



Revised Guildbook:
SYMPHONISTS

A Free Gaming Resource
for Wraith: The Oblivion and

The Wraith Project

To Nannerl

I hope you are well, my dear sister. When you receive this letter, my dear sister, my opera will be being performed that same evening. Think of me, my dear sister, and do your best to imagine, my dear sister, that you are watching and hearing it too, my dear sister. Admittedly that is difficult, as it is already eleven o'clock; what's more, I believe beyond any doubt that during the day it is brighter than at Easter. My dear sister, tomorrow we dine at Herr von Mayer's, and why is this, do you think? Guess! Because he has invited us. Tomorrow's rehearsal is at the theater, but the impresario, Signor Castiglioni, has urged me not to say anything about it, because otherwise everybody will come rushing along, and we don't want that. So, my child, I beg you not to tell anyone anything about it. Otherwise too many people would come rushing along. That reminds me, do you know what happened here today? I'll tell you. We left Count Firmian's to go home and when we reached our street, we opened the front door and what do you suppose happened then? We went in. Goodbye, my little lung. I embrace you, my liver, and remain, my stomach, ever your unworthy brother

Wolfgang

Please, my dear sister, something is biting me - please scratch me.

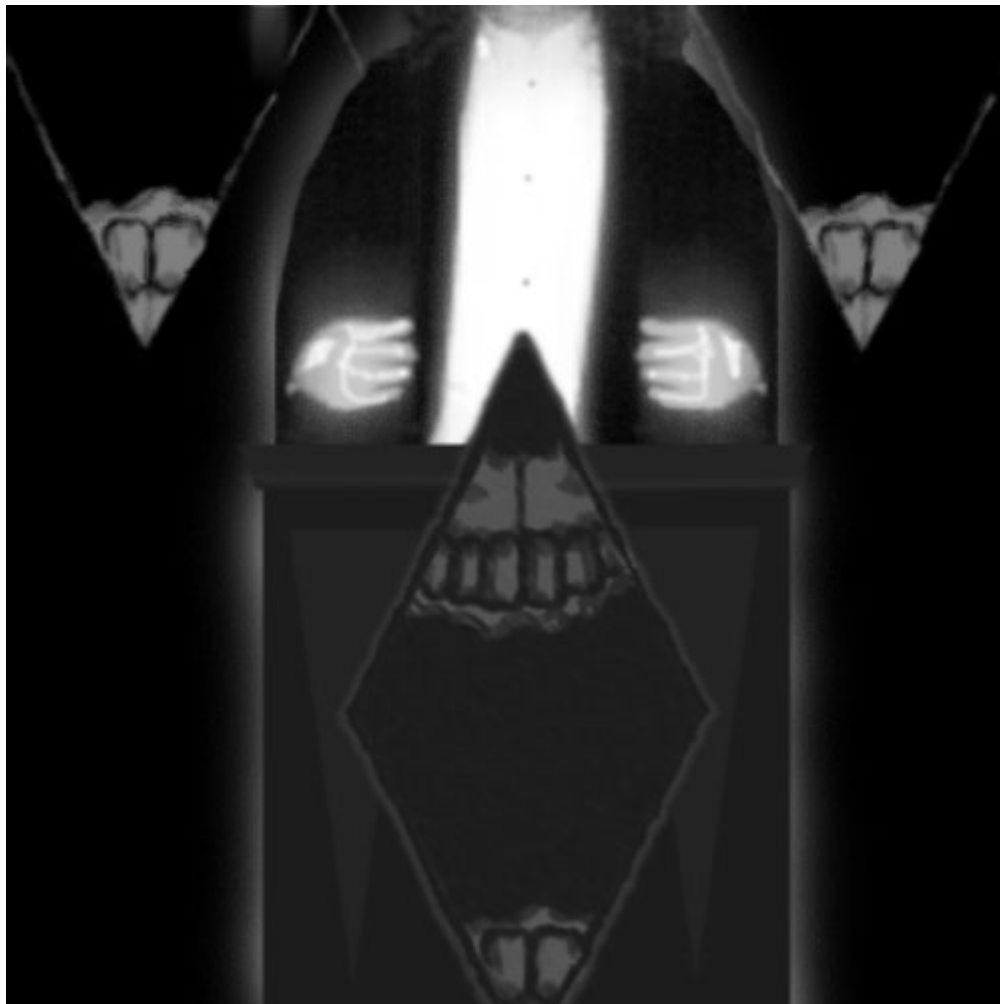
Milan, 18 December, 1772

Credits

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*Dedicated to the Memory of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Whose Final Requiem Was the Inspiration for this Work*

1756-1791

Prologue: A Gathering of Souls, Part I

It is October, 1999.

There is a great deal of activity this morning, despite the silence of the monastery. Those who travel here on tours, armed with cameras to capture the subject of their curiosity, amble about the ossuary, in solemn awe of its macabre craftsmanship. They bow their heads every so often, humbled by it, or perhaps revolted. The monastery is a train wreck; they cannot look too long, lest they forget to be respectful. Mostly, they are thankful that the spirits of those who contributed to this masterpiece are not angry with them for violating their sanctity. It is a church, after all.

On the other side of the Shroud, forty thousand voices sing a darkened song. The shadow version of this place is lit with moliated torches, set in places where the walls have no bones. The chant is Gregorian in style: quiet, yet looming. The skulls have only begun to sing recently, and it is believed by the monastery's Gaunts that this chant is an omen of things to come, and a beacon to those who will be a part of it.

The three Gaunts have been here a long time, and have seen everything from Stygia's rise to its fall. They have only survived the storm because this place is far too strong a haunt for any Maelstrom to crumble it. Forty thousand souls have been through here. It is one of the strongest haunts in the world. The Gaunts, however, have become so weak that they are mere whispers of the wraiths they once were, and are barely visible to each other anymore. They barely move around, and can only speak to one another telepathically.

They hear the chanting of the bones, and have come to rely on them for prophecy. The last three Maelstroms were predicted through the bones, as was the fall of the Chanteurs, which has been the subject of many meetings here over the last six years.

The Gaunts wander throughout the halls and amidst the bones, talking to each other without eye contact, or any corporeal interaction at all. They are of no guild, nor faction. They have no names, and are of no obvious consequence to anyone. The reason we visit them now is to understand the role they have chosen, and what they have conspired to do.

Logos begins the mental dialogue: "It is what must be done. There is no alternative."

It is Pathos who responds first: "Yes, a song. Yes. That would be nice."

"For the sake of all of them, the one must be silenced. It is the only reasonable solution, though I am sure Ethos will debate that point."

Logos raises a curmudgeon's eyebrow, in subtle expectation. Ethos says nothing; it is instead Pathos who debates, his barely perceptible voice wavering. "We did our duty nearly three centuries ago, when we found Miklos. It was to be done then, and it is he who failed. Not we."

"Miklos failed because he did not understand the responsibility that comes with the gift," replies Logos: "He did not realize his own potential, and he passed his own hubris down to those he taught. He could not have done the task we set for him, because he was young and impetuous."

"Yes. Young and beautiful, with a chorus of angels in his heart. He was truly chosen, and it is too bad that he has fallen," Pathos opines.

Ethos has listened enough: "Miklos was a fool and a traitor. He was greedy, lecherous and arrogant, even in life. We should have let the Void take him, but we were not in the wrong. Miklos was. He was not a leader, he was an upstart *Enfant* who happened to know how to use a piano from the age of five. That does not a Guildmaster make."

"No need for anger," pipes Pathos: "We are allies here, we three. Yes. So what shall we sing? A lullaby? Would that please the Master? I believe it would, yes. Too much tragedy now."

"The plan is flawless," Logos replies. "It is only its execution which was flawed the first time. The song must be changed, I concur, but we must not make the same mistake as before."

"We won't. This time we will not choose a leader before we choose the guild. We will make them understand the cause, as we have done with most of the others. Have we not done well with the Artificers? The Masquers? True, they have their dark agendas now, but their drive is still intact, just as it is with us three."

"Yes. Much Passion is here. It is in the bones of this church, and they sing of it now. A beautiful siren's song, yes. Do you hear? They are coming even as we wander this church," Pathos chimes: "and there are hundreds of them."

Author's Note

Popular opinion among those who have inspired **The Wraith Project** is that after the 6th Great Maelstrom, the power of rule was taken up by the once-banned Guilds, who have come together as a group to reshape the government of the Underworld.

However, the sad truth of the matter is that some Guilds were unable to reassert themselves as an organized faction, and died out. The Chanteurs' Guild, as cherished or mocked as they may have been in the past, was one of those. Due to creative differences, they disbanded, and are no longer an active participant in ghostly affairs.

Unfortunately for us Storytellers, it's not as simple as all that, because Wraith doesn't work the same way as the other books in the World of Darkness series. In most cases, when a faction of society leaves, their unique powers disappear.

For example, if the whole clan of vampires known as the Kiasyd were to descend to the underground, the Discipline of *Mytherceria* would vanish with them, for the most part. This does not hold true for wraithly society, because (much like **Mage: the Ascension**) each Arcanos can manifest in a wraith spontaneously, before any socio-political preferences are chosen. The Arcanos exists whether or not there is a Guild to preside over it, and yet at the same time there must be a Guild to manage the Arcanos, because it isn't just a superpower; it's a source of profit.

If one Guild is unable to use its Arcanos to generate enough revenue (whether in Pathos or Oboli form) for the guild to stay afloat, then another organization has to step up to the plate and present a better business plan, so to speak.

The Symphonists' Guild is an attempt to revitalize the necessity of *Keening* to the Underworld, in as unique and logical way as can be presented.

Now then...

FIRST MOVEMENT: SYMPHONY

Let's not speak of the Chanteurs, for the very thought of them brings my Shadow closer to me. Let us speak of the new and the now, and later we will speak of our history, and inbetween (the second movement, no?) we will briefly talk of the Chanteurs, but not kindly, I assure you.

I have chosen this place, up in my balcony, where we can talk quietly. We don't want to disturb everyone's enjoyment of the show, because it would be more than an insult to my people; it would be akin to what the Usurers call a "Declaration of Bankruptcy."

I will begin by showing you the various parts of the orchestra down there in the pit, which serves as the metaphor of our inner circles. Someday you may choose to be one of those talented men and women, providing the music by which we work, or you may choose to be one of the performers on the stage. Either way, you are part of the grand production, simply by virtue of your presence in it.

The Grand Design

Our overall goal is straightforward enough: we wish to inspire and maintain as many Necropoli as we can, so that nothing need fall helplessly into the Void that we so desperately need. Rather than wandering as soloists from city to city and inspiring a roomful of wraiths, we set down roots in one city, branch out into other areas, and share works. It allows us the power to affect entire Necropoli at once, and establish a mood in the city, rather than in a single gathering place.

You see, all around us people are destitute. Entire cities (and indeed Stygia itself) are falling into the Labyrinth, and there is nothing that one voice can do to stop it. Three hundred voices, on the other hand, can move a mountain. That is our goal. To push the storm away from the homes of our citizens, and keep things as stable, enjoyable and comfortable as possible. There are far more important things in the world than the war against Oblivion things like Passion and Emotion. And those things can be found right here,

where we isolate them, distill them, and focus them into everyday people.

In terms of factionalization within our numbers, the Guild itself is divided into two components: the Pit, which you may think of as our research, development, management and marketing team, and the Stage, which consists of our performers — what you might call our 'field agents'.

The Pit

The Pit is made up of four sections, each of which fulfills an instrumental role in the workings of our guild. It is vital that they be in perfect synchronization with one another, and it is equally important that they know how essential they are to the rest. Unless each section is doing its utmost to support and assist the others, the music sounds at best incomplete, and at worst horribly out of practice. Just as the players in the pit are aware of this, so are the sections of our guild, though each has its own individual function in the Shadowlands.

The core function of the Pit as a whole is to ensure that the Shadowlands is kept relatively safe. Its concern lies mainly with the Tempest and Labyrinth, ensuring that the forces therein don't encroach too harshly on the places where wraiths (especially new ones who cannot readily defend themselves) reside and conduct personal business. For the most part, you will not recognize members of the symphony, for they are not much for exhibitionism. Their job is to work behind the scenes to ensure that the music is always playing, and that relations with the other groups are maintained peacefully.

Percussion

This section sets the tempo of the city, and maintains our Guild's economic relationship with other groups. We need to establish the overall tone of a city before we can determine how its moods should best

be manipulated, and the Percussion section does this by handling our status as a source of revenue. In terms of our productions, the Percussion section manages the kinds of shows we put on, and arranges our schedules accordingly. Timing is of great importance to them, as is promptness, synchronicity, and pacing.

Brass

The Brass section is our advertising group and talent coordinator. They make sure that everyone knows the kinds of productions we do, and are very careful to be honest and forthright about what a wraith is getting himself into by going to one of our productions. It is also the responsibility of the Brass section to seek new talent, in whatever form it takes.

Dancers, acrobats, illusionists, trapeze artists and any other kind of performance is noted in their records, and whenever it seems as though a wraith is frustrated because his current group affiliations don't allow him the creative freedom he desires, it is the Brass section who swoops in to recruit the fledgling. He is taken to one of our private schools, where his talents are nurtured, honed and disciplined. By the time he graduates (usually 88 days), he is ready for shipment to whatever city needs his skills most.

Wind

The Woodwinds are the teachers and mentors of our Guild. It is their responsibility to ensure that everyone's singing voice is at perfect pitch, and that all of their talents are facilitated and nurtured correctly. It isn't enough that a student learn what to do, it is equally (and in most cases more) important for her to understand the reason she has been chosen to do it.

While a person may find it a relief from the boring monotony of the Underworld to sing or dance, it is a question of where her true Passion lies, and which of her qualities are best passed on to the observer. If her talent is nothing more than a hobby for her, then using her higher Passions as a medium for artistic or musical training is always an option.

Strings

Like the Percussion section, Strings is concerned with maintaining a relationship with other groups, but rather than the financial aspects of things, the Strings section's primary focus is politics. While the Stage half of our guild are by far more interactive,

Strings looks after the Guild's public face, making sure that there is no scandal or misrepresentation as common 'Chanteurs'. They want the Shadowlands to know that they are a force to be adopted and utilized, rather than tossed aside.

The Stage

It is not our intention to be a stuffy curmudgeon of a guild, like the Usurers, nor do we want to be portrayed as a band of ragtag misfits that have no organization. While in spirit and in action we prefer to think of ourselves as a unified and single Guild, most of the people who see us outside the auditorium tend to think of us as two entirely different entities. The Pit is definitely the more practical and stodgier of the two, but they tend to see the more active Stage members as something rather like college students on vacation. We don't mind this one bit, because it serves a number of our purposes to have them be stereotyped this way.

Firstly, though we older and more experienced artists are cultured and aware of the power of music, a lot of what we do is not "fun." We don't pursue our goals with reckless abandon, and it is a great hypocrisy that we push the Stage to do exactly that. We enjoy what we do, and are passionate about it, but the Stage has a common characteristic that we don't: they enjoy just about everything. If we expect them to put most of their time, effort and energy into the performance, then we must allow them the opportunity to unwind, refresh their energy, and continue to exist in relative happiness. Usually, this includes other people, because performers are alluring and attractive, which leads to an interesting side effect: contagion.

Moods are transferred like wildfire throughout a Necropolis when we turn the performers loose. There are galas, parties, exhibitions, parades, even dance competitions. When the people who perform for us enjoy their work, they are going to transfer that enthusiasm with other people. It is a very beneficial inevitability.

The Stage is not divided into sub-groups, mainly because it's members don't care for doing such things. However, they do tend to divide into what are called "cliques," based on musical interest, and pursue those forms of music among the living for inspirational purposes (oddly, though, they tend to restrict all of their groups to eight members; if one is lost, another will soon be accepted in his place, almost by coincidence).

A great deal of enthusiasm has been exhibited for the Skinlands' recent "electronica" uprising, and is part of what the youths call a "digital revolution". As yet, their attempts to duplicate this musical style have met with failure, for mostly technical reasons.

The major problem we face with the Stage performers is the same flaw that was suffered by the Chanteurs: they are reluctant to embrace the classical training we offer them, and they work on solo projects that begin as hobbies, but later distract them from their actual work. Sadly, it is a disadvantage that we have had to work with, if we want to use their youth and vitality to our benefit. Many of them cannot see the forest for the trees, but such is the way of young dreaming souls.

For the most part, we use the Chanteurs' dissipation as an example of the road they come dangerously close to walking, and so the ideological "generation gap" is bridged, but there are a few younger wraiths who have left us, only to reapply for membership when they realize that the Underworld has little use for a lone minstrel, except perhaps as food for the spectres.

The Show

Every show we perform is a delicately woven masterpiece. Whether the tale of an overconfident free spirit who flies too close to the sun, or the tragic story of a lone man in a reedboat destined to be eaten by a beast of the sea, every production is a journey into emotional heights that have never been experienced before. The shows we put on are so grand in scale and so vast in scope that we only need do one show to enlighten an entire city's population. Before I get into the details of a given production and the sheer magnitude of diversity and effort that go into it, I should note as an aside that there are two uses for this kind of thing.

The first (and most obvious) is to help a Necropolis survive, by strengthening its power against the Maelstrom. Charge an entire population with Hope, Joy, Conviction, Zeal, and whatever else we might be planning, and a brace of Nephwracks doesn't stand a chance. We get along very well with everyone in town because of that, regardless of which factions might be in charge.

The second thing we accomplish with our shows, which many of our fellow guilds have mixed emotions about, is weaken the Fog, and increase the size of

the Shadowlands. Whenever we launch a production, it has an effect on the Skinlands that can either strengthen or weaken their spirit. If the former, then the Shroud thickens, the Fog becomes more potent, and the size of the Shadowlands stays locked. If the latter, then the opposite effect occurs; disbelief wavers, the Fog lifts a little, and the area of the city that houses the Necropolis widens. Depending on the situation in a given area, either of these results can be beneficial.

The Franchise

One of the major selling points of our Guild, one which makes us accepted in almost every city, is that virtually anyone can share in the profit. Smaller versions of our productions can be marketed as regular shows, owned by whomever has a big enough haunt to accommodate them.

The result is a franchise; an agreement between ourselves and an independent investor which allows him access to our scripts, methods and talent (as well as a number of territorial exclusivities), in exchange for a ten percent tithe of Pathos, and the assurance that all resources will remain undisclosed to the general public; all scripts and programs are the creative property of the Guild, and cannot be altered or sold. We also monitor how often these shows are played, to ensure that there is no risk of oversaturation. Too much of a good thing can be dangerous, especially when it comes to Pathos.

The first thing that a franchisee needs to do is contract himself to the guild, and allow us to view his chosen location. Once we have approved it for business, he is responsible for making sure that the structure, appearance and maintenance of the building is kept up to our standard (and to this effect we have monthly inspections of the premises). Then, he is given an itinerary of the various shows we produce, and a schedule of release, which he must adhere to.

He is then able to hire his own cast and crew, either from independent sources or ourselves. We are usually slightly more expensive, but the quality of our workers and talent is such that it's usually worth paying more. Whatever profit he earns from a show is his, minus a ten percent tithe to a guild (payable to the monthly inspector), but he is also responsible for paying his employees, purchasing new equipment, and financing any repairs or additions that are made to the building.

Cast and Crew

Every member of our guild has to be able to use Keening. It is standard, non-negotiable, and the more of it a wraith learns, the higher his status within the Guild, and the better parts he plays. Favoritism is a good thing when one is attempting to impress people, and so we insist that at least half of your training is spent learning the Arcanos.

However, this is not to say that we do not use the other Arcanoi in equal (or in some cases greater) measure. Every one of the Arcanoi is utilized in some way to create the grand production, and so the more Arcanoi a wraith learns, the more versatile and adaptable he is, and the better his chances are for getting to work on more shows. Every Symphonist wants to be seen and heard; it comes with Keening. Everyone wants to be the star of the show, so the closer one can get to center stage, the better he becomes at whatever he loves to do.

As such, we have a more diverse collection of wraiths in our Guild than any other group or faction, because every Arcanoi is useful. With Inhabit, Flux, Moliate and Phantasm, we can build the most elaborate sets and interactive environments, most of which is temporary. We can use Mnemosynis to store the details of a production or to add historical flavor, and duplicate it perfectly when we find methods that work well. Using Intimation, we get a sense of what people in a given Necropolis want to see before we get to work on scripting, and with Outrage, Pandemonium, Argos and Phantasm, we can create special effects that can dazzle even the most weary eyes. Usury allows us to keep our records straight, Castigate ensures that we will not lose composure during the show, and with Fatalism and Lifeweb, we can determine what connects the audience to our efforts, and what will best earn their admiration.

Perhaps the only two Arcanoi that we have found little use for are Puppetry and Embody, though we have employed them on occasion to stage puppet shows and documentaries in the past.

There are singers, dancers, actors, acrobats, jugglers, telekinetics, magicians, and almost any other type of performer one can think of, and we never refuse to allow someone the chance to audition, but they must be at least reasonably skilled in Keening, because everything we do, every show we put on stage is a musical one, and everyone is expected to sing during some point in the last act. There is always a mel-

ody and rhythm to our work, and unless the individual can do this, he cannot go on. That is the one thing we will not argue about or make exceptions for.

Outside Relations

We have worked hard at it, and have managed to retain many of the alliances we had before. However, since the tone and mood of the Underworld has changed with the geography, some of the guilds and factions who have redefined themselves as well have caught our eye, and so it should be noted which organizations we work well with, and which we don't.

The Quick

Inspiring mortals to create works of art has always been a favored career among our kind, and we continue to do it now. Given that we al but slept through the Victorian period, history has proven to us that mankind is perfectly able to create beautiful things on its own, but in the modern day, it would seem that their muses are coming to them less and less frequently, and so we must work even harder to assist them. Besides, helping them to fulfill their artistic goals means that they are less likely to become wraiths upon death, and so we are in this way helping our own people to control the overpopulation problem as well.

Vampires

We have always been fascinated with these immortals, particularly those who refer to themselves as Toreador. The artistic works that some of them can create on a whim, as well as their love of pretense and social etiquette, makes them interesting subjects for observation and artistic influence. Aside from that we find little use for vampires in general, though I have seen the occasional creature who may be a reflection of Miklos' ideal; twisted, misshapen and without a shred of humanity left.

Werewolves

The shapeshifters are not part of our jurisdiction. We don't cross paths with them very often (if at all), and when we do come across a pack of them, we tend not to get in the way. They seem to be more than busy with some kind of constant conflict, so we steer clear, and they tend not to bother us very much at all. Still,

watching them fight is rather like observing some kind of savage ballet, and we have often used such things for ideas on how to properly synchronize battle scenes.

Mages

The sorcerers are the very extreme of what we all strive to become. We find them to be incredibly profound in some of their ideas, but all-too-often they go too far, and the result is a reality we can no longer recognize. The key piece of advice when dealing with mages is to observe them for the first few minutes, and when the illusions begin to get confusing, cut your losses and move on.

Changelings

The fair folk are a subject of discussion better suited to the Sandmen, who are more than happy to tell you of their adventures with them in the land of dreams. Dealing with them directly, which we have done in the past, can be mutually fulfilling, and the inspirations that the two (and sometimes three, if the Sandmen are involved) groups can collaborate on are truly amazing. It's a pity that we rarely remember everything later on.

Hierarchs

We have always had a decent rapport with the Legions, mainly because every war party needs the occasional source of entertainment, and none of what we do is technically a violation of the Dictum that they are so dedicated to enforcing. They welcome us into their cities, and usually look the other way whenever there is a major indiscretion; something we are always thankful for. We seem to get along better as of late, since there is no constant demand for production. They don't even mind paying the admission fee most of the time.

Heretics

We are not a Heretic cult. I cannot stress this enough. We never have been, and there is no such thing as the cult of Miklos. We shy away from Heretics whenever we can, because no matter what kind of cult we are dealing with, eventually it boils down to one thing: worship. We don't worship anything or anyone. Miklos did, and I think it is fairly clear what happened to him.

Renegades

Renegade Necropoli can be rough, and place more of a demand on us to produce the kinds of shows they'd like to see. It is never a good thing to have angry, drunken mobs throwing garbage at us for not entertaining them right, and if we do venture into such a city, we don't end up staying very long if we're not in the mood to get seedy and vulgar with our show. However, when we are in such a state of mind, they welcome us with open arms, and we never have to pay for anything. Odd, that.

The Guilds

As one of the working-class guilds, we cultivated good relations with most of the others so that we would always have potential employers. Now the obolus has flipped, and we find ourselves in a position where we have the same attitude toward our fellow Guilds, but the motives have changed a little. We now keep friendly contact with as many other Guilds as we can, in the hope of trading our employees with theirs, or sub-contracting them to help with a franchisee's production. We can always take advantage of other Arcanoi, and will always help one of our own find work elsewhere if his skills are not currently needed.



SECOND MOVEMENT: HISTORY

Very well. It has come time to discuss that which darkens the spirit in all of us, and fills us with a profound sense of dread: the Chanteurs. I will speak of this Guild only because it (and its loathed founder) are a part of our history, which cannot be undone, and were it not for the mistakes and blasphemies on Miklos' part, we would not be here in the form you will come to know.

The Origin of Keening

It is a romanticized tale told by Glee-addled bards, but it is said that since the fabled Lady of Fate had marked Charon as the first significant wraithly presence in the Underworld, his every action caused ripples throughout the fabric of after-space. Simply put, by doing a thing, he created a facet of restless death.

For example, it is theorized that by getting into a reedboat and sailing the Sea, he created Argos. Further, by keeping steady in his tasks and not bending to any dark desires that anyone is aware of, he created Castigate. In this vein, it is popular among the Romanicists that while Charon rode the waves of the Sunless Sea, he hummed a tune to center his thoughts and keep himself entertained on what could have been a very long and mostly tedious journey.

Whatever the case, Keening was originally used as a means of bringing small bits of relief from the gloom, though it was not exclusive to any one group at the time. Everyone had a little of it, and it wasn't even an Arcanos until much later. People took for granted that a lively tune could boost the spirits of their fellows, and it was not noted to have any supernatural quality until the Dark Ages, when such things were being more rigorously explored.

The Dark Ages

After the fall of Rome in the Skinlands, much was done to aid the Quick in revitalizing themselves. People were losing faith, and needed some kind of inspirational kick to be reminded that their God was still watching over them. We helped as only we could, bestowing Faith on any Quick who remained open enough to superstition, but it was not until the efforts of Pope Gregory I that we realized the potential of mass inspiration and sermon, in the form of what would then be called Gregorian Chant. The profundity of this music and the Pope's efforts to spread it throughout the Western church made it relatively easy for us to do our work, as the chants became the common language between Man and God.

Had we not had this medium as a tool, we would have fallen prey to far more exorcisms and banishments. Following that, secular forms of music originated in France, by individuals calling themselves *trouvères* and *troubadours*, and the liveliness and emotionally charged melodies gave our work more versatility. We no longer needed to rely on churches that we may not necessarily agree with, and put ourselves at risk of judgment by mortal inquisitors.

At that time, Keening began to develop recognition as more than a talent. Most of the people who used it, though they were arrogant and sanctimonious, agreed that they were at their best when working in octets (small groups of eight wraiths designated to a specific area), and in their collaborations noticed patterns in the Arcanos' development. It was not long after that the Underworld (led by the recently rebuilt empire of Stygia) recognized the Troubadours' Guild (which would later become the Chanteurs).

Charon's *Dictum Mortuum* did little to hinder us, because nothing we did was harmful to or even detectable by the Quick most of the time. The Crusades among their churches proved only that our services were no longer required, and since we had already adopted a more secular approach to our work, we

could still entertain the masses of Quick and Dead alike without a loss of revenue. Our music was paid for by Anacreons, and we were a favored form of entertainment for troops going off to war, or for anyone else who wanted to have musical accompaniment for a celebration or festival.

The Chanteurs became very popular in the Iron Kingdom in a very short amount of time, especially through the Second Great Maelstrom, where hordes of souls from all walks of life crossed the Shroud, desperately seeking relief and distraction from the boils and lesions the Black Death had loosed upon their bodies. As a reward for the joy and love we showed them, we were later given the Sedlec Monastery near Prague, to act as our fortress; it would serve as an excellent acoustic theatre, and would be fiercely guarded by the many scores of plague victims whose bones adorn the walls.

The Renaissance

Aside from the Sandmen (with whom we have always enjoyed a healthy friendship) and the occasional Masquer, we didn't associate exclusively with any of the other Guilds, so when war broke out among them, we were largely unaffected. Our independence and separation gave us the freedom to work for whomever we chose, and we watched in solemnity as the hubris of the Artificers exceeded even our own.

Once the dust had finally settled, we set to work trading inspiration with the Quick, who by then had begun to experience an artistic rebirth. Humanity was beginning to realize its role in the universe, and wanted to share with one another the freedom they had gained in this knowledge. Art of all kinds poured over Stygia, as did many new forms of instrumental expression. We grew yet more flexible in this period, furthering our musical expertise and learning new scientific principles regarding the nature of sound that would later develop into the founding principles of Keening itself. The Arcanos was not only growing in scope and popularity; it was beginning to codify.

Also, our relationship with the Masquers grew, with the development of Renaissance dance music. The balls and galas we threw outshone any in the Skinlands, and were truly a spectacle to behold. The Chanteurs became very valuable assets to anyone in power, as the more glamorous the celebration, the higher an Anacreon climbed the social ladder.

The Baroque Period

As the will of kings and courts dictated the flavor and style of music, it began to develop a monotony to the composers who created it. There were many artists, such as Bach, who had become enslaved by their employers to churn out constant pieces of music for impromptu occasions, and we fared no better with the Anacreons. It became a chore to do what we loved, and this boredom with our craft led to many of us becoming Renegades, and leaving the Hierarchy to pursue solo ventures.

It was during this time that we took a cue from the composers among the Quick and broke new musical ground, but while the living were occupied with their concertos, we had made more practical innovations in how Keening could become a weapon or tool, rather than simply a form of entertainment. Those of us who remained in Stygia adopted the operatic styles of Vivaldi and Handel, making them our own.

The Classical and Romantic Periods

With so much rebellion among our number, the remaining Chanteurs had to work even harder to keep up with the ravenous demands of the Anacreons. There were less of us, and though we were learning a great deal from the Quick in terms of how dynamic music can be, we lacked two major things that would hinder us without end.

The first was that there was little to no job security in being a Chanteur unless one could never cease to entertain. The moment an Anacreon was bored, the Chanteur was taken to the smelting yard in chains. Other groups were more attractive to would-be masters of the arts, because even if there was little to no room for creativity, there would always be the promise of regular income, security, and acceptance. We were under so much pressure to endlessly create masterpieces on demand that many of us could endure it no longer, and threw ourselves into the Void.

The second major problem we faced was physics. Most of the people who do not specialize in Keening are unaware of this major point, but there is no air in the Underworld, because wraiths don't need to breathe. Ergo, Keening has very little to do with sound at all. It is a projection of Pathos that creates a vibration in the Corpus which the mind interprets as an audible noise, but it is not. With that, the subtle reverberations and echo effects that many composers of the time used to

create their symphonies were lost on us. Had we been able to duplicate those effects precisely, we would have been able to innovate further and subsequently would have been revered for it but the Underworld's cosmology prevented the perfect echo or acoustic performance, because it is always moving; a phenomenon that only gets worse as time here passes.

The Prodigy

All right. It is time now to risk Catharsis, and speak of the true fall of the Guild; the coming of Miklos.

Everything you may have heard about him from others is a lie. A carefully crafted one, mind you, in that historical records will show the existence of Miklos prior to 1791, but the truth of it is that the Chanteurs never had a Guildmaster previous to this time. There was a mask, fashioned in the likeness of a leopard, which many past Chanteurs had worn in an effort to profess the idea that we had a Guildmaster, and all agreed that the name would remain the same no matter who wore it, but for all intents and purposes, Miklos was an unidentity. He existed solely on paper, and made brief appearances at meetings.

That is, until the prodigy came. Born in 1756, he had mastered the violin, the piano and the organ by age 6, and was composing sonatas by age 8. In his teens, he was a boorish and lecherous lad, vulgar to the kings and nobles for which he performed, and fond of the drink, though it never impeded his performance. The world acknowledged him as a genius, but loathed him in personality, as did we. He lacked the emotional maturity to truly understand what Keening was, but that knowledge would not come to us until much later, when it was too late to undo the damage he had done.

Upon his death in 1791, the composer was immediately taken into our fold, and it was soon discovered that his knowledge of Keening (though he did not understand it) surpassed our own. Whether because of some fated blessing or curse, he had come into the Shadowlands pre-armed with all of our tools, but without any sense of discipline or maturity.

He quickly rose in the ranks of our guild, and eventually claimed the title of Guildmaster, refusing to remove the mask (the mask of Miklos itself was never permanently worn by anyone; it was used as needed, to keep up appearances, but no one had attempted to fully adopt the identity until now). He called a meeting of the most popular composers among the Guild, and

declared that in addition to the pursuit of musical enlightenment, he was going to proceed with a plan, which all of us would be involved in, in one form or another.

The Plan

As a mortal, the composer spent the last moments of his life in a fever, suspecting everyone of trying to poison him. This sickness (and the insanity that it caused) led to the creation of the most beautiful and dark pieces of music ever to grace Creation, but it also meant that as Miklos, he suffered from even more severe delusions. He believed that he was chosen by God to combat Oblivion itself, and that his musical vision was the weapon. This doesn't seem very far-fetched when one considers some of the other crusades that have been launched by Heretics, but Miklos' hubris and derangement rivaled that of even some of the more zealous Haunters I have come across.

Miklos proposed that the existence of the Shadow was proof that the entirety of the Underworld was being poisoned. In addition, he said that the Malfeans, whose dread nightmares cause the toxicity of the after-life to increase, are nothing more than kings without entertainment, and if they were properly appeased, there would be no need for them to inflict wrath upon those they lord over. In essence, he convinced most of the Chanteurs that in order to stop the darkness from consuming everything, the right kind of song would need to be played; one which would require us to embrace the Shadow, and act in its best interests much of the time.

It was, of course, immediately backed by most of the younger members, but the elders knew an attempt to build a cult following when we saw one, and suspected that the new Miklos had become Shadow-eaten shortly after dying, though there was no way to prove it. Rather than attempt to refute what we knew was a ridiculous endeavor, we were content to wait until the cult was dragged to the forges, and sat this one out, as it were.

The Victorian Period and Beyond

Many of the Deathlords had fled to the Isle of Sorrows during this time, and it led to a rapid influx of Heretic activity in the Shadowlands. While the industrial era churned out progress among the Quick, it claimed lives in record numbers, and those individuals

became immediate ranks for the fractured Hierarchy. The Shroud was so thick during this period that the Romantic era skipped over us like a rock across a pond, and that suited Miklos just fine. He defied any art form that pandered to a flowery and light-hearted mood, and insisted that the focus of the Guild be diverted toward darker imagery, foreboding tragedy and the like.

His obsession with Angst and the Shadow led to a grotesque movement, which while often aesthetically appropriate to the environment wraiths occupy, was not appropriate for those whose interests lie in higher emotions and personal transcendence. Oblivion ate heartily at the expense of all of the factions, and the other Guilds came to hate us, calling us a death-cult and hurling Infernal accusations. We were reviled and shunned from the cities, our only safe haven being the monastery near Prague, where Miklos composed endlessly. He was determined to make Oblivion full, swearing that the better we fed it, the less it would eat.

Eventually, in the mid-twentieth century, Miklos' crusade ended. Shortly before the Great War, those souls who had sworn to protect our stronghold broke their arrangement with the Guild, and dragged Miklos' mask from his face.

What remained behind it shocked us all: a twisted visage of frustration and rage, its eyes gone from its skull, plasm hanging in tatters, muscle tissue smoking with a deep reddish glow. It would seem that his fever never ended, and without his authority to guide him any longer, the young prodigy we had both loved and hated threw himself into the Abyss, and was never seen again. The mask itself was placed on the wall for decades, until it was taken by myself, and later destroyed. The Miklos that everyone had come to loathe is no more, and never shall be again.

In the time between the fifth and sixth Maelstroms, the Chanteurs fractured, broke, and eventually ceased to be. To think of the plan that they attempted to carry out brings warmth and comfort to my Shadow, and so I will not speak of it any longer, lest I join the composer in his absence from the world.

The Post-Maelstrom Guild

By perpetuating the notion that "Chanteur" is a bad word, we have managed for the most part to rise above the sullied reputation we earned in the past. We are no longer seen by others as reckless vagrants, drifting from one 'gig' to the next, using Keening as a

sort of emotional narcotic. The days of self-gratification are largely over, although there are some throwbacks to that period; Abandonment cultists who follow the teachings of Miklos can still be found, and there are occasional attempts made to sabotage our productions in order to twist them into Requiems for Oblivion, but we are always on watch for these individuals.

Also, our younger members still enjoy delving into various styles of rebellious music, deriving pleasure from what they can find in the Skinlands, but they are hard workers, and deserve the occasional break from their training.

As far as what the future of our guild may hold, the Symphonists' franchise is always getting bigger. When the common man learns that he can make a decent afterlife for himself without having to pledge any eternal allegiance to us, he is more than happy to read all of the brochures and make the appropriate contributions.

Allowing others to gain from our work is the least we can do for the trouble that Miklos caused to the rest of the Shadowlands, and staging his 'mysterious' departure has given the rest of the Shadowlands all the proof it needs that the era of freelance art is over.



THIRD MOVEMENT: BEHIND THE SCENES

Since the Guild has been revised in its entirety, the Arcanos of *Keening* and its various uses and applications must be revised as well. In order to properly understand how we use *Keening*, we must examine it both in theory and in practice.

This is necessary for all members to know and understand, because it serves as the foundation of our work, and without knowing the proper way to wield it, one can easily fall prey to its dangers. For those of you who are not as wise as the rest, having only been dead a short time, I will allow one of my recent graduates to explain things in more modern context.

The Theory

If one were to stand still in the Shadowlands and listen carefully, one would be able to hear a very, very high-pitched hum, nearly imperceptible to the ear. Humans cannot hear it, nor can anything that is on the other side of the Shroud. If one were to take a step toward the Tempest, the hum would lower in pitch, though not nearly enough for the senses to detect it, and would get gradually lower as one went further toward the Void. In the heart of the Abyss is a sound so low that to hear it would rip the Corpus apart, which is what happens when things fall there.

The reason that human beings do not hear this noise (and the reason that we do) is because that sound isn't a sound at all. It is the pulse of life; the frequency of existence. A vibration that only we can feel, through the act of Keening. We call it the Hum, and once you have tapped into it, you will learn what it is to be a part of the universe's musical score, and to wield the power of conduction.

The first step to understanding the Hum is to realize that your senses died when you did. Don't try to listen with your ears, because they don't serve any functional purpose. The only reason that wraiths use their eyes and ears to see and hear is because they are more comfortable sensing their environment in this way. It has become familiar to them, and most see no

need to attempt to perceive the afterlife any other way. As a Symphonist, you must understand that there are no senses, no chemical reactions, no manipulation of light and shadow to create vision. There is only Corpus, its Pathos, and the Hum between them. Listen without your ears. See without your eyes. Close your eyes and cover your ears with your hands, if it helps.

Listen with your soul. In life, had you ever heard a song on the street or on the radio, and had to stop a moment, and let it captivate you? Has it ever entranced you so deeply that you closed your eyes, and were taken to some height of consciousness that you'd never experienced before? That had everything to do with music, but nothing at all to do with sound.

That is the Hum; the vibration of the universe itself, infinite and awesome, and only music can touch it. Only the pure emotional potential contained in a specific piece of music can achieve that sense of awe for a specific person.

With that, let's examine my Corpus a moment. You will note that it is etched with very fine parallel lines, with dots placed on the lines in a specific pattern. I won't remove my clothing, but I assure you that these markings cover the entirety of my Corpus, and are invisible to the naked eye at more than eight inches away.

That is the mark that *Keening* leaves on a Symphonist. infinitesimally small bars of music, which signify the fact that I have learned the theory of the Hum, and in doing so have begun to find my song. As I continue to help others find their songs, my own will continue to write itself throughout my Corpus, and eventually, when it is completed, my work will be done, and I will Transcend.

The Hum is perceptible to us because of Keening. Once you learn it, the Hum becomes a vibration that you may tap into to achieve a kind of resonance that many cultures have used to find their emotional center. The mind is emptied of all trivialities, and the personal reservoir of emotional energy can be focused

outward, to those you intend to affect. Used properly, it can move others to tears, laughter, sorrow or rage. Used incorrectly, it can destroy those emotions, rendering the Pathos nothing more than a common energy source.

Once you have found your center, you will begin to realize the truth: that all things, on both sides of the Shroud (and indeed the Shroud itself) only exist because they vibrate at a different frequency than everything else around them. The more emotionally significant a given thing, the higher its frequency of vibration, and so the farther it is from Oblivion. The more or less important something or someone gets, the more its frequency (or tune, as we older folk like to say) slows down or speeds up, until it eventually reaches a point where its tone either matches the Hum or opposes it, and it is absorbed by Transcendence or Oblivion, no longer existing as a separate thing. By tuning in to those frequencies of vibration, we gain the power to change them to match our own, and hence may manipulate the speed by which something ages, rots, or fades from emotional existence.

There are examples of this all around us. You hear someone whistling a tune, and it becomes stuck in your head. You are unable to shake it, no matter how hard you try to focus on other things. Only by concentrating on it and singing or whistling it aloud can it be expelled, and with it the emotion you associated with the song to give it relevance. The next person who hears it will do the same thing, and the transfer will continue ad infinitum, until the song is lost or forgotten.

In this way, Keening is a kind of drug. You will notice as you use it that it is fairly addictive, because it allows you to feel others' emotions in addition to your own, and the spotlight is a wonderful place for any entertainer to find himself. Be mindful of that, because when you are in the throes of an emotional transfer, it can get so intense that you can lose yourself in it, and crave that experience over and over again.

The Practice

And so we come to the part of the lesson that focuses on those skills you will actually use: the Arts of *Keening*. Be aware that within our guild is a gap in paradigm, so the Arcanos' arts have different names, depending on which person is using them. The effects are always the same; the name differences are only meant to indicate a difference in application. The an-

cientists use the arts exclusively on mortals, while the more modern members use the arts on wraiths in particular.

Author's Note: As with every other Guildbook I have written, the arts and other system rules listed here are for use with the **Mind's Eye Theatre** game. If you require conversions to the tabletop system, feel free to modify them as needed. Also, be aware that the Arts of *Keening* that appear in **Wraith: the Oblivion** are still used by many independent wraiths, as well as some active members of the Guild.

Basic Ability: Seek the Faith/Where's the Party?

By engaging in a Simple test, the user of this subtle art may determine the nearest or largest source of a given type of charged Pathos. He may not determine its quantity, but only its direction and distance.

0 Adagio/Chill Out

With a social challenge, a wraith may dampen whatever emotional state a target is currently in. This turns hatred into anger, love into friendship, or despair into boredom, but the target's current emotional state must be apparent. Each grade is one minute's duration, or one target.

00 Allegro/Groove Thang

A wraith with this art may perform a social challenge to flood a target with whatever emotional state she chooses, for ten minutes. Each grade turns one of the target's Pathos into a given type, or extends the duration by ten minutes. If the emotion is negative, the user gains one Angst.

000 Rhapsody/In the Zone

This art allows a wraith to inspire a target with a given idea, which the target believes to be his own. With a Social challenge, each grade grants the idea a temporary Passion rating; levels fade at a rate of one per hour.

0000: Overture/House Party

This art works the exact same way as Rhapsody, but grades may also be used to affect multiple targets at the same time, to inspire collective ideas, and the duration is in days, not hours.

00000 Operetta/Bump & Grind

The wraith may perform a Mental test with a Narrator before the evening begins. Each grade may be spent at the same time another wraith spends a "universal" Pathos, to "split" it into 2 "charged" Pathos of a given type. One of them will be used as intended, and the other will be fed into the wraith nearest to the one who spent it. The Pathos is added to the target's total, and he is flooded with that emotion for one minute. Each grade extends this duration by one minute.

New Merits & Flaws

The Merits and Flaws listed here are exclusive to Symphonists, although there may be occasions where the Storyteller may allow other wraith characters to take these Merits and Flaws as well. As usual, it's the Storyteller's call.

Deaf (4 trait Flaw): You are unable to perceive any sound at all, on either side of the Shroud. Not only that, but since sound and vibration are the exact same thing in the Underworld, you cannot perceive those either. You automatically fail any and all tests related to hearing, and suffer a three-trait penalty on any attempt to use Keening arts.

Miklos Cultist (5 trait Flaw): Others may not be aware of it, but you are of the belief that by commanding other things to Oblivion, you are actually satiating hunger, and will eventually make it full. Your permanent Angst is increased by one, and if anyone ever discovers what you are, they will destroy you.

Pathos Ineptitude (2 trait Flaw): You are unable to process the emotion associated with a given kind of Charged Pathos. As such, anytime you come into contact with it, it immediately neutralizes, and you may only use it to heal, or fuel Arcanoi which do not depend on a given 'charge'. You also suffer a two trait penalty when involved in any kind of challenge against that kind of Pathos.

Plays by Ear (2 trait Merit): Once you have heard a sound once, you never forget it. You gain a two trait bonus to any challenge involving memory, recalling any sound that you may have heard, or matching a voice to its owner.

Prodigy (5 trait Merit): You were a musical genius in life, and may have mastered several instruments at a very young age. You win all ties on challenges involving Keening, as long as you are the one who initiated the challenge, and anyone who attempts to use Keening arts on you is two traits down.

Scrambled Signal (3 trait Flaw): Your mind is unable to easily distinguish one kind of Pathos from another, and so while you may use any kind of charged Pathos, it will usually scramble when you do, and manifest as a different type altogether. Anytime you use a given kind of charged Pathos, it will behave as though it were charged differently. The Storyteller should note what the Pathos does upon invoking a given effect.

That's My Song!! (1 trait Merit): You have a natural affinity to a given type of music (whether it be country, hip-hop or death metal), and when you hear it, you gain bonuses to your feats. Choose one musical genre; anytime it is playing you gain a two-trait bonus to any challenge until you can no longer hear it anymore.

Tone Deaf (1 trait Flaw): You cannot sing. Others may or may not be aware of it, but you must actively avoid any situation in which you are forced to sing solo, and if you are in a singing group, you may only mouth the words, for fear of being discovered. You may not take any levels of Performance related to singing, and if you do sing, you will be slightly off key, giving you a one trait penalty on any related challenges.

Tuning Fork (3 trait Merit): You have a natural affinity for a given kind of charged Pathos, and whenever you use it, you win all ties. Additionally, any charged Pathos that is given to you will immediately become that type instead.

Visualist (4 trait Merit): You have the bizarre ability to see Pathos while it is in motion. This Merit allows you to engage in a Mental challenge against the current Maelstrom rating anytime there is an exchange of Pathos done within your line of sight. If you win, you may determine whether or not the moving Pathos is charged, and if it is, how it is charged.

Epilogue:

A Gathering of Souls, Part 2

It is April 16, 2000.

The wind has died down enough to hear Barghests howling from the Isle of Sorrows, which is very slowly sinking into the Sunless Sea. A little more of Stygia disappears every day, its monolithic empire reduced to a shrinking pile of debris.

Looking around the ossuary, there are many different kinds of people here, all of them restless. They are of any given age, race and color. Many of them don't speak English. One of them doesn't seem to be able to speak at all, because he has no face. It was worn off in his trek through the Tempest.

Most of these folk are casualties of war, lost in the storm that claimed the Underworld. Some have been thrown here from across entire oceans. Those who do have a common language introduce themselves, asking the expected questions.

Why are we here? Who summoned us?

Those without recognized speech huddle in corners, awaiting what they believe to be their doom. They are refugees in a foreign land, undoubtedly summoned here to be tortured and smelted. Their Shadows remind them of this, pleading with them not to fight it. It's always quicker if you don't struggle.

Most of the people in this room have failed to make the connection that binds them all to one another. Those who have are silent, wary of what they believe is a cleansing of some kind. Overhead, the thousands of skulls loom over them, grinning. There is a hum that resounds throughout the monastery, like a slow and distant rumble. It is unnerving to the Corpus.

A woman enters the room carrying a briefcase in one hand. She is dressed in what looks to have been an expensive suit at one time, though it is now tattered and torn. She has the look of someone who had an important meeting somewhere, but not here. She belongs in the sterile corporate world, not this gallery of death and pestilence. She puts the briefcase on a table adorned in bones, and a green light emanates from her hands as the briefcase whines itself open. She reaches inside, and pulls out an abacus.

Many of the people here have deduced that she is an Usurer, and they are right. Several of them have also deduced that she is using the abacus to count how many people are here, and they are also right. One small boy in front, barely twelve years old at his time of death, has noticed that she has counted herself into her calculations. He is quite correct, and takes a small comfort in the fact that she is one of them, and not some emissary of judgment to take a headcount of the hostages.

For that is what they are: prisoners in this macabre place. Many of their number were swallowed by the Void during the pilgrimage, and those who managed to make it here in one piece are doubtful that they could make a journey anywhere else. They are trapped here, for there is nowhere else to go.

This realization begins to circulate, and soon many of the downtrodden wraiths have grown a sense of panic. They are slaves to the will of whatever summoned them here, and have begun to realize it. There is nowhere to go. If whatever is in charge of this church wishes to end their pitiful afterlives, there will be nothing they can do.

An explosion, and then a deafening sound comes from each of the forty thousand skulls in the ossuary. A power so massive that it cannot be measured emanates from the chandelier, and the skulls that once lined its rim opened wide in a silent scream as the force pushes through them, and they splinter like driftwood. Frozen in awe, the paranoia and desperation in these people has been stripped away. They are no longer afraid of this monastery, nor the storm, nor even the ravenous teeth of Oblivion itself. Their all-consuming fear and loss has been nullified, and replaced with things none of them have felt in a long time, and few of them thought they could ever feel again. There is Hope, Conviction and Joy.

The humming that resounds beneath and above and through them is louder now, and they can all see clearly. Their Pathos has been refreshed, and their wounds have healed. Their Shadows, for the moment, are silent. There is no more fear, no more mistrust, and no more misunderstanding. Everyone knows why they are here, and whatever is about to happen, they trust they will be safe.