

The Hunters Guild

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

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

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

Who We Are

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

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

We Hunters came from the ranks of those wraiths who not only saw the rift widen and the world of the living attempt to leave us behind, but who were determined to rectify this situation. Our solution was to tear down the ubiquitous wall called the Shroud, and our target was humanity (for if mortals were the tailors who dictated the weave of the world, then they had to be shown that the fabric of their reality was not as well-crafted as they had hoped). The struggle continues to this day, and when you die, you will join us and take up the same struggle we have fought through the centuries. Our aim is this: to unite the two worlds and take back what was once ours – the Skinlands. We do so by haunting the living and by reminding them that there is more to their lives than their petty little world. Mind by mind, we will show them the reality of terror, and thread-by-thread the Shroud will unravel. Then the worlds of the living and the dead will be one again, and we shall step from the Shadowlands into the sunlight, there to live once again.

Forever, perhaps. We shall see when it happens.

I will not delude you. The road has not been easy. We have always been a fractious bunch. As a Guild we have divided ourselves into various alliances that pursue the same goal, but do so by taking differing and, occasionally, opposing paths. From the maniacal Bedlameers to the practical Menagerians, from the cold-hearted Mandelbrots to

the pious Dantes, we are all Haunters, but we march under the banners of unofficial alliances that keep us apart. In essence, we are often our own worst enemies.

Alliances

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

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

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

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

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

The H.G. Dwellers

(Aliases: The Puritans, Pandora Skia)

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

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

once we have wound back time to a point when we all live once again, then the sky will be the limit!

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

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

Our Organization

Like most of the other factions, we do not have a rigid hierarchy. Individual members are allowed to pursue their own endeavors, so long as they advance the group's goals. The H.G. Dwellers do rely on a council of five wraiths, however, to make major decisions for our alliance. The final vote lies in the hands of Midian, the leader of the H.G. Dwellers. It is Midian who chooses who will occupy the five council seats, and who decides what issues they will address.

Never accept an offer of a game of chess from Midian, I tell you this now, in hopes that the memory will survive your death.

The Mandelbrots

(Aliases: Bay't el-Hikma, the Nihilists, Chaosticians)

Some Haunters believe it was a mistake to ignore Outrage as a potential avenue for returning to the world of the Quick, and are still closely allied with the Spooks. This group works at combining Outrage and Pandemonium in order to manipulate the stuff of the Shroud itself. Reliable sources also indicate that they are researching the prospect of harnessing Nihilis in the hopes of using these tears in reality to shred the Shroud. These wraiths, when not terrifying the living, are the most analytical and research-oriented of our kind. Many former scientists find a home with the Mandelbrots; many new uses of the Wylding come from their labs.

The Nihilists are gaining more and more adherents to their ranks. They are also the most brutal of our kind, and they haunt with the intention of maiming and killing. That they say is the only way to make humanity truly remember the sting of Pandemonium. Of all the alliances, they are the only ones strong enough to challenge the H.G. Dwellers.

I didn't say defeat. I just said *challenge*.

Organization

The Mandelbrots are controlled by one wraith, Dr. Shudder. He rules the Nihilists with an iron hand, and his vision steers their actions. The Dead Cadre, a group of 13 assistants who delegate assignments to the various subgroups and research teams, attends Dr. Shudder.

The members of the Cadre, all personally devoted to the good doctor, are merciless in their efficiency. Any dissension in the ranks is squashed without a second of remorse. Dr. Shudder is also rumored to be in league with dark fae, not to mention some of the more violent members of the Spooks' Guild.

The Caligarians

(Aliases: The Artists, Dark Muses)

Originally known as the Bacchaens, a hedonistic sect of wraiths who regarded Pandemonium as their drug of choice in the Shadowlands, these Restless have since evolved and now view reality as an antiquated medium whose time has ended. The Caligarians were renamed back in 1921, following the release of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Apparently the film so inflamed their sensibilities that they adopted a new precept: Since they were no longer limited by physical law, they no longer had any need to adhere to its tenets.

The Caligarians' prime concern is artistic expression, and while they are potent manipulators of Pandemonium, I doubt many of these hedonists are much concerned with bringing down the Shroud. Caligarians prefer to make a "statement" with whomever they terrify, and their recruiting techniques are something to behold. They love haunting artists and revealing their "talents" to these hapless creators. These particular Haunters refer to themselves as Dark Muses, claiming that they give mortal creators the inspiration of insanity. From what we have seen, this faction is also closely allied with certain Renegade Masquers and well versed with Moliate. The wraiths of the Caligarians love to use themselves as canvases for Corpus art, and their often-freakish appearances reflect this preference.

Organization

Any attempt at describing their chains of command is laughable, as the Dark Muses have no organization. The Caligarians classify their craft as a solitary venture, a journey of personal vision. Therefore, a leadership structure is superfluous to their goals. They regard one another as equals and define their alliance as an assembly of common interest, not one of mutual goals.

I once heard a friend of mine describe these Haunters as a "mutual appreciation society for deceased narcissists." She was not far from the truth.

Every year, a Caligarian is elected to be host for a region or Necropolis. It then becomes his duty to provide entertainment, hold expositions and lead tours of various local Haunts. Invitations for Haunters' galas go out via word of mouth, and the events are open to all Haunters and Spooks. The festivities usually begin with a gathering at a

local art gallery, most often one that displays the work of an individual influenced by a Dark Muse. The first part of the evening consist of the guests critiquing the work, not only that of the artist, but also that of the Haunter who inspired her. A favorite topic of discussion is how much any given haunting or effect has influenced a particular piece; these debates can go on for hours.

Following the exposition, the guests travel to a celebrated haunted site, where a troupe of Caligarians mounts a “performance haunting” for the benefit of their audience. These expositions are always improvised, since their targets are whatever unsuspecting mortals wander onstage. Emphasis is placed on the ability of the actors to create a beginning, middle, climax and resolution to a play involving panicked humans. Because Caligarians enjoy the company of other performers and artists, Sandmen have also been known to take part in these improvisations, or even to present dream plays of their own. Mostly, however, the attendance at these events is limited to Spooks and Haunters.

Following the show, older Haunters share their experiences and wisdom in dealing with Pandemonium. It is at these events that new arts of the Wylding are unveiled. The evening then climaxes with a tour of famous local haunted establishments, where the guests are welcome to contribute to the legends of these places.

We have attended several such “Galleries Macabre,” and we must admit that the Caligarians are at least innovative in their presentations of the Wylding.

The Dantes

(Aliases: Explorers, Zealots)

Believing themselves to be in neither Heaven nor Hell, this group of Heretics is of the opinion that they have stumbled upon Purgatory. They were formed after the release of Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, working under the supposition that this realm was meant to test them. (The fact that Alighieri himself dwells in Stygia as a publicity flack for the Hierarchy dismays their ardor for his work not one bit.) Unsurprisingly the Dantes have defined themselves as the surveyors and explorers of the Shadowlands (for how can one expect to affect one’s surroundings without fully exploring what one strives to change?)

The Dantes do not seek to upend reality with a vision of their own. Instead they use Pandemonium to tear away the illusions placed before them by a testing God. Because of their exploratory nature, the Dantes are well versed in Argos, and most have strong ties other Heretical groups such as the Harbingers.

Do not let the fact that the Dantes are devoutly religious taint your judgment; they know exactly what they are doing . Some of these Haunters are the best tour guides oboli can purchase, for they know the Underworld as surely as you know the confines of this room. The cost of hiring a Dantist Haunter usually entails attending at least one church service however, during which they will try to convert you. It is for this reason the Dantes are employed only as a last resort by most of us; the vast majority of Haunters have no interest in anyone’s God. Still, despite their overemphasis on religion, the Dantes also believe in helping Haunters before aliens.

The Dantes can usually be found haunting those places they deem immersed in sin or owned by sinners. Unfortunately this gives them a rather long list of people and

places to haunt, and it is not uncommon for a Dante to come into contention with another Haunter who may have already staked a claim for himself.

Organization

The Dantes, entirely Christian in belief, are led by Father Foster. He acts as their spiritual guide, and some of his followers have even gone so far as to call him the Pope of the Shadowlands. To his credit, however, he repudiates this title – thus far.

Under him are two “shepherds,” who supervise regional priests. The priests, in turn, oversee the explorations of the Tempest and the haunting of the breathing world. As compared the H.G. Dwellers, the Heretics are extremely well organized and structured.

The Bedlameers

(Aliases: Alienists, Madmen)

If you think we’re putting your through hell, be glad the Bedlameers didn’t find you. What the Nihilists possess in brutality, the Alienists own in insanity. The activities of these Haunters can be traced back to the Roman era, for it was their actions that categorized us then as *Lemuria*, or evil and restless spirits. During the Conclave that united us into a Guild, they barely supported the motion to unite alliances, and they were not even interested in the Guild until well after the Breaking. It is not their politics, though, that makes them objectionable.

It was not until the 17th century, under the guidance of Sweet Sorrow, the Grandmother of the Haunters, that they adopted their current name from “bedlam,” meaning chaos and confusion. Bedlam, in turn, was taken from London’s Bethlehem Hospital, a filthy asylum for the insane where the public could purchase tickets to watch the mad “perform.” The core group of today’s Bedlameers died from the barbaric conditions that plagued the 17th-19th century mental hospital, and those experiences inform their actions to this day.

Of all the Haunters, Charon considered them the most dangerous of our kind. He constantly tried to have them captured and turned over the forges. The Hierarchy has carried on this tradition even after the Emperor’s disappearance; the form remains even when the function is not understood.

We must sorrowfully admit that we do not understand the Bedlameers either; they are beyond psychotic. They haunt asylums, prisons and hospitals, preying upon the weak-minded, the insane and the deviants. Oblivion has not merely touched these ones; it has sunk its fangs into their throats and replaced their blood with toxic madness.

Much like the Caligarians, the Bedlameers have no interest in returning to the Skinlands. They possess far too much power here to abandon the Underworld so casually. Fear has become their aphrodisiac, and this makes them dangerous and untrustworthy. Of all of our kind, it is the Bedlameers who veer the closest to the edge of what we are often accused of.

We have also heard of a rumored treaty between the Bedlameers and the Laughing Lady, the Deathlord who occupies the Seat of Succor. Sweet Sorrow is reputedly using the Bedlameers to spread madness in the world of the Quick by driving

the living insane. These unhinged mortals then kill and harm others because of what the “voices” tell them to do. This invariably fills the coffers of the Laughing Lady with more wraiths, and she, in turn, overlooks the transgressions of the Bedlameers (leaving them their hospital and prison Haunts). Although the truth of this rumor is dubious, we have heard that Sweet Sorrow covets the Seat of Succor for herself, and awaits anxiously the day when the Laughing Lady falls.

Organization

The Bedlameers are guided by Sweet Sorrow, their spiritual advisor. While she does not control them, they honor her advice and listen to her suggestions. Beyond that, each batch of Bedlameers is ruled by the strongest of their number, and they consider each asylum, hospital and prison to be a separate city-state ruled by different sets of laws, customs and traditions.

The Order of the Glass Menagerie (Aliases: The Remembered, Diplomats)

A fairly new group, but one that is rapidly gaining strength, these Haunters have allied themselves with (supposedly) the Mnemoi and (definitely) the Sandmen. Their theory (and we have to admit it has merit) is that our haunting efforts are losing their impact because of the Fog – mortals’ ability to forget our presence or explain it away. Sandmen and Mnemoi can rekindle the memories of a haunting after the Fog has taken effect by exercising their Arcanoi. This way, skinbags are forced to confront what they have seen over and over again until the memory sticks.

These Haunters are less tied down to specific locations or individuals. For them, haunting is an equal opportunity endeavor, and they believe that it should be spread across racial, status, gender and age lines in order to have the best effect. Of the haunters we know, they are the most practical, discreet and business-oriented about their day-to-day affairs. Members of the Order tend to be reserved, subtle, observant, patient, highly diplomatic and well educated. They are the ones most likely to hire their talents out, and the ones, from what we hear, the Hierarchy secretly approaches for help in dealing with *their* problems.

The Order of the Glass Menagerie maintains close contacts with most of the other Haunter alliances, and its members have begun acting as intermediaries to reunify us as a Guild. The greatest problems of reconciliation, however, lie between the H.G. Dwellers and the Mandelbrots. The Nihilist have no interest in forming a unified Guild if it means deferring to the Puritans, and we will not acquiesce our right of leadership to them. To their credit, the Remembered are still trying.

Organization

The upper echelons of the Glass Menagerie remain a mystery. We believe that their leadership consists of a shadow council of five-member who hold equal sway over the Menagerians. Because of their insistence on keeping secrets about this and other matters, however, quite a few of us distrust the Menagerie. Stories are circulating as to

how the Order is a clever front for the Hierarchy; that it is under Ember's control; that it is a trick of the Sandmen; that it is ruled by Doppelgangers; that the council member are none other than Midian, Dr. Shudder, Father Foster, Sweet Sorrow and Elvis.

You get the picture.

It is more likely, however, that the council is controlled by Midian, since the Menagerie and Dwellers share similar outlooks. With the rumors surrounding the activities of Sweet Sorrow flying, Midian may be trying to ferment a united coalition of alliances to counteract the Bedlameers and their reputed ties to the Seat of Succor. Only time will tell.

Beneath the supposed council are mouthpieces, Haunters who receive their instructions through dreams. It is their responsibility to inform the other Menagerie members as to their assignments. Below the mouthpieces are the various Hunter cells. These groups number anywhere from two to 10 members, and these members do the vast majority of the down-and-dirty hauntings that appear in the tabloids. Everyone in the cell gets his instructions at once to make sure there's no misunderstanding. A haunting that gets out of hand is an invitation to the *Dannati*.

What Do We Want

When Charon disbanded the Guilds it did not matter to us. We would survive with or without the permission of the Hierarchy, just as we had done before the Conclave. In truth, we were not just a collection of motley individuals who shared an ability; we were not willing to have Charon dismiss us that easily. We Haunters may have shared the same Arcanos, but Pandemonium was the result of our endeavors, not the catalyst for them.

The early Haunters were formed from a nucleus of wraiths working toward a shared goal: weakening the Shroud enough to create holes and doorways through which the dead could permanently re-enter the Skinlands. Our ultimate hope was that through our actions, the Shroud would eventually dissipate and the two realms of the living and the dead would again become one. The universe, however works through action and dynamic interplay, not wishful thinking. If the Shroud were to be brought down, doing so would require deliberate effort.

Many of the wraiths who formed the various alliances that predated the Guild came to this conclusion independently. With a goal in mind, groups began to search for a means to their quest, and this resulted in the discovery of various Arcanoi. Of initial interest to these groups were the fledgling arts of Pandemonium, Outrage and Embody, all three of which could reach across the Shroud and affect the physical world of the Quick. Each group took the Arcanos that interested them the most, and began expanding the scope of its ability, tailoring it to their needs.

Our Power

Our first avenues of explorations focused on Outrage, but that was a mule, a sterile dead end that diverted us away from our purpose. Outrage became the Arcanos of choice for the alliance that became the Spooks, our little brothers, even as we abandoned it. We came to the same conclusions about Embody, which shows no promise either

(even though the split with the alliance that later became the Proctors' Guild incurred a great deal of animosity between us and them, a rift that has grown worse over the centuries). Then, finally, came Pandemonium, an Arcanos said to have been learned from the whispers of the Wyld in a deal called the Covenant. We'll tell you more about it later – if you're attentive.

Pandemonium, a time and space-altering Arcanos, accomplished what we were striving for: the manipulation of reality, albeit to only a small degree. Our Arcanos, however, is still limited, influencing perceptions of reality while stopping shy of actually producing long-term effects. We're working to change that, however. We've made a very impressive start.

The assorted alliances explored the use of our Arcanos in different ways. One group wanted to manipulate time and reverse its hold on the world. Another hoped that by distorting people's perceptions of reality, its members could influence the way the world was viewed and understood. A few distraught wraiths merely wanted nothing more than to break down the walls between the Shadowlands and the world they left behind.

To outsiders – those we call aliens – these varying strategies seemed too far-fetched to have any potential for success whatsoever, but they were quite surprised when we managed to unite ourselves into a proper Guild following the Conclave. It is still difficult for aliens to understand why we would be so interested in such a “Quixotic” quest. They, however, have never been touched by the Wylding's caress. We have, and we know what can be accomplished with it. It is this very gift that allows us to communicate with you right now. It is this gift that you will come to appreciate when you join us.

Why We Haunt Humanity

The Haunters, though never unified by the concurrence of opinion, all still strive toward the same goal. And that is why we haunt (hate?) the humans. We are all convinced that humanity is the key to our freedom. It is their belief that reinforces the Shroud and builds it ever higher. It is our duty to haunt them into believing in us – and thus wrecking their own creation. Once they accept that we are real, then the artifact of their disbelief will come tumbling down.

We have learned that humanity has a subconscious communal sense of self-preservation when it comes to the supernatural. The result is the Shroud – a sort of ghostly version of the Berlin Wall – and the Fog, humanity's inability to recognize the paranormal for what it actually is. To counter these hindrances, we use hauntings to remind the Quick that we still exist and that out of sight is not out of mind. Pandemonium allows us to use the weaker points in the Shroud to our advantage. By probing these weak spots, we can manifest our abilities in the sunlit world and scare humanity into remembering that there is another realm out here, waiting for each and every one of them. Forget Outrage; knocking over a glass or two is something that most people can eventually overlook or rationalize. On the other hand, creating bleeding walls and plagues of insects is something the people will notice. Already, the antics of several of our more prominent members have been immortalized in history. You've heard of the Bell Witch hauntings? No? Then how about Amityville?

Using Wylding across the Shroud also serves to weaken the barrier, inch by steady inch. The Shroud is continually gaining strength, and haunting is necessary to prevent our avenues into the Skinlands from being cut off entirely. Being a Haunter means relying on many small victories in order, someday, to win the war.

The Cut of Our Dress

It is habit to categorize everything you see into tidy little compartments. Since our behavior is difficult to quantify, our appearance serves as the hook by which others identify us. They say, “Oh, he’s wearing a black cloak. He must be a haunter,” and they think nothing more of it. Most don’t even stop to ponder why we wear the cloaks anymore. That’s their mistake. Our choice of clothing, however stylish, does serve a functional purpose as well.

Initially, the standard cloak hid the deformities of those of our kind who had grown visibly tainted by the Wylding. Wraiths tend to react rather negatively to someone whose translucent Corpus is teeming with insects or who bleeds from every visible orifice. Soon, many of our kind wore the cloaks because they offered us a psychological advantage over the aliens. Furthermore, large billowy cloaks made it difficult to determine our precise physical make-up, and allowed us to conceal relics, Artifacts and weapons with ease. With the mystique surrounding those Haunters who had been physically wracked by the Wyld’s gift, many wraiths were left wondering what secrets lay hidden beneath our oh-so-mysterious cloaks.

Eventually, the habit of wearing cloaks soon began to affect the way some of us used our abilities. We discovered ways of allowing the effects of the Wylding to erupt from the folds of our clothing, and our voluminous cloaks were nothing if not abundant in hidden creases and pockets. This effect kept many aliens away from us; the uncertainty of what lay beneath the cloth as well as what might erupt from within it frightened them greatly.

Aliens and Outsiders

The Hierarchy

There was a reason Charon never approved of our Guild, never sanctioned our activities or knowledge as proper. He had an inkling of what we sought, and he was frightened by the prospect of what we could accomplish. That’s where the precious *Dictum Mortuum* came from, that lot of piffle that says talking to the living is bad. We’re not harming you, are we? But Charon saw only the worst in what we wanted to do, and succumbed to fear.

The man himself is gone, but his fear has survived, passing into the Hierarchy of the present day. The Deathlords remain blindfolded as to the reasons why we should be feared, however, and snap at the darkness around them like frightened pets simply because they heard a noise.

That is not to say that the Hierarchy is entirely bad. The Deathlords’ subjects have their uses, and we are sure they believe the same of us. You’ll find the odd Legionnaire or Anacreon who seeks to employ your services, but if you take these

contracts, remember, your Guild and the safety of its members takes precedence over any alien and what he can offer.

Renegades

By definition, this appellation applies to us, but don't allow yourself to be pigeonholed quite so easily. Only the Mandelbrots and possibly the Bedlameers are true Renegades; they readily oppose anything that deals with the Hierarchy on a friendly basis, and often throw themselves into frays if it means spilling Legionnaire plasm. The Caligarians, on the other hand, consider themselves moral opponents of the Hierarchy, but rarely pursue their ideology to the point of confrontation. "Weekend Renegades" was the term we heard used once in their case.

The problem with Renegades is that they often expect you to join their fight simply because "it's the right thing to do." The further the goals of our Guild as a whole, and if that means going against the Hierarchy, Renegades and/or Heretics to do so, then we will. By the same token, we will work with any and all of the three factions if – and only if – doing so furthers our ends.

Heretics

What applies to the Renegades holds true with the Heretics. Perhaps we understand them a touch better because the Dantes are really nothing more than a cult that has formed within the Haunters, Heretics of a sort themselves. We have already expressed our grievances concerning these wraiths, but must admit they are less aggressive than the Renegades. They see the benefit of subtlety, the need to move slowly and gauge an opponent before considering a course of action. Now if only they could teach the Nihilists and Alienists this wisdom, we would all be much better off.

The one major problem with Heretics is their blind devotion to their belief(s). They are subtle by choice, but when dictated to do otherwise by this cult leader or that bit of holy writ, they become far more dangerous and brutal than any Renegade could ever be. This reliance on foreign ideology makes them allies at arm's length, at best.

Other Guilds

Our attempt to discover new ways of weakening the Shroud often brings us to the doorsteps of others. Just because members of other Guilds are aliens does not mean that their gifts and powers are useless. (The same applies to us, by the way. If anyone seeks to learn the Wylding from you, use judgment, but teach it if they ask. Spreading Pandemonium is always of benefit to the Haunters.)

Of all the Guilds, however, be most careful of the Artificers. They believe they are above all, especially us. Masquers can be a fun lot, but watch them carefully. They are dangerous when provoked, and while their vengeance is slow, it is sure. On the other hand, working with the Monitors can be financially rewarding; many Haunters team up with these ghosts to form freelance "fetter hit squads." There's nothing like the look on another wraith's face when he realizes that his biggest Fetter is about to be torn down "on account of the ghosts."

Our Allies: The Spooks

We like to refer to the Spooks as our younger siblings, because in essence they are. Before we attached the definition of Guild to our name (or before we even united), Spooks and Hunters were inseparable. While the paths we took as Guilds differed, we have remained staunch allies through the centuries.

With the Conclave, however, the alliance whose membership constituted the Spooks went ahead and, ahem, forged their own Guild, a move which was not met with our approval. Initially, our disapproval generated a feud between the two Guilds, which nearly cost us the only true friends we possessed. A war of practical jokes quickly turned into backstabbing and politicking, forcing the Spooks to look elsewhere for support against our superior numbers and talents. It was only after they began a very public alliance with the Artificers that we realized our mistake and publicly apologized for our actions. Luckily, we were forgiven.

We now recognize the Spooks as equals, even though we still fondly regard them as our younger brothers. This does not mean you can boss them around, however; family fights are often vicious, and frankly, a Spook is strong enough to give you and nearly any other Hunter (except, possibly, a Nihilist) a good thrashing. Staying on their good side is a wise idea, but we know they regard us with the same fondness we have for them. Regardless of the day-to-day quibbles and problems that may arise, they are family. They are allies, they are lovers, and they are kin. Most importantly, they are to be trusted with almost the same convictions you would place in another Hunter.

Our enemies: The Proctors

Our reaction to the formations of the Spooks' Guild was due primarily to the sense of betrayal we had felt at the hands of the hedonistic Proctors. Before the formation of the Guilds, the Proctors constituted an alliance with, just as we did, strove for a means to return to the Skinlands. We once regarded them as friends and allies, but our warm regard for them has faded. They betrayed us, you see. We do not forgive such things.

From the onset, the alliance that would later constitute the Proctors wallowed in self-pity instead of trying to see the advantages of their new existence. They used Embody to remember the way things used to be, rather than pushing the boundaries of what could be. They called us stupid for our optimism, and took every opportunity to denigrate our efforts. They whispered in the ears of the others, sabotaged our efforts, sicced Hierarchy troops on our Circles, and generally did everything they could short of total war to destroy us.

The final straw came during the formation of the Guilds, when the Proctors petitioned the Artificers to exclude us from the proceedings. We were too chaotic, they said, and would disrupt matters. We even discovered that they tried to sell us out to the Hierarchy during the Revolt of the Guilds. Pity that backfired on them, don't you think?

Has no idea what we're talking about? You will.

Our Opposites: The Puppeteers

We don't talk about them. We don't think about them. See, we're not thinking about them now.

Why? Because we want to make the living aware of us. They want to make the living *us*. Horrible, isn't it?

Think about it.

Skinbag Aliens

Most of the skinbags we deal with are on the receiving end of our abilities. It is we who seek them out, not the other way around – most can only reach us when we want them to. Still, it is wise to know whom not to approach and why. There are things out there that can harm us, so discretion is necessary when choosing a target for a haunting. It simply won't do to have you go out on your first haunting and find yourself trapped in a bottle in some alien's laboratory somewhere. No, that wouldn't do at all.

Vampires

Don't waste your time. These creatures are so egocentric that as far as they're concerned, if you can't be used, you aren't worth the effort of speaking to. As far as these self-named "Kindred" are concerned, *everything* is a pawn in some grand scheme of theirs. As a result, any agreement you may wish to engage in will invariably be structured to come out to their advantage, regardless of how cunning you thought you were when you negotiated it. Besides, they don't scare that easily, and for all their posturing, they have negligible impact on how reality is viewed or interpreted.

Of all of the aliens, though, only the living have fewer defenses against us than the bloodsuckers do, and disrupting their museum-tableau existences can be great fun. Just take time to observe your target to see what she's actually capable of before you start making her furniture leak clotted blood; you don't want to be surprised by a necromancer.

Werewolves

We mostly ignore these walking mountains of fur and muscle, not out of disinterest, but because they possess the means to fight us. Charms and chants, spirits and dances – these are the tools that the werewolves use to shield themselves from our tender ministrations. However, these tactics are surprisingly effective. It's a disappointment, really. You'd think they'd welcome our wildness (and Wyld-ness) in the waking world.

There is one particular group of these creatures who are thoroughly deformed, horrors that Oblivion's sting has tainted beyond recall. The Bedlameers are the only ones foolish enough to speak with these twisted monstrosities, and we advise you to avoid them. Their Shadows rule them; they are living Shades.

Mages

These are a tricky lot. Such power makes us sick...sick with envy. We are sick that some skinbags possess the ability to manipulate reality, and sick that we do not possess it ourselves. Fortunately, these miracle workers are saddled with their own problems, a shadow war of sorts. If you are going to seek out any communications with this lot, however, then speak to the animists, the ones who believe in the spirits that surround them. They are less likely to try to snare you for their own gains, or worse yet, use you to power their outlandish contraptions.

There are mad ones among the wizards, and we've found we can work with them – to a point. It is best, most times, to let them do what they wish to the fabric of reality, and to use that as a starting point for our own actions. Working thus in tandem, we create nightmares the even the most Fog-befuddled account executive can't explain away.

Changelings

Of all the aliens, we share the most with these creatures. We are cut from the same cloth, we suffer from the same wounds, and we bear some of the same grievances against Fog-ridden humanity. Their whimsical natures and childish demeanors can be aggravating, however, and too often are good for nothing more than a moment's entertainment. We have solidified alliances with two of their breeds, however; those called the eshu and the sluagh. Both are worth the effort of cultivating a friendship, and they are our strongest allies in the Skinlands.

There is the darker kind of fae (bullies, you might say) who are exceedingly willing to enter into minor alliances with us, but whose true intentions are clouded. Deal with the darker ones only if you have to; otherwise, be diplomatic in your response when they seek you out. Insulting them will lead to confrontation, as their honor is cut easily, and they'll not suffer that wound lightly.

Benandanti

These we have saved for last, for surprisingly, through the centuries they have remained the greatest threat to the Haunters that the Skinlands have to offer. Most of the *Benandanti* are more curious about our nature than actually threatening, but in this case the exception is more important than the rule. You see, there are those among the Caul-born called the *Dannati* who have sworn to destroy all wraiths, and have specifically targeted us for our aggressive acts against the living.

Have you wondered why we do not haunt in the presence of “reputable” parapsychologists? It would make sense, wouldn't it, to haunt the so-called “experts.” After all, once the “experts” had evidence, the rest of humanity would believe in us as well, wouldn't they? It's a tempting opportunity to speed up our work – too tempting.

Really, you'd be amazed at how many ghost-hunters and parapsychologists are really *Dannati*, or affiliated with them. These vicious frauds are the reason one should never haunt one location for an extended period of time, or even on a regular basis. Wherever we manifest, they follow us with their damned fennel blades in hand, sending all before them into Oblivion's maw.

History

The Birth of Haunting

What do we care of history? It might as well be a fairy tale. Our past has rarely mirrored the cycle of humanity, and our exploits were barely touched upon during the age of legends. What you are reading is not so much our history as it is our perspective on past events, an essay of sorts.

Now we all know that there was a time when the Shroud was but a thin sheet of gauze stretched between the worlds, no more an inconvenience to cross than plunging one's hand into a pool of water. Death was regarded as a period of transition, a moment of sleep before the soul was free to wander. In those days, we wraiths were appreciated as guiding spirits. We comforted the living into believing there as a continuation of existence, not an abrupt end to everything. A belief in us was a belief in a sort of immortality by our actions; our presence let them know that the soul lasted forever. We were *needed*.

As various religions grew to have stronger influences on humanity's collective psyche, however, the notion of rewarding the "good" and torturing the "evil" after death became widely accepted. It was only common sense, really. How else were gods expected to keep worshippers in line? But we were caught up in the middle of this change, and we did not see where it was leading until it was too late. The realms of the after life became crowded with camps of ancient heavens and hells. We, of course, were caught right in the middle; humanity's need to be given a bone for obeying whatever religion patted it on the collective head didn't take ghosts into account. Our presence, however, presented some people with serious doubts as to this entire reward-based philosophy, but clerics swiftly rectified that little conundrum. Having obviously never seen nor heard of these supposed paradises here on our side (and believe me, we looked), by these mortals reckoning we were lost souls, trapped in a nether-realm, doomed to wander forever without rest because of some earthly transgression. Others of our kind throughout Africa and the Orient were described as evil spirits, hell bent on misleading the foolish, as well as acquiring their children and virgins.

Now admittedly, there were some who helped to spawn these legends through their brutal activities, but that sort of behavior certainly was not the case for the majority of us. Still, the stories grew, and the fears of the living grew with them. Prompted by fear of our presence, and by the need to know that something better existed, humans began to distance themselves from us. Mere post-mortem existence wasn't enough for them anymore, the greedy bastards. The Shroud grew stronger and stronger, and none of us could do anything to stop it. Thus, this fabric between the worlds became the target of our ire, along, of course, with the wretched mortals who unknowingly began to block us out.

Charon never liked to admit this, but we had a purpose before the name Guild was given proper sanction and later rescinded, and before Charon made the Shadowlands into his own private empire. We were originally formed from a handful of wraiths who tasked themselves with storming the walls of the Shroud and breaching its defenses. In our respective regions, and individually, we began to probe the Shroud's strengths and weaknesses, and quickly ascertained that at certain areas and times, it was weaker than normal. By this point, individuals began to band together, lending support to one another

while pursuing a shared agenda. Small Circles of wraiths throughout Egypt, Greece, Canaan, Babylon and Africa enlisted more members to their cause and established lines of communications with one another. The first, tentative alliances took form. While it took several years, we eventually concluded the living somehow reinforced the slowly coalescing Shroud, keeping us out. We were determined to get revenge for being shut away, but had little idea how to go about achieving such. Then, a path manifested itself.

Freelance hauntings had already begun, admittedly, before we conceived of the notion. They were tools used by frustrated wraiths who blamed their condition on some grievous wrong, imagined or otherwise, committed by their families. The Fog barely touched the minds of the living in those days, so these hauntings were well-remembered and passed along. The tradition of telling ghost stories began in this fashion, as groups of people, huddled by the security of a bonfire, retold personal and secondhand accounts of brushes with the supernatural. It was at these moments that the living were most receptive to us; it was at these gatherings that our power was strongest. Humanity was subconsciously strengthening the gossamer wisp that would one day become the Shroud, but our continued influence on people through direct intervention (haunting, you fool) served to weaken the barrier even as it was built.

It wasn't enough for us, though. A tale only traveled so far and lived only as long as the tale-teller's memory. We needed to make our hauntings legend; we needed a way to let the influence of each banshee howl echo down the ages. Luck smiled on us, though; the means to our end was discovered through the expression of written documents. For uncounted decades, humans transcribed their folklore onto clay and papyrus, immortalizing gods, heroes and demons. Why should they not immortalize us, as well?

And so we set to work. Tales of unearthly encounters and journeys found their way into Herodotus' *History*, Homer's *Odyssey*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Akkadians' *The Descent of Ishtar into the Underworld*. With this record of our deeds, we made a fascinating discovery: In the minds of the masses, the written word became *proof*. Once a scribe, no matter how lowly or insane, put something down in words, his scribblings acquired a legitimacy because of the simple fact that they were concrete.

The premier Circle of that time, the Athenians who called themselves Pandora Skia, seized upon the notion and disseminated it to every clutch of Haunters they could find, for a revelation had seized them. If tales of our hauntings could be immortalized as truth in the minds of the living forever more, then they would always *believe*. They would always be...open...to our ministrations. They would help us back into a world where the living and the dead walked as one.

Thus began the widespread haunting of the living for the express purpose of the greater good. Despite our shared vision of returning to the lands of the living (and, some already whispered, of returning to life itself), we were still scattered throughout the ancient world, and took our form and names from the folklore of our breathing days. In ancient Egypt, hoary priests mistook us for Shai or "Destiny," the shadow-god who was born at the same moment as each individual, grew up alongside him, and was present at his death when Osiris weighed his heart. In Assyria and Babylon, were *Edimmu*, the souls of those who had been improperly buried and who tormented the living in revenge. In Greece, alliances such as Pandora Skia and the Bacchaens were called Shades, spirits

angered by improper funerary rites. While the stories surrounding us were never exactly positive, at least they told our tales and thus remembered us.

Imagine our anger when we, wraiths who had survived the growing horrors of the Underworld for centuries, were faced with an upstart child named Charon who told us that he was our hope. He warned us of dangers we had already confronted: he asked us to form a band when we already had; then he had the nerve to call us Renegades for failing to heed the warnings we ourselves had already given to others. This self-appointed messiah was powerful, we will admit that, but he had no interest in returning to the breathing world. Instead, it was his self-proclaimed “destiny” to guide other to safety.

We avoided him and his precious band of sailors. Their thinly disguised attempts to extort payment were reprehensible to us. In the meanwhile, we still sought ways to diminish the barrier, but the Shroud was growing faster than we could tear it down. We needed alternate measures, and the suggestion was put forward to develop our “special” skills in a way that could aid us in our quest.

The search for a new Arcanos or at least a new way of using what we already knew – began. Our alliances reestablished contacts with one another in an effort to pool our resources, but the process was slow. Already groups of wraiths had gathered into Circles based on the powers they possessed. We, however, had been united by temperament long before others were joined by shared skills. Our members studied under various teachers, learning different arts and trying to redirect their purpose, but the going was difficult.

Eventually, we heard that several of our associates tucked into Western Europe had expanded on certain arts that could affect the world of the Quick. It was the beginning of something big, we knew, and we all dedicated our attention to following up the discoveries that flowed from this new research. The initial reports were promising. Researchers had learned to reach across into the ephemeral lands and *move* things that previously our hands had passed through. Eventually, we hoped, the power to move objects could become advanced enough to manipulate the Shroud as well as those objects that lay across it.

However, it was not to be. The research into the Arcanos later known as Outrage progressed rapidly, but in a predictable direction. While the first arts showed much promise, the later ones were built from the success of the first, and therefore suffered from its limitations. Outrage simply became a means to affect the living world, and not the Shroud as we had hoped.

Our discovery of the Wylding itself is shrouded in mystery. What we have been told is this: One of our members, a lad who called himself Theseus (after the hero of legend), followed Charon, hoping he would reveal the source of his powers. Theseus followed Charon for nine days and nights, until the Imperator of Stygia came to the place we call the Veinous Stair. Incredulous, Theseus saw the Ferryman descend.

In future accounts, Charon claimed that he was guided to the Stair’s threshold by the mysterious “Lady of Fate,” but we know better. The stairs were chiseled from the bloody –veined stone; therefore they were built by human hands. Malfeans had gnawed away the stuff of Oblivion into the Labyrinth; what use had they for stairs? On the other hand, Charon knew the location of the Veinous Stair. How? Simple. He had been to the Labyrinth before, and had hewed the steps for his own uses.

Theseus followed Charon into the Labyrinth; skulking on the fringes of the Ferryman's lantern's glow, and discovered the Ferryman was allowed to pass freely. Charon, it seemed, was allied with the Spectres, and in course of his service to them, he was given a slave named Nhudri to craft Artifacts for his pleasure. At this juncture, Theseus was discovered, and he fled into the Labyrinth. After getting thoroughly lost in the winding maze of tunnels, he discovered the Wyld slumbering in a vast chamber, and realized that Charon was keeping this, the true power of the Underworld, to himself. Theseus roused the imprisoned Wyld from its sleep, and then offered to free the great dragon from its prison if it would give him the power to escape the Shadowlands forever. The Wyld told Theseus it was not ready to escape yet, but it would give him a gift. In exchange for this kernel of knowledge, Theseus, and all who learned the gift, would become that aspect of the Wyld that could not exist in the Shadowlands, the aspect of change and possibility. Without hesitating, Theseus accepted this arrangement in an agreement called the Covenant, and was given what they called the Wyld's eye – the Wylding. At that moment Pandemonium was born.

This we believe.

Beginning Thoughts

There is much in both our history and our ambitions that remains unresolved. We maintain our struggle to pierce the Shroud and bring it crashing down (to the thunderous applause of all wraiths), but it is still a long, slow process. Some Haunters, dissatisfied with our progress, have made the accusation that the creation of the Haunters Guild drew our attention away from our ultimate goal, but I say these wraiths have not yet studied our history well enough.

The Conclave

The need to establish ourselves as a Guild derived from several sources. We were not interested in becoming “officially” recognized, since our actions spoke for the validation of our goals. There was a need, though, to pull the disparate of alliances together to pool our knowledge, to disseminate knowledge of Pandemonium properly, and to direct our pursuits in order to make them more effective. Besides, had we not done that, rumors abounded that the newly formed Proctors (an alliance we thought we could trust) were attempting to demarcate both Embody and Pandemonium as their own Arcanoi. We later discovered that the Proctors tried to establish themselves as the only Guild who would have dealings with the Skinlands (a move which robbed them of valuable support in the years to come, as neither we nor the puppeteers were impressed). Pressed on by this imperative, several attempts by individual alliances to gain Guild status as masters of Wylding failed, their efforts sabotaged by other factions who wanted the same thing. This nearly shattered the delicate web of treaties and non-aggression pacts between the different alliances, and forced the formation of the first Hunter Conclave. The brainchild of Sweet Sorrow, a woman already recognized as the Grandmother of Pandemonium (it was she who brought Theseus' story to us), the Covenant brought together the major Pandemonium-using alliances in order to give us a unified face and voice. It was said that nearly 20 groups came to the Conclave, setting

off a week of deals, promises and haggling. By the end of it, the alliances were ready to call themselves a united Guild, with Midian (new leader of Pandora Skia) as Guildmaster. Sweet Sorrow refused the position after it was originally offered to her, preferring to accept a role as Midian's advisor.

The greatest disappointment of the Conclave came when the alliance representing the practitioners of Outrage went their own way to form the Guild of Spooks. Despite the close ties that the Spooks maintained with assorted alliances, they believed that the Conclave was not taking into account a single one of their interests or skills. Many alliance representatives already felt that Outrage was a useless dead end, and were not quiet about their opinion. Unjustly, they transferred this disdain to Outrage's practitioners as well.

The Spooks tried to make the separation amicable, but we did not. Those of us who chose to remain Haunters took the matter of their leaving as a personal affront, and we utilized the same tactics the Proctors used when they tried to convince the other Guilds that we were not Guild material. We did our best to harass the Spooks in order to prove to them they could not do without us. We slandered them in public forums, offered them little respect and even less support, and did everything we could to force them to come crawling back to us.

It was only when the Artificers officially recognized the Spooks as a Guild that we realized the depth of our error. Only when confronted by the possibility of losing our former compatriots as friends and allies (and to the hated soulforgers!) did we finally see our mistake. In truth, Outrage was a useful Arcanos, and we needed the Spooks a great deal more than they needed us. We were severely lacking in allies (a result of the Proctors' smear campaign against us) and even more importantly, friends. Had we lost the Spooks once and for all, we might not have survived.

So, we humbled ourselves. In a show of great and public humility, we apologized for our actions, and tried our best to make it up to the Spooks (individually and as a Guild). Eventually, they forgave us, though I suspect that some still harbor a thorn of animosity toward us for betraying their trust.

War and Peace

The War of the Guilds might have come as a complete shock to us (hardly surprising as we were so focused on our own agenda) had the Spooks not warned us of the Artificers' attempts to position themselves as head Guild. The disparate wills of the alliances reared their heads in the matter, and a second Conclave was called to ascertain how the Haunters wanted to approach the new problem. It was generally agreed the Artificers should not be allowed to assume primacy, but exact methods for dealing with their claim were a matter of contention. Eventually, it was put forth by Sweet Sorrow that in light of so many differing opinions, each alliance should approach the matter in its own way, so long as no one supported the Artificers or brought harm to the Haunters as a group or individually.

What happened next was complete chaos. Many alliances made it a point to attack Proctor interest, ignoring the Artificers completely, while others did their best to haunt the Quick allies of the soulforgers. Teams of Spooks, Monitors and Haunters went after Fetters of enemies, doing their utmost to destroy or at least damage them, while

some of us began haunting the Artificers themselves, interrupting forge-work and ruining the creation of Artifacts. Whenever the Artificers tried to place the blame on us, however, our excuse was, “Pardon, but that was not my alliance responsible for that unfortunate accident. Try the Followers of Discord; this sounds like their handiwork.” Of course, the Followers of Discord had disbanded and vanished several years back, but we did not bother telling the other Guilds that. The Artificers responded to our claims of innocence by forging whatever Haunters they could catch and siccing their allies on our nascent Circles. Attrition was high, and we had not nearly enough allies.

Unfortunately, the war came to an end with the Artificers in the position they had originally coveted. Their losses had been great, but ours had been greater. The one lesson we did learn from the entire affair, however, was that dedication to our pursuit did not mean we had to be blinded by it. We had to become more aware of the games being played around us if we were to survive them.

The Breaking

With Stygia reeling from the “First Abomination” – the Renegade assault on the Onyx Tower in the early 1500s – the Compact of Guilds felt it was time to topple the foundations of the Hierarchy. Our involvement in the attempted *coup d’etat* of April 6th, 1598, however, came not from the Artificers’ oh-so-compelling argument for Guild supremacy over Stygia, but from within our own ranks. We were leery of the Artificers to begin with, and their whole plan seemed like a convenient way for them to seize power while using us as cannon fodder. We agreed with the notion the Hierarchy had to be toppled, but the candidates for the mantle of leadership were less than appealing.

A third Conclave was finally called (the last one to date), to discuss the matter. As usual, the Conclave, rather than unite opinion, served only to polarize it further. There were endless hours of debate, back and forth, pro and con, and at the end we found ourselves still undecided. The matter had almost reached a terminal impasse when the Dantes, a young alliance within the Haunters, stepped forward with a proposal. Having maintained powerful ties to Heretical groups such as the Fishers, the Dantes suggested that we support the Artificers’ attempts to usurp Charon’s rule, then step in afterward (with the help of the Fishers and Spooks) and destroy the soulforgers. We may not have cared who ended up ruling Stygia, but we were certain that it shouldn’t be the Hierarchy or the Artificers.

Sweet Sorrow was the first to support the idea, followed (grudgingly) by Midian and the other alliance leaders. Our hesitations in this matter, I am told, came from the sheer ambiguity of the entire situation – and our putative allies. The Fishers, who agreed to assist us when the time came, were not exactly a known or even desirable quantity; what if they turned on us instead of the Artificers? Additionally, most Haunters were uncomfortable with assuming any sort of a political stance to begin with. What swayed most of us into the revolt camp was Sweet Sorrow’s support of the Dantes’ plan, support which, in hindsight, looks somewhat out of character for her.

Needless to say, the “Second Abomination” (the coup) was a failure from its onset. The Usurers and Masquers abandoned the fight for their own reasons; the Artificers had the other Guilds doing most of the dirty work (straining the unity of the already tenuous rebellion), and arguments constantly erupted over the division of spoils

not yet won. We never had occasion to implement our private coup using the Fishers, and in truth, we were somewhat relieved that we never tried.

As you know the attempted overthrow of the Hierarchy failed miserably, and Charon's edict broke the Guilds. What happened afterward, however, was the interesting part. The Fishers, at the behest of the Dantes, used their underground railroad and network of safe Haunts to hide many Haunters and Spooks. Because of their efforts, a large portion of our Guild membership escaped the Hierarchy's purges, and this is a debt that has never been forgotten. As we Haunters look back on our history, we realize that we escaped from the events of A.D. 1598 relatively unscathed. Certainly the Breaking affected us, but many Haunters believe being exiled from Stygia allowed us to become unfettered from the political intrigues that was diverting us from our true pursuit: the destruction of the Shroud.

The Hunters

Very few events have impacted the Guilds as a whole, save for momentous occasions such as the Covenant with Wylding, the Conclave and the Breaking. However, our efforts were completely undermined by a half-millennium of witchcraft scares, and as such, we were little more than a hazy construct in the mind of mortals. Despite the fact that we were a part of the Compact of the Guilds, our standing within it was always dubious due to mistrust, or because all our efforts involved a rather blatant disregard for the *Dictum Mortuum*. To make matters worse, our activities began to attract the attention of ghost-hunters like the *Dannati* of the Benandanti. As soon as the witch-hunters came calling, the other Guilds distanced themselves from us because we made "dangerous allies." The potential threat from some ragtag mortals was all the excuse they needed to throw us to the wolves.

One of the prime examples of this was the case known as the Drummer of Tedworth. In 1662, a traveling performer – still living, mind you – named William Drury was arrested for forgery in the English town of Tedworth, and his drum was confiscated. Upon his release, he began "haunting" the residence of John Mompesson, the presiding judge at his trial, by making loud noises and generally being antisocial. This activity gained Drury some notoriety, and attracted the attention of a Circle of Haunters who approved of his actions. The Circle devoted its efforts to "assisting" him by doing the things he could not: tossing furniture around, upending bedclothes and chamber pot, etc. Drury panicked and fled when he realized that he was no longer responsible for the events taking place around him, and the Mompessons destroyed his drum, believing it to be the source of their problems. The destruction of the drum merely made it into a relic for the haunters, and aggravated the situation. For a while, all was well.

Unfortunately, the events in Tedworth attracted the attention of Chaplain Joseph Glanville, a witchcraft investigator. Unlike others of his ilk, however, Joseph was intelligent, not given to hysteria, patient in his observations and a member of the *Dannati*. During the course of his investigation, he quietly and methodically eliminated the offending Haunters. This became the first of many incidents that has set us and the *Dannati* at war across the Shroud.

Golden Age

Without a doubt, the 19th century was our heyday. The paranoia of the witch-hunts (and the fear of all things occult) finally died down, and our exploits were ours (not the Devil's) once again. The British Empire choked in the grip of Victorianism, and our existence brought about the religious movement known as spiritualism. Penny novels and Christmas tales recounted our brand of terror, and finally, the Society for Psychical Research in Britain (and its American counterpart) emerged to study our kind. It appeared as though our efforts to change the perceptions of the Quick had finally succeeded.

The Victorian era was also a time of charlatans and fakes who purported the ability to speak with spirits, and profited nicely from this "ability." Many Haunters looked upon these deceivers as "cushions." We haunted and manifested around them frequently, or amplified their pitiful effects to enhance their claims. This may have seemed odd, considering we normally liked having the credit of paranormal activities attributed to us. The issue here, however, was not credit, but safety. The *Dannati* had acquired a frightening proficiency at hunting down and destroying incautious or ostentatious Haunters. Admittedly, Pandemonium is one of the most flamboyant of the Arcanoi, but we suspect that someone led the hunters to us (the Proctors, most likely, though we have yet been able to prove such a connection). We therefore used skinbag tricksters and fakes as dupes. We found mediums and sensitives, helped them authenticate their claims by providing industrial-strength light and magic, and then left the moment someone appeared to challenge our dupes' "powers." *Dannati* posing as "investigators of the supernatural" and "psychic detectives" thus uncovered countless frauds, but nary a single Haunter. Mediums were debunked as fakes and charlatans, and the *Dannati* lost our scent.

Unfortunately, this tactic proved to be a shortsighted mistake with long-reaching consequences. As a result of our little deception, people decided to treat all supernatural events as trickery of some sort. We learned this, to our sorrow, at the Hydesville haunting of 1848 and its attendant "rapping ghosts."

I can assure you, by the way, that the adjective is not used in the context of modern music. The phenomenon known as rapping is defined as when hovering spirits supposedly communicate by making rapping sounds. While the Hydesville haunting was not the first time that this form of dialogue was used (the so-called "Bell Witch incident" also involved communication through knocking), it garnered unprecedented exposure when Maggie and Kat Fox exhibited the ability to communicate with the ghosts. Of course, we heard about the supposed supernatural activities taking place at the Fox home, and in turn, began enhancing the "haunting" of the sisters with Wylding. Only when the Fox siblings became public celebrities did we withdraw our presence. The girls' notoriety was sure to draw the attention of the *Dannati*.

The events of Hydesville were later declared to be a hoax (surprise, surprise) perpetrated by the Fox sisters, originally intended to scare their mother, and then as a money-making scheme under the direction of their older sister, Leah. Despite this, the Fox sisters' reputed ability to communicate with spirits became the catalyst for the movement called spiritualism, a quasi-religious belief in the spirit world and ghosts.

Spiritualism unlocked all sorts of doors for wraiths in general, but for us (and those ridiculous Proctors) in particular. Humans were out-and-out inviting us into some

of the best parlors and company of the day, granting us amazing opportunities. (Of course, the flip side was that we ended up patronizing Masquers extensively as a result. After all, it wouldn't do for us to materialize underdressed now, would it?)

It became fashionable for mortals to believe in ghosts, have séances, and so on. Leading artists, socialites and even occasional political figures gave the movement further credence, which drove the Hierarchy batty. And despite those staid bastards' best attempts to shut the whole thing down, study of the "other world" enjoyed something like true legitimacy among the living. It was a golden time, and it produced some wonderful talents and stories. Some of the mediums of that time are even studied today, by whatever would-be "spirit guides" that are still running around out there. From the 1850s right up through the 1930s, it was a remarkable time to be dead. Things were going our way at last. The Shroud was weakening; the Quick had enlisted in the fight to bring it down, and then?

Phooey.

Have you ever been to a party where the food was wonderful, the conversation was enthralling, and everyone was having a ball, up until the point when some jerk crashes the gate and pisses in the punchbowl? That was how spiritualism ended – skinbag stupidity and greed ruined a wonderful party. Whether it was the bored housewives and gigolos claiming that the "spirits" were telling them to get drunk and sleep around, frauds who bilked grieving families for everything they had, or hunters like the *Dannati* driving us away from our best mortal allies, the damned skinbags ruined it for everyone. They ruined it for themselves, for the aliens, and most of all, for us. Bastards.

Spiritualism mostly wound down in the 1930s, but it is still practiced in churches throughout the United States and South America to this day. It is in these places of congregation that the Shroud is often at its lowest, and where many of our fold have a great deal of fun pretending to be dear departed Auntie Ethel or Uncle Murray.

Today, we have become nothing more than a product of other people's perceptions. As the Quick become more sophisticated, our hauntings have become more visceral and brutal. We have lost that fine touch, and the disaster at Amityville is a prime example of that lack of subtlety. While our influence over the Long Island home is generally regarded as a hoax, the similarities between our arts and the occurrences within its walls are too many for any informed observer to discount. The techniques practiced within that innocent-looking home were far too brutal for the tastes of many Haunters, however, save perhaps the Bedlameers or Mandelbrots. However, the question is academic, as the true identity of whatever wraith or wraiths were responsible for this incident is unknown. The house is barred to us, and so is the resolution of the mystery.

The fault, of course, lies at the feet of the *Dannati*. No sooner had the Amityville story premiered on a New York television program than the Benandanti stormed the place and destroyed the Circle that made Amityville (the town, not the house) their Haunt. We have not been able to get close to the legendary house since; even venturing inside the city's limits is dangerous now. The *Dannati* keep it under careful surveillance, and many Haunters, desperate to get inside in order to learn the truth, have been cut down with fennel swords or worse.

The absence of solid fact, however, doesn't discourage the rumor mill from churning. If one believes all that one hears, one knows that black light can be seen in the

Shadowlands cast from the sinister house's dark windows, and that hideous shapes creep across the well-trimmed lawns at night. Rumors persist that the occupying *Dannati* have fallen prey to a hive of Spectres who have claimed Amityville as their home, and that even now a Nihil yawns beneath the house.

It's all pure speculation, of course – but we of all people know that every ghost story has some truth at its heart.

Final Words

These aforementioned events are tiny morsels compared to grand smorgasbord of all of the hauntings that we have successfully completed. Borley Rectory and the Tower of London were our Mecca's, but these places have lost much of their power over the mundanes. Humanity is becoming less imaginative and thus less fearful. It takes bio-engineered plagues and cybernetic horrors to frighten the living, these days; they've made their world such a hell that they're inured to blood and mist. So as we approach the millennium, and the Shroud continues to grow in strength, we find ourselves forced to rely on more brutal and direct methods to haunt the living effectively. In some way the Mandelbrots have it right: "Pain is an excellent reminder."