connect to. (The tribe hopes to change that soon.) There have been no further attempts to take the Sky Lights Caern since June of '06, and the site appears safe for now.

The caern is named for the mysterious lights that sometimes appear in the night sky above the caern and the surrounding area. They hover, zip across the desert sky, or move in strange patterns; these visitations are frequently accompanied by a general sense of weirdness, fugue and malfunctioning technology. There seems to be no pattern to these lights' appearance and behavior. Initially a cause for concern, the phenomena present no apparent threat and are now accepted as signs from the spirits; that the area's Gauntlet is thinner than usual at these times lends support to that theory. (The "sky lights" would certainly interest Stargazers, were any around the area these days.)

Caern: The caern is hidden among rocky buttes several miles north-northwest of Sedona, Arizona, nestled within the scrub desert; the caern's heart is a small meteor crater that formed eons ago. The crater itself, large cracks in the stone outcroppings and surrounding dry gullies all serve as concealment.

Level: 3

Gauntlet: 3

Type: Enigmas

Totem: Sirius

Tribal Structure: Exclusively Vanguard of Sirius. Four packs and three individual Vanguard are full-time members of the sept. The sept doesn't enforce formal offices – Warder, Gatekeeper, etc. – but the caern is maintained despite this semi-anarchy, with members sharing responsibilities as they need arises. Besides them, tribal visitors continually cycle through the sept, inflating the number of Sirius at the caern by five to twenty at any given time.

Leaders: The Tailchasers lead the Sept of the Sky Lights

This dependence fuels an unusually tight relationship between the Vanguard of Sirius and their human Kinfolk. There aren't that many kin, and individuals often shoulder a lot of responsibility. But the tribe appreciates and honors their human friends (an attitude encouraged by Dog's followers), and Kinfolk are more involved in the internal affairs of the Sirius tribe than one observes among most Garou. Kinfolk sometimes serve as advisers to septs, especially in matters involving the human world, and several command considerable (though unofficial) power within the Vanguard.

The Sirius claims a huge number of Kinfolk dogs between its wild dog populations and kennel-raised lines. The primary use of these animals is as breeding stock for the tribe. Vanguard don't typically include dog Kinfolk as part of their packs, unlike ferals, but well-trained dogs round out the ranks of some groups. Some dog kin serve as pets or guard dogs for human Kinfolk.

Finally, the Vanguard has a few wolf Kinfolk. Almost all are wolves that have crossbred with Debased in the wild, and are thus unable to produce Garou. Werewolves typically kill these corrupted wolves so they don't render other wolf lines nonviable, but the Sirius have managed to rescue a handful and secure them in hidden, fenced-in enclosures. They make ideal breeding stock for both dog-blooded and Garou vectors, producing children that (while still Debased) are physically stronger and more attuned to their wild instincts.

and wield a lot of influence within the Sirius as a whole. The Redeemed serves as the "beta" pack and ersatz police force. These packs' governance is loose and informal, and while they reserve (and enforce) the right to make decisions in important matters, the sept is usually ruled by member consensus.

Other Septs

The Elysian Sept: Huge tracts of land in New Orleans remain uninhabited by people, entire neighborhoods deserted in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Often considered not worth the money and effort it would take to restore or even clean up, these polluted demesnes sit and fester. A mix of Goat and Weasel packs have claimed a desolate Elysian Fields subdivision as their domain, determined to thwart Wyrms encroachment in the area. The sept lost a pack to Spirals in August, but has founded two new packs between feral recruitment and producing several young via the large stray dog population in the area.

Life in New Orleans is still a struggle, and this is no less true for the Elysian Sept. These Vanguard fight Black Spiral Dancers and Banes drawn to the area by all the death, suffering and decay. Still, the Elysian packs hold their own and have even made headway against these threats, but they also tangle with the area's Garou and Ratkin. Even with its recent increase in numbers, the sept can't continue to split its attention between so many foes.

The Sept of the Open Hand: This is one of the tribe's few stationary septs, based around a kennel several miles east of Arlington, Texas; it was purchased by Kinfolk after the tribe's reformation, and is staffed and operated exclusively by them. The sept's elders often listen to their Kinfolk and give their council consideration in sept matters, especially regarding human matters.

The Sept of the Open Hand is notable for the number of Debased it has produced for the tribe (almost a dozen each year), and also for the wereraven it's secretly hosting. The Open Hand is comprised of four packs, two that serve Dog and one each patronizing Sirius and Flea. Left Hook, a homid dog-blooded, is the acting leader of the sept.

The Sirius has only the Sky Lights Caern, but is keen on expansion. Among Southwestern septs, talk has been circulating of the Dutchman's Caern, a site hidden in somewhere in the Superstition Mountains. News of this place came from a recent convert by the name "Stitches." Reportedly, the caern is potent, but claimed by only a handful of Skin Dancers.

The Redeemed and five other Southwestern packs are now making plans to claim the Dutchman's for their tribe. They'll extend token invitations for the Skinners to join the Vanguard, but they realize this offer will almost certainly be refused. At which point the Sirius will take the caern by force, occupy it and build up its defenses. The Dutchman's Caern would greatly increase the Vanguard's spiritual resources and help consolidate the tribe's power in Arizona. Better that, says Molydeus, than the Garou Nation taking the potent domain, or far worse it falling into the clutches of the Black Spiral Dancers...

The Litany

The Litany was drilled into the Vanguard of Sirius by the Masters from its very foundation, and even after that cabal's fall that philosophy persists. Promises of inclusion within the Garou Nation was a lie, one that stings the Vanguard still. The young tribe struggled to find its identity in the tumultuous period following the Masters' fall, one distinct from Garou culture. The Litany was in danger of being tossed to the wayside until several high-ranking Sirius made their voices heard on the matter, and the tribe's spirit allies echoed their sentiments. The edict was this: the Litany is of Gaia, not only of the Garou Nation. So the Litany is still held up as the Vanguard's canon, and even the tribe's iconoclasts have to admit most of the Litany is common sense and in the best interest of the individual, pack and tribe.

However, the Litany is regarded more as a set of guidelines than inviolate law. Tenets are interpreted broadly and simply; there are no scholars among the Vanguard that debate and apply the Litany's nuances, and the letter of the law is pretty unimportant to a group composed mostly born as dogs who know neither letters nor laws. Punishment Rites for Litany violation are becoming more common as the tribe matures, but violators are as often informally admonished by the jaws of their fellows or superiors. It remains to be seen if this casual approach to the holy laws of the Garou will change as the tribe matures.

Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou

The Vanguard are regrettably lax on this tenet. Since it specifically states "Garou," some argue, then it wouldn't necessarily apply to *Canids*, would it? Many dog-blooded see nothing wrong with mating with whomever they please. The severely deformed metis that result from this irresponsible behavior rarely survive for long. Some mongrels are getting into their heads this is not a good thing, and it appears violations of this tenet are slowly on the wane. That this happens at all frankly disgusts Vanguard (especially werewolves) that hold conservative views of mating.

Combat the Wyrms Wherever It Dwells and Whenever It Breeds

Vanguard attend this responsibility and take it seriously, though with a pragmatic approach that contrasts with their former suicidal abandon. The new tribe's Rite of Passage, so to speak, was the annihilation of Choked Gully Hive. The Sirius hasn't slowed its assault on the Wyrms since, killing Black Spiral Dancers, fomori, mad dogs, maneaters, and other menaces. Many Vanguard die in these fights, proof of their determination and sense of duty.

However, the Sirius is focused on external threats, seeing the Wyrms as "other." They're less ardent about policing their own

for corruption, especially since many mutts don't quite grasp that the Wyrms can affect them personally or that taint can result from their own actions. Several tainted Sirius are running around, poisoned by man-flesh, medical waste or other things they ought not have eaten, while others give into Rage too often.

A scattered half-dozen converts are refugees from Spiral programs to breed their own mutts, though none that have danced the Black Spiral have yet made it into the tribe. However, these oft-violated and abused Spiral-spawn aren't very sane, sanitary or self-controlled. Still, they've been assimilated into the tribe, even breeding and siring Vanguard young with strains of Spiral blood. Also a threat to the tribe are the numerous Bane-fetishes appropriated from dead Spirals, as many Sirius see nothing wrong with using these items to benefit themselves and their tribe.

Though no Vanguard serves the Wyrms consciously, like anyone else they fall under its influence without ever realizing it. The spiritually aware of the tribe attend corruption when they can – using rites, claws and a range of other approaches – but they only catch a few problems. Thus the Destroyer's tendrils slowly wind through the tribe, perhaps lending weight to Garou fears after all.

Respect the Territory of Another

Many Sirius don't even bother paying this law lip service. They don't feel the Garou or others respect them or their territory, and are prone to return the same lack of regard. Packs and nomadic septs habitually move through Garou domains when they feel the need. Others sneak in to gather intel... including looking for tactical vulnerabilities, should such information should prove useful. A few especially bold (or foolhardy) packs enjoy brief incursions into Garou areas just to test and antagonize its defenders, though such instigators don't do this without strength of numbers.

However, even should the Vanguard see an opportunity to seize Garou Nation holdings (even a caern), not even the most militant would consider such an attempt: while the tribe holds its own in small skirmishes, no Sirius sept is strong enough to capture and then defend a werewolf territory. Things are tense enough with the Garou Nation as they are; attempting to take their caerns would certainly turn them into blood enemies, which nobody wants.

However, Arizona's Sirius are planning to take the Dutchman's Caern soon. It's safe to say that they don't respect the Skin Dancers' territorial claims at all.

Accept an Honorable Surrender

There are two standard the Vanguard holds to here. They spare the lives of ferals that submit to them (they get more recruits that way). And most Sirius would allow Garou to surrender, should such an happen. Anything else can't really surrender honorably, and can be killed or not killed at the whim of the pack in question.

Submission To Those Higher in Station

This is something Vanguard are good at. The tribe needs solidarity to function, and part of that is recognizing rank and one's place in the tribe and pack. Most Debased are instinctively wired to submit to alphas (especially Garou), and aren't as cockstrong as many young werewolves. This isn't to say there isn't subversion, grumbling or outright fights for dominance. However, a ranking Vanguard can expect to be obeyed if his orders are reasonable and he doesn't abuse his authority.

The First Share of the Kill For the Greatest of Station

This tenet dovetails with the previous one, and most Vanguard let their superiors have the greatest share of meat, valuables, mates or whatever. As it pertains to fetishes and talens scavenged from fallen foes, though, ranking Sirius aggressively enforce this rule even when subordinates would rather not follow it.

Ye Shall Not Eat the Flesh of Humans

Maneating isn't a Vanguard epidemic, though it's enough of an issue to bear discussion. Converts that eat people for lack of other options stop once inducted into the Vanguard and they find better ways to obtain food. Some Canids bring their taste for man with them when they join the tribe, though these monsters tend to die quickly at the fangs of Dog's packs or other Sirius. Still, mistakes happen, especially in the throes of frenzy and during lean times, and some Sirius are a little too willing to overlook such slips in their allies.

Respect Those Beneath Thee - All Are of Gaia

Like the Bone Gnawers, dog-bloods proclaim that since they're at the bottom of the heap already, this tenet doesn't apply to them – and they make such a statement with greater justification. Most Sirius know what it's like to be spat and shat on, either as deformed werewolf-dog hybrids or as outcast Ronin, and a good many avoid dishing out the same abuse. However, many Vanguard have been made mean by their poor treatment; packs and mobs are bolder lately, and bully Garou, Fera and others. In a disturbing trend, a growing number of packs hunt and torture Spirals and other enemies for sport (rather than as duty to Gaia).

Rural Vanguard Canids tend to overhunt wildlife wherever they settle, which is understandable considering the hunger they often endure. Responsible Sirius attempt to explain to their fellows that this disrespects Gaia and the creatures of the world, but they learn slowly.

The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted

This tenet is perhaps taken even more seriously by the Vanguard than by the Garou. The tribe is almost entirely composed of Canids, who have more to fear from humanity than werewolves: they're physically weaker and often handicapped, and the Delirium they inspire isn't as strong. Some converts remember being blasted by shotguns or hounded by animal control as ferals, and don't care to repeat those experiences. Most Sirius dog-blooded lay low and don't interact with humans beyond what's necessary. Those that follow Dog see humans with more goodwill and move among them more freely, but are careful to not test the Veil.

Veteran Vanguard practiced another sort of Veil: the one that hid their tribe from the Garou. While that particular secret is shot to hell, the lessons of stealth and misdirection the tribe learned are applied easily enough to people, who are less astute and easier to deceive. And while their tribe's existence is now common knowledge among Garou, Sirius packs have little to gain by announcing their presence to their foes.

As far as maintaining the Veil goes, many Canids can pass as dogs, giving them the ability to range into territory through which werewolves would have to move more carefully. The Curse of Rage and especially blatant debasements makes this tactic risky, but they still have less to fear than Garou.

Do Not Suffer Thy People To Tend Thy Sickness

The Vanguard of Sirius is still very young, and so infirm elders is a non-issue for them. But the tribe has its share of maimed tribe members no longer able to fight. Before the tribe was outed, severely injured Sirius were left to die or were mercifully put down by their packmates – there really wasn't anything else to do with them. The tribe had its strongholds, but few were equipped to nurse the wounded back to health. Soldiers that couldn't fight were liabilities, and were (with great sadness) written off. Thus was the will of the Masters.

The contemporary Vanguard is no longer so carefree with the lives of its people, and they save everyone they can. Tribemates unable to function as warriors serve support roles within their septs,

servicing as teachers or advisers or otherwise contributing to their tribe. Their fellows don't begrudge caring for them. This behavior may seem uncharacteristically compassionate for a bitter collection of outcasts, but it's very pragmatic: no resource goes to waste. And it makes sense, considering that the vast majority of the tribe carries the burden of debasements, and a significant minority bear metis deformities – the Sirius are used to working around weaknesses.

The Leader May Be Challenged At Any Time During Peace/The Leader May Not Be Challenged During Wartime

These two tenets are seen as variations on a single basic idea: challenge for power if you feel you can do a better job, but the well-being of the pack and tribe comes first. Surprisingly few Vanguard violate these tenets, especially since Sirius himself holds this tenet in high regard.

It's interesting to note that, while the tribe's werewolves are valued and Canid Sirius instinctively submit to them, they're no longer considered the “default” leaders of their packs or the tribe. Consequently, a few interesting power shifts have taken place since the tribe's reformation.

Ye Shall Take No Action That Causes a Caern To Be Violated

This is largely a non-issue for Vanguard not dwelling at the Sky Lights Caern. The ones that do reside at that caern take their responsibility very seriously, and cherish the single piece of holy ground their tribe lays claim to unto death.

Stereotypes

The Vanguard of Sirius was once naive, their views on the Garou and others informed almost solely by the Masters. The Sirius were told little more than what they needed to know to eliminate their targets, and to avoid the Garou. The tribe's werewolves shared what they knew with other Vanguard, but they were spread thinly and usually kept too busy to discuss Garou society or other matters at length.

Now the tribe is far more cosmopolitan and pragmatic. The sheltering and propaganda of the Masters are gone. An influx of new Garou gives the tribe a clearer picture of the Nation from which they hail. So the Sirius turn with renewed scrutiny toward werewolves, Fera, humans and others with whom they share the world, now free to form their own opinions about what they see.

Their opinions are rarely generous. The embittered tribe has adopted a siege mentality against an unforgiving world. However, the ways this negativity expresses itself varies widely: the resentment a former Fianna metis has for the Garou Nation will be very different from the anger nurtured by a harried feral recently given his initiation, and neither understands the sense of betrayal felt by a grizzled tribe veteran that once believed in the Masters. But even cynicism isn't a constant – like flowers sprouting in the wake of a forest fire, optimism and hope still bloom here and there. The Gaian idealism that inspired the tribe in the beginning remains in even the most doleful Sirius.

While the following opinions aren't universal, they might be considered typical of a variety of Sirius.

The Garou Nation

“Fuck the Garou.”
– *Shakes-With-Hate, canis Canid convert*

“Once, I wanted so much to be like the wolves. Now I know that hope was a lie. Those lies came from the wolves, but the wolves are angry at us for believing them. It is very confusing. But now I am proud to be a Canid.”

– *Ugly Paws, canis Canid sectary*

“Our fellow Garou are confused and angry, and rightly so. They have just uncovered a great deception from their own people. Would you not be upset as well? Give them time to calm down and reflect. They will soon see we are no threat to them, and that we are their allies and brothers. But if we continue fighting the Garou, they will never attain calm and the bad blood will not subside.”

– *Dario Sanchez, homid Philodox, former Bone Gnawer*

“I guess we should sympathize with the Bone Gnawers. They make lots of us Canids. They helped found this tribe. Their luck is pretty bad and they share the gutters with us. So I guess I should feel bad about those three me and my pack tore into. Hey, it's not like I *killed* them...”

– *Grimgrin, canis Canid sectary*

“Unlike most Garou, the Children of Gaia haven't much heart for killing their own, and preach peace and unity. So we need to work these guys, big-time. We need to make them see that, one, many Garou stand with the Sirius, and two, that Canids are Garou too. Then the Children can put pressure on the rest of the Nation to lay off us and spread good PR for us. It's not like that many folks listen to 'em, but every bit helps.”

– *Angela Skydancer, homid Galliard, former Uktena*

“Yeah, I was once Fianna. Let's just say they didn't appreciate me, and the feeling was mutual. But thank Gaia for you Vanguard! It was getting so bad that I was gonna jump ship regardless... and I *really* don't want to think where I might've ended up if you guys, my new family, hadn't been here. *Family*... that's how my old tribe should've made me feel, goddammit. But more's their loss, aye?”

– *Crooked, metis Theurge, former Fianna*

Black Spiral Dancers

“Spirals are the very worst of the wolves, and they violate everything they touch. It's pretty scary, when you think about it, how easy it could've been for any of us to end up like that. Many Canids have defected to the fallen tribe, as well as outcast and metis Garou. But for the grace of Gaia, you know?”

– *Grimgrin, canis Canid sectary*

“Spirals and their Wyrms are our bitches.”

– *Shakes-With-Hate, canis Canid convert*

Ferals

“I was feral. I ate many things when I starved. But never people. I fled from men with guns. But I didn't attack them and they never saw my monster-body. I understand ferals, for I was one. And many ferals listen to us when we tell them to move carefully among humans. Some join our tribe and adopt our ways. But hunger and ignorance makes other ferals dangerous to humans and to us. Canids that can't learn a better way must be stopped, and that is what we do.”

– *Chewtoy, canis Canid convert, now deceased*

“It must be terrible to be cold, hungry and having to fight to live. I see ferals as lost sisters and brothers. More join us every day. One day all Canids will see the wisdom of our tribe.”

– *Grimgrin, canis Canid sectary*

“At best, ferals are a source of recruits. At worst, they are a dangerous nuisance. It is our responsibility to turn the nuisances into recruits, and to prevent the rest from threatening the Veil.”

– *Dario Sanchez, homid Philodox, former Bone Gnawer*

Humans

“Dog teaches us that our tribe must form strong ties with humans and defend them. Human allies can be a great strength to our tribe. We must always keep what we are secret from them. With cunning we can pass among them.”

– *Chewtoy, canis Canid convert, now deceased*

“Here's one reason why we should treat people with respect: they're not helpless. There are lots of 'em, they spook easy, and they're prone to get twitchy and blow holes through whatever scares 'em or pisses 'em off. On top of all that, Dog doesn't take kindly to us messin' with people. There's no good reason for us to beef with people, and a lots of good reasons we shouldn't.”

– *Left Hook, homid Canid sectary*

“You're asking my opinion of me? Heh, well, there's an awful lot of us, and some Garou don't recognize that. They think killin' us'll fix the problems we cause. Even if I liked that idea (and I don't), there's way too many of us for that. The best way to make things better is to deal with those problems *inside* society. And that's where folks like me got it all over furry types like you, see? And it's nice being recognized for it. Best way to show your appreciation is fetching me a Red Rock from the fridge, pronto!”

– *Trey Philadeaux, Kinfolk*

Others

“Thank Gaia for the fuckin' Ravens, the best thing that ever happened to this tribe! And to me, for that matter... t'weren't for them, I'd've never known about the Vanguard.”

– *Crooked, metis Theurge, former Fianna*

“The Rat People are enemies of Garou. If you meet any, tell them what you know of Garou and a good reason to go after them. Then leave... the Rat People don't like us Canids either.”

– *Shakes-With-Hate, canis Canid convert*

“Yeah, vampires stink of the Wyrms, subvert the natural cycle, are not of Gaia, are all Commie bastards, yadda-yadda. But they also have no particular beef with us, and I see no compelling reason to provoke the undead bastards. Let the Garou Nation have at the damned leeches if they want 'em so bad. We have other concerns – for instance, the Nation coming after us.”

– *Malachi Mancuso, homid Ragabash, former Glass Walker*

“The Masters pushed us to kill leeches, though leeches never wanted to fight us. I always thought it was a waste of time to kill things that were already dead. But Dog tells us leeches threaten people, and it is our role to defend people. So maybe the Masters were right about some things.”

– *Ugly Paws, canis Canid convert*

“There are false totems that walk this earth in flesh, masquerading as angels and devils from the Church's teachings. They grant great power, but they deal in illusion and lies. To serve these things is to betray Gaia and your tribe.”

– *Dario Sanchez, homid Philodox, former Bone Gnawer*

“Need more reasons not to kill people? Landing on Dog's shit list and bringing trouble on yourself not enough for ya? Here's one: some people don't stay dead. They become some sort of weird spirit we can't fight, and some can even climb back in their bodies. They're always pissed at whoever killed them, and if they're gunnin' for you, there's not really much anyone can do to help you.”

– *Left Hook, homid Canid sectary*

The View From Outside

The Garou

"I've never touched a dog in my life... at least not in *that way*. I've never thought about getting that Rite of Debasement or whatever done to me. I don't like dog-blooded or the Scotchguard of Serious or whatever, and I think they're all a nuisance and a bad idea. Worse, I think they're a distraction from bigger problems out there. But whenever the subject of the Vanguard comes up, all you guys start looking at me like I'm supposed to have some special insight into these guys.

"I don't."

– Mickey Scratch, homid Bone Gnawer Galliard

"We spend so much goddamned time fighting each other that the world has gone to hell and wolves are almost gone. Great. So someone out there finds a way to breed with dogs, Gaia knows why, maybe so the Garou don't die out before the Apocalypse. So now we have these 'Debased' things, right? But we see *them* as the problem, of course, instead of the crisis that probably inspired 'em to begin with. So we kill these poor bastards when we manage to pull ourselves from each other's throats. But a few Garou see how wasteful this is, so they round up some Debased, give 'em Gaian ideals, and try to do something positive with 'em... and, *big surprise*, we start the killing as soon as we find out about it. Man, that makes perfect fucking sense! Where can I sign the petition?!"

– Chain-Smokes-and-Rants, homid Child of Gaia Philodox

"Yeah the Vanguard's dangerous, and they fight us sometimes. But they also fightin' Bee-Ess-Deez and Banes and shit, and got enough heart to scrap with both Spirals and us. Hell, they even go after rogue mutts causin' trouble. So they got my respect. I say let 'em do what they do and stay outta they way."

– Ghetto-Fenris, homid Get of Fenris Ragabash

"The Vanguard of Sirius, eh? Damn. Why didn't *we* think of something like that?"

– Surge Protector, homid Glass Walker Theurge

"Many Garou tend to see us manipulators and villains, a bunch of Snidely Whiplashes and Skeletons that turn into wolves or something. So I recount the names of my tribe's heroes that have sacrificed and died in Gaia's name. I deal with others honestly and openly. I praise King Albrecht, a Silver Fang, because he's a fine leader – tribe rivalry bedamned. And so I get through to some Garou, and dispel some of the stereotypes and propaganda.

"But then there's this whole Vanguard-Masters thing, and now half those I talk to assume all us Lords were in on it, though we were as surprised and disgusted as everyone else. And while I'm trying to dispel *that* particular conspiracy theory, I ask myself why I even bother anymore..."

– Peter Christian, homid Shadow Lord Galliard

"Some say the Vanguard is a good thing. They fight for Gaia, they're on our side, they're too dangerous to fight when we have bigger problems to deal with, they're a better choice for metis defectors than the Spirals, so on and so forth. Sure. It makes sense until you *think*. First, just because the Vanguard fights Spirals doesn't mean they're actually on our side; many vampires kill their own kind and other agents of the Wyrms. Does this make leeches 'of Gaia'? This Vanguard-Spiral conflict could be a ruse, you see, or an internal struggle in the Wyrms' hierarchy. It's the nature of the Hydra to fight itself and to deceive others, and it's discouraging that so few look past the simplest explanations.

"Second, a 'viable' option for defectors encourages Garou

to leave the Nation that would otherwise stay. They bring our secrets with them – the locations of caerns, our rites and Gifts, the names of our people and their families, and other intel outsiders don't need to have. They swell the Vanguard with warriors, making it more difficult to put it down, especially since they know so much more about us than we do them. Oh, and let's not forget that *they've been killing us*.

"We can't afford to simply wait for the Sirius to strike us in force or fall entirely to the Wyrms if they haven't already. We should engage them before they become too strong to face."

– Lambent-Eyes, metis Silver Fang Galliard

"There's a whole tribe of dog-blooded and traitor Ronin out there, and the Garou Nation *tolerates* it. Do we need any more proof that the Garou Nation is a fool's dream? Can we start purging Wyrmscomers now?"

– Badger-Killer, lupus Wendigo Ahroun

Black Spiral Dancers

"Man, this is *rich*. Someone cobbles a tribe out of Ronin and mutts, and the Garou don't want 'em 'cause they're deformed and impure. Same song and dance as with the metis. And they're all just about ready to go for each other's throats! I don't think it'll take too much to make that happen.

"Hey I know! Let's throw some of our home-grown mutts together with real Spirals and have them go 'play Vanguard!' They can attack Garou and kill people and summon Banes and all sorts of cool shit, all while singin' praises to Sirius! Trust me, the Nation is dumb enough to fall for it. I think I could learn to like the Vanguard..."

– Bane-Chaser, metis Spiral Ragabash

"I don't like the fuckin' Vanguard. They wiped a hive from the goddamned map and still give us hell. They're nothing to make light of. They even poach abused metis from the Nation that might've joined us. We need to take these pretenders down before they become too strong, which will be bad for us. I never thought I'd agree with the Garou Nation on anything, but I'm with them on this: the Vanguard need to go down. Unlike the Nation, though, we got the numbers and unity to make that happen, especially since the Garou won't lift a finger to help 'em."

– Phlorkhux, homid Spiral Ahroun

Others

"Vanguard are bullies now, like the wolves. They forget what they are."

– a nameless canis feral

"As with my breed, the Garou Nation beholds the twisted children of its impropriety and rejects it. I understand the Vanguard honor Dog as well as Sirius, and both are wise totems. This new tribe is a sign of great promise, though I am afraid more tribulation awaits them."

– Jabal, metis Stargazer Theurge

"Those Vanguard dog-fuckers killed Loki-Laugh-Too-Much and left her in a ditch to get gnawed by buzzards. Sure, it was dumb for her to try sneaking into their little club, but she deserved better than that shit. I'm gonna get them, but good..."

– Deals 'em-Face-Down, homid Nuwisha, now deceased

"God, I don't even wanna talk about it."

– Tabloid Stacy, homid Corax

Who's Who Among the Vanguard

The recent upheavals and changes within the Vanguard of Sirius have been an opportunity for many to earn distinction and renown. The tribe's exemplars have been forged in the fires of conflict and honor, while its antiheroes have been defined by savage infamy – and moral posturing aside, the Sirius gains from the efforts of all its members. The tribe as a whole endures crisis after crisis only to emerge stronger, and every member of the tribe probably deserves accolades for just surviving it all. But some individuals stand out among the Sirius, having earned rank and preeminence through their deeds, wisdom or prowess. Other Vanguard described here claim no great renown but deserve mention due to an unusual quality or nature.

Chewtoy

Chewtoy spent her pre-Change life among humans, and had always felt at ease with people, even after her First Change and adoption by the Vanguard. She was among the first to be adopted by Dog, and became a model follower of that totem. Chewtoy was friendly but inspired respect, and was well-liked by both her fellows and the Masters (at least while the latter were still around). Chewtoy rarely left her Canis form, as shifting caused her great pain, but this didn't interfere with her duty of patrolling human settlements; thanks to her low Rage and unimposing stature, she rarely drew unwanted attention.

In September of 2008, Chewtoy's four-member pack – the Joyful Howls – discovered that a group of ferals and their Kinfolk had occupied a small southern California community called Cole. The mutts had been openly attacking people and stealing food. And earlier that week, a woman and her grandson never returned from an evening walk. People were suffering and the Veil was at risk, and the Joyful Howls were obligated to act.

This turned out badly for the Howls, however, as the six ferals and their dogs ambushed them one night and killed all but Chewtoy, who escaped with only light wounds. Needing help against this menace, but unwilling to leave the humans for even the time it would take her to get to her sept and back, Chewtoy conducted a one-Debased campaign to defend Cole and avenge her three fallen packmates.

For two weeks, Chewtoy harried and attacked the ferals in the sparse woods around Cole. First she eliminated their canine Kinfolk, killing four and chasing off the rest. Then she started picking off isolated ferals, ambushing and retreating before their allies could arrive. It took more than a week for the three remaining ferals to catch on and band together for defense, yet still the Sirius didn't relent – she attacked and harried the mutts almost constantly, depriving herself of food and sleep just to spare them not a moment's peace. She suffered many wounds during these fights, yet she kept going.

The three remaining ferals finally cornered Chewtoy in a gravel pit on the outskirts of Cole. The Vanguard let what Rage she had take her and fought them. As brave as she was, exhaustion and wounds had taken their toll; Chewtoy was torn apart less than a

half-mile from the community for which she had given her life.

Another Vanguard pack, the Snake Eaters, came to Cole a few days later, looking for the Joyous Howls; at this, two of the surviving ferals fled Cole. The third mongrel remained behind and cautiously approached the Snake Eaters. He told them what had happened to their tribemates, even admitting his own part in their deaths. But he spoke admiringly of their bravery, particularly that of the lone warrior that so long stood against him and his allies. Somberly but proudly, the Snake Eaters buried the Joyous Howls and performed funerary rites for them. The Vanguard pack spared the feral out of respect for his honesty and gave him leave. But the lone Debased said he felt he owed them and their fallen comrades his service. The feral returned with Snake Eaters to their sept, took Memory of Joyous Howls as his name, and earned a place within the Vanguard.

Chewtoy and the other Joyous Howls gained much posthumous renown, and are honored as martyrs by Dog's children.



Gray

Gray is widely believed to be the very first Debased, sired in the 1950s by the first Garou to use the Rite of Adaptation. No one knows if this is true, but he's old, and possibly the most formidable dog-blooded alive. For decades Gray has haunted the West like some flea-bitten ghost, skirting the unseen peripheries of small desert towns and the spirit world. Cunning and resourceful, this feral legend has endured whatever Garou, humans and others (including a miffed Mexican Sabbat pack) threw at him over the years.

Needless to say, the Masters and Vanguard of Sirius had been trying to rope Gray for years. Such an experienced Canid and his pack would have been a great asset, and other ferals would have followed his lead. But Gray turned down membership in the tribe no matter what the Masters offered him; when he bothered giving a reason, it was, "I like calling my own shots." The issue of Gray's recruitment was largely forgotten in the face of the Masters' treachery and the threat of an all-out war between the Vanguard and the Garou Nation. Gray was happy the Sirius had finally quit bugging him, but watched the tribe from a distance, curious how (or if) they would weather the coming storm.

But Gray and his pack bit off more than they could chew when they provoked Arizona's Garou a few years ago, Gaians and Spirals alike. (See pg. 60 of **The Debased** for more on Gray and why all the Garou were so sore at him.) No ragtag mob of ferals, no matter how resourceful, could dodge fate forever. A pack from the Choked Gully Hive ambushed Gray's pack from the Umbra one July night. The four wounded survivors (Gray among them) managed to lose the pack and flee to the only possible safe haven they knew: the Sept of the Sky Lights.

Now, as part of a true pack patronized by Sirius, Gray is more powerful than ever. His popularity and experience has made it easy for him to earn renown and rank: he made Fostern only a month after his induction, and is now almost an elder. Gray never quite understood what he was missing by not joining the Vanguard

of Sirius, and he internally chides himself for not joining before – he's old, and realizes he has only a few years left in which to enjoy this. But then, he supposes, it's just as well he never had to serve under the Masters.

Gray knew he has a certain following among other ferals, but didn't realize the extent of his celebrity until he joined the Sirius and found himself surrounded by Canids that knew his name and deeds. Several ferals have even joined the Vanguard just because Gray has. The old mongrel isn't sure what to think. He appreciates the respect, and he returns it as best he can by being a responsible Vanguard. But having so many eyes on him makes him nervous; he's always survived by staying out of sight and beneath notice.

Gray has given the Vanguard a lot by joining. The tribe's leaders realize his death would hurt morale, so the Sky Lights sept is heavily invested in protecting Gray. The old mutt mostly just sits around the Sky Lights Caern these days, protected by his pack, the Redeemed and other Vanguard. He's rarely given any duties, and then only those that expose him to little danger or risk (guard duty or scouting the Penumbra for hostile spirits) – despite the fact Gray is stronger and more experienced than any of his tribemates.

Gray is getting restless: he feels the call of the road in his old joints, and the burden of his status weighs heavily on him. He appreciates regular meals and safety (who wouldn't?), but being a goldbrick goes against every instinct he has. Gray isn't reconsidering his loyalty to the Vanguard, just his place and role within it. If the sept doesn't stop patronizing him, he plans to take the initiative and strike out with his pack without so much as a by-your-leave to his Sirius nursemaids. Gray's years left in this world are few anyway, he figures, and he's damned if he'll die of obsolescence and age. He owes himself and his tribe more than that.

Image: Gray sports a rough and spotted coat of fur appropriate to his cognomen, liberally shot through with white; scars and patches reveal pale skin beneath. He's a mutt of no definable breed but with obvious wolf blood. Gray's Homid form is a weathered man in his 50s. He once retained his Canis form's front left leg in all five forms, but had that debasement corrected though the Rite of Holism after joining the tribe. His right eye is missing, courtesy of a rancher's shotgun blast to the head many years ago. Gray projects an aura of strength and experience rather than decrepitude; this old dog has aged well.

Genevieve "Gen" Patterson, Star-of-Omen

Though she hasn't yet accomplished anything noteworthy, Genevieve "Gen" Patterson has attracted attention for one reason: she's the only Garou to undergo the First Change as a Vanguard of Sirius. Before her (and since), the only werewolves in the tribe were those that joined after their First Change.

Genevieve's father, a Lost Cub never claimed by a tribe, joined the Vanguard seven years ago and brought his daughter (then eleven) with him. A month after the Choked Gully conflict, Gen underwent a spontaneous First Change under the half moon. She

survived her Rite of Passage as a member of the Sirius and joined the Sky Lights sept. Star-of-Omen adapted to Garou life well, and is an enthusiastic student of the Litany and Vanguard culture. She has a penchant for astrology, and is often found staring off into the northern sky on clear nights. She's especially fascinated by the mysterious dancing lights that appear above the caern.

Even though Garou don't enjoy the primacy they once did in the Vanguard, Genevieve's First Change is still considered a very good sign, and Star-of-Omen is already being groomed for leadership by her father and tribe. How well she fulfills expectations remains to be seen, but has already attained the rank of Fostern.

Image: Gen is a short, freckled teen with ruddy hair and hazel eyes, girlishly pretty without standing out too much. In her furred forms she's tan with reddish-brown markings, with a distinct red star pattern on her face.

Udale Kennedy, "Stitches"

An outcast among outcasts, Udale Kennedy is the Vanguard of Sirius' token Skin Dancer.

The halfbreed Udale Kennedy was angered by a lifetime of poor treatment by purist Wendigo relatives, and in a fit of pique learned the Rite of Sacred Rebirth from a wandering Skin Dancer named Jim Phillips. He waited years for an opportunity to perform the rite, and found it after some Wendigo and Black Spiral Dancers went at it near a local logging mill. He gathered skins from five dead Garou at the mill and performed the Rite of Sacred Rebirth that night. Though he never killed a werewolf to obtain the skins he needed for the rite, Kennedy still stank soundly of the Wyrn – that three of the pelts he collected were Spiral skins certainly didn't help. Udale knew once the Sept of the Snow Owl or the Spirals found out what he did, he was as good as dead. He fled south to Arizona, joining Phillips and other Skin Dancers at the Dutchman's Caern.

But life among the Skin Dancers wasn't what Udale had hoped. Few spirits save Banes would deal with the Wyrn-ridden Garou. Minotaur was a harsh and demanding totem, and his brutal policies didn't jibe well with Kennedy. The Skinners fought amongst themselves constantly, and after an increasingly erratic pack member nearly killed him during a frenzy one summer night, Udale fled. He broke all contact with the Skin Dancers and lived as a Ronin in Alamo Lake for a few months, slowly going mad from solitude and growing corruption.

Udale Kennedy came to the Sky Lights Sept after hearing about it through a Ronin contact, on the verge of suicide and seeing it as his last hope. He was honest about his origins with the Sirius he talked to, knowing they'd probably see through any deception he attempted and that his taint would be obvious to them. He wasn't even allowed into the caern, which didn't surprise him.

However, a monstrous Vanguard named Molydeus took Udale aside, and told him that he was so impressed with the Skin Dancer's candor that he had advocated for him. But Udale would have to prove worthy of that honor, especially since the mutt had put his ass on the line for him. Unable to stomach further isolation,



Kennedy volunteered everything he thought would buy him favor. Details on the Skin Dancers and the Ritual of Sacred Rebirth fascinated Molydeus, but most useful was information on the Dutchman's Caern, including location, points of ingress and membership. The Vanguard (like the Garou Nation) didn't know this place even existed, and were quite pleased to learn of it. And thus Udale Kennedy earned his way into the Vanguard of Sirius, snuck in through the tribe's back door in an expedited Rite of Welcome.

As one might guess from his new moniker "Stitches," Kennedy's dark origins are something of an open secret. It's not discussed – at least, not while he's around – and no one hassles him about it. He talks with Angela Skydancer occasionally, who's also had bad experiences with Wendigo. He's even joined Molydeus' pack, the Redeemed. Udale isn't fully trusted however, and many Sirius fear him. He bears his nickname and his tribemates' distance with not so much as a grumble, elated that great Sirius saw fit to allow him into the tribe and that Goat accepts him as a follower. The Vanguard is his only hope for redemption and a new life, and Udale is devoted to his tribe and pack with the fanaticism reserved for the insane and doomed. Whatever they ask of the Skin Dancer, he'll do... even die fighting his former allies.

Stitches endures frequent Rites of Cleansing at the hands of Molydeus and his packmates. These inflict great pain, especially along the "seams" on his pelt where the skins were stitched together; the first few rites induced violent nausea and vomiting. Recent rites haven't hurt quite as much, and Udale believes he's making progress in purging his sins against Gaia. He dreads returning to the Dutchman's Caern, as he's a key part of the offensive to take it for the Sirius, but he accepts it as just another part of his penance. Nothing is too great to ask of him.

Image: Udale Kennedy is in his thirties, but his rough-hewn face and haunted eyes make him seem at least a decade older. He's Blackfoot and French Canadian, sporting gray-shot black hair and a dark complexion. Kennedy is stout and thick, slab-muscled like a laborer. In his furred forms, Stitches sports a quilted patchwork of greenish, black and storm gray fur – due to his rushed performance of the Rite of Sacred Rebirth or some other factor, the Garou pelts never blended into a uniform coat. This makes it obvious what he is, so Udale rarely shifts from Homid form.

Molydeus

The mutt that would come to be known as Molydeus was born to Debased wolf Kinfolk in a Tennessee garbage dump; his mother and siblings died during birth, and would have starved had he not taught himself to hunt rats and scavenge. He spent his first year hiding from humans and predators, and surviving through cunning and force of will. The lonely mongrel was found by a scouting Vanguard pack scant days after his First Change, saving him from existence as a stray. They brought the ugly, mostly hairless thing to

the Nashville kennel sept and left him there; the pack didn't know what else to do with him.

The Canid was raised by the Kinfolk staff and successive Sirius packs that cycled through the protectorate. He was given the nickname "Molydeus" by a vet tech into fantasy roleplaying games, who remarked that the mutt looked like some type of demon. The name stuck; the Canid himself had no objection to it, and liked the sound of his name (as well as actually having a name). Molydeus enjoyed hearing stories of the heroes and magic of Planescape. (However, the impressionable young Canid was also being indoctrinated into the Vanguard during this time, and he'd frequently confuse D&D's epic fantasy with the reality of spiritual warfare in a dark modern world full of shapeshifters, spirits and other monsters. It was decided that roleplaying games were a bad influence on Molydeus, and probably a waste of time for anyone.)

The young mutt was taught to hide when mortals were around, and helped out around the kennel as best he could. He was a quick study, and took to the Litany and the ways of the Vanguard easily.

Molydeus was moved to the Sky Lights Sept soon after it was re-awakened, as the Masters figured he would make an idea caern warder: he's strong, loyal, intimidating, and too ugly to wander off. They chose wisely. Molydeus was a paragon of the tribe, both loyal and competent, and he quickly earned rank (such as it was) for his service. He founded a Goat pack, the Redeemed, from six other "misfit" mutts, to defend the caern. When the Masters betrayed the Vanguard, the mutt bolstered his tribe's morale despite his deep hurt. Molydeus orchestrated the assault on the Hive of the Choked Gully, leading the charge and drawing a lot of Spiral blood himself (something he did with relish). The mongrel has a keen tactical mind and a knack for military leadership, which has greatly benefited the Sirius. No one can argue that Molydeus has been any-

thing but a boon for his tribe.

But Molydeus bears a terrible secret he dare not share with anyone: what else than a Black Spiral Dancer would spawn an unsightly demon such as himself?! He loves Gaia and his tribe, however, and is determined to redeem himself. Molydeus whips his ugly body with a make-shift silver-tipped scourge in secret, hoping to drive out the Wyrms; this has left a road map of scars (which other Sirius and even packmates have learned better than to ask about). He engages in punishing regimens of purification and performs regular Rites of Cleansing on himself.

The poor mongrel is paranoid and confused. Even if he were of Spiral heritage (he isn't), Molydeus' actions and dedication to Gaian ideals would have redeemed him long ago... were he not so fixated on his supposed damnation. His masochism and obsessive purgation are symptoms of self-loathing, an avenue though which corruption can manifest. It doesn't help matters that the mutt is terrified to confide in other Sirius, afraid he'll be cast out of the tribe or worse. In a sad irony, Molydeus' obsession with redemption may be what damns him.





Molydeus advocated for Stitches' membership in the tribe, a gambit that seems to be paying off. (Stitches would gladly die for Molydeus.) He's adopted the former Skin Dancer as a student and confidant, and has even inducted him into the Redeemed. He relates to the *faux*-werewolf's struggle for redemption and watches him closely, perhaps to find hope for himself in Udale's success. But Molydeus also pumps Stitches for information on the Skin Dancers and the Dutchman's Caern, as he'll soon lead the attempt to capture the site.

Image: Molydeus is honestly monstrous, but otherwise a prime Canid specimen, as big and strong as a werewolf. The mutt is mostly hairless, with patches of light gray fur thick on his head, shoulders and back. His skin is sunburn red with scaly maculation. The scars all over add to the disturbing effect. It might remind one of something that dragged itself out of Hell, an unkind comparison sadly not lost on Molydeus himself. Molydeus often wears a large gray hooded cloak to conceal his appearance. While he's availed himself of the Rite of Holism twice to correct spiritual limitations, he hasn't opted to correct his appearance – irrationally, Molydeus is convinced that his ugliness comes from corruption, and that the rite wouldn't work... thus revealing his “secret” to everyone.

Molydeus often carries his imposing double axe with him, especially when expecting a fight. The huge weapon was a gift, forged from folded steel by a Kinfolk SCA weaponsmith the mutt used to game with. A rattlesnake-spirit was bound into the axe by a Theurge as a reward for accepting the warder position at the Sky Lights Caern.

Tabloid Stacy

Stacy Patterson bears the honor – and stigma – of exposing the Vanguard of Sirius to the world.

Tabloid Stacy became a celebrity overnight, and gained a lot of status among her people – even many Garou know her name, and one can't put a price on that sort of renown. More than an act of status-whoring, it was Stacy's *responsibility* to expose that truth.

That's what Corax do. Be that as it may, it doesn't make things any easier for her. The Corax has landed herself on the now-deposed Masters' shit lists, who want to see her dead for her effrontery – and they have charged Garou assassins with that task. Meanwhile, most Garou feel the whole Masters-Vanguard affair was a shame they should have uncovered on their own, and that it would have been better had Stacy and the other goddamned birds stayed out of it. And while they have great regard for their new golden child, the Corax can't help Tabloid Stacy beyond keeping her apprised of the latest gossip and helping her dodge the Garou out to kill her; while they wouldn't leave her out to dry, wereravens aren't warriors. No one Corax is worth the dozen or so that would die defending her, no matter her popularity or how unfair it is that she's being hunted.

But Tabloid Stacy has found safety among unlikely allies in the Vanguard of Sirius. Aware of her precarious situation, the Open Hand Sept just outside of Arlington, Texas extended her its protection and support. While there are sore feelings toward Stacy within the Sirius – her loose lips caused trouble and cost lives – they recognize that she's also responsible for the gains the tribe has made. It's not like the Vanguard miss being the unwitting dupes of asshole Garou, after all. Stacy reluctantly accepted the Open Hand's offer for lack of other options, and the sept has given her an apartment in the building next to their kennel. Stacy's digs smells like ass and is noisy, with the scores of fucking dogs next door and all. But it's free, and as safe as she can hope for right now. Apparently no one in the Garou Nation has any idea she's there.

So now Tabloid Stacy bears the distinction of being the most unusual “member” of the Vanguard of Sirius. This membership isn't genuine, of course – even assuming Sirius would accept a Corax supplicant, Raven would no doubt have something to say to any kid of his that ditched him to run with werewolf mutants. Stacy wouldn't dream of it anyway. Nonetheless, she's been given honorary rank in the Vanguard (the same sort offered to exemplary Kinfolk), and has even exchanged a few Gifts and rites with her protectors. Tabloid Stacy also feeds them information. Nothing about her own people or other vital secrets, of course, but detailed dirt on the Masters and other matters has done much to justify the trouble the four packs go through to keep her secure. Other than occasional visits from other Corax, sitting in on Vanguard moots and swapping stories are the highlights of Stacy's existence.



Despite the fact her protectors genuinely care about Stacy and her wellbeing, and go out of their way to make her feel safe, the young Corax lives in fear. She's prone to just sit in her safe house these days, smoke and watch cable TV, too afraid to go out alone except for the occasional foray to the local watering hole or grocery store. But her claustrophobic wereraven instincts struggle mightily against this self-imposed internment. Stacy's soul yearns for the sky but fear keeps her indoors, and her only friends are shapeshifting dogs. The woman is going slowly insane.

Image: Tabloid Stacy was once fairly attractive, dusky-skinned with shoulder-length black hair and alert brown eyes. But she's wasted away to a haggard shadow of her former self. She's dropped ten pounds from her already spare frame, and her drawn face reveals lines and dark circles. Her eyes are paradoxically dull and focused, as sleep deprivation wars with paranoia.

Notable Packs

While individuals accomplish great things, the Vanguard of Sirius' members are most effective when they operate in packs. The pack is the basic social unit of the Vanguard, as it is for Garou. United by a totem bond and common purpose, packs become something more than the sum of its parts. Certainly, many of the characters mentioned below are interesting enough to justify individual writeups, but they've become noteworthy through acting in concert with their packmates.

The Entrail Renders

Totem: Weasel

Currently ten strong – excessive even by Vanguard standards – the infamous Entrail Renders are all canis, and mostly ex-ferals. The nomadic Renders travel between septs and serve as heavy hitters for whoever hosts them, either handling minor threats on their own or leading multipack attacks on enemy strongholds. The Entrail Renders have proven tough enough to back up their bad attitudes; while the pack cycles through fringe members regularly, its core membership remains remarkably stable. This is impressive when one considers what the Entrail Renders fight (Black Spiral Dancers) and how often (almost constantly). They dislike Garou in general, but grudgingly tolerate Sirius werewolves.

The Entrail Renders racked up on Glory at Choked Gully, killing more than their share of Spirals. However, the pack's Honor suffered when they attacked Gaian Garou that approached them in peace, resulting in needless casualties among both the Vanguard and the werewolves. The Renders were scathingly reprimanded by Molydeus and other tribe elders. Since then, they've made efforts to avoid Gaian Garou so they won't have to fight them. Despite this, the Entrail Renders have ended up tangling with werewolves a few times. Only one such fight resulted in Garou deaths... that's pretty good, right? To be fair the two that died struck first, and they probably had it coming anyway...

The Entrail Renders really come into their own when hunting and killing Black Spiral Dancers. Armed with guns, silver weapons and fetishes taken from previous kills, the Renders have slain six full packs and thirteen individual Spirals (not including their impressive Choked Gully body count). They also target Spiral Kinfolk, and have killed more than thirty. The pack's favored tactic is to wear down, cripple and demoralize their foes with sniping and divide-and-ambush strategies, then move in and tear their weakened foes asunder. They're fond of burning down structures for kills.

But the Entrail Renders go far beyond what's necessary to secure a victory, and take great pride in being even more brutal and savage than their enemies. They have been known to engage in torture and malicious maiming of foes, either during interrogation or just for fun. They're lauded for their courage and efficiency (and they've even inspired imitators), but some Sirius fear the Renders simply love killing – Garou in particular, with Spirals the only ones upon which they can vent violence without being forsaken by totem and tribe. There may be more truth to this than even the Renders would like to admit.

The unchallenged alpha of the Entrail Renders, Shakes-With-Hate, was a feral that survived five years of everything the world threw at her. The Fianna of the Red Cudgel Sept hounded her and her pack in the rural foothills of southern Pennsylvania before they fled to the Vanguard. Shakes joined the Vanguard of Sirius out of fear and desperation, but grew to embrace the ideals of the tribe... most of them, anyway. She's never been quite able to leave behind her old fear and hate, though, and she lashes out at any werewolf she feels she can (which is mostly Spirals). Shakes-With-Hate shook uncontrollably when she used Rage, a malady she was only able to control by sheer force of will. She's recently had that debasement removed through the Rite of Holism; her old moniker sticks with her, but she doesn't care. She cuts a lean and intimidating figure, a lithe Doberman with wolf thrown in for bulk and power; her Homid form is a wiry black woman with short hair and piercing brown eyes.

Underbite is Shake-With-Hate's loyal beta. A brave and skilled warrior before, he's become an unholy terror since liberating the Scourge Collar from its previous owner at Choked Gully (see Fetishes & Talens, pg. 33). Though not rightly a Bane, the pain-spirit within the Collar was in the possession of its Spiral owner long enough to become a touched by the Wyrms. The spirit has lost whatever restraint it had before in applying its talents. Not an introspective creature, Underbite readily complies with the pain-spirit's subtle urgings, and is increasingly driven to “feed” it. So far, the spirit hasn't directed the Canid against his allies, though the distinction between the user and the used blurs. Underbite is wide and squat, built low to the ground; his lower jaw juts unnaturally, which looks odd but doesn't interfere with his ability to bite (as anyone on the receiving end of those jaws can attest).

Another infamous Entrail Render is a small, near-hairless metis called Maggot. She resembles nothing so much as some huge variety of mole rat. The wretched little thing is Shakes' personal guided missile: obedient, Rage-powered and bloodthirsty. (The Renders' favorite war story is the time Maggot took her pack's name to heart: in her Canis form, she bit a hole in the belly of a Spiral and clawed her way into him. This not only killed the hapless Dancer in the most painful way imaginable but sent two of his pack into panicked frenzies.) Maggot is despondent when not hunting or killing something, and slinks around to make herself as unobtrusive as possible. She fails miserably at this.

The pack's premier scout is Radar, whose sense of smell is so acute he's able to run down anything he scents – and without the use of Gifts. Having learned a few tricks to augment his natural talents, the mutt can now pretty much find anyone or anything anywhere. Radar lacks his packmates' killer instincts and avoids fights when he can; this has cost him both respect and Glory. However, no one takes issue with his results, as he's led the Entrail Renders to more than a dozen (now dead) enemies.

The Tailchasers

Totem: Sirius

The Tailchasers are possibly the most renowned and powerful pack in the Vanguard of Sirius. They lead the Sky Lights sept, along with the Redeemed. The pack is now composed of Angela Skydancer, Racer, Sun-Coat, Machine and Sapho. Since their early days the Tailchasers have endured two leadership changes, the loss of two members and the addition of two new ones. Yet they've emerged strong, shining examples for other Sirius, and its core members have become capable administrators for their sept. (See pg. 66-69 of **The Debased** for more on this tribe's past.)

In August of 2006, in a battle against a Black Spiral Dancer and her Kinfolk, the Tailchasers were reforged in tragedy. By this time, Maw's rampages had become uncontrollable and too frequent, despite Skydancer's desperate attempts to reign him in. Maw entered a frenzy he couldn't shake during that vicious fight, and after finishing off the last of his foes Maw attacked Racer. With no hesitation Angela leaped to Racer's defense and tore out Maw's throat – had she acted even a moment later, Racer would have died. Skydancer, crying, held the confused Maw as he bled out, while the horrified pack struggled to comprehend what had just happened.

The Galliard abdicated the role of pack leader to Racer after killing Maw, defying the Masters' unspoken but enforced policy of placing Garou in charge. The Masters felt this impromptu power shift ill-advised, and one of them personally approached Angela on the matter. Still too grief-stricken to care about consequences, she told him to fuck off. Angela heard nothing more about the matter, though word of this quickly spread among Vanguard packs (“Hey, did you know a Garou is taking orders from a Canid now?!”) Before much social reform could come of this, though, the Masters were outed and the tribe as a whole was reborn, its broad changes mirroring those that took place in the Tailchasers months before.

Angela now serves as the Sky Lights Sept's lone Galliard. When not engaged in other sept duties, she enthusiastically collects stories from other Sirius and retells them with her own epic flair. The Garou is delighted when her songs and tales are shared by her tribemates both near and far. This is what Skydancer was born to do, and she's glad she can at long last fulfill that purpose. But she's lost so much along the way. Everyone knows Angela Skydancer mourns Maw, but few realize just how much. She sees Maw's death as her failure because she didn't manage his behavior, and his blood will stain her claws forever. She struggles with depression and near-Harano, and frequently suffers nightmares in which she kills Maw again... but too late to save her pack. Having also lost Trey doesn't help matters. Angela secretly wants to die in battle, to end her pain, but her sense of responsibility to her pack and tribe has so far prevented her from acting on this death wish.

Racer is the pack's alpha and the sept's senior member. As she did in the earliest days of the Tailchasers, Racer shows a natural flair for leadership and a keen tactical mind. She manages the sept well, especially with Molydeus' and Angela's capable help, though she occasionally misses the simpler times of running with a pack. She's especially close to Skydancer, despite the resentment she once held for her; Racer never suspected the once-Ronin was uncomfortable with the burden of leadership that had been thrust upon her. Racer now recognizes Skydancer's leadership potential, for it was she that had to end Maw's life; Racer wonders if she could have made such a painful decision. But Racer doesn't bring this up to Angela, as it's still a painful issue.

Sun-Coat, known formerly as Patches (and Rat-Chaser before that), was one of the first Vanguard to avail himself of the miraculous Rite of Holism. He emerged a handsome creature, with smooth reddish-gold fur. Not being afflicted with mange has done

much to improve his self-image and confidence, and now he's now a touch cocky and vain. Sun-Coat is competent and loyal, directing a tribal spy network that digs up intelligence on nearby Garou septs and Wyrms activity. He also gathers, analyzes and disseminates information brought to the Sky Lights Sept, using nomadic Sirius as both an information source and a means to relay it. Sun-Coat remains close to both Skydancer and Trey Philadeaux, and is keenly aware of the sadness they try to hide.

The newest Tailchasers are Machine and Sapho. A K-9 unit police dog before his First Change, Machine is the pack's new muscle, but far more composed and intelligent than their former bruiser Maw. He's more a bodyguard for Racer and Skydancer than a soldier, as the Canid knows they're prime assassination targets. Machine is alert and quiet, saying little; he's a bit lacking in the personality department. Sapho is a sectary with an unusual affinity for the Umbra and its denizens. She lead important rites, gathers information from spirit allies, and endeavors to improve relations between the Sky Lights Sept and local spirits. Contrasting Machine's somber character, Sapho is enthusiastic and compassionate, quick to help anyone in need and taking her painful seizures in stride.

Trey Philadeaux quietly retired from the Tailchasers after Maw died; he's missed, but as Kinfolk, Trey wasn't an integral part of the pack anyway. He still works actively for the Sirius, as a vet tech and healer for its Sedona kennels, making him popular within the tribe.

Maw's death hit Philadeaux hard, flensing his easygoing and carefree ways away, though the affable man hides this well. Trey is secretly terrified of Angela Skydancer, whom he now sees as a monster. He avoids her as much as possible. He understands on a logical level what Angela did was necessary, and he also knows that Maw's death weighs heavily on her. So Trey doesn't hold it against her... at least, he *tries* not to.

But he saw her tear the life from Maw, and how Maw nearly killed Racer, and Trey can't unsee these horrors no matter how hard he tries... especially when the scene so often replays in nightmares in which Angela kills him and the entire pack. Trey knows Angela is hurting more than anyone has a right to, and he prays she doesn't know how he feels.

But of course he knows she does.



The Trojan Horses

Totem: Flea

A rising star among Glass Walkers, the Ragabash Malachi Mancuso had a knack for digging up dirt. He hit a goldmine when he discovered that a Bone Gnawer of some status was contributing to the local mongrel population, and used it to blackmail him. The Gnawer had nothing else to offer (big surprise, there), so Mancuso squeezed every bit of information he could from the vector... including the forbidden knowledge of the Rite of Adaptation.

Mancuso learned the rite simply because he was curious – any knowledge is power, right? However, it proved to be too much power for him to resist using, especially when he considered the reasons the Bone Gnawer gave for creating Debased young. True, the Garou race is dying, and those forced to live in in the city suffer greatly for lack of animal blood. But the Ragabash figured it wasn't the Rite of Adaptation itself that was messed up, but who and what was doing the breeding. When you're already scraping the bottom of the Garou gene pool, and you make out with stray dogs behind the corner fish market, it's small wonder your kids will be gimps. While no blue blood (Glass Walkers don't have those), Mancuso was confident that his seed was immeasurably better than that of any Gnawer, and that by carefully selecting the best and healthiest dogs he could avoid the unfortunate deformities and weakness associated with Debased.

So Mancuso dropped eight thousand dollars on ten registered dogs, and a few grand more on a comfortable enclosure for them behind his townhouse. He then performed the Rite of Adaptation, mated with the dogs, and eagerly awaited the results...

...which were two dead dogs and a bucketful of stillborn puppies. And despite all the time and money Mancuso had invested in all this, the three that ended up going through the First Change a year later all had something wrong with them. Figures.

Mancuso knew what was coming, since he'd been mostly absent from his Glass Walker sept for the last year and had heard rumors he was on the outs. He came clean to his sept, explaining what he did and why. None of it was any surprise to them, though, as they had ways of finding out about things (which in turn didn't surprise Mancuso). They were glad he finally owned up to his stupidity, but what was done was done. They might've shown leniency with a cub, but a by-God Adren should know better, and they were not happy with the vector at all. They allowed Mancuso to leave the sept quietly, and spare him the shame of kicking him out.

Mancuso used what standing he had left among the spirits to get them to teach his three Canid children Gifts, as well as grant the one with a stunted leg a cyberfetish replacement; Mancuso had to offer permanent Gnosis as chiminage for the last favor. Then Mancuso and his newly changed young (plus a lot of dogs) hit the road in a modified RV. Through happenstance or providence, they ran across the Vanguard of Sirius. The tribe was happy to receive a

Garou and a pack's worth of new members all at once, especially one that came with its own Kinfolk. The newly christened Trojan Horses weathered the Masters debacle and contributed significantly to the Choked Gully conflict by supplying armaments for the tribe (you should know the story, pg. 6).

The Trojan Horses is currently composed of Mancuso, his three offspring and a member they've adopted recently. They're open to bringing promising new members into the pack.

Malachi has strong Italian features with steel gray eyes, and dresses business casual. The former Glass Walker cares deeply for his children and feels responsible for their condition; he negotiated with a Dog pack to have the Rite of Holism performed on the two children he wasn't able to "fix" with cyberfetishes. Malachi is still a devout technofetishist, rarely seen without his laptop and cell phone. His Canid kids share his materialistic values, and have cell phones, an array of guns, melee weapons, and other toys.

Charlie Horse is the most distinctive member of the pack, a red- and gray-furred Setter-wolf mix with a cyberfetish left hind leg. Her Homid form is a redheaded teen with her father's gray eyes. She gains no advantage from the mechanical limb other than the ability to walk, run and move about normally, which is a miracle Charlie appreciates greatly. She serves as the pack's scout and messenger. She favors revolvers, but her insistence on firing them "John Woo style" makes her less effective in firefights than she'd otherwise be.

Clydesdale ("Clyde" for short) is a wolf-Mastiff hybrid, and as big and strong as you might imagine, far larger and more muscular than even his dad. He was born dumb as a rock, but the Rite of Holism has fixed that; he's enjoys his new intelligence. He still looks like a big thug, though, and he likes taking advantage of those that underestimate him. Clyde uses wrestling moves and an array of weapons to devastating effect, including a double-barreled sawed-off and a silver-plated machete.

Clipper, a rail-thin mongrel of whippet stock, was once as frail as she looks; her brittle bones broke from any sort of hard impact. Even since the Rite of Holism, she's physically weak. She compensates with her dedicated laser-scoped Barrett Model 82 and a pronounced mean streak. If Clipper can't set up a sniping position, she sprays enemies with her MP5. Clipper runs to her siblings or Daddy for protection if foes close on her, as brawls don't favor her. Clipper enjoys gloating to Charlie and Clyde that her "kill count" exceeds theirs combined (which, to her credit, is true).

The only non-relative the pack adopted so far, Pony is a tiny Debased: a mere forty pounds as a dog, four and a half feet tall in Homid form, and a mere 6' in Crinos. The runt is stoutly built, however, and is willing and able to fight. She excels at ambush attacks and getting under opponents' defenses, tripping opponents up, and other pack tactics that utilize surprise and her small size.

A Family of Spirits

The Vanguard of Sirius is more diverse than it once was, and not only because of the influx of new members. The patronage of additional totems has had several profound effects on the tribe.

Not too long ago, the Vanguard was a tribe in name only. Much like the Skin Dancers, it was comprised of forsaken quasi-werewolves that boasted the patronage of a minor totem spirit. But this alone isn't enough for these groups to qualify as genuine tribes. Due to their distinctly non-Gaian origins, the spirits don't recognize Skin Dancers or Debased as Garou, disregarding or reviling them as perversions of nature. Spirits are ultimately conservative beings, their very natures tied to tradition and their roles in the Tellurian. They don't change easily, and won't simply disregard millennia of The Way Things Are Done easily. Even Wyrms-totems and Banes interact with Black Spiral Dancers in the way that Gaian spirits do with other werewolves, strictly observing rank, renown, chimage and behavioral taboos.

But Dog's adoption of Vanguard packs in the Fall of 2005 changed everything for the tribe, and precipitated a chain of events the Masters didn't predict. The Masters, who arranged Dog's introduction to the tribe, wanted a greater range of boons and Gifts for their soldiers. However, this precedent attracted the attention of other spirits, including the totems Flea and Goat. With each new totem that accepted Vanguard packs, the tribe gained recognition in the greater spirit community, as well as spiritual savvy and a greater sense of self-worth. Weathering the Masters' betrayal, and finding independence and a new sense of identity, earned the Vanguard further respect by spirits, along with Weasel's support. In less than a year, the Vanguard of Sirius went from a self-contained, ingrown group on the fringes of spirit and shapeshifter communities to a full tribe... even if a minor one that still doesn't get much respect. However, that the Sirius is a true tribe is no longer in question. Spirits are traditionalists, remember, and the laws of the cosmos demand they recognize Vanguard, whether or not they actually *like* them.

The five totems that honor Vanguard of Sirius packs enjoy a unique relationship with one another. Sirius is indisputably the greatest influence over the Vanguard (who bear his name, after all), but he isn't a jealous patron and doesn't mind "sharing" his tribe with the other totems. Each great spirit has the interests of the tribe at heart, and while their ideas on what's best for the Vanguard might vary, there have been no significant intra-totem conflicts. Other totems may claim portions of Sirius' pie in the future; spirits serving Raven, Fox, Rat and Rattlesnake have made tentative contact with Vanguard septs, and Gifts and chimage were exchanged. Whether stronger associations form remains to be seen.

For the Vanguard of Sirius, diversity truly is strength.

(Systems benefits for these totems – Background costs, benefits and bans – are found on pg. 32.)

Sirius

The tribal totem of the Vanguard, Sirius has the respect of all the members of his tribe, including those that follow other totems. While the same spirit he always was, Sirius has become more of a proactive leader of his tribe, contrasting his former passivity. Sirius interacts with his tribe through spirit servants and visions more frequently; his prompting the rediscovery of his Arizona caern is one example of this. He's been the spiritual glue that has kept the Vanguard together through its recent upheavals; while other factors also kept the tribe from disintegrating, the tribe would certainly have fallen without its patron. Sirius still represents companionship and service, but the focus of that devotion has changed from the Garou Nation to Sirius himself and the Vanguard as a whole. And his servants' values reflect this evolution.

Sirius is fiercely devoted to his tribe, and inspires the same in turn from his children. Under his oversight, the tribe has truly come of age, growing and defending itself from its many foes. A few Vanguard mull over this new commitment Sirius has for the tribe, though they keep their thoughts to themselves – it's not proper to openly question the motivations of one's god. However, some of their conclusions are surprisingly astute.

Sirius was apparently complicit in the Masters' schemes... at least, at the Vanguard's inception. The totem, along with his tribe, has obviously outgrown the Masters. But for some, the nature of the connection between the great star-spirit and the cabal of secretive Garou has never been satisfactorily answered.

Sirius was once a totem with only a marginal following, and he was eager to gain new followers. He was initially skeptical of the Masters' vision of a dog-blooded tribe described to him via spirit proxies more than a decade ago. But between the chimage the Masters offered and Grandfather Thunder's personal assurances, Sirius agreed to accept the patronage of Canids. Sirius was pleased to see a tribe form around him, dedicated to venerating him as Garou do their tribal totems. He played his part in the Masters' conspiracy, but unwittingly; while the spirit is no fool, he wasn't privy to the social intrigues of Garou and thus unaware of the camp's greater agenda. (Things might have been different if the totem had been more familiar with werewolf society, but few packs followed him before the Vanguard's advent.)

In light of what has transpired, Sirius feels responsible for his part in the deception perpetrated on both his tribe and the Garou Nation. He isn't at all pleased with the Masters (what's left of them), nor with Grandfather Thunder, who attested to the honor of that group. The stellar spirit intends to back his tribe and help it prove itself against the Wyrms, feral Debased, and the Garou Nation if necessary.

Not only is his commitment to the Vanguard unwavering, Sirius offers his supplicants greater boons lately. While the star-dog commands far more Vanguard than any other totem, a given pack no longer simply defaults to Sirius for lack of other options. Sirius appreciates the diversity the new totems offer his tribe and doesn't see himself in competition with them, but he fully intends to maintain primacy over the Vanguard.

Dog

Dog hails from the Middle Kingdom, and has only gained Western followers in the last two years. His following has never been large, as his message of peaceful coexistence with and appreciation of man appealed to few hengeyokai (and very few Nezumi in particular). More than for his stance on people, Dog was venerated for his emphasis on loyal service and protection, which his sentai directed toward the Mandates and the Way of Emerald Virtue (the Eastern Litany analogue). But Dog's following has declined steadily in the last several decades, as the Sixth Age looms over the horizon and Eastern Shifters gravitate toward more militant totems.

Facing increasing marginalization when contacted by the Vanguard emissaries in 2005, Dog discovered a tribal collection of outcast Shifters that might as well have been custom-grown for him. What clinched it for Dog was the massacre of hundreds of thousands of dogs by the Chinese government... a campaign that zealous Hakken appear to have had a hand in. Now that tribe's relationship with Dog is in jeopardy, as is Dog's future in the East.

But the West offers Dog great opportunity. Vanguard are more receptive to his humanistic teachings than hengeyokai, and are instinctively predisposed toward service. Dog's acceptance of dog-blooded children isn't as straightforward as one might assume,

however. Dog is a Totem of Honor, and he would sooner fall into obsolescence than accept the servitude of those unworthy of him. He recognizes exactly what the Debased are: not true dog-Shifters but crippled corruptions of Garou, something Gaia never intended to exist. Yet he sees potential in the Debased, and in the Vanguard of Sirius in particular. He intends to help the quasi-Breed redeem itself. Dog regards the canine heritage of the Debased as an avenue to something greater, a quality he encourages his children to embrace. To this end, he pioneered the Rite of Holism.

Dog has weathered the Vanguard's recent identity crisis, and his following among that tribe is stronger than ever. He's the most popular totem behind Sirius, and uses his influence to nudge the tribe toward better relations with humans. So far this is working in small ways, and Dog is very pleased.

Dog is looking to the Garou Nation, and he sees possibly sympathetic views among the Bone Gnawers, Children of Gaia and Glass Walkers. Whether he gains any following among these tribes remains to be seen, but Dog will make certain that any inroads he makes for himself also benefit the Vanguard of Sirius.

Flea

No one asked Flea for her participation – she simply invited herself along once she realized Vanguard of Sirius packs were open for poaching—er, patronage. She nagged Sirius for Vanguard packs and wouldn't go away until he relented. After the Masters had to beg Dog so aggressively to get him to adopt Vanguard packs, it surprised them and everyone else when Sirius' spirit servants informed the Masters one day that Flea was to be given packs. Flea has little direct or intermediary contact with the other totems, which is fine with them; her participation is appreciated, but her insectile thought and motivations are often strange to them.

As the tribe's first Totem of War, Flea quickly proved her value. Her packs are in great part responsible for the Vanguard's early victories after the Masters' betrayal. While few Garou associate Flea with bravery, her packs are among the Sirius' most potent warriors. That the Glory of her packs don't suffer for following her does much to endear Flea to the Vanguard. She claims more packs than Weasel because of her practical approach to warfare – rather than driving her packs to bloodlust, Flea encourages measured attack-and-withdrawal tactics more conducive to their survival.

Goat

At a glance, Goat is perhaps the oddest of the totems that sponsor Vanguard packs. Sirius and Dog are both canine spirits, and where there are dogs Flea won't be far behind. Weasel is just vicious, and it makes sense she'd appreciate the acerbic Vanguard. But Goat doesn't seem to fit, at least on the surface.

Goat is clever and pragmatic, and good at recognizing opportunity and capitalizing on it. The Vanguard of Sirius and the Masters caught the totem's interest years ago. In the Vanguard he saw a great resource. Under the Masters' guidance, the Sirius were capable and accomplished a great deal despite meager resources and their naivety. And the Masters' ruse lasted for a decade under the noses of secretive and paranoid Garou, which showed the Garou camp and their “tribe” were adept at deception. Goat respected the Vanguard and their Masters, but more the former for their competence and cunning: no matter how skilled the artisan, one might say, poor tools and materials yield little. Truth be told, Goat was also a little envious of Sirius, who had a tribe all to himself. He assumed that's what Sirius wanted and didn't interfere.

However, once Dog and Flea began adopting Vanguard packs, Goat immediately approached Sirius with an alliance. The idea of not employing such a useful asset as the Vanguard ran counter to common sense, as Goat saw it; snubbing the tribe was foolish, especially when they've proven willing to act in Gaia's interests.

And thus Goat was accepted into the small but growing family of Vanguard totems.

And despite the faltered Masters, the tribe's trials, and all the adversity they still face, Goat isn't going anywhere. All this has done is strengthen the stubborn spirit's dedication to the tribe. Goat is capable of straightforward action, but is more cunning and subtler than other Vanguard totems. He encourages cleverness and intelligence, and several packs sponsored by the wily old totem have risen to political prominence in Vanguard septs.

Weasel

Weasel only began accepting Vanguard supplicants after the fall of the Masters and the tribe's rebirth. Like many other totem spirits, she long disregarded the mock tribe as a bad joke. How the tribe comported itself after the Masters' house of cards collapsed impressed her, however. When Weasel saw them defending the Sky Lights Caern from the Garou they once emulated, she knew the new tribe had at long last come into its own. Her spirit servants immediately approached several undecided Vanguard packs and suborned them to her service. By the time the other totems and tribe elders knew what was what, Weasel's children had already proven themselves loyal and capable Vanguard... though bloodthirsty. Weasel was accepted into the tribe's spirit brood, largely because it was too late to refuse her participation by that point.

Weasel created a little bad blood with Sirius for her presumption: she didn't approach him in a “proper” fashion and offer her services. Instead, she subversively adopted several packs and then expected thanks for bailing out his tribe. Dog backs Sirius in this matter. (Flea and Goat really don't care.) Weasel doesn't feel she needed Sirius' permission in the first place, any more than she'd need to personally ask Pegasus to adopt a Black Fury pack. Weasel and her packs are too valuable for the tribe to let go, even if it were a realistic option to purge them from the tribe – and Sirius certainly doesn't want that. Weasel has a nasty disposition, and Sirius honestly would much rather have her as an ally than a rival; meanwhile, Weasel quietly admires Sirius, but wants her contributions to his tribe recognized. The two great spirits maintain a cautious respect for one another.

Totems and Pack Roles

Vanguard Garou retain their auspices and are influenced and guided by the moons of their births, but Canids (who form the overwhelming majority of the tribe) have no auspices. But loose divisions of function have formed around the tribe's totems, giving rise to auspice-like roles within the tribe: for example, packs of Flea are warriors, serving the same role among Sirius as Ahroun do in Garou society. This means Vanguard packs are highly specialized, and while this focus makes such groups very good at what they do, they lack the diverse capabilities and approaches of multi-auspice Garou packs.

Sirius' children comprise nearly half the tribe, and are the heart and soul of the Vanguard. Once used to serving all roles in their tribe, many Sirius packs have gravitated to leadership and regulatory positions while packs serving other totems take on combat and support roles. With few exceptions, Vanguard septs are led by followers of Sirius. They enforce the Litany, conduct rituals, induct new tribe members, and maintain good relations with the spirits. In essence, they combine the practices and responsibilities of the Philodox and Theurge auspices.

The most peaceful of the Vanguard totems, Dog introduces an element of tranquility to the tribe. His children tend to have low Rage, and are more prone than many Sirius to think before acting rashly. Dog has done much to inspire respect for humanity in his packs, and to a lesser degree in the tribe as a whole. His packs

protect and observe human communities, and Dog teaches Gifts that help them better move among people. When problems crop up in human communities, Dog's packs are the first to know and to lead any efforts to resolve them.

The Vanguard is heavily invested in Ahroun analogues, with two Totems of War. However, the tactics these totems' respective packs use differ markedly. Flea's packs are ideal defenders and front-line fighters, good at both taking hits and avoiding them – they leap in, attack and then hop back out, all while shrugging off those blows that do connect. Another popular tactic is to jump from enemies' reach while pelting them with gunfire. Those that fight Flea's packs tend to hate them bitterly. They play good offense too, especially experienced packs with access to the Fleabite Gift.

However, damage is Weasel's specialty – and her children are good at their jobs. Her packs are the Sirius' premier hunter-killers, spearheading attacks against Spirals, fomori and trouble-

some Garou. A typical Weasel pack sneaks up on their victims and then unleashes deadly bite attacks from all sides. When packs of Flea and Weasel cooperate, the effects are devastating: the Flea pack plays interference and draws foes' attacks while Weasel's children quickly move in and rain death. This one-two combo has been the screaming end of several enemy packs.

Goat's children have yet to find any defined niche in the larger Vanguard body. Goat prizes a quick wit and a silver tongue, and augments such qualities in his followers; as a result, they often wield more influence than their renown might suggest. Some use their gift of gab to support their tribe, such as serving as liaisons to local Garou septs not completely hostile to the Sirius. Goat packs also make able fighters in a pinch. Finally, their ability to subsist on just about anything and withstand the harshest conditions allows Goat's children to range into areas in which others wouldn't survive, making them ideal scouts and spies.



Systems

Character Creation

Vanguard Debased are created using the rules on pg. 11 of this book, with the following changes applied.

Tribal Totem: Sirius

Initial Willpower: 4

Background Restrictions: The Vanguard stands apart from Garou society, and is largely composed of Canids. They're restricted in what Backgrounds they can take, though the new spiritual ties the tribe forged have opened new possibilities for them. Kinfolk (dogs) and Totem are still the most common Backgrounds; totems are restricted to Sirius, Dog, Flea, Goat and Weasel (unless the Storyteller has decided other totems have approached Vanguard packs). Fetish, Numen and Resources may be taken, but Sirius with them are rare, and Storytellers may charge extra for these Backgrounds. Garou Allies and Mentors are limited to fellow Sirius. Vanguard may not take Ancestors, Pure Breed or Spirit Heritage. (Numen and Spirit Heritage are described in **Players Guide to Garou**.)

(The above rules apply to dog-blooded Sirius, which form the majority of the tribe. See below for guidelines on creating Garou and Kinfolk Sirius.)

Beginning Gifts: Blur of the Milky Eye, Devour, Flea Jump, Guidance of Sirius, Hide the Wolf, Inspiration, Prey Mind, Sense Wurm, Sharptooth, Squeeze.

Naming Conventions

Not big on semantics, the Sirius take a fairly casual approach to names. The tribe is composed mostly of canis Debased, so most names are short and straightforward, describing a mutt's defining characteristic or favored activity: Maw, Jumps Far, Wag, Racer and Rictus. Some ferals don't have names before they join the Sirius, and arbitrarily adopt a word or nonsensical sound they like, such as Oolie, Radio, Hee, Dang and Ark. Finally, some converts that were once pets keep the names humans gave them, so there are some Spots, Lassies, Odies, Snoopies, Preciouses and Cujos in the ranks.

Many Vanguard use "traditional" deed names and titles: Wurm-Killer, Hornet-Sting, Angela Skydancer. Garou usually take new names when they join the Sirius, leaving their old shame behind them while honoring their new tribe. One popular trend is to incorporate the name of their tribe or pack totem into their own, like Stalwart Vanguard, Wisdom of Sirius and Runt-of-Flea. And not a few adopt (or are given) facetious names that recall Bone Gnawer and Glass Walker practices, like Skunk-Eater, Nips-At-Haunches and Crashes-the-Party.

While many Vanguard names might sound ridiculous to anyone else, members of the hodgepodge tribe don't really care. As long as a Sirius is a loyal and productive member of the tribe, she can call herself whatever she wants. A warrior that goes by Princess is often as deadly as one that calls himself Roaring Rib-Ripper, and is less likely to be compensating for something.

Garou and Kinfolk Vanguard

The above rules are for creating Debased Vanguard of Sirius. If you want to create a Garou or Kinfolk tribe member, you need to go about things a little differently. There are significant power level gaps between these special characters and "standard" Canis Sirius, so make sure everyone in the gaming group is aware of the power differentials and okay with it.

Garou: All werewolf Vanguard are converts to the tribe. (Well, except for one unique case which holds no bearing here.)

Create a Garou character as a member of another tribe (using standard char-gen rules), then replace the tribe entry with "Vanguard of Sirius" and adjust the character sheet to reflect her having left her former tribe. Garou Nation Allies and Contacts will likely be lost, and Garou may "reclaim" some or all the character's Kinfolk or fetishes. Any points invested in Totem are also lost (though if the character followed any Vanguard totem before leaving the Nation and continues to do so in the Vanguard, a kind Storyteller may let those points transfer). Finally, the werewolf's leaving her tribe and/or swearing allegiance to the Vanguard may sever her connection with her former tribe's heroes and spirit allies, resulting in the loss of Ancestors and Numen.

Distribute three dots of renown according to the Garou's auspice; all previous renown and rank were lost when she was cast from or renounced her former tribe. (Ronin can conceivably be of any rank before renouncing their tribes and joining the Sirius, but player characters should be created as Cliaths.) A player might opt to hold aside freebie points to buy a Vanguard Gift, if a penurious Storyteller doesn't want to give it to the character outright.

Henceforth, the character advances in rank according to her auspice, like other Garou, but within the Vanguard of Sirius. As a member of a recognized tribe, she has the option to learn auspice and breed Gifts, as well as Gifts proprietary to the Sirius tribe. This is a significant change from how werewolves advanced in the Vanguard before; being members of fully recognized tribe has its perks. However, these Garou may still find it difficult to convince spirits not allied with the Vanguard to teach them Gifts; Storytellers may opt to charge level x 4 exp for Breed and Auspice Gifts or require additional chiminage.

Kinfolk: Few Vanguard Kinfolk (relations of both Garou and dog-blooded) run with packs or otherwise participate directly in the tribe, and most that do are wise to invest in Physical Attributes and combat-related Abilities. Even the most buff mortals don't fare well in direct confrontations with the big bad nasties the Sirius go after. Instead, Kinfolk usually assume support roles, as the others usually have the death-dealing angle covered. This may seem mundane in the face of the advantages mystical shapeshifting killing machines boast, but what good are all those dice of agg death if a pack can't drive from Texas to Florida, gather information from people, buy food or even read? I bet you're starting to see how a Kinfolk can have a pack happily eating from the palm of her hand. Smart Sirius appreciate their Kinfolk.

Vanguard Kinfolk are created using standard rules for such characters (see **Players Guide to Garou**, pg. 200 or **Kinfolk: Unsung Heroes**). Kinfolk of dog-blooded can't take Pure Breed; Garou kin associated with the Sirius may have that trait, but these bloodlines are watched closely by their Garou relations, and so few are claimed by the Vanguard. While Kinfolk may earn the respect and admiration of their peers (and often do), they can't earn actual rank in the tribe, especially with the spirit community's recent validation of Vanguard renown and rank.

In the interests of making Kinfolk competitive, Storytellers might offer their players a few extra options. Truly trusted and valued Kinfolk *may* be taught a Level One Gift from the Vanguard Gift list. However, they can't take the Totem Background (despite contradictory information I put in **The Debased**; sorry about that). A few rare and lucky Kinfolk display psychic ability or sorcerous talent, and such luminaries make potent player characters. Storytellers bring such extrinsic elements into their games at their own risk, though the Revised edition of **Sorcerer for Mage: the Ascension** comes highly recommended if they want to.

Gifts

The new spiritual connections the Vanguard have developed have opened an array of new Gifts to them, granting the tribe far greater versatility. However a few Gifts once in the Sirius collection have fallen into disuse, namely those taught by the Masters. While a number of Sirius still know and use those Gifts, and pass them on to tribemates, Vanguard now learn almost all their Gifts from spirits. In return, spirits are more inclined to respect them, since they're following protocol and learning Gifts the proper way. Thus, the "Master Gifts" – Sense Weakness, Sway Frenzy and Ultimate Sacrifice – aren't listed here.

Vanguard Garou can now learn Gifts associated with their breeds and auspices as they progress, as they're no longer considered Ronin by the spirit community. As they've turned their backs on their former tribes, however, they don't have access to those Gifts anymore.

Ultimate Sacrifice is notable because it's fallen completely from favor – the Vanguard of Sirius no longer use that Gift at all. The post-reformation Vanguard now realize that they were expendable dupes all along – and a Gift that kills its user as often as not is a perfect example of that disregard. While valiant Sirius are willing to fight and die for their tribe (and do), they're no longer so sanguine about martyrdom. They're smarter and have a greater sense of their own worth now, and their fighting tactics and Gifts reflect that.

Blur of the Milky Eye (Level One): Same as the Ragabash Gift (pg. 137). This Gift is taught by a chameleon-spirit.

Devour (Level One): The Sirius' constitution becomes much tougher, letting her subsist on almost anything organic: cured leather, briars, carrion, even wood. Anything softer than bone can be chewed, swallowed and digested, as long as the material was once part of a living thing. While this Gift doesn't make such fare particularly appetizing, it does inure the character against disgust and horrid tastes. Predictably, this Gift is taught by a goat-spirit.

Systems: Usually no expenditures or rolls are necessary to use Devour – just dig in. Eating things obviously bad for the character, such as poisonous plants or garbage, might require a Stamina roll to avoid deleterious effects. Devour isn't Resist Toxin; anyone dumb enough to consume antifreeze or the stuff found in the disposal bin at the Magadon plant gets the painful death she deserves.

Flea Jump (Level One): As the Lupus Gift Hare's Leap (pg. 136). This Gift is taught by a flea-spirit.

Guidance of Sirius (Level One): Sirius grants his child an intuitive understanding of the night sky, allowing her to navigate by the stars. So long as even a few stars are showing, the character can't get lost, and she always knows what direction she's facing. Further, the Vanguard may place spiritual markers, and she always knows her location relative to them, including direction and rough distance. This Gift is taught by a spirit servant of Sirius.

Systems: As long as stars are visible, the Vanguard can determine direction accurately; this requires no roll. Placing a homing beacon costs a point of Gnosis; thereafter, the character can determine how far away that marker is and its direction relative to her. The character can't mark people or objects, only locations. She may have a number of active markers equal to her Intelligence at one time, and may sever the psychic link to an area at will.

Hide the Wolf (Level One): Rage hinders mutts' interactions with both humans and canines, and keeps them from passing as normal dogs. This is doubly true of werewolves. Hide the Wolf allows a character to hide his Rage for a time, so that he may pass among men and beasts without radiating primal anger. However, the Rage is still there, hidden though it is, and this Gift doesn't

prevent frenzy or lessen the Delirium's effects. This Gift is taught by a chameleon-spirit, or more commonly these days a spirit servant of Dog.

Systems: The Vanguard's player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Primal-Urge. Success allows the character to function at an effective Rage of zero for purposes of social interaction for a scene; at the Storyteller's discretion, especially high Rage scores may require additional successes to abate or decrease the functional duration of the Gift.

Inspiration (Level One): Same as the Ahroun Gift (pg. 142), and taught by a spirit servant of Sirius.

Prey Mind (Level One): Same as the Lupus Gift (Players Guide to Garou, pg. 185). A rat-spirit teaches the Vanguard version of this Gift, and the Gift's difficulty is always 8, no matter where the character uses it.

Sense Wurm (Level One): Same as the metis Gift (pg. 135). This Gift is taught by a spirit servant of Sirius.

Sharptooth (Level One): Like the Ahroun Gift: Razor Claws (pg. 142), except that it augments the character's bite damage. This Gift is taught by a weasel-spirit.

Squeeze (Level One): As the Black Spiral Dancer Gift: Rathead (pg. 273). This Gift is taught by a rat- or weasel-spirit.

Alter Scent (Level Two): As the Ragabash Gift (Players Guide to Garou, pg. 186). This Gift is taught by a stinkbug-spirit.

Blissful Ignorance (Level Two): Same as the Ragabash Gift (pg. 186). This Gift is taught by a chameleon-spirit.

Carapace (Level Two): This useful Gift was brought to the Vanguard by Flea. Carapace creates a ghostly shell around the character's body that resembles an insect's exoskeleton. Those with the Flea totem gain this Gift automatically, but any Sirius may learn it from a flea-spirit.

Systems: The player spends a point of Gnosis from the character's pool and rolls Stamina + Survival. Every success rolled grants an additional soak die against lethal and aggravated damage. In addition, the character becomes almost immune to bashing damage: each success rolled on the Gift activation is treated as an automatic soak success versus bashing, in addition to any rolled for Stamina. (For example, three successes on the Stamina + Survival roll means three dice are added to soak rolls, and three levels of bashing damage are automatically negated before soak is rolled.) Unlike the similar Gift Luna's Armor, Carapace doesn't protect from damage inflicted by silver.

Distractions (Level Two): As the Galliard Gift (pg. 141). This Gift is taught by a dog-spirit.

Divine the Quarry (Level Two): Same as the Ragabash Gift: Sense of the Prey (pg. 137). This is taught by a dog-spirit.

Man's Best Friend (Level Two): Once, the Vanguard of Sirius' Canids emulated the Garou. Now, ironically, as more werewolves join the Vanguard of Sirius, they sometimes find it handy to pass as dogs. Many dog-blooded display obvious lupine heritage or otherwise look feral. All of them find this Gift useful. Dog hopes this Gift will encourage the Vanguard to pass among humanity and defend them; predictably, it's taught by that totem's dog-spirits.

Systems: The Sirius must be in Canis or Lupus form to use this Gift; it won't function for any other shape, and shifting dispels the Gift. The player must spend a point of Gnosis and roll Appearance + Primal-Urge, difficulty 7. The character gains the benefits of Hide the Wolf (see above), and physically assumes the form of a nondescript dog. Each dog form is unique to that Vanguard, and reflects her original form in some subtle way. This Gift doesn't affect the character's statistics.

Ram (Level Two): Another Gift brought to the tribe by packs following Goat, the Vanguard using this Gift sprouts a pair of goatlike horns. While good for offense, the horns are best used for battering down barriers and destroying objects. This Gift is taught

by goat-spirits.

Systems: The Sirius spends a point each of Rage and Gnosis to grow the horns, which remain for one scene. To effectively use these horns, the Vanguard must get a running start. They inflict Strength +2 aggravated damage when wielded against opponents (Dexterity + Brawl to hit); those struck must exceed the attacker's pre-soak damage successes on an opposed Dexterity + Athletics roll to remain standing (but take damage regardless of whether they stay on their feet or not). If the character doesn't charge, the horns only inflict the assailant's Strength in damage and have no chance of knocking the foe down.

The horns are very effective against inanimate matter, and they allow the character to knock down and blast through barriers and objects as if her Strength were two higher. Ram protects the Sirius from injury directly caused by ramming things, though with-in reason: someone that runs headlong into a concrete piling will likely break her fool neck.

Sense the Unnatural (Level Two): Same as the Lupus Gift (pg. 136). This is taught by a spirit servant of Sirius or Dog.

Wolf's Skin (Level Two): Sometimes a mongrel finds it useful to pass for a wolf (or Lupus-form Garou) when werewolves are present, or for intimidation and combat. While the Gift user doesn't gain the instincts or spirit of a wolf, sometimes appearance and raw power are all that's needed. This Gift is taught by a spirit servant of Sirius or the odd friendly wolf-spirit. (This Gift is useless to Garou Sirius, for obvious reasons.)

Systems: In order to use Wolf's Skin, the mongrel must be in Canis form. The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Subterfuge; if the roll is successful, the character assumes the guise of a wolf for up to a scene. The change is real, not illusory; the character actually becomes a wolf. For the scene's duration, she doesn't suffer from the Diluted Blood Flaw, and uses the standard Attribute adjustments for Lupus form in place of her Canis form stats (Strength +1, Dexterity +2, Stamina +2). The character still "smells" Debased, so it's not a foolproof ruse. Wolf's Skin may not be used to mimic any form other than a wolf, nor can it alter any form other than Canis (so the Gift user can't mimic a Garou's Crinos form with the Wolf's Skin). The Gift's effects end immediately if the character shapeshifts.

Belly Bite (Level Three): As the Philodox Gift: Weak Arm (pg. 140), except the roll is difficulty 7, and user only gains the Gift's benefit when fighting as part of a pack. In addition, the successes attained may not exceed the number of members in the pack, excluding the Gift-user herself. Belly Bite is taught by a spirit servants of Flea and Sirius.

Curse of Hatred (Level Three): As the metis Gift (pg. 135). This Gift is now taught by a spirit servant of Weasel, instead of the Masters.

Fleabite (Level Three): This innocuous-sounding Gift is one of Flea's nastier tricks. She imparts the anticoagulant and irritant properties of her insect children's saliva to her packs, allowing them to inflict grievous harm on their foes with their bites. Of course, this Gift is taught by that totem's spirit servants.

System: A point of Gnosis is spent to for the character to gain the following benefits for the scene. A successful bite attack that inflicts one or more levels of damage bleeds for a number of turns equal to the damage levels done; successive bites add one turn to the initial duration. Each turn of bleeding causes a non-regenerating subject to suffer a level of bashing damage; this isn't soakable. The rapid healing of Garou and other such creatures prevents the damage associated with bleeding (assuming the subject is in a form with that benefit), but the character can't regenerate health levels during this time. Resist Toxin is proof against this Gift, and a healing Gift like Mother's Touch interrupts its effects.

Further, the bite wound swells and itches terribly for the

next hour or so, adding 1 to the victim's effective wound penalties (even if he's unwounded). This penalty doesn't cumulate with multiple bites. Like standard wound penalties, this effect can be ignored for a turn by spending a point of Rage.

Flee (Level Three): One of the Gifts brought to the tribe by Ronin Garou, this useful and powerful Gift transports the user far away by means of the Umbra. The character using Flee Steps Sideways immediately, and reappears in the Penumbra miles from her previous location. This Gift is taught by a Wyldling.

System: The Sirius' player spends a point of Gnosis and make a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7); if the character has the Secondary Ability: Cosmology, she may use that in the roll instead, and the roll's difficulty is reduced to 6. The character may not always end up where she wants: the more successes on the roll, the better her control over her destination. A success or two is sufficient for the Gift to work, but puts the character anywhere the Storyteller wants within five miles (better hope she likes you); three or four successes allow the character to designate a general location known to be within fifteen miles (like "the woods north of here" or "my old 'hood"); five successes grant the player total control over her character's destination, so long as it's within twenty-five miles. Botches trap the witless character in the Gauntlet, while stating a destination that doesn't exist or that is out of range causes the Gift to automatically fail.

Coordinate (Level Four): One of the most powerful Gifts in the Vanguard arsenal, and reserved for the greatest heroes of the tribe, Coordinate binds disparate packs into a potent whole by calling upon the shared spiritual bond of the tribe. This Gift is taught by a Jaggling of Sirius.

System: Once learned, Coordinate's effects are automatic. As long as at least one member of two or more packs knows this Gift, these packs may coordinate their actions as if they were all of the same pack: they may opt to act on the same initiative (in which case the packs' initiatives are averaged) and use pack maneuvers. However, they don't share totem boons or bans. For example, a Sirius pack, Flea pack and Goat pack are fighting together against a nasty pack of vampires. Members of both the Sirius and Flea packs know Coordinate, and so members of these packs can opt to share initiative and use pack tactics as if they were all of the same pack; however, the Goat pack has no one with Coordinate, and so they don't gain the benefit of that Gift.

Bolster (Level Four): This Gift allows a Vanguard to offer her inner strength to a packmate, reinforcing him in times of need. This Gift is taught by a spirit servant of Sirius.

Systems: The Sirius can donate up to three points of Willpower, Gnosis or Rage to a single packmate up to five yards away; this effect is automatic and requires no rolls. She can't grant more than one type of point in any given turn. Points granted in excess of the respective trait maximum are lost at the end of the scene; a subject given Rage in excess of his maximum must immediately check for frenzy. A recipient can opt to refuse points offered him, if he has a reason to, in which case they're spent by the donor but lost.

Rites

As the Vanguard have matured, so have their rites. Becoming a legitimate tribe in the eyes of the spirits (some, anyway) means they have to pull their spiritual weight. The dumbed-down "shortcut" rites the Masters once adapted for Vanguard are no longer practiced or honored. So this means that Sirius now follow the standard rules for performing rites, and recognize the same categories of rites as the Garou. The tribe's range of rites have increased as inducted Garou members introduce more. It's safe bet that any rite that the Storyteller thinks the Sirius should have, someone in some sept or another probably knows it. By far, the rite that has had the greatest impact on the tribe is the Rite of Holism.

The Rite of Welcome

Level Two Rite of Accord

This rite is performed when a feral Canid or Ronin joins the Vanguard of Sirius. The rite has matured with the tribe, becoming more solemn than the largely informal event it was before. The character that desires induction into the Sirius presents himself in turn to everyone present for the rite, including the spirits, stating his desire to join the tribe and his reasons for doing so. Everyone is free to question the supplicant, use Gifts to ascertain the truth of his words, check for Wurm-taint and the like. Any that would deny the subject's entry into the tribe may make their objections known at any point before the next step. While the inductee may attempt to reason with objectors, it's up to him to convince skeptics of his honor and righteousness.

If everyone accepts the petitioner, he finally presents himself to the highest-ranking Vanguard present and a spirit servant of Sirius. They might allow the proceeding events to sway them one way or the other, but the fate of the would-be Vanguard is ultimately theirs to decide. The grilling continues, but even more intensely. Through Gifts and Charms, the character's soul is laid bare, and his motivations are uncovered (whether he admits them or not). His final acceptance by ranking Vanguard and Sirius' spirit brood signifies his new status as a member of the tribe. Once the Rite of Welcome is completed, the new Sirius is taught the Litany and tribal customs, as well as his first Vanguard Gift by an attending spirit. The new Sirius is now free to find a pack.

Systems: Make rolls as normal; the Rite of Welcome is performed by the ritemaster, who uses it on behalf of the character seeking entry into the tribe. If the rite fails, but the initiate's motivations and character are not impugned, he may petition for membership in one lunar month.

The Rite of Holism

Level Five Mystic Rite

Here's a secret: the true reason for the distorted nature of the Debased isn't their domesticated dog heritage... at least not entirely. There's nothing innately "corrupt" about dogs (despite what those jerk Red Talons might tell you). The essential problem is the spiritual incompatibility between the mongrels' canine and lupine natures. The Rite of Adaptation doesn't satisfactorily resolve that conflict, and thus the rite's inheritors are crippled physically and spiritually. This is also true of Garou that have undergone that rite: though they remain outwardly unchanged, they've damaged themselves by replacing part of their essential "wolfiness" with the spiritual qualities of a dog. They can never produce werewolves or even Garou Kinfolk, but can only continue the damaged lineage of the dog-blooded. The essential tragedy of the Debased is that, like metis, they have no say in being born as they are and can expect to stay that way all their lives.

At least until just recently. The Rite of Holism, introduced to the tribe by Dog, is a balm for the wounds in the Canid soul. The rite replaces parts of the subject's wolfen spiritual attributes with those of a dog's, bringing the subject's spirit closer to the archetypal canine the Dog totem represents. In effect, the Debased becomes a little more like a true dog-Shifter, and a little less like a mutant patchwork werewolf. However, the Rite of Holism is no miracle cure; it only creates incremental improvements, and those blessed by this rite will still never be anything but Debased. It also inflicts great pain and demands spiritual sacrifice from the subject. Still, there are no few mongrels willing to undergo the rite; any im-

provement at all is a big deal to dog-blooded that have to live with those handicaps.

The Rite of Holism does nothing to restore vectors; infusing more dog-nature into them would likely only exacerbate their problem. Such Garou must live with the choice they made.

Systems: The lead ritualist's player rolls Wits + Rituals, while the subject of the ritual gives up one dot of *permanent* Gnosis to a Jaggling of Dog that personally attends the rite; the spirit uses that energy to work the changes in the mongrel's spirit. The subject also suffers five levels (not dice) of aggravated damage, soakable only by Gnosis *after* the permanent points have been spent; his soul is literally being rewoven, bits of it excised and replaced, and this is understandably agonizing and traumatic.

If the rite is completed successfully, the recipient gains *one* of the following benefits, either chosen by him or the Jaggling. More than one benefit may be gained, assuming the mutt undergoes the Rite of Holism more than once. However, the rite's prohibitive cost (and the pain it inflicts) means this is uncommon.

- ◆ The most invoked effect of the rite, the character's debasement is healed or mitigated. Cases that involve drastic modification of the mutt's body (like replacing missing limbs) will require more Gnosis and/or more than one use of this rite.
- ◆ The character's Gnosis cap is eliminated. The Canid can (with experience points) raise his Gnosis to 10. Considering the permanent Gnosis cost of the rite, of course, it may be a slow climb to reach that potential.
- ◆ The maximum Gift level the mutt can learn increases to Level Five. (The poor selection of high-level Vanguard Gifts may make this seem an empty benefit, but the tribe is certain to offer more options to these restored Canids soon.)
- ◆ Primal-Urge penalties are eliminated: it costs the normal amount of experience (current x 2) to improve this trait, and it can be increased to five dots. The mongrel is also free of any regressive canine instincts that hinder him, like compulsions and the urge to submit to Garou (see *Roleplaying Debased*, pg. 39 of **The Debased**); this includes derangements or Flaws that relate to such behaviors.
- ◆ The -2 Social roll penalty with Garou is eliminated. The character won't reflexively cause a poor reaction, though he still won't "feel like" true Garou either.
- ◆ An ultimately superficial effect, the mutt's appearance can be changed to reflect the breed or breeds of dog strongest in the character's bloodline, while any overt wolf heritage is eliminated. Disproportionate and ungainly features are smoothed over (though debasements remain), and mass may decrease in some cases. The character's Rage is considered one lower for invoking the Curse of Rage. This doesn't affect the character's Attributes or capabilities, but it does make passing as a normal dog a fair bit easier.

There are some things the Rite of Holism can't fix. Luna has forsaken the mongrels, and the have no auspices; the moon won't be swayed with a paltry rite. Likewise, spirits and Garou aren't compelled to look upon "purified" Canids with less disdain, and are free to make up their own minds how they feel about them. Finally, the lesser physical capabilities of mongrels are part of the character's dog heritage, and he'll simply have to live with being a notch less imposing than a full werewolf.

"The Perfect Debased"

Some Storytellers might not like the Rite of Holism. Part of the mutts' appeal for them might be that they're inherently weak and deformed, and the rite might (for lack of a better word) debase the gritty, tragic feel of the mongrels. They may worry that mitigating this essential curse compromises the concept of the Debased.

This is a legitimate concern, though let me point out a few things before you skeptics write off the rite. First, if you're worried about players running amok with this rite and affecting the balance of the game by eliminating inconvenient character quirks, I think it's fair to say that any gumby worth his loaded dice won't play a dog-blooded in the first place. If a player wants raw power, she'd be better off playing a straight Garou. After all, it's not like mutts offer any mechanical advantages over "stock" werewolves, and that's the angle powergamers play. Also, the minimum a Canid character's player would have to spend is *six permanent Gnosis* to gain all the benefits the Rite of Holism offers. This is a big chunk of experience points going towards one thing, forcing the player would to continually buy up Gnosis for more "repairs." That exp isn't buffing other traits or buying Gifts. And even after the character has exhausted the utility of the rite, she's still weaker than a werewolf in several respects. Theme and story preferences aside, a player blowing Gnosis dots to eliminate one or two quirks isn't going to somehow upend your game.

Also, keep in mind the Rite of Holism isn't an entitlement or on-demand powerup. Vanguard that can perform the rite use it at their discretion, and offer it as a reward for exemplary service and loyalty to the tribe. The ritemasters (and the Jaggling of Dog that attends the rite) will likely take offense to being treated like benefit vending machines. And those on the outs with Dog or his packs will categorically be refused access to the rite. A Story-

teller that withholds the Rite of Holism from a character until she proves worthy of it isn't being unfair at all, but is respecting the setting and gravity of the rite.

However, a Canid that repeatedly seeks the Rite of Holism is a potentially fascinating character angle. Like a plastic surgery junkie that's never satisfied with her body, the mutt is driven by poor self-image to continually repair her broken soul – and that defining inferiority complex is something the rite can never fix. After having her debasement removed, the mutt returns to erase her Debased "scent" so she may inspire more respect from Garou adversaries, and then wants her instincts "straightened out" so she doesn't feel compelled to abase herself before them... and so on. The mongrel remains spiritually weak as she perpetually scorches one part of her soul to restore another, often finding herself without Gnosis to power Gifts or trapped within the Gauntlet from botched Reaching rolls. The character's fixation on recovering lost Gnosis makes doing so all the more difficult, as she now sees spiritual advancement as a mere means to an end. The mutt falters in renown and other areas, lagging behind compatriots who find her obsession with perfection disturbing. A player that can effectively portray such a tormented character, and guide her to her eventual redemption or doom, is a credit to your gaming group.

The Rite of Holism offers both storytelling potential and a carrot-and-stick reward system for players. However, if you still don't like the rite, you can simply ignore it. Or maybe you like the basic concept but you want to incorporate a few underhanded side effects. One possibility is making the rite's benefits inheritable by the next generation of Debased, instead of a quick fix. Hey, do what you want, I promise I won't take my netbook back.

Rank & Renown

At one time, Vanguard had it a little easier when it came to renown, and often advanced quicker than Garou. However, their rank was a sham, so much semantics and pretense and imitation of werewolf practices. The tribe, Masters and a few allied spirits recognized Vanguard renown, but it had no true spiritual significance and didn't exist to anyone else.

But things have changed since the Vanguard of Sirius has become a true tribe. Its renown and rank now mean something. While many spirits still don't like the Vanguard and have little to do with them, they will recognize an Adren of that tribe as being an Adren and will show her due deference. Their views not bound by the immutable laws of the spirit world, many Garou still don't honor Sirius renown, and the Vanguard can look forward to more of the same for a long time to come – maybe forever. (But it seems many Garou acknowledge Vanguard deeds and rank, even despite themselves... the names Molydeus, Angela Skydancer, Left Hook and others circulate through Garou septs, while the Entrail Renders have earned infamy among Gaian Garou and Spirals alike.)

However, with that recognition comes a higher standard. With the oversight of the entire spirit community, no longer can the Vanguard's spirit allies give their poor mutts breaks or give some well-meaning underachiever a kip-up to the next rank. Now the Sirius have to scrape and scrap for every bit of renown and rank they get. Like Garou, they must earn their status, a challenge made all the harder for their poor origins. Yet Sirius' brood have proven they can meet that standard.

Use the Ragabash chart for Vanguard Debased – and no pity discounts this time. Be sure to apply the benefits for rank, including frenzy roll modifiers (pg. 124-125). Vanguard Garou now advance in rank according to their auspices, like other werewolves.

Storytellers that want a more defined renown system for Debased Vanguard of Sirius can tailor advancement to one's pack totem. Followers of Flea and Weasel would benefit mostly from Glory awards, Dog's children advance through Honor, and Sirius' packs favor Wisdom and Honor in equal measure. Goat's kids fit no defined behavioral archetype and most closely fit the Ragabash model, advancing through whatever renown they earn.

Totems

The totems associated with the Vanguard of Sirius are described in detail on pg. 25. Below are Background costs for these totems and the systems benefits they offer.

Astute readers may note that the specifics for these totems vary from those printed in other **Werewolf** books; the totems cost more, but offer either additional benefits or a reduced ban. Storytellers are free to use these versions for werewolf packs that follow these totems, if it's appropriate – while there's no good reason Weasel would withhold the Gift: Sharptooth from any followers, Flea's reputation among Garou as something less than an honorable warrior won't change anytime soon.

Sirius (Totem of Wisdom)

Background Cost: 7

Traits: Sirius augments his children's ability to serve the tribe and each other, bolstering the efforts of their companions and themselves in turn. All rolls involving pack tactics gain a bonus die (see pg. 212-213 of **Werewolf** and 79-80 of the **Players Guide to Garou**). In addition, Sirius grants his children the benefits of the Bone Gnawer Gift: A Friend in Need (pg. 144), though its benefits only apply to pack members. Finally, Sirius grants the Gift: Guidance of Sirius.

Ban: Sirius asks his children to always assist each other in good faith, even if it means sacrifice to that end. Leaders are to be obeyed unless it's clear they're unfit for command.

Dog (Totem of Honor)

Background Cost: 6

Traits: Dog grants the Gift: Beast Speech (pg. 140), and three bonus dice are added to his followers' Alertness die pools. Empathy rolls to interpret human behavior and emotion gain a two-die bonus. Finally, Dog's followers can draw upon four extra Willpower points per story.

Ban: Dog asks his packs to avoid hurting humans unless absolutely necessary. He's greatly pleased when his packs protect human communities and otherwise improve their lives.

Flea (Totem of War)

Background Cost: 7

Traits: Flea's followers are blessed with potent benefits: all pack members gain the Gifts: Flea Jump and Carapace.

Ban: Flea's supplicants can't scratch away fleas, and must let them feed in peace – though at least the little buggers are a little less likely to harass Flea's children. (Vanguard packs of Flea don't suffer reduced Glory awards as do their Garou Nation counterparts, as their contributions to the tribe are so valued.)

Goat (Totem of Cunning)

Background Cost: 7

Traits: Packs following Goat gain two bonus dice to Subterfuge and Survival rolls, and the stubborn cusses make Willpower rolls at -1 difficulty. Goat also bestows the Gift: Devour.

Ban: Goat's children must eat any food offered to them, of course within reason: they're free to refuse anything that may be poisonous, toxic or inedible.

Weasel (Totem of War)

Background Cost: 7

Traits: Weasel increases her followers' Dexterity by one, and adds a bonus die to all Dodge rolls. Finally, her children gain the Gift: Sharptooth.

Ban: Weasel packs must never show fear, and can never act on that emotion without losing face; this includes succumbing to Fox Frenzy. (This doesn't mean her packs should run heedlessly into battle – though a Totem of War, she doesn't abide fools.)

Fetishes & Talens

The Vanguard of Sirius doesn't have much in the way of spirit-empowered items, and members of the tribe that have fetishes can count themselves lucky. But the Sirius are using and making more as their perspective gradually shifts to a spiritual one. Garou are responsible for most fetishes and talens the tribe creates, though enterprising Canids have crafted some as well. Fetishes created by the Vanguard are often unique items created with the immediate needs of the user or recipient in mind, though the tribe does show a marked preference for fetish guns.

The Sirius have taken fetishes from defeated Gaian werewolves. Spirits bound to these secondhand fetishes don't appreciate being liberated from their previous owners, and few showed interest in cooperating with a tribe cobbled together from Debased and Garou Nation rejects – at least, at first. Chiminage and voluntary geasa were enough to sway about half these fetish-spirits to the service of the Vanguard. What happens the remaining fetishes that the tribe can't use varies; most are passed on to sept leaders, who keep them in case someone can sway the recalcitrant spirits or to use them as bargaining chips when negotiating with Garou. A few

fetishes have been thoughtlessly thrown away, especially if the Sirius in question is angry at a difficult spirit; one priceless Get of Fenris fetish-hammer was thrown into a muddy Louisiana ditch after a Sirius couldn't get it to work, where it remains today. Another frustrated mutt destroyed a fetish spear and attacked the freed spirit afterward... and was nearly killed for his trouble. This kind of disrespect is displayed exclusively by dog-blooded converts not raised with the proper reverence for spirits; even the most flippant Garou accept fetish-spirits' intractability as the way of things and don't press the matter.

Several Black Spiral Dancer toys have fallen into Sirius hands, and the resident Banes are usually happy to cooperate with their new owners. While some items are useless or unpalatable to any but their original owners, Bane-weapons are straightforward enough for anyone to use. The pragmatic Sirius aren't prone to let any resource go to waste. Needless to say, such items invariably taint their users. The tribe has yet to take a stance against this, though that may change as increasing incidences of erratic behavior and spiritual contamination are associated with Wyrms-fetishes.

Greenie Gun

Level 2, Gnosis 5

Most Vanguard fetishes are one of a kind, but a notable exception to this rule is the Greenie Gun, of which more than a dozen have been made. These fetishes are made with canis in mind, who often take a while to learn how to use and properly care for guns. Greenie Guns appear in a variety of models, but assault rifles or semi-automatic shotguns are the most popular. These weapons have standard damage ratings, rates of fire and ranges, but offer two special advantages.

First, a Greenie Gun is durable: it has a Stamina rating of 4 for soaking damage (including agg), and never jams or misfires. This quality is helpful when the item is dropped, used as a club, or subjected to other punishment by clueless canis. Second, if left on the ground for any length of time, the fetish makes a most annoying wail until picked up. This keeps users from simply dropping and forgetting it, which new Sirius do more than they ought.

Most Greenie Guns belong to packs or septs instead of to individuals, and are intended to teach Canids how to properly use firearms. Users are expected to eventually outgrow the need for it; a Sirius will typically carry a Greenie Gun until he gets the hang of what to do and not do with a gun, and soon passes it along to someone who needs it. With this in mind, a Storyteller may reduce or waive the Background cost of this fetish if the player doesn't intend for his character to keep it for long.

These fetishes are made by binding cicada-spirits to guns.

Share-Heal Rope

Level 2, Gnosis 6

Tired of seeing his sickly packmate suffer with wounds he could only heal slowly, a Sirius mutt known simply as Gus created this useful item by binding a tick-spirit into a short length of hemp rope, allowing him to "donate" his superior recuperative powers to his friend. Though ownership of the Share-Heal Rope has passed through several packs since its creation, no one has bothered to give the fetish a less awkward name.

The function of the Share-Heal Rope is simple. One end is tied to a Shifter that regenerates normally, and the other tied to a living creature with inferior healing capability, such as a mutt with the Stunted Healing debasement or a Kinfolk; they must be at rest, and neither user can be engaged in combat at the time. When the fetish is activated, the "donor's" natural healing rate is halved, while the second user heals at an equivalent rate (both recover one level of lethal or bashing damage every other turn). The recipient retains this benefit for one scene or until she's back to full health, while the

donor recovers at the reduced rate for an entire day; the leech-spirit inside the rope takes this excess health for itself.

Scourge Collar

Level 4, Gnosis 7

This unique fetish must be worn around the neck to be used (hence its name). When activated, the pain-spirit within the adornment envenoms the user's saliva, allowing him to inflict un-

soakable aggravated damage with bite attacks; this effect lasts for a number of turns equal to the Gnosis roll's successes. The pain-spirit within the Scourge Collar subtly urges the possessor to use it, even to the point he feels the urge to fight when he doesn't have to; the Storyteller is free to decide what sort of quantifiable effects, if any, this compulsion has.

The Scourge Collar is currently in possession of Underbite of the Entrail Renders, who won't give up the item without a fight – and the rest of his pack *will* back him.

The Vanguard in Your Chronicle

The Vanguard of Sirius offers Storytellers like you many options for your **Werewolf** chronicles, whether the tribe is the focus of the game or a secondary concern. The tribe's history, activities, notable personalities, systems, and other specifics are exhaustively detailed above. Here are some ideas on how to bring all this stuff together in a story.

Garou Chronicles

Those of you that don't want to change the feel and theme of **Werewolf** that much can run games for Garou characters and employ the Vanguard of Sirius only occasionally. This isn't hard to do. There aren't enough Sirius to be in the thick of everything, and

they're especially thin on the ground outside the Western and Southern U.S.; none exist outside North America so far. What role the tribe plays is up to you; the Vanguard can be dangerous foes, uneasy allies, X-factors that act outside the knowledge and control of the Garou, or all of these at different times. The challenge here is using the tribe effectively and sparingly, without letting it overshadow the traditional focus of the game.

But you can also opt to involve the Vanguard more fully in a Garou chronicle, even making them central to the plot. The characters can experience the rumormongering, the exposure of the Masters, and the violent events afterward from within the Garou Nation. Having the characters play pivotal roles in these events can involve them organically in the storyline: the players' Garou might be rumormongers that spread gossip brought by Corax in the beginning, savvy politicians that leverage the chaos of revelation to their benefit, or werewolves that participate in fights against Vanguard or their dog-blooded. But if you intend to allot the Sirius this much attention in your chronicle, don't force the players into the roles of mute witnesses to larger events unfolding around them; their characters' actions may only produce minor results, or they may throw things so totally out of whack that this entire chapter is rendered invalid. In any case, the players should feel like what their characters do mean something.

Assuming things end up as described earlier in this chapter, the actions of player characters can shape relations between the Nation and the Vanguard. Things are tense now, and it wouldn't take too much for an all-out war to break out, or for an alliance to form. Not that it'd be *easy* to force things either way, of course, but a determined pack of werewolves can at least influence how things turn out. While going claw-to-claw with the Sirius in the midst of a war they helped instigate can net a pack Glory and bragging rights, a pack that secures such valuable allies against the Wurm – or even just establishes a formal pact of non-aggression – will also inspire a lot of respect, and likely do more for Gaia in the long run.

The "Handle With Care" Label

The Vanguard of Sirius may not be appropriate for all chronicles. Not that there's anything game-breaking herein, like overpowered Gifts or fetishes or much else for eager powergamers to exploit. But the introduction of the Vanguard – especially in its current incarnation as a full-fledged tribe – impacts the **Werewolf** setting in a significant way.

The circumstances that led up to the Vanguard's rebirth relies on the existence of a secret group of Garou able to pull off hiding hundreds of dog-blooded soldiers from other werewolves, and the revelation of the Sirius sent reverberations through Garou society. The birthing pains of the Vanguard and their aftermath aren't things that occur in the casual backdrop of a chronicle, but should inspire shock, anger and fear among all werewolves.

During its violent rebirth and in subsequent skirmishes, the Vanguard have killed close to fifty Gaian Garou. These aren't generic and faceless foes, but individuals with lives, packs, septs and families, each with their own roles to play in Gaia's Grand Design. Further, about half that number have defected to Sirius' tribe. The loss of so much of the Garou Nation is no small deal, and some of you may find this difficult to justify in your settings.

Also, the spiritual and cosmological repercussions of a new tribe coming into being is worth considering. Several totems now claim children in both the Garou Nation and the Vanguard, potentially supporting packs that oppose one another. The ripples from the Vanguard's spiritual birth may echo through the Umbra in ways no one can predict, and the ultimate results of such may not be understood by anyone for years – if the world has that long.

While I'm not trying to talk you into disregarding all my hard work, I want to make clear the impact the Vanguard of Sirius will have on your games. While stuff presented in the *Ferals* and *Company Dog* chapters can be dropped into a game without too much fuss, the existence of the Sirius does change the social landscape of the **Werewolf** setting. If that's what you and your players want, go ahead and add all this to your games. It's not my intention to mess up your games, after all, and so I figure I owe you guys fair warning.

Vanguard Chronicles

One obvious possibility is to run a game featuring Vanguard characters. While there might've been a certain masochistic appeal in playing Sirius before, they're now legitimate player character material, being recognized by the spirits as a true tribe, and they function and advance like other Shifters. (Which should make a Vanguard game easier to sell to your players, if it's something that you're itching to run.)

Vanguard chronicles offer many of the same things as traditional **Werewolf** games, giving players (and you) a familiar foundation from which to work: Sirius struggle against the Wurm's encroachment, operate in totem-enforced packs, learn Gifts in the same manner as Garou, and identify strongly with their tribe. However, they're quite different from werewolves in several ways: their often nomadic septs aren't founded around caerns, most aren't as powerful as Garou and compensate by working in greater numbers,

and they often conflict with Garou and non-allied spirits. Still, the Vanguard aren't nearly as alien and bizarre as some other things in the Tellurian (like, for example, Ananasi or kami), and they're a fine option for players that want something off the beaten path of normal **Werewolf** games without straying too far into weirdness. They'll obviously appeal to players that enjoy the challenge of playing lower-powered characters. Sirius games are also ideal for large groups, as packs with six, seven or even more members are the norm among the Vanguard.

The easiest way to start a chronicle is to let players create Vanguard characters right off the bat, using the rules on pg. 28. This drops the players into the thick of things and lets them experience the world through the eyes of their Sirius alter egos right away. In this case, your players should have some familiarity with this chapter, including the tribe's history, society, politics and systems, so they can make informed decisions about their characters. (You might want to keep some bits and pieces to yourself, like details on Storyteller characters or secret events relevant to your plot, so I encourage you to copy and paste this netbook into a document and edit it to taste before handing it out to players.)

However, a possibly even more rewarding option is to have your players create feral characters (and perhaps a Ronin, if everyone's okay with it), and then introduce them to the Vanguard a little into the chronicle. The tribe may attempt to recruit the ferals, or they may hear of the Sirius and seek it out. This limits player options at the start and forces slower growth at the start, but by the time the recruits finally join the tribe they'll be more experienced and worldly than "starting level" characters. This option doesn't require players to have an in-depth knowledge of this chapter, and in fact you can start your players off blind – give them enough info to create feral dog-blooded and then teach them about the Vanguard of Sirius entirely through their characters' experiences. (However, don't be a smartass; make sure you have a good trust going with your group before springing this all on them, and don't abuse their lack of knowledge.)

Another thing worth devoting thought to is at what point in the above metaplot you want to kick off your chronicle. While pages 2-9 is written as history, this doesn't preclude you starting the game sometime before the Vanguard's reformation, or advancing events according to your own vision. The former approach risks changing "history" (like what if the player characters prevent the conflict with the Gaian Garou at Choked Gully?), but that isn't such a bad thing. As mentioned above, it's better for players to take an active role in the game than be a passive audience to an inexorable metaplot, be they involved only tangentially in events or major players in the formation and leadership of the Vanguard.

For a real challenge for you and your players, consider a long chronicle centered around a pack of Debased brought into the Sirius at its formation, weathering the proto-tribe's growth, decline, and finally its violent rebirth as a true tribe.

Other Options

Fera Chronicles: Vanguard make interesting additions to games featuring other Shifters (at least those present in North America). Their potential as antagonists is obvious, as they're enough like Garou to raise the hackles of that Breed's traditional foes. But though the Sirius tend to be bullies, and are at least as insufferable and dense as their werewolf progenitors, they had no hand in either War of Rage; this *may* make them easier for some Shifters (like the typically liberal player character) to tolerate. Vanguard have little reason to antagonize most Fera... but be forewarned, they don't have the Garou equivalent of white guilt staying their claws when conflicts do erupt. When fights break out, it's almost always over territory. Sirius that explore areas unclaimed by werewolves sometimes

find those areas already occupied, and shoving matches often result. A small band of Gurahl, Bastet or whatever will have their work cut out for them if a determined Vanguard sept decides they want their land. Encounters between Vanguard (or Debased in general) and Fera are rare enough that generalizations can't reliably be made about who thinks what. However, a few broad statements can be made about certain Breeds and the Sirius.

The Fera that most often deal with the Vanguard of Sirius are the Corax. Some wereravens feel indebted to the tribe, truth be told, feeling a little responsible for all the trouble the poor mutts been through. (Of course, they won't admit this, and will never hesitate to claim credit for the Sirius as it exists: "Hey, if it wasn't for us, you'd still be licking the Masters' boots!") Enterprising Corax might trade information with Sirius septs, or sell intel on the Vanguard to Garou.

The wereravens are uncertain what to do about Tabloid Stacy, forced to hide out in a Vanguard kennel to avoid the werewolves out to kill her. But Corax player characters might take the initiative on this. Bribing or blackmailing her hunters to give up the pursuit would be a classic Corax tactic (because it's a smarter approach than fighting), though a brave and especially skilled murderer might make good on the obvious pun and handle the problem more directly.

The Nuwisha and Vanguard have come into conflict on a few occasions, due in large part because the new tribe has taken the American Southwest as its home territory – lands sacred to Coyote's children since the world began. A ranking Nuwisha was killed by the nomadic Bent Cactus Sept when she tried infiltrating them, and her would-be avenger met a similar fate; needless to say, these events haven't helped feelings between the Sirius and werecoyotes. On the whole, however, Nuwisha are content to leave the Vanguard alone for the time being. The bastard tribe will be punished in time, worry not, and for now their very existence is a thorn in the side of the Garou that created them – a sick prank by the Masters against their own people gone awry. (Hey, it's what they get for not leaving trickery to the experts.) But as individualistic and foolhardy as they often are, it's wouldn't be a stretch for werecoyotes portrayed by players to extract their pound of flesh from the Sirius, as an object lesson on either the deaths of their people or some other epic foolishness.

Finally, some Ratkin find the angrier Vanguard endlessly amusing. These ranting Garou castoffs feel abused by their stronger brethren, and so would use Ratkin (the enemies of their enemies) to strike without implicating themselves in the matter. The wererats play along, happy at any opportunity to make things hard for Garou, but they hold the mongrels in little better regard. But the Sirius seem to recognize and accept the disdain of the Ratkin, and aren't pushy or pretentious about it. This alone earns the dog-wretches the wererats' grudging regard and continued tolerance.

The Vanguard of the Destroyer: Oh, don't tell me you didn't see this coming! Certainly, the Vanguard falling to the Wyrms isn't inevitable, but it's not an impossibility... or even all that unlikely. The seeds of corruption are spread throughout the young tribe, just waiting to be watered: general bitterness, strong anger and even hate for the Garou Nation, the liberal use of Wyrms-fetishes taken from fallen Black Spiral Dancers, and the unwitting inclusion of Spiral kin, among other things. Any one or combination of these elements can pave the slow road to the Vanguard's fall. But Sirius and the other totems will desert the tribe long before it falls entirely to the Wyrms, taking with them their spirit broods, crippling the Vanguard severely. Most members of the tribe would find life as ferals or Ronin, or even as Garou Nation sycophants, vastly preferable to Wyrms servitude, and would scatter to the winds. Such a gutted Vanguard will fall quickly from internal schisms and attacks from numerous foes.

However, corruption can spread far faster and more dramatically than most would like to think, and this can cripple the Vanguard (or any group) before they know what hit them. Two likely avenues for such a calamity are through the Entrail Renders and the Redeemed.

The Entrail Renders are easily as bloodthirsty and nasty as the Spirals they so enjoy killing. They're more brutal than even Get or Red Talons, reveling in sadism and death for the sheer joy of it. Though this attention is reserved for Wyrmspawn, this may not long remain the case – such hate scorches and eventually consumes its fuel. Oddly enough, Weasel may be the moderating element that arrests the Entrail Renders' fall; she's mean as hell and has precious little mercy, but she doesn't abide Wyrms-corrupt children. If she forsakes the Renders, they may wise up and reexamine their behavior. However, in a corruption scenario, they'd write Weasel off as a loss and find another totem that will accommodate (or encourage) their excesses. Packs that emulate the Entrail Renders may leave with them, creating a rift in the Sirius. Worse for the Sirius would be the corrupt pack turning on them; they're certainly not unstoppable, but the tactics they use against Spirals could be adapted well enough against Vanguard packs, and the Renders are lethal enough to reduce the tribe's numbers measurably (especially if they lead other corrupted packs). If there's any bright side to this scenario, it's that the fallen Entrail Renders at least wouldn't join the Spirals –

the pack forged itself in the blood of these most hated enemies, and in a dark irony it's that very conflict that may lead to the Renders' fall from grace.

As bad or worse would be the fall of the Redeemed. The pack alpha is the delusional Molydeus, who while noble, is secretly convinced he's corrupted; this in itself may pave the way to that end. The Athro has a genius intuition for tactics, and intimately knows the weaknesses of the Sky Lights Caern and its defenders (since it's his job to eliminate them). Even by himself a corrupted Molydeus can do a lot of harm to his sept and tribe, but he'd almost certainly drag his fanatical Skin Dancer lackey down with him. The other Redeemed have no obvious weakness through which the Wyrms could find purchase, and so are unlikely to fall easily, but there are several ways just Molydeus and Stitches can score great coups for the Destroyer. Dancing the Black Spiral may teach Molydeus much about his supposed heritage, and finally grant Udale the unconditional acceptance of an entire tribe; the information they could offer the Spirals could spell the end the Sept of the Sky Lights and cripple the Vanguard of Sirius. Or between Stitches' contacts and Molydeus' tactical acumen, the odd pair could forge the scattered packs of the Skin Dancers into an elite strike force to harvest more skins and raise a Skinner army... which would be especially bad for the Sirius if Debased pelts could be used in the Rite of Sacred Rebirth.



Vanguard of Sirius

Name:

Canid or Caron:

Pack Name:

Player:

Breed:

Pack Totem:

Chronicle:

Debasement or Auspice:

Concept:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●0000
 Dexterity _____ ●0000
 Stamina _____ ●0000

Social

Charisma _____ ●0000
 Manipulation _____ ●0000
 Appearance _____ ●0000

Mental

Perception _____ ●0000
 Intelligence _____ ●0000
 Wits _____ ●0000

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ 00000
 Athletics _____ 00000
 Brawl _____ 00000
 Dodge _____ 00000
 Empathy _____ 00000
 Expression _____ 00000
 Intimidation _____ 00000
 Primal-Urge _____ 00000
 Streetwise _____ 00000
 Subterfuge _____ 00000

Skills

Animal Ken _____ 00000
 Crafts _____ 00000
 Drive _____ 00000
 Etiquette _____ 00000
 Firearms _____ 00000
 Leadership _____ 00000
 Melee _____ 00000
 Performance _____ 00000
 Stealth _____ 00000
 Survival _____ 00000

Knowledges

Computer _____ 00000
 Enigmas _____ 00000
 Investigation _____ 00000
 Law _____ 00000
 Linguistics _____ 00000
 Medicine _____ 00000
 Occult _____ 00000
 Politics _____ 00000
 Rituals _____ 00000
 Science _____ 00000

Advantages

Backgrounds

_____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000

Gifts

Gifts

Renown

Glory

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Honor

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Wisdom

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Rank

Rage

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Gnosis

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Willpower

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Health

Bruised
 Hurt -1
 Injured -1
 Wounded -2
 Mauled -2
 Crippled -5
 Incapacitated

Weakness

(Optional)

Vanguard of Sirius

Homid

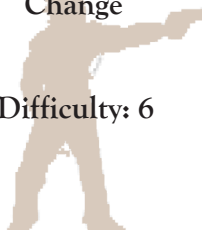
Glabro

Crinos

Hispo

Canis/Lupus

No
Change



Difficulty: 6

Strength() _____
Stamina() _____
Appearance(-1) _____
Manipulation(-1) _____

Difficulty: 7

Strength() _____
Dexterity() _____
Stamina() _____
Manipulation(-3) _____
Appearance 0

Difficulty: 6

INCITE DELIRIUM
IN HUMANS

Strength() _____
Dexterity() _____
Stamina() _____
Manipulation(-3) _____
+1 Die to Bite Damage

Difficulty: 7

Strength() _____
Dexterity() _____
Stamina() _____
Manipulation(-3) _____
-2 Perception Diff.

Difficulty: 6

Other Traits

_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000
_____	00000

Gifts

Fetishes

Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		
Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		
Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		
Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		
Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		
Item: _____	Level: _____	Anasks: _____
Power: _____		

Rites

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Combat

Weapon/Attack	Diff.	Damage	Range	Rate	Ammo	Conceal

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll	Diff	Damage
Bite	Dex + Brawl	5	Strength + 1/A
Body Tackle	Dex + Brawl	7	Special/B
Claw	Dex + Brawl	6	Strength + 1/A
Grapple	Dex + Brawl	6	Strength/B
Kick	Dex + Brawl	7	Strength + 1/B
Punch	Dex + Brawl	6	Strength/B

A=Aggravated Damage B=Bashing Damage

Armor: _____

I lied, and I am shamed.

I lied to my packmates, my sept and my tribe. But those are not the lies that shame me the most. Those lies are the ones I told the Vanguard of Sirius. I told them they were Garou, and my equals, and they would soon join the Nation. I knew these things were not true when I said them. I told the Vanguard lies that made them die fighting battles I was supposed to fight. The Vanguard trusted me, believed me, relied on me to lead and protect them. And so many of them died for it...

But it is all over now. The Masters have been exposed and disgraced. The crisis forced us to conspire, but we quickly fell upon one another. Gentle Momma Maria died at the fangs of my own sept-brother, Foreboding Cloud. Some Masters have been judged and killed as they returned to their septs... the Stormcrowns speak of the Judges of Doom handing down sentences to those of my tribe. Perhaps this is just. But I will leave long before the Judges get here. I do not flee from fear, though. I plan to atone.

I will go to the Vanguard of Sirius, unmasked for the first time. Perhaps some will recognize my voice and scent. It does not matter. I will go to them, without tribe, and ask for entry into the Vanguard; if it is Gaia's and Sirius' will, it will be my new tribe. I will go without name, for I have lost the right to use mine; I will take the name they give me. I will go without rank or deeds, for my fell acts have erased mine; I will reclaim them with my new family. And I will go, disgraced in Grandfather Thunder's Eyes; I can only hope Sirius will accept me, and allow me penance.

And when I say the Vanguard are Garou and my equals, I will know these things to be true.

Epilogue: the Masters

Origins

It all began with a Shadow Lord pack called the Cerulean Thunders. In 1986, they discovered a pair of emaciated Debased while investigating cattle attacks in north of Nashville. The mutts scampered off as soon as they scented Garou. The four werewolves pursued, but not to kill – they were simply curious. The mongrels, initially wary, were willing to talk once they realized they weren't in any danger. The Garou asked the ferals about the cattle deaths. In their broken Garou, they stated simply, “We were hungry.”

After a short discussion (out of the mutts' earshot, of course), the Garou concluded that killing the mongrels for fulfilling a basic need seemed cruel, and two more dead mutts would accomplish little in the grand scheme of things. The Cerulean Thunders fed the dog-blooded a prodigious number of Dairy Queen burgers, and warned the mutts if they started killing the cattle again the pack would return and kill them. They happily agreed between mouthfuls of fast food, though the pack realized this acquiescence was mostly perfunctory. Despite this threat, and that the Shadow Lords had to kick and chase the damned things to make them go away, the mutts kept lurking around, begging for more food and for the Lords to stay and talk to them. The Cerulean Thunders literally had to flee the area to be rid of the mutts. These forsaken Debased were driven by more than just the promise of more free meals: they were lonely and lost, and their instincts compelled them to follow and submit to Garou.

Reflecting on this later that night, the Philodox Adriana Frost-Eyes saw in the Debased a great potential resource going to waste. Ever the opportunist, she saw a means to utilize them for her and her tribe's benefit. Adriana explained her ideas to her packmates, who were intrigued and agreed to participate in her proposed experiment. The next morning the Cerulean Thunders tracked the mongrels down and “recruited” them. While the Thunders didn't adopt the Debased as actual pack members (as if Grandfather Thunder would accept them anyway), the pack encouraged them to tag along during patrols of the area. The two mutts were indoctrinated

into the Garou worldview, and taught its full language and beliefs. Progress was rewarded with food and praise, while slip-ups earned disapproval and lost privileges – very much like one would train actual dogs. The pair responded well to this treatment, and evolved into capable Gaian warriors more quickly than any of the Thunders predicted. And when the mongrels died helping their “packmates” fight Banes, showing surprising bravery and cunning, the Cerulean Thunders even performed Death Rites in their honor.

Adriana Frost-Eye's theory was confirmed: dog-blooded could be trained to function as auxiliary warriors, as long as they were managed skillfully by Garou. The pack set out to find more Debased to practice their training techniques upon. Within a year they had collected and indoctrinated nine more mongrels, dividing them between two packs and letting them hunt down threats in their own territories; within two years, the enterprising Shadow Lords controlled six packs. Mortality was high, especially when the mutts were maneuvered against stronger foes like Black Spiral Dancers, but there were always more ferals to recruit. This second phase of the Cerulean Thunders' venture proved successful, and they saw the potential to establish such packs nationwide.

Such an ambitious operation was beyond the management capabilities of a single pack, so the Thunders recruited six more trusted Shadow Lords into their clandestine enterprise. They also discovered Rusty Klaive, an Arkansas Bone Gnawer and vector that had sired numerous young and had independently organized his progeny in a similar fashion; after some discussion, the Lords invited Rusty to participate in their project. Rusty Klaive later invited two of his tribemates to join, placing three Bone Gnawers within the ad-hoc camp. Finally, a Child of Gaia Philodox with a knack for social organization was brought on board.

These fourteen conspirators laid down the framework for a secret Debased army under their command. A Shadow Lord and Bone Gnawer made contacts with weapon suppliers, while others in the cabal invested in kennels and land. A trio of Theurges explored options to offer spiritual resources to their dog-blooded underlings, though some in the conspiracy considered this effort impractical.

A "Tribe" is Born

By 1992, close to twenty Debased packs were under the direction of the camp that now called itself "the Masters." However, while reasonably efficacious on their own, hopes that these mutts would coordinate on a larger scale didn't materialize. A pack got its marching orders from the werewolf that founded and trained them, and had little contact with other mongrel packs. When packs were directed to cooperate, intra-pack conflicts and confusion hampered their ability to work together; the mutts had no sense of community. The Masters had to maintain frequent contact to coordinate their pet packs, to either direct them to work in tandem or steer them away from one another. They also had to continually reinforce the packs' indoctrination and behavior. Even well-trained Debased failed to function with the unity of Garou packs, limiting their effectiveness. Finally, very few spirits would have anything to do with the dog-blooded, and Masters often had to offer exorbitant chiminage for even low spirits to teach their mutts Gifts or acknowledge their rites. So while these mutts were useful in some respects, the Masters' project offered too little return for such massive expense and effort. There was talk of disbanding the packs and abandoning any effort to use Debased.

Then the Master Theurges had a breakthrough. Years before, they realized that many problems associated with their dog-blooded could be addressed spiritually. A unifying totem would offer these packs cohesion, and bind them into a greater, self-regulating community which fostered cooperation – one analogous to a tribe. This could also grant them nominal recognition from some spirit broods. The challenge was finding a spirit willing to stand in as the patron for their army of mutts. After years of tentative contact with spirit servants of various minor totems, the Theurges finally found an Incarna willing to consider Debased supplicants: Sirius. The great spirit was initially skeptical, but the Masters were well-respected Garou. They demonstrated their good faith by offering the star-dog an epic amount of chiminage and guaranteeing him the service of no fewer than twenty packs. And Jagglings speaking for Grandfather Thunder vouched for the Masters. Sirius finally agreed to accept patronage from mongrels and the Vanguard of Sirius was born.

Even in its very earliest days, the effects of a patron totem on the Debased were dramatic. With the reinforcement of Sirius' spirit servants and the tangible benefits of a spiritual perspective, the mongrels finally "got it." Groups worked together with pack unity, and packs fluidly worked together, as the new Vanguard of Sirius were inspired to serve Sirius, Gaia and their Masters. The Masters reindoctrinated their most trusted and capable servants into the Garou Weltanschauung, grooming the mutts for leadership and mystic roles. The Litany, rank, rites, spirit lore and other aspects of Garou culture were drilled into the mutts. However, the need for secrecy was emphasized just as much: the Vanguard were told the Garou could never know that they exist. Over the next year or so, the Masters ceased active participation in the Sirius, allowing the proto-tribe to regulate itself under their gentle direction rather than micromanaging the activities of each pack. Adopting this approach was controversial, as some Masters didn't fully trust the mongrels to function on their own. But the Vanguard of Sirius somehow didn't self-destruct once left to its own devices, and instead grew in sophistication, numbers and ability.

The Masters were delighted at the performance of their pet project, which had grown far beyond the most ambitious expectations of Adriana Frost-Eyes and its Cerulean Thunder founders.

Canny politicians among the Masters discovered it was easy to reap renown for many of its tribe's accomplishments (it's easy enough to claim credit for another's deeds when he can't contradict you). Already Garou of renown, the Masters leveraged the deeds of the Vanguard into more power and esteem within their respective tribes and sects. While the Masters stopped bringing new members into their inner circle, they continued recruiting Debased into the quasi-tribe, and they eventually opened membership to Ronin werewolves, placing them in leadership positions. The Vanguard of Sirius as presented in **The Debased** took shape around 1995.

And for a while (at least from the Masters' perspectives), things went swimmingly.

The Conspiracy Falls

Jump to 2006. As detailed previously, rumors spread by Corax revealed the existence of the Vanguard of Sirius and the conspiracy that directed it. Once the Masters realized there was no way to salvage this disaster, they declared an emergency meeting and debated what to do.

As so often happens in times of crisis (especially among Garou), arguments raged. First came recriminations: the conspirators blamed the Corax, nonexistent spies, and each other. They also heatedly debated what to actually do about the situation. Some said they should simply desert the Sirius and cover their own asses,

leaving them to fend for themselves. However, a few Masters actually believed in the Sirius and felt they owed them. These idealists insisted on sticking by their creation and supporting it (though they split on the matter of public disclosure). A passionate Shadow Lord Theurge, Rains Forever, insisted the Masters should make good on their promise and finally induct the Sirius into the Garou Nation – they'd certainly earned it, after all. A few undecided Masters offered observations, but made no definitive stand.

Pragmatists outnumbered idealists, and discussions grew ever more heated as the latter were unwilling to budge – if necessary, they declared, they would run the Vanguard of Sirius by themselves. Several days of impassioned but fruitless arguing finally came to blows. Two idealists were killed and the rest wounded; the survivors fled. The undecided werewolves promptly supported the pro-abandonment victors. The issue was thus decided.

(As detailed on pg. 3, not all those that survived the Masters' convocation lived much longer upon returning to their tribes.)

Loose Ends

Adriana Frost-Eyes, the Shadow Lord whose ideas laid the foundation for the Vanguard of Sirius, never bought into the philosophy she instilled within her creation. With a perspective befitting her cognomen, the Garou had always seen the Vanguard as a tool and a grand stage upon which her sociopolitical theories played out.

Adriana intended to cover her tracks well. She would deny all involvement in the Vanguard of Sirius, and would leave no evidence to implicate her. She'd worked most closely with the Atlanta chapter of the Sirius, so she decided to eliminate it first. She overestimated her strength and cunning, however; Adriana managed to kill three Vanguard she lured away from their packs, but their packmates caught onto Adriana and ambushed her.