Fall of the Camarilla



Vampire
THE REQUIEM



What We Remember, What Is Real

"He is awake."

Father Mayhew, so tall and so thin that his dark suit hung limply on his gaunt frame, said those words but did not move deeper into the room. The priest simply stood in the doorway, staring into the penthouse at his gathered flock.

Mary sighed, the Bowie knife stuck halfway into a makeshift stake, a curl of wood coiled up above the blade. She looked to Hiram and Finch, small dark men who looked to be cut from the same mold.

"You're sure?" she asked.

Mayhew dipped his handkerchief into the silver dish of holy water by the door, wetted his lips, then nodded. In his small voice, raspy and quiet (its ministerial power was not contained in its volume) he confirmed: "Most certain."

Hiram idly thumbed the slide on the tarnished .45 lying on a purple cloth in his lap. The metal was etched with a dozen tiny crosses, and in each, rust had flourished.

"Where you are," Hiram started, "death will find you, even in towers built up strong and tall."

Finch rolled his eyes. "Still reading the Quran, yeah?"

"Some good shit in all the Father's works."

"Fifty years dead, now you decide to broaden your horizons?"

"Quiet," Mary said. She shot them a look. Her dark eyes bespoke volumes, and in those volumes were the pages of pain she'd caused others. She turned back to Father Mayhew, who maintained the empty gaze and pursed lips that were so often his trademark during sermons. "The Liar Bishop hath returned. No kidding. We have a plan?"

Mayhew reached into his coat, and pulled out a slip of paper torn from a notebook.

Upon it was a name written in red: "Renatus."

The priest smiled — an unusual occasion, a *rara avis* on par with sighting Bigfoot — and tucked the paper back into his coat.

"We leave in one hour."



"He's awake."

Up on the rooftop, the crows in the pigeon coop danced back and forth. Nathalie tilted her head, listening to their complaints. She popped the latch on the door, reached in, and selected a bird. The crow in her hand was fat and oily, with round dark eyes that captured the light of the slivered moon above.

She showed her people the bird that twisted in her grip, waving the bird beneath their heads and urging them to listen. Mouse looked frightened: she always did in the presence of the divine. Horatio appeared smug: a persistent mask so that he didn't look like Mouse when confronting the sublime. But it was Vitellus's reaction she most wished to gauge. His hands, gentle beneath her own, urged the bird up toward his face. Pressing his ear to its breast, he nodded.

"Very good," he said, his eyes smiling even if his mouth was not. "You discerned this from the sounds they make?"

"*Oscines*," she said.

"One day soon I shall show you *alites*, the omens seen in flight. But for now..."

As his voice trailed off, he took his pinky nail — longer and sharper than any of his other nails — and eased it into the bird's breast as if he were sliding his nail into fresh mud. Dragging his finger downward, he opened the crow's chest and nudged the ribs aside. The red heart, no bigger than a thumbnail, twitched and pulsed. Nathalie didn't know what it was that Vitellus saw in the crimson cavity of the crow's breast, but he seemed satisfied enough. Pitching the bird off the roof, Vitellus wiped his hands on his coat.

"And now we know where he is. Shall we?"



"He's ancient? That true?" Finch asked.

When Mayhew did little more than stare at Finch, he continued: "He doesn't claim to be that old, right? Is he just batshit? Franco, my sire's sire, he was old. Couldn't get his head together. Couldn't remember names. Couldn't remember places. I remember one night, he went ahead and had his people bring him a van full of, I don't know, stray dogs or cats or something. No nourishment there, but his people didn't want to tell him that because not only was he losing it, but he had a powder-keg temper. They should've told him. Because when he tried to quench that thirst on a goddamn herd of strays and found that it didn't do shit for shit, that only enraged him. Though, I guess you could say it allowed him to get back to his food source because, you know, he ate every last one of his dumbfuck people."

"You ever shut up?" Hiram asked.

Mary countered: "*Both* of you, shut up."

As the lights of the city passed — strobe flashes, bars of white in the dark car — Mayhew adjusted his awkward frame and seemed to snap out of whatever reverie that regularly consumed him.

"It is accurate," the priest said. "Renatus is nearly two millennia old. We have pages of the letters he's been writing. Journal entries written to childer that he put to dust a hundred or more years ago. Our mole has done his job."

"Amazing," Hiram said. "This guy's gone to ground more times than we thought."

"We're going to make out good," Finch said, white teeth flashing in a fox's grin. "Fucker's probably got a metric ton of old shit in that penthouse. Gold and bronze and old swords and pieces of art. All for the coffers of the Sanctified, of course."

Mary put her big knife to Finch's tight throat — an empty gesture devoid of physical harm, but a gesture nevertheless.

"It's not about that," she corrected. "This is about treachery. Not just about heresy, but about putting down a liar. Renatus was never one of us. He played at being Bishop. Pretended to be *pious*. And then when he — "

She jerked the knife away and curled her hand so hard around the handle that she nearly cracked the rosewood hilt. Her muscles tightened. Mary didn't need to say what she was going to say. Everybody in that car knew. That night, Midnight Mass some 50 years back, so-called *Bishop* Renatus had heard of the plan to purge the city of its heathen contingent — either by running them out on a rail or by feeding them to the wolves that lurked in the woods around the city — and he had gone mad. He didn't move fast, but he didn't

have to. The room, afterward? All that blood, sprayed on copies of the Catechism, soaked through the holy raiment. Swatches of clothing clinging to splintered pews. The aspergillum stuck awkwardly in a pile of oily ash that once was one of their own. Those who had survived did not survive well. They were few, anyhow.



"He's a god, isn't he?"

It was Mouse who said it; strange, given that he didn't speak most times. But as they made their way on foot through the tangle of back alleys and one-way side streets, he seemed awfully chatty.

"He may be," Horatio said, still smirking.

"I don't know that he's a god, not exactly," Nathalie said, hoisting herself up over a chain-link fence with one hand. "But an emissary to them? A link between us and the divine? That I believe. He was *there*. He dwelled among the old gods. Minerva. Vulcan. Venus! I can hardly fathom. He's living history. Well. So to speak."

Vitellus reached over and pulled her head sharply toward him, then pressed his dry dead lips to her temple. "You make me so proud, Nathalie."

They emerged out of this last alley, leaving behind the squealing rats and moldering boxes and the Dumpsters that stank of curry and garlic. They emerged into light: the towers of steel and glass, of silver light garnished with hints of neon and fluorescence. The tallest of those towers was straight across from them, a spire of Byzantine modernity whose tip seemed to puncture the very sky.

"I just want to meet the one who saved our collective ass," Horatio said. "Those foul God-junkies wanted to get rid of us so many years back — you weren't made yet, Mouse, so don't sweat it — but this one, he stepped up, he balanced the equation. Took out half of his congregation. A perfect treachery. We're sure it's safe, though, right? Nobody else knows that he's here? Awake again?"

Vitellus shook his head. "We're alone in this knowledge. Only we knew what signs to look for. The appearance of new altars beneath the city. Cruets of blood hidden in the subway tunnels. Old coins pressed into the stone floor, wreathed in garlands of fresh laurel. The signs were clear. And the augury confirmed it."

Mouse stared up at the tower with wonder.

"The gods," he whispered.

They moved to cross the avenue.



"He's going to kill me," Anthony blubbered.

Mayhew, two nights before, sat with Anthony on the steps of the cathedral. The fool was worried. Not that he didn't have a right to be, of course. If Renatus discovered the human's treachery, Anthony's life would surely come to a gory, greasy halt.

"Let me ask you a question," Mayhew said. "The first of many. Do you believe in God? The Lord, our Father?"

"I, I..." Anthony stammered. Buried his face in his palms. Rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands so hard that it seemed he was trying to push them back into his skull. (*No surprise*, Mayhew thought, *given what grotesque blasphemies Renatus probably played out before him.*) Finally, he blurted, "Yes! Yes. Of course."

"Then you believe in salvation. And in Heaven."

"Yes."

"Good. Because what I ask is not a favor for me, it is the command of God Himself. I am a priest. A subject of a far greater realm, an emissary between the divine and the profane. You will help me."

"I will help you," Anthony repeated, a string of saliva connecting his upper lip to his lower. His eyes were puffy, shot through with a web of red.

"You have the pages? Of his journal?"

Grinding his teeth so hard that Mayhew could hear the molars sliding against one another, the poor fool reached into his shirt pocket, and pulled out a wad of papers poorly folded.

"Tell me about him," Mayhew said. "Whatever comes to mind. I have time."

"He... he thinks he's a soldier. He talks about, about Rome. About chariot races and something called 'the Greens.' He talks to nothing. Or everything. When I bring him girls, he drains them and lays them on the... the long couch thing, the chaise! The chaise. And he talks to them even after they're dead. Sometimes he speaks to the air, arguing with... I don't know what."

"And what else?"

"He speaks of someone named Senex. I don't know who the fuck that is, but he sometimes talks about him, and other times he talks *to* him. Like he's his sire or master or something. Other names come and go. Lucretia? Decimus? He hates that one. Rages whenever he mentions his name. And the Camarilla. I don't know who that is, but he talks about him a lot."

"The Camarilla. What does he say?"

"He babbles, mostly. Something about Rome and the seven hills. About... about the old gods, the old ways. How they *created* this Camarilla."

Mayhew's jaw clenched. *Gross heresy, that.* He resisted the impulse to tear out Anthony's tongue just for uttering such sedition against Heaven and its glorious monsters. The old gods were in opposition to the natural order, standing in the way of sanity and sanctity. Just look at the scattered cults of those so-called old gods now —! Disparate fools forging superstitious rituals while kneeling in the gutters. Was that sanity? Was that order?

Sucking in a deep breath, Anthony looked up at the cloud-ringed moon with his bleary eyes. He was on the cusp. Mayhew decided to push.

"Tell me where he rests during the day."

"I... I mustn't."

"You're not compelled to protect him."

"I know. But..."

"He'll kill you."

"Yes."

"And what is it you think God will do should you betray *Him*?"

Mayhew reached out and gently stroked Anthony's sweat-slick hair. He allowed that concept to sink in. An eternity of pain for one mistake? Anthony was a good Catholic boy — or was, once. As such, he was keenly aware of infinite tribulation.

And then, the dam broke.

Anthony, blubbering once more, told Mayhew where the Betrayer Bishop rested his perfidious head.



"He'll never know!"

Two nights before, Busker hunkered down in the brackish sewer water, the dark forgotten tunnel rising wide and tall around him, and he turned the coin over and over again in his hand. On one side, a bearded man with stark eyes, a bolt of lightning above his head. On the other side, a wreath encircling a pair of tongs. Busker laughed, licked the coin, bit it (he didn't know why people bit coins to determine their worth or authenticity, and he didn't know precisely what information was received when he *did* bite down, but it seemed good enough to him).

"Stupid old man will never know the treasures I find down here, *never.*" He looked down at the audience to his comments, a pair of fat Norway rats, their gray fur patchy from flea bites and septic ringworm. He scooped up one of the rats — he wasn't sure if it was the one he called Mickey or the one he called Pluto — and kissed it on the top of its head. It squealed in what Busker believed to be delight.

The savage did not see the shadow behind him. Too consumed was he with his treasure find and his pet rats; he didn't even hear the faint splashes of water.

He didn't even hear the whispered entreaties to the Magna Mater, the Liber Pater, the curses against the stolen blood in his dead body.

But he damn sure felt it when his muscles started to seize.

Busker cried out, and he could *hear* the dead blood hardening in his body, the Vitae going inert with the sound of ice cracking beneath one's feet. Then suddenly he flopped face down into the stagnant run-off as if someone had just cut his puppet strings.

Vitellus stepped over the body. Nathalie, smiling in awe at what her father could do, followed close behind.

"What do you have, filth?" Vitellus asked. He reached down and gripped Busker's hand, peeling back the fingers like skin from a banana. When each finger reached the end of its movement, Vitellus kept going: brittle bones popping, one by one. "Nathalie, if you please."

Eager, she grabbed the coin that revealed itself.

She needed no light to see it. Her eyes had learned to adjust to the darkness over time. Her ears, too — were she half a mile down the tunnels, she still could've heard Busker's choked weeping, his murmurs of misery.

"It's Vulcan," she said. Spinning the coin around, she continued. "A laurel wreath and the tongs of the forge. It's him. Isn't it?"

Vitellus, bright eyes gleaming in the dark, let the savage drop down into the sewage. He stood, smiling.

"It may be, dear one. Perhaps it's time for you to consult the birds."

If Nathalie weren't dead, her heart would've fluttered at the promise.



"He was a pretender."

The words, spat with so much venom.

Renatus paced. Bare feet fell on cold white marble. Somewhere, a fountain within the penthouse burbled, but he didn't know where. Sometimes, this place was equal parts prison and temple. Palace and labyrinth. The vilest fundament, and loftiest Elysium.

The girl lay slumped over the chaise, her hindquarters up in the air. She was mostly dead. Her eyes were empty, but he still heard breathing. Saw the bubbles of sticky spit and blood rise and fall betwixt her painted lips.

Curling a finger under her chin, he tilted her head back. For a moment, her eyes found focus, and she looked at him. Those bloodied lips quietly smacked together as if she was trying to say something. She couldn't.

"Do you know what Ovid said? Forgive me if I mangle the words. Consider this a paraphrase. He claimed that women should keep themselves hidden until they make themselves up. Because this —" He ran a thumb across her red lips, then beneath the eyes where he

smeared her eyeliner into a coal-dark streak. "This is where your beauty truly lies. In all the little containers of paint and powder."

He let her head drop. Her pinky twitched. But not much more.

"Was he right, Ovid? I don't know. Beauty may lurk in ochre oil on the lips or soot and antimony around the eyes. Oh, but Lucretia, that beautiful lady and that bitter witch! Her beauty went deeper than what lay caked upon the skin. It went to the blood." He forced his papery lungs to draw in a sigh, deep and forlorn — a habit that even now, after millennia, he could not break. "But we weren't speaking about her, were we? Even though you have a faint glimpse of her beauty, even though I'd consider making you my childe if it weren't for the fact that they're going to betray me and surely you'd do the same someday soon..."

He slumped to the floor next to the chaise, resting his head against the hollow of the small of the girl's back.

"No, I was speaking about Renatus. The other one. The real one. Strange, isn't it? That I can, only rarely, recall my real name? The name from my days as a soldier? That's sad, to me. Renatus, the true Renatus — which is to say the *false* Renatus — was a cruel pretender. He was the cancer in the system. The worm in the marrow. He, and others like him, were what laid our proud order so low..."



"He left the door open for us?" Hiram whispered. They stepped off the elevator, and up on this floor only one door waited for them: a red door with black fixtures, the doorway into the penthouse. And, currently, it sat ajar. "No security at all?"

Finch shrugged, ran his hand along the cool metal of the sawed-off's barrel. "Either he's really gone nuts, or he's scary enough that he doesn't *need* security."

Mary scowled and put a finger against her lips. Then she pointed to her ear and tilted her head toward the door.

Somewhere, deep within the haven, they heard someone talking.

The words, a question: "Do you know what Ovid said?"

"It's him," Mayhew whispered.

Mary pointed toward the door. "Let's move."

They crept into the kingdom of the Betrayer Bishop. The penthouse was a mad mix of the modern and the archaic — pagan faces whose mouths spit rusty water, a flat-screen television on the wall (its power cord hanging limp and unconnected to anything resembling an outlet), a old claw foot strongbox sitting in the middle of the floor, a pile of celebrity magazines sitting in disarray only a few feet from it. Ferns and flowers swayed and shuddered in a breeze — a window was open, somewhere (they could smell the chemical stink of the city carried on the air). Somewhere, rooms away, a fluorescent light flickered and buzzed. In the other direction, guttering candlelight. Hiram nearly knocked over an alabaster vase; Mary shot him a look that could've taken his head off.

The voice deep in the haven continued: "...which is to say the *false* Renatus..."

With spidery fingers, Mayhew withdrew the slip of paper with the accursed name from his jacket.

Hiram's hand tightened on his pistol. Finch's shoulders eased back, and he felt the cold blood within himself warm to the possibility of urgent action.

Mary crept forward, knife in one hand, fresh-carved stake (its wood burned with many small crosses) in the other.

They entered the room.



"He will help us," Mouse said, so sure of it.

The elevator slid upwards almost effortlessly. The golden dial at the top — an Art Deco arrow, its finials curved inward in a smooth loop — ticked off the floor numbers.

"No," Vitellus corrected. "We will help him. The ancients need our assistance if they are going to be restored to glory. The gods are powerful, but not all-powerful. They need our faith and our work to operate. Renatus is the bridge between the old gods and this place, and so we will help him restore those connections. Once he has his mind in order, his heart can again direct its ire toward the Sanctified. And we will help him achieve that, all of us acting in concert with the fury of the gods."

Nathalie nearly swooned. The words of her master were so perfect, the dream so true that she could taste it on her tongue like fragrant blood.

"I'm fucking terrified," Horatio said, a bold and unexpected declaration from someone who usually kept his cards so close to his chest.

"That," Vitellus noted, "is the power of the ancient."



"He, and others like him, were what laid our proud order so low..."

They had expected... well, they didn't know what to expect, but it wasn't this. The Betrayer Bishop should've been reclining in his throne, a blood-caked scepter in his lap. Or perhaps examining a steaming pile of entrails on an altar. He should've been a lion. Proud and defiant, but whose age had come and past. He could've been a snake, coiled around a beautiful tree and hissing entreaties of temptation to all who pass near.

But instead he was merely deflated. They found him lying against the chaise, a silken robe laying open, revealing his nakedness. A chest smeared with rusty red. Curls of hair ringing his burnished forehead.

He didn't seem surprised to see them.

"My children," he said. He made a weak, meaningless gesture with his left hand.

"We aren't your children," Mary barked.

"Can I offer you anything?" He looked to the girl, still clinging to life. "I'd give you this one, but it seems that I've... exhausted her." Renatus looked disappointed.

Mayhew pinched the piece of paper between thumb and forefinger.

"The priest will stand before the accused," Mayhew began, "holding a jar of bitter water that brings a curse to those who are guilty."

"A curse?" Renatus asked. His voice suggested bemusement. "This is a grim irony, indeed. I recall wandering the dark tunnels of Necropolis with a contingent of good soldiers who wisely feared and respected all the gods. I remember hunting down you people, hiding in dusty rat warrens with your stars and spears and crosses. And here, the tables are turned — mostly, of course, since now we monsters live high in shining towers instead of lurking in the bowels and guts of the city. But the sentiment is the same, isn't it?"

"Then may the people see the Lord's curse is upon you," Mayhew continued.

"Yes, yes, curse, so you say. Here's the other irony, both bitter and sweet: we hunted you down, but it only seemed to strengthen you, didn't it? You grew bolder. Every hand we chopped off, two more grew from the stump. Ah, but now it's we whose limbs are vengeful and multifarious, we whose time has come."

"Let it be so," Mayhew finished.

Then he withdrew a single match.

They all expected Renatus to move. To leap, to pounce, his hands a blur as they reached to tear out throats or hearts.

But as Mayhew struck the match against the rough back of his lean hand (flinching as he did so, for the fear kicked up within him), Renatus only laughed. A mirthless sound, to be sure, but a laugh nevertheless.

The match tip burned the paper.

Renatus's name — and all his sins with it — caught aflame.

The Betrayer Bishop howled, a short yawp of agony mixing with his laugh. He slid further to the floor, his back arching as if caught in the throes of some kind of inexorable ecstasy.

"Now," Mayhew said to his people.

Hiram and Finch started shooting.

"He's besieged."

The reality was almost too terrifying to consider: someone had found him before they had. Thieves who wanted his treasures. Fiends who wanted his blood. Perhaps even the cruel Sanctified with their hunger for vengeance.

They stepped off the elevator, the ringing of gunfire echoing down the hall. The acrid tang of cordite stung their noses.

Vitellus seized Nathalie's arm in a firm grip. He could see that she was frightened and horrified, unable to comprehend what needed to be done next. She was young, his childe, with great promise that hadn't yet been tested.

"Show me why I chose you," he said to her.

That seemed to do it.

They entered the penthouse.



He watched it all happen. Felt it, too.

The tragedy unfolded, he at center stage... but he felt distant from it, too. As if it was happening to someone else. A traitor so long ago at the Forum, the dull roar of voices arguing, the whisper of a word in a barbarian's ear, and the turning of fortunes that

would end the Empire. The bullets in his chest shouldn't have hurt like this, but they did. Foul stings, sizzling at the edges, fat wads of lead sitting heavy in his flesh. His childer had come to destroy him. These were his progeny, were they not? The faces of the false God? The pale eyes of Constantine's idiot savior? They looked familiar and yet... they didn't. Perhaps it no longer mattered. Whatever sorcery they had used to curse him, fine, so be it, he had long prepared for their coming.

Oh, but this dramaturgy was not over. The gods had chosen to rewrite the play as it unfolded, didn't they? Others entered the scene. A vulpine face. A beautiful girl with the flashing eyes of Athena. An old man with a satyr's glance. A tiny mouse. Such were the whims of the gods that they should bring new actors this late in the story!

It was a ballet put on by the spirits for his amusement.

It all seemed so slow, so delicate.

The way the old satyr moved to snap the neck of the priest.

The way the brutish dog with the knife and stake met the beauty with the flashing eyes, and how they struggled, pirouetting about.

The way the mouse cried out as a blast from the one weapon erased most of his face.

The way the fox-faced man and one of the dark-eyed fools danced an erratic zigzag toward the window — the smash of glass, and then they were gone, toppling into the dark night.

All the while he lay, bleeding, burning, the dozens of holes in his body just barely dribbling the red ochre. Some of them puckered and shuddered, mushrooms of gray lead spitting back out into his lap. But his body was marred by so many eruptions. Too many to manage. For a time he recalled the things his sire did to him, his cruel keeper, the one known as Decimus. That vicious man (also with a fox-face, yes?) put holes in his body, too — heated skewers of metal run through his skin, dozens of them, hundreds perhaps. That day, when he slept in his clay urn, it felt like biting ants as his body healed itself from the wounds. Though, perhaps that never happened. Perhaps he was Decimus. Perhaps there never was a Decimus, or a Renatus or a Lucretia. Sometimes the gauze that wrapped his mind was too thick to undo, and it was all the more comfortable to let it stay. Easier, at least. So much easier to forget. So much simpler to ignore the deviations between what was real, and what was remembered.

He returned to the present.

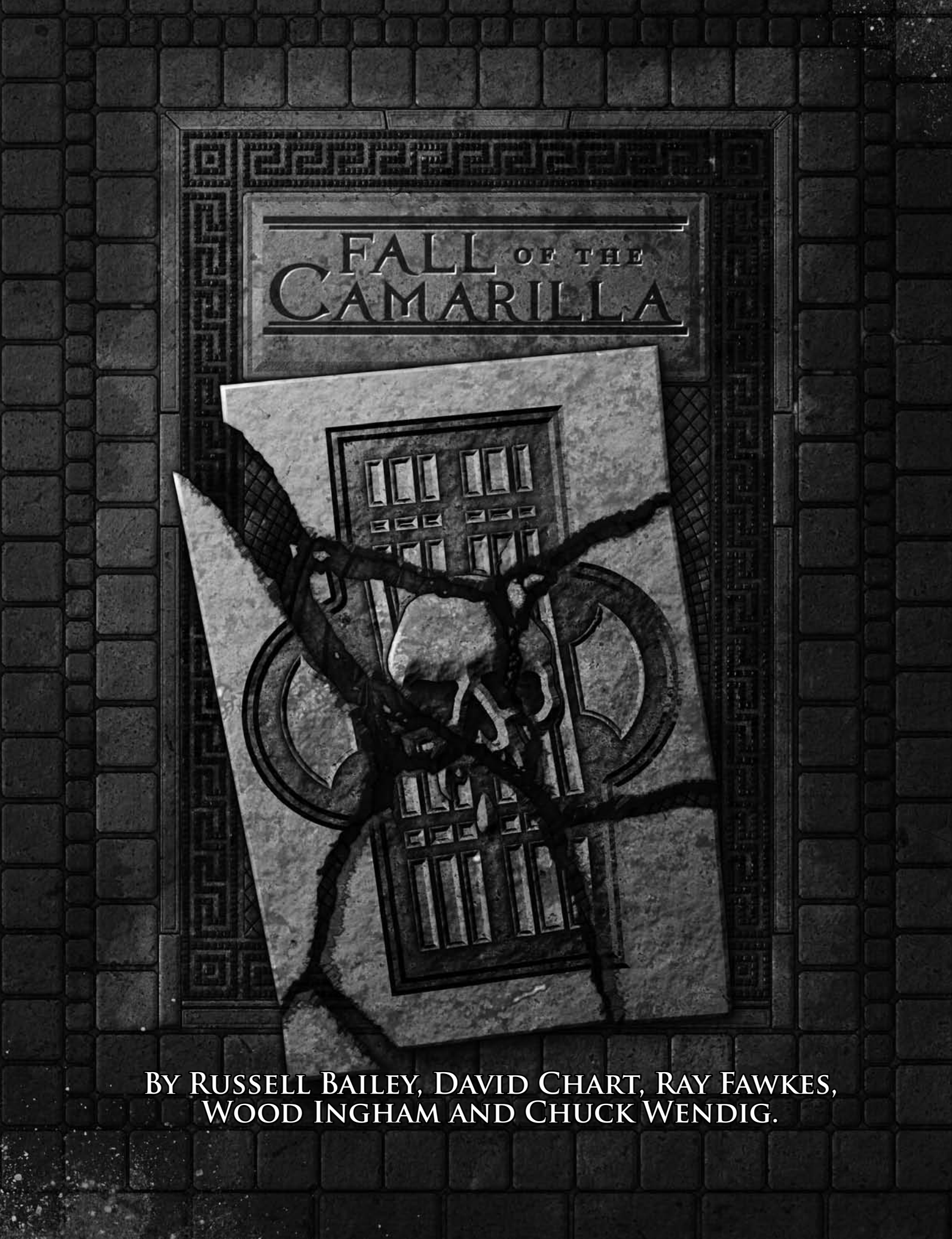
Those of the Lance and Spear were gone. The brute girl with the stake was nowhere to be found, though a shadow of smoldering ash decorated the far wall, the wispy curls of still-smoking cinders roughly forming a once-human shape. The priest remained, his head cocked at an odd angle — dead, but weren't they all? The mouse lay faceless, grabbing at the cold marble but finding no purchase. The one dark-eyed man lay curled in the corner, reminding Renatus of a crumpled slip of paper.

The satyr and the girl with the flashing eyes approached him, hands out.

But he felt something inside. Something stirring.

He was hungry.

And he moved to eat.



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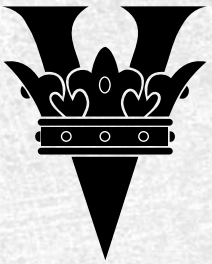
To Rich, matt, Ray, Will, and all the writers for giving me such a wonderful sandbox to play in.

– Craig

With utmost respect and admiration to all those who gave us the Camarilla in its previous and present incarnations, and to all those who filled it out in play. Thanks to you, the name is fraught with meaning and memory - making our job that much more challenging and enjoyable. CAMARILLA VICTA!

– Ray

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FALL OF THE CAMARILLA™

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INTRODUCTION

The Fall of the Camarilla is a complete, multi-chapter chronicle, ready for play. Only you, as the Storyteller, should read this book initially. What follows is a how-to guide for running a series of stories over the last hundred or so years of the only great, multi-city vampire civilization in history with your troupe, using the game rules in the World of Darkness Rulebook, Vampire: The Requiem and Requiem for Rome.

Think of this book as a multipart story kit, as if you'd bought a set of modern furniture and brought it home in a bunch of big flat boxes. Inside, you'll find all the parts to build this chronicle at home, through play. The tools you need to put this story together are in the three books listed above. When you get your troupe together, you'll use all these parts to build something together. It might not look exactly like the picture on the box, but that's fine. Your troupe doesn't get together to look at a story; your troupe gets together to build one.

So this is a nuts-and-bolts thing. The parts in this kit are designed to make the actual job of being a Storyteller easier, to make the craft of Storytelling fast and fun for you. The heavy artful majesty you've read about — the transcendent game experiences that shock and satisfy as well as any novel — those come simply from doing a great job. Everything in the following pages is intended to take up the slack so you can focus on doing that great job.

The basic parts that make up this chronicle are simple: Storyteller characters and scenes. Each can be used in different ways to keep the chronicle building toward its climactic end.

The Characters

Ideally, the players should start the chronicle with neonate vampires at the bottom of their respective strata of Roman Kindred society. Over the course of the story, the neonates will have access to fame, fortune and raw power — and their transition to powerful ancillae should be dramatic. They are unlucky in that they are Embraced near the end of their civilization, but they do enjoy the opportunity to rise rapidly through the ranks as their superiors are destroyed or knocked aside by their efforts as much as the ravages of time.

It doesn't really matter which Wing (or Wings) of the Camarilla the characters begin in, so long as they're part of society in some capacity. Opportunities for earning the respect of most of the Wings will arise, and the characters will be free to throw their lots in with the traditional power structure or the up-and-coming force of the Sanctified Church.

The Chronicle

The chronicle traces the historical collapse of the Camarilla, leading to the dissolution of European vampire society and paving the way for the development of the feudal system of covenants and cities that would arise during the Dark Ages. The chronicle begins about a hundred years before the fall, displaying the civilization at its height, establishing its strengths and weaknesses, and then takes the characters through the slow decline that leads into a final, precipitous tumble into chaos and destruction.

In concrete terms, the chronicle deals with the actual actions of establishing power in vampire society and then struggling to hold on to that power (or just avoid Final Death) as the forces of disorder close in on the structure that supports that power. Everything that comes before and after these actions — that is, motive and consequence — must be customized by you to adapt this chronicle to your troupe's characters.

Before the story begins, you'll have to establish that the characters are looking to gain a foothold somewhere in vampire society: whether as eager members of the traditional structure, as potentially treasonous rebels or just as self-serving Kindred.

Theme and Mood

The overall theme of the chronicle is the *descent into darkness*. Each individual story has its own theme that plays a part in painting the picture of the whole struggle, but this theme must always inform the big-picture action. The Camarilla itself is sliding from efficient order into confusion and disarray, reflecting the smaller struggles of individual vampires as they do battle with their own Beasts. In a sense, the fall of the Camarilla is a historical lesson to vampires: the Beast always threatens to consume reason and virtue, and the only society that the Kindred ever assembled based (however theoretical that basis) on those values fell victim to the same forces that lend power to the Beast: vice, predatory instinct and madness.

The mood of the chronicle overall is one of *fatal inevitability*. The players already know, going in, that civilization is going to collapse. The book is called "Fall

of the Camarilla," after all, not "Requiem in the Camarilla." Human beings and Kindred have a tendency to see patterns in events, even when they aren't necessarily there — and so, as the Camarilla limps toward destruction, everything that happens seems to be infused with a sense of inevitability and decay.

That isn't to say that the player characters should feel doomed — quite the contrary. They should feel, ideally, that they have the skills and the wit to weather whatever storm approaches. They are citizens of the Camarilla, true, but they are willing and able to defy the forces of history and survive the cataclysm.

The End and the Beginning

While the collapse of the Camarilla represents the end of Roman vampire civilization and the disintegration of the last wide-reaching common society of Kindred, the fall also lays the groundwork for the future: the setting that will evolve into the modern World of Darkness. The player characters should feel that, if they survive, they will be presented with the opportunity to play a part in setting the vampires on that path – providing all the motive the characters need to try and avoid Final Death. Who doesn't want to say, after all, that her character had a hand in founding one of the modern covenants, for example, or in preserving one of the last bastions of the ancient world of vampires?

How to Use This Book

The **Fall of the Camarilla** is a start-to-finish chronicle detailing the last 100 years of the Camarilla's rule, including the catastrophic events that led to the Camarilla's ultimate destruction. Each chapter of the chronicle is broken down into individual stories, and each is composed of a number of scenes that include ready-made descriptive text, supporting characters and instructions on guiding characters through the plot.

Before the chronicle proper begins, a list of the **Supporting Cast** is provided, detailing nine important vampires with whom the player characters are likely to interact, and explaining their roles in the society of Roman Kindred. Each of these vampires presents a potential ally or antagonist to the characters: some will offer to lead and instruct the characters, some will attempt to destroy the characters and some will simply fill out the background, performing their tasks and dealing with the characters whenever the story dictates.

Chapter One: Nights of Glory serves as the beginning of the chronicle. This chapter describes the relatively smooth operation of the Camarilla in its final nights of undisrupted rule, giving the characters time to familiarize themselves with the setting and three stories detailing opportunities to stake out territory, establish their reputations and set themselves up for crucial roles in the collapse of the Camarilla.

Chapter Two: God's Spearman follows, setting up four stories that allow the characters to play through several crises that crop up near the Camarilla's end, weakening it and setting everything in place for the final collapse. Political infighting, the shift from religious persecution to outright spiritual war and the death of a Roman Emperor set the stage for social apocalypse. Characters can choose, throughout, whether to fight for the Camarilla in an attempt to shore it up against the threats or to side with the enemies of established Roman society and try to hasten the Camarilla's end.

And the end soon follows. Forty years after the end of Chapter Two, **Chapter Three: Vandals in the City of Emperors** takes place. The forces arrayed against the Camarilla crash down upon it like a thunderous wave, piling upon one another and annihilating its fundamental structures of order. Mortal barbarians invade Rome and sack the city, and the Striges, a mortal band of vampire-hunters, rebel within the Camarilla; all take the opportunity to rise up at the same time, each trying to smash their foes and grab power. The Legio Mortuum collapses, the Senex is torn to pieces, and in the middle of it all, the player characters fight for survival. By the end of the story, the characters are in position to take control of the faction they have allied themselves with — or abandon it and choose an existence all their own.

Throughout the story pages, a sidebar called **The Passage of Events** details the important "off-camera" moments in the Camarilla's decline, explaining how the major supporting characters play a role in history and indicating what happens to them as a result.

The story is followed by three appendices. **Appendix I: Sample Coterie** provides a ready-made coterie of five characters for players to use in the story, if they wish. **Appendix II: Slouching Towards Byzantium** explains what happened to the last shreds of the Camarilla in the years following the chronicle and tells the story of the Camarilla's failed last chance at re-forming. **Appendix III: Rome Tonight** discusses the impact the Camarilla's fall might have on characters in the modern nights, and lists a series of Storytelling options that can tie modern chronicles to the one detailed in this book.



The Supporting Cast

"What I recall most strongly, with all that passed in those terrible nights, is how many surprises I faced. Prominent, experienced Kindred collapsed in weak despair, almost unprovoked. Lowly slaves and perennial victims arose with admirable assurance and conviction. I myself was rescued by a hated enemy, who pulled me from the flames with blood-tears of regret in his eyes. It was as if the fates themselves had gone mad."

- Aquila, Daeva of the Peregrine Collegia,

The Supporting Characters

The Fall of the Camarilla occurs over a period exceeding a hundred years. The progression of events that precipitates the end of Roman Kindred society is neither sudden nor inevitable – it is a slow, inexorable march towards calamity – and some unlucky vampires had to be the ones who found themselves, by fate or fortune, leading the way.

The player characters will be some of those vampires: Kindred caught up in the steady march of time, making decisions that speed or soften the collapse of the Camarilla. But they aren't alone. Following is a list of nine vampires who play major roles in the last nights of the Camarilla. They are warriors and politicians, prophets and traitors, and they will serve as major allies and antagonists to the characters in the chronicle. Some will play one role or another, depending on the nature of the player characters and their interaction with the world around them. Some will play both roles, shifting from one to the other between chapters. Most will die before the story is done.

While each of these vampires represents a powerful force in the story, it is important to keep this in mind: their ultimate purpose is to support the tale of the player characters, filling gaps and rounding out scenes. They should never take the spotlight for themselves (at least not for longer than a couple of minutes here or there). They may, at times, be more important than the coterie of characters *in terms of the setting*, but they must never be more important *in terms of the story*.

Do not allow the players to read this section, as it refers frequently to the progression of the chronicle and the fates of the supporting cast.

Helvidius Bassianus, called War-Crow

Quotes: (Intimidation) *"Well-kept sword you have there, boy. Know how to use it?"*

(Warfare) *"Were I him, I'd have burned the ships too. They'd use them against us. Better to walk home."*

Description: *He's short enough that even the women can see over the top of his head, but he still fills the room, still gives the illusion that he's somehow bigger than anyone else here. It's difficult to look at his face: there is dried blood spattered across his grim, craggy face, matted in his close-cropped salt-and-pepper hair, crusted on his stubbled chin.*

Worse than the blood are the eyes, cold and dead gray, and speckled with red-brown flecks, like rough pebbles lifted from some bloody battlefield.

Under his heavy red cloak, chainmail glints, draped across broad, powerful shoulders; club-like fingers, covered in that same dried blood, handle a well-kept pilum with something akin to tenderness.

He speaks in short, clipped sentences in a voice that sounds like a spadeful of earth thrown into a pit. He smells of mud and gore in equal measure.

Background: He fell in the year of the five emperors, that much he knows, but for whom he was fighting—or where—he can't remember any more. It was far away from Rome, that he knows, and he recalls lying on a field of battle under a pile of corpses. Helvidius remembers closing his eyes and turning his head so the crows wouldn't get them, and he remembers crawling out from beneath his dead comrades after the sun had set and the enemy was done slaughtering the wounded. That is all.

The *Propinqui* say that the War-Crow had no sire, that he died on that far-away battlefield and rose again to prey on the dying, a battlefield crow. He keeps his silence in the face of the rumors; sometimes a legend is a good thing to have.

For nigh-on a hundred years, Helvidius traveled across the length and breadth of the Empire, following the armies that wandered the Empire throughout that epoch, gradually becoming rich on the loot that conquerors and victors could not carry, on gold rings and silver brooches taken from the dead (Helvidius still treasures the signet ring he took from Herennius Etruscus—he ended the Caesar's life as he lay dying on the field of Abrittus). He knew how to behave among the troops and he soon had the power to appear to a military officer as a trusted member of staff. He met other monsters who survived in much the same way as he. One showed him the trick of hiding within the earth of the battlefield until the battle was over and the sun had gone down, to emerge in the midst of carnage.



The Passage of Events

300 CE: Helvidius Bassianus, the infamous War-Crow, follows a detachment of Roman legionaries to the settlement of Eboracum in Britannia Secunda. His journey provokes rumors of disruption in the northern ranks of the Legio Mortuum. Gambling clubs within the Peregrine Collegia begin to take wagers on the likelihood that his travel presages war in Britannia and the speculative year of his return. They offer 50-to-1 odds to those willing to bet he will meet Final Death on the road.

306 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor hosts a celebration of epic proportion, honoring the accession of Vaticinator Septimus Aurelius Maxentian to the position of Rex Sacrorum. At the party, S. Maxentian announces that the Cult of Augurs has learned, through careful study of omen, that the Camarilla will stand for more than 2,000 years.

308 CE: Macellarius Corbulo is accused of violating and murdering the mortal great-granddaughter of a prominent member of the Senex. He defends himself eloquently in public debate, proving to the audience that the accuser had, in fact, committed the act. The accuser frenzies as the debate is concluded, and is ejected from the chamber by a soldier of the Legio Mortuum. He is sentenced, in absentia, to exile, and his name is erased. Agents of the Peregrine Collegia report that the nameless outcast is slain just outside the gates of Rome by a shadowy figure.

310 CE: Eupraxus of Daeva, a notorious Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs, encourages a mortal cult to name him Christ returned and then demands their martyrhood. The whole of the cult commits suicide in his name. Macellarius Corbulo declares Eupraxus a "genius of comedy." Other, quieter voices speak of him in less flattering terms.

312 CE: The battle of Milvian Bridge. Constantine's victorious soldiers display the Christian *chi-rho* on their shields. Helvidius Bassianus is spotted on the field by Peregrine spies, who report the sighting back to the Kindred of Rome. Shortly thereafter, Bassianus returns to the Camarilla in Rome, taking his place among the Equestrians of the Legio Mortuum. The report of the Constantine's shields sparks a series of intense disputes within the Senex. A motion to legalize the worship of the Lancea et Sanctum and accept them as an official Wing of the Camarilla is defeated in a marathon three-week debate. A motion to purge Necropolis of Christian influence follows swiftly, and the Legio Mortuum slay dozens of suspected Kindred worshippers. Thascius Hostilinus escapes a sweep of his district, protected by friends among the Peregrine Collegia.

313 CE: The Emperor Constantine passes the Edict of Milan, proclaiming tolerance for all religions. Representatives of the Senex reluctantly legalize Christian worship within Necropolis. The first Magistrate of the Lancea et Sanctum is named to the Senex. He is assassinated within a month.

It was the right time for a vampire like Helvidius. Barely a year passed without some battle, somewhere, without a city being burnt or a barbarian invasion, or civil strife. And in the meantime, as the edifice of Empire collapsed, it became easy to feed on the homeless, on the bandit, on the deserter. People fell into the cracks, and if they never emerged, few missed them.

The wars ended. With the triumph of Constantine, Helvidius, now known to the dead across the Empire as *Corvus Belli*, War-Crow, settled in the Rome he had not visited since the year he died, and stayed. His fame preceded him, and he found a place among the Legion of the Dead within a few nights. As elders fell into torpor, he became more and more prominent.

The War-Crow is not, as the chronicle begins, the highest among the Legio Mortuum, but he is among the most respected, since, alone among the *Propinqui*—and although but a "worm," he is undeniably Kindred—he has seen a thousand battlefields and knows the ways of war better than any man, living or dead. Assuming the characters don't interfere with him, though, he will rise in the ranks over the course of the story, eventually seizing control of more than half of the Legion and destroying those who remain independent of his command.

Storytelling Hints: Vampires who meet this brutal old veteran before 312CE likely meet him on the road somewhere, traveling between battles or taking refuge in the earth alongside a legionary camp belonging to one imperial force or another. As a traveler, he's wholly pragmatic. There are more dying men for him to feed from than he needs, and he sees no reason why other dead men, if they do not bother him, should not feed also. If given reason to trust them, he'll even show traveling vampires some of his tricks of the trade.

After 312 or thereabouts, the War-Crow is a mainstay of the Legio Mortuum in the city of Rome. While there, he serves any side he thinks will promote order. He's seen more generals cry havoc than any other individual walking and he craves stability. He doesn't care for gods—like many pagan soldiers of the Empire, he's seen too much to convince him that there are gods watching the world—and although he'll happily observe the rites, he thinks them a sham. He'll say so too, knowing full well that if anyone finds his opinions offensive, they're not going to pick a fight—if they're wise. And if they're unwise, well. That's their fault.

Characters beginning play in the Legio Mortuum might have trained under Bassianus, or they might have reason to interact with him on occasion: taking assignments that he commands, reporting findings to him, or running errands for him.

If Thascius Hostilinus represents the future and Tertia Julia Comitor represents the Camarilla, Helvidius Bassianus represents the balance of power. He isn't the commander of the Legio Mortuum, but he is in many ways their spirit and their figurehead. Like a Praetorian captain in the age of the Principate, he holds the true power in his bloody, lumpen hand, and he knows it.

When the Camarilla falls, one of the defining moments will be when the War-Crow decides that the Lancea et Sanctum are the only way to recover order among the Kindred. He crosses over to the Sanctified, taking most of the Legio Mortuum with him, and giving them temporal power as well as spiritual.

Clan: Nosferatu
Wing: Legio Mortuum
Embrace: 193CE
Apparent Age: Late 40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 1, Medicine (Field Medicine) 2, Politics 1, Warfare (Civil War, Barbarians) 5

Physical Skills: Archery (Bow) 3, Athletics (Thrown Pilum) 4, Brawl 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Ride 3, Weaponry (Sword, Pilum) 5

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 2, Expression (Military History) 2, Intimidation 4, Socialize(Common Troops) 2, Streetwise 3

Merits: Fighting Style: Formation Tactics 5, Haven Location 4, Haven Security 3, Haven Size 2, Patron 4, Herd (Garrison) 3, Languages (Gothic, Greek), Retainers 4, Status (Camarilla) 3, Status (Legio Mortuum) 4

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Justice. Helvidius has seen more chaos than any human, and now he craves order in all things, and values it more than even his own self. He serves faithfully whosoever he believes to be able to keep control, and will be the instrument of control, doing whatever it takes, no matter how terrible, to keep things orderly.

Vice: Lust. The War-Crow is a soldier of Rome, and he takes seriously the Legion's motto: *vae victis*–woe to the defeated. He visits terrible, painful indignities aon those he defeats, whether they're still moving or not. His sadism is a palpable thing. Vampires who know the War-Crow don't fear being beaten by him—it's what comes after that's truly frightening.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3 (1 with armor, but +1 when using pilum defensively, and +2 with shield)

Speed: 12 (10 in armor)

Health: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Protean 2, Vigor 3

Vitae/Per Turn: 13/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Shortsword	2L	1	12	
Pilum	3L	4	13	+1 Defense
Pilum (thrown) 3L	4	12		
Shortbow 2L	3	9		

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty	Special
Lorica Hamata (Chain)	2/1	-2	
Legionary Shield	+2 Defense	0	requires left arm

The Second Chapter: By 326 CE, Helvidius Bassianus develops, as do all characters. Assume that all of his statistics remain the same, with the following exceptions: Politics 2, Vigor 4

The Third Chapter: By 410 CE, the following statistics are further developed: Religion 1, Haven Security 5, Patron 5, Status (Legio Mortuum): 5, Obfuscate 5.

316 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor throws a great celebration on the 10th anniversary of Maxentian's 2,000-year prophesy, happily declaring her intention to host events in its honor every 10 years hence. A great proportion of high-Status Kindred attend. Thascius Hostilinus, rumored to be one of the organizers of Rome's Lancea et Sanctum, is present. He is not welcomed, but neither is he ejected.

318 CE: Magistrates of the Lancea et Sanctum provoke a startling number of formal debates of reform within the Senex. Among the motions made: that the officers of the Legio Mortuum be ordered to change the design of their shields to match Constantine's *chi-rho*, that the Senex declare legal sanctuary over the holy places of the Sanctified, that the representatives of the Lancea et Sanctum in the Senex should be made equal, in number and Status, to those of the Cult of Augurs, and that the prayers of the Lancea et Sanctum be redefined to protect their worshippers from accusation of witchcraft. Every one of the motions is defeated in these formal debates, costing some of the Sanctified magistrates their unlives.

319 CE: Macellarius Corbulo begins to host chariot races in the Circus Maximus. His races are exceedingly popular among the Kindred of Rome. Gambling clubs of the Peregrine Collegia are encouraged to do business at the Circus, and their enthused contribution popularizes the races among the lower strata of the Camarilla.

Tertia Julia Comitor

Quotes: *"It's so good to see you here, [name]. Have you tried the Nubians yet? I recommend them; fresh imports, and in season."* (Socialize)

"Oh, I only invite the most elegant Kindred to my parties. Or, of course, those who exemplify the same virtues. By, for example, talking their Tribune out of a reckless appeal." (Persuade)

Description: *Comitor is a remarkably attractive, mature woman. Age has made her face more interesting, but had not yet quite reached the point of decay when she was Embraced. Her long brown hair shines whether it is done up in an elaborate coiffure or allowed to cascade naturally down her back to her hips. At her parties at the Baths of Caracalla, she goes naked, drops of water and blood like diamonds and rubies on her skin. In the Camarilla, real diamonds and rubies stand out against the pure white of her silk stole. In any context, she talks in a friendly fashion to the vampires around her, and encourages them to enjoy the parties and avoid rocking the social boat.*

Background: Comitor was embraced into the Julii as the Roman Republic fell and the Empire was born. She barely noticed in death, spending all of her time on parties. Her carelessness meant that she survived Nero's fire by pure luck, and spent some time in torpor in the aftermath. The experience made her more aware of the importance of politics, even to those who live to party, and she became more involved in the Senex. Over the centuries since she has become a respected member of the Senex, and truly loyal to it and to the Camarilla; she genuinely believes that it is the best government that vampires can hope for.

Still, social gatherings are her main interest, as they have always been, and her influence in mundane society is directed toward allowing her to hold the greatest parties that the Camarilla sees. She has almost complete control of the Baths of Caracalla, and sometimes closes them to most mortals for a whole night while she hosts a party; these events are talked about for months afterward, and when the gossip has started to die down, she holds another. In between, she holds many more intimate parties, some at smaller bath houses, some at brothels, and even a few literary soirees in Necropolis itself.

Politically, she is intelligently conservative, and a skilled, although not outstanding, debater in the forums of Necropolis. The Invictus often consider making her a consul, but her constant association with decadence has, so far, led the more hypocritical elders to veto it. Comitor does not mind; she gets her validation from the parties, not political power.

Comitor no longer remembers her mortal days reliably. She thinks that she was probably a senatorial wife, but other memories suggest that she may have been a high-class courtesan. She claims senatorial lineage for the edge it gives her Camarilla politics, but does not really care.

Storytelling Hints: Comitor symbolizes the Camarilla and the Senex. The decadence of her constant celebration points up their hypocrisy, while her genuine commitment to the greater good emphasizes that the Camarilla is not *just* a protection racket.

In the first act of the chronicle, she should be an approachable and somewhat sympathetic, if cautious contact in the upper reaches of the Senex. She does not regard even Sanctified vampires as beyond the pale, preferring to tempt them back into the mainstream of vampire society. She should act so as to convince the player characters that the Senex is not all bad. Her depravity, however, should not be downplayed. To many mortals, she is a nightmare, and she does not embody all the classical Roman virtues any more than the rest of the Senex does.

As the crisis develops, she rises to the challenge. While she does not abandon parties, she becomes much more active in defending the Camarilla and in trying to persuade other groups of vampires to support it. If the player characters are working against the Camarilla, she becomes an enemy. On the other hand, she tries to convince vampires who are not actively working against the Camarilla to alter their actions to support it. She also becomes willing to expend steadily more of her Resources, until in the end she is willing to sacrifice her existence to save vampiric society.

She fails, the Camarilla falls, and she is destroyed. Ideally, she should survive until at least the end of the second act, but she should fall before the climax of the story. Since she tends to avoid physical combat and does not deliberately make enemies, this should not be too difficult to arrange. However, if events do bring her down sooner, let it happen; this is also an important reflection of what happens to the Camarilla.



322 CE: Victrix races in the Circus Maximus for the first time. A challenger attempts to set her chariot afire, and Victrix destroys him, forcing the blazing torch he wields into his open mouth. Macellarius Corbulo protects her from the law, arguing successfully on her behalf in the chamber of the Senex.

324 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor's childe, Caius Julius Comitor, is destroyed by his lover, Julia Severina. Julia Severina is brought to trial before the Senex, and refuses to speak in her own defense or name a defender, instead delivering a gleefully mad, disjointed diatribe against the "pustulent, rotting corpse" of the Senex, making obscene gestures to her accuser and expelling blood from her posterior on the chamber floor. She laughs as the sentence of Final Death is passed. Her last statement before the Assembly is a declaration that she intends to copulate with her accuser before, during or after her execution. Tertia Julia Comitor herself oversees the crucifixion of Julia Severina, and Comitor's living servant watches the murderess burn in the sunrise.

326 CE: After a year of mourning, Tertia Julia Comitor surprises the Kindred of the Camarilla by holding true to her promise and hosting a party to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Maxentian's 2,000-year prophecy. The party is a great success. Some Kindred present note that Comitor is as gracious and light-hearted as ever.

326 CE: Marciana Longina Rhetrix is Embraced.

329 CE: A Martyr of the Lancea et Sanctum disrupts an orgy hosted by Macellarius Corbulo, denouncing him as a "degenerate beast." Corbulo reacts with great mirth, encouraging the attendees to crown the young Martyr "emperor of the party" and inviting him to sentence them all for their crimes. The impassioned declarations of the Martyr are drowned out in wave after wave of the attendee's derisive laughter. Tertia Julia Comitor leaves the party in silence. The Martyr is beaten into torpor near the end of the party and left for Sanctified Kindred to collect. Rumors alternately attribute the beating to Corbulo's allies, Comitor's allies, Corbulo himself or the mirthful, debauched attendees of the party.

331 CE: Septimus Aurelius Maxentian is consumed by a pillar of flame during a ceremony of the Cult of Augurs. Panicked Vaticinators and witnesses flee the Tempulum Remi, provoking a riot in Necropolis. The Legio Mortuum responds to dozens of accusations of sorcery in the weeks that follow, capturing well over 30 Kindred for trial by the Senex. Horatia Vera is named Regina Sacrorum.

332 CE: Conflict erupts between factions within the Lancea et Sanctum during a discussion of doctrine. The battle spills out into the tunnels of Necropolis, and seven Kindred are destroyed before the battle is suppressed by the soldiers of the Legio Mortuum. The call to outlaw the practice of the Lancea et Sanctum returns to the Senex, but the motion is defeated in formal debate.

Clan: Julii
Wing: Senex
Embrace: 44 BCE
Apparent Age: Early 30s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics (Senex) 4, Religion (Roman cults) 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 1, Brawl 1, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 4, Socialize (Kindred parties) 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Hiding emotions) 3
Merits: Allies (Baths of Caracalla) 5, Allies (Brothels of Rome) 1, Allies (Circus Maximus) 3, Contacts 3 (Senex, mortal Senate, Roman baths), Debate Style: Rhetoric 3, Haven 5, Herd 5, Resources 5, Retainer 4, Retainer 4, Retainer 3, Retainer 3, Status: Camarilla 3, Status: Senex 4, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 9
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Prudence. Comitor is a social creature, and would hate to be cut off from interaction with other vampires. Maintaining a social position requires care, planning, and a considerable amount of self-control. As she has risen in the Senex, she has also become aware of the importance of preserving the social structure around her. She is capable of sacrificing personal gain to maintain the structure she needs for her pleasures.
Vice: Gluttony. Comitor loves parties. It isn't just the sensual pleasures, it's the opportunity to partake in an environment where other people are also enjoying themselves, and where everyone around her validates her choices. If she attends a party and doesn't enjoy herself, her mood is black until she can get to a good one.
Health: 8
Initiative: 7
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Blood Potency: 5
Disciplines: Animalism 2, Dominate 4, Majesty 3, Resilience 3
Vitae/per Turn: 14/2
The Second Chapter: By 326 CE, Julia Comitor begins to get more serious about the role she plays in the Senex. Assume that all of her statistics remain the same, with the following exceptions: Academics 2, Politics (Senex) 5, Majesty 4.
The Third Chapter: Comitor is destroyed during the second chapter of the story, and plays no part in the third.

Macellarius Corbulo

Quotes: (Expression) *"I dedicate this to you, my peers who sit with the Senex, for your enjoyment and edification..."*

(Dominate) *"You know who I am. You know your place. You know what you must do. Do it."*

Description: *He looks like a florid, cheery bag of blood, like a huge debauched Cupid smothered in perfumed hair oil, white lead and rouge. He smiles in the same way Vitellius is said to have smiled when he saw a finely stuffed roasted crane, doused in garum. His cloaks are always fine, gaudy things, dyed in expensive colors and decorated with tassels and gold thread. Rings encrust chubby, squishy fingers like the scales on the claws of some sleepy overweight lizard. His toga sits over tightly-fitting breeches and a patterned tunic. He's a dandy and a popinjay and every single item he wears costs alone more than a soldier's annual wage. Wealth, however, doesn't guarantee good taste, and Kindred with a sense of style find that his wealth only enhances his spectacular vulgarity.*

He wears too much gold, too much perfume. Macellarius is sublimely cultured, but he doesn't have class. He isn't noble-born and he knows deep within that no amount of money, learning or literary skill can change it. He's a Julian, but not a Julian. His dress is flashy rather than stylish; his manners might be fashionable, but they aren't really patrician. And it's a really sore point. The one guaranteed way to garner Macellarius' wrath is to mention it.

He looks like he should be clumsy and slow, and certainly he never seems to move very far or very fast, and yet it's possible to turn away from him, just for a moment, only to find him on the other side of the hall, or far across the forum, or standing nearby when he was a hundred yards away.

Background: S. Julius Macellarius Corbulo tries hard to play up the fact that he is a Julian, both in terms of human and Kindred lineage, but the fact is that he's deficient in blood. The name Macellarius ("Meat Merchant") is not a name any Roman patrician would be proud of.

In fact, in life Macellarius was the freedman of a minor member of the Julian clan, a former pedagogue who simply took the name of the man who freed him, as was the custom. His parents and grandparents were slaves. Macellarius the freedman worked hard as an importer of exotic sweetmeats and spices, and like many of those who had begun their lives as slaves of the great families, he made a fortune enough to gain at least the trappings of nobility, even if he never really had class. By the time that Julius Auditor, a true Julian of ancient stock, came for him and gave him the Embrace, he had become grossly fat on the labors of hundreds of slaves and clients, possessor of a villa with floorspace larger than many small farms.

Among the dead, Macellarius found to his distress that he was a client again. He needed a niche, and so he returned to literature. In fact, apart from a few lengthy, dull histories, the *Propinqui* had no literature of their own. Macellarius was among the first of the Kindred to attempt to create a literary aesthetic for the dead.

He's a polymath; he's done everything from tragedies and comedies through to epic poems, epyllia and epigrams. And as a writer, he's not bad. But he isn't all that good, either. Whatever his small army of toadies and flatterers might think, he isn't as funny as Plautus. He isn't as adept with epic hexameters as Virgil, and he isn't as artfully concise as Callimachus. While his tragedies outstrip the work of Euripides and Sophocles in their presentation of violence and death, they lack any real insight into human nature. As a prose stylist, he's got nothing on Apuleius and as a biographer, he's never going to be a Suetonius. But he is, by quite a significant margin, the very best the Kindred have, and the vestiges of talent that still survive in this obese walking corpse have made him a favorite among the Kindred. Although he doesn't have any official position among the Senex, he is very much the Camarilla's Master of Revels. There isn't a party that goes on without the touch of Macellarius' chubby hand. Because of that, he's got a lot of power. A vampire's reputation can soar or collapse with one well-chosen *bon mot* from Macellarius' lips.

His wrath, as terrible as any other Julian's, has the distinction of creativity. He brings down his enemies with complex, labyrinthine plots stolen from the great tragedians of the past, creating grotesque dramas of ersatz cosmic retribution. His penchant for making his enemies' falls look like divine justice lead some of the Kindred to call him "the *Erinys*"—the Fury, or the Harpy—but never to his face.

Macellarius has a somewhat conflicted relationship with Tertia Julia Comitor. In some ways she represents everything he is not. She is a true Julian; he's just a sham. She has taste and grace; he will always be a parvenu. He'd do something about her, but her parties are too good.

333 CE: Julia Sabina is injured by a barbarian vampire of the Peregrine Collegia in an apparently unprovoked attack. She makes the surprising choice to speak on his behalf before the Senex, arguing that he misinterpreted a gesture of hers, and that he should not shoulder the burden of her ignorance. Her defense is successful, although popular gossip later claims it is a fabrication.

335 CE: The Black Abbey is consecrated, and the doctrine of the Lancea et Sanctum begins to solidify. Horatia Vera predicts, in public ceremony, that the abbey will burn within five years. Thascius Hostilinus is rumored to reply with a prediction of his own: that the abbey will never be destroyed, and that it is Vera herself who is soon to burn.

336 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor's fourth party in honor of the millennial prophecy of Maxentian. These parties, now famously named "the Decades" now attract all of Rome's Kindred elite. Horatia Vera reiterates Maxentian's prophecy at the celebration, drawing the appreciative applause of the assembled guests. Macellarius Corbulo presents Tertia Julia Comitor with a necklace of dazzling expense and beauty, and she accepts it with a gracious smile, quelling rumors of dispute between the two.





Over the last century or so, Macellarius has sired a few childer, always with the permission of the Senex. Curiously, each of them is almost as obese as he is, even if they were not so fat in life.

Storytelling Hints: Macellarius is one of the most visible *Propinqui* that characters will meet. Be expansive and effusive when playing him, always smiling, always making extravagant gestures. Spread your hands, and vary your tone. Although he's grotesque and (worse) *nouveau rich*, he's also charming and, in a dark way, funny, the (un)life and soul of any party. Players should find having their characters interact with Macellarius enjoyable, even when he's trying to get them staked by a horde of ravening Goths.

In every party, in every orgy of blood, Macellarius will be there, and he will over-indulge. If feeding is involved, describe how Macellarius gorges himself on mortal blood and then disgorges it, so that he can feed some more, in the way that Julius Caesar is reputed to have done with his food. He takes months at a time to organize dramatic, bizarre parties. In one, Conditioned mortal thralls prepare themselves in front of a Kindred audience as if preparing a carcass for a Senatorial table, before cutting their own wrists and offering themselves as food. In another, he acquires a dozen or more slaves from exotic corners of the Empire, shackling them by the feet from the ceiling of a Necropolitan hall and having them "tenderized" with cudgels for a week or more; he invites his guests to walk among the bruised mortals, allowing them to drink their fill and compare the tastes of foreign blood in the way a human epicure would compare wine vintages. In another still, he gathers children, drugging them to his preference, so that his guests will become intoxicated on adulterated, delicate blood. Vampires with scruples, religious convictions or the simple with to maintain Humanity will not find Macellarius' parties easy affairs to stomach, but to refuse an invite or make a scene is to offend him deeply, and when Macellarius takes offense, he takes with it revenge.

In the Chronicle, Macellarius is the characters' best friend, or their worst enemy, and he can change from one to the other without any notice if it looks like they might gain (or lose) the upper hand.

What Macellarius will never do is openly tell anyone what he thinks of them. He might be plotting to destroy the characters in a dozen different ways, but he'll be just as friendly to their faces.

And about those plots. He might steal from Euripides' *Bacchae* and contrive for a character to enter frenzy in the presence of a valued member of a mortal family, humiliating the vampire and ending the life of the mortal (or even the whole family). He might make an Oedipus of his enemy, engineering events over several years so that his victim performs a terrible crime without even knowing it — engaging in an incestuous sexual relationship with a long-lost child, perhaps — *and then* leaves enough clues that a curious victim can find out himself. He might engineer a breakdown in relationships between several vampires in a coterie, prompting them to destroy one another before they realize the truth. Make his plots grand and gory and tragic, pieces of theater in which his victims are the unwitting victims. He has plenty of vampire clients to do his dirty work, meaning that his machinations can never directly be traced back to him.

Macellarius is never alone. He usually has one of his friends with him, many of whom adopt a similar style. Foremost among them is Flavonius Calvus, as

337 CE: The chariot races of Macellarius Corbulo are interrupted by a riot that spills from the stands onto the field itself. By the time the disturbance is quelled, several Kindred — all allies and servants of Corbulo himself — are destroyed. Outraged, Corbulo calls for the capture and destruction of the instigators. Three Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia are brought before the Senex and sentenced to destruction, satisfying Corbulo. Whispers of false evidence and too-expedient procedure arise immediately within the ranks of the Peregrine Collegia.

338 CE: Horatia Vera is assassinated by a Mekhet of the Lancea et Sanctum, who sets himself alight in her haven, destroying himself and one of the Regina Sacrorum's guards. Many Kindred of Necropolis note that Thascius Hostilinus's prediction has been realized. Appius Ferasius Constans is named Rex Sacrorum in her place.

339 CE: Eupraxus leads a second mortal cult to mass suicide. Rather than applause, he is met by the uncomfortable shrugs of the Camarilla elite. Macellarius Corbulo makes an effort to distance himself from Eupraxus, mocking his tendency to "endlessly repeat his faded glories and moldering offenses both."



341 CE: The Emperor Constans bans pagan sacrifice. A thunderous debate follows in the halls of the Senex after a Magistrate of the Lancea et Sanctum proposes that the Camarilla follow suit. Dozens of voices join the debate on both sides, and violence erupts on more than one occasion. After four weeks, it is decided that the Camarilla will not follow Constans's declaration. Less than two months later, the debate is reopened when a respected official of the Senex wonders aloud whether the Camarilla has the right to divorce itself from the declarations of a Roman Emperor. The legal operations of the Camarilla grind to a halt for nine weeks, as nearly every legislator attends or participates in the monumental debate that follows. The upper ranks of the Legio Mortuum threaten to fracture during the arguments, as some Equestrians call for plans to move, *en masse*, against the Cult of Augurs. The Praetor of the Legion of the Dead barely manages to hold his troops together until the final declaration of the Senex is made: Constans's declaration will be upheld, and pagan sacrifice is henceforth banned in Necropolis. No Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs will be prosecuted for previous sacrifice. The Cult of Augurs is crippled by the declaration, and all practitioners of the Veneficia are driven into secrecy. Rumor that certain high-ranking members of both the Legio Mortuum and the Senex willfully ignore the continued practice of the Vaticinators persist.

344 CE: Vitericus Minor is Embraced in the territories of the Goths.

cadaverous and lean as Macellarius is fat. If Macellarius should be destroyed, for whatever reason, Calvus, who's from much the same background as Macellarius and has similar abilities, would take his place, both socially within the game, and as a plot element in terms of the chronicle.

Clan: Julii

Wing: Senex

Embrace: 81CE

Apparent Age: Early 40s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Republican Latin Literature) 3, Investigation 1, Occult (Omens and Portents) 2, Politics (Provincial and Diocesan Politics) 3, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Larceny 2, Stealth (Catching People by Surprise) 3, Weaponry (Dagger) 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 1, Empathy 1, Expression (Plays, Poetry) 3, Intimidation 2, Socialize (Dinner Party Conversation, Orgies) 5, Streetwise (Slave Dealing) 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Debate Style: Reason 2, Debate Style: Rhetoric 4, Haven Location 3, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 4, Herd 3, Language (Greek), Patron 5, Resources 4, Retainers 3, Status (Camarilla) 4, Status (Senex) 2

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 3 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Prudence. Macellarius is good at picking the winning side in any conflict and siding with it. His beady, pig-like eye is always on the main chance.

Vice: Gluttony. Macellarius over-indulges, spectacularly, even vomiting up blood he's just consumed in order to drink some more. Secretly, he would love to be able to draw sustenance from solid food, and in private, he's been trying to consume human flesh for decades. Maybe at some point in the future, he might be able to manage it.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Blood Potency: 5

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Celerity 3, Dominate 4, Resilience 4

Vitae/Per Turn: 14/2

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1	5

The Second Chapter: By 326 CE, Corbulo is moving rapidly up the ranks of the Senex, and takes naturally to the role of public figure. The following statistics replace those listed above: Haven Size 5, Resources 5, Status (Senex) 3.

The Third Chapter: Corbulo is destroyed during the second chapter of the story, and plays no part in the third.

Eupraxus

Quotes: (Persuasion) *"Come, see my hands. Put your fingers in the holes. Put your hand in my side. Put your finger to your lips. Taste my sweet redeeming blood, my child."*

(Socialize) *"I would like that. I have a clean, quiet place where we can... come together."*

(Manipulation) *I, ah, need some help. It's kind of embarrassing, really, and I shouldn't ask, but I need you to do something for me..."*

Description: *He's a beautiful youth in a tunic. His hair falls over a porcelain brow in ringlets. His lips are like fresh rosebuds. His eyes, under perfectly arched brows, reflect the light like sapphires. His soft, pale skin glows with health and love. His voice, just broken, is soft and sweet. A glory surrounds him; in the lamplight, he seems to have the light of God shining upon him and around him.*

But then his sensuous lip curls in a way not congruous with the appearance of innocence. Or his eyebrow rises a tiny fraction of an inch, and his eye adopts a knowing expression. And that pure, sweet voice says something utterly obscene.

Background: Eupraxus was a Syrian catamite, a slave trained from childhood to be the object of some Roman senator's lusts. But he proved to be a poor servant. One day, he strangled his master and ran away, knowing exactly what awaited him if he was ever caught.

Cycles of abuse are hard to break; the runaway had no other skills and had no choice but to sell himself to a brothel or starve. He'd see the Christians on the streets and they'd tell him that there was a way out of his terrible servitude, and that there was hope, and he'd laugh at them and tell them that their God was nothing, for there was no way out for him.

The way out came in the shape of Flaviana Galla, a dead priestess who had been a living man, who came to him and said she was impressed with his beauty and grace, and told him about the Gods and the dead and a lot of things the boy didn't understand, but he allowed the dead priestess to buy him back from the brothel owner and let the priestess do with him what she wanted.

When he was dead, Eupraxus went back and drank his fill of the owner of the brothel, leaving the man dead.

But cycles of abuse remain hard to break, even after death. Eupraxus became, for a time, Flaviana's whipping boy, forced into a different kind of servitude by the demands of her patronage. He's still in her debt, but Flaviana Galla approves of his activities, and leaves him mostly alone, on the understanding that he expect no help from her. He's happy with the situation. In the meantime, he's found himself a new patron, Macellarius, who finds him a charming addition to his parties, and who is all too happy to (quietly) supply ideas for what to do with his little "project".

Since the time of Maximian, Eupraxus has led a number of small heretical cults, one after the other. His heresy is a simple one: he tells them he is Christ come back to them, ministering to the poor, and to the sick. He opens up his side and his palms and allows them to drink of his blood. Most of them are hopelessly devoted to him.

He is doing this because it amuses him. He thinks the Christians idiots blinded by false hope, and he derives a great deal of enjoyment from leading them to their doom. In 310, he made his whole cult martyr themselves. He did the same in 339, ordering them to reveal themselves to the Nicenes. They got themselves killed, too. They started a riot. Oh, how Eupraxus laughed.

He now has another group. The heresy's the same, but this group seem to be different somehow. Eupraxus wants them to be zealous, but he's beginning to think that they're a little too zealous. Each time he calls them together to drink from his blood, there's another one added to the flock. He hears stories about things they're doing in the name of "the returned Christ." They're preaching on the streets. And the Eupraxites (the "do-gooders") are beginning to antagonize some of the other heretical groups, taking it upon themselves to barge into feasts and services and break them up, and even beating rival clergy. It's too soon for them to be doing this. They're spoiling his fun!

He can't very well tell them not to—he's spent a year or more impressing into them the wrongness of the heretics. But they're doing it the wrong way. They're being too open, too soon, and they're beginning to tell others about the "miracles" Eupraxus is doing. The Kindred don't know about this part, yet, and Eupraxus isn't sure what he's going to do.

Storytelling Hints: He is Eupraxus, "he who does good," and at first he appears to dead and living alike as a thoroughly decent individual. Vampire should like him. He'll help out neonates in any way he can, seemingly without thought of any gain for himself. He'll

346 CE: The fifth of Tertia Julia Comitor's Decades is held. Thascius Hostilinus attends with a Sanctified retinue, making public his pleasure with the preceding years' events. One of his retinue openly insults the Cult of Augurs, noting that the Black Abbey yet stands and declaring that their auguries are mere political currency, worthless in spiritual terms. Enraged, Comitor has the speaker thrown out. Macellarius Corbulo manages to rescue the party afterwards by reciting a mirthful, if somewhat crass, poem that sparks a light-hearted competition among the artful speakers among the attendees.

348 CE: Vitericus Minor travels to Constantinople, then wanders westward. He declares himself a prophet before the Kindred of the Black Abbey, and is ejected by his outraged peers. He journeys to Rome and founds the Cainite Heresy.





listen patiently to whatever problems or complaints they have. They can go to Eupraxus. He'll help them.

He's astoundingly good at getting others to take consequences he's brought upon himself. And they'll thank him for it. His cult is a case in point. Flaviana approves of what her childe is doing, if only because it's guaranteed to kill a few Christians and offend many more.

Macellarius, meanwhile, sees the whole thing as "a splendid lark," and keeps giving Eupraxus ideas about the ways in which he can make his followers humiliate themselves for him, or ways in which the Eupraxites might become nuisances to the Christians. Both Macellarius and Flaviana keep quiet the fact that they approve of what Eupraxus is doing. Marciana Rhetrix knows about the Eupraxites, but also knows that Eupraxus is under the protection of Macellarius. The Sanctified loudly complain about the cult, and members of the Senex and Cult of Augurs promise to do something about Eupraxus, but no one does anything.

As time goes on, the third group of Eupraxites become more and more beyond Eupraxus' control. When he tries to contrive their martyrdom, they get lucky and survive, joyously returning and thanking him for his divine protection. And now they've found an heretical sect that's fighting back, whose leader seems to be able to produce many of the same miracles as Eupraxus. When the Eupraxites and the Cainites meet, one of the cults is going to be destroyed. More importantly, the pagan vampires forget that he was ever one of their own, cutting him loose to deal with the problem on his own.

If Eupraxus doesn't fall to the characters, Vitericus or the Cainites get him. And if they don't get him, his own followers get him.

At the moment that Eupraxus meets his end, the Vinculi holding each of his followers' devotion in place snaps like a frayed rope. Suddenly, each becomes aware of *exactly* what they've been following.

Clan: Daeva
Wing: Cult of Augurs
Embrace: 284CE
Apparent Age: Mid-teens
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Religion (Christianity) 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Weaponry (Dagger) 1, Survival 1
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression (Lyre) 3, Persuasion (Asking for Help) 4, Socialize (Sexual Techniques) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Appear Innocent) 4
Merits: Haven Location 1, Haven Size 1, Herd 2, Mentor 1, Retainers 3, Striking Looks 4
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Charity. Eupraxus likes making friends, and gives socially and materially. He wants people to like him. He knows that the best way to make people like him is to be interested in them, and so he acts like he's interested in them. He's an easy, generous conversationalist, and meeting him is to be

349 CE: Helvidius Bassianus, the War-Crow, orders his troops within the Legio Mortuum to remove all insignia from their shields. They bear neither the marks of the traditional Camarilla nor the *chi-rho* of the mortal Christian Empire. The decision provokes ripples of discomfort among the Kindred of Rome. While it is not considered overtly treasonous, some begin to whisper that Bassianus is putting his loyalties up for bidding. The Praetor of the Legio Mortuum points out that there is no legislation guiding the insignia of the Legion, and that the officers have always been free to dictate the markings of their troops as they choose. Bassianus ignores the controversy, and his pure-black shields are deployed. A second division within the Legio Mortuum, led by a contemporary of Bassianus, soon follows suit.

351 CE: The whole of the Legio Mortuum now marches under the pure-black shield. Rumor has it that representatives of the Senex and the Lancea et Sanctum have made entreaty to the Praetor of the Legion, attempting to bargain for a proclamation that would require the soldiers to bear their respective marks in service. All attempts are rebuffed.



convinced that he is fascinated with you.

Vice: Greed. Eupraxus rarely makes friends without an ulterior motive. The important thing to remember is that although he'll milk friendships for everything he can get out of them, he won't call in favors, or directly remind people of what he has done for them. He's more subtle than that. He's really good at making the people he meets, alive and dead, feel guilty for not helping him, even when he's asking for completely unreasonable things.

Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Blood Potency: 3
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Majesty 3, Vigor 1
Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1	5

The Second Chapter: In 326 CE, Eupraxus continues his depraved entertainments, and develops little. The only statistic that changes for him is Herd, which increases to 4. Corbulo is moving rapidly up the ranks of the Senex, and takes naturally to the role of public figure. The following statistics replace those listed above: Haven Size 5, Resources 5, Status (Senex) 3.

The Third Chapter: Eupraxus is destroyed during the second chapter of the story, and plays no part in the third.

Flaviana Galla

Quotes: *"Through the ecstasies, we become one with the Great Mother. Through pain, we touch her wisdom and power."* (Religion)

"The vengeance of the gods has no end, and no escape. They send furies in the mind, furies in the soul, and furies in the flesh. Pray that they not find it necessary to make me their agent to chastise you." (Intimidate)

Description: *Flaviana is striking; tall and slender with fiery red hair that cascades down her back. Her movements speak of ritual no matter how mundane their aim, and her voice resonates with a thousand agonies and ecstasies. Her clothes and adornments mark her out as a priestess, but something jars, like a coin of brass among gold.*

(Expression) *Leaping and spinning, Flaviana sweeps the axe through the air, weaving among the other celebrants. Her axe falls to slash her arm, and a fine spray of Vitae slices through the air. As she leaps higher than ever, her skirts part to reveal the mass of scar tissue between her legs.*

Background: Flaviana was a devout follower of Cybele even when she was mortal, and male. The cult she joined was controlled by one of the Kindred, who decided that Flavianus would make a fine childe. He was embraced before he could castrate himself to express his devotion to the goddess, and for several decades he had the habit of castrating himself at every ceremony, flinging his genitals to the mob of initiated mortal cultists.

In devotion to the goddess, Flavianus out-matched his sire, and when he discovered that she did not really believe he diablerized her in a frenzy. He then declared himself the new high priestess of the cult, castrated himself for the last time, and spent the Willpower needed to make the mutilation permanent.

Flaviana encouraged the cult her sire had begun, as a cult of the Great Mother and of Flaviana, her messenger. The rites became even more bloody and ecstatic than normal for followers of Cybele, and their performance moved from the streets of Rome to hidden subterranean chambers. The cult is quite substantial, with over a hundred members, and they will do almost anything that Flaviana commands. Her low Humanity means that few of the mortal members like her, but they all regard her with a fearful awe and reverence, a feeling that is only reinforced by Disciplines.

The cult has two main purposes. The first is to recruit new worshipers of Cybele; the members of the Flaviana's cult are often the leading members of more conventional cults of Cybele. These other cultists are not remotely as devoted as the inner circle, however.

The second purpose is opposition to the Christians. Flaviana has never liked followers of other religions, and has always found the Christians the most obnoxious. Now that they hold power, she directs considerable effort toward undermining them. Flaviana loathes the Sanctified, particularly Thascius Hostilius. She may have been the first to call him Pestilens; she certainly claims to have been.



356 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor's sixth Decade. All attendees consider the celebration a great success. An uncharacteristic peace is maintained between the Vaticinators of the Cult of Augurs and the Missionaries of the Lancea et Sanctum. Comitor herself welcomes both with equanimity, encouraging her guests to forget the strife of the world above and enjoy her hospitality. Julia Sabina, Macellarius Corbulo, Helvidius Bassianus, Thascius Hostilinus, Flaviana Galla and Appius Ferasius Constans are all in attendance — the last time they are all found in peaceful gathering together.

357 CE: The Emperor Constantius visits Rome. Tensions between the Arian and Nicene factions of the living Catholic Church threaten to erupt into open conflict. The Lancea et Sanctum seems poised on the edge of schism even as the Sanctified count victory after victory in the legislative chambers of the Senex. The Kindred of the Cult of Augurs frequently predict the imminent destruction of the Sanctified movement, pointing to numerous omens to enforce their statements.

358 CE: The city of Nicomedia is destroyed by a violent earthquake. Several prominent Sanctified Missionaries are destroyed. Popular support begins to shift back to the Cult of Augurs, who gleefully attribute the earthquakes to the wrath of the gods. Appius Ferasius Constans calls for the re-legalization of pagan sacrifice in Necropolis, arguing that only by properly appeasing the gods can the Kindred of Rome hope to preserve themselves. The motion is proposed and defeated in an assembly of the Senex.

359 CE: In defiance of law, Appius Ferasius Constans holds a great sacrificial ritual, appealing to Jupiter, Apollo and Mars for Rome's protection. Constans is taken prisoner by soldiers of the Legio Mortuum and escorted to the Senex, who reluctantly sentence him to death according to the letter of the law. A riot erupts, disrupting the Senex assembly and spreading quickly through Necropolis. Constans briefly escapes and is subsequently recaptured and destroyed. Flaviana Galla is named Regina Sacrorum. While she is careful not to decry Constans's destruction, she also makes no statement of intent to follow the law. Those who worship with her know that Galla secretly conducts regular sacrifices to Cybele, and that she practices the Veneficia.

362 CE: The Emperor Julian attempts and fails to reinstate the official worship of Apollo. The Senex is caught in a dilemma, trying to maintain the integrity of the law while honoring the rapid reversals of Imperial declaration. Many of the vampires of the Peregrine Collegia begin to openly ignore the rule of law, choosing to maintain pockets of self-governed order within their districts. The Legio Mortuum is kept busy breaking up those bands within the Collegia that go too far.



Storytelling Hints: Flaviana symbolizes the pagans, and the birth of the Circle of the Crone. She has studies strange and lost arts of magic, incorporating them into the Veneficia, and as the Camarilla weakens and falls she intensifies her interest.

The cult of Cybele under Flaviana is a bloody one, placing great importance on ecstatic self-mutilation, in particular self-castration by male followers. Flaviana follows her own preaching; she does not torture her victims over long night, but prefers to whip them into a frenzy in which they harm themselves, or set frenzied followers on them. She regards rage frenzies as inspiration from the goddess, and does not always even try to resist them.

Flaviana is implacably hostile to both Christians and the Sanctified, but willing to compromise with other pagans in the light of the greater threat. She does not much like them, seeing them as allies of necessity rather than any sort of friends. This emphasizes the conflict between Christian and Pagan, while also making it clear that there is no united pagan consciousness in the time of the Camarilla.

The pagans are doomed to be crushed by the Christians, but some manage to disappear into the dark crevices of the world. Flaviana starts by openly opposing the Christians, but as that position becomes untenable she may take her cult and go into hiding. Alternatively, she may be caught and destroyed by the Lancea et Sanctum, or even by mortal Christians who crush her depraved cult, or go down in fire as she leads an assault on a prominent Sanctified coterie.

The choice should depend on how the themes are playing out in your chronicle, which in turn will depend on which side the player characters have chosen. If they have joined the Sanctified, she should probably be destroyed, and the player characters should help. If they are pagans, she may be one of their allies as they try to form a pagan alliance that can survive in the new nights, or a horrible example of what happens to those who do not act subtly.

In any case, as the Camarilla weakens and the situation degenerates, she should rely on the Veneficia to a greater extent, and more openly.

Clan: Daeva
Wing: Cult of Augurs
Embrace: 234 CE
Apparent Age: Early 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 6, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 2 (Clothing), Medicine 3 (amputation), Occult 3, Politics 1, Religion 5 (Cult of Cybele)
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Weaponry 3 (Axes)
Social Skills: Empathy 3 (Fanatical cultists), Expression 5 (Ritual dance), Intimidation 4, Persuasion 4, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4 (Religious obfuscation)
Merits: Allies (Cult of Cybele) 5, Contacts 1 (Pagan mystery cultists), Haven Security 5, Herd 4 (Mortal followers of Cybele), Iron Stamina 2, Resources 4, Retainer 4, Status: Camarilla 1, Status: Cult of Augurs 4, Status: Cult of Cybele 5, Striking Appearance 2
Willpower: 8
Humanity: 4

Virtue: Faith. Flaviana truly believes that the Great Mother watches over the world, and has plans for everyone. She tries to understand, and advance, those plans.

Vice: Pride. Flaviana feels that she is a particularly blessed servant of the Great Mother, with unique insight into the will of the goddess. This makes her especially suited to control cults, and anyone who opposes her might as well be opposing the goddess herself.

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Celerity 4, Veneficia 3, Dominate 3, Majesty 5, Nightmare 1, Vigor 3

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

Veneficia Rituals: Pangs of Proserpine (1), Call to Cybele (1), Call to Janus (1), Apollonian Sight (1), The Eyes of Minerva (2), The Blessing of Antaeus (3)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Ritual Axe	3L	9

The Second Chapter: By 326 CE, Galla solidifies her place as a figure of prominence among the Cult of Augurs. Replace the following statistics in the second chapter: Status: Cult of Augurs 5, Veneficia 4, additional rituals: Call to Dionysus (1), Fortuna's Blessing (3).

The Third Chapter: Flaviana Galla abandons Rome during the second chapter of the story, and plays no part in the third.

Thascius Hostilinus

Quotes: (Religion) *"Who calls upon the name of the Lord must do so in a fitting fashion; it is self-evident that our God tolerates no casual devotion."*

(Persuasion) *"And have you not seen the result of your folly? What good have your sacrifices done you? Where is your Emperor now? Whom does he truly serve?"*

Description: *He has no visible eyes; even in the torchlight of the Camarilla, they are pits of darkness in black shining skin. His heavy woolen cloak reeks like the rotting flesh of a plague victim, and the very smell causes you to imagine the festering decay under those rough, filthy folds. His clean-shaved face and scalp shines as if covered with fevered sweat, even though vampires do not gain fevers, even though the dead do not perspire. When he talks, his voice swings between bass and screeching falsetto as he grows ever more passionate, and his face contorts; he bares yellow-white teeth as he pronounces the judgment of God on the pagan and the heretic.*

Background: Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus, called Numida, called Pestilens, was a freedman of Thebes. He made what passed for a living as a bandit, killing and looting travelers along lonely Egyptian roads. It was in the time of Philip the Arab that Thascius and his cohorts made the mistake of attacking what looked like a group of Christians, traveling by night. They were no living Christians, and within minutes, only Thascius was left alive. He repented on his knees as a monstrous cenobite single-handedly wiped out the bandits, crying out to the God of the Christians. The creature placed his hand on Hostilinus' throat and asked if his repentance was true, if he understood what it was he said, and Hostilinus, eyes lowered, trembling, told the cenobite that he would gladly follow any God whose followers could do such things. This pleased the traveler, and by the time the sun had risen, Hostilinus was dead, but still walking.

Hostilinus' sire—his name, it turned out, was Maron—took Thascius to see his own master, in Thebes, and before long, the bandit had become a more holy predator, refining the power of his blood by sheer force of will. In 261, Thascius, driven by a vision, saw fit to travel to Rome with his sire's blessing, hidden in a cargo of grain. He arrived in the city shortly after the capture of Valerian. The pagan vampires of the Camarilla were polite—the persecution of Christians had only recently ended, and among the dead the Sanctified were for a time tolerated again—but unwilling to hear his message.

They assigned to him a feeding ground in the plague-ridden Suburra; they could not have known that Thascius would develop a taste for the blood of the diseased and the dying. The vampires of the Camarilla, now that they know him, call him *Pestilens*—"the plague"—out of frustration with his fervent, uncompromising stand and his growing number of followers. But even his own followers don't know how accurate that name is.

Thascius Hostilinus is now the most influential vampire among the Roman Lancea et Sanctum. He is their voice, their head, their heart. He speaks the word of Longinus and the vampires around him listen. He is unafraid to

363 CE: The Emperor Julian is slain by an unidentified spearman at the Battle of Maranga. Riot and rebellion ensue within Necropolis. Helvidius Bassianus strikes a deal with Thascius Hostilinus of the Lancea et Sanctum, commanding his troops in concert with the forces of the Sanctified in quelling the rebellion. The Legio Mortuum splinters as a result, some pledging themselves to Bassianus, others against him. The last Praetor of the Legio Mortuum is destroyed in the rebellion.

364 CE: The rebellion is quashed. Bassianus's troops stand victorious, but the strength of the Legio Mortuum is cut by nearly a third. The Peregrine Collegia continues to fragment, and some bands grow strong enough to force withdrawal of the Legion's troops from their districts. The Legio Mortuum strikes an uneasy bargain with the mercenary defense of some bands in an attempt to maintain order.

366 CE: Tertia Julia Comitor's seventh Decade. The number of attendees present at the celebration number less than half that of the previous gathering. None of the Cult of Augurs attend. Bassianus announces his personal conversion to the Sanctified cause in conversation, shocking Comitor into silence. Only Macellarius Corbulo responds, laughing uproariously. Three weeks later, Corbulo disappears.

367 CE: Conflict in Britannia brings rumors of mass barbarian uprising to Rome. A riot results, sparked by a clash between Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia. The Legio Mortuum suppresses the riot at great cost: several prominent soldiers of the Legion are slain.



die again, and does not temper his language. He's been sentenced to Final Death on several occasions, but each time he's escaped or been rescued.

He's achieved a kind of tarnished status, enabling him to come and go like the winds that carry the plague itself, pronouncing the judgment of God on the unbeliever.

Storytelling Hints: In the same way that Tertia Julia represents the Camarilla, Thascius Hostilinus represents the Lancea et Sanctum, and his fate is tied closely to the Lancea et Sanctum's future in Rome.

He is open in his condemnation of the pagan past, and he the foremost exponent of the view that God has placed His hand on the Emperors of Rome; that paganism will die with the last pagan Emperor; that the Camarilla's end comes with the death of the old religion of Rome.

Having said that, Thascius isn't quite as important to the Lancea et Sanctum as Tertia Julia is to the Camarilla; Tertia Julia falls with the Camarilla, but if Thascius Hostilinus falls, there will be another just like him to take his place, just as Rome was vital to the pagan Empire, and increasingly irrelevant to the Christian Empire.

Thascius is a means by which the Storyteller can drum in the theme of the Camarilla's fall. There are no prophecies of the future, but Thascius' opinions are put strongly enough and often enough that the vampires of Rome start believing them, as time goes on, and, by believing what Thascius has to say, they make it happen.

He wants to make it happen, and although he'll talk about a "divinely ordained future," he's actually under few illusions, and will not rest on his laurels. He makes a particular effort to wipe out heresies among the Sanctified—the heresies of Eupraxus and Vitericus Minor both come to his attention, and he tries to extirpate both of them. In this way, he echoes many of the great Christian leaders of the day, who believe that for the universal church to be strong, it must be completely united in doctrine.

The Sanctified are on the ascendant, and Thascius Hostilinus knows it. After the death of Julian, this Sanctified monster's pronouncements grow ever more triumphant. He becomes over-confident.

His main weakness is his unusual condition as a vampire who can only feed on the victims of the plague. He knows that his childer have the potential to become just as he is; not all of them know it themselves, however.

Although he considers this to be God's pleasing and perfect will, he knows that the pagan vampires would use it against him. The other Sanctified are still vampires, meanwhile, and there are those among his followers who will happily engineer his fall—and in fact, some time after the fall of Julian, this is what happens, as his secret becomes known and his enemies and erstwhile friends close in. He is destroyed (or at the very least, forced into torpor).

Clan: Mekhet (founder of the Morbus bloodline)

Wing: Lancea et Sanctum (Peregrine Collegia)

Embrace: Some time during the reign of Philip the Arab (about 244-249CE)

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts (Smithing) 1, Religion (Christianity and its Heresies) 3

Physical Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Ride 3, Stealth 3,

368 CE: Two of Macellarius Corbulo's childer disappear. Rumor of vendetta follows, and frightened Kindred make allusion to Bassianus's legendary cruelty, and many speculate that the War-Crow might be willing to go so far as to destroy an entire line because of a single insult. Bassianus does not respond. No formal charges are laid.

370 CE: At an assembly of the Senex, Marciana Longina Rhetrix publicly decries Tertia Julia Comitor as sinfully dissolute and a crass materialist. Rhetrix proposes that the Senex officially designate Comitor "degenerate" and criminalize her orgies. Nobody rises to speak in Comitor's defense. Comitor defends herself with some success: she is not condemned by law, but the Senex chooses to censure her. The measure is an empty gesture, carrying no weight whatsoever, but Comitor reacts with horrified shame. Mortified, she excuses herself from the Senex and never again attends Assembly.

371 CE: Thascius Hostilinus leads his followers in ritually cleansing and claiming the Fons Ater for the Lancea et Sanctum, placing a Sanctified altar within the cave. The protests of the Cult of Augurs go unheeded. Over the course of the next six months, no fewer than 14 Vaticinators are caught attempting to set the Fons afire.

372 CE: A ritual of the Cult of Augurs is disrupted by a rain of scorching blood, deep inside Necropolis. Flaviana Galla is burned beyond recognition, but she survives. Kindred present at the ritual leave the Cult of Augurs in droves, seeking the protection of the Peregrine Collegia and the Lancea et Sanctum.

Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression (Preaching) 4, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Evangelism) 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Christian bishops and clergy) 4, Debate Style: Theology 4, Debate Style: Rhetoric 2, Eidetic Memory, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 1, Haven Size 3, Herd 3, Language (Latin, Greek—his native language is Egyptian), Status (Lancea et Sanctum) 4

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 6 (Power Fetish Obsession—a small codex containing Psalm 109)

Virtue: Faith. Thascius believes utterly in the rightness of his position, and even though he knows that his prophecies are really self-fulfilling, he nonetheless believes that God wants him to bring about the Camarilla's fall.

Vice: Pride. Thascius has met the Monachus, second founder of the Lancea et Sanctum. Thascius is foremost among the Sanctified vampires of Rome. Thascius has escaped destruction many times. He believes himself invincible. It will one day be his downfall.

Initiative: 4

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 9

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Cachexy 4, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 4, Theban Sorcery 5

Rituals: The Angel's Touch (1), Blood Scourge (1), Curse of Babel (2), Liar's Plague (2), Malediction of Despair (3), Micah's Hope (3), Gift of Lazarus (4), Stigmata (4), The Martyr's Miracle (5)

Vitae/Per Turn: 15/3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Sword	2L	2	8

The Second Chapter: By 326 CE, Hostilinus makes public declaration of his position within the Lancea et Sanctum and begins to take an active role in steering the future of the Camarilla. Replace the following statistics for the second chapter: Status (Lancea et Sanctum) 5, Status (Camarilla) 3, Humanity 5.

The Third Chapter: Hostilinus is destroyed during the second chapter, and plays no part in the third.

Marciana Longina Rhetrix

Quotes: *"All that exists has its place under heaven, and our place is in the darkness."* (Religion)

"Damned? Yes. Undoubtedly, and beyond redemption. But it is as monsters that we can find purpose and meaning. The Creator of the world has ordained our roles, and our every action has significance in his sight." (Expression)

Description: *Marciana was an old woman when she was Embraced, as attested by her thin white hair, lined skin, and unsteady walk. But her eyes are harder than jet, and there is nothing old about her voice, which carries like thunder in the darkness, or caresses like the breezes of a summer night. Her confidence is stronger than her arm, and it shows in her bearing. She does not physically push herself forward, but there is almost nothing that can push her back.*

Background: Marciana was a Christian in life, one who held firm to the faith through the persecutions. She remembers being arrested and tortured once, but she did not recant. She brought her family, children and grandchildren, through the horrors alive, and was there to see the beginnings of the victory of her faith.

Then a Sanctified Mekhet decided to test her faith, stalking and killing all her family. She never wavered, and she was brought back to maintain her firmness among the damned.

Death and unholy resurrection did what torture and the slaughter of her family could not; they destroyed her faith. Marciana does not actually believe that Longinus became a vampire at the cross of Christ, nor that God has chosen vampires to inflict trials and punishment on the elect. On the other hand, she does believe that the philosophy and standards of the Sanctified are the best guide for a vampire's requiem. Vampires are clearly damned monsters, superior to the mortals around them, and where can they find meaning if not in the obvious purpose of their existence? If legends and metaphors of the spear of destiny and divine election help to support that, then far be it from her to reject them.

This combination of genuine dedication and scepticism led her to adopt her new name; the nomen raises eyebrows among the Sanctified, but few question her assertion that it is simply a sign of respect. Her quiet dedication to the cause, and her wrath at its enemies, have won over the doubters, and her position among



373 CE: Thascius Hostilinus issues a statement condemning the games of the Circus Maximus as sinful and improper for Kindred. Attendance at the night games drops drastically. Victrix is attacked by a Sanctified neonate en route to the Circus one night. She beats the neonate into torpor and delivers him into the hands of his "minders."

375 CE: Flaviana Galla leaves Rome. Unwilling to admit that she is not soon to return, the Cult of Augurs does not name a successor to the position of Rex Sacrorum. Galla is never heard from again.

376 CE: Guests arriving at the Baths of Caracella for Tertia Julia Comitor's eighth Decade find the dismembered bodies of her servants arranged in a grotesque sexual tableau. The pools are stained red with blood. The floors are slick with vomit and offal. Comitor's ashes are found packed into the eye sockets of her favorite servant, a ghoul she has kept for more than 200 years. Outraged Kindred level impotent accusations against the Sanctified soldiers of the Legio Mortuum, crediting them with the gruesome crime. None are brought to trial.

377 CE: Marciana Longina Rhetrix disappears.

378 CE: Goths invade the Eastern Roman Empire. A barbarian band within the Peregrine Collegia seizes control of several cities to the East, claiming domain and expelling the remnants of the Legio Mortuum there. Rumor has it the band is loyal to the Goths and is abandoning the laws of the Camarilla wholesale.

379 CE: Thascius Hostilinus is accused of spreading plague throughout the districts traditionally held by the Peregrine Collegia. The Legio Mortuum and his Sanctified followers fail to protect him from the outrage of the vampires of the Collegia, and he is swept away in a riot. He is never seen again. Some of his followers believe that his torpid form was rescued and rests somewhere under Rome; the rest assume that he is surely destroyed. Philemon the Damascene succeeds Hostilinus as Archbishop of Rome.

380 CE: Philemon, in speech before the Senex, calls for the official dissolution of the Cult of Augurs and the militant expulsion or destruction of all practicing pagan sorcerers. He is flanked by soldiers of the Legio Mortuum as he speaks. No vampire rises to dispute him. The Cult of Augurs is disbanded by law, and the representative Magistrates are excluded from the Senex. A detachment of the Legio Mortuum is assigned to the capture and destruction of those vampires found practicing the Veneficia. Many Vaticinators flee to the protection of the Peregrine Collegia; many more leave Rome, never to return. The temples of Necropolis are littered with the ash of those who can do neither.

383 CE: Helvidius Bassianus is rumored to be the eldest vampire remaining in Rome. Some Kindred begin to refer to him as Helvidius Bassianus Senex. A motion to forbid the designation is put forward in the Senex. The War-Crow watches impassively as the legislative body votes to make the name — a name he never chose for himself — illegal.

the Sanctified of Rome is solid, although not spectacular. None would look to her for leadership, but all the leaders covet her as a follower.

Marciana worked hard to get to this point, and now she is building on it, preaching to other Kindred and gathering a flock around herself. Vampires have started to accord her the title "Missionary", a trend she encourages. She knows Thascius Hostilius personally, and some whisper that he is her sire (a rumor that she denies if it is spoken in her presence). She admires the older vampire, and believes that, with perseverance, she can attain a position of at least equal eminence.

Storytelling Hints: Marciana represents the younger Kindred reaching for power within the Sanctified. She is a mirror for the player characters. This can work in a number of ways.

If the player characters are Sanctified, she is a rival. She is at much the same level as the player characters, most likely, and ultimately wants to become their superior. However, she does not need to become that powerful tonight, and she is happy to form alliances with the player characters in order to advance the cause of the Sanctified in general. She does, however, compete with them for the approval of superiors and adulation of inferiors within the covenant. She should not annoy the characters so much that they want to see her destroyed, but she should be a factor they have to consider at all times.

If the player characters are pagan, she is an enemy. She wants the Sanctified to triumph because she believes that only their philosophy can keep a vampire sane through the long nights of undeath. The value of faithful adherence to the cause of the Sanctified also increases the more powerful the Sanctified are. Although she would be an enemy, she does not, initially, seek to destroy the characters. Rather, she wants to convert them. She should be played so that the players can see why their characters, and vampires in general, might find Sanctified dogma appealing. If she actually succeeds in converting them, she can become a patron of sorts; if the player characters acknowledge her superiority, she will not even become a rival.

More likely, she does not convert them, and she becomes a concrete example of what the characters could have become had they chosen to throw their lot in with the Sanctified, the winning side.

Marciana will not convert to paganism. Most likely, she survives the fall of the Camarilla and goes on to take a position of influence in later nights. If the player characters decide to martyr her, however, she faces destruction with all the courage and violence at her disposal. She should not go gently; the characters should have a concrete example of how difficult it is to destroy the Sanctified.

Clan: Mekhet
Wing: Lancea et Sanctum (Peregrine Collegia)
Embrace: 326 CE
Apparent Age: Late 50s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 1 (Religious influences), Religion 3 (Sanctified dogma)
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2 (Her flock), Expression 3 (Preaching), Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Contacts 1 (Christian priests in Rome), Haven 2, Resources 2, Status: Lancea et Sanctum 2, Status: Camarilla 1

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Fortitude. Marciana does not give up on plans, beliefs or loyalties just because the going gets difficult. If she still believes that something is worthwhile, she sees it through, and she takes the long view. A vampire with a reputation for betrayal will never be able to hold a position of power and influence, even if she can take it.

Vice: Wrath. Although she doesn't give up when people or circumstances make things difficult, she doesn't take it lying down, either. Anyone who gets in her way had better watch out, because she does not tolerate such interference.

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 1

Speed: 7

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Obfuscate 2

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

The Second Chapter: As the pendulum begins to swing and the Lancea et Sanctum grows more powerful, Rhetrix moves with it. The following stats should be replaced in the second chapter: Politics 2, Intimidation 2, Status: Lancea et Sanctum 4, Status: Camarilla 2, Auspex 3, Blood Potency 2.

The Third Chapter: After Hostilinus is destroyed, Rhetrix moves into position to lead the Lancea et Sanctum and grows significantly more powerful. The following stats should be replaced in the third chapter: Politics 3, Intimidation 4, Status: Lancea et Sanctum 5, Status: Camarilla 4, Auspex 4, Blood Potency 3.

Julia Sabina

Quotes: (Politics) *"I'd advise against doing that. It's best not to antagonize Macellarius. Well, at least not without getting Comitor's blessing first. "*

(Socialize) *"Take the couch next to Marcus Exsuperius. The third one. You take the higher one, and you'll offend Luscinus, and that won't sit well with Helvidius. But sit any lower and you compromise your position..."*

Description: *She's never the first person you see in the room. Some are better looking. Some have more presence. But this controlled, retiring young woman has the face of a Julian: the high cheekbones, the strong mouth; the aquiline nose, the pale, intelligent eyes. She carries her heritage in her unassuming dignity, her understated dress. She speaks only when she has something to say, and she doesn't waste her words on those who do not deserve them.*

Background: After three miscarriages and countless beatings, Julia Sabina had become able to take anything she faced. Her husband Eutherius took out his business stresses on her; and she let him. It was her place. If her dress was always less revealing than that of her contemporaries, it reflected well on her moral character—and it hid the bruises.

Her ability to face up to hardship was the reason behind her Embrace. When Macellarius Corbulo and Flavonius Calvus gatecrashed a dinner party at Eutherius' house, Julia Sabina's absolute refusal to be intimidated by them, even when they gorged themselves on the lifeblood of her husband and every one of the guests, impressed the vampires so much that Flavonius Calvus, with Macellarius' encouragement, brought her into the fold.

She has, since then, made it her business to know the ways of the Camarilla. Without necessarily trying too hard to advance herself, she has a niche as a source of knowledge. She never publicly over-indulges. She takes lovers and she enjoys pleasures of various kinds, but she makes a point of keeping her indulgences private. Few know the things she gets up to. If Dominated human slaves enter her chambers of an evening and do not leave, if lovers—ghoul and vampire alike, two or three at a time—come out of her private parties exhausted, or injured, or scarred by fire, and unable to remember exactly what went on, if Macellarius himself tells his friends that she must be respected and watched, even while she openly holds him in mild contempt for his lack of taste, then whose business is it but hers?

The Kindred come to Julia Sabina for advice on politics, on etiquette, and on the personal rivalries that drive the Camarilla. Her only real gap in knowledge lies in the doings of the Sanctified, but it's a gap that might well be filled in the future, as the Sanctified begin to pique her interest.

Storytelling Hints: Julia Sabina is the quiet one you have to watch. She's perceptive and softly-spoken. She's a fine ally. You just have to make sure that if you're invited to a private party at her place, you'll come out again.

384 CE: Twenty prominent elders of the Julii vanish, leaving the inner circle of the Senex reduced to four members. Gossip attributes their disappearance to the soldiers of Bassianus, or to cowardly flight. Other, more disturbing rumors begin to surface, crediting their destruction to horrifying spirits of vengeance.

386 CE: On the date that would mark Tertia Julia Comitor's ninth Decade, a small gathering is held at the Baths of Caracella to mark the occasion. Only seven Kindred attend, performing a small ceremony in Comitor's honor. The occasion is interrupted by soldiers of the Legio Mortuum, who take the vampires into custody. They do not resist. They are subsequently charged with witchcraft and sentenced to destruction.

389 CE: A Julian vampire claiming to be Gratian, last of the Constantine Emperors, arrives in Rome. He is barred from taking a seat on the Senex amidst controversy and doubt. An assassin of the Peregrine Collegia murders Gratian before his identity can be verified.

392 CE: Less than half the seats of the Senex are filled for official assembly. Most of the Kindred who fail to attend are Julii. This is considered by many to be unremarkable — the vast majority of the Senex is, after all, made up of members of the Julii clan.



Characters should, nonetheless, grow to like her. She's quietly-spoken in public and willing to offer aid on reasonable terms. Even Sanctified characters could gain her help, as she offers her help in exchange for information on the workings of the group.

Unlike Victrix, she's wholly reliable, and it should be clear that her extra-curricular activities are just that: nasty, but not proof of treachery—they're really a means for you to remind the players that she's still a vampire, even if she is on the characters' side.

And the more help she gives to the characters, the more they trust her and like her, the more the impact when the Strix gets her.

Clan: Julii

Wing: Senex

Embrace: 189CE

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Latin and Greek Literature) 1, Crafts (Spinning, Dressmaking) 2, Investigation 2, Politics (Personal Rivalries) 4, Religion 1

Physical Skills: Larceny 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Expression (Song) 1, Intimidation (Blackmail) 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Etiquette, Seduction) 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Haven Location 4, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 5, Noble Heritage 4, Patron 1, Resources 3, Retainers 3, Status (Camarilla) 1, Status (Senex) 2

Willpower: 9

Morality: 4

Virtue: Fortitude. Julia Sabina recognizes when she should be afraid, but refuses to give into it. She is not easily intimidated.

Vice: Lust. Julia Sabina wants to experience the things she was denied in life. Outside, she's still the Roman matron, but secretly, she wants pleasure, and—this is more important than the pleasure itself—she wants it on her terms. If she takes a lover (like a player's character) she must be in control. Her desires have become increasingly deviant as time has gone on. She derives a great deal of enjoyment from simple sadism.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 4, Obfuscate 1, Resilience 3

Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1	2

The Second Chapter: Julia Sabina does not develop significantly between the first chapter and the second one.

The Third Chapter: Special statistics are provided for Sabina in chapter 3, to reflect that changes she goes through when possessed by the strix.

393 CE: Marciana Longina Rhetrix returns to the Lancea et Sanctum, claiming that she had been beaten into torpor and buried by Peregrine vampires in collusion with the Cult of Augurs. She names two prominent Magistrates of the Peregrine Collegia in her accusation, sparking a riot. The Magistrates are dragged from their chambers in Necropolis and set alight by Sanctified Kindred. Rhetrix is not called before the Senex to answer for her actions.

396 CE: On the date of Tertia Julia Comitor's tenth Decade, four prominent bishops of the Lancea et Sanctum are assassinated by unknown assailants. The attackers leave a mark at the scene: a numeral seven, inscribed in blood on the floor of each bishop's chamber. Five former members of the Cult of Augurs, now Martyrs of the Lancea et Sanctum, are singled out and destroyed in retaliation. Few believe they are actually guilty of the crime.

397 CE: The Senex meets in assembly to determine a matter of administrative policy. A Magistrate of the Peregrine Collegia demands that the Legio Mortuum withdraw entirely from policing the territories of the Collegia and devote their attentions exclusively to defense against external threat. During the debate that ensues, many notice that the two remaining members of the inner circle look to Helvidius Bassianus before registering their vote. The Peregrine Magistrate is defeated.

Victrix

Quotes: (Intimidate) *"UlulululululululuAIYAIYAII!"*

(Subterfuge) *"We'll catch the culprit. Then you can do what you like."*

Description: *She's tall and whipcord-thin, an arena-barbarian from an era when women fought freely on the sand. Long braids of hair, woven with beads and strips of pale leather, stream down her back; the shaved sides of her scalp bear intricate tattoos, similar to the ones that cover her arms and back. At rest, her smooth, angular face looks like some pale Northern Minerva, beautiful and untouchable. Angered, she becomes a beast or devil, snarling, baring filed teeth, her eyes devoid of anything that could be called intelligence. Her tongue clicks and vibrates, building up an ear-splitting, ululating cry. She leaps, she rolls, she tumbles, she whirls, she somersaults, part Colosseum entertainer, part screaming savage.*

Victrix wears her arms and armor proudly, even at times when arms are inappropriate. She speaks with the strong, heavy accent of the Picts. She speaks in short, staccato phrases. Her voice is harsh, sounding like the sharp ringing tone of hail clattering against a legionary helmet.

Background: The girl was the daughter of a Pictish chieftain, a queen-in-waiting, who, like many women of her station, chose to fight with the men as they raided Roman settlements and trading posts around Hadrian's Wall. In 211, she took part in a raid on Carlisle. The Picts had made an error; Septimius Severus himself was there, and his legions with him. The raiding force didn't stand a chance. The Romans crushed the raiders and took their leaders away in fetters. They made the girl watch as they humiliated and crucified her father, her nine brothers and the man to whom she was betrothed.

They didn't kill the girl. The emperor's sons had her shipped in chains back to Rome, a slave. They sent her to a *lanista's* training school, considering that a warrior-woman like her would be a great attraction in the arena. She was 16. She knew how to kill a man, and to do it in ways that would strike fear into a more civilized people, but the *lanista* taught her to fight for show. The trainer took her name away. They beat her and starved her and made her forget her name, took away her identity, remade her inside and outside as a gladiatrix. And they called her *Victrix*, an irony, given that she was in Rome through her defeat, but a good omen for the arena.

Victrix was a success. She killed beasts and other warrior women with panache. She channeled the anger of humiliation and enslavement into wild fury on the bloody sands. After nine fights, they set her against a man, and she killed him too. Caracalla himself used her in an honor guard once, and it was on the night she accompanied that quarrelsome Emperor that she gained the attention of a Gallic auxiliary of the Legio Mortuum.

The trainers at the *lanista's* school thought she had escaped. They tried to find her, but never did. She'd gone underground.

The Camarilla remade Victrix again. She became a favorite of the *Propinqui*, an entertaining killer who demonstrates her lethal skill in Kindred gatherings, who enforces the Senex's will with panache, and who kills those mortals who need to be killed in dramatic and creative ways.

She owns a bewildering variety of weapons, stripped from all manner of enemies: blades, chains, tridents, *cesti* (spiked leather gauntlets used in boxing matches), axes and spears, and practices with them regularly. It's in the practice times that the birds come. They flock around her. She speaks to them; sometimes she becomes one of them, blending into the nocturnal flock.

They're her only friends, the ravens, the crows, the nightjars... and the one, solitary owl, that always comes at the end of her time alone, and sits on her shoulder and whispers to her that things don't have to be this way.

Victrix has a secret. The owl has her allegiance these days, and the owl gains her advice. As time has gone on, some among the Julii have disappeared, taken by the Striges. The Julii remind their childer not to be alone these nights, or they'll suffer the same fate—but the fact is, they weren't alone. Victrix was there, watching her true master give the hated Romans their due.

Storytelling Hints: Victrix appears trustworthy. She might even appear to be an ally to characters, particularly if they're of barbarian origin. If they're in trouble, she's the arm of the Camarilla, come to extricate its dead children from whatever fix they're in.

She knows enough about the Christians to court the Sanctified too, if it suits her. and Sanctified vampires find that Victrix appears sympathetic to them. She's



400 CE: The representatives of the Peregrine Collegia excuse themselves from the Senex, vacating their seats permanently. The Legio Mortuum launches a series of violent incursions into Peregrine territory within Necropolis. Conflict flares throughout the year. Word of a Gothic invasion of Italy's north reaches Rome.

402 CE: The Gothic invasion is repelled before reaching the city of Rome. An uneasy peace is brokered between the Peregrine Collegia and the Legio Mortuum.

404 CE: A representative of the Senex claims that a census reveals that the populations of the Senex and the Legio Mortuum have experienced steady decline for the last 30 years. She points out that the Lancea et Sanctum and the Peregrine Collegia have been growing rapidly, by contrast. She proposes legal measures restricting Embrace and induction of neonates in an effort to maintain the structures of law and order within the Camarilla. Her proposal passes, despite the opposition of every Sanctified representative in assembly.

405 CE: Constant defiance of the law restricting Embrace leads to further conflict in Necropolis. Marciana Longina Rhetrix openly preaches that the dictate be ignored, stating that it was passed without the participation of the Sanctified or the Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia. Soldiers of the Legio Mortuum take her into custody, but she escapes before the Senex can assemble for judgment.

406 CE: Patrols are increased on and around the night of Tertia Julia Comitor's Decade. Despite the efforts of the Legio Mortuum, three prominent Kindred are destroyed by assailants unknown. Investigators of the Legion wash the chambers of the victims before allowing any visitors to see them.

407 CE: Reports indicate that an elder of the Mekhet has seized control of Alexandria and purged the city of Camarilla elements. It is said that she is a vengeful, terrifying creature of shadow, and that she orders the destruction of any Roman vampire who steps into her domain, without exception.

409 CE: Correspondence from the north indicates that the Romans have abandoned Britain. The Camarilla there is said to be embroiled in conflict with a violent pagan cult of native Kindred.

410 CE: The army of Goths under the command of King Alaric I breaches the walls of Rome and sacks the city. Amid chaos and conflagration, the Senex is officially disbanded, effectively ending the government of the Camarilla. So many vampires are destroyed or flee that an accurate count of the lost is impossible to make.



self-controlled and chaste. She may be 160 years old, but she's still a virgin, and among Christians she'll capitalize on that fact.

Either way, Victrix is a means of rescue. Victrix is a source of help.

But there's a point at which Victrix's help vanishes. The fact is, she's working for the Striges. They haven't possessed her. It's more insidious than that, and she's more useful to them with what's left of her self intact.

Victrix doesn't really have much of a true personality any more. She's been hollowed out, first by the *lanista's* brainwashing, and then by a century of hate and frustration. All that she has is self-control, and revenge. It's all there is: the chance to destroy the Romans. If she fights for them and helps them, it's to get them on her side so that *she* can be responsible for their downfall.

Victrix has no allegiance to anyone but herself, and apart from the Striges, she considers no one her ally. When the time comes, characters who have relied upon her to get them out of trouble find that she simply stands back and lets the real monsters take them. And she'll watch.

Keeping Victrix in the game involves maintaining a fine balance between Victrix as ally, and Victrix as suspect. If there's no evidence at all of Victrix's treachery, Victrix's final betrayal won't ring true. If Victrix is too suspect, there's no reason why characters can't take her down (or try to). The leaders of the Camarilla—particularly Helvidius, who's very fond of her—believe her to be utterly trustworthy. Characters who are suspicious of her should have a reason not to kill her, even if it's her saving their (un)lives from some terrible threat just after they discover some reason to be suspicious of her. Sure, the characters may see her talking to the owl, but when the barbarian vampires appear moments later, she's the one who saves them from certain destruction.

When Julius Senex awakens, Victrix may be present, in which case, she's a possible cause of his destruction.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Legio Mortuum

Embrace: 214CE

Apparent Age: Late teens

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Medicine (Poultices and Bindings) 1, Politics 1, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Archery 1, Athletics (Acrobatics) 4, Brawl (Roman-Style Boxing) 4, Larceny 1, Ride (chariot) 3, Stealth (Moving Like a Cat) 3, Weaponry (Axe, Chain, Spear, Sword, Trident) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 1, Empathy 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Feign Alliance) 4

Merits: Ambidextrous, Fighting Style: Boxing 1, Fighting Style: Gladiatorial 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Haven Location 1, Haven Size 1, Status (Legio Mortuum) 2, Status (Camarilla) 2, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 3 (Suspicion)

Virtue: Temperance. She's keeping it together. She's a boiling, whirling

tempest inside, her mind consumed by fury, but she'll only let go when it's right to do so. The owl keeps telling her to wait, to cut loose when the time is right. Victrix will never intentionally let slip her true feelings. She'll avoid attacking Camarilla vampires directly, allowing the Striges to do it for her. She may have been responsible for the destruction of several Julii, but she didn't lay a finger on any of them.

Vice: Wrath. In training, the *lanista* destroyed the identity of the the Pictish warrior girl and remade her in mind and body as a gladiator. Essentially, Victrix was brainwashed. She knows exactly what they did to her, and as time has gone on and her old life has been swept away by the fog of ages, she's begun to get more and more angry about it. Her life and death were stolen from her, and the thought fills her with rage. Everything reminds her of what she's lost, what she can't remember. And someone has to pay for it. It doesn't matter if they've actually wronged her or not.

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3 (2 in armor)

Speed: 15

Health: 8

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 1, Protean 4, Resilience 2

Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Short Swords (both hands)	2L	2	10	
Spear or Trident	3L	4	12	+1 Defense
Spear or Trident (Thrown)	3L	4	10	
Cesti	0L	N/A	8	
Chain 1B	2	10		

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Gladiator Armor (Light)	1/0	-1

The Second Chapter: Victrix grows steadily more powerful throughout the story. Replace the following stats in the second chapter: Strength 4, Fighting Style: Boxing 2, Fighting Style: Gladiatorial 3, Resilience 3, Protean 5

The Third Chapter: Replace the following stats in the third chapter: Fighting Style: Gladiatorial 4, Resilience 4, Humanity 2, Blood Potency 4.

411 CE: Helvidius Bassianus and his Sanctified troops do battle with scattered Peregrine Kindred throughout Necropolis. Both sides sustain heavy losses.

412 CE: By the end of the year, all who oppose the remains of the Sanctified Legio Mortuum are either destroyed or beaten into submission. Bassianus takes dictatorial control of Necropolis with the blessing of Marciana Longina Rhetrix. He becomes, for all intents and purposes, the first Prince of Rome.



Chapter I: Nights of Glory

"The glory of Rome extends not only across the face of this world, but under it as well, into the very fringes of death's realm. The Camarilla stands on that border below, bearing the standard of the Empire with pride and honor. We are as eternal as Rome. We are, as Rome is, unconquerable."

-Opening statement of
S. Julius Macellarius Corbulo at
Senex Assembly, 302 CE

ANYONE CAN HOLD THE HELM WHEN THE SEA IS CALM.

– PUBLIUS SYRUS

The Camarilla, as portrayed in this book and **Requiem for Rome**, is about as good as a government of vampires could hope to be. The Camarilla is marred by selfishness and infighting, bias and favoritism, but it is functional and universal. It does not purely serve the interests of a ruling elite, it does not crush all vampires and it provides stability, clearly delineated hunting grounds and protection from major threats. Rome, even in its waning years, is a bastion of civilization. True, Rome is tainted with decadence and cruelty, but learning and high ideals still survive, although they are threatened by forces within and without. This chronicle is a tragedy, a story of great works and great Kindred brought low by the forces of change and decay.

Overview

This act is the prelude to the main story of the fall of the Camarilla. This prelude is necessary because the fall of the Camarilla will have little impact if the characters, and players, have no experience of what is falling and no reason to care about any of the characters or conflicts. Thus, this act gets the characters involved, investing them with an understanding of the setting and establishing their context. This prelude is designed to establish a fitting backdrop for characters of any type: loyal followers of the Camarilla, rebellious traitors-in-training, confused or awe-struck foreigners new to Necropolis and anything else that occurs to the players. It is meant to draw the characters into the Requiem of Rome, familiarizing them with the territory and the traditions of the setting so that they can play through the catastrophic dissolution of the Camarilla and understand what is happening to them and around them.

This chapter, then, lays the foundations for that tragedy by giving the characters space to experience the value of what is to be lost. This chapter includes a synopsis of the sorts of things that might happen to characters at this point, followed by a discussion of the important themes of this chapter.

There are several general events in this chapter: scenes that can be run at any time, as relevant, to help illustrate the night-to-night existence of the characters or tie up the loose ends within the stories of the chronicle. **Assembly of the Senex** is applicable whenever the characters need to speak before the legal assembly, whether to defend themselves, attempt to earn respect and position or influence policy. **Sanctified Mass** illustrates a gathering of the Lancea et Sanctum for worship, and **Dance of the Galli** displays a large ritual of the Cult of Augurs.

In 320 CE, the story proper begins with **Drawn into the Web**, a story that introduces the characters to the power players in the Camarilla and pulls the characters into a minor political affair with ramifications that will stay with the characters for the rest of the chronicle. A party hosted by the famed Tertia Julia Comitor brings the characters into the orbit of the corpulent Macellarius Corbulo, decadent and masterful manipulator of the Senex. Corbulo asks a favor of the characters, implying that he will promote their ascendancy in the Camarilla in return.

One year later, in 321 CE, the characters are forced to investigate the disappearance of a member of the Julii, **The Missing Vampire**, to fight off accusations of their involvement in foul play. Investigation takes them into the *cauponae* of Rome, demonstrating that there are holes in Kindred society through which low-Status vampires can fall, despite the protections of the Senex and the Legio Mortuum.

One year after that, in 322 CE, the characters encounter a dangerous sect of foreign Christian Kindred in **The Doomed Heresy**. Following a notorious barbarian vampire, the characters stumble across the meeting of his heretical sect and uncover a treasonous plan doomed to failure by fanatic faith. They are allowed to choose whether they will assist in bringing down the sect or ally themselves with it and attempt to influence the planned rebellion.

The Grandeur of Rome

By the advent of the fourth century, Rome has already fallen from its peak, but its size and splendors are still enough to astound even the Emperor Constantius when

he visits the city. The glories of Rome are faded, but they are not yet fallen; this is still the Eternal City, the place from which the world was ruled.

To establish this theme, you should ensure that important scenes take place against a backdrop of the spectacular architecture of Rome. The Baths of Caracalla and the Circus Maximus are given as examples in this chapter, but the Forum Romanum, the Flavian Amphitheater, the Pantheon and the aqueducts of the city are also highly symbolic locations. These locations are all described in **Requiem for Rome**, the companion volume to this book.

These places are not seedy or rundown; the wealthy senators of Rome use a lot of their money to ensure that everywhere still looks the part. Careful examination shows that none of the spectacular buildings are new, and that apparently gold items are mostly gilded brass, or just brass, but the initial show is still dazzling. Characters who arrive from outside Rome, whether in the prelude or in the early nights of their Requiems, should be stunned by the magnificence of the city.

Vampires, as members of the Camarilla, can get into most of the impressive locations at night. Even newly arrived foreigners should not feel as though they are on the outside looking in, although they may feel a bit out of place.

Rome is glorious, and theirs for the taking. Vampires can last eternally, and Rome will last with them. That should be the message the city tries to send as the characters build their Requiems within it.

A final point to bear in mind is that, although the Camarilla is doomed to fall as part of the story, the Camarilla is not the victim of clear divine fiat or grand conspiracy. The Camarilla falls because it has weaknesses, and particular vampires (including the characters) make decisions that worsen those weaknesses, making it possible for the forces aligned against the Camarilla to overwhelm it. Thus, in this act the Camarilla should look as if it could survive. Its internal weaknesses are not enough to bring the Camarilla down yet, and it should still look as though it were possible for all the vampires to pull together in the face of a sufficiently large threat. For instance, the characters should worry about what could happen if the Camarilla does not reconcile the Sanctified, but the characters should not feel that the Camarilla has no chance of doing so.

An ideal situation would find the characters at the end of this act, admiring Rome and valuing the Camarilla, but worrying about problems facing them, and making plans to resolve those problems.

A Note on Prophecy

There are prophecies of the fall of the Camarilla, telling of how a divine spearman will strike at its heart, and cast down the old pagan order. Those prophecies are remembered, repeated and rendered more detailed and accurate in later nights.

There are also prophecies of the fall of the Camarilla at the hands of the cultists of the Great Mother, wielding a consuming, mystic fire and in the face of wave after wave of ravening monsters in the form of wolves. While those prophecies are popular during the fourth century, they are largely forgotten by the sixth. As for the prophecies of the eternal persistence of the Camarilla, they disappear entirely by the fifth century, put down to wishful thinking.

Before the Camarilla falls, prophecies are tools of propaganda. After the Camarilla falls, they are the justification of the victors and excuses of the vanquished. Some prophecies are remarkably detailed and accurate. Afterward.

The fall of the Camarilla is not driven by some ancient prophecy, and if the player characters want to be the chosen ones, predicted by ancient seers, the characters have to forge the prophecies themselves. Everyone else is doing it, after all. Few of the Kindred of Rome will take it seriously until all is said and done.

Decadence and Politics

Most high-Status Kindred of the Camarilla spend an inordinate amount of time at parties, scheming and socializing in equal measure. The characters attend one massive fete at the beginning of the chronicle, but they may have reason to throw celebrations of their own at any time, inviting the movers-and-shakers of Kindred government to join the characters in revelry and cementing their own position of influence.

At a party, characters are aiming to enjoy themselves, solidify alliances and avoid making enemies. You should design the party to be significant, in terms of the social impact the fete might have. The characters probably go to parties that you do not play out, particularly over the intervening "downtime" months and years between stories, so the ones you do play out should be significant. Some options follow; several of these could be combined at a single party.

• The host sets some tests for the characters, without telling them what she is doing. These tests might be of their Humanity, their social graces, their creativity or their ability to respond to surprising situations. The tests might

also be tests of political beliefs or loyalty. The "correct" response should be one that could be inferred based on knowledge of the host, so that characters who know something about the host have a chance to "cheat."

• A rival tries to make the characters look foolish, boorish or dangerous. He might try to provoke frenzies, as a really high-risk strategy. He is more likely to try to manipulate the characters into saying the wrong thing, or to try to mislead them about the nature of the party so that they act inappropriately. He might also lie about other vampires, and then introduce the characters to those vampires, so that the conversation is likely to go horribly wrong.

• An influential vampire attends the party, and makes a point of speaking to all the vampires present. This gives the characters a chance to make an impression, whether good or bad.

• A newly arrived vampire attends the party, and the characters find themselves thrown into contact with him. They form an important part of his first impression of the Camarilla, and of any factions to which the characters belong. This vampire could be Silberic, Longina Rhetrix or a character of your own creation. The characters' actions determine how a recurring character will treat them throughout the rest of the chronicle.

• One of the entertainments provided is sufficiently heinous to require a degeneration roll if the characters get involved. (This is all but inevitable at Corbulo's parties, and common at all.) If the characters choose to avoid the entertainment, they have to conceal their avoidance, or gain a reputation. The host is likely to be at least a little offended, but other vampires might actually admire the characters' restraint, or see them as potential recruits for a faction.

In general, the entertainments provided at the party are an important part of the setting. They should be horrific, at least for the humans who are involved in them; see Corbulo's description for some concrete ideas: children crushed in a wine press to create a fine vintage for the vampires to drink; slaves driven so far into submission that they volunteer to be victims; humans invited from across Rome and served fine food by the vampires, until the critical moment arrives and the humans are drained of blood. The players should be at least somewhat uncomfortable at the things that are going on, even if their characters are keen to participate. This is the decadence of the last days of the Camarilla, and the vampires should be seen as the monsters they are.

Hosting Parties

Debauched characters should also aim to host parties, partly for their own entertainment, and partly to establish themselves as the sorts of vampires who should be invited to a fashionable event. This is not easy; hosting a party at which you have fun takes some skill, and hosting one that impresses the social arbiters of the Camarilla takes even more. There are a number of stages involved.

Designing the Party: The characters must decide how big the party will be, where it will be and what the entertainments will be. To a great extent, this is up to the players, and is a chance for them to exercise warped creativity. However, the social impact of the entertainments the players devise depend on how well the characters read the mood of vampiric society.

Every party should have a small number of "elements": entertaining features that move it along. The location could be one element, if it is particularly notable, but normally these elements are the entertainments that the characters provide. There is no theoretical limit to the number of possible entertainments, but two things should keep the number down to three or four. First, it is difficult to make many elements into a unified whole, which damages the party. If there are more than three elements, all the design rolls suffer a penalty of two dice for each additional element. Second, the characters have to make the events happen, which is difficult if there are too many.

For each element, one character makes a roll to determine how well the group has read the mood of society. The character must be an active participant in the design of the party to roll, but the character with the best total gets to roll. Other characters may assist, according to the rules for teamwork (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134). The dice pool normally involves Intelligence and one of Expression, Socialize, Streetwise or Politics. The precise combination depends on the nature of the element. One roll represents one night of discussions, or solitary planning for a lone host.

The characters must decide on how many elements they plan to include before starting to roll, so that the penalties for large numbers of elements can be levied if necessary. The successes on all of the rolls are totaled to give an idea of the possible success of the party, although this will almost certainly be modified by events on the night. The characters may abandon a plan if the possible level of success is too low, or start again from scratch.

Dramatic Failure: The characters will horribly embarrass themselves if they go through with this, and they don't even know it. If Julia Sabina finds out about their plans in advance, she will warn them, with a look of horror on her face. Her opinion of their taste suffers a bit, but she keeps the secret. If they do it anyway, she

snubs them for a while. Comitor definitely snubs them as boorish, and even Corbulo is unimpressed. The party is a failure, no matter how effective the other elements, and a major setback.

Failure: This element will contribute nothing to the success of the party, but is merely lackluster. The characters know this, and can simply drop it, if desired.

Success: The element contributes its successes to the overall success of the party.

Exceptional Success: The element contributes at least five successes to the overall success of the party, and makes a memorable impression on all the vampires who attend.

Suggested Bonuses: The proposed party element is imaginative and somewhat horrific (+1 to +3, Storyteller's judgment), the element will be difficult to arrange (+1 to +3, depending on how interesting the story arising is likely to be), the characters have been attending a lot of parties in the last few months (+1), the characters' last party had a total of more than 10 successes (+1, because the characters' taste is partially defining what society likes).

Suggested Penalties: The proposed element is boring (–1 to –3, Storyteller's judgment), the element is very similar to one the characters have used before (–1), the element is very similar to one that was used at a party the characters attended (–2), the characters have been to no parties recently (–2), the proposed element is simply gut-churningly sick, without being stylish (–1), there are more than three elements to the party (–2 for every additional element, to every design roll).

Inviting Guests: The characters next have to decide whom to invite to their party. Successfully inviting important guests requires a resisted Manipulation + Persuasion – subject's Composure or Manipulation + Politics – the subject's Composure roll, and needs a number of successes equal to the invitee's highest Status. Comitor does not attend just any party, after all. It is very embarrassing to host a party to which no one comes, and such an event counts as a disaster for future parties. It is also very unlikely, because the characters can, in desperation, just go and invite any low-Status members of their Wing who happen to have some free time.

Suggested Bonuses: The characters' last party had an element with an exceptional success for its design (+1 per element), the characters' last party was a great success (+1 for three to five successes, +2 for six to eight, +3 for nine or 10, +4 for 11 or more), the characters have held at least three parties with at least five successes within the last year, and none with fewer than two (+1), highest Status: Camarilla *or* Status in the same Wing as the invitee (+Status), invitee is a friend (+3).

Suggested Penalties: The characters' last party was a bit of a failure, with 0 or one success overall (–1), the characters' last party was a disaster, with a dramatic failure for one of the elements or negative overall successes (–5), the characters have hosted a disaster within the last year (–3), the characters have hosted a disaster ever (–1), the invitee is a rival (–1), the invitee is a political enemy (–3).

Making the Party Happen: The characters have to gather the necessary materials for the events they have planned. If any of the elements are interesting, this is likely to require more than a simple number of dots in Resources. However, the actions required here are entirely dependent on what the players' fevered imaginations have come up with, so we can offer no concrete guidance.

If the characters fail to gather the necessary materials for an event, they can simply drop it from the party; the event will then not contribute its successes to the possible success of the party. In addition, the overall total is reduced by a further one, as the various elements were designed to work together. The characters may re-plan the party if their initial scheme proves impossible, but planning takes the same length of time, one night per roll, and the date of the party may not give them that liberty.

Blessing the Party: Any character hoping to throw a successful party needs to seek the blessings of appropriate gods. Without the obvious endorsement of the powers above, guests will be uncomfortable and unwilling to remain; nobody wants to insult the gods by endorsing an event that defies or ignores them.

To properly bless a party, a member of the Cult of Augurs must determine the province of the celebration: whether or not it is planned for an auspicious date, whether certain gods are to be honored on that date and what the character of the party is (and thus, which gods should be appealed to for success). A celebration set for pure enjoyment, for instance, might be dedicated to Dionysus, while one held to honor victory in war ought to be dedicated to Mars. Almost every celebration must also begin with a request for the blessing of Janus, God of passage, beginnings, and endings. These auguries and blessings can be quite costly — especially if the party itself is lavish — and can involve securing rare or delicate sacrifices, the creation of elaborate altars (often displayed during the party itself) and the creation or purchase of sculptures of the gods.

Managing the Party: All of the events listed above for attending a party can also happen to the characters at a party they host. One difference is that they will never be completely ignored; it is simply not socially possible to cut the host of a party you have chosen to attend.

The Veneficia of Celebration

Characters who are members of the Cult of Augurs may wish to bless the party themselves. Here are two sample Veneficia detailing the sort of ritual the characters might engage in. Feel free to riff on these, changing them to suit different gods or adhere to the themes of your specific story.

Call to Dionysus (Level One Veneficia)

This ritual is enacted by pouring at least one point of Vitae into a clay pot, which is then raised over the Vaticinator's head throughout the intonation of a complicated tripartite hymn, requiring the participation of at least two other singers (who don't need to possess knowledge of the Veneficia to perform). At the climax of the song, the pot is thrown to the ground at the ritualist's feet, smashing into shards and scattering the blood within.

If the ritual successfully activates, then all those who participated in singing the song to Dionysus enjoy a +2 bonus to all Socialize rolls for the remainder of the scene, so long as the participants remain within 30 feet of the smashed pot.

Call to Mars (Level One Veneficia)

Dedications to Mars require the sacrifice of a ram sprinkled with a mixture of wine and a point of the Vaticinator's own Vitae (and the Vitae of others included in the ritual). The ram is slaughtered and disemboweled, and its vital organs are burnt on an altar.

If the ritual is successful, all those who contributed Vitae to the sacrifice enjoy a +2 bonus to Politics or Warfare rolls for the remainder of the scene, so long as the participants remain within 30 feet of the altar.

Call to Janus (Level One Veneficia)

The ritual to seek Janus's blessing on a gathering involves the offering of two different cakes baked specifically for the ritual, sprinkled with a mixture of wine and the Vaticinator's Vitae. A prayer of gratitude is spoken, and those gathered participate, if they wish. The offering is placed at the base of a statue of Janus, which is positioned so that it may overlook the gathering that follows.

If the ritual is successful, all those who participated in the prayer enjoy a +2 bonus to all Persuasion rolls for the remainder of the scene, so long as the participants remain within 30 feet of the statue.



The hosts have additional responsibilities. The first is making sure that the guests enjoy the entertainments provided. This requires three rolls, one each of Presence + Socialize, Manipulation + Socialize and Wits + Socialize. The Presence roll represents making the entertainment the center of attention, the Manipulation roll represents getting guests to enter into the spirit of the entertainment and the Wits roll represents dealing with any problems that arise. All three can be roleplayed. The rolls may be made by one, two or three different characters, and may be supported by teamwork. The successes on the three rolls are totaled, and the lower of the total of these successes and the total successes on the design roll represents the actual success of the element. A dramatic failure on any of the rolls turns the element into a dramatic failure, as described above. On the other hand, if the design of the element achieved a dramatic success, then the element is memorable if the hosts achieve even a single success on the night.

Example: Julia Sabina designs a party element: the timing and placement of a musical performance. She has a dice pool of six, and rolls three successes. At the party itself, she has dice pools of five in each of the Socialize totals, for two, one and two successes. Although she gets five successes on the night, the element cannot contribute more than three successes to the overall success of the party.

Guests may attempt to deliberately sabotage an event, rolling Wits, Presence or Manipulation + Expression, Persuasion or Subterfuge minus the host's Composure successes on one of these rolls subtracted from one of the hosts' dice pools for hosting the party. Most guests do not do this, as it is very impolite, and hosts and other guests may attempt a Wits + Socialize or a Wits + Composure roll to notice attempts. The target number of successes is the number gained by the saboteur.

If a character notices an attempt at sabotage and tries to stop it, the attempt becomes an opposed action, the character rolling his own Wits, Presence or Manipulation + Expression, Persuasion or Subterfuge – the saboteur's Composure to bring things back on track. Only the saboteur's excess successes are subtracted from the host's dice pool, but this can never grant a bonus, no matter how well the anti-saboteur rolls.

The sabotage may be opposed by someone who is also making one or more of the rolls to manage the event, and imposes no penalty on those rolls.

Party Crises: Something disastrous may threaten to happen at a party. A vampire going into rage frenzy and destroying other guests would be an extreme example; a prolonged shouting match between two guests is a more probable event.

If the hosts can stop the problem quickly, it has no effect on the course of the party. If, however, the problem goes on, it subtracts from the total number of successes of the party. As a rule of thumb, the hosts should engage in an extended, opposed roll with the guests causing the problem, with penalties accruing if the hosts have not solved the problem within three rolls. The totals involved, and the size of the penalty, depend on the nature of the problem. In general, merely social problems should not subtract more than five successes, even if the hosts completely fail to bring the problems under control. Actual physical violence could subtract an indefinite number of successes, if the violence led to the destruction of vampires.

Assessing Success: The success of a party depends on the total number of successes the hosts have by the end of the night. The success cannot be higher than the number of successes gained for the design rolls, but can be substantially lower.

Negative Successes, or Dramatic Failure: The party is a complete disaster. Vampires will remember it for quite some time, and laugh at the characters behind their backs. They might even lose a dot of Status over this debacle.

0 or One Success: The party is uninspiring, and makes guests reluctant to come again. The hosts have probably set their social climbing back a little, but a resounding success would quickly wipe the setback out.

Two Successes: The party is an average party. No one will remember it for long, and it won't advance the hosts. On the other hand, it doesn't set them back, either, and at least they have kept themselves active in the social whirl.

Three to Five Successes: A good party. Vampires who were considering inviting the hosts to their own parties decide to do so, and others start to consider it. The guests are somewhat favorably inclined to the hosts, and more likely to accept invitations to future parties.

Six to Eight Successes: An excellent party. The guests are very likely to accept future invitations from the hosts, and the hosts are likely to have more invitations than they can accept in the nights immediately following — which may actually cause them problems, if they invited too many high-Status Propinqui.

Nine or 10 Successes: A spectacular party. All the guests talk about it for weeks, and they are very likely to accept future invitations. The hosts are deluged with invitations, and can even refuse invitations from Comitor without fallout, at least in the first week or so.

11 or more Successes: A party that the Camarilla will talk about for years. The characters are thrust onto the social stage,

and get invitations to just about any party. For a month or so, the characters are the trendsetters of vampire society.

Taboos of the Dead

There are some actions that even the dead find unspeakable. Using these as entertainment at a party is social death, at the very least, and might well be grounds for crucifixion at dawn. Note that acts at least as evil are perfectly acceptable; vampire taboos are quite particular. In addition, these are things that some vampires are known to do. They are unspeakable, not unthinkable.

Interference with "cold" corpses. Killing people is fine, and damage to the corpse that happens during the killing is part of the process. However, once someone has died and the killing is over, the remains should be treated with respect.

Contaminating blood. Feeding from seriously ill humans is regarded as treading very close to the line on this one, but the main concern is with creating perverted bloodlines. There is, however, no clear definition of "perverted." A common rumor is that the Striges have the power to do this; a less common rumor is that the Julii are a perverted bloodline themselves.

Feeding from one's childer. This is a simple rule, but most Roman vampires find the idea deeply repellent. The more philosophical surmise that it originated as a way to stop vampires with more powerful blood creating childer as a food source, but the taboo is now completely general. There is no reverse taboo; childer can feed from their sire, and, indeed, the practice of putting childer under the Vinculum is far from uncommon.

General Event: Sanctified Mass

Mental: • Physical: – Social: ••

Overview: The characters attend a religious service held by the Lancea et Sanctum, witnessing the practice of Sanctified faith.

Description: *There are easily a dozen vampires in the dim chamber, kneeling quietly as they face the altar. The Missionary stands behind the altar, one wrinkled, pale hand resting gently on the spear point that juts from its center. A drop of her Vitae runs down the blade, sparkling in the moonlight that filters in from a hole in the roof. She speaks.*

"We are the damned, chosen by God to test and refine his children. We have ourselves been tested and refined, and now the time of our great work is at hand. Has not the Lord spoken to us? Will we not rule all our Kindred and bring them to the way of the one true God?"

As she speaks, you glance around the chamber. You recognize few of the faces here. Only Thascius Hostilinus, the notorious Martyr of the Chapel and Spear, is known to you. He faces forward, the hood of his cloak drawn up over his head, the shadow within obscuring his eyes. His dry, gray lips move silently in prayer while the Missionary leads the mass.

Mass in the First Nights of the Covenant

The gatherings of the Lancea et Sanctum in early nights are nothing like the modern masses of the Kindred Church. More often than not, the early masses were ragged affairs conducted in undecorated chambers similar to the one described here, presented to a small, hastily assembled group of worshippers. The pomp and circumstance of modern ritual were absent, and an earnest, simple homily or a crude display of divine power (courtesy of Theban Sorcery) stood in its place.

The masses were designed to begin and end quickly, with — short, easily memorized prayers scattered throughout. It was common for the soldiers of the Legio Mortuum to break up gatherings of the Sanctified, even legitimate ones — on even minor pretenses, so it was necessary to conduct a speedy ritual and avoid long-winded sermons. When describing one of the old masses, concentrate on the speed and simplicity of the ritual, contrasting it with the drawn-out, complicated worship of the pagan Vaticinators.

Storyteller Goals: Introduce the early Lancea et Sanctum, and show that their practices are rather different from those familiar in modern nights.

Character Goals: Meet with the Sanctified. For those characters who are believers, seek the blessing of the Missionary.

Actions: There are several options for characters in this scene.

Observe the Sanctified

This is a chance for characters to have their first good look at the local Sanctified Kindred. Three in particular are important, and will play a part in the story of the fall of the Camarilla. Marciana Longina Rhetrix, the Missionary leading the mass, is just freshly Embraced and beginning her long (and eventually, illustrious) career with the Church. Thascius Hostilinus is still just a fringe-dweller, yet to truly distinguish himself. Vitericus Minor is within the crowd of worshippers, also relatively anonymous... for now.

Characters who make successful Wits + Empathy, Politics, Occult or Streetwise checks will realize that all three of these Kindred are somehow important. The others here at the mass react to these Kindred with something approaching awe.

Seek a Blessing

Any character who approaches Marciana Longina Rhetrix at the end of the mass may seek her blessing. She will be pleased to give it, and will intone a quick prayer on behalf of the coterie. While she does so, players can make an Intelligence + Religion roll. Success indicates that their characters realize that the prayer she is reciting is structured properly — very much like a prayer to Janus — and that it may provide a mystical benefit on their travels. Indeed, those who receive the blessing may replenish one point of Willpower, if they have spent any thus far.

Anyone who pays attention and succeeds on a Wits + Stealth roll will realize that Thascius Hostilinus is silently watching them from the shadows. As soon as he is spotted, he will withdraw and vanish.

Make Political Overtures

Characters who wish to join the Lancea et Sanctum or initiate political dealings with the Sanctified are free to make the attempt. Anyone who comes to the Church is welcomed with open arms, but they will be warned that the way ahead for them is difficult and may invoke the ire of the Camarilla. Rhetrix is the one who makes herself available for the discussion, if it begins. If the characters approach Thascius Hostilinus or Vitericus Minor, they are directed to speak with her instead.

Rhetrix doesn't have anything she can give the characters except her endorsement, so Negotiation and Fast Talking won't do a lot of good. Characters can Persuade her to support them despite their lack of belief, or they can use Subterfuge to fool her into thinking that they agree with her views, but that's about as tricky as they can probably get.

Consequences: Attending mass identifies the characters with the Sanctified to some extent, as long as they behave. This has political implications, good and bad. Characters who consistently attend the masses of one group become strongly identified with that group, even if they make no other motions of support.

• Characters who make successful overtures to Rhetrix are free to take the first dot of Status (Lancea et Sanctum) — if they want it. If they do, she will lead them in a purifying ritual and bless them. Note that taking a point of Status in the Kindred Church will call the loyalties of members of the Cult of Augurs into question.

General Event: Dance of the Galli

Mental: • Physical: – Social: ••

Overview: The characters attend the ecstatic rites of a mystery cult and see the effects of the Veneficia on vampires and mortals.

Description: *You are standing, as instructed, hidden in the shadows of a balcony. Below you, lit by several large braziers that make you nervous even at this distance, a couple of dozen mortals mill around, dressed in bright robes and carrying axes. The mortals start to leap and dance, and then the first slashes his own arm, and you smell blood.*

Flaviana Galla and two acolytes spring from the shadows at the head of the room, crying out to Magna Mater and Cybele as they fling themselves into the crowd. Things move faster, the smell of blood gets stronger, and the scene becomes one from delirium. Galla's face, smeared with blood, comes clear as she is lifted up by the cultists, twin axes crossed over her head.

"The day of the Great Mother is coming! The third birth is at hand, and blood shall flow!"

As the dance builds in intensity, you feel the heat of the ritual drawing you in. Something within you – something powerful and primal – responds to Galla's call, urging you to join in the worship.

Out of the corner of your eye, you spot the unnaturally beautiful figure of Eupraxus, standing off to the side and observing the dancing mortals. There is a gleam in his eye – not just born of the blazing fires, but of something else... something hungry.

Storyteller Goals: Introduce pagan rites, public but not official. Show that mortals can take an open role in vampiric worship at this point, subordinate as it might be.

Character Goals: In many ways, the goals here are the same as they are when attending a Sanctified mass.

Actions: The rites of Cybele are ecstatic, involving wild dancing, double-headed axes and ritualized self-harm. Player characters might only observe the first time, but if they become involved with the cult, they will be expected to participate. As with the Sanctified mass, characters have a few options:

Observe the Cult

This is a chance for characters to have their first good look at some of the local members of the Cult of Augurs. Two in particular are important: Flaviana Galla, the androgynous Vaticinator leading the ritual, destined to become Regina Sacrorum of Rome, and Eupraxus the manipulator, a figure of some import later in this story.

Characters who make successful Wits + Empathy, Politics, Occult or Streetwise checks will realize that

both of these Kindred are somehow important. The others here at the ritual venerate Flaviana and Eupraxus as near-gods themselves, and it's not hard to see why. Flaviana Galla is a fierce, energetic true believer, and Eupraxus is a strikingly beautiful, supernaturally seductive figure.

Seek the Blessing of Cybele

Characters may wish to seek the blessing of Cybele, a primordial nature goddess. To do so, they must participate in the ritual dance of the cult, joining in the ecstasy of worship. Those who participate faithfully will receive the benefits of the Veneficium Flaviana Galla is performing: the Call to Cybele. Any character who makes a successful Intelligence + Religion roll will recognize the nature of the magic she is invoking (and members of the Cult of Augurs may study her performance, if they wish, and spend experience later to learn the ritual).

Ritual Dance

Those characters who dance must give themselves over to the ecstasy of the ritual, cutting themselves with a bladed, double-headed axe at Flaviana Galla's direction, and letting the blood run from their wounds. The dice pool for the dance is Dexterity + Expression, with a –2 modifier for the size and weight of the axe.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character accidentally strikes one of the other dancers. Roll Dexterity + Expression + Weapon Bonus for the axe to determine damage, subtracting the unlucky victim's Defense.

Failure: The character does not manage to cut herself while keeping up with the dance, and does not receive the benefits of the ritual. She will not suffer any ill effects, though.

Success: The character performs well. She takes a single point of lethal damage, sacrifices one point of Vitae and receives the full benefit of the ritual.

Exceptional Success: The character seems to be possessed by the primal force of the goddess herself. The character takes a single point of lethal damage, sacrifices one point of Vitae and receives the full benefit of the ritual. Others who participate in the ritual notice the power of her participation. The character enjoys a +1 bonus on social dealings with every member of the cult for the remainder of the scene.

Make Political Overtures

Characters who wish to join the Cult of Augurs or initiate political dealings with the Sanctified are free to make the attempt. Anyone who comes to the ritual is welcomed with open arms, so long as she is not known to associate with the Lancea et Sanctum (i.e., has no status with the Church). Flaviana Galla is not available to speak during or after this ritual; Eupraxus is the one characters will have to deal with.

Eupraxus is a smirking, arrogant creature — but he's also greedy, and will have trouble resisting any overtures that involve a bribe. If he's paid off, he will promise to speak on the characters' behalf in the future, and will agree to provide blessings on their endeavors. If they offer enough money, he will allude to his ability to falsify the results of auguries. The characters need to succeed on a Wits + Subterfuge roll, subtracting his Composure of 3 to get the point. They then have to succeed on a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, to agree without stating their intent outright. If they make a blatant request for false reading, he will deny them.

Aids/Bonuses: Self-castration; male characters may castrate themselves in the dance, which automatically inflicts two points of aggravated damage (+5).

Obstacles/Penalties: Killing the mortal cultists is extremely frowned upon (-5).

Consequences: Attending ritual identifies the characters with the Cult of Augurs to some extent, as long as they behave. This has beneficial political implications for every vampire who wishes to appear loyal to the traditions of the Camarilla.

• Characters who make successful overtures to Eupraxus (and pay him dearly enough) are free to take the

The Blessing of Cybele (Level Two Veneficia)

The ritual seeking the blessing of Cybele is a difficult, potentially dangerous one. The Vaticinator leads a gathering of worshippers in a violent, ecstatic dance, brandishing a blade as she intones a prayer to the goddess. As the dance continues, the Vaticinator (and all those seeking the benefit of the ritual) must cut themselves, taking a single point of lethal damage and bleeding out at least one point of Vitae, letting it spatter on the ground as they move.

If the ritual is successful, all vampires who participate gain a +2 bonus on their next hunting roll. Mortals who participate enjoy this bonus as well, applied to their next roll to secure food (whether by hunting, crafts or larceny).

first dot of Status (Cult of Augurs) — if they want it. If they do, he will lead them in a purifying ritual and bless them. Note that taking a point of Status in the Cult of Augurs will call the loyalties of members of the other Wings into question.

General Event: Assembly of the Senex

Mental: ••• Physical: – Social: •••

Overview: The characters plead a case in the Camarilla, before the Senex, relying on verbal power to sway the policy of the Kindred. This is a generic scene that can be used any time the characters need to defend their actions legally.

Description: *The stone chamber is packed with vampires, and in the flickering light you can see more crammed into the corridors, their heads craning forward in an attempt to catch every word. The ancient throne stands empty, but senior members of the Senex stand next to it. You are in a small open space, hemmed in by eminent vampires of all clans, faced by an official speaker of the Senex. A Consul nods, and the speaker begins.*

Detail the reasons for the characters' visit to the Senex at this point. If they're being accused of a crime, have the speaker make declaration of the accusation. If not, have him indicate the purpose of their visit.

Storyteller Goals: Display the glory of the Camarilla, in the very chamber from which it takes its name. Debates here really do shape the fate of all vampires; the leadership actually change their policies based on speeches made before the Senex. Thus, the characters should feel that their speeches make a difference, or, at least, that they would have made a difference had they beaten their opponent.

This is a very important scene, because the player characters should have the chance to see the Camarilla in operation under normal conditions, before the crisis strikes.

Character Goals: The characters want to get the Senex to support them (or exonerate them) in some endeavor or dispute. They speak before the Senex to gather that support by winning a debate.

Actions: Any argument that takes place in the Camarilla will be resolved by official debate. The full rules of formal debate among members of the Senex are presented in **Requiem for Rome**.

If the characters are defending a point or responding to an accusation that doesn't directly involve Macellarius Corbulo or his instructions, the characters will face off against the speaker mentioned above, a vampire named Octavius Magnus. If, however, they are responding to an accusation leveled by Corbulo, or are accused of violating his instructions, then Macellarius Corbulo himself will speak. Here are the relevant debate statistics for the two Kindred:

Character	Integrity	Target to Defeat	Dice Pool	Technique	Debate Merits
Octavius	3	16	7	Aggressive Logic	Reason 3
Macellarius	2	17	4	Deft Maneuvering	Reason 2, Rhetoric 4

Note that Corbulo will never speak against the characters if they have arranged a relationship of Patronage with him. Instead, he will throw support behind them from within the audience, adding a +1 bonus to every argument roll.

If the characters have arranged a relationship of Patronage with Tertia Julia Comitor, Corbulo will not hesitate to speak against them. If he doesn't see the need (because the accusation doesn't involve him), he will work to undermine them from within the audience, imposing a –1 penalty on every argument roll.

Consequences: If the characters are accused of any crime except for murdering another vampire and fail to win the debate to defend themselves, the character who chose to enter the debate loses a point of Status and the defendants are fined a certain sum — something that taps out their Resources until the end of this chapter — and allowed to go free.

If they are accused of murder and lose the debate, the relevant character loses a point of Status, but Julia Sabina (and any other vampire the characters have negotiated alliance with in earlier scenes) intercedes on their behalf, arguing successfully to reduce a sentence of crucifixion to a fine, tapping out their Resources as above.

If they win a debate against Octavius, they go free and are not punished.

If they win a debate against Macellarius Corbulo and the victorious character has less than two points of Wing Status, give him one point, raising him to two. Corbulo loses a point of Wing Status (Senex), but will regain it by the time the chapter ends. He'll remember the humiliation of losing to the character, though, and that character will suffer a –2 penalty on all future social dealings with Corbulo, for the remainder of the chronicle.

320 CE: Drawn into the Web

The characters, as neonates in the milieu of the Camarilla, begin the journey that will take them all the way to the collapse of their society. They are introduced to the Kindred elite so that the characters can play a significant role in the chronicle that follows.

Story

The story starts at a party, bringing the characters into the orbit of the Roman vampire elite so that the characters can establish themselves and get noticed. Several Kindred of note, including Macellarius Corbulo, Julia Sabina and Tertia Julia Comitor, notice the characters and initiate dealings with them.

With a little encouragement, Corbulo makes overtures to taking the characters into his service and sends them on a courier's mission to nearby Mediolanum. There, the characters learn about the operation of the Camarilla away from Rome and the extent of Roman Kindred decadence.

They return to find that their association with Corbulo has benefits and consequences: they are now embroiled in the politics of the Camarilla's upper strata, but are also associated with a vampire of questionable moral character.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is *decadence*. The Kindred of the Camarilla are at their peak, walking the streets of the Empire with relative impunity, throwing great, lavish parties to celebrate their continued rule and taking what pleases them: life, treasure or land.

Macellarius Corbulo illustrates the theme with his rude jokery and fulsome pursuits. Through him, the characters must understand that the powerful Kindred of the Camarilla enjoy an existence without logical limits — and are becoming less and less aware (whether on purpose or not) of the price others pay for their indulgence.

Although this story is meant to demonstrate the pleasures of the Camarilla, those vampires with high Humanity (as the neonate characters are likely to be) will feel at least a hint of shame or disgust, presaging the general collapse that is to come later in the chronicle.

Allies and Antagonists

Most of the characters involved in this scene are members of the Camarilla or their servants. All of the supporting characters detailed earlier may take part.

Vampire Revelers

Quote: *The gods favor us! Dance, friend, dance, for we are happily blessed.* (Socialize)

Description: *This creature is a pale, smiling shade, whirling in her flowing silks. Stray locks of her hair have come loose from the pins, falling over her brow and touching her shoulders. She smiles at you as she passes, her arms raised over her head, her feet dancing to the song of the room.*

Background: The vampire revelers are an ever-present feature of Camarilla celebration. Moving from party to party, *caupona* to *caupona*, temple to temple, they seem to have no purpose in the Requiem but to dance, sing and feed. Most are low-Status members of the upper strata, free to bide their time in luxury if they so choose.

Storyteller Hints: The revelers are background noise, presenting a distraction or a transitional encounter whenever you need it, just so that the players don't feel like *everybody* they meet is somebody important.

The revelers are representative of the prevailing sentiment among the upper strata of the Camarilla; while the enemies of high society plot and scheme, the majority of the Senex and the Cult of Augurs while their time



away in celebration, unaware of the extent to which they rely on the strength of the Legio Mortuum to keep them safe. The revelers embody a kind of warning to the characters: the revelers are something that the characters must choose not to be.

Abilities:

Shameless Revelry (dice pool 6): If there's one thing the revelers are good at, it's having a good time. They're free of worry and fear, and their attitude can be infectious. If anyone is souring the mood of a public affair, the revelers will attempt to soothe her and encourage her to join in the fun.

Practiced Seduction (dice pool 6): What the revelers want, they take — and enjoying the flesh of the living and the undead is something that they very often aim for. Characters may find themselves the target of seduction attempts at the most inopportune moments, thanks to these heedless partiers.

Julia Africana, Magistrate of Mediolanum

Quotes: *Welcome, guests and friends, welcome. The humble servants of the Camarilla bid you good night. Tell me. How fares the munificent Macellarius Corbulo?* (Politics)

Have a care, Kindred. You are yet within the long reach of the Camarilla, and you address an official of the Senex. (Intimidation)

Description: *She looks like an elderly woman, with gray and white hair plaited firmly in place over her old-fashioned* stola. *Still, she moves with the confidence and strength of vampires who have seen many nights since their deaths.*

Background: Julia Africana, a mortal relative of the famed Scipio Africanus, was Embraced by an undead uncle who could not bear to watch her die. He was a weak-willed vampire, and his long-time hesitation allowed her to grow old and frail — something she never forgave him for. Still, he did bring her into the society of the Propinqui, and she was made welcome.

She never could quite bring herself to respect the undead, though, thinking of them (and herself) as creatures of inherent dishonor, unable to pass properly into the underworld. The position of Magistrate in Mediolanum came up early in the third century, and Africana chose to take the role, giving herself a chance to get away from Roman Kindred society and claim a place of her own. She has served the will of the Camarilla there since, dwelling mostly undisturbed.

Storytelling Hints: Julia Africana wants to minimize her contact with other vampires. Anyone who interacts with her will find her polite but impatient, as she attempts to complete her business and usher them out. It's not



that she dislikes them personally — it's that she finds the whole of vampire existence to be distasteful, and she prefers to keep other Kindred at arm's length.

Julia represents the strength of the Camarilla's rule, extending as it does throughout the Empire, and the philosophical differences tolerated in its outer territories. Everyone in Rome knows that she dislikes Kindred gatherings, but they also know that she abides by the law and never makes any trouble.

Julia Africana has maintained a relatively high Humanity, and will be deeply offended if the characters carelessly injure or kill anybody while in her territory. She's physically weak, and won't be able to put up much of a fight if anyone attacks her. Her vampiric Disciplines seem to be concentrated in Animalism.

Abilities:

Sitting in Judgment (dice pool 8): Her matronly look and her stern expression come together to create an imposing figure: that of the wise, elderly caretaker who sees all, constantly sizing other vampires up and making mental note of their weakness or infidelity. She reminds many of their grandmothers, and her simple presence should be intimidating — especially to those planning mischief.

Impressive Etiquette (dice pool 5): Julia Africana's learned a lot in her time, and she knows the etiquette of every Wing of the Camarilla (with the exception of

the Lancea et Sanctum). When she addresses characters, they should notice that she seems to know the right way to talk to all of them, and that she recognizes the marks and habits of each Wing without prompting.

Quintus Didius Scornutor, Merchant of Mediolanum

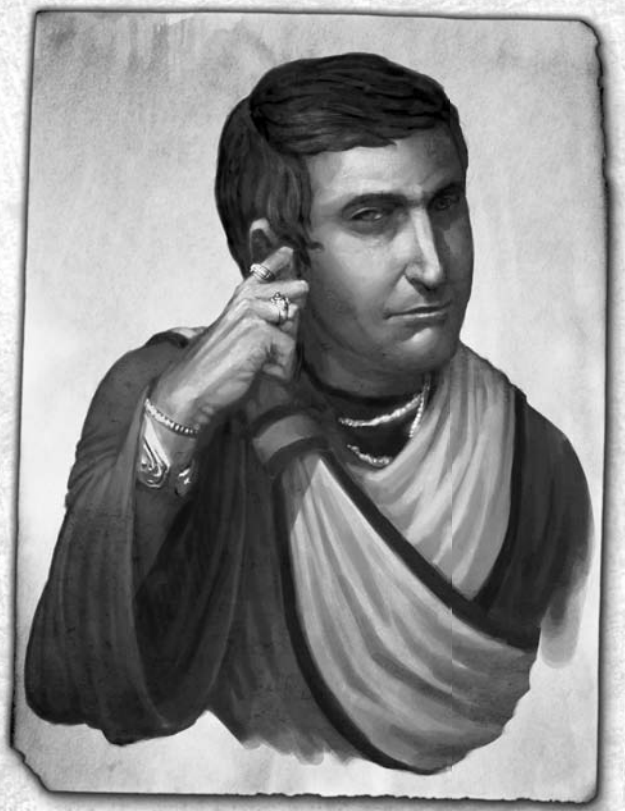
Quotes: *I don't know what he wants. I must have told that messenger to go away.* (Subterfuge)

Be careful around Corbulo. There are sinful creatures in the cities, and they gather around people like him. (Intimidation)

Description: *Scornutor is the sort of man who can rely on getting a second glance in most contexts, and he uses that to his advantage. He is middle-aged, and running slightly to fat, but his clothes and jewelry speak of prosperity, almost wealth. Something about you makes him uncomfortable, and he cannot quite hide his nervousness. The way he stands and sits, however, suggests that he cannot imagine that you would physically threaten him.*

Background: Scornutor is a moneylender and businessman, although he pretends to be a member of the idle rich. His father actually was, but was going through the family fortune too quickly. Scornutor became aware of this quite early, and began investing and lending out his allowance, so that he was able to support his father, in somewhat reduced circumstances, in his last few years.

Scornutor has been a members of a number of cults. He was a Christian briefly, but they don't like moneylenders.



He tried to join a cult of Mithras, but wasn't remotely militaristic enough in his thinking. The cults of Dionysus, Isis and Cybele briefly captured his imagination, and it was through the first of those that he came into contact with Corbulo. Scornutor was always on the edge of the vampire's circle, and never knew Corbulo's true nature.

On Scornutor's most recent visit to Rome, he fell in with a new cult, the latest of Eupraxus's creations, and met Eupraxus himself. Scornutor has been convinced by this cult, as he has been convinced many times in the past, and has put his old life behind him. Again. He's stumbled across rumors of blood-drinking monsters in the city of Rome, and, credulous as he is, is currently fearful. Unless the characters give him a reason to be afraid of them, though, he won't let it interfere with business.

Storytelling Hints: Scornutor needs to give the characters two pieces of information: that the statue is the item that Corbulo is after and that the members of Eupraxus's cult think that there are blood-drinking monsters in Rome. Scornutor believes that Eupraxus is the Messiah, and may tell the characters this as well.

Abilities

Haggling (dice pool 6): Scornutor's good at doing business. When talk turns to the statue, and payment, he'll try to get as high a price as he can. His initial asking price will be a little higher than Corbulo's provision, forcing the characters to pay a little bit out of their own pockets if they agree.

Concealing Motive (dice pool: 5): Scornutor's not exactly the smartest guy in the world, socially speaking, but he's not completely without skill. As soon as talk turns to business, he becomes relatively hard to read, adopting the stance and expression of a put-upon salesman, whether or not he is happy with an arrangement.

Event: Orgy at Caracalla's

Mental: • Physical: – Social: •••

Overview: The characters attend a party held for vampires at the Baths of Caracalla. They get to meet lots of people, and everyone already dead has a good time.

Description: *As you step from the antechamber and your eyes adjust to the light, it looks like every vampire in the world is here. Under a vaulted roof lost in the shadows, they wander, talk and enjoy the diversions. Some are naked, others adorned with nothing but jewels and gold, and still others are dressed in tunics or togas. There are humans mixed in, most naked, many chained, others performing as they have been told. As you look around, a vampire across the hall casually slits the throat of*

a chained human, filling goblets with blood and passing them round her friends.

Everybody is here. You see Victrix, the famed gladiator of the Legio Mortuum, laughing as Macellarius Corbulo, the great and terrible master of the undead spectacle of the Circus Maximus, tells a wry, no doubt filthy joke. Eupraxus, the beautiful and strange Daeva of the Cult of Augurs, stands to the side, eyeing a shrine to Janus with professional detachment. Flaviana Galla, famed Augur, mentions something to him, pointing out some feature of the shrine. Helvidius Bassianus, called the War-Crow, scavenger of the northern battlefields, whispers to a uniformed soldier of the Legio Mortuum, scowling.

You are still looking around for someone you know when you realize that someone is approaching you. She is naked, with no jewelry, but from the way the crowd parts around her you know that she is no slave. In fact, you are sure you should know her. She is smiling, friendly, and just before she reaches you, you remember her name: Tertia Julia Comitor, member of the Senex, and hostess of the party.

Comitor raises her hand, reaching out to you [indicate the player with the highest-Status character, or the one closest to the Senex], clearly expecting you to take it and greet her. She smiles, but her eyes narrow only slightly. This is a test.

The character targeted by Comitor needs to react properly. The player can make just about any Social roll in response: Presence + Politics, Presence + Expression, Presence + Empathy, Manipulation + Expression or anything else that the player argues is appropriate. Even a single success indicates that the character is cultured enough to meet with Comitor's approval. If he succeeds, read the following:

Her smile widens and her eyes gleam. It is clear that you meet with her approval, and she pulls you to her side, turning to show you the party with a sweep of her hand. "What is mine is yours tonight," she says. "Please. Enjoy. And do come back to me before you leave. I should like very much to know more about you and your friends." In among the smiling faces of the crowd, you notice Julia Sabina, one of the members of the Senex your [patron/mentor/sire] once told you to seek out for helpful advice. She grins and inclines her head, indicating that she recognizes you.

If he fails, read this:

She bows her head slightly, her smile fading as she withdraws her hand. "Welcome to the celebration," she says, stepping aside. You notice a few Kindred glancing your way, their expressions wary. In the crowd, you see the face of Julia Sabina, one of the members of the Senex your [patron/mentor/sire] once told you to seek out for helpful advice; her look one of mild dismay.

In either case, the characters are free to move about the party. They might see or encounter any number of the following flavor elements as they go:

• *Two young Kindred lose themselves in an amorous embrace under a sculpted fountain. The male leans back, propping his hands against the marble as the female bends over him, nipping at his throat, her motions growing more insistent as she goes. He closes his eyes, moaning, and blood pools in one of the bites. She licks her lips and sucks at it. Elder Kindred watch with detached amusement.*

• *A mortal crawls on hands and knees before Macellarius Corbulo, who raises his enormous legs and props them on the slave's back. "Ah, but this one will be bruised in the morning," Corbulo jokes, shaking with mirth and drumming his heels on the poor mortal's ribs.*

• *Three vampires sing in front of a statue of Dionysus, swaying drunkenly as they do so. One takes long draughts from a jug, slopping blood all over his chin and tunic. Eupraxus pulls at one of his curls as he watches them, lost in thought. He grins as one of the vampires slips in the blood, falling on her ass, clutching at her fellow celebrant's legs in hilarity.*

• *Two muscular slaves wrestle in one corner, cheered on by their Kindred masters. A small circle of vampires gathers around the wrestlers, and it seems that an impromptu auction has begun. Tertia Julia Comitor notices from across the room and frowns, whispering something to one of her servants. It's not exactly polite to conduct business at a celebration like this — you're sure that the servant will instruct them to take their commerce elsewhere.*

• *A female slave recites a poem before Julia Sabina and a number of her associates. When the slave finishes, the assembled Kindred applaud politely. The slave smiles shyly. A male vampire sitting with them holds out his hand, pulling the slave close. She relaxes in his arms as he pulls her hair aside, exposing her throat. He turns to Julia Sabina, clearly making an offer. She declines with a gentle, polite smile. He shrugs, lowering his head to the girl's neck.*

• *A soldier of the Legio Mortuum stands at attention near the exit, dressed head-to-toe in the matte black armor of the service. A drunken mortal drapes herself on his shoulder, resting her head against the segmented bands of leather across his chest. She is obviously propositioning him, but he does not react at all — ranging his eyes back and forth across the party, staying ready to react to trouble. After a minute, the girl collapses at his feet, vomiting on the floor. He does not reach to help her when she crawls away, embarrassed.*

Storyteller Goals: Display the society of the Camarilla at its most opulent, decadent and peaceful. The characters can talk to just about anyone, and are at no risk of violence unless they deliberately provoke frenzy. Even then, members of the Legio Mortuum are on hand to calm things down. This scene shows the characters and the players that the Camarilla could,

not infrequently, deliver on its promise of a peaceful world for all vampires.

This is a good scene with which to open the chronicle, because the player characters have the chance to talk to vampires they know, in character, and thus the players can be brought up to speed without resorting to an info-dump. This scene also emphasizes the glory and the decadence of Rome, setting the tone for what will be lost.

Character Goals: Get to know the local Kindred of renown. Pave the way for earning Status and establish a name for themselves.

Actions: For possible actions at a party, see the section on attending parties in the discussion of the debauchery plotline, earlier. Specific activities that characters might want to engage in are detailed here.

Socialize with the Elite

Those characters who just want to have a good time and make friends will socialize with their cohorts, and may pay little attention to the relative Status or position of those the characters choose to party with. A Presence + Socialize roll can represent the attempt to enjoy oneself and contribute to the overall mood of the party.

Roll Result

Dramatic Failure: The character misses the mark so badly, telling an inappropriate joke, flirting too close to taboo or otherwise committing a faux pas, that he makes a spectacle of himself, embarrassing everyone involved (and, no doubt, provoking Tertia Julia Comitor's ire and Julia Sabina's pity). One of Comitor's servants politely asks the character to leave the party. If he refuses or otherwise makes a scene, the soldiers of the Legio Mortuum forcibly eject him. The character suffers a –1 penalty in his next dealing with Comitor.

Failure: The character fails to make a significant impact. He doesn't make a fool of himself, but he also doesn't make any new friends.

Success: The character enjoys himself and brings other Kindred in on the fun. He makes a favorable impression on almost everyone present, keeping within the bounds of good taste while provoking laughter and enthusiastic celebration. He tells a good joke, spins a fascinating tale, makes an appropriate toast to the host or the gods or otherwise attracts attention and pleases his cohorts.

Exceptional Success: The character has a blast, and clearly contributes to the success of the party. All who encounter him remember him well, even if they wouldn't normally find him agreeable. Tertia Julia Comitor, Macellarius Corbulo and Julia Sabina are all impressed with the character, and he enjoys a +1 bonus on his next social dealing with any of them.

Jockey for Recognition

Alternately, a character might make a less honest, but more focused attempt to make a good impression, concentrating on certain high-Status characters in hopes of getting noticed. A Manipulation + Socialize, Manipulation + Politics or Manipulation + Expression roll would be appropriate in this case. The target's Composure should be subtracted from the roll.

The attentions of the character should be focused on a specific target for this action to work. Tertia Julia Comitor and Macellarius Corbulo are good choices for those seeking the approval of the Senex. Victrix and Helvidius Bassianus present opportunities to impress the Legio Mortuum, and Flaviana Galla and Eupraxus make good targets for Kindred seeking the approval of the Cult of Augurs.

Roll Result

Dramatic Failure: The character makes an impression, but it's not the one she was hoping for. She commits a terrible misstep, proclaiming views that are incorrect or offensive and damaging her reputation instead of establishing it. Julia Sabina politely indicates that the character ought to watch herself, making it clear that she's going the wrong way. The character suffers a –1 penalty on her next social dealing with Tertia Julia Comitor as well as the target.

Failure: The character fails to get noticed. She doesn't sabotage herself, but she also doesn't win any points with the intended target.

Success: The character makes a favorable impression. She carries herself correctly, speaks well and expresses views that attract the approval of the target. The character enjoys a +1 bonus on her next social dealing with the target.

Exceptional Success: The character makes an extraordinarily good impression, winning friends and allies with the careful presentation of her best qualities. The target spends much of the evening in her company, and everyone notices. She enjoys a +2 bonus on her next social dealing with the target, and a +1 bonus on her next social dealing with every high-Status vampire at the party.

Seek a Patron

Rather than attempting to create an image for himself, a character may choose to take a more direct approach, seeking to initiate a politically beneficial relationship with a high-Status character. This isn't the same thing as seeking the target's approval — the character is actu-

ally looking to strike a give-and-take deal with the target, hoping that she will take him on as an apprentice of sorts, giving him a leg up in society in exchange for the promise of services rendered.

Some Kindred are easier to win over this way than others. Macellarius Corbulo and Flaviana Galla are always looking for young vampires to integrate into their machinations, and Julia Sabina actually likes helping up-and-comers, seeing their instruction as a service to the Camarilla. Any character trying to win them over this way can apply a +1 bonus to the roll involved.

Helvidius Bassianus isn't interested in schooling anyone, and Tertia Julia Comitor doesn't particularly care for the burden of a student. Any character trying to win them over must apply a –1 penalty to the roll involved.

To win the favor of the intended patron, the player involved should make a Social roll: Manipulation + Expression, Persuasion, Politics or Socialize, depending on the nature of the approach.

Roll Result

Dramatic Failure: The character manages to find a way to personally insult the target, ruining his chance of associating with her and making a crass spectacle of himself. Tertia Julia Comitor's servant approaches soon after, asking the character to leave the party. If he resists, the soldiers of the Legio Mortuum will forcibly eject him.

Failure: The character does not to appeal to the target, and the target makes it clear (in her own way) that the attempt is a failure. Each target reacts appropriately to their disposition: Macellarius Corbulo is likely to laugh off the attempt, telling the character to try again in 20 years or so. Victrix shakes her head and waves her hand dismissively, frowning as she states that she has no time for a naïve neonate's complaints.

Success: The target is suitably impressed and agrees to offer the character some support in exchange for a promise of service. The offer of support might translate into a dot of Status in one of the Wings of the Camarilla, or in some more material gain. In exchange, the character is going to have to keep the patron's best interests in mind throughout the story.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the target agree to take the character on, but she does so in a public manner, letting everyone around her know that she intends to take him under her wing and make a great success of him. The effects of a success apply, but the character also rises to two dots of Camarilla Status (if he isn't already there).

Consequences: The characters are likely to leave the party with contacts and appointments for more private conversations later. If the characters make a bad impression, they lose access to useful information or support, while a good impression could result in someone letting slip a vital tidbit.

• Those who successfully connect with Macellarius Corbulo, Tertia Julia Comitor, Julia Sabina, Flaviana Galla or Victrix are invited to Corbulo's spectacle at the Circus Maximus, and move directly to **A Night at the Races**. Read them the following at the end of the scene:

Toward the end of the night, as the party begins to thin out, there is a tap on your shoulder. You turn to see one of Macellarius Corbulo's servants standing before you. He bows deeply, and speaks. "My Dominus wishes to express his pleasure with you and your conduct tonight. He instructs me to bestow the honor of invitation to his spectacle at the Circus Maximus, two nights hence, and indicates that he would like you to join him there. Do you accept?"

• Those who fail to make a good impression will get some good advice from Julia Sabina, and move to **A Night at the Races** as well. Read them the following at the end of the scene instead:

As the night draws to a close, Julia Sabina approaches you. She takes [indicate a character] by the shoulder, speaking in a quiet, even tone. "I know things didn't go so well for you tonight, but don't worry. You'll have another chance, and soon. Macellarius Corbulo is hosting a spectacle at the Circus Maximus two nights from now. Why don't you attend and see if you can do better? In the meanwhile, I'd be happy to prepare you with some advice. Come see me before you go, yes?"

Event: A Night at the Races

Mental: •• Physical: ••• Social: ••

Overview: The characters attend chariot races at the Circus Maximus, and have the opportunity to participate.

Description: *The Circus Maximus is eerily quiet when empty of the crowds of screaming fans. You can hear the breathing of the horses as they wait on the starting line, and you even think that they sound nervous, unsure of the darkness. The light comes from a handful of braziers, spaced around the track, but distant, leaving the stands in darkness.*

The rope falls, and the chariots leap forward, Blue, Green, Red, White and Purple. Around you, you are aware of spectators leaping to their feet, and you can hear them shouting to urge their teams on, but their voices seem to be swallowed by the immensity of the stadium. In the flickering firelight, the chariots hurtle around the track.

If Corbulo personally invited the characters, read the following:

You are greeted by Corbulo's slave. "My Dominus bids you welcome," he says, eyes lowered respectfully. "This way, please." He leads you through the stands, around through a small corridor and back out again in the private box of seats. Macellarius Corbulo is there, in all his corpulent glory, decked out in a mass of glossy fabrics. He smiles as you approach, opening his hands in a welcoming gesture. "My friends," he declares, "my friends, you have come! Join me, and cheer the races with me! Perhaps we shall see some blood, eh? If we are lucky, we shall."

If not, read them this:

You find seats easily in the near-empty arena. Scattered Kindred look your way as you sit, clearly wondering who you are. Macellarius Corbulo is seated some distance away in a private box, his eyes flickering over you as you sit. After a moment, he recognizes you and smiles — more to himself than to you — turning back to the show.

Storyteller Goals: Display the importance of chariot races to the vampires of Rome, who have generally not left their mortal loyalties behind. Get the characters in contact with Corbulo so that he can give them a mission.

Character Goals: Make a deal with Macellarius Corbulo.

Actions: Characters who've already made a good impression on Corbulo (or earned his attention by making a good impression on some other high-Status Kindred) only need to talk to him to get the job done. Those who haven't will have to earn his notice by putting on a bit of a show.

Talk to Corbulo

Corbulo's actually got a job that needs doing, and he'll be perfectly happy to give it to the characters no matter what he thinks of them. If the characters are already in his good books, read this:

As the chariots thunder by on a pass, Corbulo shouts a mighty roar, cheering on his racer. He almost rises out of the chair, then settles back. "You know," he says to [choose a character]. I wonder, do you have any time these nights? I have a little favor that needs doing. Are you interested?"

If they aren't, but they try to directly approach him, read this:

As you approach the box, Corbulo's servant steps into your path. "Wait," Corbulo says from above, his great forearm hanging over the rail. He never takes his eyes off the track, watching as the chariots rumble around a bend.

After they pass, he curses and pokes his head over to look at you. "Hmph," he says, his lip curling in a sneer. "Come to get into my good graces, have you? Well, here's your chance. I have some work that needs doing. Do you think you can conduct yourselves better on the road than you did at the party?"

Here's how different Social skills can play into the interaction with Corbulo:

• **Empathy:** A successful Wits + Empathy action will indicate that Corbulo isn't sure what to make of the characters yet. He's more cautious than his demeanor seems to indicate, and careful attention will reveal that his dismissive gestures and jokes provide a frivolous cover for a serious political tactician. Reading Corbulo successfully will indicate that the best approach is that the characters know that they are inferior to Corbulo, and they'll do what's necessary to win his approval, plain and simple. This success, if applied to the coterie's interactions with him, adds a +1 bonus to further Social rolls this scene. An exceptional success adds a +2 bonus instead.

• **Intimidation:** Considering his relative position, Corbulo should be very difficult to intimidate. He should add his Camarilla Status rating (4) to his Composure when resisting any character's attempt. If it succeeds, though, Corbulo will clearly be afraid of them, and will reveal the nature of the mission, offering to pay them dearly for its completion. After they leave, he will attempt to organize their destruction on the road.

• **Persuasion:** The coterie may attempt to Cut a Deal with Corbulo (see p. 82, the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). That's what he's already hoping to do with them, so it's not difficult to come to a basic agreement. To strike a basic bargain — to do the job for Corbulo and receive the payment he already intends to offer — requires only one success on the roll. For each success beyond that, Corbulo will raise the value of payment.

Alternately, this skill could be used to Fast Talk Corbulo (see p. 83, the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). This serves to broker the deal as well, but he will offer no more than the intended payment unless an exceptional success is achieved.

• **Socialize:** At best, a Presence or Manipulation + Socialize roll will soften Corbulo's opinion of the characters somewhat, giving them a +1 bonus on the negotiation.

• **Subterfuge:** This skill can be used to achieve the same result as Fast Talk, above.

Once Macellarius is ready to cut a deal, read the following:

"I have need," says Macellarius, shifting his great bulk and sighing, "of a courier. There is a contact of mine in Mediolanum — not far away, really, but for someone of my... stature, well... a journey that is better undertaken by those with more time on their hands, yes? At any rate, I have everything you need: instructions, a seal, some money. Just go to this man, Scornutor is his name, and bring back the package that is waiting for me." He waves to his servant, who proffers a wax tablet, a small bag of coin and a clay seal. "It's all there. Shouldn't be too difficult, nay? Find me when you return, deliver the package, and you



will be amply rewarded, in coin and in praise. Public praise. Very valuable... more than gold, nay?"

Participate in the Spectacle

Characters who don't already have Corbulo's approval will come to the Circus Maximus armed with advice from Julia Sabina: there's nothing that Corbulo enjoys more than a thrilling show, and there's nothing he appreciates more from potential allies than proof that they are willing to risk injury or death for his benefit. The best way to win him over, Julia indicates, is to participate in his races.

If the characters wish to participate in the races, they only have to tell one of Corbulo's servants. Corbulo will raise an eyebrow and nod assent, indicating that the servant should lead the characters down into the arena and allow them to equip themselves for a race.

Do keep in mind that while one or more characters are participating in the race, the others are free to attempt Social rolls, listen in to the surrounding Kindred for rumors or do just about anything else they feel. Don't focus entirely on the one character for the whole of the scene, or the other players might get bored.

Corbulo has organized a race with eight two-horse chariots for tonight. If the characters choose to enter a racer, Corbulo will have one of the mortal drivers withdraw and allow the character to take his place. Victrix is participating as well. Here are the relevant statistics of the drivers:

Driver	Wits + Composure	Dexterity + Ride	Manipulation + Ride
Red 1	5	6	4
Red 2	5	7	6
Green 1	6	6	3
Green 2	5	6	4
Blue 1	6	6	5
Blue 2	5	5	4
Victrix	6	8	5

The Chariot Race

A chariot race consists of a number of laps, and each lap consists of two straights and two corners. All racers start with no successes. For the start, roll Wits + Composure, as starting successes.

The race starts with a straight. For each straight and corner, all the drivers roll Dexterity + Ride (Chariot). The rolls are considered to take place simultaneously. Characters without a Chariot Specialty in Ride get a –2 penalty to all pools involving it; characters with the Specialty get the normal bonus. Driving a chariot is similar to riding a horse in many ways, but the differences are important. Riders add their successes to their total.

The number of laps for the race is set in advance; seven is normal. The winner is the character with the highest number of successes when the race ends. Obviously, basic racing is a bit boring. Fortunately, hardly anyone ever does that.

Crashes

A dramatic failure on a racing roll indicates a crash. The driver of a crashed chariot takes 10 dice of bashing damage. When one chariot crashes, it may bring the others down with it. Drivers who are significantly ahead of or behind the crash are safe, but others must make reflexive Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) rolls to avoid the danger, applying an initial –1 penalty to the roll. Each driver should roll in order of his position in the race. Every one who crashes adds an additional –1 to the penalty of those behind him.

If a crash brings another chariot down, those drivers already in the crash take an additional five dice of bashing damage each. A crash near the front of a race can spell doom even for vampires.

Ghouls with Celerity are trained to clear the track when there is a crash; by the time the race comes round again, all the wreckage has been removed.

Maneuvers

All the penalties from the following maneuvers stack, and a driver targeted by more than one other driver takes all the penalties from those maneuvers. It is thus very, very easy to be reduced to a chance die on any Drive roll in a large race, even for skilled charioteers.

Blocking: A driver can attempt to block any driver behind him in the race, measured at the end of the last turn. To do so, he takes a –3 penalty to his Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) pool and rolls as normal. If he succeeds, his target cannot get past, and thus cannot improve his position — the best he can do is keep pace with the blocker. However, the blocker is similarly limited, and cannot gain successes toward victory in this turn. He can choose only to block one driver per turn.

A driver may make a reflexive Wits + Composure roll to realize that he is being blocked. If he does, he may contest the blocking action with his own Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) roll, without any penalties. If he gets more successes than the character trying to block him, he is not blocked, but his position in the race does not improve.

Once a driver is blocked, the leading driver may maintain the block for as long as he likes. Both drivers roll as normal, but they both advance the lower number of successes, keeping a constant distance.

If the blocked driver advances to one success behind the blocker, he can attempt to escape the block on his next turn. The blocker rolls first, and the blocked driver takes a penalty on his dice pool equal to the number of successes the blocker achieves. If he succeeds anyway, he advances that many successes and escapes the block. This may leave him behind the blocker, but at least he is now in a position to move forward. A driver who has just escaped a block automatically notices if the blocker tries to reimpose it on the next turn.

Interference: Drivers can try to make problems for the other racers to force them back. Each driver can target a single racer (who must be within two successes of him in terms of the overall race — other chariots are too far away). The interfering driver accepts a penalty to his Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) dice pool, of any amount up to the amount needed to reduce his pool to a chance die. If he succeeds, the target of interference suffers a penalty to his dice pool equal to the penalty the interfering driver took.

Deception: Charioteers can also attempt to deceive one another. The dice pool for this is Manipulation + Ride (Chariot), as the deception is expressed in the movements of the chariot. A charioteer attempting deception makes a reflexive Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) roll at a –2 penalty, to determine his position in the race, and then his Manipulation + Ride (Chariot) roll. All the other charioteers make a reflexive Wits + Ride (Chariot) roll to see through the ruse. Those who achieve more successes than the deceiver are unaffected. Those who do not take a penalty equal to his number of successes on their next Dexterity + Ride (Chariot) roll. They do not know that they are taking this penalty, and so may try other maneuvers.

Forcing Wide: This maneuver can be used only on corners, and only against a charioteer within one success of the maneuverer. The aim is to force the other driver to the outside of the corner, where the distance is longer. The driver takes a –1 penalty to his dice pool, and the target takes a penalty equal to the number of successes the driver scores.

As far as seeking Corbulo's approval is concerned, it doesn't really matter if the characters win the race. Macellarius will enjoy the spectacle of the race immensely, and he will be genuinely impressed by the lengths the characters are willing to go to just to win him over.

Of course, winning a race will impress him greatly. If the character wins, read the following, and give the characters a +1 bonus as they move on to "Talking to Corbulo," above:

Macellarius Corbulo looks to you [indicate those characters not racing], a surprised smile cracking on his face. "Not bad," he says, "not bad at all. Listen... tell your friend not to bother cleaning [himself/herself] up. Have [him/her] join us up here immediately. There's something I'd like to talk to you about." He licks his lips and grins again.

If the character doesn't win, read this:

Macellarius Corbulo looks to you [indicate those characters not racing] and shrugs, an easy smile spreading across his wide face. "I'll tell you what," he says, "it was worth the effort. You've got my attention. Let's talk."

A side note: if the character involved in the race manages to cause Victrix to crash some time during the race, she won't be very happy. She'll rise from the wreckage, eyeing him as he rounds the track, saying nothing. She'll remember him in the future... something that will come into play much later in this story.

Consequences: Getting Macellarius Corbulo's attention affords the characters the opportunity to move to the next part of the story: **Walking to Mediolanum**. Those who wish to seek blessing before departing can go to **Sanctified Mass** or **Dance of the Galli** first, as appropriate.

• If the characters refuse Corbulo's offer or otherwise avoid the trip to Mediolanum, move on to **Sanctified Mass** or **Dance of the Galli**, depending on their faith, narrate a year of debauchery and politics without significant gain or change and then move ahead to **The Missing Vampire**.

• A character who wins a chariot race gains Fame 1 (Kindred) for his performance in the spectacle.

• As mentioned above, a character who forces Victrix into a crash will earn her undying enmity... but she won't let that show for a while yet. However, in the meantime, that particular character suffers a –2 on all Social rolls involving Victrix.

Event: Walking to Mediolanum

Mental: •• Physical: •• Social: ••

Overview: The characters travel to Mediolanum, in the north of Italy, finding that authorization from the Senex makes the journey almost easy and assures them of a welcome at the other end.

Description: *It is only half an hour until dawn, and the eastern sky is already starting to brighten. You are hidden in trees by the road, watching the inn. The instructions were clear: do not approach before the owner opens up. Just when you are thinking of finding somewhere else to sleep, there is a noise from behind the door, and moments later it swings open, a man peering out into the gloom. What do you do?*

Storyteller Goals: Demonstrate the reach of the Camarilla. Safe way stations have been prepared for traveling vampires, and they work. The characters (and players) should be expecting problems, but there are none that the characters do not cause for themselves.

Character Goals: Get to Mediolanum safely, and get the job done so that they can return to Corbulo and get paid.

Actions: The rigors of travel determine what the characters will need to do on the way to Mediolanum.

Walking the Path

The characters' journey proceeds without trouble. The Pax Romana is still functional, and the purpose of this scene is to give the characters an easy time. It takes 10 nights to get to Mediolanum at normal traveling speed, and the appointed stopping places are spaced so that the characters arrive shortly after midnight on the 10th night.

Finding Accommodation

The wax tablet that Corbulo gave the characters includes a list of places to stay along the road, including inns, temples and even a legionary fort. The characters are told how to approach, and when. If they follow instructions, they are effectively guaranteed safe haven during the days.

At different points in the journey, give the characters the opportunity to choose from the listed havens (or to find their own — requiring a Wits + Survival roll with an imposed –3 penalty for unfamiliar territory). If they take advantage of those listed, read from the following, as appropriate:

Inn: *The innkeeper quickly guides you through the common room, where you can see travelers asleep on the floor, and to a passage beside the kitchen. Firelight dances beyond the open doorway, and though you bristle at it, the torches stand too far to present a real threat. He pushes open a door set in the wall, and gestures to the space beyond. "My lords, you may sleep in here."*

You notice that the door is thick, and has heavy bolts on the inside, but nothing on the outside. Peering in, the small room has solid walls, and a number of metal shelves set against the wall. It doesn't look comfortable, but there is nothing flammable in sight.

Fort: *The gate guard looks at you, and then at the seal you presented, suspicion clear on his face. He calls his superior, who takes one look at the seal and goes white, sweeping off his helmet as he bows. A few barked orders later, you are shown to an empty warehouse. Similar to the others, it is built of stone and roofed in slate. Unlike the others, the bars are on the inside of the door.*

Temple: *The priest sacrificing in front of the small temple nods in acknowledgment as you approach, and quickly brings the ceremony to a conclusion. He leads you up the steps, between the plastered-brick columns making the facade, and directs you into the main body of the temple. A number of altars around the walls provide places to sleep, and there is a heavy wooden beam with which to seal the solid wooden doors.*

Of course, agents of the Camarilla are spying on all of these locations. If the characters stay there and don't make an extraordinary effort to conceal themselves, it can be assumed that any major character they deal with in future scenes knows what they get up to (in a general sense).

Realizing that the havens are externally secure, but vulnerable to internal spies requires a success on an Intelligence + Larceny or Intelligence + Survival roll.

Hunting

The characters are given strict instructions not to feed from the humans at any of the places they are told to sleep, and warned of serious penalties if they do. Corbulo and Julia Sabina will both back this up, emphasizing that the Senex takes such violations seriously, and characters who have been in Rome for some time have heard stories about those penalties. Any success on a Wits + Politics roll tells the characters that these prohibitions are taken seriously.

Characters who respect that stricture can make normal hunting rolls, without the benefit of any Herd dots they may have if their herd is based in Rome.

There are always a few travelers too poor to find accommodation more substantial than a ditch hidden from the road. It seems that the father of this family intended to keep watch, but he has fallen asleep. His wife, son and daughter, are sleeping huddled together in the shelter of a bush. How do you feed?

Characters who ignore the stricture can feed automatically, as none of the humans at the way stations resist. Spies will send messages back to the Senex, though, reporting the actions of those who do not make a serious effort to conceal their actions. If the characters do not kill when they feed, they can stay in the same places on the way back.

The innkeeper's face is shocked, but he quickly relaxes. One of the serving girls screams and bolts for the door, but another grabs her arm and calms her down.

"We will not resist. Just don't kill us," says the innkeeper.

When reports of illegal feeding reach Rome, however, characters who violate the restriction will be called to answer for their crime before the Senex.

Arrival at Mediolanum

Players who care to can make an Intelligence + Politics or Intelligence + Warfare roll to represent their characters' observations about the Camarilla's travel system.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character incorrectly assesses the process, assuming that it is much weaker and more vulnerable to false pretense than it really is. His arrogance makes it more difficult (–2) to spot actual spies or threats on the road, as he mistakes them for harmless features of the landscape or improperly attributes them to recognized allies.

Failure: The character is confused, and cannot properly assess the system.

Success: The system has its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, it would be very easy to fake the seal and simply remember the instructions from one time to the next. Assuming the travel arrangements do not change regularly, there is very little security in the system. Then again, it's obvious that the Camarilla's spies are all over the road, so it isn't quite as easy to take advantage of the system as one might think.

Exceptional Success: If the Camarilla actually wanted to stop vampires traveling from one town to another, they would have a more involved system. Thus, it's clearly more important to them to make a means of safe transit available than to remain completely secure. There must be reasons for this preference, and it would be wise not to test them. It's true, there are vulnerabilities in the system — but some are clearly preferable to the impassable barrier that distance would present without *some* kind of arranged scheme of way stations and reportage.

The characters' initial contact in Mediolanum is Julia Africana, a local Magistrate of the Senex. She is an old vampire, and was Embraced as an elderly matron. Her main concern is with keeping Mediolanum stable; she is perfectly happy to be the big fish here, and she likes to send ambitious troublemakers to Rome, out of her hair.

The gate guards let you in very quickly when they saw the seal, and avoided looking at you as much as possible. The town is tiny, compared to Rome, and it takes you a moment to realize that you have walked straight through the main forum. Yes, it's a forum, but it would barely serve a neighborhood back in Rome. You find the back entrance to the town's curial hall, and let yourselves in. The clerk dozing by a brazier sits up sharply as the bell behind the door rings, and barely glances at your seal before stammering, "Be so good as to wait for my mistress," and bolting from the room. You have time to look around the office, which appears standard, and peer into Mediolanum's curial hall, which is a small copy of the Senate House in Rome, before your contact, Julia Africana, arrives. "If I might see your seal?" she asks, politely enough.

The roll on arrival is Presence + Socialize, Presence + Persuasion, or Presence + Streetwise. Julia Africana's Composure of 3 is subtracted from the roll. The coterie's spokesman should roll, but other characters may assist. Julia Africana is very unlikely to throw them out of the town, but they can make life easier or more difficult for themselves here. (If the characters decide to attack Julia Africana, use Julia Sabina's statistics. This is not a good idea, and players should be allowed Wits + Politics rolls to figure that out.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The characters are told, in no uncertain terms, that they should leave the city the following night. They can try to stay to complete their business, but they will have to dodge the current inhabitants of the town.

Failure: The characters are allowed to stay for as long as it takes to complete their task, and are given inadequate temporary hunting rights. (Subtract two dice from all hunting pools if the characters do not break the rules.) They are not welcomed into the society of Mediolanum, and vampires will start to put pressure on the characters to leave if they are not finished within a week.

Success: The characters are allowed to stay for as long as it takes to complete their task. They are granted adequate temporary hunting rights, which grant no penalty to hunting rolls. They are also welcomed into the vampire society of the town, and the local vampires only put pressure on the characters to leave if they are obnoxious and obviously wasting time rather than working on their task.

Exceptional Success: Nothing is initially said about when the characters might be leaving. They are not only granted adequate hunting rights and welcomed into society, but Julia Africana throws a small party to make the characters welcome. They get a +1 die bonus to all initial interactions with vampires in the town.

Obstacles/Penalties: Characters are insulting or aggressive (–2), or they cause trouble in the city between arriving and presenting themselves (–3).

Aids/Bonuses: Following instructions and presenting the seal (+3).

Consequences: Unless the characters do something truly stupid, they are in Mediolanum and have permission to track down Scornutor. They might even have an appointment for a welcome party. If the characters do have to hide from the other vampires while they are here, you can require Dexterity + Stealth rolls at times, particularly when they are trying to get the statue out of the city. However, the vampires of Mediolanum are not actively searching for the characters, so unless they are very unlucky, the characters should still be able to complete the job. They should certainly feel time pressure, however — and if they stick around too long, feel free to run a physical confrontation with one of the locals.

• Characters who ignore Corbulo's instruction and feed on the mortals maintaining the travelers' havens will be called before the Senex to answer for their crime. This will figure into play after they return to Rome.

• Those who follow Corbulo's instructions to the letter will find, upon their return, that Corbulo is more pleased with them than they had expected, and will enjoy a +1 bonus on their next social dealing with him.

Encounter: The Converted Contact

Mental: ••• Physical: — Social: •••

Overview: The characters find Quintus Didius Scornutor easily, as he still lives where Corbulo said. However, Scornutor refuses to have anything to do with the characters, having "moved on" from that part of his life. The main problem for the characters is that they do not know what the item they are supposed to collect is; they have to negotiate with Scornutor at least until he tells them that. Once they know that they want the statue, they can either negotiate for it or simply take it by force.

Description: *Corbulo's directions and description were good, and it took you less than an hour to find the house where his contact, Quintus Didius Scornutor ("call him Scornutor"), lives. It's a nice house, and the slave who opened the door when you knocked was large, burly and not at all welcoming. Still, he disappeared to fetch his master quickly enough when you mentioned "Macellarius Corbulo." He closed the door, though, leaving you waiting outside a blank wall.*

You don't wait long before there are footsteps, and the door opens a crack. A man peers out, and it is Scornutor: brown eyes, black hair, scar above the left eye, missing upper left canine. His eyes sweep over you, and before you can say anything he blurts out, "That part of my life is over. I'm having nothing to do with Corbulo now," and starts to push the door shut. What do you do?

Storyteller Goals: Have the characters deal with a mortal whom they cannot just kill, and make sure that they hear enough about Eupraxus to become suspicious of his cult.

Character Goals: Find out what the item that Corbulo wants is, and get it. See what else they can learn in the meantime.

Actions: Scornutor is an ordinary mortal, and no physical threat to the characters. The characters need information, but there are a few ways to get it.

If the characters are thinking about torturing or killing Scornutor or ignoring Corbulo's errand, have them roll Intelligence + Politics with a +2 bonus. Any success reveals that simply abandoning Corbulo's job will make an enemy of him — not exactly a good idea. Similarly, if they kill Scornutor before finding out what the item is, Corbulo will believe that they are stupid, at best, or treacherous, at worst, and will make things difficult for them when they return.

Getting the required information out of Scornutor isn't very difficult, but the way the characters choose to go about their task will inform how he reacts.

Telepathy

If the characters have Auspex ••••, they can use Telepathy to read Scornutor's mind. Scornutor is actively thinking about the statue, so there is no penalty on the roll.

However, you should roll the dice secretly. If the characters succeed, you should also give them some additional information as if they scored an exceptional success:

The mortal has little mental strength, and you are quickly into his mind. As you burrow through his mind looking for the item Corbulo wants, you pick up other thought fragments: "I met the Messiah!" "The Messiah will save us from this world of



monsters!" Then you find the item, an erotic statue, currently in a storeroom off the atrium of his house. As you withdraw, you hear, "I met the Messiah!" again, this time with the Messiah's face: it is Eupraxus.

Mesmerize

Characters with Dominate •• can use their power to get Scornutor to cooperate. (Command is not quite enough.) The Discipline is specific enough to get him to talk about what Corbulo is after, and then to get him to hand it over. However, the Discipline cannot force him to focus entirely on that. During the course of talking about Corbulo and the statue, he also mentions the Messiah he met in Rome, describes him well enough for the characters to recognize Eupraxus and warns the characters about the monsters in Rome.

"Of course I'll show you what Corbulo wants. But since I heard about the monsters, I don't want to be involved with him. He'll attract them, with his tastes. This way, please. Yes, the Messiah opened my eyes to the risk. Ah, his eyes. Like sapphires, they are. And so young, but with a voice like angels. You can tell he is touched by God... er, the gods; no one that young could know so much without the blessing of the heavens. And they do say that true beauty reflects the soul within. It's in here..." As he rambles on, you realize that the "Messiah" he is describing sounds a lot like Eupraxus.

He opens a door, revealing a large statue propped up in the corner of the room. The image is of a satyr, rutting with a nymph. It must be nearly life-sized. He grimaces, waving a hand at it. "There it is. I hope you brought the money for it."

Majesty

Majesty is very effective in getting Scornutor to talk. Awe means that negotiating characters do not have to come up with a good line, although they do still need to talk to him, as described below. Revelation makes Scornutor spill his secrets, which means that, first, he tells the characters all about the Messiah and the blood-drinking monsters, and then about the statue. Revelation by itself does not convince him to hand the statue over, but his description of Eupraxus is very clear and detailed. Entrancement makes the negotiations utterly trivial; Scornutor simply decides to hand the statue over. While taking the characters to it, however, he warns them about blood-drinking monsters and tells them of his experience of meeting the Messiah in Rome. He mentions that the Messiah is even more impressive than the characters, and describes him well enough for them to recognize Eupraxus. Sovereignty is like Entrancement, only more so, and Eupraxus is not described as being more impressive than the characters.

Nightmare

Characters with Nightmare may use Dread to make the negotiations easier; the other powers of this Discipline are not really appropriate, and make things harder. Provoked by Dread, Scornutor involuntarily blurts out that the blood-drinking monsters are coming to get him. That might give the characters a shock, but as he goes on to warn them, they should quickly be assured that he doesn't know what they are. He goes on to talk about the Messiah, who can protect him, talking in detail about the encounter in a transparent attempt to convince himself. The characters can easily recognize Eupraxus from this account.

Negotiation

Of course, characters can just talk to Scornutor to find out what Corbulo wants, and try to convince him to hand it over. They can take just about any approach: honest negotiation, clever fast-talk, persuasion by begging or by making seductive overtures. Let them choose their approach.

Dramatic Failure: Scornutor lies to the characters, sending them back with a Bible he has left over from a previous religious experience. He warns them of the blood-drinking monsters infesting Rome, though.

Failure: Scornutor isn't persuaded, and only tells them about the blood-drinking monsters, and the Messiah who warned him about them. The characters can try again, at the normal penalties.

Success: Scornutor makes a deal and hands over the statue. He warns the characters about the bloody monsters of Rome as he does, showing genuine concern for them (and a complete ignorance of their state).

Exceptional Success: No special benefits beyond those of an ordinary success.

Aids/Bonuses: Offering Scornutor the money from Corbulo (+3), telling him this is the only way to stop Corbulo interfering in his life (+3), showing interest in his talk about the Messiah (+1).

Obstacles/Penalties: Using Intimidation (–2), offering nothing in return for the statue (–3), trying to cut off his talk about his religious experiences (–1), revealing their undead state (–5).

The Item

The item that Corbulo wants is a life-size marble statue of a satyr rutting with a nymph. The technical quality is excellent, and the image is shamelessly pornographic.

Consequences: This scene should have two consequences. First, the characters should have the statue, and be able to hand it over to Corbulo. Second, they should

have heard about Eupraxus's cult in a context that makes it sound a little risky.

The Journey Home

If you want, you can make the journey back to Rome a bit difficult for the characters, as they have a rather striking, heavy and fragile object to transport. If your group likes comedy, this is a good chance to introduce some mildly absurd situations, best resolved by fast thinking rather than fast blades. A few laughs this early in the story can go a long way toward establishing the "good times" feeling of the characters' early Requiem, allowing them to experience the later fall as stark contrast.

Alternatively, you can allow the characters to buy a cart, throw a blanket over the statue and get it back to Rome without any trouble. No one at the way stations is going to make a fuss about creatures of the night carrying a rude statue, after all.

Event: The Return to Rome

Mental: — Physical: •• Social: —

Overview: The characters return and report to Macellarius Corbulo. Julia Sabina consults with them and offers advice.

Description: If the characters bring the statue with them, read the following:

Your journey back has been no simple task. Protecting the statue through the rough and dusty travels is harder work than it seems, and you are relieved to see the gates of Rome up ahead.

Macellarius Corbulo's personal slave greets you at the appointed time and place, nodding as he inspects the statue. "Yes, yes, Dominus will be most pleased. Good, good. Come with me, please."

The slave snaps his fingers, and several others emerge from a doorway nearby, taking the statue from you. They bend to carry it, grunting and sweating as mortals do, into a warehouse nearby. You know that there is an entry to Necropolis in that house; no doubt the statue will decorate one of Corbulo's extravagant rooms underground.

The slave hands you a generous purse filled with coin. "The Dominus instructs me to give you this," he says, with a smile. "He also assures me that you will find him most accommodating in the future, should you require a favor of your own. You are most appreciated."

If they fail to bring it back, read this instead:

The journey back is not difficult, but you know that the trouble will begin once you are home. Shortly after you pass through the gates of Rome, Macellarius Corbulo's personal slave intercepts you. That damnable man seems to have a talent for finding you. "No package?" he inquires, peering over your shoulders. "The Dominus will be most disappointed. Most disappointed, indeed."

Either way, give the characters a chance to interact with the slave, if they like, or to dismiss him. He won't try to remain around them; he knows perfectly well what they are, and, by extension, what they might be capable of.

Once he's out of their hair, read the following:

After he's gone, another mortal steps around a corner: an old woman. You recognize her — she's Julia Sabina's body slave, a lifelong servant and companion. "My Domina extends greetings," she says, eyeing you with a practiced, expressionless look, "and invites you to join her this evening."

If the characters agree to visit Julia Sabina, read the following:

You follow the old woman down into one of the nearby entrances to Necropolis, then down a series of corridors, finally emerging in a large, silk-draped chamber: the entry to Juliana Sabina's home. A great fresco depicting the achievements of a great general, no doubt one of Sabina's relatives, runs the length of all four walls.

Sabina herself emerges from another entrance moments later. "Friends," she proclaims, extending her hands. "It's so good to see you again. How are you? Tell me of your travels!"

Storyteller Goals: Reward the characters for a job well done. Give them the information that draws them into the next part of the story. Give them an opportunity to interfere with Corbulo's personal slave, if they want to, and to learn a thing or two from Julia Sabina.

Character Goals: Deliver the package to Corbulo's people, if they have it, and collect payment. Tell Julia Sabina what they've discovered.

Actions: The characters are free to do as much or as little as they want to in this scene. Here are two of their options:

Interfere with Corbulo's Slave

The characters have a rare opportunity: they're alone with Macellarius Corbulo's personal slave. While they're out on the street, in public (and a successful Wits + Larceny roll will make it clear that they are obviously being spied on), they can do just about anything they want to him. Injuring or killing him, feeding on him or stealing from him are obviously bad moves, politically speaking, and will earn Corbulo's wrath — but there are subtler moves they can make. Certain social challenges, aided

by the application of Majesty or Nightmare, will allow them to get some information about Corbulo's naked ambition and staggering, nearly limitless capacity for self-indulgence. Powers such as Dominate can be plied to implant mesmeric commands.

The slave has Composure and Resolve ratings of 2.

Seek Julia Sabina's Advice

Once again, Julia Sabina is genuinely willing to help the characters, if they want her to, and won't ask anything in return because she believes that, by helping the characters learn how to politic properly, she's helping the Camarilla overall.

Here examples of some of the things Sabina might tell the characters, depending on what they say to her:

• *"Hmm. Pleasing Corbulo is a good idea — he has a lot of personal power, and many in the Camarilla owe him debts of one kind or another. Just be careful not to get too far into his pockets or you'll find yourselves subject to his whims. If he's happy with you, see if you can't start establishing yourselves in Assembly or befriending someone else of influence: Tertia Julia Comitor, perhaps, or Helvidius Bassianus. Maybe it's time for you to throw a party of your own?"*

• *"Eupraxus is toying with mortals again, is he?" She furrows her brow. "He's dangerous, that one. Takes too much pleasure in leading the living to destruction. I wouldn't be surprised if it brought real trouble to his doorstep one night."*

• *"A satyr in rut with a nymph, you say? Hah, Corbulo's at it again. Rumor has it, you see, that Corbulo is conducting an affair with Tertia Julia Comitor. He knows that the rumor annoys Comitor, and that she's denied it — so he's planning to fan the flames by placing a scene of love on prominent display. What a mischievous dog he is."*

• *"You need to be very careful. I heard that you violated the stricture on feeding in one of the Camarilla's public havens on the road. If I were you, I would get to an Assembly of the Senex as soon as possible, so that you can answer for the deed. Do it before they call you there."*

Aids/Bonuses: There are no significant bonuses in this scene.

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant penalties in this scene.

Consequences: Characters who turn the statue over to Corbulo's slave are rewarded in coin (which translates to two dots of Resources that can be split between characters, but cannot raise any character's total in Resources above two dots).

• Those who interfere with Corbulo's slave may earn his wrath in future dealings, suffering a –2 penalty on their social interactions with him from now on.

• Those who violated the rules of travel on the road will be called before the Senex (if they don't go of their own free will first), and should move on to an **Assembly of the Senex**.

• Otherwise, the characters get a year of "downtime" to resolve actions, pursue personal goals or simply relax. Once the time is up, move on to **The Missing Vampire**.

Aftermath

Macellarius Corbulo

If the characters successfully retrieve the statue and please Corbulo, his payment to them is a *de facto* offer of Patronage. Even if there's no official agreement, Corbulo will begin to treat the characters with generosity, mentally racking up the debt they owe him every time he gives them a gift or showers them with praise in public. Eventually, when he needs something done, he'll turn around and demand that the characters satisfy him. If the characters go along with him, they'll stand to gain a lot: Status with the Senex, wealth and fame and even, when Corbulo disappears during the second chapter of the chronicle, the stewardship of the Circus Maximus itself. The characters can list Corbulo as a four-dot Mentor on their sheets, and they should be encouraged to revisit the Circus Maximus any time they want to meet with Corbulo, and can watch or participate in as many races as they like.

If, on the other hand, they fail to bring the statue back intact, Corbulo's disappointment will be obvious. Later, he will begin to suspect that their failure was not a result of incompetence, but rather service to Comitor. If the characters don't take great pains to convince him otherwise, he will be publicly spiteful and unwilling to aid them later.

Tertia Julia Comitor

Comitor's going to be rather unhappy with the characters if they bring Corbulo's statue back. She doesn't really consider it a personal insult from them (just from him), but as far as she's concerned, the retrieval indicates that the characters have chosen Corbulo as a patron. In response, she will be more distant than usual, and invitations to her parties will stop entirely (or, if at least one of the characters has either Status (Senex) 2 or Status (Camarilla) 2 or higher, they will come grudgingly).

However — if the characters fail to bring the statue back to Corbulo's satisfaction, Comitor will hear of it and make an offer of Patronage to the characters, noting — correctly — that Corbulo will suspect them of serving her already, so they may as well benefit. If they agree, they will have access to Status and fortune under her tutelage as well, and will stand to inherit the mantle of Rome's foremost party organizers when Comitor dies in the second chapter of the chronicle. The characters

can list Comitor as a four-dot Mentor on their sheets, and should be encouraged to attend one of her parties whenever they want to speak with her.

Julia Sabina

If the characters accept the Patronage of Corbulo or Comitor, Julia Sabina will still offer them advice. She'll withdraw a bit, not wanting to step on anyone's toes, but she'll make herself available if the characters ever want to see her.

If they remain independent, Sabina will compliment them on their prudence and courage, and offer them any advice they like.

Experience

Every character who participates in this story receives at least three points of end-of-story experience: one for attending the party, one for visiting the chariot race and one for traveling to and from Mediolanum.

- Any character who participates in a chariot race earns one bonus point of experience.
- Any character who makes a particularly interesting choice, displays keen wit or acumen or does something surprising and entertaining during the story earns one bonus point of experience.

321 CE: The Missing Vampire

A year passes. The characters, now beginning to establish themselves in Roman society, come under an oblique attack. A vampire disappears, and rumors begin to surface accusing the characters of foul play.

Story

One night, a low-Status Julian vampire named Caius Julius Cunctator wandered unawares into the arms of a waiting Strix. The Strix, visiting Rome for the first time, intended to beat Cunctator into torpor and steal his body, but the young Julian proved more resilient than eh Strix had expected, and it accidentally slew him. In an effort to defend itself from detection (and protect Victrix, the Strix's co-conspirator), it possessed another mortal body and started the rumors. The characters were not specifically targeted — they just happened to be there for the Strix to point to.

The characters must investigate the disappearance and destruction of Comitor, then argue their case and clear their names before the Senex. They may or may not choose to fix the outcome of the debate by engaging the services of the Cult of Augurs beforehand.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is the *unseen threat*. From the very beginning, pressure is applied to the characters from an unknown source. Even as they uncover the real cause of Cunctator's destruction (to be more precise: what *looks* like the real cause), they are left with a lot of unknowns.

This story's purpose is the first insertion of a dark, unpleasant element into the night-to-night existence of the characters, mirroring the first appearance of nearly invisible cracks in Camarilla society.

Allies and Antagonists

Spurius Paetus, Bartender of the Green Amphora

Quotes: *Er, I'm sorry, but I can't help you there. Can I interest you in a plate of roast mouse?* (Subterfuge)

Don't worry, don't worry. I'll clean it up. You just go about your business. Old Paetus can clean it up. (Persuasion)



Description: *This man seems to be aging poorly. He looks to be about 40 years old, except his hair is nearly all white, and his bloodshot eyes are surrounded by a web of wrinkles. He has a furtive, hungry look to him — he scuttles more than walks, and the curve of his back suggests some defect of the bones. He looks to you, showing irregular teeth in something like a smile.*

Background: Spurius Paetus is the unlucky ghoul of Caius Julius Cunctator, the missing vampire of this story. He's run the Green Amphora for more than 30 years — when Cunctator took him into service, Paetus was almost 40 years old. Now he's past 60, and without Cunctator's Vitae, Paetus's age is threatening to catch up with him. He hasn't felt the full impact of the missing blood yet — Cunctator's only been gone for a week when the story begins — but Paetus's starting to realize that something is terribly wrong.

Storyteller Hints: Paetus is desperate to find Cunctator, but smart enough to avoid revealing his true nature to anyone (or the need he feels for Cunctator's blood). He doesn't realize that any vampire can feed him, and the wracking pains that are starting to shoot through his limbs have distracted him from reasoning it out.

Unless the characters tell Paetus that they know Cunctator, Paetus'll be wary and accommodating, trying to satisfy them so that they'll pay up and leave him alone to prepare for his Regnant's return.

Abilities:

Keeping a Watch Out (dice pool 6): Paetus has arranged more than one feeding session for Cunctator, isolating drunken visitors to his *caupona* and keeping guard so that nobody will see his Regnant drain the unconscious victim's blood. Paetus's very careful, and knows how to pass a subtle signal without drawing attention to himself.

Avoiding Questions (dice pool 5): This is a man who knows how to change a subject. No matter how many times somebody asks an uncomfortable question, Paetus always manages to steer the conversation toward more mundane, harmless subjects: what they'd like to drink, how long they've been in town, what happened at the races last night — anything. Most people looking to get useful information out of him eventually give up, and assume he's an idiot.

Marcus Auditor, Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs

Quotes: *It is as the gods will it. I shall read you the signs.* (Religion)

Tell me what you need. We shall endeavor to serve. (Empathy)



Description: *This vampire has an air of the worm about him. Pale and soft, his face seems to recede into the dark hood of the Vaticinator as though sucking down into wet earth. His nearly toothless mouth is pursed under a long, hooked nose, and the stubble on his chin is a translucent, repulsive white.*

Background: Marcus Auditor is one of the Vermes, a Nosferatu who was Embraced as he lay dying in his grubby *insula*, high up in one of the worst slums of the city. His sire was a former neighbor, a man who hated Auditor and sought to deprive him of a natural death and afterlife. He discarded Auditor in the lower tunnels of Necropolis, knowing that he would be pressed into service as a digger.

And so he was. But Auditor did not suffer there. He was glad not to die, and worked without complaint, earning the respect of his brethren. After about 50 years, a fellow Nosferatu introduced Auditor to the Cult of Augurs, giving him the option to study as a Vaticinator. Auditor made the transition comfortably, and has served in the Cult ever since. Now, nearly 70 years later, he is honored to work at Flaviana Galla's shoulder, assisting her in ritual and handling the custom that is too small or too dull for her.

Storyteller Hints: Auditor is all business. He's a simple vampire, happy to serve and guided by the teachings of the Cult of Augurs. He is a believer in the will of the gods, but

also understands that their word cannot reach the masses if the Cult is not powerful — and rich. If the characters want to hear honest auguries, Auditor is enthused and satisfied. If they want to pay for false ones, he's careful not to offend them by showing his disappointment.

Abilities:

Performing Augury (dice pool 6): Auditor's smarter than many give him credit for. He has a talent for augury: receiving and interpreting — and many of his predictions are accurate.

Unobtrusive Observation (dice pool 5): He's also good at watching customers carefully and assembling a rough idea of what they're hoping to see, just in case they want to pay for a false augur. If they do, he's ready to give them what they want almost before they ask for it — and sometimes manages to convince them that they're paying for a real reading, not a personalized one.

Event: A Threat to Reputation

Mental: •••• Physical: — Social: •

Overview: One of the Julii disappears. Investigating characters uncover disturbing evidence of Strix activity.

Description: *There's trouble afoot. Two nights ago, you started hearing rumors that a vampire has gone missing — one of the ones who kept hunting grounds near your haven — and that you might have had something to do with it. His name was Caius Julius Cunctator, a minor official of the Senex. He wasn't anyone special — at least not to you — but the last thing you want it to find yourselves under suspicion for some kind of foul play. So you nose around the mortals for about an hour, just to see if you can find any clues.*

"Owes me money, too. If you do find him, remind him to pay up." You've spend most of the night getting the same answers around here. Most of the mortals know him, so these clearly are his real hunting grounds, but no one has seen him for several days, at least. You realize you'll have to look elsewhere for answers... and fast, before the accusations start to fly.

Storyteller Goals: Induce a sense of paranoia in the characters. Foreshadow the actions of the Striges in later chapters, without introducing the Nemeses directly.

Character Goals: Find out what happened to the missing Julian. Ensure that they cannot be blamed for his disappearance.

Actions: There are a number of actions the characters can take here, as part of their investigations. The characters might want to speak with some of the Kindred they know — especially those who knew Cunctator — or they might want to undertake an investigation themselves.

Ask Julia Sabina

You have been waiting in the greeting chamber for some time when Julia Sabina finally emerges from her private quarters, immaculately dressed.

"It is good to see you again; so sorry to keep you waiting. Callisto said that you wanted to ask me about someone; what is it?"

Julia Sabina is an obvious source of information, and she is willing to help. No dice rolls are required to interact with her.

On initial enquiries:

"I haven't seen him for, oh, nearly a month now, but I know he tends to hunt in the cauponae *around the Flavian Amphitheater. If you ask around there, you should be able to find him within a couple of nights. He also goes to Macellarius Corbulo's parties fairly often, so he might be able to help. If you can't find Cunctator, do come back; I might be able to find out some more."*

If the characters return after failing to find him near the Amphitheater:

"No one has seen him for a week? That is worrying. I wouldn't normally tell you this, but I know roughly where he nests. His haven is somewhere in the area of Necropolis immediately to the south of St. Peter's Basilica. I'm afraid I don't know anything more precise than that, but I know that few vampires lair there any more. If you look around, you should be able to find his haven. It's marked with the image of a cat."

Ask Tertia Julia Comitor

Tertia Julia Comitor knows everyone. However, Cunctator's a relatively low-Status vampire who never really came up on her radar, so she doesn't have that much to say, and Comitor is a busy vampire, so unless the characters have already established a working relationship with her, they are going to have to persuade a slave to let them see her (with an appropriate Social roll), and then persuade her to talk about Cunctator (with another Social roll, as appropriate). If they succeed at both, this is what she says:

"Cunctator, Cunctator. Hmm. I seem to recall him... yes, he's one of Corbulo's subordinates. Mawkish little man, not very well spoken. Lover of cats. Doubtless he's off on one of his patron's missions. Off to Medialonum, perhaps?" She eyes you for a moment, waiting to see how you'll respond.

Beyond this, Comitor doesn't have much to say — but she'll be happy to get the characters talking, if they're willing to stick around — just to see if she can get any information about Corbulo's activities or anything else the characters are involved in.

Ask Macellarius Corbulo

Corbulo knows Cunctator fairly well and acts as his Patron, and threats to his subordinate make him a little

nervous, as they might extend to him. Corbulo might, therefore, tell the characters quite a lot, if approached in the right way.

The characters have no problem persuading the slaves to tell Corbulo that the characters are there, as they are already known associates. However, unless the characters have already established a working relationship with him, Corbulo makes them wait. Unlike Comitor, he really doesn't care how they behave; he just wants to see what they do. If they come early in the night, he makes them wait until dangerously near dawn. If they come later, he sends a message shortly before dawn to say that he will see them the following night. The characters have to hurry to get back to their havens, but there is no actual danger. Eventually, they get to see him.

Corbulo wanders into the chamber. He is looking at you, and his look says, quite clearly, "Who are these vampires, and what are they doing in my house?" After a moment, however, it is replaced by recognition.... And you have to wonder whether he really failed to recognize you.

Corbulo's attitude is strongly influenced by how well the characters did on their trip to Mediolanum. If they brought the statue back intact, and without causing an embarrassing fuss, he is well disposed, if a little distant. If they didn't bring the statue back, or managed to break it, he is openly scornful of their abilities, but may still help them with information if he thinks it will protect him. If the characters actually embarrassed him, for example by killing people at the way stations, he berates the characters for thinking that they could come to him for help. He might still be persuaded to offer some, however.

Characters will have to make a Social roll to convince Corbulo to start talking. If they succeed, he doesn't hold back, secretly glad that someone's willing to look into the problem for him.

"I'll tell you something. I do think Cunctator's in some kind of trouble," he says, drawing close to you and glancing to the side. "He normally hunts in the cauponae *around the Flavian Amphitheater, and none of my people have noticed him in those parts lately. Truth is... truth is, I dispatched someone to his haven just last night to see if he's well. Yes, yes, I know where he sleeps. He lairs in the tunnels near... here, let me draw you a map." He scribbles a crude image on a piece of coarse fabric with a piece of charcoal. "He marks his door with the face of a cat.*

"Find out what happened to him," Corbulo mutters, "and I'll see if I can't give you a little something."

Ask Helvidius Bassianus

It's not hard to find a legionary, and anyone inquiring about this potential crime is directed to speak with Helvidius Bassianus. Bassianus is professionally detached, but willing to talk.

The War-Crow crosses his arms, his steely gaze focused on you. "I've heard about this Julian. Disappeared, they say. People have mentioned you, actually, in connection. You and Corbulo both. Maybe I should be asking you the questions?"

No matter what the characters say, Bassianus waves dismissively and interrupts.

"Can't tell you much about him. He was nobody, really. Nobody's friend, nobody's problem. Until now. He feeds in the cauponae *around the Flavian Amphitheater, sleeps near there, too. Maybe you should have a look. See if you can't resolve this and save me the trouble."*

Ask Anyone Else

Nobody else really knows anything about Cunctator, and few Kindred really care. Those in the Senex barely remember him — he was one of the multitude that always forms at the outer edges of Assembly, and he never really got a chance to speak. Vaticinators might be able to perform an augury that will tell them that Cunctator has met his Final Death (and could provide a bonus to investigating characters, per the "Apollonian Sight" Veneficium). Members of the Lancea et Sanctum will shrug their shoulders and wave questions away — they don't know him and they don't care about him.

Nobody knows how the rumor of the characters' involvement started — because it didn't actually start with a vampire. Trying to track the rumor back to its source will eventually present a dead end.

Investigate Cunctator's Hunting Grounds

The characters can learn where Cunctator hunts quite easily, and can ask around after him among the mortals there.

The dark bulk of the Flavian Amphitheater towers above you, eerily quiet as even the cries of the animals kept there are muffled by the mass of stone. The cauponae *set into the arches at its base, however, are bright and lively, and as you watch a brawl spills out of one and into the street. You stiffen involuntarily as the mob comes a bit close to one of the braziers, but they veer away, and it remains upright.*

The people in these *cauponae* do not trust outsiders, so the characters have to work for their information. This is an extended task, and each roll suffers a base penalty of two dice, for the average Composure of the mortals the characters are interviewing. The dice pool is Manipulation + Persuasion, Streetwise or Subterfuge, depending on the approach they take. Each roll represents half a night of asking around, and multiple characters may assist.

Dramatic Failure: The characters meet someone who claims he saw Cunctator earlier that night. He gives them directions to the *caupona* where the vampire is supposed to have been. In the approach alley, they are mugged by three mortal ruffians. If they go to the *caupona* afterward, no one there has ever seen Cunctator.

Failure: The characters make no progress, talking to far too many people who have no idea who Cunctator is.

Success: The characters learn some useful information.

Exceptional Success: The characters learn a lot of information, finding a particularly informative individual.

Aids/Bonuses: The characters spend freely on drinks/bribes (+1 per two dots of Resources). The characters make subtle use of Auspex, Dominate and Majesty (+3, if the roll for the Discipline succeeds).

Obstacles/Penalties: The characters are relying on Intimidation, but do not look intimidating (–1). The characters say anything to suggest that Cunctator will be in trouble if found (–2). The characters say anything to suggest that Cunctator is a blood-drinking creature of the night (–4).

The following information is revealed as successes are accumulated:

One Success: *Nobody has seen Cunctator in at least a week.*

Three Successes: *Cunctator visited the Green Amphora nearly every night. (The* caupona *has a verdigrised bronze amphora hanging outside.) They should ask there to see if anyone has seen him. The bartender there knows Cunctator personally.*

Four Successes: *The bartender at the Green Amphora — a man named Spurius Paetus — believes that Cunctator is dead. Paetus won't give up a lot of evidence to support his belief, but he's sure of it — simply because Cunctator's stopped coming around.*

Astute characters will notice that Spurius Paetus looks a bit worn and sickly. A separate success on an Intelligence + Occult roll will reveal that the bartender is a ghoul. If he's questioned more directly (and Social Skills are applied), he will reveal that he was Cunctator's personal servant, and that he "felt" Cunctator die.

Characters may wish to save Spurius and take him into service themselves. His stats are provided in the "Allies and Antagonists" section at the start of this story in case the characters choose to have further dealings with him.

If they don't save him, Spurius will age rapidly and die within the month.

Five Successes: *A lot of people think Cunctator was a Christian, because he often spoke of going to "St. Peter's" or "heading to the tomb." They assume he would go there to pray.*

Seven Successes: *He always wore a little ivory pendant in the shape of a woman with a cat's head. "I think that's a pagan goddess, one of the Egyptian ones. So maybe he's not a Christian after all."*

Ten Successes: *The most recent sighting in the area was early in the night about a week ago (or longer, if the characters have taken a long time over their enquiries.) He was with a tattooed woman wearing a cloak. The man who saw him is happy to take the characters to the spot.*

The woman described is Victrix, but the description is not specific enough to make the characters sure of that. In fact, the cloak described sounds similar to the uniform of a Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs — something that might throw the characters off the scent (but, ironically, direct them to speak with the Cult of Augurs, taking the characters closer to answering the mystery). Move on to "Investigate the Crime Scene," below.

Investigate Cunctator's Haven

The proximity to St. Peter's tomb made this area of Necropolis much less attractive to most vampires of the Camarilla, eager as they are to avoid association with Christian mysticism, and the passages and rooms show it. The passages are relatively large, and there are a lot of them, clear signs of a well-used area, but they are also dusty, with few dropped or forgotten items. Sanctified vampires are said to use these tunnels to reach the tomb, so there are few tunnels you can neglect as completely unused. Searching these tunnels will take some time.

The characters know the general location of Cunctator's haven, which makes their task possible. They may also have additional information that makes things easier.

Although "Necropolis near St. Peter's" might sound large, investigation on the spot (or three or more successes on a Wits + Intelligence roll, to see if characters already know) indicates that its possibilities are restricted. There is a definite area of tunnels, connected to other areas of Necropolis by half a dozen longer passages, and with a number of exits to the surface. The northern edge was sealed off some time ago by a rockfall. Thus, the area has clear boundaries, and a limited size. Searching the whole area is entirely practical, although a search could take some time.

Finding the haven is an extended Wits + Investigation task, and each roll takes an hour. Only five successes are needed, so almost any group should be able to find the haven in one night. It is not just a matter of combing the passageways, although ensuring that the characters do not miss any is part of the problem. Disturbances in the dust, signs around doors and marks on walls all serve to provide more evidence of where he might have laired.

• *You crouch to peer at the tracks in the dirt. It looks as if only one person uses this tunnel, which is a good start. Looking more closely, however, you realize that the tracks are at least two weeks old; Cunctator has been seen since then, so this can't be the place.*

• *This dark tunnel is truncated by a rockfall — rubble that nobody's bothered to clear away.*

• *You notice a crude fish and spear scratched into the rock of this corridor wall — a mark of the Lancea et Sanctum. Looks like you've stumbled across one of their makeshift churches here, not a haven.*

• *There are a few small cubicles and chambers leading off the main corridor in this direction. Moving past them, you notice that most seem to be abandoned.*

When the characters score enough successes, read them this:

• *You peer into one of the recessed cubicles in one corridor, and realize that it's barred with an iron door. The face of a cat is sculpted in bronze on the door. This must be it.*

Searching the Haven

The bronze cat's face on the door seems to be looking at you, and you regard it warily, wondering if it might be a god's mark. You are sure that this is the place, but now that it comes to it you are somewhat nervous about entering another vampire's haven. How might it be guarded? Might Cunctator still be there?

Success on a Wits + Composure roll reveals that the door is held shut by a simple bolt on the outside. Characters can easily work out that this means that Cunctator is not inside. The bolt opens easily, and the characters can enter the haven.

Your flickering lamp illuminates the chamber. A wooden table stands against one wall, with an elaborately carved ivory chair in front of it. A rack to one side of the table holds a number of scrolls, two of which are currently on top of the table, along with a wax tablet and writing stylus. Across the room are three chests, probably containing clothes, and a number of pegs set into the wall, some with cloaks and the like hanging on them, others empty. The dancing light makes a figure, possibly a cat, in the rear corner seem to move. For a few moments, you cannot see where Cunctator must have slept, but then the shadows filling a niche in the rear wall become clear. It seems he was something of a traditionalist.

Searching the haven is a Wits + Investigation extended task; the information discovered at various levels of success is given below. Each roll takes 10 minutes. In addition, simply looking around lets the characters learn some things; characters automatically learn the information given at zero successes after their first roll, even if it is a dramatic failure.

Aids/Bonuses: The characters can search freely, and take as long as they like, so there are no specific bonuses available.

Obstacles/Penalties: The characters have taken a long time to get around to searching (–1 for every night above seven since Cunctator was destroyed).

Zero Successes: *Cunctator is not here, nor is his body. There are no signs of a struggle. The statue in the corner is a small statue of Bastet, as part of a personal shrine. The scrolls are in Latin and Greek; literate characters can tell that most are works of poetry and drama, including Corbulo's.*

There is a clay augury tablet on the table, dated just before Cunctator vanished. It says, "They swarm in darkness, turning our past against our present." The symbols impressed into the reverse identify the augur who gave the augury — a vampire named Marcus Auditor — but you would have to take it to the Temple of Remus to find out more, such as the question that was asked.

One Success: *There are no significant vampiric remains in the room. If he was destroyed here, someone removed the ash very carefully.*

Three Successes: (only characters with at least one point of Academics can get this clue) *The scrolls on the table are books of prophecy, both in Latin. There is a wax tablet under some of the scrolls, but it has been scratched clear. Both of the scrolls are unwound to points dealing with cults that worshipped dark gods, and their violent rites. The descriptions are somewhat different, but have many elements in common.*

Four Successes: *He has all the equipment necessary for maintaining a sword, and a spare scabbard, but there is no sign of a sword in the haven.*

Six Successes: *There were two individuals in the haven the last time it was occupied. The second was probably a woman, judging from the size and shape of the footprint.*

Eight Successes: *Cunctator was definitely not destroyed here; there are no traces of violence or ash at all.*

Ten Successes: *Although the wax tablet was erased, it wasn't done very thoroughly. By getting the light just right, you can make out fragments of quotes copied from the scrolls, parts of a calculation, and just enough of the conclusion to get a location: "Below Danc[. . .] Satyr, [. . .]" This is definitely the most recent thing written on the tablet, but the rest is illegible.*

You know that there is an entry to Necropolis under a mural of a dancing satyr nearby, by the insulae *near the Amphitheater above.*

If the characters follow up on this clue, move on to "Investigate the Crime Scene" below.

Investigate the Crime Scene

If the characters find the spot of Cunctator's destruction — either by achieving 10 successes on the investigation of his hunting grounds or his haven. Alternately, if the characters aren't having much success, you can direct them back

to his hunting grounds and get them to investigate again, this time stumbling across the scene of his murder.

The murder site is a small chamber with access to the street above — the spot the patron of the Green Amphora might have taken them to. None of the mortals above know about the access to Necropolis, but the characters all do.

If the characters reach the site above ground, read this:

You know this place. There is an entry to Necropolis hidden here, under a section of loose stone at the base of one of the insulae. *It's the one with a faded mural of a dancing satyr, advertising a long-defunct* caupona.

If they reach the site from within Necropolis, or if they enter Necropolis after finding the site, read this:

You smell it before you see it: old blood, dried on the stone walls. The air of the narrow passage is heavy with it, and as you look around, you see that the walls of the small chamber are covered with blood. Shreds of rotting flesh are scattered near the bottom of one wall. A pile of ash sits in the middle of the chamber, mute testimony to a terrible event.

What Actually Happened

Cunctator was targeted by a pagan fringe cult that believed he was a malevolent shade, because one of them recalls him from his living days and realizes he hasn't aged at all in more than 30 years. He was worried that they would make trouble for him, and began to investigate them, hoping to discover who they were and why they would care what he was. He studied books of prophecy and consulted the augurs, blowing his fears out of proportion and ascribing greater powers to the cult than they had.

Because he feared for his safety, he contacted Victrix and began talks about hiring her to guard him. She told him that he couldn't afford her services, but promised she could take him to someone capable and inexpensive instead. She knew that he was isolated, not well liked, and dwelling in a relatively unused section of Necropolis, so she walked him straight into a trap and then wandered away, delivering him into the hands of a Strix who was looking for a vampire body to inhabit.

The Nemesis attacked Cunctator with a possessed human body, but it struck him too many times, doing more damage than it intended to and reducing him to ash instead of driving him into torpor. The body that the Strix was possessing was badly mutilated, and clearly useless in public. The Strix snuck back up into Rome and abandoned the body in the river so as to destroy the evidence of the Strix's involvement and make it more difficult to solve the crime.

As described above, the scene of Cunctator's destruction is horrific. Investigating it is an extended Wits + Investigation task, with each roll taking 10 minutes. The characters are not under much time pressure here, however.

One Success: *A vampire was clearly destroyed here, and a human must have been mortally wounded.*

Three Successes: *There were, at most, three individuals present, and at least one of them, probably a woman, survived.*

Four Successes: *A scratch on the wall suggests a missed weapon stroke. The death that occurred here followed a battle.*

Six Successes: *You find a small cat pendant under a small overhang at the base of a wall. It is damaged, and the thong that tied it is cut clean through. That proves it — the ash is most likely Cunctator's, and this necklace must have been flung away during his last battle.*

Eight Successes: *The damage to the pendant is from a fine sword — one more keenly crafted and sharpened than any Cunctator was likely to have.*

Ten Successes: *Cunctator was dragged into the room, probably struggling. The woman who was with him backed out of the chamber, so she probably wasn't the one who slew him or pulled him in, but she didn't stick around to help him either.*

Consequences: Characters should complete this scene sure that Cunctator was murdered, and knowing that he had dealings with the Cult of Augurs shortly before his destruction. Move on to **Augurs Before Remus** below. If the characters don't head to the Cult of their own accord, have a supporting character they trust (such as Julia Sabina or Macellarius Corbulo) suggest it.

Event: Augurs Before Remus

Mental: •• Physical: — Social: ••

Overview: The characters receive predictions and information from duly authorized Vaticinators of the Cult of Augurs. They learn more about the destruction of Caius Julius Cunctator, and are presented an opportunity to clear their names.

Description: *The chamber is smaller than you imagined, but the walls are still hazy through the fog of smoke and incense. The scent of the latter almost covers the smell of animal flesh, fresh, rotten and scorched. The statues of the gods of the Camarilla are ranged against the far wall, and the Augurs stand ready to take commissions from those who seek to know their will. One approaches you, wondering how valuable you find the advice of the gods. You cannot shake the feeling that, the more tangible and weighty your expression of respect, the more favorable the gods' will proves to be.*

The Augur lifts her hands to her hood, pulling it back and revealing her face. You are standing before Flaviana Galla, who looks to you expectantly. "What service may we perform for you tonight, good Kindred?"

Storyteller Goals: Exonerate the characters. Close off the mystery.

Character Goals: Find out what the powers of the Augurs can reveal about the crime. Seek Flaviana Galla's support and clear their names.

Actions: Unless the characters are members of the Cult of Augurs, they are most likely to be negotiating with the Vaticinators, asking questions and offering subtle bribes. Characters who are in the Cult may be involved in performing divination together with Flaviana Galla.

Seek Advice

If the characters bring the cat pendant or the scratched wax tablet to the temple, Flaviana Galla will recognize the object immediately. Read this:

She looks at the [item], and then back up at you, meeting your gaze with her own. She reaches over her shoulder, indicating that one of the Vaticinators should step forward. "This is Marcus Auditor," she says. "He knows the one who owned this."

Auditor, a sallow, hollow-cheeked vampire, nods gravely. "Then it is true," he mutters. "Cunctator is destroyed. I felt it might be so..."

If they present the cat pendant, Auditor says: *"He was a devotee of the Egyptian way. This was a goddess's mark."*

If they present the tablet, he says: *"A warning, an augury. It spoke of an enemy, clothed in familiar flesh, rising from the dark to betray him. I fear he did not heed the warning. He asked me who might pose a danger to him, and this was the result."*

If the characters ask for an augury themselves, they are expected to give payment, and then receive one of the following readings:

- *"You find yourselves on a long road, one that does not turn or end. There are many travelers with you on the road, and many of them will die before you reach your own destination. Catastrophe awaits. Blood paints the stones. Beware the beating of wings, for the sound will herald great danger."*
- *"A single arrow races through the whistling air. It is years in coming, and will fly for some years yet. When it strikes, a multitude of arrows will follow, falling like rain, bringing the enemies of the Camarilla to destruction amidst chaos and ruin. Each has its target. You must stand strong and hold your shield over those you value."*
- *"The favor of the gods is reserved for the resolute. You will be called to a great gathering, and a fool will be named your leader in jest. Do not let cruel mirth move you. Stay faithful. Stay true."*



• *"A bird of prey dives from above, clutching up its own young in its claws. Rage and betrayal overshadow paternal love. Beware the honeyed call of your ancestors."*

Any of these untainted readings will provide each of the characters with one bonus die that can be applied to any single roll, any time throughout the rest of the chronicle.

Bribe the Vaticinators

Of course, the characters might not be as interested in a genuine reading as they are in one that publicly exonerates them. Those who know the Cult of Augurs well enough (and either one dot of Status in the Cult or a successful Intelligence + Politics roll will provide the information) know that specified readings can be bought, so long as the vampire making the request is willing to pay dearly enough. They also know, however, that making a direct request for a false reading is extremely insulting. The idea is to make one's hopes for the outcome clear, and offering suitably high payment as "sacrifice for the gods."

A successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll is required to make the suggestion subtle and clear, with a –2 penalty for the delicate nature of the subject.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: *Flaviana Galla listens to your request, furrowing her brow as you speak. She rears back, clearly insulted. "We are not interested in your bribes, citizen. The Cult of Augurs speaks with the untainted voice of the gods. Take your filthy business elsewhere."*

Failure: *Flaviana Galla nods as you make your request. When you finish, she looks at you expectantly. "I don't think I catch your drift," she says.*

Success: *"Ah," says Flaviana Galla. But of course. Come right this way, and Marcus Auditor here will perform the reading for you." She looks to one of the hooded Vaticinators, exchanging a significant glance with him. As he steps forward, he draws a wooden bowl out from under his cloak. "For the donation," Flaviana Galla whispers. "Do make sure you give enough, nay? The gods are watching."*

With a success, the characters can get Marcus Auditor to deliver a reading that declares them completely innocent for an expenditure requiring four dots of Resources. For one requiring five dots, Auditor will even point the finger at a mortal of their choice (but not a vampire).

Exceptional Success: *Flaviana listens to your request. When you finish, she takes you by the shoulder, smiling warmly. "But of course, of course. I understand completely." She leads you into the temple proper. "I will be honored to provide you with an augury myself. This is a matter of import, after all." As you enter, she indicates a large stone bowl, positioned near the doorway. "Place your donation in the bowl. May it please the gods to speak favorably."*

With an exceptional success, the characters convince Flaviana Galla to deliver the reading herself, throwing the weight of her Status behind them. They must donate a sum requiring at least three dots of Resources for her to begin. For one requiring four dots, she will point the finger at a mortal of their choice. For one requiring five, she will testify that the gods declare a vampire of their choice the culprit — so long as the vampire they choose has no more than one dot of Camarilla Status.

Manipulate the Augury

If one of the characters is a Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs herself, she may wish to conduct a reading with other members of the Cult in attendance, using her influence (or her Religious training) to manipulate the outcome of the reading.

Manipulating a reading before officials of the Cult requires a Manipulation + Religion roll with a –3 modifier (to represent the collective Composure of the officials present) and then a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll with the –3 modifier. The first roll represents the character's ability to control the circumstances of the reading while maintaining proper ritual procedure, and the second represents her ability to mask her manipulations, making the outcome seem genuine.

Roll Results

Both Rolls Fail: The Vaticinator is clearly either incompetent or dishonest — neither of which Flaviana Galla will publicly allow. The ritual is halted, and Galla insists that the character step out and leave it to the other members of the Cult.

First Roll Fails, Second Roll Succeeds: The Vaticinator runs a poor ritual, but at least manages to conceal her dishonest intent. Flaviana Galla corrects the ritual and gives the character a look of reproach, indicating that she knows what the character is up to. All present are aware that the character screwed up the ritual.

First Roll Succeeds, Second Roll Fails: The Vaticinator runs a competent ritual, but she fails to conceal her dishonest intent. Flaviana Galla steps in and corrects the reading, giving the true result and eyeing the character with clear disapproval. All present are aware that the character attempted to lie.

Both Rolls Succeed: The ritual is correct, and the dishonesty of the Vaticinator is concealed. The reading seems to have whatever result the character chooses.

Note that if Flaviana Galla isn't going to lambaste a character for messing up — not in public, anyway. In private, she'll tell the character that he's going to have to shape up his act or risk losing Status in the future.

Consequences: The characters leave with an oracle of some kind, which they can use in their schemes. If they played it right, they've also got a public statement of support from the Cult of Augurs — all the characters really need to get off scot-free. They might also have strengthened or damaged their relationship with the Cult of Augurs.

• If the characters receive a reading that exonerates them and places the blame elsewhere, narrate a declaration of their innocence by a representative of the Senex.

• If not, run an **Assembly of the Senex**, accusing them of the crime. The result of the Assembly should be as noted in that scene. The sentence for murdering a citizen of the Camarilla is Final Death by sunlight. If this is their second time standing trial for murder, all members of the coterie will have to sacrifice a point of Status if they are found guilty.

• After the resolution of this section, give the characters a one-year downtime, and then move on to **The Doomed Heresy.**

Aftermath

Macellarius Corbulo

If Corbulo is acting as the characters' patron, he will celebrate their exoneration from the crime (or their relatively light sentence, if they are found guilty) and encourage them to forget the whole sordid business as soon as possible. He will assume that the rumors were started by Comitor's people in an attempt to weaken the structure of his network, but he won't feel the need to strike back. Not yet, anyway.

Tertia Julia Comitor

Comitor is not so forgiving. If the characters were found guilty of the crime, she will sever the arrangement of Patronage and leave the characters to seek mentorship elsewhere. Otherwise, if they are acquitted of the murder, she will throw a party to celebrate. Comitor will assume that the rumors were started by Corbulo's people in an effort to damage her reputation and that of her students.

Julia Sabina

Sabina misinterprets the nature of the rumor, believing that it indicates that the characters are gaining in Status and invoking the fear of their less-than-scrupulous competitors. She claims that it's a good thing, noting that she went through similar circumstances early in her career with the Senex. Sabina won't hesitate to communicate her optimistic view to the characters.

Flaviana Galla

If the characters attempt to bribe the Cult of Augurs, successfully or otherwise, Galla will make a mental note of their lack of faith and treat them appropriately in the future: as potential business partners, but not trustworthy allies. She will also note that the augury actually does reveal that the characters are innocent of the crime.

If, on the other hand, the characters show their willingness to take the result of an honest augury to the Senex, Galla will be impressed.

Victrix

If the characters manage to make the connection and accuse Victrix of the crime, she will volunteer to step before the Senex and prove that she had nothing to do with it. At the Assembly that follows, several high-Status members of the Senex (including Macellarius Corbulo) will contribute testimony that proves that Victrix was seen elsewhere on every night around the time of Cunctator's disappearance. In some cases, the Kindred testifying are wrong — they were fooled by uses of Obfuscate — but they don't know that.

Victrix won't be happy with the accusation, but she'll make every effort to demonstrate that it's no big deal. She gets accused of a crime every time somebody describes a "tall" or "snake-haired" woman, so she's used to it. "Water off a duck's back," she's likely to say, shrugging it off while she makes a mental note, biding her time so she can make the characters pay at a later date.

Experience

Every character who participates in this story receives three end-of-story experience points: for investigating the crime, for visiting the Green Amphora or Cunctator's haven and for dealing with the Cult of Augurs.

• Any character who investigated the site of Cunctator's murder gains one bonus experience point.

• A character who realizes that Spurius is a ghoul and takes him into service gains one bonus experience point.

• Any character who makes a particularly interesting choice, displays keen wit or acumen or does something surprising and entertaining during the story earns one bonus point of experience.

322 CE: The Doomed Heresy

Another year passes. The characters have now firmly entrenched themselves in Kindred society and weathered the first attack on their reputations. Now, they are presented with a fortunate opportunity.

Story

The characters happen to see Silberic, an infamous foreign troublemaker and rumored treasure-monger, behaving strangely and opening a secret door in one of the corridors of Necropolis. They are offered the opportunity to follow him and discover his secrets.

If they do so, he leads them on a long, circuitous chase, eventually assuming he's lost them and taking them straight to a meeting with a heretical offshoot of the Lancea et Sanctum. There they witness the formation of plans to stage a rebellion, and may decide whether to join in or expose and destroy the plot.

The characters shouldn't really join the rebellion at this point, but there's nothing to stop them if they want to. They're going to have some real problems in the second chapter if they do — but there's nothing wrong with that.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story, the last of the first chapter, is *overconfidence*. Silberic and his rebel allies clearly overestimate their own strength, and are destroyed for their trouble. What the characters may come to realize, though, is that while this kind of uprising is no real threat to the Camarilla, the rebellion shouldn't really be happening.

The truth is, it's become an all-too regular occurrence. The Legio Mortuum is well-organized and more than capable of crushing the uprising every time it crops up, but they, too, are becoming overconfident. This story provides the second major hint that trouble is coming: the cracks in the façade of the Camarilla are growing steadily, but everybody's acting like it's all business as usual, assuming that the Legion can handle an infinite number of disturbances.

Allies and Antagonists

Silberic

Quotes: *Give me that gold bracelet, and I'll let you keep the arm.* (Intimidation)

Let's see if we can't put a little life into this gathering. Anyone want to spar? (Socialize)

Description: *If you hit a bear in the face with a shovel and then gave it a quick shave, it would look a lot like Silberic. It would probably sound similar, as well. He's as solid as the trees of the northern forests, and almost as tall. He wears the barbarian styles of his living days, and wields an axe that most men could not lift in one hand.*

Background: Silberic was a Gothic warrior who knew he was losing his edge, slowed down by old age. He didn't have the charisma, brains or knowledge to become a leader, so he resolved to go out in a blaze of glory, hunting down a monster that was preying on his settlement. He expected to die, but hoped he could take the monster down first. In the end he died first, and destroyed his sire as soon as he arose from the Embrace. He still believes that he did the right thing, repaying death for death, but he has learned not to talk about it too much.

He knew right away that he had become a monster, and left his home territory, not wanting to become what he had killed. Instead, he raided Roman settlements, glorying in his strength and power, and in the absence of any sign that age would slow him down in the slightest.



He continued that way for years, working his way south through the empire.

He has only recently arrived in Rome, and knows very little of vampire society or the Camarilla. He met some other vampires as he wandered, and picked up enough to know that he should present himself and get himself recognized as a member of the Peregrine Collegia. Having done the bare minimum, however, he has little interest in involving himself further in the politics of the Camarilla. He also heard enough about the doctrine of the Lancea et Sanctum to decide that it suited him; he had become a monster, and he was an Arian Christian in life. He's hooked himself up with a dangerous heretic offshoot of the Kindred Church, though, and doesn't have enough understanding of the faith to realize the difference.

Silberic wants to be rich, and achieves that end by stealing from the Romans, just as he always has. (His Resources are a room full of stolen treasure.) He kills if necessary, but doesn't see the need to kill everyone he meets; that's what the monster he hunted down did. As a result, his Humanity is a bit higher than other vampires might expect. He is hopeless when interacting with mortals, but it isn't because he has low Humanity; it's because he is socially inept. He has no long-term goals, and spreads destruction as he travels around.

Storytelling Hints: Silberic symbolizes the Roman image of a barbarian: uneducated, violent and surprisingly shrewd. He is determined to steal the good life from the Romans, and doesn't really care about social disapproval. Play him as rough, rude and fearless.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Peregrine Collegia

Embrace: ca. 300 CE

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Warfare 2

Physical Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 3

Merits: Fleet of Foot 3, Giant 4, Language (Latin), Resources 3, Status (Camarilla) 1, Status (Peregrine Collegia) 1, Status (Lancea et Sanctum) 1, Stunt Rider

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Justice. If you hurt Silberic or his friends, he will hurt you back. Silberic is also ready to take the law into his own hands if he sees the weak being exploited or hurt unreasonably, although this tends to be a more spontaneous thing. He will plan for nights at a time to avenge a hurt done to himself, however.

Vice: Greed. Silberic wants more, particularly more treasure, and if he has to sack Rome to get it, then that's what he'll do.

Health: 11

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 16

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Protean 2, Resilience 3, Vigor 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Great Axe	5L	14
Knife	1L	10
Brawl	0B	8

Type	Damage	Ranges	Dice Pool
Bow	5L	39/78/156	10

Heretic Rebels

Quote: *The time has come. The diseased body of sin must be rent asunder.*

Description: *These rough, crude creatures seem barely conscious, let alone good Kindred of Rome. They scratch at their hairy, dirty heads, growling and shuffling as they move. If one bumps shoulders with another, they eye each other with narrow-eyed, predatory glances.*

Background: The heretic cult is a small assembly of northern barbarian Gangrel, drawn from the ranks of the Peregrine Collegia. All are misfit outsiders, incapable of integrating properly into the society of the Camarilla and easily drawn into the fantasy of uprising and conquest. The assembly of their cult is relatively recent: most have only started coming to the scheduled gatherings within the last couple of months.

Storytelling Hints: Play these Gangrel as stupid, vicious, crass and insecure. Their Beasts are overtaking them, and blind, animalistic anger is leading them straight into a conflict that they can't possibly win.

Clan: Gangrel

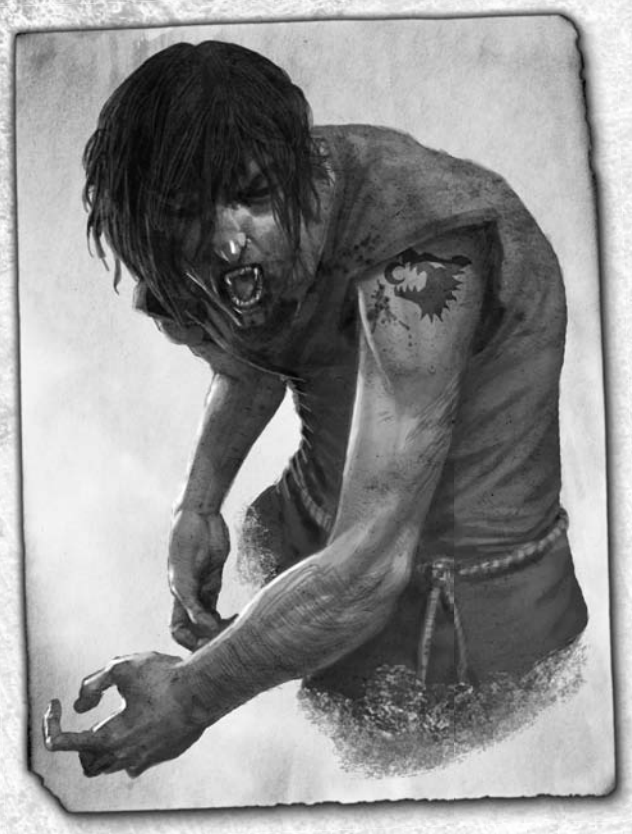
Wing: Peregrine Collegia

Embrace: ca. 300 CE

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4



Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Warfare 2

Physical Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Brawl (Head-Butt) 4, Ride 1, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 2, Intimidation (Bestial Roar) 2, Streetwise 1

Merits: Iron Stamina, Fleet of foot 2, Status (Peregrine Collegia) 1, Status (Lancea et Sanctum) 1

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Hope. Though the heretic rebels rarely express their Virtue, they are enthused about keeping hope alive in the dark halls of Necropolis, speaking often of the freedom and open air in the lands beyond Rome and telling the downtrodden that there is another world and another god waiting for them out there.

Vice: Wrath. These Kindred are angry. They're angry that they were taken from their homes, they're angry that they don't know how to get back, they're angry that they don't fit in with the Roman Kindred and they're angry that they can't just take whatever they want.

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Protean 2, Resilience 2

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Axe	4L	10

Legionaries

Quote: *Where is he?* (Intimidation)

Description: *Soldiers of the Legio Mortuum. They are dressed in the distinctive black armor of the Wing, their expressions hard and malevolent.*

Background: These are Kindred of the Legion, going about their night-to-night business.

Storytelling Hints: The undead soldiers are an organized, dangerous unit. They're a story element rather than characters in their own right, serving as a force of nature in this part of the chronicle. If their initial contribution to the scene doesn't succeed, they come in ever increasing numbers, overwhelming the foe with sheer numbers if not superior skill.

If it becomes necessary to flesh out one of the soldiers, feel free to pick a name from the roster of Roman names



(see **Requiem for Rome,** p. 104) and add a dot or two to some other Skills, or to add some specializations.

Clan: Nosferatu

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation (Searching) 1, Politics 1, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword, Pilum) 2

Social Skills: Intimidation (Weight of Numbers) 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Status (Legio Mortuum) 1, Status (Camarilla) 1, Fighting Style: Formation Tactics 1

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Faith. The soldiers of the Legion believe that they serve a higher purpose, and they take their orders at face value.

Vice: Wrath. If ordinary citizens of the Camarilla put up resistance, the soldiers have a tendency to fly off the handle.

Initiative: –4

Defense: 2 (0 with armor, but +2 with legionary shield, and +1 with pilum)

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Short sword	2L	2	8	
Pilum	3L	4	9	+1 Defense if used defensively
Pilum (thrown)	3L	4	8	

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty	Special
Lorica Hamata (Chain)	2/1	–2	
Legionary Shield	+2 Defense	0	Requires left arm

Disciplines: Nightmare 1, Vigor 3.

Following the Barbarian

Mental: — Physical: ••• Social: ••

Overview: The characters follow Silberic the barbarian back to a meeting of his cult, passing through some of the less-frequented areas of Necropolis.

Description: *You are walking one of the corridors of Necropolis one night, when you notice a peculiar sight: Silberic, a barbarian vampire you've seen around, sneaking into a small tunnel and pushing what you thought was a solid wall aside, moving through it. He doesn't seem to have seen you.*

You've been hearing rumors about Silberic lately: that he's only a member of the Peregrine Collegia by dint of the massive bribes he pays to his Magistrate and that he's got a secret stash of barbarian treasure hidden somewhere in Necropolis – a fortune in gold and gems. They say that he's part of some crude foreign conspiracy, and that he verges on treason with his every step.

Could it be true? Might this be an opportunity to find out?

Storyteller Goals: Take the characters through various areas of Necropolis, so that they get a sense of the scale of the city of the dead. Get them to the meeting of Silberic's heretical cult for the next scene.

Character Goals: Find out where the barbarian is going.

Actions: The actions here fall into two main groups: keeping track of Silberic and making him think that he is not being followed. However, the meat of the scene is the area of Necropolis that the characters encounter. To a great extent, this scene is here to fill in background on the scale of vampire society in ancient Rome. Thus, you can edit this scene to suit your group. If they are enjoying the pursuit, and are interested in the areas they come across, use all the sections given below. If they seem to be getting bored, take them through a couple of areas before they arrive at the heretical gathering.

Rolls to follow the trail need to be made once in each area described below. As long as Silberic thinks he is being followed, he makes rolls to spot the characters once per area, as well. While he knows he is followed, he may double back in an attempt to lose the characters.

Follow the Trail

You peer round the corner, but Silberic has already disappeared. Hurrying to the junction, you kneel to peer at the floors and walls, and strain your senses for any sounds of movement from either passage.

A network of lightly traveled corridors is not the easiest place to follow someone, especially if you do not want to

be spotted. The characters have to draw a fine balance between letting Silberic get far enough ahead that he doesn't have reason to suspect he's being followed, and so far ahead that he loses them. The dice pool is Wits + Investigation, and most of the bonuses and penalties depend on the immediate environment, so they will be discussed below. The characters can, however, choose how closely they follow Silberic. For every one-die bonus they take for this pool, they take a one-die penalty on their Stealth pool, below. Similarly, if they take penalties to this pool for hanging back, they can get bonuses to Stealth. Once they have chosen this bonus or penalty, they are limited in how much they can change it.

The characters may assist one another on these rolls. If Silberic thinks that they are close, he opposes them with his Wits + Stealth (four dice).

Dramatic Failure: The characters lose the trail, and have to spend considerable time searching for it. Their penalty for distance increases by five, to at least –5. Their bonus to stealth increases to balance this penalty, however, as they are a long way behind Silberic now.

Failure: The characters cannot find the trail immediately, and have to try again. This imposes the normal –1 penalty for successive attempts, but this penalty applies to future rolls as well, as the characters fall further behind.

Success: The characters can follow immediately, and may change the bonus or penalty to this roll by one, in either direction, as they move closer or choose to fall back a bit. They may also choose to maintain the same distance.

Exceptional Success: The characters can follow immediately, and vary the bonus or penalty by up to two, in either direction.

Keep Hidden

You press yourselves into the shadows, waiting for the sounds of Silberic's footfalls to diminish. You don't think he spotted you.

Silberic is understandably paranoid, and makes a Wits + Composure roll (base four dice) to try to spot the characters once every stage. The characters contest this with Wits + Stealth. This roll must be made by the character with the *worst* dice pool in the group. Bonuses and penalties based on the characters' distance apply, as discussed above. There is also an additional penalty of –1 for every character in the group above the first, except for characters successfully using the Obfuscate power Cloak of Night. If all the characters are successfully using Cloak of Night, Silberic automatically fails all his rolls to spot them.

The relevant levels of success are Silberic's.

Dramatic Failure: He is convinced that there is no one following him, and stops looking.

Failure: He doesn't spot the characters this time. If he fails to spot them three times in succession, he assumes that he is safe and stops looking.

Success: Silberic spots the characters. He keeps his guard up and tries to lose them in the tunnels.

Exceptional Success: No special effect.

Note that, as the bonuses and penalties are generally applied to the characters' dice pool, Silberic will typically be rolling four dice, and thus unable to get either a dramatic failure or exceptional success.

Aids/Bonuses (for characters): Distance from Silberic (+1 and up; a balancing penalty applies to their rolls to follow him).

Obstacles/Penalties (for characters): Proximity to Silberic (–1 and up; a balancing bonus applies to their rolls to follow him), Additional visible characters (–1 for every character beyond the first who is not invisible), The characters are carrying a light source (–3).

Other bonuses and penalties apply in particular areas.

Silberic does not head for the meeting as long as he thinks he is followed.

Ask Around

It's hopeless; you lost the trail. Still, you realize that there is a chance. The barbarian is quite a distinctive vampire, so if you look for other Kindred and ask if they have seen him, you might be able to pick him up again.

Silberic is indeed distinctive, and characters can pick up his trail quite easily by asking other vampires. This is important, because the characters should not permanently lose him; they have to get to the next scene. The dice pool is Presence + Persuasion, and it is an extended action, with three successes required. Each roll takes 20 minutes.

Success gets the characters into the right general area, and they may make rolls to pick up his trail again, as above, but with a –3 penalty for distance. They can modify this as normal. Stealth is no longer relevant; the characters have spent at least 20 minutes off Silberic's trail, and he has become convinced that he has lost them. Characters bad at following trails may spend a lot of time asking around.

Keep track of the time the characters spend asking around. If they spend up to an hour, they miss the first third of the heretical gathering. If it takes them more than an hour, but less than three, they arrive in time for the final third. If it takes longer than that, they arrive in time only to see the very end, which means that they will be able to gather much less information about the group.

Near the Temple

The tunnels here are expertly dug and reinforced, and show signs of frequent use and deliberate cleaning. The ground is paved with smoothed stones, and channels down the sides carry water away. Lamps set into deep niches in the walls provide a flickering light, enough to see by.

There are no special bonuses or penalties to the rolls in this section.

Linking Tunnel

This passage has no tunnels branching off it as it curves through the earth, linking two sections of Necropolis. The props are well-maintained, but in the central section there are no lamps, and everything becomes very dark.

The characters cannot lose Silberic while in a linking tunnel, as there is nowhere for him to go. On the other hand, they suffer an additional –2 penalty to their Stealth checks, because there are no corners for them to hide behind. Thus, they should still roll to follow him, and a failure or dramatic failure simply means that they cannot adjust their distance to take account of conditions.

Meeting Areas

Necropolis is normally quiet, but this area almost qualifies as noisy. The tunnels are well-maintained, with lamps set in niches, and many side tunnels, some with doors. The doors are the entrances to cubiculi*, rooms within Necropolis without owners, which vampires use for meetings and other purposes. Bursting in without warning is generally not a good idea; better hope that the barbarian has enough manners to realize that.*

The characters have a +2 bonus to their Stealth roll, as the corners and doors provide lots of places to hide. If Silberic still thinks he is followed, he takes a chance and dodges through a *cubiculus*, gambling on it being empty, and striking lucky. He closes the door behind him, which imposes a –1 penalty to the characters' roll to track him.

The room is very simple, nothing more than a widened corridor with a door at each end, where the corridor enters and leaves. A bronze tripod stands in one corner; all cubiculi *have names, and this must be The Empty Tripod. Since the barbarian is not here now, following him is fairly easy.*

Because there are a relatively high number of vampires in these areas, rolls to ask around take only 10 minutes each. However, since the characters will be barging into meetings, the characters take a –2 penalty on each roll.

Abandoned Construction

The dust thickens on the floor, and the illumination grows dimmer as the torches are more infrequently placed. Before long, you are in total darkness.

If the characters have no light source, and cannot see in complete blackness, they take a –4 penalty, as they must rely on sound and touch to track Silberic. On the other hand, he is also relying on touch to get him through the area, and so is making rather more noise than usual, which is why the penalty is no higher. If the characters do have a light source, they take a –5 penalty to their Stealth rolls here, as the light really stands out.

The prop wobbles slightly as you touch it, and you instinctively freeze, ears straining for the sounds that would precede a cave-in. There is nothing, and you continue on your way, stumbling over a pile of dirt that fell from the ceiling some time in the past.

Columbaria

The tunnels are narrower here, carved out of solid rock. The lamps are irregularly spaced, with some passages plunged into darkness. Every so often, so come across a heavy wooden door set into the side of the passage, and occasionally an open doorway, leading into a room with niches carved into all the walls. These are columbaria*, and you are passing the havens of many vampires.*

The corners and complex passages give the characters +1 to their Stealth rolls in this area. If they need to ask around, however, they are at a –2 penalty, because most vampires in this area are near their havens, and distinctly nervous about strangers asking questions.

Cellae

You peer round the corner, and into a cella*. The cult statue is of Minerva, in her warrior aspect, but you do not recognize the vampire the statue is modeled after. As your eyes sweep the room, taking in the lack of offerings, you realize that, whoever she is, she is not as important as she once was. The two lamps burning on stands either side of the altar are the only evidence that someone still respects her. Maybe she lights them herself.*

Silberic, as a good heretic, could not resist upsetting the few offerings that remained on the altar. This gives the characters a +3 bonus to follow his trail through the *cella*.

New Tunnels

The ceiling gets lower, until you can no longer quite stand upright, and the sides of the tunnel close in. The props are of new wood, not yet seasoned to the underground, and stone chips and dirt mingle on the floor. The lamps in the niches suggest that construction is still in progress.

The characters get a +2 bonus to rolls to ask around in this area, as some of the workers are here, and notice anyone who passes through the area. Finding the workers still takes time, however, so the normal interval between rolls applies.

Consequences: The characters arrive at Silberic's heretical meeting. Move on to **Heretical Murmurings** below. They may be just in time to catch the climax, or they may, if they do a good job, be there early enough to listen to everything.

Heretical Murmurings

Mental: •• Physical: — Social: ••

Overview: The characters witness some heretics preaching against the Camarilla, and probably most Sanctified. Most characters need to get away before they are seized and accused of being spies.

Description: *This is where Silberic was headed — you see him up ahead, moving into the small chamber. But it isn't what you were expecting. There's no treasure here, just a small, makeshift altar and a couple of crude-looking Kindred, dressed in simple sackcloth garments.*

It looks much like any other Sanctified mass from where you are standing, and the opening section of the sermon, with its emphasis on the damnation of all vampires and their duty to test those around them, goes along with that. But the sermon develops in a rather unique direction, and it soon becomes apparent to you that these vampires are a threat to those around them. The Missionary speaks of bringing about the destruction of the Camarilla itself, openly defying the law and fomenting treason. He also claims that God will manifest physically in each and every one of the members of the congregation – a heresy even according to the Christians, as far as you know, and that through them, he will drink the heart's blood of the Senex.

Something must be done. What do you do?

Storyteller Goals: Introduce a group of heretics, who are genuinely a threat. Make it clear that worries about the Lancea et Sanctum are not *just* paranoia, or the self-interest of the current ruling elite. Some groups of Sanctified are mad, bad and dangerous to know; but possibly even more dangerous if you don't know about them.

Character Goals: Learn enough about the heretics to report them to the authorities, or destroy the heretics outright. Alternately, the characters may want to join the sect or ally themselves with it.

Actions: Stealth and Subterfuge are likely to be the most important Skills in this context, although Weaponry and Athletics could suddenly become vital.



Gather Information

Gathering information on the sect just requires the characters to stay hidden and keep their eyes open. They won't need to make any Stealth rolls unless they try to get closer. If they stay put, they can make Wits + Investigation or Wits + Politics rolls to figure out who all of the congregants are, Wits + Religion or Wits + Occult rolls to figure out how, exactly, the preaching of the Missionary would be offensive to the Camarilla and the Lancea et Sanctum, and Wits + Brawl or Wits + Warfare to assess the congregation's combat readiness (which is significant).

If the characters stick around long enough, they learn that the sect is planning open revolt two nights hence, set for one of the large corridors of Necropolis near the Camarilla so that they may attempt the assassination of officials of the Senex and, they hope, spark a riot.

Destroy the Sect

If the characters jump right in, swords unsheathed, they're in for a hell of a fight.

- **Heretic Details**

  The wild-haired vampire spins, baring yellowed fangs and bellowing wordlessly. His eyes flash with pure, undimmed hatred and rage.

  A muscular, compact creature, the barbarian vampire crouches instinctively, narrowing his eyes and watching you, waiting for you to make the first move. He slowly draws his axe from the strap on his back.

  A low, rumbling growl escapes his throat as he widens his stance, drawing an axe from his belt.

- **Weaponry (One to Two Successes)**

  You spin away as the axe whistles through the air toward you, barely nicking your shoulder.

  You duck under the axe as it swings wild. The barbarian's knee comes up suddenly, cracking into your chin.

  You step forward, coming inside the vampire's reach. He draws his arm back, trying to make room. As you lean in, he whips his head forward, smashing his skull into the bridge of your nose.

- **Weaponry (Three to Four Successes)**

  The axe buries itself in your upper arm, leaving a wide gash as the enemy pulls it out and prepares for his next swing.

  The vampire delivers a blistering series of punches, knocking you off-balance but doing little harm — until you feel his axe bite into your stomach, cutting through the muscle.

  The enemy leaps upon you, pushing you against the wall and biting into your shoulder. He worries at the wound like a dog, tearing your flesh.

- **Weaponry (Five+ Successes)**

  An axe flies through the air, end over end, slamming into your hand and pinning it to the wall. It cuts clear through the palm, shattering the bones of your fingers and wrist.

  The enemy knocks you to the ground with a solid axe-strike, following it up with a vicious stomp to the neck. You feel the bones of your spine crack under his ragged boot.

  You are lifted into the air by the force of the axe-blow, feeling it crack ribs and force jagged fragments of bone into your heart.

Join the Sect or Forge an Alliance

Joining the sect or forging an alliance requires two Social rolls: one to calm the congregation when the characters suddenly reveal themselves (if the roll fails, a fight breaks out and the characters will either have to flee or do battle, as described in "Destroy the Sect" above) and a second one to win them over. If the second roll fails, the characters will be allowed to leave peacefully.

If the characters win the sect over, they will be invited to participate in the uprising two nights hence.

Consequences: The characters might come away with useful information, new allies or implacable enemies. It is possible to attend one heretical meeting without much impact, even if it becomes common knowledge in the Camarilla, but multiple attendance marks some sort of commitment.

- If the characters don't destroy the sect outright and intend to report the sect's plans to the Legio Mortuum, in which case you should move on to **Warning the Legion** below.
- If they choose not to report the sect, move on to **Defiance**, below.
- If the characters actively avoid the scene of the intended revolt, move directly to the Aftermath and conclude this chapter of the chronicle.
- If the characters destroy the sect outright, conclude this chapter of the chronicle.

Warning the Legion

Mental: • Physical: — Social: ••

Overview: The characters report the sect to Helvidius Bassianus, who thanks them for the warning and orders his troops to prepare.

Description: *Helvidius Bassianus inspects a collection of* pila *as you speak, moving slowly down the wall of a chamber, occasionally pulling a spear away from the wall and running his thumb over the sharp edge to test it.*

"They say you have something to tell me. Speak."

Storyteller Goals: Show the confidence and readiness of the Legio Mortuum. Demonstrate the folly of opposing Helvidius Bassianus at this point.

Character Goals: Help the Legion smash the uprising, or try to help the uprising without getting killed.

Actions: No matter what the characters tell him about the uprising, read the following:

He listens carefully to your story.

"I've heard something about this. Didn't know they were planning to move so quickly, though. Thanks for the notice." He pauses, turning to one of his subordinates — a hard-looking female soldier with cropped black hair. "Get a patrol together and get them in position. Let's make this quick and final."

He takes one of the spears away from the wall, hefting it. "If you want," he says, addressing you again, "you can lend a hand. Give yourselves a chance to strike a blow for the Camarilla."

Of course, they don't have to be telling him the truth. Here are their choices:

Tell the Truth

If the characters are telling Bassianus the truth, they've got nothing to worry about. If they offer to assist in crushing the rebels, he'll be impressed and happy. If the characters don't, he'll shrug and think the less of them — but won't do anything about it for now. After all, they've done their job, and now he's got to worry about doing his.

Misdirect the Legion

If the characters lie about the time or place of the rebellion (or both), Bassianus will be a bit suspicious. His keen understanding of warfare and his long experience on the battlefield will make any attempt at lying that isn't preceded by a successful Intelligence + Warfare roll ring false — simply because he knows what kind of place rebels are likely to plan an attack for, and has carefully crafted apparent weak spots for the purpose of drawing trouble in.

He won't accuse the characters of anything on the spot, though. Instead, he'll insist that the characters come with the Legion and face off against the rebels, offering the characters the opportunity to take part in glorious victory. Then, when the rebellion happens elsewhere, he'll have another unit respond, and the one with the characters will attempt to take them into custody. Use the stats for the legionaries if conflict occurs.

Consequences: Characters who honestly aid the Legion will make a good impression on Helvidius Bassianus and find him well disposed (+1) to their social approaches in the future.

• Those who misdirect the Legion and escape the clutches of the soldiers will be fugitives. You can narrate months or years of hiding, making it clear that the characters will have to sacrifice their Status and havens to elude capture. Those who choose to do so can end the chapter as fugitives and move on to the next. Those who surrender should move to an **Assembly of the Senex**, where they will be tried for conspiring to aid a rebellion — the maximum sentence is a fine and loss of Status, unless they kill one or more of the soldiers in the process.

• Those who misdirect the Legion and are captured move to an **Assembly of the Senex**, and should hear about the failure of the rebellion during their trial. They are tried for conspiring to aid a rebellion — the maximum sentence is a fine and loss of Status, unless they kill one or more soldiers in the process.

• Those who misdirect the Legion and manage to worm out of accompanying the soldiers (by tricking Helvidius Bassianus) will not go to trial, but he will be suspicious (–2) in all future social dealings with them.

Defiance

Mental: • Physical: ••• Social: •

Overview: A group of vampires openly defy the Camarilla and is thoroughly crushed. The characters participate, on one side or the other.

Description: *Two nights hence. At the appointed time, in the appointed corridor of Necropolis, just before a scheduled assembly of the Senex, the members of Silberic's sect strike.*

The heretics are as wild as before, and their daggers are sharp and gleaming, hungry for blood. Somehow, however, they are less threatening now that they are faced by a ready detachment of the Legio Mortuum. The soldiers are deployed in formation, emerging from entranceways all along the corridor. They were ready for this [if the characters informed on them, add: *thanks to you*]. *The heretics seem to know it, because you can see uncertainty in their eyes, and in the way they glance constantly at their leader. He has no answers to offer them now.*

For a moment, you think that the heretics are going to sheathe their daggers and surrender. Suddenly, Silberic lets out a mighty howl, leaping toward one of the soldiers before him. His cohorts hesitate for only a moment before they follow suit.

Roll your Initiative.

Storyteller Goals: Display the might of the Camarilla. When it commands its legions to move, it can crush any one of the groups that stand against it.

Character Goals: Participate in crushing the enemies of the Camarilla. Alternately, escape the violent response of the Legio Mortuum.

Actions: Combat, supported by the elite undead warriors of Rome, is the main action of this scene. Use the descriptions and sample results from "Destroy the Sect" in the previous encounter.

Characters who choose to associate with the sect should probably try to flee. Doing so will initiate a foot chase with the Legion, but the soldiers are weighed down by their armor and will soon fall behind.

Consequences: If the characters aid in crushing the rebellion, they will earn Helvidius Bassianus's respect. Any characters already in the Legio Mortuum with one dot of Status will be promoted, earning their second dot.

• If the characters insist on staying and fighting with the Legion, they will eventually be overwhelmed and captured, as noted in the "Consequences" section of **Warn the Legion**, above. Narrate a trial before the Senex, using an **Assembly of the Senex** scene to do so. If they are found guilty and this is their first time facing sentence, Julia Sabina will intercede on their behalf. If this is their second or third offense, nobody will speak up for them during sentencing, and the characters will be stripped of Status and fined the sum total of their Resources.

• If the characters successfully flee the Legion, they will become fugitives, as noted in the "Consequences" section of **Warn the Legion**, above.

Aftermath

The Camarilla

The failed uprising has little or no effect on the Camarilla whatsoever. None of the supporting characters outside of the Legion will give it much thought — it's just another small band of criminals making a little noise and getting themselves killed, after all.

Only Helvidius Bassianus will admit irritation, stating that this sort of trouble seems to be getting more frequent. It's hard to tell if he's just griping or if what he's saying is true. Either way, he's confident that the uprisings present no real threat to the Camarilla — he's just annoyed.

The Lancea et Sanctum

The Sanctified are aware of the failed uprising, and they're filing it away as demonstration of the Legion's capability. They won't bother to try and make heroes of Silberic and his barbarian allies, though — the Sanctified aren't the kind of martyrs who make for good propaganda.

Thascius Hostilinus will treat the occurrence as an annoying inevitability, pointing out that the barbarians were rumored to be members of the Church, but that none of the congregation of Sanctified Kindred ever saw them at mass. He'll indicate that the association is pure propaganda on the part of the Senex in an attempt to vilify the Lancea et Sanctum.

Marciana Longina Rhetrix will echo Hostilinus's sentiments, but she will take the opportunity to note the cruelty of the Legion, pointing out that the rebels were clearly oppressed and desperate, and noting that they were slain when they could have been neutralized with any number of non-lethal tactics.

Experience

• All characters participating in this story gain three experience points: one for following Silberic, one for learning about the rebellion and one for doing something about it.

• Any character who makes a particularly interesting choice, displays keen wit or acumen or does something surprising and entertaining during the story earns one bonus point of experience.

Concluding

This chapter should conclude with some event emphasizing the characters' accomplishments and their gains in Status. Run the characters through a party or a spectacle at the Circus Maximus, taking pains to have their allies spotlight and praise them in public, or narrate a Sanctified mass and have Marciana Longina Rhetrix call them up before their fellow followers to highlight the characters' achievements. Set them up as up-and-comers in the Camarilla and then segue into the next chapter.

Experience

All characters participating in this chapter of the chronicle gain an end-of-chapter bonus of three experience points.



Chapter II: God's Spearman

"No deviation from the decree of the Senex is tolerable. The declaration of Assembly is inviolate, and the blade of the Legio Mortuum is extended towards all who dare to defy it. All deviation from lawful obedience is to be reported to the Legio Mortuum. Any demonstration of opposition to the law is to be met with necessary force."

-Helvidius Bassianus,
addressing the troops of the
Legio Mortuum, 362 CE

IT IS BY REASON THAT WE OUGHT TO PERSUADE AND INSTRUCT MEN, NOT BY BLOWS, OR INSULTS, OR BODILY VIOLENCE.

- JULIAN THE APOSTATE.

Nothing lasts forever. Things change. Kingdoms fall; new kingdoms rise. Empires dissolve. The Camarilla has tried to resist change for nearly a thousand years now, but even so, the cracks are showing. The new God's followers are triumphant in the city.

On October 28th 312CE, Constantine and Maxentius fight for the future of Rome at the Milvian Bridge. Constantine wins, and marches victorious into the city. His army bears his rival's head on a spear at the front of the procession. It has happened many times before: a new leader takes the Empire by force, leads a triumphal procession, begins a new regime. But this time things are different. The shields of Constantine's men bear crudely painted Christian symbols. And the Emperor breaks with ten centuries of tradition by refusing to sacrifice to Capitoline Jupiter, as a victorious general should. He has had a vision, he says.

Within a year, the surviving Emperors have passed the Edict of Milan. Christianity is now the Empire's favored religion. The Camarilla follow suit: there are too many of the Sanctified now, and there is no point in suppressing them any more.

When, some years later, the Emperor establishes the Roman Catholic Church as the new religion of Rome, the Camarilla have no choice but to offer the Sanctified the benefits of what the living call universal toleration

The Sanctified begin to circle around the Camarilla, like crows around a dying man on the battlefield, ready to swoop in and feast on the remains. Other forces, too, look to the imminent failure of the Camarilla and plan their final assault on the Julii. The shadow of the owl falls on too many Kindred; its screech echoes through the corridors of Necropolis.

Overview

In this chapter, the characters take part in events that start the ball rolling on the Camarilla's ultimate fall. Over a period of 37 years, the Empire, hardly stable up to this point, is shaken by civil war, usurpation and barbarian invasion. The church, the new religious elite, becomes preoccupied with doctrinal issues. The death of Julian, last of the family of Constantine, paves the way for some of the worst military disasters of Rome's history. The Empire is doomed.

As above, so below: the Camarilla has, up to this point, been in a much more stable position than the Empire of the living. The introduction of the Sanctified into the lawful society of the dead gives these quasi-Christian vampires more prominence than ever before; their teachings are attractive to blood-drinking monsters who seek meaning, and they begin to grow in numbers. The time comes when Thascius Hostilinus, leader of the nascent church, sees fit to put forward the Sanctified manifesto. Things will never be the same again.

The Riot is a brief, tense event that can happen in Rome at any time during the Chronicle. The people of Rome tend to riot in this era at the slightest provocation. Getting stuck in the middle of the rioting populace can be incredibly dangerous, even for the dead.

In 326CE, characters get thrown into the middle of the events in **The Illustrious Childe.** Thascius Hostilinus sets forward the Sanctified manifesto in the hearing of the Camarilla. Characters get the opportunity to take par tin the debate and to declare allegiance in the struggles to come. Depending on what side they took, one or more of the characters gains the notice of powerful individuals who ask for a favor, a favor which leads them, initially unknowingly, into creating one of the greatest mysteries of the fourth century: what happened to Constantine's favorite son?

Late in his reign, Emperor Constantius arrives in Rome and the **Saint of Whores** appears on the characters' hunting grounds. A brothel becomes a convent. The living and the dead make moves to suborn, destroy or burn the women there. The characters find that they have the power of life and death over the nuns.

The Age of Toleration begins when the Emperor Julian declares all Christian sects, even those formerly anath-

ematized, to be legal. Open fighting breaks out between factions of Christian partisans, including the two heresies under the control of Vitericus and Eupraxus. The two heresies get out of control, and the living become a threat to the Kindred. The characters must act decisively or cease to exist.

Against a background of unrest in the Camarilla, the characters are the first to meet **The Messenger,** who brings the news that Julian is dead, and the hopes of Rome's pagans are forever dashed. What the characters do with the news seals the fate of several of the dead—foremost among them the hapless would-be usurper Herennius Lanista—and may mean the beginning of the end of the Camarilla.

Through all of these tales, the Striges lurk.

The Sanctified Manifesto

The Camarilla is the Small Chamber, the Night Senate, and it oversees the doings of the dead, just as the government of Rome commands the living. But as far as the Kindred are concerned, the living are superior in all things. The living are first. Their government leads the Kindred. The Emperor of the Living is also the Emperor of the Dead.

The Kindred prey upon the living. And they try to influence the living. But they do that so that they can continue to co-exist. In the Roman age, people identified themselves with their city, to a degree barely comprehensible in the modern age.

While a vampire of the 21st century would register if the President of the USA suddenly died, it wouldn't make much difference to her sense of self. He's just a human leader. But to a Roman vampire, the Emperor embodies the State. And the State defines the Camarilla. If there is no Roman state, there is no point to the Camarilla.

As time has progressed, the Emperor has grown more and more to embody the State. The Emperor *is* Rome, to the extent that for a century, the capitol of Empire has been wherever the Emperor (and later, Emperors) chooses to make his abode. And that hasn't always been Rome. By 326CE, it's Constantinople, and in the Eastern half of the Empire, that's where it stays. After the death of Julian, the West has its capitol in several places (especially Milan)—but none of those places is the city of Rome.

The power of the Emperor has departed Rome, and the Kindred know it. But the Camarilla still persists, because the Empire still persists. The Camarilla still perform their sacrifices to the Gods, because the Gods demand it.

But now the Emperor is Christian, and if the Emperor is Christian, then so is the Empire. The God of the Christians doesn't need the Camarilla to govern the society of the dead. The Sanctified say that since vampires are cursed by God and assigned by Him to test the living, their governance should be a religious issue, just as it is among the living. They fall under the vampiric wing of the church, the Lancea et Sanctum; the Emperor has no use for pagan gods, and hence has no use for the Camarilla. This is the Sanctified manifesto: the adherents of the Lancea et Sanctum demand nothing other than the destruction of the Camarilla. They prophesy the collapse of the Camarilla, and concentrate their efforts on making that prophecy self-fulfilling.

The Age of Religious Debate

This is the era of the Great Ecumenical Councils, and across the Empire Bishops, Deacons and Presbyters are discussing Christian doctrine, sometimes to the point of violence. The issues they speak of might seem niceties to outsiders, but to the Christians, they can be matters of life and death—literally.

From the last years of Constantine, religious debate begins to become common, not only in the city above, but between the Kindred of the Camarilla.

In game terms, religious debates follow the same rules as philosophical debates (see **A Requiem for Rome,** p. 179). Characters can use the new Merit, Debate Style: Theology in any debate, but its practitioners excel in debates about doctrine and church practice.

New Merit — Debate Style: Theology (• to ••••)

Prerequisites: Presence ••, Religion ••, Expression •

Effect: Your character has learned how to use the new religious debating style adopted by the participants in the Great Ecumenical Councils. He may be a lay preacher, a cenobite, a bishop, or a student of Christian doctrine. The character knows Scripture and knows how to apply it to a multitude of causes, and can fuse traditional pagan learning and philosophy with the doctrines of whatever Catholic Church he chooses to ally himself with. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan during the time of Valentinian and Theodosius, will become the master of this style, drawing the church into the political arena and ultimately convincing the Emperor to change the law in favor of the Church again and again.

Dots purchased in this merit allow access to special debate maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have "Proof Texts" until

he has "Passionate Apologetic". The maneuvers and their effects are described below. Only one maneuver can be performed in a given turn.

Passionate Apologetic (•): The character uses defensive tactics to gain a moral advantage over her opponent. She presents her argument using long strings of complex ideas interposed with brief statements, repeated for the sake of force. The character gains a +1 to Manipulation rolls when using this technique.

Proof Texts (••): Your character knows the body of the Scriptures well enough to back up any argument, no matter how specious or counter-intuitive (or counter to established Christian doctrine, in fact). The character simply references several statements from the Bible, which, out of their context, can back up her position. When using Proof Texts, your character may substitute her Religion dots for her argument's Integrity until her next turn.

Appeal to the Witnesses (•••): Your character applies the teachings and deeds of the Apostles, Fathers, Confessors and Martyrs as reinforcement of her position, restating her position while interjecting an anecdote about the these great believers of the past. The character doesn't say anything new, but strengthens her position and makes it difficult to attack. The player rolls as usual, and if the roll is successful, she doesn't get further with her own argument that turn (that is, none of her successes count towards the target), but her opponent's next roll suffers a -2 penalty.

Zeugma (••••): The character has an encyclopedic knowledge of anecdotes, stories and theological points, and has an analogy or metaphor for everything. In lieu of an answer to a reply, she can justify (or condemn) virtually any action with a Scriptural precedent, weaving her own argument into a story. Does she want to justify her use of pagan literature to other Christians? She says she's "looting the Egyptians," as the Israelites did before the Exodus. Why should the seven Senex members present at the debate be censured? In their deeds, they show that they are the seven-headed Beast of Revelation, and the priestess of the Augurs is none other than the Whore of Babylon. The character spends a point of Willpower. No matter how many opponents level arguments against the character, you may apply her full Integrity to all arguments in a single turn, as each time she finds another metaphor to bring to the show.

General Event: The Riot

Mental • Physical ••••• Social –

Overview: In the fourth century CE, the people of the Roman world have no real say in government. The only thing they can really do to make themselves heard is to start a riot, and no city has people who are as prone to riot as the people of Rome. If the grain ships don't come in on time, the people riot. If the adherents of two different Christian factions meet, they engage in pitched battle in the streets. If charioteering factions get in the way of each other, they riot. If news of the Emperor's death breaks or there's news of a barbarian invasion, there's a riot. If something violent or distressing happens in front of a crowd of people, they riot.

Description: *A shutter gets torn off the window of a caupona, a rock flies across you, just inches from your face, a crowd of people armed with torches and sticks are here, fighting among themselves, overturning closed market stalls, tearing open barrels of grain. They're around you in an instant. The air is thick; a blow thrown just in front of your face meets flesh; the smell of blood assaults you as a few drops spatter on your cloak... and now a man with a chair leg rushes you.You don't even know what side he's on...*

Storyteller Goals: Introducing the rioting public keeps things moving. Whenever things are flagging, and the vampires are out and about, this is a good tactic to use.

Character Goals: The characters need to get out of this without getting beaten into a torpor. Ideally, they shouldn't be here at all.

Actions: The only thing a character can do is try to get out of the way, and then to fight her way out. How much fighting involves depends upon how much trouble the character's in.

Getting out of the way

Characters have a chance to get out of the way of some riots.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure + Auspex

Aids/Bonuses: Getting caught up among people who are clearly, obviously on your side (for example, wearing the robes of a Christian cenobite in the middle of an anti-pagan riot, or dressing as a civilian rather than as an official in a food riot) +3; three or more dots of Stealth +1.

Dramatic Failure: *It sweeps around you before you even know it. You're caught wrong-footed as men rush past you and around you carrying torches and clubs.*

The character is completely oblivious. Not only is he stuck in the riot, he doesn't get to roll Initiative (essentially adding 0 to his Initiative Trait for the purposes of combat).

Failure: *It happens too fast for you to avoid, but you see it coming. You ready yourself, drawing your sword/picking up whatever you can find to improve your chances before the raging turmoil engulfs you.*

The character realizes what's happening, but doesn't have time to get out of the way. He gets to roll initiative, though, and has time for one turn of action before the riot hits him.

Success: *The sound of cries, of splintering wood and a tearing awning alerts you to the danger.*

Quick! There isn't a whole lot of time to spare, but the character has one turn to get himself and his friends out of the way for every success he rolls.

Exceptional Success: *You feel it in the air – a crackling, expectant wave, as before a great storm. You move even before the violence begins.*

The character doesn't even have to think about it—he sees an appropriate place to get out of the way for himself and his friends.

Characters who are the root cause of a riot (as in a situation like the one around the bonfire in **Saint of Whores** below) don't get the chance to do this. They've just got to fight their way out.

Escaping

Run this as a combat, with the riot as an individual combatant. The riot doesn't really have health levels—you can't strictly "kill" it—but each success a character rolls on a combat roll counts towards getting out of danger. Run combat as if the riot were an individual combatant fighting against each character; any successes it makes on attacks cause lethal damage.

When a player has managed to gather a number of successes equal or greater than the target number, the character escapes.

Narrate each round of combat as if it were something wild and unpredictable; characters who score successes crack heads, swat people out of the way and kick and gouge their way out.

If a player rolls an exceptional success at any time, it means the character has killed someone, which is cause for a degeneration check after the fact for characters with Humanity 4 or above (since it counts as "impassioned manslaughter").

Different kinds of riot have different Traits.

Type	Initiative	Dice Pool	Target to Escape
Religious Riot	5	4L	12-16
Chariot Riot	5	6L	14-18
Grain Riot	5	5L	12-16
Social Riot	5	5L	16-20



Religious Riots begin when one religious faction does something objectionable to another—and not just Christians. In 361, religious riots began in Alexandria, when the pagan inhabitants lynched George, the Christian bishop. They're neither as dangerous nor as long-lasting as the other kinds of riot, and A religious riot probably happens in the story **Saint of Whores**, below, if the characters aren't careful, and one almost definitely happens in **The Age of Toleration.**

Chariot Riots happen between chariot factions. They're the most dangerous and most violent. They don't necessarily happen after any specific event. They just need two groups of opposing fans to be in the same place.

Grain Riots get triggered by something going wrong with the grain dole. The people of Rome still get a regular free ration of grain; they depend upon it, and if for any reason it's delayed, famine strikes the city. Small wonder, then, that the people go mad. In 359, the city prefect Tertullus only managed to stop the Roman populace from tearing up the city by presenting his small children to them and saying that they would probably die, too. Lucky for him that the delayed ships got to Rome shortly afterwards.

Social Riots can happen for all sorts of reasons. They're the most unpredictable kind of social unrest, because while the other kinds of riot have obvious causes, these just begin, triggered by some flash point.

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl or Strength + Weaponry

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant obstacles in this event.

Aids/Bonuses: Vampires can augment physical Attributes with Vitae, as usual, and can make use of Disciplines:

- **Protean:** Characters who can turn into mist are at an advantage. Protean 5 enables the character to escape without having to roll. Protean 4 only allows the character to escape if she can turn into something with wings; if she turns into a small animal like a rat or a house-cat, the character gets to escape, but the riot gets one more "attack" on the character before she escapes. If the character turns into a larger animal like a dog or a wolf, the character still has to escape as normal.
- **Obfuscate:** A character successfully using Obfuscate 3 can escape without having to fight.
- **Celerity, Resilience and Vigor:** All of the physical Disciplines have their usual effect.
- **Majesty and Dominate:** Most Majesty and Dominate powers pretty much useless in this kind of situation, since it's impossible to hold anyone's attention for any length of time. The one exception is Sovereignty (Majesty 5). Once the player spends a Willpower point, the power is on. Every round, make the roll (see **Vampire: the Requiem**, p. 132)—oppose it with the Riot's Composure of 3. If the character is successful, the riot doesn't get an attack on her that round although the character can still choose to make an attack roll against the riot, and any successes the player rolled on the Sovereignty roll count against the target the character needs to get out of the riot, as she walks through the crowd, unmolested. Obviously, since the Sovereignty roll doesn't involve violence, an exceptional success doesn't mean that the character's hurt anyone.

326CE: The Illustrious Childe

Constantine named his eldest son Crispus as his successor of choice. The court favorite, Crispus, gave Constantine a grandson and acquitted himself more than adequately during the war with Licinius. And then, in 326, the histories say that Emperor had his son killed and his name excised from all records and monuments. And that's all they say. No one will ever know for sure why.

No one living, that is.

Story

The story begins *in medias res:* the characters are among those present in the Camarilla when Thascius Hostilinus steps forward and declares the end of the Camarilla and the beginning of the age of the Sanctified. The characters have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, on either side.

The issues raised in the debate disturb many, leading plans to be made. Hostilinus knows that the son of Constantine has come to Rome. He decides that he must meet the man, and reveal himself. He wishes to control the future and has absolute confidence that Crispus will do what he asks. Flaviana Galla wants to make Crispus a vampire, to show him that his father's devotion is futile, that the God of the Christians couldn't save him from the dead, and to show the Camarilla that the old gods, represented by the Augurs, still have the power of life and death over the grandees of Rome.

The characters become embroiled in several plots surrounding a young man staying incognito in a *caupona*–he is Crispus, favorite son of Constantine, and his position as heir apparent to the Empire and champion of the Nicene Church means that his ultimate fate changes the course of history for the living and the dead.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is *the struggle for survival.* Thascius Hostilinus lays out the manifesto that defines the end of the Camarilla and the ascent of the Sanctified. The Camarilla bridles; it must survive.

Crispus wants to survive, and like many other potential conquerors, he sees his only chance at survival as the result of his making a successful play for the throne. He doesn't want to be a dead man, stuck underground in Rome – Rome, where no Emperor has made his home for a century–he wants to rule.

The mood of this story is the turning of the onset of darkness. Over and over again, the owl hoots overhead. Shadows flit between the torchlight of Roman inns, Roman streets. The debate shakes the Camarilla. Vampires who haven't spoken before make dire pronouncements about the future. None of these things are prophecies as such, and nothing is set. But the doom sayers are out in force. The Camarilla begins to stagger.

Allies and Antagonists

Any vampire active before 326CE can take part in the first act of this story, since it takes part during a meeting of the Camarilla.

After the first act, however, the most important characters are human, and central among them is Crispus, the son of Constantine.

C. Flavius Julius Crispus, Germanicus Maximus

Quotes: (Intimidation) *"You don't have the faintest idea what I could have these men do to you."*

(Politics) *"Sometimes–and you must understand that this is purely hypothetical–a man's only hope of survival is to aim for control."*

(Persuasion) *"I have friends. Family, too, actually. Connections. Get me out of this, and they're at your disposal."*

Description: *He has everything before him: you only need to look at him to tell. He has fine hair, piercing eyes, a prominent nose and a strong chin. Perhaps when he's older, he might tend to fat, but right now he's at his peak. His clothing is finely made, expensive but not flashy, suiting someone on important business traveling incognito. He talks like he expects people to listen, and walks like he expects people to get out of his way.*



Background: This is Crispus, the son of Constantine. In the year 326, he is 29. He has fought in civil wars. He's had people killed. He's no stranger to death and politics.

By the end of this year, he will be dead, apparently by order of his father. No one will ever know why for sure.

Right now, he's in Rome incognito, accompanied by a pair of agents. His military escort is camped outside of the city. He's on business for his father. Constantine has trusted him to organize a clandestine investigation into the doings of the Vicar of Rome, before revealing himself at the Vicar's home. What Constantine doesn't know is that Crispus offered to do the job himself because he intends to find supporters to enable him to overthrow his father.

In fact, Crispus is in the middle of an affair with his stepmother Fausta. Fausta has encouraged him to make a play for the throne himself. He doesn't know if he really wants to try yet, but his passion for his father's wife consumes him, and is driving him to behave less than prudently.

While Crispus is traveling incognito, his men and his bodyguards are under instructions to call him Flavius.

Storytelling Hints: Crispus is a real historical character. He's the son of one of the greatest Roman Emperors. The age of good Roman Emperors ended with Marcus

Aurelius; Constantine may be the hero of the Christians and the founder of the Catholic church, but he is a hard, cruel individual who discards or destroys allies and enemies alike without pause. And Crispus? He's a chip off the old block.

Crispus really should be one of the single most unlikable individuals the characters ever meet. He's arrogant, imperious, selfish and wholly unprincipled with regard to the lives of those around him. He's not bad in a fight, pretty strong-willed, and he isn't at all stupid. He's heard about vampires, but doesn't—to begin with—believe in them.

All that history can say about his death is that it happens in 326, and Constantine commands that his memory be damned—he is excised from all subsequent histories; his statues are destroyed; his name is chiseled from the monuments. As soon as Constantine's wife Fausta gives birth, she, too dies.

What did Crispus do that was bad enough for him to be treated so? In the real world, we'll never know. In the game, it's a piece of history that the characters directly influence. Crispus finds himself, unwitting, in the middle of the first attack on the integrity of the Camarilla. The Sanctified want him to be protected. They want to control him. There are elements in the Camarilla, among them Flaviana Galla and Macellarius Corbulo, who want to see Crispus brought into the fold, to prove that the Camarilla still has its power and can decide the fate of an imperial heir. In effect, the Camarilla has the future of Rome in its talons.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Latin and Greek Literature) 1, Investigation 1, Politics (Imperial Politics) 4, Religion 1, Warfare (Legionary Command) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Ride 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 2, Expression (Panegyric) 3, Intimidation (Authority) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Legions) 5, Debate Style: Reason 1, Fame 3, Mentor 5, Noble Heritage 4, Resources 5, Retainers 5, Status (Imperial Court) 5, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 6 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Fortitude. Crispus has marched across the world with his father, and he's survived in court. He survives. It's what he does. Survival is everything.

Vice: Greed. What Crispus wants, Crispus takes. He is the favorite son of Constantine, and the Empire will one day be his. Hell, it's more or less his anyway. He's already got his father's wife. Why wait?

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Short Sword	2L	2	9

Official History

The mystery of Crispus' death is one of those Great Unsolved Mysteries that makes history interesting. Still, what little we *do* know about Crispus leads the historian to believe that the idea of him plotting to unseat his father is a bit far-fetched.

But then, so are movie-style vampires jockeying for supremacy in ancient Rome.

Protasius, Agens in Rebus

Quotes: (Subterfuge) *"Nonsense. We're just on our way to Brundisium."*

(Persuasion) *"I think it'd be better for all concerned if you were to sheathe the sword and allow me to buy you and your friends a drink."*

Description: *He's skinny, but not cadaverous, his stick-like frame engulfed by a gray woolen cloak and somehow denied by rosy, healthy skin, a clear complexion, a full head of glossy hair. He could be any age from nineteen to thirty-five; it's difficult to tell, and his cleared blue eyes and smooth, unwrinkled face give no clue as to age or attitude. He talks in level, considered phrases. Everything he does and says seems eminently reasonable, even when he's trying to kill you.*

Background: Protasius is the more talkative of Crispus' two bodyguards, and, like his partner Gervasius, he's an *Agens in Rebus* with responsibility for the Diocese of Rome. He and his partner have been pulled away from their usual duties (without the knowledge of the Vicar and the Prefect) to guard the Caesar in the city, as the heir apparent performs some task on behalf of his father. He's a Nicene, but only because the Emperor is.

Unlike his colleague, Protasius isn't pleased to be watching over the Caesar—it's risky, and if there's one thing Protasius has no time for, it's risk.

Storytelling Hints: Protasius' dedication to Crispus' defense depends utterly on his sense of self-preservation.

He doesn't know what Crispus' job in the city is, nor does he know what Crispus is really up to.

Play Protasius as talkative and reasonable. He's not exactly charming, but his calm, down-to-earth demeanor has a certain soothing quality. He can't stand Crispus, and he won't risk his life for him, but he'll do his utmost to get the Caesar out of danger.

On the other hand, if he finds the letter from Fausta that Crispus has in his possession, of finds any other evidence of Crispus' intentions, he'll attempt to leave the Caesar to his fate and ride to Constantinople, reasoning that his only hope of getting out alive is to warn the legitimate Emperor of the truth. Were the Emperor a reasonable man, Protasius might be right. But the Emperor is not a reasonable man.

If Protasius and Gervasius lose Crispus or allow him to get killed, the Emperor will have them tortured and executed. If they discover the truth and let the Emperor know, he'll be grateful (if heartbroken). Of course, he can't leave them alive to know the secret. At least their deaths will be swift. Protasius won't allow himself to think about his fate. He never learned that sometimes in life there is no way out.

If somehow convinced that he's doomed, Protasius will try to cut a deal, or escape. He's fully able to kill his partner (or Crispus, for that matter, if he thinks it's necessary). Life is everything for him, and he'll do anything to keep it.



Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 1, Politics 2, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Archery 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Ride (Quick Starts, Evading Pursuit) 3, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword, Dagger) 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Diplomacy, Avoid Violent Altercations) 1, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Contacts (Bureaucrats in Rome) 1, Danger Sense, Languages (Greek, Gothic), Status (Imperial Courier Service) 3

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Virtue: Prudence. Protasius intends to keep himself alive, and he's good at it. He's an inveterate planner, a man with a keen eye for an opportunity to get himself into a safe, secure position. He isn't in a secure position right now, and he's looking for a way to keep in that position.

Vice: Envy. While he is not covetous as such, Protasius' sense of self-preservation is all consuming. He's doing this job because it seemed a good way to advance himself, and he'll look after Crispus because he knows that if he doesn't, he'll lose his neck. He has an inkling that he's doomed whatever he does, but hasn't allowed himself consciously to entertain such thoughts. Life is everything for Protasius: he holds onto it with a force that overcmes everything. If he can keep hold of the life he has, he'll do anything at all.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Short Sword	2L	2	7
Dagger	1L	1	6

Gervasius, Agens in Rebus

Quotes: (Weaponry) "*Domine, domine! To me!*"

(Intimidation) "*Oh, for the love of- Look. We can all go on our way, or I can kill you. I vote for us all going on our way. It's less trouble.*"



Description: *Beside his slender companion, Gervasius looks incongruous, an unhygienic older man with something of a paunch. His breath is like the rubbish heap behind some Greek kitchen. He doesn't look like much, but something in that black-toothed smile, behind those watery eyes, leads you to think that maybe he's more dangerous than he looks; although he moves slowly and clumsily—like some alcoholic veteran—the perceptive viewer realizes that he's playing dumb, an assessment borne out when he dispatches a belligerent drunk in a tavern with frightening speed and efficiency, when he flourishes his blade with the speed of the finest military men in the Empire.*

He rolls his eyes when he kills, as if it's all far too much bother, as if he'd rather be somewhere else relaxing, as if it's their fault.

Background: Although senior to Protasius in experience, Gervasius allows the younger man to do most of the talking and make most of the decisions. He follows orders, to the spirit rather than the letter; he's a man of the service. That's always been Gervasius' way. That's what's kept him alive and useful since the time of Maximian.

Unlike Protasius, Gervasius is actually quite devout. He justifies his bloody profession by convincing himself that by doing the Emperor's bidding, he is protecting the Church, and by protecting the Church, he is doing the will of God, even if he has to do things that God commands against. Sometimes they are necessary evils. He often cites the example of the Bishop Athanasius, through whose preaching Gervasius converted to Christianity while posted in Alexandria. Athanasius was many things, but mostly he was a man unafraid to do violence when the sanctity of the church demanded it.

Storytelling Hints: Gervasius' piety is matched by his loyalty. He doesn't share Protasius' illusions about getting out of the fix they're in. He knows that if anything goes wrong, they're both dead men, and he doesn't care. His is to do his duty. That is all. Protasius will skip out on Crispus if he realizes he won't get out alive, but Gervasius will continue to defend the young man to his death.

Having said that, dying gloriously isn't in his career plan, and Gervasius will try to find other options if he can. Gervasius is a much more sympathetic character than Protasius, and should be given a chance to converse with characters. He won't reveal the identity of his charge or shirk his duty, but he will do his best to find reasons not to kill people.

Still, the likelihood is that Gervasius is the first to die, at the hands of the characters, Victrix, or even Protasius, and if he's the first to die, he's the first to get taken over by the Strix.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Politics 2, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Ride (Pursuit) 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword) 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Languages (Greek, Syrian, Egyptian), Status (Imperial Courier Service) 3

Willpower: 6

Morality: 7

Virtue: Faith. Gervasius is loyal and devout. These things keep him going. He might look like a slob, but it's a front. He's a paragon when it comes to doing his duty.

Vice: Pride. Sometimes Gervasius can be blinded by that same duty that sustains him. Sometimes, doing his duty is neither safe nor prudent.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Short Sword	2L	2	9

Legionaries

Quotes: (Intimidation) *"Where is he?"*

Description: *They're Roman legionaries. They're a group of brutal-looking men in armor, carrying shields. Some of them have scars on their faces and hands, and the dead eyes of killers.*

Background: Crispus brought a cohort of troops to Italy as an escort. They camped a few miles outside of the city and handed the Caesar over to the *Agentes in Rebus.* A group of these soldiers are under instructions to come into the city and look for Crispus if they don't hear from him in three days, or if he sends for help via the *Agentes.*

Storytelling Hints: The soldiers are a complication. They're a story element rather than characters in their own right. If something happens to Crispus and the *Agentes* get killed or (in the case of Protasius) abscond, a dozen or so will come into the city, show their papers to the urban prefect, and start turning places over until they find him. Protasius and Gervasius might be alive and kicking, in which case they might come and get the soldiers themselves. The soldiers follow orders above all, although they're more faithful to Crispus than the *Agentes,* having seen action with him against Licinius a couple of years ago.

In fact, if they found out that Crispus was planning on usurping the throne, they'd support him. It's just about conceivable that the troops find out *and* Crispus gets out alive, in which case the troops declare him Augustus, and he fights a short civil war against his father. And loses.



None of the soldiers should be much trouble to deal with individually, but characters should be wary of simply killing them. Each man knows his comrades and is prepared to avenge them if need be.

If it becomes necessary to flesh out one of the soldiers, feel free to pick a name from the roster of Roman names (see **Requiem for Rome,** p.104) and add a dot or two to some other skills, or to add some specializations.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation (Searching) 1, Politics 1, Religion 1, Warfare 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Sword, Pilum) 2

Social Skills: Intimidation (Weight of Numbers) 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Legions) 1, Fighting Style: Formation Tactics 1

Willpower: 4

Morality: 6

Virtue: Fortitude. They're loyal to Crispus, to the extent that they'll continue looking for him, back him up if they find out he's planning on staging a rebellion and

Vice: Lust These are Roman soldiers of the late Empire. Which means that they're fundamentally a bunch of sadists. Soldiers throughout history are capable of terrible things, and these men are prize examples of what years of fighting can do to a man. Some of these men fought with Constantine at the Milvian Bridge, and they're capable of doing some pretty vile things if allowed.

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2 (0 with armor, but +2 with legionary shield, and +1 with pilum)

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Short sword	2L	2	8	
Pilum	3L	4	9	+1 Defense if used defensively
Pilum (thrown)	3L	4	8	

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty	Special
Lorica Hamata (Chain)	2/1	-2	
Legionary Shield	+2 Defense	0	requires left arm

Ascylta and Posca

Quotes: (Socialize) *"Remember: it's business. Drinks are not included."*

Description: *This is Ascylta: she's aging, in her late 20s, at a guess, but she still has enough of her once-vaunted beauty to draw in clients enough, and for her to be able to pick them. She's plump and soft-skinned, and if her eyes are dark-ringed and weary, she hides it beneath Kohl and white lead; if her hair is thin and beginning to fall out, it cannot be seen beneath her blond wig. Her silk dresses aren't the best, but they're still silk, and if in places the silk has holes, none of her clients seem to mention it. For a moment, just a moment when no one is looking, she deflates, and she looks very old. She looks used up.*

This is Posca: he's in his forties, bald-headed and leathery, apparently stained with grease and wine right through to the skin. He speaks in grunts and nods and meaningful gestures. He shrugs; he cleans cups, he tops up the wine-jug. He keeps himself to himself.

Background: Ascylta's a freedwoman, and she has no other career option open to her. She knows that she's going to have to keep on working and working, each year taking worse and worse clients, each year until one gives her the pox or he strangles or stabs her. She works for Posca the innkeeper. So she found herself another pimp, Posca, who was for a time her lover, he owns the tavern, and she works here.

It's tonight that she's caught the eye of Crispus, who likes women who look older than him. She reminds him of Fausta.

Storytelling Hints: Ascylta and Posca represent the girls and the staff of the *caupona.* If something bizarre or lethal happens, Posca sends one of the girls to get someone from the city garrison.

If the characters don't notice that Posca has done this, or don't do anything about it and then stick around, the Officer in the Garrison of Rome (see **Requiem for Rome**, p. 242) turns up in about half an hour with a bunch of legionaries (use the same Traits as Crispus' men, above). He begins to ask awkward questions.

Ascylta personifies the stereotype of the tragic, world-weary hooker. She's a bystander in the events at the *caupona,* and she's aware of exactly who she's with tonight, even if they've been trying not to let her know.



She might be the weak link; vampires could use her to find out who the young man is, or, taking her to one side, force her with Majesty or Dominate (she's got ordinary Resolve and Composure Traits, two dots in each) or intimidate her into letting the truth of his identity slip.

She might end up as a vampire's meal, in which case play up the horror of the woman's fate. She's had a hard life and although she's resigned to dying some time, she never thought it might be like this, and even though she submits to the vampire's kiss like anyone else, for her it's somehow a sign of failure, of the final tragedy of a life destroyed before it even began.

Abilities

Not Missing Much (Dice Pool 6): They've spent their lives keeping alive in the rough streets of Rome, avoiding more pain than they absolutely have to suffer. The prostitutes and staff here are really good at reading a man and gauging a situation, the better to know how much trouble it's going to be and how difficult the evening is going to be.

Carousing (Dice Pool 6): He's developed a tolerance to alcohol that would put many mortals to shame. She's a prostitute: it's her job.

Atla, the Strix

Quotes: (Intimidation) *"Stop. Now. I would have you stay... there. I wish to play."*

Description: *The screech of an owl sounds above your head; it seems to carry a significance, a force. You thought your heart was dead, but the cry chills you nonetheless...*

An owl, huge and shadowy, swoops down from nowhere and bats its wings in front of your face; you raise your hands to protect yourself. It's gone. It's like it dissolved...

It's the owl again. It hovers above the body, crooning to the corpse, as if whispering in the body's ear, and then it's gone, a wisp of something dark and then nothing, and then the body pulls itself to its feet...

The dead woman sniffs. She smiles, lopsidedly. The smile doesn't reach her eyes. Her head tilts to one side and with the movement, her eyes reflect the torchlight like a cat, or an owl. And then she starts to talk, and the voice comes from the beginning of forever and you can feel it echoing through the blood that sits in your veins...

Background: It was worshiped by the worms of the earth before Aeneas set foot on Roman soil; it is older even than the gods of Rome. It has flown through the night on wings of shadow since life began. It is one of the old evils, and like the others of its kind, it has returned to Rome, and is hungry. It knows that the young man in the *caupona* is important, and is watching him. It can smell a bloody future on this youth and wants to know more.



Storytelling Hints: The Strix is present from the moment the characters leave Necropolis to find Posca's *caupona*. It knows early on that the dead have designs on Crispus, and decides that it would be amusing to play with him.

If things seem to be dragging, the Strix swoops down and bats its wings. If a vampire goes into torpor or a human dies, the Strix takes the body. It wants Crispus. If it takes over another body, it tries to kill Crispus (or drive him into torpor, if he's a vampire) and possess his body. Having taken over Crispus, it goes for the characters, taking on any Julii first of all.

Atla possesses the corpse of a freshly murdered prostitute when the characters first meet it.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 5, Stamina 0 or Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2 in body

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Investigation 3, Occult 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2, Weaponry 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 4

Merits: n/a

Willpower: 6

Morality: n/a

Health: In its disembodied form, Atla uses Willpower instead of Health. If reduced to zero Willpower, it dissolves into nothingness. When inhabiting the prostitute's body, Atla's Health is 7.

Initiative: 7 (4 in body)

Defense: 3 (2 in body)

Speed: 20 (9 in body)

Size: 2 in disembodied form; 5 in body.

Powers: Possession, Sense Blood, Spiritual Essence, Dominate 3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Knife	1L	1	5

Event: Birth of the Sanctified Manifesto

Mental: ••• Physical: - Social: ••

Overview: The Camarilla is in session in its central chamber at the base of the Tarpeian Rock. As the business of this night draws to a close, Thascius Hostilinus steps forward, and, for the first time, declaims that the Camarilla's destruction is at hand.

Caught by surprise, caught in shock, the vampires of the Camarilla pause, leaving it—momentarily—up to the characters to decide the course of the debate.

Description: *The dead jostle and push, the Camarilla is stuffed to bursting. Walking corpses spill out of the arches, craning pale necks to see inside the chamber to listen to the business of the dead, elbowing through the crowd to make petitions, to review hunting grounds, to ask permission to make childer, to do all the business of the night.*

Thascius Hostilinus stands forward now. He takes his leave to address the Camarilla. Julia Comitor acts as if she were drawing in a deep breath. This is the first time the Sanctified leader has addressed the assembly.

He begins: "Today," he says, "the Camarilla is dead."

Silence. The dead look around. He invites debate; you are here and ready. Will you take him on or stand beside him?

Storyteller Goals: Through playing out the debate, Thascius Hostilinus sets out the schema for the eventual collapse of the Camarilla and gives Storyteller characters motivations to feel strongly for or against the characters.

Character Goals: The characters make their allegiances—or at least the allegiances they think they hold—publicly known, if they haven't done already. Hopefully, they win the argument.

Actions: The characters are standing right next to Hostilinus. No one has begun to speak yet.

Joining in the Debate

The characters don't *have* to join in the debate. If they don't, skip over it, explaining that at the end of the debate the dead on both sides of the argument are shaken, and that something important *did* happen—only, no one's sure what it was.

Still, things are more fun if they do take part, and if they're reluctant, emphasize that this is a prime opportunity for the characters to be recognized as players in the game of Empire.

If the characters don't take part, Thascius Hostilinus and the Sanctified win the debate. If the characters do take part, the Sanctified may win the debate, but it'll be in part due to the characters' intervention; if the Sanctified don't win the debate, it's due to the characters taking part.

The Debate

After Hostilinus has said his piece, several other vampires join in, on both sides of the debate. Importantly, Flaviana and Julia stay out of the debate. Julia wishes to retain the dignity of her station; Flaviana is simply too angry to speak (although it will be difficult to see, because she keeps composed). Helvidius and his colleagues pay close attention. The War-Crow is curious about what the Sanctified have to say and says nothing.

The characters can join in on different sides if they wish.

As the debate begins, Hostilinus is speaking for the Sanctified. The players who want to join in pick a side for their characters to join and any characters who wish to counter him get one round of debate in which to make a start.

After this, Octavius Magnus (see **Requiem For Rome,** p. 239), Speaker of the Senex, joins in, opposing Hostilinus.

A new individual joins in each successive round, until the numbers on each side (taking into account the players' characters) are equal, or until there are no more Storyteller characters left to join in on the weaker side of the debate. Macellarius joins in before Eupraxus, and Marciana Longina Rhetrix joins in before Noah (see **Requiem For Rome,** p. 241).

Octavius is aggressive and blunt. He has no time for the Christians, and no time for the Sanctified. Macellarius is eloquent and uses flowery language. He makes poetical allusions. He is frivolous, and it doesn't go over well with the audience. His argument suffers. Marciana is measured but forceful. She never raises her voice. Eupraxus is passionate, but his arguments carry little weight. Noah makes the mistake of speaking as if he were preaching to the converted.

The debate carries on until either Hostilinus or Octavius is defeated and silenced, even if other members of their side of the debate are still able to continue. Each carries the main force of the argument, and their defeat invalidates the argument of the whole side. Players should be aware of that from the outset.

Here's a summary of the relevant Traits for the possible participants in the debate, factoring in modifiers for the crowd and the technique they are using (but not including the +5 for the importance of the matter—see below); it also includes the Debate Style Merits the vampires might use. Only have the Storyteller characters use Debate Style Maneuvers if the players' characters have them.

Octavius uses Defensive Arguments (see **Requiem For Rome,** p. 183); Hostilinus will mount an Humiliating Attack on Octavius if he starts winning.

Pagan Participants

Character	Integrity	Target to Defeat	Dice Pool	Technique	Debate Merits
Octavius	3	16	7	Aggressive Logic	Reason 3
Macellarius	2	17	4	Deft Maneuvering	Reason 2, Rhetoric 4
Eupraxus	3	14	6	Appealing to Emotion	—

Sanctified Participants

Character	Integrity	Target to Defeat	Dice Pool	Technique	Debate Merit
Hostilinus	2	17	7	Aggressive Logic	Rhetoric 2, Theology 4
Marciana	3	15	6	Aggressive Logic	—
Noah	2	14	5	Playing to the Audience	Theology 1

Dice Pool: Players roll the higher of Wits + Religion or Wits + Politics.

Obstacles/Penalties: There are more than 100 vampires here, so the crowd is easy to sway. The Sanctified are here in force tonight, and there's enough of them to move the crowd either way if need be, so the crowd offers no penalty either way.

Aids/Bonuses: Give players who have a go at explaining the point, or who describe what their characters are trying to do and say in some detail, bonuses of +1 to +3 to dice pools, depending on how intricate the description is.

Dramatic Failure: The character realizes that she has spoken foolishly. Her argument is facile, plainly so, and the audience knows it. Some laugh. Some sneer. She feels the Vitae boiling within her... The character only needs to roll no successes once more before becoming frustrated and having to roll to avoid rage frenzy.

Failure: The character speaks in clichés and simple phrases; his opponent's argument isn't affected at all. Three successive failures means that the character becomes frustrated and has to roll to avoid rage frenzy. If he fails and goes into a frenzy, his side—all participants—loses the debate.

Success: The character spoke well. The opposition take pause and think harder about what they're going to say next.

Exceptional Success: The character's opponent is tongue-tied; he struggles to find a way to escape the character's logic. The other side's argument takes serious damage.

Consequences: In mechanical terms, characters on the winning side gain one dot in Wing Status; characters on the losing side *lose* one dot. In story terms, the characters who took part in the debate are now on the map, if they weren't before. They're players in the new game of Kindred politics.

Don't let the players know this, but which faction won the debate is actually immaterial. The important thing is that the debate has happened at all. It represents the battle lines being drawn in the struggle for dominance

Hostilinus vs. Octavius

Hostilinus repeats the logic of the Sanctified Manifesto (see p. 99, above); he backs up his assertions with Biblical allusions. He mentions the Beast of Revelation, and compares it to the Senex, alluding obliquely to Flaviana as the Whore of Babylon. He attempts to gain the support of the Legio Mortuum by using military language, and alluding to the successes of Constantine and Crispus on the field, and to the campaigns of Constantius, the Emperor's father. He describes himself as a latter-day Elijah struggling with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, a lone voice of truth against a horde of heathens, able nonetheless to draw down fire from Heaven when the pagans fail. Against Octavius' assertion that by destroying the Camarilla, he destroys himself, Hostilinus uses the example of Samson pulling the Philistine temple down upon himself.

Octavius' precedents are classical. He speaks of tradition, of the worthlessness of the new. He attack Christianity as human, and atheist, and the religion of the Sanctified as an attempt without substance to ape the living. He speaks of the weakness of the Christians, and their inability to agree, and extrapolates this to the Sanctified. He underlines that the strength of the Camarilla lies in unanimity. He recognizes that the Emperor is Christian, but he sees it as a novelty. Elagabalus and Aurelian brought novel religions to Rome; why should this last? And why should the dead see fit to copy? It is unworthy. It is sickening, he says.

between Sanctified and heathen, and in the future will be remembered as the beginning of the long fall of the greatest edifice the Kindred have ever known.

Event: The Boon

Mental: - Physical: - Social: • • •

Overview: One night later, individuals who had a stake in what happened (whoever they are) send an emissary to the characters and ask them to do a simple task: find a traveler in a *caupona*. What they want done with him depends upon who's asking, and how the characters did last night.

Whichever side contacts the characters sends Victrix—she hates both sides equally, but she's done enough for members of both factions (and has a reputation for not being curious). If both sides contact her, both Hostilinus and Flaviana send their letters through Victrix. This amuses her.

Description: *It's Victrix. She stands at the door, barring your way, shifting easily from one foot to the other, winding one braid around an idle finger.*

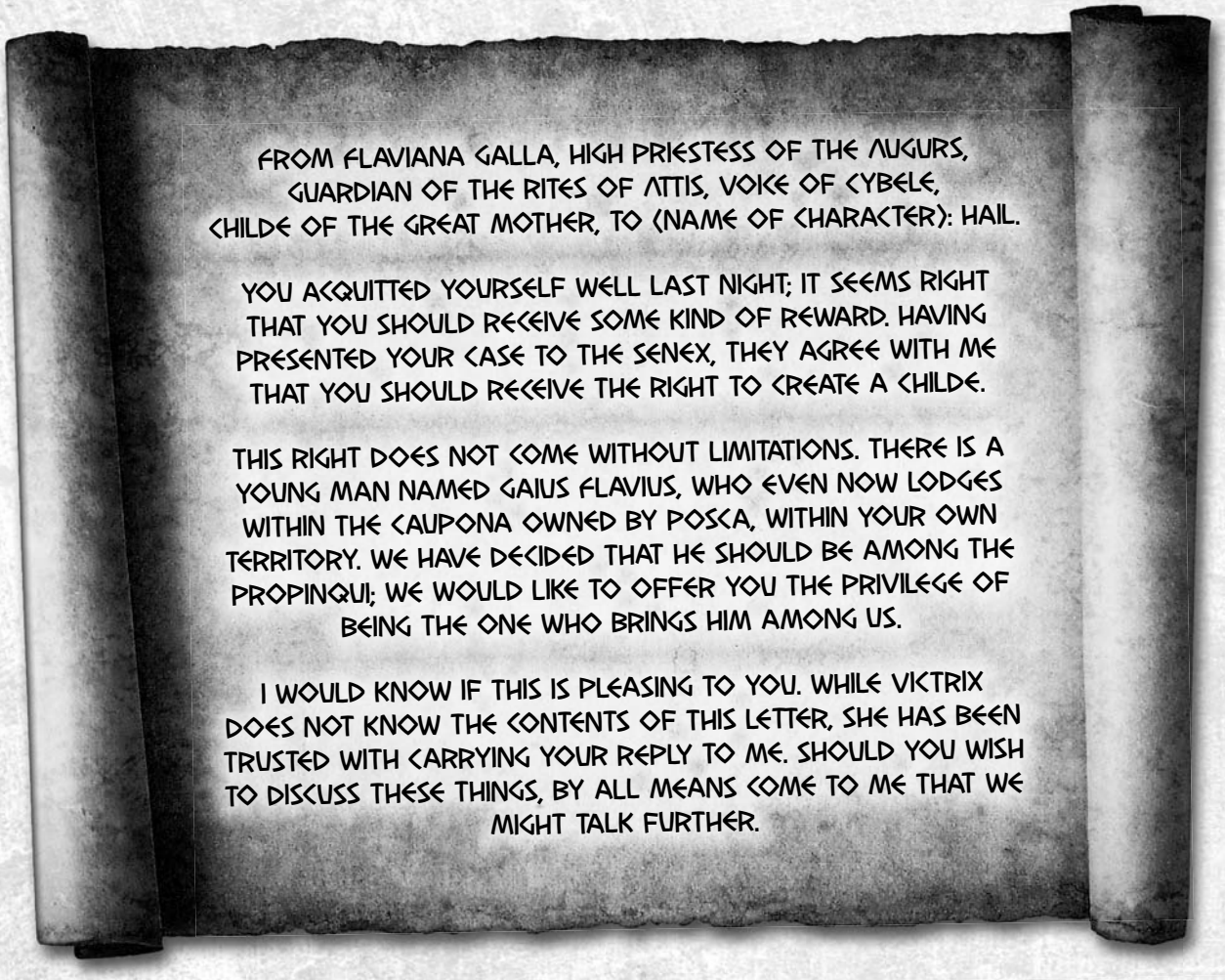
"Don't panic," she says. "I have something for you." She reaches into a small leather case at her belt and takes out a letter. She hands it to you.

Storyteller Goals: This scene—which shouldn't last too long—should impress upon the players that the characters matter enough to do this job. Of course, the players don't know *who* this individual is.

Character Goals: The players should have a clear idea of what they're expected to do; more importantly, it gives them a chance to flex their bargaining muscles.

What the Letter Says

If the characters were on the side of the pagans and won, the most prominent or successful of the participants in the debate (and failing that, the one who contributed first) receives this letter from Flaviana:



FROM FLAVIANA GALLA, HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE AUGURS, GUARDIAN OF THE RITES OF ATTIS, VOICE OF CYBELE, CHILDE OF THE GREAT MOTHER, TO (NAME OF CHARACTER): HAIL.

YOU ACQUITTED YOURSELF WELL LAST NIGHT; IT SEEMS RIGHT THAT YOU SHOULD RECEIVE SOME KIND OF REWARD. HAVING PRESENTED YOUR CASE TO THE SENEX, THEY AGREE WITH ME THAT YOU SHOULD RECEIVE THE RIGHT TO CREATE A CHILDE.

THIS RIGHT DOES NOT COME WITHOUT LIMITATIONS. THERE IS A YOUNG MAN NAMED GAIUS FLAVIUS, WHO EVEN NOW LODGES WITHIN THE CAUPONA OWNED BY POSCA, WITHIN YOUR OWN TERRITORY. WE HAVE DECIDED THAT HE SHOULD BE AMONG THE PROPINQUI; WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING THE ONE WHO BRINGS HIM AMONG US.

I WOULD KNOW IF THIS IS PLEASING TO YOU. WHILE VICTRIX DOES NOT KNOW THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER, SHE HAS BEEN TRUSTED WITH CARRYING YOUR REPLY TO ME. SHOULD YOU WISH TO DISCUSS THESE THINGS, BY ALL MEANS COME TO ME THAT WE MIGHT TALK FURTHER.

If the characters were on the side of the Pagans but lost, it's addressed to the character who did the worst, and reads:

FROM FLAVIANA GALLA, HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE AUGURS,
GUARDIAN OF THE RITES OF ATTIS, VOICE OF CYBELE,
CHILDE OF THE GREAT MOTHER, TO (NAME OF CHARACTER): HAIL.

YOU SHAMED THE GODS LAST NIGHT, BUT EVEN SO, THE SENEX
AND THE CULT OF AUGURS ARE MERCIFUL, AND OFFER YOU AN
OPPORTUNITY TO REDEEM YOURSELF.

THERE IS A YOUNG MAN NAMED GAIUS FLAVIUS, WHO EVEN NOW
LODGES WITHIN THE CAUPONA OWNED BY POSCA, WITHIN YOUR OWN
TERRITORY. I WOULD HAVE YOU FIND HIM AND BRING HIM TO ME.

WHILE VICTRIX DOES NOT KNOW THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER,
SHE HAS BEEN TRUSTED WITH CARRYING YOUR REPLY TO ME,
THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU MUST DO THIS.

Victrix waits until the characters have read the letter, so that she can receive their answer.
A character who spoke for the Sanctified (and they won) gets this letter, from Thascius Hostilinus:

FROM THASCIUS EGNATIANUS, GIVEN THE NAME HOSTILINUS,
COMMONLY CALLED NUMIDA, TO ((CHARACTER NAME),
IN THE NAME OF CHRIST AND HIS VICAR AMONG THE DEAD,
LONGINUS, WHO INTERCEDES FOR THE PREDATOR AND OFFERS TO
THE FAITHFUL THE BOUNTY OF BLOOD, I GIVE YOU MY GREETINGS.

I WAS GRATEFUL THAT YOU DEMONSTRATED YOUR FAITH TO THE
ASSEMBLY; I ASK NOW, HUMBLY, THAT YOU SHOW YOUR UNITY IN
ANOTHER WAY, FOR TRUE UNITY IS LIKE PRECIOUS OIL ANOINTING
THE BEARD OF AARON.

IN THE CAUPONA WITHIN YOUR HUNTING GROUND THAT IS OWNED
BY THE MERCHANT POSCA, THERE IS STAYING A MORTAL MAN
NAMED GAIUS FLAVIUS. I WOULD LIKE THAT YOU BRING HIM TO
ME THAT I MIGHT CONVERSE WITH HIM, FOR HE IS, I AM GIVEN TO
KNOW, A MAN OF PURITY AND VALUE TO US. DO THIS THING, AND
I WILL BE BEHOLDEN TO YOU.

VICTRIX IS NOT ONE OF US AND DOES NOT KNOW WHAT I ASK,
BUT SHE CAN BE TRUSTED TO TAKE YOUR ACKNOWLEDGMENT;
THAT YOU YOU HAVE RECEIVED MY REQUEST AND DO AS I ASK.

If the Sanctified lost, the character gets this letter instead:

FROM THASCIUS EGNATIANUS, GIVEN THE NAME HOSTILINUS, COMMONLY CALLED NUMIDA, TO (CHARACTER NAME), IN THE NAME OF CHRIST AND HIS VICAR AMONG THE DEAD, LONGINUS, WHO INTERCEDES FOR THE PREDATOR AND OFFERS TO THE FAITHFUL THE BOUNTY OF BLOOD, I GIVE YOU MY GREETINGS.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE FAITHFUL FALLS ON YOUR SHOULDERS. STILL, YOUR FAILURE DEMONSTRATES THIS ONE THING: THAT YOUR SPIRIT IS WILLING, EVEN IF YOUR FLESH IS WEAK. YOU MAY REDEEM YOURSELF TO ME AND TO THE ONE WHO SEES ALL THINGS NOW BY PERFORMING A SIMPLE TASK.

IN THE CAUPONA WITHIN YOUR HUNTING GROUND THAT IS OWNED BY THE MERCHANT POSCA, THERE IS STAYING A MORTAL MAN OF PURITY AND VALOR NAMED GAIUS FLAVIUS. BRING HIM TO ME THAT I MIGHT CONVERSE WITH HIM. DO THIS THING, AND YOUR SIN, THOUGH IT BE SCARLET, SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW.

If characters joined in on both sides, then a character who spoke for the Sanctified gets Thascius Hostilinus' letter and one who spoke for the pagans gets Flaviana's.

The Twist

The most likely outcome of the debate is that the characters all weighed in one side, in which case the other side sends someone to bring Crispus to *them*. It's made more complicated still by the fact that that someone else is Victrix, since she's a trusted messenger and doesn't ask questions.

Of course, what none of the vampires know is that Victrix has made a deal with the Striges; the Strix Atla wants Crispus itself—a royal corpse, a vampire made from a prince—and has asked Victrix to make it possible to possess the son of Constantine.

If they go, Victrix asks where they're off to and offers to accompany them. If they say no, she shrugs and follows them anyway.

Negotiations

Never assume that players are going to bite. Admittedly, if they screwed up at the debate, they don't have much of a leg to stand on—going to Flaviana or Hostilinus in those circumstances is likely to evoke dire threats, or, at worst, loss of Status.

On the other hand, if the elder vampires are favorably disposed, the characters might be able to get another boon, *as long as they agree to bring Crispus back*. Characters who don't want to Embrace Crispus can still be allowed to bring him back.

Bargaining

The characters have the chance to go find the vampire who sent the letter, and talk them into giving more in the way of favors, or make a case as to why they do not deserve penance (in which case, the elder might offer them another boon or cancel another obligation, to make things quits).

Have one character make the roll, with the others aiding as a teamwork action (see **The World of Darkness Rulebook,** p. 134).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Flaviana's Manipulation + Persuasion (8 dice) or Thascius' (7 dice)

Obstacles/Penalties: If the characters were on the losing side of the debate last night, they suffer a -3 penalty to dice pools.

Aids/Bonuses: If the players come up through roleplaying with a *really good* argument as to why they deserve better, give a +1 to +3 bonus on the roll.

Dramatic Failure: If the elder was well disposed towards the characters, the old vampire gets angry and tells the characters that they are ungrateful wretches, and com-

mands them to bring back Gaius Flavius immediately. If the elder wasn't well disposed, the characters meet with dire threats of destruction in a hundred imaginative and nasty ways. Either way, the audience is over.

Failure: The characters don't offend the elder, but they don't convince either. The terms stay the same.

Success: The elder suggests that the characters will regain favor by doing the job, offers the characters a further boon, or gives them some reasonable favor they ask for, as long as they do this.

Exceptional Success: Although the elder doesn't admit who Gaius Flavius is, he/she lets slip that he is really important, so important that the future of the Camarilla or the Sanctified is at stake, important enough that the characters could be worth gaining another boon, whether or not they were out of favor.

Consequences: Hopefully, the characters have agreed to take part in tonight's escapades. Either way, it's been impressed on them that whoever this Gaius Flavius is, he's important. He matters.

Event: The Emperor's Son

Mental: -Physical: •••Social: ••••

Overview: The characters know the inn in which Gaius Flavius is staying, and they just have to meet him. Which means figuring out which of these men is their man, and talking into coming back.

Currently, he's in a group of men playing dice in the corner, with a woman hanging off his arm.

The biggest obstacles to their efforts are Protasius and Gervasius, who will not let their charge out of their sight under most circumstances.

The *only* circumstance in which the two *agentes* allow Crispus some privacy is if he finds himself a woman, in which case, they'll guard the room he goes to. But that's a problem anyway, because Crispus is already with Ascylta, who cries foul if some other woman (a female character, for example) tries to take her client from her.

If Victrix is with the characters, she'll wait for them outside the *caupona*.

Description: *Posca's inn is like any the better sort of caupona. You're inclined to think of it as a hunting ground. It smells of sweat and the detritus of the streets and spilt wine and sour food.*

Men recline around a table, talking and drinking, while serving girls bring them what looks like a dish covered with cutlets and chops. A group of men stand in the center of the room holding cups. They drink the health of the Emperor. A man in a Christian priest's robes slumps against the far wall, passed-out drunk. Posca himself, his bald head sweating, his apron so filthy it looks like it's never been white, carries a tray of drinks to the men on stools in the corner.

Three of the men are playing dice. Two others, in heavy cloaks, watch. A blond woman in gaudy paint and slightly faded silk hangs on the shoulder of a young man in a plain but finely-cut cloak, who raises his fist in the air in triumph as he rolls Venus and scoops up a handful of coins.

Storyteller Goals: Hopefully, the players should learn two things about "Gaius Flavius." First: he's a piece of work. And second, he's someone important. They might find out who he is, but they don't have to.

Character Goals: For this scene to end, the characters have to get Crispus away from his minders and get him wherever it is they're taking him.

Actions: The characters first have to identify the young man they're looking for. That's easy. Too easy, in fact. But then, that's the point.

The most important thing they have to do is establish that the two men with him are minders and get rid of them (and also, the prostitute).

They could try striking up a conversation with Crispus, perhaps by joining in the dice game and winning some money from him and then trying to get him alone, the problem with that being that the most alone Crispus is likely to get is when he's alone with Ascylta. Crispus alone with Ascylta could be easier to handle than Crispus alone with his two capable minders; even so, Protasius and Gervasius know their lives depend on Crispus' safety.

The characters could wait until he leaves the room and take him by force, which could be tricky (because the most alone Crispus is likely to get is when he's alone with Ascylta).

Getting Crispus away from his minders

Joining in the Dice Game

Characters who join in the dice game need to make a roll of Presence + Socialize to join, and put a stake down. Playing the game involves putting down a stake. If a character has two or more dots of Resources, he's got the means to afford the stake; if he has three or more, he can afford losing.

If you're so inclined (and you know how), you can always pull out two ordinary six-sided dice and play a round or two of Craps or Hazard instead; or you can take three six-sided dice (the Romans called them *tali*) and try

THE LUCK OF THE GAME

(Augustus writes) ...we gambled like old men through the meal, both yesterday and today. Anyone who threw the Dog or a Senio had to put a denarius on the table, and anyone who threw a Venus took the whole pot... Your brother complained loudly about his bad luck, but in the end he hadn't lost all that much. He made a huge loss at first, but everyone was pleased to see him gradually winning back his losses. I lost 200 milia nummum from my own pocket, because I was just too much of a good sportsman.

—Suetonius,
Augustus 71

playing a couple of rounds of this somewhat simplified version of Tali.

Playing Dice (Social Dice Pool Version)

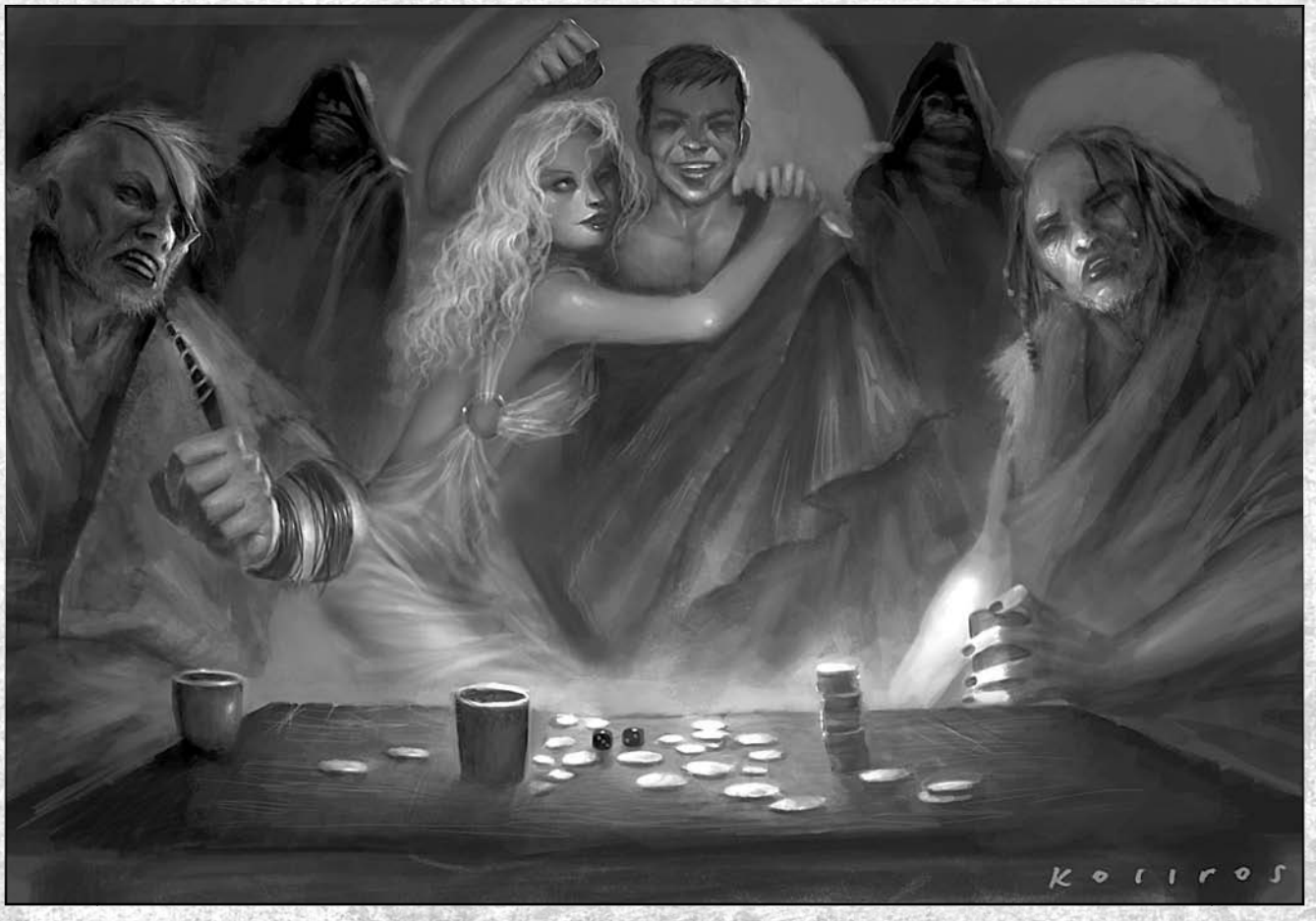
Dice Pool: Wits + Socialize

Obstacles/Penalties: Characters who make a Wits + Empathy roll at the beginning of the scene realize that Crispus is not a good loser. They can choose to let Crispus win (by going out of the game sooner than they otherwise would, or by re-rolling dice they'd have been more sensible to keep) by accepting a -3 penalty to their roll for the game.

Aids/Bonuses: Crispus is slightly drunk, and suffers a -1 penalty to all of his dice pools.

Dramatic Failure: The character makes a succession of unlucky rolls and loses everything in his money-pouch.

Failure: The character loses the round,



Success: The character wins a round.

Exceptional Success: The character wins several rounds in a row.

Simplified *Tali*

The Stake: Everyone agrees on a set value for the stake and puts their stake into the middle of the table. It's usually a sestertius or a denarius. People playing for fun and not profit play with asses, while particularly rich or flamboyant individuals might play with aurei or even more valuable denominations. The stake in Crispus' game is two denarii.

Every time you have to add to the stake, you add the agreed stake for the game.

Rolling: Choose by lot who goes first. In the second and subsequent rounds, the winner of the last round goes first. Everyone rolls the dice once. Players don't have to roll all of the dice when it's their turn; if the roll was not a Venus or Vulture, a player can choose to keep one or two dice from the preceding player's roll (so, for example, if Protasius rolls 3, 4 and 6, Gervasius is well within his rights to keep the 3 and 4 and re-roll the 6, hoping to get a 5); however, if two dice were retained by a player, the next player must roll at least one of them in his turn. If, after one round, no one has rolled a Venus or a Vulture, a second round begins.

Ending the game: The round ends when someone wins the pot, either through rolling a Venus or a Vulture, or when only one player remains after the others have gone out of the game.

Rolls:

Dog (two or three ones): Put another stake in the pot or go out. You can choose to go out if you can't afford another stake

Senio (at least one six): Put another stake in the pot or go out.

Venus (2, 3 and 4 or 3, 4 and 5): Win the pot, unless someone else has rolled a Vulture.

Vulture (three of a kind of 2, 3, 4, or 5): Win the pot.

Any other roll: Do nothing.

Consequences: Crispus loves dice, but is a very bad loser. If he loses enough, he will be in a very foul, stubborn mood throughout the remainder of the scene, making it difficult (-2) to deal with him on a social level.

Getting Crispus' companions drunk

Crispus' bodyguards aren't drinking. Characters might try to get them to lower their defenses and take a drink, but it's not going to be easy. Ascylta, meanwhile, is drinking, but has an amazing capacity for alcohol

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize vs. Resolve + Composure

Obstacles/Penalties: The two men are trying not to get drunk, and so rolls to convince them to have a drink suffer a -3 dice pool penalty. Also, the characters have to convince both of them to drink. If one starts to drink, the other is less likely to, so success with one leads to a further -1 penalty on dice pools directed against the other.

Dramatic Failure: Protasius and Gervasius realize exactly what the character is trying to do and become hostile, exclaims out loud what the character is doing and perhaps even tries to usher Crispus out of the *caupona.* Ascylta becomes suspicious and confronts the character.

Failure: The *agens* politely make excuses and refuse ("I'm sorry, no. I must be ready to travel at sunrise tomorrow"). Ascylta drinks but doesn't appear to be affected at all.

Success: The character gets the *agens* to take a couple of drinks. He can try again to get them drunk, this time with no penalty to the roll.

Exceptional Success: The character gets the man to have several drinks and he becomes quite drunk. The *agens* now suffers a -3 penalty to all dice pools.

Consequences: If the characters get the *agentes* drunk, it becomes possible now to extricate Crispus from his companions, but in the morning when they wake up, they're going to come looking for him, with armed help, triggering the Event: Military Intervention.

If the characters manage to give Crispus the Embrace, go on to **Crispus the Neonate**. If things go very wrong, they could end up killing him, in which case go straight to **Military Intervention**.

Using Disciplines

• **Auspex:** Auspex 2 allows a character to read auras—enough to tell that Crispus is up to something and that the *agentes* consider him to be very important. Using Auspex 4 on the *agentes* gives away exactly who Crispus is within seconds.

• **Dominate:** Characters with Dominate 1 or 2 can *make* Crispus' companions drink enough to pass out or let the characters, although the power can only be used on one victim at a time. This means that if one of the others makes a Wits + Occult roll, he or she gets suspicious and conceives the idea that the character is using witchcraft. Characters can use Dominate 3 on Protasius, Gervasius or Ascylta, but again, it's a difficult power to use in the sight of others.

• **Majesty:** This is probably the single most useful Discipline in this situation. Majesty 1 allows a characters to

insinuate herself into the confidences of Crispus and his companions. Majesty 3 is even more effective, and has the added advantage of being far less obvious than any of the Dominate powers. A character who uses Majesty 2 on Crispus, Gervasius or Protasius quickly learns Crispus' true identity.

• **Nightmare:** Nightmare is less useful, but can be effective if used properly. A character with Nightmare 2 can make the companions panicky and jumpy, the better to be convinced that they shouldn't be in the *caupona* and causing them to make mistakes.

• **Obfuscate:** Using Obfuscate 3 can give a character the opportunity to get close to the group without being seen. Using Obfuscate 4 on Crispus means he sees his father (if the character is male) or his stepmother-lover (if the character is female), since both are on his mind right now. Either could be disastrous. Ascylta sees a colleague or a former client, and the *agentes* see either a fellow—superior—agent named Nebridius Piso, or a prostitute named Clodia, whom they've used many times while in the city.

Violence

Of course, characters might just decide that diplomacy is a mug's game and drag Crispus away by force. The *agentes* are both armed; their horses are around the back of the tavern. If anyone tries violence, Protasius and Gervasius try to talk their way out of the situation. One tries to hold off the vampires and the other tries to get Crispus—who protests loudly and draws his sword—out of the *caupona*.

Worse, the *caupona* erupts into a classic bar-room brawl within a couple of rounds. Other patrons might try to defend the *agentes* and their charge (drunk patrons have 4 dice in their Brawling dice pools, Defense 1 because they're intoxicated, and fall over after taking five Health levels of damage).

Aids/Bonuses: The *caupona* is full of objects that can be used as weapons in a pinch: stools, tables, bottles, plates, and the like. The wall has torches, and if either Protasius or Gervasius loses his weapon, he'll grab one from the wall. Ascylta uses a torch from the wall if anyone threatens or attacks her.

What Victrix Did Next

Victrix is still waiting outside: either she's come here herself, having been commissioned by Hostilinus or Flaviana to get Crispus, or she's accompanied the characters and decided to wait for them. Either way, she hasn't been wasting time. Her Strix came to her, and told her what to do.

She's strangled a human prostitute and given the body to Atla to possess. She leaves Crispus to the Strix. When the characters come out of the *caupona*, Victrix is, for the time being, gone.

Next Steps

If the characters get Crispus out, dispose of the agents and get Ascylta out of the way, they either have to get Crispus to Necropolis (Event: **The Dead Woman**), or Embrace him themselves and then get him to Necropolis to present him to the Senex (Event: **Crispus the Neonate**).

Event: Pursuit

Mental: - Physical: ••• Social: -

The characters hopefully get Crispus out of the *caupona* and away from the *agentes*. If the *agentes* are still standing, one of them tries to pursue the characters through the streets. The other goes for help. If only one of them is left standing, he gives chase until he either loses his charge or fails to get him back and decides to get away and go for help.

As the chase continues, the characters become aware of something else following them. They hear the cry of an owl and see shadows flit above them, even as they try to escape the *agentes*.

Losing a Pursuer

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics or Wits + Streetwise (whichever's better) versus Stamina + Athletics of pursuer; extended and contested action (see **The World of Darkness Rulebook,** p. 65).

Obstacles/Penalties: If the characters have Crispus in tow, he may prove difficult to handle. If he's unconscious and a vampire is carrying him, assume a -4 to the roll unless the character has Vigor 2 or more. Unless he's been Dominated to run, assume he's not going very fast, in which case apply a -3 penalty to the troupe's rolls.

Dramatic Failure: The characters think they've lost their pursuer, but the pursuer has found a short cut and heads the characters off just as they reach the entrance of the Necropolis. They don't see him.

Failure: The characters don't lose the *agens*, by the time they get to the entrance of Necropolis, but they know he's there.

Success: The characters lose the agens, who goes for help, but who doesn't know about Necropolis.

Exceptional Success: The characters lose the *agens* and make it to the outskirts of Necropolis in double-quick time.

Consequences: Run the Event: Crispus the Neonate if the characters intend to Embrace Crispus and they lose their pursuers, and the Event: the Dead Woman if they don't lose their pursuers. If the vampires lose their pursuers and decide that they're not going to Embrace Crispus until they're safe in Necropolis, run the Event: The Dead Woman. If the vampires have to stop and fight, run one round of combat and then go straight to the Event: The Dead Woman, using the *agentes* as an extra complication.

Event: Crispus the Neonate

Mental: • Physical: • Social: •••

Overview: If the vampires were asked to give Crispus the Embrace (or want to do it anyway), this event happens when the characters have the chance to bring him into the fold.

They may try to talk him into it; they might just wrestle him to the ground, kill him and feed him blood, and then let him into the secret.

The character hear an owl, overhead.

Description: *Here seems as good a place as any; a lonely place, an alleyway where nothing moves except the rats. Perhaps it's time to make him one of you.*

Storyteller Goals: Here's a good time for Crispus to reveal to the characters who he is.

Character Goals: Ideally, the characters should decide whether or not to Embrace Crispus. And if they don't, they have to decide what to do with him and what to tell Flaviana.

Actions: If the characters decide to force him into it (or use Dominate and Majesty to make him submit to the Embrace), he's going to fight, whether physically or mentally. Make rolls for Initiative and start combat as usual.

If Crispus hasn't revealed who he is already, the moment he understands what the characters are, he says exactly who he is.

Alternatively, the characters might try to talk him into it, which won't be easy.

Talking Him Into It

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion versus Crispus' Manipulation + Persuasion (four dice)

Obstacles/Penalties: Crispus still doesn't believe in vampires. And when he does come round to the idea that they exist, the thought of *being* one fills him with disgust. He laughs at the dead for trying to bring him into the fold. If he isn't convinced that vampires exist, trying to talk him into joining the ranks of the dead is almost pointless (a -5 dice pool penalty), not least because he's effectively been kidnapped. If he is convinced that the dead are real, characters suffer a -3 dice pool penalty.

Aids/Bonuses: Characters may have to demonstrate that they are what they say they are, perhaps revealing an horrific visage (Nightmare 1), melding into the earth (Protean 2), growing claws (Protean 3), changing shape (Protean 4), or simply revealing their fangs. Either way, each thing the characters do to prove that yes, they really are vampires reduces the -5 dice pool penalty by one. However, the characters can't reduce the penalty to less than -3 just by demonstrating their powers.

Crispus is beginning to sober up, so he's no longer suffering from penalties due to alcohol.

Players who present really good arguments as to why Crispus might want to join the hungry dead *can* reduce the penalty to the dice pool further, perhaps even removing it altogether: it's the Storyteller's call.

Dramatic Failure: Crispus laughs at first, and calls the characters pathetic shades, worthless corpses. If they persist, he tries to fight or run. If he has no way out, he might even try to kill himself rather than become a monster.

Failure: Crispus still doesn't quite believe the characters, or really thinks it's a bad idea. They can try again, but at a further -1 penalty to dice pools. They can't take any longer than that, though. The night's moving on. Soon it'll be dawn.

Success: Crispus agrees. But he says he needs to go outside the city and tell his troops not to wait for him. If the characters want to convince him that there's no time, they have to roll again, only with a -1 penalty to the dice pool (and no other penalties).

Exceptional Success: Crispus lets one of the characters Embrace him.

Consequences: If Crispus goes off to tell the army, he never comes back. The army don't arrive, however. He means to return, but finds when he reaches the camp that he has to return to Constantinople. He doesn't have any reason to know this, but the Emperor knows now about his affair with Fausta. He feels he has no choice but to go, not knowing that his fate is sealed.

If Crispus receives the Embrace, the obvious consequence is this: the son of the Emperor is now a vampire. At no point in the history of the Camarilla has a member of the Imperial family ever joined the ranks of the *Propinqui*. Something important has changed tonight. And again, the characters were the agents of that change.

He's hungry, of course. They're going to have to find some sort of victim, and soon (not easy at this time of the morning); otherwise, they'll have to find him a rat

or a dog. Once Crispus is a vampire, and has fed, run the Event: **The Dead Woman**.

Event: The Dead Woman

Mental: • Physical: ••• Social: –

Overview: The Strix catches up with Crispus. She can smell him, and knows exactly who he is.

Throughout this story, the cry of the owl has been overhead, the shadow of something terrible has been around the corner.

Description: *The young man balks before the gaping doorway to Necropolis. "I'm not going down there," he says. Before you can say anything, a voice, high-pitched, sibilant, rings through this deserted city lane. "Crispus!" it says. "Crispus... my darling... where are you, Crispus?"*

He turns his head. There is a woman standing at the end of the lane, wreathed in shadow.

Storyteller Goals: This scene really serves to establish how creepy the Striges are. The Strix knows who their charge is, and knows exactly what's been going on in the Camarilla. Victrix told Atla about the debate, but as for the identity of Crispus? It just knows.

Here's a further complication: what with all the chasing and the fighting, there's only a few minutes left until sunlight. The characters have to get inside quick.

On a more symbolic level, Crispus is, at this moment, the embodied future of Rome. Do the pagans have him? The vampires?

Character Goals: Keeping Crispus alive (or undead) is the order of the day. The Strix has the advantage over the characters,

Actions: The Strix wants Crispus, whether he's a vampire or not by now. It wants to destroy him. He avers that he doesn't know the woman. The Strix begins by talking to the characters. It knows all of their names and if they don't know who Crispus is, it tells them outright, mocking them for their stupidity.

A successful, reflexive Wits + Composure roll allows the characters to notice the paleness of the woman's body, the way her head sits oddly on her neck and makes a gentle cracking sound when it moves, and the way her eyes sometimes luminesce, like the eyes of an owl or cat.

And she's not alone.

If one or both of the *agentes* are present, they react with confusion; it might well be that one of the men falls to a knife wielded by a dead prostitute before he can react (in which case, a Strix takes his body when its own body gets too damaged to fight in). Alternatively, the *agentes* could get mixed up in the fight as soon as

Fight the Striges

Atla is not alone.

She sweetly orders the Kindred to give Crispus to her, threatening them with destruction or possession should they try to stop her, musing on how sweet it would be to wear each of their pale cadavers, like a gauntlet.

If the simple request for Crispus fails, the Strix lets out a shriek unlike any other creature living or dead. Two other figures come to the end of the alley. They're also Striges, inhabiting the bodies of ~~a~~ a footpad and a beggar Atla has murdered this night. Their dresses are bloody and torn. All of them have the same embodied traits as Atla.

Atla tries to use its Dominate powers on the Emperor's son, but is prepared to fight if necessary, and has its shrieking, laughing friends to help it. The Striges all concentrate on Crispus. They want him more than anything else, to possess and use for a time. He is the Emperor's son. He is the future of Rome; the Striges would make that future their own.

The Striges aren't particularly deadly in the bodies, and they are concentrating on Crispus. None of the Striges will stay in a body that has only one or two Health levels left.

Consequences: The Striges have returned again to Rome. They are here. If the characters don't know the significance of this, the first vampire they tell about it (if they do tell someone) lets them know exactly what's up.

To drive them off is one thing; to destroy them is another. By leaving the bodies before they're destroyed, the Striges show that they can survive to fight again.

Crispus possessed could be a terrible thing: the future of Rome, steered by a monster. If the Striges achieve their goal, play the possessed Crispus as a demon, who (assuming he wasn't a vampire when possessed) runs laughing through the streets of Rome, far from them, leaving them standing at the gates of Necropolis as the sun rises.

Event: Military Intervention

Overview: By the end of the next evening, if Crispus hasn't come back, a small cohort of troops comes looking for Crispus. They ask questions; they turn the city over. They stay for three nights.

The vampires know about this when a half a dozen troops or more accost them on the streets on one of the following nights and ask them if they have seen

If Protasius or Gervasius got back to the camp, the troops have their descriptions. At any rate, the characters might have to run a gauntlet of legionaries for three nights.

Storyteller Goals: This Event is simply here to impress upon the characters that Crispus matters. He's the son of the Emperor, and his disappearance is impossible to ignore.

Character Goals: Characters just need to get away with it—and they will, but they don't know that. Present the soldiers as a potential danger to the characters.

Actions: The characters could fight; they could run; they could tell bare-faced lies (using Disciplines to help them—Dominate 3 could enable a vampire to convince soldiers that they are not the people who kidnapped the Emperor's son); they could lie low.

Consequences: Characters may come out of the event injured, but ultimately, the main consequence is in terms of knowledge. They haven't just made trouble in a tavern and got into a fight—they've changed the future of the Empire.

Aftermath

Victrix

Victrix is already back in Necropolis when they get back, and she's actually pulled their fat out of the fire, since she's already told Flaviana Galla and Thascius Hostilinus that the Striges are abroad. If the characters lost Crispus, they can get away with it thanks to her. Let them know this.

When they see her, she tells them the same dire story she told the elders, about being pursued through the city by corpses under the control of some terrible spirit. She adds enough detail to the story to make it plain that she was facing the same danger. It's a lie, of course, but it's a convincing lie, and the characters have no business to disbelieve her. If they do suspect she's lying, let them roll Wits + Empathy versus her Presence + Subterfuge (nine dice, taking into account her Subterfuge specialty). If they confront Victrix with her lie, she simply ends the conversation.

The Camarilla

The discovery that the Striges having been hunting so close to Necropolis sends many among the Camarilla into a panic. Tertia Julia, Octavius Magnus, Flaviana, Hostilinus, Bassianus and others approach the characters and ask about them. Eventually, the panic subsides. But the fear remains.

The Sanctified Manifesto has been presented; the vampires have dealt with the Emperor's son; the Striges are back.

Crispus

This act isn't going to end well for him.

Crispus quite possibly ends the night as a vehicle of one of the Striges. He might not, however.

The chances are that Crispus never makes it to Necropolis. If he does, and the characters achieve their mission, then he gets to meet Flaviana Galla or Thascius Hostilinus.

If Flaviana didn't ask the characters to Embrace him, she gives him to Julia Sabina, who Embraces him. Thascius Hostilinus takes Crispus into his chamber and they talk privately, at length. Three nights later, Hostilinus lets him leave, bound under a Vinculum.

If Crispus received the Embrace, he might still meet Final Death in a matter of nights.

It could be that he simply offends the wrong people, standing up in the Senex and demanding that he receive the respect he is due. He doesn't realize that an Emperor's son among the living is still a neonate among the dead. It could cost him dearly. Both the Sanctified and the pagans are initially suspicious, realizing the terrible danger that having the Emperor's heir become a vampire might pose to the Masquerade. It makes sense that some think that he is too much of a liability to survive. If he somehow gets out of that (and if he does, it's because the characters rescue him), he eventually joins the Legio Mortuum, and later, as the decades pass and alliances change, the Sanctified.

Whether Crispus the vampire is destroyed or not, Constantine loses a son. Crispus vanishes.

The first thing that happens after Crispus' vanishing is that his agents (if they're alive) and the escort, spend some time looking for him. They ask questions in the *caupona* where Crispus was staying. Care is advised. In the process, the men find, carelessly left behind in Crispus' effects, a letter from Fausta which implies the Caesar's designs on the Empire.

Constantine concludes that Crispus ran out on him. This is compounded by him finding more documents addressed from his wife to Crispus. Given this, and given the evidence presented by Protasius, Constantine wipes out Crispus' memory and, after making *absolutely sure* that the child is his and not Crispus', waits for the child to be born before having Fausta strangled. Protasius' reward for finding out the truth (or the reward of whoever tells the Emperor) is a swift beheading.

If Crispus ends up bound to Thascius Hostilinus by a Vinculum, as soon as he gets back to his father's increasingly paranoid court, the Emperor figures out that something's up. Crispus, affected more deeply by

his experience in Rome than he knows, makes mistakes and begins to let things slip. Constantine finds out. Exit Crispus, exit Fausta.

If Crispus escapes without getting blood bound or otherwise compromised, his execution still happens. Only, this way the characters are no wiser as to the reason than anyone else.

Thascius Hostilinus and Flaviana Galla

The one who gets Crispus wins the point. If Thascius Hostilinus wins, he makes claims that the Sanctified own the living and the dead, and it is God's will, at least until the news of Crispus' execution arrives at Rome. If Flaviana Galla wins, she has a new neonate under her wing who represents the control of the Camarilla over Rome's future, at least until he joins the Sanctified.

Experience

Give the players between one and three experience points for each event in this story. Give one extra point to the best roleplayer, the player who had the best idea, and the player whose character behaved in the most impressive manner.

357CE: Saint of Whores

Among the living, society has changed. Witchcraft brings a charge of death; pagan sacrifice is outlawed. The Christian martyrs are heroes of the past; those who would suffer and die for their faith must inflict it upon themselves or each other.

In the meantime, the Christians fight amongst themselves. Constantine stood by the decision of the Nicene council and most of his sons were Nicenes. But the last son of Constantine, the current Emperor Constantius, is an Arian. He's made enemies in the church and advanced his own faction, even going so far as to exile the Bishop of Rome for failing to condemn the troublemaker Athanasius. Constantius has installed his own "anti-Pope," Felix. The two major Christian factions exist on a knife-edge. The city could erupt at any time.

All it needs is one small event, one tiny moment that could start a citywide war.

In the middle of all this, the Emperor comes to Rome. By day, he rides in procession through the streets; by night, he holds court in the long-vacant Palatine. He's not one for revels, and the music is somber and reverent: the sound of hymns travels across the South and West of the city, that and the screams of the tortured hundreds who suffer from accusations of witchcraft and treachery,

Although the animal hunts and games go on far into the night, soldiers, priests and cenobites fill the streets. It's no good time to hunt.

Story

A preacher and a woman who may be some kind of saint appear into the midst of the characters' hunting ground. There is a brothel, a reliable and frequent source of sustenance; within a day of their arrival, the madam and her girls have renounced their sinful ways and decided to follow Christ; they cut their hair and burn their dresses, smash the jars containing their make-up and perfume and white-wash the brothel walls.

They publicly renounce their past lives. Each reads out a confession of guilt; each lists her clients; each burns her possessions. Then they retire to the former brothel, now a convent under the care of the preacher and his saint, and then they starve themselves nearly to death; they submit themselves to confinement and torture, the better to be pure.

The vampires watch with interest. Some consider that perhaps a convent would be a fine toy, a pretty thing to play with and use for pleasure. Others think that it's an abomination, a means of keeping prey out of the claws of the Kindred. And some of the Sanctified think it's how things should be, that the new nuns are doing the right thing, and that it's the duty of the true believers among the dead to perfect them further by terrorizing them, by adding to their divine sufferings.

The Passage of Time

Forty years have passed since the last story. The Camarilla continues as it always have, but the Sanctified continue in increasing numbers. Vitericus Minor has brought the Cainite Heresy to Rome. The characters, while not necessarily more powerful than before, are enjoying greater fame and Status. They have territory in Rome; they have a reputation. They have the same friends; they have the same enemies.

Allow the players 20 experience points each to represent the last few decades. All characters involved gain a dot of Blood Potency for free.

The city's Arians, too, represented by the deacon Damasus, watch the development with horror, reasoning that a Nicene saint and a redeemed brothel gives the Nicene heretics too much credit, too much power. And the talk of miracles: that can't be true! They're not supposed to do that. It has to be some kind of Satanic perversion, some deception.

Or maybe it's witchcraft.

Motives

The conversion of the brothel happens in the middle of the characters' rightful territory, and the area around the brothel, if not the brothel itself, was a prime hunting ground. The characters have to decide what to do: their land, their hunting ground has been compromised.

If any of the characters had a Herd that included in some part prostitutes, it's members of that Herd who have repented and become nuns. If they don't do something about it, they stand to lose the benefits of any dots they have in the Merit: Herd, unless they find a way to make the nuns and the religious community that appears in the district, become a new Herd.

Meanwhile, the Sanctified vampires are moving in. Vitericus Minor wants to gain control of the place, and characters may object to having their former hunting grounds overtaken by the Sanctified, whether or not they're members of that faction.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is slavery. The open signs of tyranny are everywhere, for the Emperor is in the city. Trials for witchcraft and treason are going on every day; each night echoes with the far-away screams of people being tortured to death for things they didn't do.

The prostitutes proclaim that they were trapped in their old life; again and again, they sing of the freedom they've found: the freedom to starve themselves, mutilate themselves and confine themselves in locked cells. That's the horror of their situation: their lives have so trapped them, that the best they can hope for is a different kind of slavery.

And the dead are trapped by the night. They're trapped by fear of the future. They're trapped by fear of their Nemeses. And they're trapped by each other, caught in hateful co-dependent relationships that they dignify with the name of patronage.

This story's mood is of upheaval: the transformation of whores into nuns, the sudden riots, the witchcraft trials, and the way these changes affect the vampires, who are simply not used to change. Change is coming, and it's not always for the best.

Ursulus, the Nicene Monk

Quotes: (Religion)*"You! You there! Do you know of the ineffable justice of Christ? Do you understand the nature of your sin?"*

(Persuasion) *"Your daughter needs to live her life? I quite agree. She needs to live a life unfettered by the flesh and the world. Her life needs to have value, to become an ornament to virtue..."*

Description: *He believes. It is what he is, it is what he does. He believes with an intensity that threatens to scorch you with the fires of hell called upon you. And it's his belief that hides what he is: a short, badly shaped man in a foul-smelling monk's habit; his hair is lank, his chin recedes and his eyes are watery. It doesn't matter. When that quavering voice begins, you have almost no choice but to listen.*

Background: Three years ago, Ursulus left his Egyptian monastery to fast for 40 days and 40 nights; he survived, but found that he could not find his way back to the monastery. He nearly died; he fell in a wasted valley and broke his leg. He passed out. He expected to die. He did not; he awoke to find a woman in a cenobite's robes standing over him. She gave him water and bread, and then, with the merest touch, healed his leg.

She saved his life. She did not speak until he spoke to her. Her name was Thaïs, she said. She had been at peace, she said, but had been sent to him. That was all. She had nothing else to say.



He never went back to the monastery. He went to the city of Alexandria and proclaimed the story of Thaïs, the prostitute who allowed herself to be confined in a bricked-up-room, and who had died or starvation and a dozen kinds of infection ten years before. She had returned to life; he believed that God had rescued him from death for a reason. That it was through Thaïs, this paragon of turpitude-become-virtue, made it apparent to him that he must share the message of salvation with the world.

Thaïs was God's chosen vessel; he was the means of bringing her to the world. He took to traveling, and where he went, the women of the streets abandoned their lives of slavery to lust and took to another kind of slavery. And now he's in Rome.

Storytelling Hints: Ursulus preaches hellfire. All the time. Every time. He never stops. He's possibly the most exhausting conversationalist the characters will ever meet.

Ursulus sees pretty much everything that happens to him, every setback, every success as a sign from God. If he suffers, that's God refining him. If he dies, he's being martyred. If he meets with the walking dead, he is being given the chance to stand up for his faith and dismiss the agents of Satan. He can't be reasoned with once he has an idea in his head.

Characters who try to converse with Ursulus should find him extremely frustrating, to the point where some players might consider just killing him and being done with it. If they don't end up killing him, there are many other takers: Damasus is not averse to promoting violence, and Vitericus is quite capable of getting him out of the way so that they can control his convent, although their problem is that although he's the driving force, as long as Thaïs is alive, someone takes Ursulus' place.

The problem is that Ursulus has gathered a large community of Nicene adherents, and when the preacher gets killed, it's going to start a riot.

Abilities

Hellfire Preaching (Dice Pool 6): Ursulus preaches damnation to the sinner. Woe to the flesh! It's more or less the only thing he does. He can turn practically any event into an excuse for a sermon.

Pull the Strings of Conscience (Dice Pool 5): The flip-side of hell-fire preaching is that Ursulus is very good at making people feel guilty, or making them feel pity for the downtrodden (but particularly for him). Characters who use violence against Ursulus or who even torture him get to see just how good he is at inspiring pity and regret.

Thaïs, the Saint of Whores

Quotes: (Religion) *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself; there is no commandment greater than these."*

(Medicine) *"Arise. Get up and Walk."*

Description: *She looks like an ivory angel, a vision in bone. She is impossibly thin, her wide, slightly empty eyes a strange green color. Her fine, fair hair, cut brutally short like a nun's, floats around her house and seems to glow as if she has some sort of halo. Her features are regal and beautiful; her hands are slender and graceful. You barely register the rank, stinking rags she's dressed in.*

She smiles like a statue angel; she nods and gestures, and she rarely says a word. When she talks, it's in quotations from scripture, delivered in a musical but heavily accented voice.

Background: Ursulus says she's Thaïs, the saint of Alexandria, brought back to Earth by the will of God. She hasn't actually disagreed with him at any point.

The "historical" Thaïs died in 344CE in a convent outside of Alexandria. Is this her? Maybe. Maybe it isn't. That Thaïs, once a prostitute, was bricked up in a room for three years without a bed or a change of clothes, surrounded by her own piss and shit, left to repeat the same phrase over and over. She went mad; in the end, the repetition of one phrase became her whole world, and when she stopped, she died.

This Thaïs appeared to Ursulus in the desert and healed his broken leg, and the man immediately took it into his head that she was an apparition of the saint. She never disagreed with him. She believes she *is* the saint, inasmuch as she has any thought in her head beyond the words of Scripture that fill her every thought.

An observer in the 21st century might think her uniquely, exquisitely damaged, a woman who's either experienced something so awful that she's entered a fugue state, or an autistic savant. A fourth-century Nicene, however, is in no doubt that she's a living saint, a paragon of the perfect Christian woman.

Storytelling Hints: Thaïs is a cipher, a slightly tragic figure. When she speaks, make it half non-sequitur, half scarily accurate or prescient. There should always some doubt about whether she's psychologically damaged or really is the vehicle of God's will. Likewise, the miracles she does are never unequivocally divine; there's always chance that they can be explained some other way.

She *is* unusual in some ways: vampires' powers don't seem to work on her so well, and when she finally dies (whether it's at the hands of the characters or at the stake, at Damasus' behest), her body is inviolable. The



flames of the stake snuff themselves out, and cannot be re-lit. Neither vampire nor Strix nor magician can do anything with her corpse (which includes possession or re-animation). She dies, and remains death, but her remains *do not decay.*

Whoever this Thaïs was, she is now for all intents and purposes devoid of a personality of her own. She is utterly pure, utterly empty of all except the words of Scripture that spring unbidden to her lips. Although he claims she's the source of God's message to him, he calls the shots; her pronouncements are always what he wants to hear (and since he turns every message he receives into what he wants to hear anyway, that's not hard).

In fact, Thaïs is a vehicle for fanaticism. She is a blank page, but a blank page that demands to be written on by someone. If Ursulus dies for whatever reason, one of the former prostitutes (Casta, probably) takes his place, using Thaïs exactly as Ursulus did, behaving exactly as Ursulus did.

When she is burnt at the stake, she does not resist.

Some characters might decide to Embrace Thaïs. If they do, she's a vampire, just like any other... but she's no more coherent. Her Bible quotes become darker, and more violent (from some of the Psalms, Judges, and Revelation, for example) but she remains exactly what she was before, a figurehead, appearing as a saint even as she preys on the living.

Abilities

Quote Bible (Dice Pool 7): Thaïs is illiterate, but can quote the Bible, any part of it, from memory. In fact, if she talks at all, it's in Bible quotes. They're often apposite. Sometimes they're non-sequiturs.

Miracles: Thaïs is entirely unremarkable in virtually ever other way, apart from the fact that she seems to perform miracles, just once a night. She heals a sick man. She removes cataracts. She touches a lame beggar's leg and she throws away her crutch. She makes a mute boy speak. The important thing is that it's impossible to verify her miracles after the fact. The people she heals never seem to be around for very long. They've vanished into the crowd within moments of being healed. And people dream of her. All of these things have other explanations. Players should be at least slightly skeptical about the miracles. Damasus, on the other hand, calls it witchery.

Resisting the Supernatural: Some sort of supernatural power protects Thaïs; every time a vampire she'd be required to resist a vampire power, Thaïs adds 4 dice to her dice pool, as if she were a supernatural being with four dots in a "power trait" such as Blood Potency, Primal-Urge or Gnosis. For no adequately explicable reason, Vinculi don't work on Thaïs. Vampires might think that Thaïs is possessed of superhuman willpower, but she isn't, not really. In truth, she has no will, no ego to speak of at all. She is an empty shell filled only with scripture.

THAÏS SAYS...

In case you don't have a Bible handy—here are some random lines of Scripture for Thaïs to repeat:

"The blood is the life." (Deuteronomy 12: 23)

"His Young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there he is." (Job 39: 30)

"In you are those who slander to shed blood, those in you who eat upon the mountains, who commit lewdness in your midst." (Ezekiel 22: 9)

"You shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth." (Ezekiel 39: 18)

"They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit." (Romans 1: 29)

"But your dead will live. Their bodies will rise." (Isaiah 26: 19)

"You were dead in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2: 1)

The idea is that Thaïs gives the impression—only the impression—that she knows what the vampires are. Does she? It's impossible to tell.

Mary, Casta, Euphemia, Serapina, Pelagia, and the Others

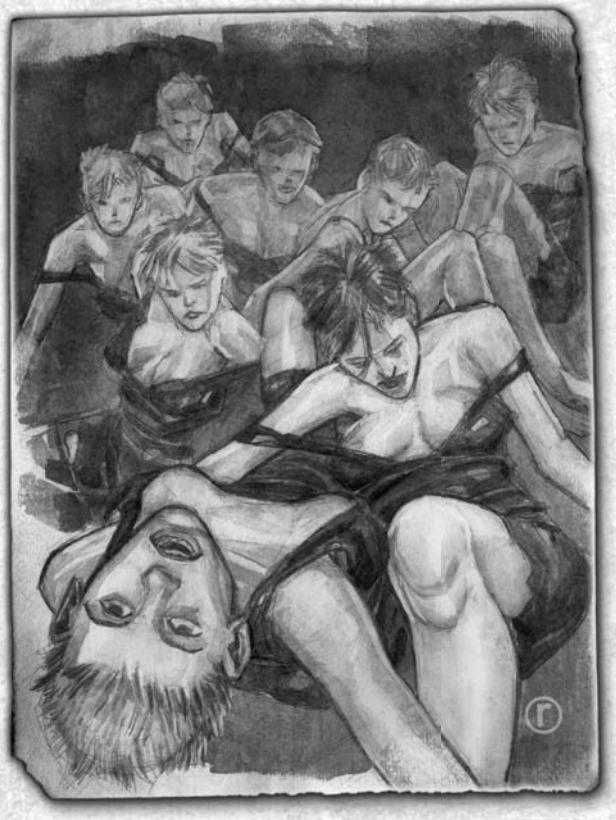
Quotes: (Persuasion) *"I was blind, and now I see. I was lost, and now I am found."*

Description: *Where once was gaudy paint, there is bare skin, already sullied with smears of earth. Where once was silk and gold is burlap. Where once were flowing locks anointed with oil is butchered stubble, cut away with a knife, covered with a sackcloth hood. Once-voluptuous flesh already begins to show the signs of abuse: livid weals ring grubby wrists; crosses made of still-hot ash burn foreheads; the women move gingerly under their clothes as if there are injuries on their backs and legs.*

They glow with happiness.

Background: These five women represent the dozen or so prostitutes in the brothel, convinced to repent and become cenobites by the preaching of Ursulus and the weird presence of Thaïs. Even Euphemia, the madam, gave up her old ways. The most outspoken of them are Casta (who before she converted was known to the clients as Cunna Flora) and Mary (formerly Palaestra); if Ursulus dies early in the story, either takes his place as the interpreter of Thaïs' pronouncements and the prophet of the convent.

Storytelling Hints: The prostitutes claim they have found freedom.



And the fact is, they've found the most freedom they're ever going to get. Although their new life seems restrictive, the horror of their situation is better. They might have eaten better and dressed better as whores, but they *chose* to do this.

In this age, people believe that women are to blame for the things men do to them; each of the prostitutes has long ago internalized this. They blame *themselves* for a career of luring men into sin. What they've done is—for them—a release. They existed before to be used for men's sexual pleasure; they adopted names (Palaestra, Fella, Cunna Flora) that emphasized their status. Now they have no sex at all; they are not even women, and punish themselves for having once been women.

And this is the most horrific thing about their plight: it really the best they can do in this age. The situation to which they were born allows them no other exit. It's all they have, and to destroy the faith they freely chose is effectively to end their lives. Only death would remain to them.

As it happens, unless the characters intervene (and aren't the agents of their demise), death is likely to be what they're going to get. Vitericus wants to make the place his private playground. He wants to be their tormentor, to perfect them, to make them part of his heresy with blood and fear.

And Damasus wants to see the convent wiped off the earth.

Abilities

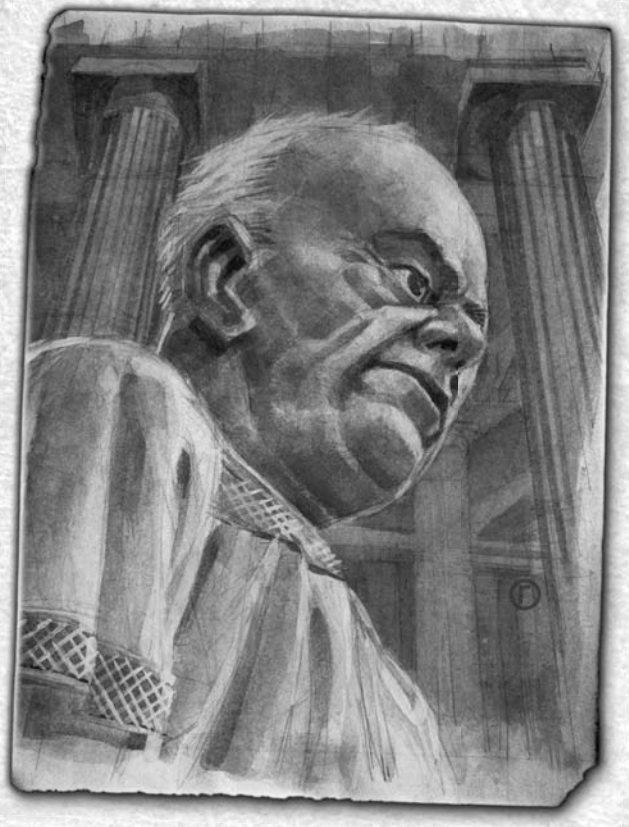
Prayer and Praise (Dice Pool 4): They're inexpert, but they have Thaïs and Ursulus to teach them. They sing hymns and they quote the Bible and they bind themselves closer together than they ever were before with the shared apparatus of faith. Their hymns bolster their morale and shame their enemies.

People-Reading (Dice Pool 5): Just because they're not prostitutes any more, it doesn't mean that they have forgotten what they know about the street. They're all fairly adept at looking at a person and figuring out on the spot if he's going to be trouble or not. It's why most of them are still alive.

Damasus, Deacon of the Arians

Quote: (Religion) *You are sufficiently exposed by your words. You are a heretic, and must be corrected.*

(Persuasion) *"Take heart, for we are the soldiers of Christ. Take courage: for the witch and the heretic shall be defeated, and we shall be God's instrument in their fall."*



Description: *The man looks like he was carved of stone, painted in bright colors and installed in a basilica somewhere. He's a still figure, dressed in fine clothes and a high-quality cloak in a style fashionable a few years ago. He is in his late forties, and he is clean-shaven and well-fed. His face is round and healthy, but doesn't move much, except when he speaks, when his warm, orotund voice booms out across the room or the street. He has a provincial accent that instantly places him as a native of the Rhine region. He preaches the wrath of God against the heretic and the schismatic; his face is stone, his voice is fire.*

Background: Damasus is believes that the pagans are no threat, but it is the heretics who threaten the church, the Nicenes who commit the blasphemy of imputing God's Finest Creation with a perishable nature. He believes this utterly.

Storytelling Hints: Damasus is obsequious to his superiors—even to the Bishop of Rome, although secretly he holds the man in contempt—and benevolent but distant to people of his own faction. To the heretic (the Nicene) he's uncompromising and blunt.

The foundation of the convent offends him deeply. They are heretics. They blaspheme against the Lord and lead many into error with the semblance of holiness. They are a reproach on Rome.

If he discovers evidence of vampires in the region, he uses it as a reason to mount an accusation of witchcraft. The accusation alone is a sentence of death, and he brings the nuns in the convent what they dearly want: martyrdom.

He'll be there, accompanied with armed men, taking it upon himself to be in charge of arresting them, even though he in fact has no official rank to do this.

There's nothing Damasus would like more than to miraculously defeat the forces of Satan head-on, and if directly faced with a group of vampires, he attempts to drive them away by calling down the power of God on their heads. It doesn't come.

Abilities:

Use Influence (6 dice): Damasus has already got favors he can call in and strings he can pull. He finds it ridiculously easy to get his accusations of witchcraft heard. The authorities—particularly since the notoriously paranoid and superstitious Constantius is in town—want to hear news of wtiches, and Damasus knows how to be able to tell them what they want to hear.

Persuasion (6 dice): Damasus is talented at getting people to see his side of the argument. It's difficult to out-talk him. He talks in flowery, convoluted language. His sentences seem to fall out of his mouth in huge strings, one connected to the other, tying up the listener in tangled sophistry.

Event: The Sound of Hymns

Mental: •• Physical: - Social: ••

Overview: The story begins with the characters going hunting and finding slim pickings in their territory (if you're rolling dice to decide how hunting goes, the players roll all dice pools for hunting at a -4 penalty). As they finally manage to feed, each hears the sound of singing, of a Christian hymn being sung, penetrating the deepest alleys of this grim part of town.

Assuming they investigate, they come to the square. There's a huge bonfire. One by one, women they recognize as the women from Euphemia's brothel, Euphemia included, come forward, and ritually throw their clothes and luxury goods into the fire, all the while reciting the names of men in the district.

Few people in the crowd are happy.

Description: *You wipe the blood from your mouth, lick your lips. And then, the singing comes. You can hear singing. Women's voices, singing in plain chant:*

"Great is the Lord and most worthy to be praised/ In the city of our God/ His holy mountain, beautiful and high/ is the joy of the whole earth..."

And beneath the song, the chattering of crowds...

The square is packed with people, men, mostly, and in the crowd is focused on a huge bonfire. crowds flock around an enormous bonfire The flames rise, bright and hot, and there's a group of women beside the fire, hair cut brutally short, dressed in burlap and sackcloth, ashes smeared on their faces. You very nearly don't recognize them, but no, it's true, they're the women from Euphemia's house of pleasure. And there among them, is Euphemia herself.

One of the girls steps forward; this scrawny-looking monk leads her forward, and she comes and stands alongside a tall, skinny woman with shining hair. You don't recognize her.

The girl who's just stepped forward–the one they called Cunna Flora–starts to throw things into the fire: silk dresses, gold jewelery, bottles of perfume, pots of white lead and rouge and Kohl, vanity mirrors and a fine embroidered bed-cover. There's smoke, unearthly smells and there's strange colors in the flames. Over the crack of the fire and the smoke and the singing, the girl begins to recite a list of names, men's names, and some of the men in the crowds begin to heckle and make catcalls.

The girls in the habits look ecstatically happy; the men in the crowd are less happy.

Storyteller Goals: This is the set-up; more importantly, you need to get across the atmosphere of this scene. The women in the square are apparently ecstatically happy,

Character Goals: The characters need to know what's happened to the brothel, and to be motivated to investigate more (possibly by the behavior of Thaïs, who appears at least to know who they are). They can play an active part in what's going on, simply by trying to ind out from passersby or from the lone vampire—Vitericus—who has invaded their territory.

Actions: The characters might want to find out what's going on. They might also notice Vitericus at the edge of the crowd.

At the Bonfire

Getting closer to the action

If they want to have a better idea of what happens, the vampires might have to get a lot closer to a fire that's now so big, what with all the furniture, personal effects and flammable cosmetics on it, that its heat can be felt almost at the edges of the square. Characters who want to get to the front of the crowd need to roll to resist fear frenzy. Although the fire is huge, it's not an immediate danger. They need to amass five successes, but gain a +2 bonus to dice pools.

Characters who get to the front of the crowd can try to figure out what's going on

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex

Aids/Bonuses: Female characters gain a +1 bonus to attempts to hear what is happening, as the crowd assume that they're coming forward to join the monks and get out of their way.

Dramatic Failure: The character hasn't the slightest clue about what's going on, or she mistakes Ursulus for some magician she heard about recently, or she thinks that Thaïs is a vampire hiding her true nature with Obfuscate, or she comes to some other disastrously inaccurate conclusion.

Failure: The character can't make out what's happening.

Success: For each success the player rolls, character concludes one of the following facts:

- the prostitutes met the monk and the saint and have renounced their former ways;
- the saint and the monk are Nicenes;
- right now, the former prostitutes are confessing their sins and listing the names of their clients;
- the saint works miracles.

Exceptional Success: The character learns all of the above, but also ascertains that the monk is very much calling the shots.

Consequences: Let the characters soak this in. If a character has the Merit: Common Sense, let the player roll Wits + Composure to figure out the implications of this (namely: the characters territory is going to be a bad place to hunt in, unless the characters do something or change their *modus operandi*). If none of the characters have the Merit and the players haven't figured it out, let them roll anyway.

Asking people in the crowd what's going on

Dice Pool: Presence + Streetwise

Obstacles/Penalties: Remember that when talking with the living, players can't roll a dice pool bigger than the vampire's Humanity score.

Dramatic Failure: The character asks so ineptly that the passerby thinks that the character is someone dangerous, like a heretic or an *agens in rebus*; not only does he not tell the character anything, but he starts crying for help. The character has to roll Wits + Streetwise to escape into the crowd, or be jostled to the front of the crowd and brought before Ursulus and Thaïs.

Failure: The character picks someone who doesn't know what's going on himself.

Success: For each success the player rolls, the passerby tells the character one of the following facts:

- the prostitutes met the monk and the saint and have renounced their former ways;
- they plan to turn the brothel into a convent;
- right now, they are confessing their sins and listing the names of their clients;
- the saint works miracles.

Exceptional Success: The passerby caught the name of the monk and the saint, and also knows that they're Nicenes.

Consequences: It's exactly the same as above: the characters need to figure out that it's going to be bad for hunting.

Happenings

When the characters have figured out what's going on, they might have thought of a course of action. If they haven't, spring one of the following events on the characters:

Spotting Vitericus

A character who makes a reflexive Wits + Composure roll notices a vampire in the crowd. Vitericus is here right now. He saw the characters before they saw him, and he's watching them to see what they'll do. He makes no attempt to approach them or hide from them, meaning that if they approach him and converse, he offers to take the characters to one side and talk.

He thinks the convent is marvelous. He asks the characters' leave to torment the cenobites, that he might perfect them, make them his own. Sensible characters would do well to tell him to leave their territory alone. He nods and smiles and apologizes for the offense, and leaves as soon as they let him. Of course, he's going to come back tomorrow night anyway.

If they allow him to have the convent, he thanks them, and vanishes into the crowd. He mobilizes his human followers to support the convent, and even, before the night is through, gets some of them to renounce their own possessions and join, the better to allow him access in a few nights' time.

This is likely the first time the characters have met Vitericus. Characters who make a successful Wits + Religion roll while talking with him detect implications in what he's saying that suggest he's a heretic, even by Lancea et Sanctum standards.

Ursulus and Thaïs

This happens after the characters meet Vitericus, or if the characters don't try to talk to him.

When Casta (the former Cunna Flora) is done, Thaïs performs a public (but ambiguous) miracle—see above—and Ursulus begins to preach. Two or three women come from the crowd and fall to their knees in repentance.

Thaïs interrupts him mid-flow. He tails off. She says: "They wandered the streets blindly, so defiled with blood, that none could touch their garments."

Characters who get a success on a roll of Intelligence + Religion know it's a Bible quote if the players haven't already figured it out; on an exceptional success, they know it's from the book of Lamentations.

And then she points with those strange, wide blank eyes, directly at the character nearest to the front of the crowd. The people around the character step back, leaving the character isolated and exposed.

Ursulus steps forward and begins to harangue the character. Characters who believe in the Monk's words roll for fear frenzy. Those who don't roll for rage frenzy. Either way, a character only needs 2 successes to hold it at bay.

Right now, the character can do anything he wants. Using Obfuscate 3 or Protean 4 or 5 to escape is a very bad move, since the people see it as witchcraft, and within two nights, Damasus turns up with his witch-hunting cohorts (the Event: Written in Fire), while using Majesty 1 incurs a penalty of -5 because of the number of people here and the frankly difficult situation.

The character could try to step forward and pretend to repent (rolling Manipulation + Religion versus Ursulus's own dice pool of 4).

The character might try to stand his ground and engage in religious debate (Ursulus has an Integrity of 2, Debate Style: Theology 2 and needs 14 successes to defeat. His dice pool has six dice).

Or the character could try to escape into the crowd, which could prove to be dangerous. He needs to get five successes on an extended Wits + Streetwise roll with a -2 dice pool penalty to slip out of the crowd. If he fails, he doesn't get very far. On a dramatic failure, he gets deposited by the crowd right in front of Thaïs.

Attacking the monk (who has stepped closer to the vampire) starts a riot. The character could easily kill the monk, but he only gets one attack roll before the crowd goes mad. See the **General Event: The Riot** at the beginning of this chapter. It's a religious riot, obviously, and the characters are caught in the middle as it begins. The characters each require 14 successes to escape.

Ursulus allows characters who disagree with him to walk away at any time, encouraging the crowd to let them go, but mocking them for being lost sinners. He welcomes female character who claims that she repents with open arms, although she must make some sign of open repentance, probably through burning some of her possessions (which means getting close enough to the fire to trigger fear frenzy: the player must roll with a -1 penalty and gain a total of four successes to remain close enough to the fire to do this properly).

Ursulus asks male characters who claim that they repent to do the same: throw the signs of finery, if it's finery they're wearing, into the fire. He tells a male convert to go in peace.

THE ABBOT AND THE HARLOT

The whore took the Abbot's gold coin and said, "Let's go into my house." Then he went inside, as if to get her into her bed, which was covered with bedclothes made of expensive cloth. And he said to her, "If there is a more private bedroom, let us go there." "There is," she said, "but if you are worried about people, there is no other way by which the outer bedroom may be entered. Only God can get in." The old man replied, "And do you know God?" "I know about both God and the Devil," she replied, "and all about the torments in store for sinners."

"Why then," said the old man, "if you know this, do you destroy so many souls? You are damned..."

When Thaïs heard him say this, she prostrated herself at the feet of Paphnutius the monk, and cried, and begged, saying, "Punish me, Father! Punish me, for I believe that my forgiveness will be gained by your intercession!"

...And she left home. She threw everything she owned on a bonfire in the middle of the town, in the sight of all. And she cried, "Come all of you who sinned with me and see how I burn all the things you have brought me!" She burned goods to the value of forty pounds of gold.

...She went to a convent, and the abbot led her into a small cell, and ordered the door of the cell to be stopped up with lead, and that a small opening should be left, through which every day a slice of bread and a very small amount of water should be given to her by the sisters of the convent. And when the door was sealed, Thaïs called out to him: "Where do you suggest, Father, that I should let my waters flow?" And he replied: "In your cell, as you deserve."

And when she asked in what manner she should pray to God, he said to her, "You do not have the right to say the name of God, nor to raise your hands to heaven, because your lips are so full of evil, and your hands have been defiled with sin. But you should only sit and look towards the east, only ever repeating this phrase over and over again: 'You who made me, have pity on me'."

When she had been shut away in this way for three years, Abbot Paphnutius... returned to the convent where the woman had been imprisoned, and unsealed the door... She demanded that she stay forever imprisoned...

"God has not forgiven your sins because of your penitence," Abbot Paphnutius said to her, "But because the thought of Him has always been in your mind."

And he brought her out of there with him.

And two weeks later, she died.

- Anonymous Fifth-Century Writer,
The Life of Saint Thaïs, the Harlot.

Event: Doing Something About the Convent

Mental: ••• Physical: •• Social: •••

Overview: The characters should, by this point, know about what the prostitutes have done. They know who Ursulus is, and who Thaïs is. They know that Vitericus wants the convent to use as his own.

What happens next depends mostly on the characters.

Tonight, if the characters don't intervene, Damasus leads a small group of soldiers and demands admittance; he is denied, but Ursulus and Thaïs come out to parley. Damasus leaves pretty quickly, having realized that Ursulus is a Nicene.

Tomorrow night, he'll come back with a group of soldiers and unless he's stopped, burn the lot of them.

Storyteller Goals: This next part of the story could go in about a dozen different directions; all are equally valid.

Character Goals: The characters have to come to a situation where they feel the issue of the convent is dealt with. If they want to leave the place alone and make do, that's fine, although they're still going to get caught in the riot when Damasus comes back.

Actions: What happens next is (mostly) up to the characters. In 24 hours, Damasus is going to come back and accuse the nuns of witchcraft.

Damasus vs. Ursulus

If the characters turn up in the vicinity of the brothel the following night, the first thing they see is Ursulus, accompanied by Thaïs, in heated debate with Damasus, who has with him half a dozen armed men. They're standing outside the convent, and it's apparent to anyone watching that both men are simply unable to see the other's point of view.

In a few seconds, Ursulus and Thaïs leave and characters with Auspex who gain a success on a Wits + Composure + Auspex roll catch the word "heresy" and the phrase "not miracles, but witchcraft" from Damasus; also a few choice words about "imputing the divine nature with perishable flesh" or something to that effect, enough that a character who rolls Wits + Religion realizes that Damasus is an Arian.

Approaching Damasus

Characters might try to approach Damasus to find out what he wants (he wants to prove that Thaïs is a witch, and use that fact to destroy the convent). If they're really charming (rolls of Manipulation + Persuasion or Manipulation + Religion) and they claim they want to help, he willingly lets them, offering them "only a small reward, for promoting the true faith is reward enough" and agreeing on a place to meet on the following night. He'll believe anything they tell him.

Stopping Damasus on the Spot

Alternatively, if they're sympathetic to the convent, they could just try to kill him and his troops on the spot. The troops have the same traits as the soldiers in **The Illustrious Childe.**

Damasus might get away. If he does, he comes back that very night with a much larger cohort of troops, convinced that terrible things are afoot—run the Event: Written in Fire.

Vitericus

Vitericus wants to "refine" the nuns, and by the end of last night, he inspired one of his followers to join the convent: she was one of the women who fell to their knees the night before. The girl (her name is Camilla) lets Vitericus in not long after Damasus leaves, if the characters aren't inside already. He's going to break into the convent and drink one of the nuns to death. When the news that one of the nuns has died mysteriously, the cry of witchcraft arises and Damasus returns the following night to take them away.

Vitericus might come into the convent while the characters are there, in which case he walks right into them, and challenges them as to what they are doing here. If they challenge him, he answers them truthfully: he's testing the nuns. He honestly doesn't understand why they're offended.

Getting into the Convent

Getting into the convent is easy. The windows are shuttered, but any vampire who gains three successes on a roll of Strength + Brawl (+ Vigor if applicable) can break the flimsy catches.

Characters can try to get in by knocking on the front door. Female characters can get in with an opposed roll of Manipulation + Religion (the nuns resist with four dice).

Any character can use Dominate or Majesty to get in (assume that the nuns have Resolve and Composure Traits of two dots each).

Inside, the characters see what the nuns are doing. Some are scourging themselves. Some are kneeling in prayer in the middle of bare wooden floors, grinding their bare knees into the rough splintery wood, allowing their urine and feces to fall on the floor around them as the characters watch. Some are bound around their wrists so tightly the blood oozes around the ropes. And some

brand their foreheads with crosses made by applying hot ashes taken fresh from a brazier.

Whatever they see, the nuns are outraged as soon as they become aware that their sanctuary has been violated; Mary goes to get Ursulus, who has made his cell in an outhouse behind the convent itself. When Ursulus comes in, he orders the characters to leave.

The characters can do any number of things. They can try to kill the nuns or scare them, for example; killing them is a lot easier than scaring them. The nuns don't fight. They just accept their martyrdom. Characters don't even need to roll: they kill the nuns easily. Characters with Humanity scores of 2 or above who commit this act of mass murder need to roll to avoid degeneration.

Ursulus does try to stop characters who come in and try to massacre the nuns, but since he has only two dots in any of his Traits, no dots at all in Brawl and Weaponry, and no weapon, he has, at best one die in attack dice pools and an Initiative Trait of 4. He's ridiculously easy to kill.

If the characters want to do this bloody work, it's over in minutes.

On the other hand, scaring the nuns is harder. They may try to force the nuns to become prostitutes again using Dominate and it may seem like it works, but the presence of Thaïs has an odd effect on them, and by daybreak, they've repented again. The only way to make Dominate work is to Condition every nun in the convent. Characters may be prepared to do that, but they're going to have to be prepared to understand exactly what they're doing to the women and pay the price in degeneration rolls (if they have a Humanity of 5 or above, they roll to avoid degeneration with three dice).

Talking to Ursulus and Thaïs

Characters might try to reason with the preacher and the saint. The preacher is quite simply inflexible—he is doing God's work, he doesn't accept any arguments to the contrary, and he resists attempts to use Dominate or Majesty to convince him away from what he believes to be right as if he had Resolve and Composure Traits of three dots each. As long as the saint is around, a successful use of Dominate fades away at dawn.

Thaïs is frustrating to talk to. She speaks in verses of Scripture and seems barely to register that they are there. But, at the same time, she uses quotes that seem to suggest she knows exactly what the vampires are.

Characters might think that she's worth Embracing, as a cruel joke. They might just kill her.

Event: Written in Fire

Mental: • Physical: ••• Social: ••

Overview: This event happens on the third night (or the next night the characters find themselves on their hunting ground), providing that Damasus is alive, and so are at least some of the nuns. On the second night, something strange happened at Euphemia's brothel-turned-convent. This might be down to what Vitericus did, or what the characters did, or might just be because of the miracles Thaïs has done.

Strange things happened on that second night, and this third evening, Damasus returns with a dozen men. They aim to take the nuns outside, read their charges and burn them at the stake. Damasus has an order marked with the seal of the Emperor himself.

Getting it sealed was easy. Damasus came to court, got an audience as an Arian clergyman of good standing, the Emperor waved a hand as soon as he heard the word "witchcraft", the secretary sealed the proclamation and it was done. Damasus spent all day waiting for the audience and 30 seconds getting the order sealed.

If the characters don't do anything, three things happen: Ursulus and the nuns get dragged out and burnt on the stake; the characters get accused of witchcraft, putting them in terrible danger; and when all is done with and the soldiers go home, Vitericus fulfills his own take on the will of God and tears Damasus' throat out.

It doesn't have to end like this. Damasus could survive. The nuns could get out alive. It's up to the characters.

Description: *And now, there's a small throng outside what was Euphemia's house of pleasure, a dozen armed men holding torches, and at their head the Arian preacher. Some of the men build bonfires and set up seven tall, fire-hardened stakes in the square. The troops batter down the door, and swarm in...*

The men drag out the monk, the saint and the nuns. Damasus, the Arian, reads out his proclamation and commands them to repent. They will not. He gestures to the kindling and the torches. They will not repent. Each in turn is tied to a stake. Among the last is Thaïs .The soldiers step forward, and Thaïs turns to look across the square at you, and she points, and she says in a voice so clear that everyone in the crowd hear it, "You shall not suffer a witch to live." All eyes turn to you...

Damasus cries out: "She gives us her cohorts." several of the soldiers advance on you...

Storyteller Goals: This the final act in a tragedy. The characters might have been behind what happened; if you can pin it on what the characters did last night, it's



perfect. Essentially, this is the consequence of the characters' actions (the players don't need to know that it's the consequence of nearly every action their characters could have undertaken).

Character Goals: The characters should find some kind of closure here. They can stop this happening and save the lives of the nuns, or they can let it happen. They can *make* it happen.

Actions: Characters can try to stop the burnings at any time. To be honest, they're not in danger until Thaïs (or whoever's left—it could be Casta or Euphemia) points the finger. Incidentally, even if they helped Damasus, he's not averse to ordering them burnt as well, and no one will raise a hand to stop him. Then they're in trouble.

Of course, it might not come to that. The characters could disrupt the burning at any time. Vampires have all sorts of abilities and while the soldiers are intimidating, the characters should be able to evade, scare or control them, if not defeat them in straight combat.

Six of the soldiers move forward to attack the characters when that finger gets pointed; the rest continue to tie the innocent cenobites to the stakes. In six turns, they're done with the tying; on each subsequent turn, they light a stake, which erupts in flame. Ursulus burns first; Thaïs burns last. It takes two turns to cross the square. Even if the characters make short work of the soldiers, they may not save the nuns, even if they really want to.

The soldiers are superstitious. Characters who reveal some supernatural power, or who make a show of drinking blood, make the men who see it break and run if the soldiers fail a Resolve + Composure roll. They've faced barbarians and rioting citizens, but demons terrify them.

The screams of the burning women (and man) fill the square. Only Thaïs does not scream, and when she dies, her flame snuffs itself out, leaving her body hardly burnt at all, and forever incorruptible. When all the soldiers are dead, incapacitated or fled, only Damasus remains. Here comes Vitericus, who has watched all these things from the shadows; if the characters don't stop him, he speaks briefly to Damasus and then kills him, before simply walking away. He'll fight only if he has no escape; otherwise, he's gone.

Aftermath

The characters shouldn't expect thanks. If any of the former prostitutes survive, they do not thank the characters. They recoil in fear, as if from demons. They might even try to drive them away with prayer and the sign of the cross.

Underline that whether or not the characters are Sanctified monsters, they should expect no love from humans. This is the age when the hungry dead become known as the Damned, and it's now that the characters should become aware that *they are Damned.*

And then there's Vitericus. He appears from nowhere; he vanishes. Characters who have reason to talk to the Sanctified and who try to investigate him further learn that he's a barbarian and a heretic, and that he leads a sect of humans. They're vague on what his heresy is, though.

Whatever happens, the characters have to deal with a hunting ground that's become less fertile. Dice pools for hunting suffer a -2 penalty from now on, since the single greatest reason for people to be on the streets after dark in this district is gone.

Experience

Give the players between one and three experience points for each event in this story. Give one extra point to the best roleplayer, the player who had the best idea, and the player whose character behaved in the most impressive manner.

Four years pass before the next story begins; if you're going straight to this story, give each character an extra experience point for every year that passes.

362CE: The Age of Toleration

The new Emperor Julian has declared himself pagan. The pagan vampires gloat. Octavius was right, they say: the Christian Emperors were just a short-lived novelty, and the worshipers of the gods of Rome once again lead the city.

Julian ushers in a new age of toleration. All sects are legal. *Let them kill each other and save me the trouble,* he thinks. Mirroring this, the pagan leaders of the Camarilla find that the Sanctified are too many to make illegal. They have to agree to accept them. No one's happy. But the pagans have an Emperor again. The Sanctified manifesto seems to have been a dream. If the Senex breathed, they'd breathe a sigh of relief.

The Legio Mortuum, meanwhile, begin to have doubts. The Camarilla is too fractured to do its job properly. Helvidius Bassianus, the War Crow begins to talk with Hostilinus; Tertia Julia and Octavius Magnus and Flaviana Galla don't seem to have the same influence anymore. Maybe it's time for new leadership.

In the midst of this, two vampires who deal with humans make small mistakes; the Camarilla faces the beginnings of a disaster.

Story

Eupraxus comes to the characters' hunting ground looking for help. If they've sided with the pagans in

Tolerance

To make his law more effective, Julian called together the bishops, who were in strenuous disagreement with each other, and their divided congregations. He calmly warned them to put their differences to one side, and to allow everybody to follow openly their own religion without fear of opposition.

He insisted on this because he knew that toleration would increase their divisions. From now on, he wouldn't have to be afraid of any unified public opinion. He knew from experience that there is no wild animal quite as dangerous to humanity as the vicious Christians are to one another.

- Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae 22.5*

the past, he comes because they're the only pagans who haven't disowned him; if they've sided with the Sanctified, he comes because they're simply the nearest and he's desperate enough to trust anyone.

He's being hunted by his own cultists. In turn, they're being hunted by the Cainites, who, still led by Vitericus, wish to destroy the heretics of the false prophet. Vitericus, in turn, doesn't know that there are those among his Cainites who know him for exactly what he is and plan to make their move, striking when he least expects it.

In a period of order, the Legio Mortuum would be able to crush these people before they became a problem. But now? There is no one to tell them what to do. The humans escape, melt into the chaos that even now begins to engulf the Empire, ready to emerge in future nights.

Motives

The characters find themselves landed with the desperate Eupraxus. Do they leave him for the misguided cultists, who, blinded by Vitae-inspired love for him, have taken it into their heads to crucify him that he might rise again? Or to the War-Crow, who demands his head? Or to Vitericus and his followers, who curse Eupraxus for a heretic?

And what of the Camarilla? They've disowned him. Characters who try to offload him on other vampires find that Eupraxus has no friends. Will they stand by him?

Theme and Mood

Things fall apart: that's the theme of this story. Plans and alliances collapse. No one seems to know whose side anyone is on.

The mood of this story is of swift, violent change, of sudden death. The knife comes from nowhere. The axe falls. Vitericus comes from nowhere; he himself faces his own exit.

If Eupraxus isn't around

If Eupraxus got destroyed during **Nights of Glory,** a somewhat effeminate Greek neonate named Philebus, who took over Eupraxus' cult and is similar to him in a lot of ways, including the Traits, takes Eupraxus' place in the story.

Cainites and Eupraxites

Vitericus Minor's Cainite Heresy resembles Manichaeism in its structure. Under the oversight of Vitericus, the Cainites divide themselves into two strict orders. The Lower Order (the Followers) don't get full access to the secret truths of the sect; the final chapters of Vitericus' book, the *Euagetaematicon*, are forbidden to them. In the book, Vitericus writes that Longinus is the prophet of Cain, the First Murderer, who was given the gift of vampirism as a reward by god for his strength; that it was Cain who gave appropriate revelations to both Christ, Vicar to the Cattle, and to Longinus, Vicar to the Slaughterman.

Vitericus tells the Followers that they "live in the world; but not of it." Their mission is to convert others to their cause. The Higher Order (the *Perfecti)* are all men. They undergo elaborate and bizarre initiation rites devised by their leader. Vitericus has told them to read his ersatz Scripture, that they might know the truth. He teaches them that they may become like him, like Cain the First Murderer, if only they can transcend their flesh. They have renounced all material possession, abstaining from milk, meat, cheese, eggs, and all sexual relations. More radical members castrate themselves. Some have even starved themselves to death, or have become "holy suicides." The would-be prophet encourages them to assault the weak among the Followers, and to attempt a kind of vampirism of their own. He tells them that to drink the blood of others is to imbibe their life spirit. If a few people die due to their overindulgence, they are merely serving God's purpose: they have freed the souls of those He had preordained to take to Himself, and they have culled the weak.

What Vitericus doesn't know is that some of the Perfecti have decided that Vitericus is lying. They believe him a monster and a heretic to his own Gnostic teaching. In striving to retain his existing body after death, he keeps his spirit imprisoned on Earth. He chooses gross material matter, and deprives those who live of what flawed spiritual matter they have.

They feel it is their religious duty to destroy the heretic, when the chance presents itself. There are forty Cainites and five *Perfecti*.

The Eupraxites, on the other hand, have a much simpler heresy: they think that Eupraxus is the second coming of Christ. His problem is this: they're all bound to him with Vinculi. Now usually, that *would* be a massive advantage. The problem is, not one of the Eupraxites understands what Eupraxus is, and this, combined with Eupraxus' own shaky command of Christian doctrine and penchant for making rash statements, has led them to an odd conclusion. He's Christ come again, in flesh; Jesus was the last fleshly vessel for the Christ-spirit, and Eupraxus is the next. And so, Eupraxus needs to rise again from the dead. And this means he has to be crucified. And the obsession and love Eupraxus' followers have

for him means that it is the job of the faithful to carry it out. He must be crucified, until the sun sets and the sky darkens. There are twelve Eupraxites.

Eupraxus ran away from them. It was only ever a game for him, playing with the humans. He never realized how successfully he was driving them mad. They're looking for him now. They don't think any the less of him, of course: for did not Jesus Christ ask that the cup of his suffering be taken away from him?

The Legio Mortuum have barred him from Necropolis at the behest of Thascius Hostilinus, with the tacit consent of Flaviana Galla. Eupraxus has nowhere to go.

The Heretics (Both Varieties)

Quotes: (Intimidate) *"Who is Cain?"*

(Religion) *"No, no, no! Without the spirit, the flesh is nothing; but without the flesh, the spirit is unshackled! Can you not see the worthlessness of the flesh?"*

Description: *They're people, ordinary people. They smell like ordinary people, they're dressed like ordinary people. They're utterly nondescript, utterly forgettable.*

Forgettable, that is, for the strange way they look at you without actually looking. As if they're seeing past you, as if they're hearing voices other than yours.

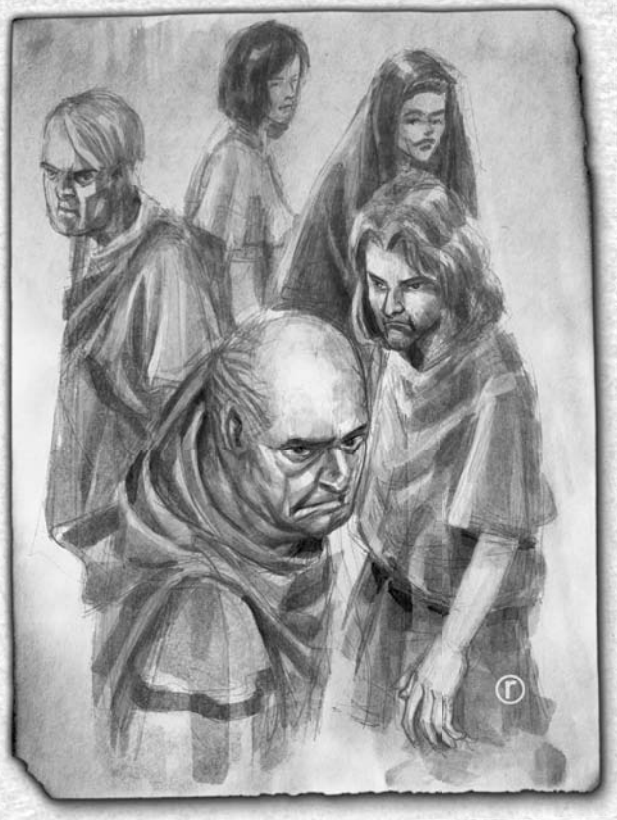
Background: The Cainites tend to be fairly affluent folk, literate and mostly male (and among the *Perfecti* only male—women, they believe, cannot gain the Kingdom of Heaven). The Eupraxites are mostly poor.

But they're all people with life histories and families and friends, and they've all fallen prey to their extremist sects.

The leader of the Eupraxites is named John. The leader of the *Perfecti* is Georgius.

Storytelling Hints: They're mostly good people. They honestly, truly believe that the things they are doing (namely, killing Eupraxites, hunting Vitericus or crucifying the Second Coming of Christ) are for the best. Imagine you knew for a fact that the entire world was terminally ill, only they didn't know it, and that you had the cure, if only you could convince people that they were ill? It's like that: the entire world is going to Hell, and the idea of it fills these people with distress, leading them to ever more desperate extremes to show the world their truth.

The action all comes to fruition in a single night: the Eupraxites come looking for their Christ not long after he meets the characters. The Cainites come looking for the Eupraxites while the characters are dealing with the Eupraxites. The Cainites bring Vitericus with them, madder than he ever was. When they have routed or destoyed the Eupraxites, which they can do easily, since



they outnumber them by more than three to one, the five Cainites who Vitericus has called his *Perfecti* turn on their master and drive a stake through his heart. Some take him away to dispose of him. The rest come for the characters.

The characters, by this stage, shouldn't find the Cainites any more of a challenge than the Eupraxites, but the existence of the *Perfecti* poses a real problem inasmuch as being a sect of people who know that vampires exist constitutes a threat to the Masquerade, and they're already outside of the character's power by being impossible to find. Tracking them down is doubly hard because the Camarilla is too concerned with political maneuvering to dedicate time and energy to finding them.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation 1, Occult 1, Religion 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Knife, Sickle or Scourge) 1

Social Skills: Expression (Preaching) 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Other Cultists) 3

Willpower: 4

Morality: 6

Virtue: Faith. The heretics of both sects believe they are the blessed of heaven, and that God smiles on what they do. They do not turn from what they know is right.

Vice: Wrath. They believe in a jealous God; they embody His Wrath. They burn with righteous anger.

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Knife	1L	1	5
Sickle	2L	2	6
Scourge	1B	2	5

Vitericus Minor, Founder of the Cainite Heresy

Quotes: (Religion) *"The blood is the life; this is self-evident. But it falls to the faithful to administer and govern the sacraments in a limited fashion, for the life is not for all..."*

(Expression) *"Caine is the First Murderer; he is the type of us all. For are we not made in the image of Caine, as the living are made in the image of Abel? So it is that we are made to prey, even as Caine, who gave an offering of blood, was given to prey on Abel, who gave an offering of the fruits of the gross earth..."*

Description: *The man dresses like a traveler, swathed in a rough woolen cloak of barbarian design, bearing a small bronze labarum on a thong around his neck. Although he dresses in tunic and breeches, it's clear that he is not from Rome. His fine, sandy hair is cut in the manner of the Goths, and he speaks Latin with a pronounced accent. Still, his voice is deep and sonorous, and although clearly foreign, he speaks powerfully and persuasively; his Latin is eloquent, and he knows the terminology of the Christians surpassingly well.*

But his eyes stare a little too much. His arms don't really move when he walks. And his words are strange. The more time you spend with him, the more you realize that he's either a true visionary, or he's completely crazy.

Background: Vitericus was one of the "Gothic confessors," the small number of Goths who heard the preaching of the Gothic missionary Ulfila and converted to Christianity. The young man became a fervent proselyte in his own right. An old vampire with a young, pretty face became, one night, the target of his impassioned preaching; she had no time for his bleating, she said. She showed him what she called his folly, and, laughing, abandoned a hungry dead man.

But Vitericus' faith was not destroyed. He began to reconstruct his own faith around his condition, listening each night to the readings of Ulfila's newly-translated Bible stories from outside the missionary's hut. The tale of Caine and Abel fascinated him. He began to read through the lines. In 348, the Goths decided that they had had enough of the Christians. They killed some, and ejected others. Ulfila entered the Empire and with his remaining followers went south to Constantinople, where Constantius welcomed them. Vitericus left them and went West, drawn there by dreams, and the voices of dead men, men whose lives he had drunk and whose ghosts now—he believed—inhabited his blood.

He wandered, aimlessly, until he came to a monastery inhabited by men as hungry and as dead as he. He met with the monks. They welcomed him for a time, and he debated with them about what it meant to be a vampire, and he learned the story of Longinus. They taught him how to create miracles of the blood. And when Longinus, too, began to come to him in dreams, revealing further truths, Vitericus knew that he had become a prophet.

He told the monks in the Black Abbey what the blessed voices had told him. They turned on him. He barely escaped in one piece. But he knew that he was right and they were wrong.

By the time he came to Rome, his new heresy was fully formed. It was Gnostic in flavor, with two different teachings, a teaching for the herd and a true teaching for the childer of the First Murderer. He took to preaching.



So far, the Lancea et Sanctum do not have the influence to have him destroyed, and the pagan Camarilla consider him one of the Sanctified. A handful of vampires, neonates all, have found Vitericus' teachings attractive. The more orthodox among the Sanctified are still in the middle of deciding whether or not he should be destroyed. The pagans, too.

Storytelling Hints: Vitericus is doomed. In that respect, he represents an aspect of the future. By the end of the fourth century CE, everything has gone to hell for Kindred and human alike. The Christians should be the one social force binding the city together. But they're fragmenting. In the same way, Sanctified want to be the future of Rome, the bringers of the new order. But they can't get their house in order.

Vitericus isn't the only heretical Kindred leading a cult in fourth-century Rome, but he's by far the craziest. His madness can't rally be defined with simple Derangements. The fact is, he was schizophrenic before he ever even met Ulfila. His Embrace and his time in the Black Abbey have contributed to whatever psychiatric complaints he had before becoming all-consuming and utterly incurable.

However mad he is, Vitericus should always appear *absolutely reasonable*, even when making wild pronouncements about the voices in his veins and the Word of the First Murderer. He's not some babbling lunatic, and he's not comic relief. In some ways, he's a pathetic figure, and his pathological visions are set to lead him, his cohorts, and dozens of innocent mortals to their deaths.

Getting mixed up in the Cainite Heresy is bad news. Vitericus is crazy, and it's going to be wiped out. The question is, how does it meet its end?

The Sanctified and the Camarilla want the cult gone, but neither wants the other to know that. For the Sanctified, to admit that they are divided would be a sign of weakness. On the other hand, the Camarilla know that the Sanctified are growing in power and want to find ways to hamstring them, and settle on this cult, not realizing that the Sanctified don't want them, either (if they'd only talked about it, this sort of misunderstanding wouldn't have happened. But what can you do? Ravening blood-drinking monsters aren't great at negotiating).

If the sect, thanks to (or despite) the characters' efforts, comes into conflict with Eupraxus' out-of-control cult, either side could win, but whoever wins, some of the vampires' human dupes learn the truth about the Kindred and attempt to do something about it.

If Vitericus' madness causes him to slip and reveal the truth to his human followers, or if the characters find a way to show them what their leader really is, they *will* turn on him. He's done so good a job of making them the paragons of goodness he wants them to be that the discovery that he has been grooming them to be food for him and dead men like him will be far too much for them to take. Mild people can snap spectacularly and violently, and Vitericus, although charismatic, is no match for his own cultists, should they come to him mob-handed.

Some of them do. In easier, more stable times, the Camarilla could have dealt with them easily, but the fact is, things aren't so simple anymore. The survivors of the Eupraxites continue to know the truth about the Kindred, and teach their descendants about the monsters in the dark for centuries to come.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Lancea et Sanctum (Peregrine Collegia)

Embrace: 344CE

Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Religion (Gnosticism, Arianism) 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Ride 2, Stealth 1, Survival (Wild Countryside) 4 Weaponry (Club) 2, Empathy 1, Expression (Theological Exposition) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Member of the Cainite Heresy) 3, Debate Style: Theology 1, Haven Location 1, Haven Size 5, Herd 2, Language (Latin, Greek—his native language is Gothic)

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 4 (Irrationality, Sanguinary Animism, Obsessive Compulsion)

Virtue: Hope. Vitericus believes utterly that the Cainites will become the central pillar of the Catholic Church. And he isn't going to give up on that vision. Because it's going to happen. He knows, because Caine told him in a dream.

Vice: Sloth. Vitericus is incredibly energetic in some ways, tirelessly promoting the Cainite Heresy, but ultimately, he's a lazy thinker. His theology is full of holes. He's too rigid in his mindset to change his modus operandi to reflect changing situations. And that could be the end of him.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 9
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Majesty 1, Protean 2, Resilience 2, Theban Sorcery 1
Rituals: The Angel's Touch (1), Blood Scourge (1)
Vitae/Per Turn: 11/1
Flaw: Vitericus has the Derangement: Schizophrenia as a permanent Flaw.
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Wooden Cudgel	2B	2	7

Event: Eupraxus the Fugitive

Mental: - Physical: - Social: ••

Overview: This is where it begins. Eupraxus blunders into the characters while they hunt. He begs for help, for mercy, no matter who they are. He has nowhere else to go. He asks them to help him to escape his pursuers, to let him go with them into Necropolis. Why can't he go there himself? The Legio Mortuum has banned him from entering. The Camarilla, urged in debate by Thascius Hostilinus in a meeting that the characters missed, judged that the mess he's in is sufficiently embarrassing and dangerous that he can have no aid.

Eupraxus isn't straight with the characters. He tells them that he's being hunted by humans. But he doesn't say why they're hunting him, more out of embarrassment than any thing else.

Description: *A voice calls out, briefly, urgently. "Mercy!" A pathetic figure—one of the dead—crouches a shadowed doorway. His cloak is torn and the makeup on his face has run. You can smell blood on him; human blood, vampire blood.*

It looks like Eupraxus. Not confident like Eupraxus. Not well-groomed or smooth like Eupraxus. But it's him.

Storyteller Goals: This is the intro. Eupraxus wants the characters—he recognizes them, of course, even if they haven't hitherto met—to help.

Character Goals: The characters need to come to some sort of conclusion as to what to do with him, before the Eupraxites come looking for him.

Actions: The characters can do anything they want with him. Some likely things they might think of doing are:

• **Get help to allow Eupraxus into Necropolis:** Victrix knows the score; Helvidius enforced the ruling. They're matter-of-fact, and each sends the characters to someone else. Victrix sends characters to Helvidius, Helvidius sends them to Marciana Rhetrix, who sends the characters to Julia Comitor, who sends the characters, reluctantly, to Thascius Hostilinus. Underline that what Eupraxus has done has turned the whole of the Camarilla against him, as well as the Sanctified (and use that to emphasize the influence that the Sanctified now have).

• **Fight the cultists:** There are twelve of them. How hard can it be? Finding them isn't hard at all, considering that no sooner do characters decide to do this, they turn up (see the next Event, below).

• **Get rid of Eupraxus:** It's easy enough to do. He's probably no match for the characters in combat, and if they send him away, he'll go. The characters still run smack into the middle of the two heretic cults, though.

Consequences: The characters should be aware of the hopelessness of Eupraxus' situation by the time that they've figured out what to do next. This is a good time to make the consequences of Eupraxus' big mistake appear in a much more visceral form.

Event: The Passion of Eupraxus and Vitericus

Mental: • Physical: •••• Social: -

Overview: At the most dramatic point, which, depending on how you wish to play it, can be at any time after the characters meet Eupraxus, the Eupraxites turn up, and the characters realize that Eupraxus hasn't been straight with them.

These people love Eupraxus. They think it's for the best.

As things get interesting with the Eupraxites, Vitericus turns up with many of his own heretics. A Cainite calls out, "Who is Cain?" That's the sign by which the Cainites recognize each other. The correct answer (to them) is "the true Bringer of God's Word, the Inspiration of Christ, Bearer of the Immortal Mark," and not "Abel's brother and murderer."

The characters don't know that, of course, and it's up to them to answer. The Cainites demand that the false Christ and his cohorts be given over to them.

Events depend upon the characters from this point on.

A big fight ensues between the Eupraxites, who want to defend their beloved Lord so they can destroy him themselves, and the Cainites, who aim to destroy Eupraxus and the heretics alike.

There are a dozen Eupraxites and something like thirty Cainites. The Cainites have Vitericus also, who recognizes the characters and warns them to give Eupraxus to him.

The characters can join in on either side or they can leave them to kill each other. If they do leave them to it, the Cainites win in short order, massacring the Eupraxites and putting a stake through the heart of Eupraxus, whom Vitericus diablerizes in the plain sight of all, a demonstration of the truth that he represents, the essence of the false Christ absorbed into the soul of the Perfected One.

Whatever happens, as soon as the Eupraxites are defeated and Eupraxus is immobilized or destroyed, the Cainites turn on Vitericus; one of the *Perfecti* accompanying him thrusts a stake through his back and into his heart; a Follower lops his head off with a sickle. Georgius the *Perfectus* explains Vitericus' heresy, briefly and says to the characters that they must choose one of their own to run now, and warn their friends; the others must perish.

Description: *A voice cries out in the dark. "Lord? Lord? We know this is a test, Lord. We know you are tempted. But you must drink the cup. You must drink from the cup..." They come into sight. They're just people. Not warriors, not soldiers, not hunters. Ordinary men. They don't even seem to be armed. But they still have you surrounded...*

To one side, the followers of Eupraxus, and now to the other side, more of them, except that they're different, fiercer, all male, bearing wooden stakes and torches. One steps forward, and cries out: "Who is Cain?"

Storyteller Goals: This event should be serious, action-packed, fast moving and confusing. Note that Eupraxus has spent some time trying to escape his followers, and he only has three Vitae and one Willpower left.

However things pan out, try to ensure that three things happen:

• The Eupraxites come for their Lord before Eupraxus leaves the characters. This could be at any time at all.

• Vitericus and the Cainites come for Eupraxus and the Eupraxites before the characters are done with them;

• The Eupraxites perish at someone's hands;

• The Cainites turn on Vitericus and reveal that they know what he is. Vitericus and Eupraxus don't have to be destroyed, but the best they're going to manage is to end the story as fugitives without cults or friends.

Character Goals: The characters just need to survive.

Actions: The characters could do pretty much anything at this point:

• **Negotiate:** Eupraxus has so twisted the minds of his followers that they simply can't see how he doesn't really want to be crucified; in their minds, they see the characters as being the thieves who are crucified alongside their Christ, and behave accordingly. They're friendly and threatening, adoring and sinister, all at the same time. Characters could use Disciplines like Domination and Nightmare to do the job, but the problem lies in the fact that neither of these Disciplines work on more than one person at once. Majesty makes the Eupraxites well-disposed towards the characters, but that really means that they just assume that the characters are sympathetic to their goal (crucifying Eupraxus).

• **Crucify Eupraxus:** The characters could just decide that Eupraxus is far too much trouble and leave him to it, or even help crucify him, in which case the Cainites turn up just as the cross gets raised up and Vitericus diablerizes him on the cross (a pretty powerful image)..

• **Fight all of the Cultists:** The characters could try this. Chances are that they'll get worn down pretty quickly. If they absolutely *insist* on fighting, let them. Let them face the consequences and give them plenty of chances to withdraw if they must. Even if they somehow manage to kill thirty or more heretics between them, make it clear (perhaps through one of the Cainites' dying words) that there are many more, and they all *know.*

• **Flee the Cainites:** Let the characters experience a fraught time, being chased through the torch-lit streets of Rome by howling lunatics with scythes and flaming brands (use the foot chase rules found in **The World of Darkness Rulebook,** p.65—surviving Cainites have a dice pool of 4).

• **Subvert the Cainites:** Clever players might think of somehow stopping the Cainites by escaping, catching their leader and controlling his mind (using Dominate 3, for example). This gets the Cainites off their back for a while, but in the end, it's not going to work for all of them. Eventually, some of the Cainites are going to get wise.

Consequences: By the end of this scene, Eupraxus and Vitericus should be destroyed. If Eupraxus somehow escapes, that's OK, too—unless the characters stop him, he runs and finds a way out of Rome. Vitericus will only survive if the characters for whatever reason make specific efforts to rescue him and keep him with them. If he gets away from them, the *Perfecti* get him and that's the end of him.

The characters should also be aware that the *Perfecti* are a threat.

Event: Getting Something Done

Mental: •••• Physical: - Social: ••••

Overview: Having escaped the Cainites, characters might try to mobilize the Camarilla. This involves pro-

tocol, however, and protocol means having to speak in the chamber of the Camarilla, and that means starting a debate.

Not everyone thinks it's a problem to worry about.

Storyteller Goals: The storyteller needs to impress how disastrous a state the Camarilla is in. No one can agree on anything. No one has any idea who's supposed to be running things. And if something *does* get done, it takes about twice as long as it should to achieve it, by which time it's too late.

Character Goals: The characters just need to play in the debate. They don't need to win, but they do need to be aware that there's an underlying reason behind the Camarilla's reluctance to act.

Actions: The characters need to convince the Camarilla that there's an issue about a group of hunters who, thanks to Eupraxus' and Vitericus' bungling, *know about vampires* and seek to destroy them all.

The Senex say no. If the characters persist, it means a procedural debate, and it's the characters versus the Senex.

The Senex and the Cult of Augurs (represented here by Flaviana Galla and Octavius Magnus) don't want to do anything because they're scared of the Sanctified usurping power over the Camarilla while the Legio Mortuum is busy hunting a bunch of mortals.

The Sanctified stay out of this one. Thascius Hostilinus and Marciana Rhetrix feel—quite accurately—that voicing an opinion would be dangerous. The Camarilla disowned Eupraxus, but the Sanctified never did the same with Vitericus.

Helvidius believes the characters and desperately wants to do something, but stands by the decision of the Senex. If the Senex win this one, he won't be happy at all. He'll protest and be smacked down by Tertia Julia for talking out of place.

Character	Integrity	Target to Defeat	Dice Pool	Technique	Debate Merit
Octavius	3	8	7	Playing to Audience	Reason 3
Flaviana Galla	3	10	7	Playing to Audience	—

Characters who, at any point in the debate roll Wits + Empathy, opposed by Flaviana's dice pool of 8 or Octavius' dice pool of 6, detect that there's an underlying reason why they're reluctant to act. Those with enough dots in Auspex may discover the truth of that reason – as noted above.

Consequences: Characters might want to join a group of Legio soldiers, led by the War Crow or Victrix, to the Cainites' last known meeting place. The place appears to be empty (although a stray dog, a nest of sparrows and an owl—an actual owl, not a Strix, but they don't know that—could give the characters cause to get nervous).

Aftermath

Even if the characters somehow get the Senex to act, it's too late. The talking has given the Cainites the chance to dissolve into Rome—and into history. In the future, they'll be back. For now, they've vanished, and while Vitericus' error might have repercussions in the future, for the present, the only repercussion is this: the Camarilla is too weak to stop them.

Experience

Give the players between one and three experience points for each event in this story. Give one extra point to the best roleplayer, the player who had the best idea, and the player whose character behaved in the most impressive manner.

A turbulent year passes before the next story begins; if you're going directly to the next story, give each character two extra experience points.

363-4CE: The Messenger

The Camarilla survives thanks to the blessing of the gods on Rome. The Emperor is the personification of the Roman Empire, it's heart; Rome is the Emperor. If the Emperor is Christian, pagan institutions have no meaning. More, the Christians see there being no place for the dead and the ancestors of the living in the world. Neither do the Christian vampires. Ergo, the Camarilla under a Christian Empire is defunct.

The last pagan Emperor is dead. His successor? A Christian. The Camarilla are so convinced of the connection between the Emperor and the Camarilla that Julian's death drives the *Propinqui* into a panic, and from panic into the first real civil strife since the Great Fire – the one that consumed Rome in the age of Nero.

Story

The emperor is dead. The man who came to Rome with the news, the first messenger, lies dead in the streets of Rome, and the first bearers of the news to Necropolis are the characters.

Panic overtakes the Camarilla. Thascius and the Sanctified gloat. In an ill-timed jest, a voice from the back of the hall names some little-known peon in the Kindred ranks as a better choice for leadership of the Senex. He doesn't mean it, but talk is cheap. The cry goes up: *Herennius for the Senex!*

The vampire Herennius Lanista takes the same course as the Emperor's cousin Procopius: he decides that whatever happens, he's doomed, and like that other ill-fated chancer, he decides that he'll make his play for the throne, for he has nothing to lose.

Motives

The characters find a man in the rich livery of the Imperial courier service, dead in an alley, murdered for his purse. That's how it begins. It's up to them to decide whether or not to tell the Camarilla.

When the Camarilla finds out and dissolves into conflict, the characters have to decide what to do about Herennius the would-be usurper. Do they fight him? Do they join him? And if they join him, do they take the chance to betray him when it presents itself?

Theme and Mood

The theme of this story is the truth. The truth will out: but sometimes the truth is a bad thing; sometimes it makes no difference.

The mood of this story is of panic. Bad things are happening, but they're happening because the dead are responding with entirely unnecessary force to new that isn't at face value all that bad. Herennius doesn't need to declare himself the new leader of the Senex; the Camarilla doesn't *have* to collapse because Julian is dead. But these things happen because the Camarilla panic.

M. Herennius Lanista

Quotes: (Politics) *"Choice is for mortals, and only who live outside of the society of Rome. The rest of us stick to the script we have to play. There is never a choice."*

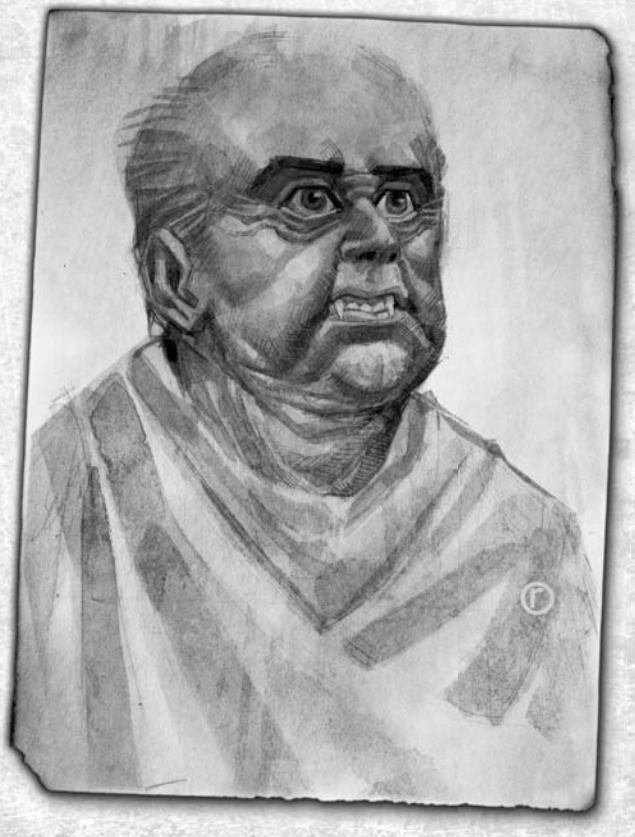
(Academics) *"That's a good point, and perhaps worth taking into account. However, if you've read your Frontinus, you'll know that the tactician has a very different take on the subject..."*

Description: *Who decided that this man would be worth bringing among the Kindred? There's nothing about that seems unique or important. He's so nondescript, so unprepossessing that his very ordinariness seems bizarre in an underworld populated by freaks. He's short, paunchy and balding, and his eyes seem to focus a few inches in front of you.*

Background: No one really cares who Herennius is. He shares a name with that short-lived Emperor whom the War-Crow claims to have sent on his way to the afterlife, but that's all the claim to fame he has. No one cares (or really remembers) who his sire was, and no one really thinks he matters. He's a joke, but the Senex aren't possessed of much of a sense of humor right now, and that's why he realizes that he either has to make his play, or face Final Death, whatever he does.

Storytelling Hints: Characters who see him leave the Camarilla chamber are probably going to be saying, "Sorry, *who?*" and that's the whole point. He is nobody, but he's a nobody with a chip on his shoulder, who feels he has no choice but to stage a usurpation. And that makes him dangerous, because he has something to prove.

Make him a small, petty individual, a character who resembles some petty office tyrant, some bureaucrat whose tiny modicum of power makes him feel important in his own pathetic little world (if you've seen either version of the TV comedy *The Office*, picture him as being a less amusing version of the boss from that show); and then put that character in charge of a faction of monstrous, murderous dead men. It's not pretty.



He'll try to get his own back against Kindred he feels wronged him. His downfall is his need to have people on his side. If people come to his side, he won't question their motives. He's too busy trying to gather as many allies as he can for his takeover.

Clan: Julii
Wing: Senex
Embrace: 296CE
Apparent Age: Late 40s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics (Camarilla) 2, Religion 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Dagger) 1
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs, Birds) 3, Persuasion (Paperwork) 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Status (Camarilla) 1, Status (Senex) 1
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Fortitude. Marcus Herennius is stubborn. When he's set his mind to something, he sticks to it.
Vice: Envy. Bullied in life, bullied in death, Herennius decided long ago that one day he'd get his own back. One day he's have the upper hand. It looks like that day has come.
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Blood Potency: 3
Disciplines: Animalism 4, Dominate 2
Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1	5

Atla as a Legionnaire

Atla, the same Strix whom the characters met in **The Illustrious Childe,** is now in possession of M. Lucinianus Probus, of the Legio Mortuum. Her Traits are the same as on p. 109, above, apart from the following:

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Health: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3



Speed: 12
Powers: Possession, Sense Blood, Spiritual Essence, Vigor 4, Dominate 3
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Sword	2L	2	6

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Lorica Segmenta (Banded)	3/1	-3

Event: A Dead Man Clutching a Letter

Mental: •• Physical: - Social: -

Overview: That's all it is; the aftermath of a robbery. A group of vampires, hunting. The smell of blood. A corpse. It's the first day of September 363, and the news of the Emperor's death has reached Rome, although the people don't yet know.

Description: *The smell of fresh blood wafts out of the alley; a body lies face down, blood running away in rivulets along the cobbles of the streets, and pooling in the blocked drain...*

It's no one you know. A man, in his thirties; he wears a fine woolen cloak, like the ones that the imperial couriers wear, like the

men who followed Crispus wore all those years ago. The ring finger of his left hand is missing, which makes sense. If he were an imperial agent, he'd have a signet ring. He's been stabbed in the gut.

He's dead. His blood is cold.

But in his hand, he's clutching something, a paper. A letter, crumpled, stained but still intact and sealed. It's addressed to the city prefect. It has the imperial seal.

Storyteller Goals: It's the set-up of the story. Yeah, it's a cliché, but it's a good one, and most importantly, it fits the themes of the story: it comes out of nowhere, and brings with it sweeping change.

Character Goals: The characters should have the chance to read the letter.

Actions: Of course, they might not bother to read the letter; they might not bother to tell anyone. They might keep it to themselves and, realizing what it means for the Camarilla, try to consolidate their position so that they can weather the oncoming storm. And that's fine.

Consequences: If the characters decide to tell the Camarilla, go straight to the Event: **The Broken Meeting**, below. If they don't, then play through a few ~~more~~ of the scenarios in **Nights of Glory:** a chariot race, a party, some political maneuvering, and flavor each of them with the bitter knowledge that Rome is soon going to find out. When the news hits the city, thrust the characters in the middle of a riot, and then, finally go to the Event: The Broken Meeting, below.

The Letter

The letter reads:

FLAVIUS CLAUDIUS JOVIANUS, SERVANT OF ROME AND NOW, BY THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS, EMPEROR OF ROME AND ALL HER LANDS, TO THE CITY PREFECT AND VICAR OF ROME, WRITING ON THE NONES OF JULY IN THE YEAR IIIIII SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF ROME: HAIL.

IT IS OUR DUTY TO INFORM YOU THAT OUR PREDECESSOR, THE EMPEROR JULIAN, IS DEAD. FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE KALENDS OF JULY, HAVING LED OUR MEN TO VICTORY AFTER VICTORY AGAINST THE PERSIANS, HE FOUGHT ALONGSIDE OUR TROOPS IN BATTLE AT MARANGA. THE PERSIANS WERE ROUTED; JULIAN LED THE PURSUIT, AND IT WAS THEN THAT HE WAS WOUNDED IN THE ABDOMEN BY A SPEAR. HE DIED OF HIS WOUND THREE DAYS AFTERWARDS.

THE FULL TALE OF HIS DEATH WE WILL SPARE YOU. MESSENGERS ARE EVEN NOW ON THEIR WAY. BUT WE SEND TO YOU THIS ONE MAN THAT YOU MAY BE READY. ALREADY THE STORIES CIRCULATE THAT JULIAN INCURRED THE WRATH OF HEAVEN FOR HIS IMPIETY; OF THIS WE CANNOT SPEAK, BUT IT IS OUR WISH THAT YOU TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO SUPPRESS THE RUMOR THAT HE WAS KILLED BY THE ANGEL OF THE LORD. IT MAY INDEED BE TRUE, BUT IT IMPRESSES US THAT FOR THE TALE TO SPREAD WOULD CREATE UNREST IN THE CITY. SEE TO IT THAT YOU ARE READY, AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED.

Event: The Broken Meeting

Mental: •• Physical: - Social: •••

Overview: Either the characters present the news to the Camarilla, or the Camarilla find out themselves. Either way, the Camarilla goes wild.

Description: *The Speaker of the Senex falls silent. Thascius Hostilinus stands to speak; he rails against the sins of the Camarilla and the hypocrisy of the Kindred. The Camarilla of old is finished, he says; there is no way to avoid the fact. And the highest among Senex and Cult of Augurs are stilled. The barbarian vampires of the Peregrine Collegia stir and whisper among themselves. The War-Crow rests his chin on his fist. No one answers.*

A voice cries out from the back. "Call yourselves leaders? Why, Herennius Lanista could do a better job!"

The hall erupts with laughter. But there are those who are not laughing. Tertia Julia Comitor is not laughing. Macellarius the Harpy, always one with the witticisms, is not laughing. Flaviana Galla is not laughing.

And a short, unprepossessing figure at the front of the Senex, a Propinquus whom you have seen many times and do not know, is not laughing, and shrinks as the vampires around him cease to laugh and draw away from him.

The little dead man turns and barges his way from the hall. The voice begins again: "Herennius for the Senex!" others join him, and it's no longer possible to tell if they're mocking or telling the truth.

Octavius Magnus composes himself. "Who said that?" he says, three times, each louder than before. No one answers.

Tertia Julia announces the dissolution of the meeting...

Storyteller Goals: The characters need to know that something is very, very wrong. They might even find out the culprit. It's still too late. The Storyteller just needs to make sure that the characters know that the Camarilla is facing a mounting crisis.

Character Goals: The characters may find out who made that fateful proclamation, but it's not essential. On the other hand, they do need to grasp the enormity of what has just happened.

Actions: The vampire who cried out the name of Herennius was Lucinianus Probus, a soldier of the Legio Mortuum, who, thanks to Victrix, is now possessed by a Strix. Characters whose players roll successes on Wits + Composure rolls spot him as he leaves, just after crying out Herennius' name the second time. They can, if they wish, try to pursue him.

If they catch Probus, one successful Wits + Empathy roll is all they need to detect that he is not himself; he mocks them. And then he makes reference to an Emperor's son, long ago (there were several Striges that night, of course, so if the one in the prostitute didn't survive, one of the other might have. Of course, if none of the Striges survived that night, the fact that this one knows about it is pretty creepy in itself).

They can fight. The Strix fights until it looks like Probus is going to be destroyed (if he's down to one or two health levels) and tries to escape if that's the case, leaving Probus in torpor, if not destroyed.

Taking Sides

If they decide to tell one of the elders what has happened, they discover that Flaviana Galla has already ordered the assassination of Herennius Lanista, and several of the younger members of the Senex, the Cult of Augurs and the Peregrine Collegia are rumored to have already gone over to Herennius.

The remainder of the Senex and the Cult of Augurs, along with the Sanctified, oppose him, creating the utterly unforeseen scenario wherein Thascius Hostilinus, Macellarius Corbulo, Octavius Magnus and Flaviana Galla all stand on the same side of an issue. Hostilinus wants the Camarilla to continue on its course—he's orchestrating a collapse of his own devising, and he's too arrogant to let someone else destroy it. The others are just terrified of the change.

The Legio Mortuum is undecided. Helvidius, in the sight of all, silently leaves the Camarilla's hall, taking his cohort with him.

Even now, the elders are preparing for battle, with or without the Legion of the Dead.

Consequences: If the characters stick with Helvidius Bassianus and his troops or Thascius Hostilinus and his delegation, move on to **The Monumental Pact**, below.

- If the characters side with Herennius, plan to attack him, or try to follow and observe his people, move on to **Herennius Struck Down**.
- Otherwise, if they choose to walk away from the whole affair, move on to the **Aftermath** and bring this chapter to a close.

Event: Herennius Struck Down

Mental: - Physical: •••• Social: -

Overview: Herennius is slain by members of the Legio Mortuum, and his murder provokes an outrage.

Description: *Herennius rushes down one of the long corridors of Necropolis, flanked by two Peregrine guards and followed by a small contingent of supporters and gawkers. You notice that Victrix is in the crowd, close at his side. You wonder: can she really be siding with this nobody?*

Even as you form the thought, you see a flash of steel somewhere in the crowd. It's hard to tell who moves first, but suddenly Herennius drops silently to the floor and his guards draw their swords. The crowd presses in and you hear the ringing of metal on metal.

Victrix backs up, shoving Kindred out of her way. She is not holding a weapon, but one of the Peregrine vampires is pursuing her.

A voice calls out: "Murder! Murder! Herennius is slain!"

And then, suddenly, screams follow as the crowd pushes outwards in a wild flex, forming a ring around the light of an unrestricted fire. Panic whips through the vampires as the first few give into the red fear, frenzying amidst their Kindred.

Storyteller Goals: Demonstrate that physical force is overtaking reason within the Camarilla. Presage the violent collapse that is soon to come.

Character Goals: Survive the attack and the riot that results.

Actions: The violence and the setting of a fire in the middle of the crowd provokes a riot. Run the characters through the outcome as normal. Those who manage to keep their ground and/or wits might try to follow through on one of these actions:

Chase Victrix

It's not too hard to catch up to Victrix. While she and her first pursuer manage to get out of the corridor before the riot erupts, she soon turns to face him in battle. She knows him, and she knows she can take him.

If the characters manage to react quickly enough and get out before the panicked crowd washes over them, they will stumble upon the scene just as she finishes the fight:

You hear one of Victrix' distinctive war cries just before you come around the corner. There she stands: holding the Peregrine's blade and grinning over his collapsing body. "That's what you get," she growls, as the body begins to dissolve into ash.

She looks up, noticing you, and narrows her eyes, keeping her ready stance.

She won't attack the characters unless they attack her. If the characters engage her in discussion, Victrix will relate her story: that she was thinking about killing Herennius but waiting for orders from the Legion before acting. Someone else struck him in the crowd – but the guard assumed it was her and gave chase. She knew better than to stick around.

In fact, she's telling the truth.

If the characters fight her, Victrix will try to tell them what happened and get them to lay off. If they don't listen, she'll turn to mist and escape.

If the characters don't manage to react in time and try to give chase after extricating themselves from the riot, they will find the ashes of the Peregrine guard dusting the tunnel – and no trace of Victrix.

Protect Victrix

Those characters who react quickly enough might be able to get between Victrix and the Peregrine guard, giving her a chance to escape. If they do battle with him, use the statistics for one of the Heretic Rebels from the end of the first chapter.

The Peregrine guard roars in frustration as you block his path. "She slew him! That traitor bitch cut him down! Get out of my way!"

You catch a glimpse of Victrix as she disappears into one of the tunnels, looking over her shoulder. She gives you a quick nod, her lips curling up in the hint of a smile.

Investigate the Scene

Characters who manage to keep from getting swept up in the crowd have the option to push forward and have a look at the murder scene. Since most of the Kindred in the tunnel are fleeing in panic, it only takes a minute or two for the tunnel to clear.

Your shadows dance on the walls in the flicker of firelight. The corridor is emptied of Kindred, and ash and flame are all that is left. A sword lies in the middle of the fire, blackening in the heat.

If the characters manage to resist frenzy, they can approach the flames and have a closer look. Even those who don't move in may be able to observe the details, but unless they have Auspex, they will suffer a –3 penalty on their Investigation rolls.

Successes on Wits + Investigation rolls will reveal the following details.

1 Success: *The flames were set by a torch. You can still see the its stub in the midst of the firelight. You don't remember seeing a torch in the crowd.* Characters with Obfuscate will realize that the torch was concealed with the use of the Touch of Shadow.

2 Successes: *The sword in the ash is coarse – not the weapon of a legionnaire. It looks as if it's been broken and crudely repaired. It must be very poorly weighted.*

3 Successes: *Considering the speed of the crime and the positions of the weapons left at the scene, It's not likely that the torch and the sword were held by the same vampire. It looks as though two Kindred took part in this murder.*

4 Successes: *The grip on that sword is too large for Victrix to have held comfortably. It's extremely unlikely that she struck the blow with the blade.*

5 Successes: *The position of the torch actually suggests that it was placed on Herennius' body from the front – which means that whoever delivered the killing blow was invisible, approaching the whole of the procession from the far end of the tunnel or one of the open doorways up ahead. Victrix didn't hold the blade and she was visible in the crowd all along – so she must be innocent. Judging from the character of the blade and the clear foreknowledge the attackers had of the route, you should be looking at the Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia to solve this crime. It's looking more and more likely that one or both of Herennius' guards were involved.*

Successes on a Wits + Warfare roll will reveal the following details:

1 Success: *Herennius never stood a chance. In close quarters, surrounded by other Kindred – he probably never even had a moment to react.*

2 Successes: *This was an ambush. The crowd would have acted as an impassable wall for Herennius and his guards, since they were all moving forward and wouldn't realize there was an attack until it was too late. The best place to strike, then, would have been from the front.*

3 Successes: *That sword is garbage: badly weighted, blunt blade, cracked hilt. Whoever was using it must have known that fire would follow his attack – unless he was planning to hack away at the body for ten or fifteen minutes for the same result. Considering that nobody saw the torch until the body was alight, and considering that the sword stroke looks as if it came from behind, this must have been at least a two-man job.*

4 Successes: *There are too many escape routes in this tunnel to make a fair guess as to which way the murderers went when they left. It's also possible that someone has been watching from one of the many niches and exits all along the route – this place is perfect for observation as well as ambush.*

5 Successes: *While this attack may have served the needs of the Senex, it has all the character of an operation performed by the Peregrine Collegia. The chaotic aftermath and the availability of multiple escape routes are both characteristic of Peregrine assassination. Even when the Legion engages in covert attack, their agents are much more quiet and controlled.*

Aids/Bonuses: The panic of the crowd and the chaos of the circumstances will aid anyone who attempts to conceal their activities. Stealth and Larceny rolls gain a +2 bonus.

Obstacles/Penalties: It's hard to tell what's going on during the riot. Attempts to investigate or observe others suffer a –2 penalty until the tunnel clears.

Consequences: Characters may be affected by the political and personal implications of the attack: a member of the Senex in good standing, murdered in public over an unresolved legal challenge. Those with great political acumen will realize that the Senex is in real trouble. The fact that the challenge occurred at all is an indication of its slipping control, and the character of the attack that follows indicates that membership in the Senex doesn't carry the sacred weight of respect that it once did.

• Characters who attack Victrix without bothering to hear her out or figure out that she's innocent will earn her suspicion and ire. She's going to take special pleasure in betraying them in the future.

• Those who support Victrix will not really soften her. When she turns on them in chapter 3, she'll think of them as weak and sentimental, not allies.

Event: The Monumental Pact

Mental: – Physical: •••• Social: –

Overview: Helvidius Bassianus, now fully convinced that the Senex is fractured and incapable of rule decides to back the winning horse and join forces with the Lancea et Sanctum. While the alliance is brokered, sealing the fate of the Camarilla, a small band of loyalists attempts to attack Bassianus. The characters have the opportunity to distinguish themselves by either defending the meeting or helping to disrupt it.

Description: *Later that night. You stand in a small, well-appointed chamber – one of the properties of the Legion. Helvidius Bassianus stands behind a table, his hands clasped behind his back, listening as one of his soldiers whispers in his ear.*

Thascius Hostilinus enters, flanked by three black-clad, hooded Kindred. He glances at you for a moment, then moves towards the table. Helvidius regards him as he approaches.

"The upstart Herennius Lanista is ash. Set alight in the tunnels amidst a crowd," says Helvidius, his voice flat and uninflected.

Hostilinus clenches his fist. "You go too far! The Senex cannot possibly expect the Kindred to accept public murder of its-"

Bassianus raises a hand to silence him. "The Legion had nothing to do with it. My agents were there, but they had no orders yet. But you're right. It can't be allowed. The Senex can't control its own people and it doesn't command the respect of the Kindred any more."

Hostilinus narrows his eyes. "They haven't for years. Do you not see? It is the Legion that enforces the respect of the Senex. It has always been the Legion." He pauses for a moment. Then: "Why did you call me here? What-"

Bassianus indicates the seat on one side of the table, taking one for himself. "Hostilinus. Sit. Let's talk."

The two men sit, speaking in low tones. One of Hostilinus' Martyrs looks your way silently, his eyes flicking towards the door. For a second, you think that he's trying to say that you should leave, and you bristle, knowing that you have as much a right to be here as anyone else. But then you hear a sound in the tunnel outside – the whisper of cloth on stone, the sound of a knife withdrawing from a scabbard. He must have heard something before you did. His look was a warning.

What do you do?

Storyteller Goals: Play out the sealing of the deal that dooms the Camarilla. Give the players the chance to play a pivotal role in history.

Character Goals: Either preserve the meeting or disrupt it.

Actions: The characters should have absolute freedom to do what they want in this scene. They are players in the political game by this point, and deserve the freedom. The results may be the same as if the characters didn't intervene, but the difference is *they're the same because they're the characters' doing.* The players don't have to know that things work out the same no matter what happens here: the important thing is that they have a good time and that they have absolute freedom in creating the story.

Characters who score successes on either a Wits + Politics or Wits + Empathy roll will realize that Bassianus is about to propose some kind of alliance between the Lancea et Sanctum and the troops under his command.

The room is full of guards: soldiers of the Legion are all arranged near the table, and the three Martyrs are all

within Hostilinus' arm's reach. Give the characters one turn to act, and then bring a group of five attackers into the room. Use the statistics for the Heretic Rebels from the end of chapter one for the attackers.

As soon as the attack begins, two of Hostilinus' Martyrs will use Cloak the Gathering, concealing Hostilinus and the whole of the Sanctified delegation from view. Bassianus will stand as his four legionnaires step forward to meet the attack in battle. A successful Wits + Warfare roll will indicate that the odds are heavily in favor of the delegation in the room: five disorganized attackers are facing off against five highly trained soldiers, and four elite Martyrs, even if the characters don't figure into the battle.

Characters have two real options here:

Repel the Attackers

The characters can join the delegation in repelling the attackers. In fact, since they're the closest to the door, the characters will be afforded the opportunity to block and fight off the attack all by themselves, getting two full turns to act before the rest of the characters in the room can join in – in the first turn, the Sanctified vanish and the soldiers draw their arms, and in the second turn the soldiers cross the room to meet the attack.

If the characters seem to be handling the problem competently, the soldiers will hang back and prepare to aid them instead of interfering.

- **Attacker Details**

  A Nosferatu vampire grits his teeth as he brandishes his sword in one gray fist. "Traitors," he whispers, hoarse with rage. "Swine." He steps forward.

  A dark-skinned woman with wide-set eyes draws two daggers, moving warily as she glances from you to the soldiers and back again. "Death to the Sanctified," she declares. "Death to the enemies of the Camarilla!"

  A smallish, furtive-looking vampire holds a bladed axe in a low stance, pushing towards you. "Out of my way, dog!" he shouts.

Assist the Attackers

Of course, the characters who realize what's going on may want to take the opportunity to disrupt the meeting and try to assassinate Helvidius Bassianus before he can broker the deal. They're going to have a hell of a fight on their hands if they do – the soldiers of the Legion will fight unto Final Death to protect their leader, and Bassianus himself will not hesitate to face them.

The Sanctified will stay hidden for a couple of rounds while Hostilinus figures out what's going on. As soon as he realizes what was about to happen – two rounds into the battle - he will order his Martyrs to protect Bassianus, and they will extend their power of Cloak the Gathering to Bassianus and his soldiers. If the characters see through their Obfuscate and keep going, two of the Martyrs will join in the battle and sacrifice themselves so that Hostilinus, his one remaining Martyr, and Bassianus and his soldiers can escape.

They won't kill the characters – you need to keep them alive so that they can play out the rest of the story, and Hostilinus and Bassianus are both much more interested in completing their deal than they are staying and fighting. Bassianus believes he holds the Camarilla's only chance at restoring order and power to the structure of government, and Hostilinus sees the opportunity to manipulate Bassianus and bring about the final collapse of the pagan Camarilla.

Use the stats for the legionnaires if the characters do battle with them.

- **Legionnaire Details**

  One of the armored vampires turns towards you, bringing his gladius around in a menacing arc. "I knew it," he says, pointing the tip of the sword your way. "Traitors. Come and meet your final death."

  The legionnaire flexes his gloved fingers around the hilt of his sword, nodding slowly. "You too?" he asks. "Come then. Let's have it out."

  The legionnaire draws her sword, stepping around in front of Bassianus. She raises one hand in a gesture of warning. "Step away and lower your weapons," she says. "This is your last chance."

Aids/Bonuses: The close quarters make it tough to avoid bumping into one another during the battle, making it easier (+1) to initiate a grapple.

Obstacles/Penalties: The room is small enough to make it difficult (-2) to perform flashy maneuvers or slip past the fighters into an exit.

Consequences: If the characters repel the attack, they will be in position to witness Bassianus' and Hostilinus' historic deal. They will also earn respect in both vampires' estimation. Those who are already members of the Legio Mortuum or the Lancea et Sanctum will gain a single dot of Status (assuming their current status is no higher than 3 dots – they won't go up to 5 for this) in their wing and will be offered the first dot in the other. Those who are not members of either will be offered the opportunity to join one or both, and will gain one dot of Status with whichever group they agree to join.

- If they participate in the attack, but fail to prevent Bassianus' and Hostilinus' escape, the deal will be sealed elsewhere. Those characters who are currently members of the Legio Mortuum or the Lancea et Sanctum lose a single dot of Status in their respective wings.
- If they participate in the attack and manage to destroy either Bassianus or Hostilinus, the deal will still take place between their subordinates.

Aftermath

The Senex

The disruption of the Assembly and the outcome of Herennius Lanista's aborted claim are terrible failures on the part of the weakening Senex. Most of the politically astute vampires in the wing are aware of the crisis facing them, but have no idea what to do about it. Under normal circumstances, the Senex would be able to rely on the Legion to protect its interests and restore order while it purged troublemakers and reasserted command – but the Legion is in the process of deserting the Senex, and without its strength, the government of the Camarilla is facing collapse.

Some of the officials of the Senex are scrambling to try and keep the Legion onside, while others are attempting to broker deals with the Peregrine Collegia, hoping to form a new army. Many more, though, are trying to ensure a future of safety and comfort for themselves, and are making overtures to the Lancea et Sanctum for membership. Some are even leaving Rome, hoping to rule in one of the outlying territories of the Camarilla. Over the next fifty years, the collapse of the Senex will accelerate, setting the stage for its final collapse and dissolution in Chapter Three of this chronicle.

The Legio Mortuum

The Legio Mortuum is standing at the brink of internal war. Helvidius Bassianus holds undisputed command over the strongest and most populous faction of the wing, but he's going to face a lot of defiance from those who remain loyal to the Senex and the old ways of the Camarilla. In the next fifty years, while the alliance between the Legion and the Sanctified solidifies, periodic battles will break out. Every member of the Legion will be kept busy with suppressing internal rebellion and maintaining order.

Helvidius Bassianus will watch silently as most of the elites of the Senex disappear and die in the years between this chapter and the next. While most of the vampires of the Camarilla will assume that he is eliminating his foes, Bassianus and those closest to him will know that something much more worrisome is happening.

If Bassianus is destroyed in this story, he should be replaced by another officer of the Legion, who will take his place at any of the events where he is mentioned in the rest of this chronicle.

The Lancea et Sanctum

The Sanctified, under the leadership of Thascius Hostilinus, are finally in position to eliminate the pagan tradition of the Camarilla and take command of Necropolis. Instead of celebrating, though, they are throwing themselves into the task, knowing full well that the path ahead is a difficult one – and that they need to hold onto the Legio Mortuum if they want to get it done. Most of their effort is split between eliminating their enemies and maintaining relations with the Legion.

Hostilinus himself works tirelessly to ensure the victory of the Sanctified – until his own Kindred turn on him in 379 CE and wipe him off the board, turning command over to Marciana Longina Rhetrix.

The Peregrine Collegia

The Collegia are splintering, just like the Senex. Some bands remain loyal to the traditional system, figuring that they can play a part in reasserting control and destroy their enemies in the Legion, securing a place for themselves as the new enforcers of the Camarilla (and the crutch that the Senex needs to survive). Others are siding with the Lancea et Sanctum, taking the opportunity to strike out at the Senex and fighting to take the plum territories away from the governing officials and keep it for themselves.

Many of the Kindred of the Collegia will spend the next fifty years in battle: fighting each other, fighting the Legion, or attacking the Senex.

Experience

Give the players between one and three experience points for each event in this story. Give one extra point to the best roleplayer, the player who had the best idea, and the player whose character behaved in the most impressive manner.

Concluding

This chapter should conclude with an event emphasizing the uncertain future of the Camarilla and the battle characters need to fight to keep their heads above the rising tide of blood. Narrate the years of riots and battle that follow, making it clear that the old structures of the Camarilla are steadily weakening while the new structure – the Sanctified / Legio Mortuum alliance – is growing stronger.

Experience

All characters participating in this Chapter of the chronicle gain an end-of-chapter bonus of 3 experience points.



Chapter III: Vandals in the City of Emperors

"O Lord, what vile, wretched creatures we are. We imagined that we were sufficient in ourselves, immune to destiny, immune to divine will. We were corrupted by false prophecy and the pleasures of the flesh. We stained the very splendor of creation in our sodden revel. O Lord, how apt our reward! We bow to it now, we suffer it willingly. We learn our place. Now, O Lord, your will and yours alone shall be done."

-Marciana Longina Rhetrix
at Mass, 410 CE

IT IS EASY TO GO DOWN INTO HELL; NIGHT AND DAY, THE GATES OF DARK DEATH STAND WIDE; BUT TO CLIMB BACK AGAIN, TO RETRACE ONE'S STEPS TO THE UPPER AIR - THERE'S THE RUB, THE TASK.

-VIRGIL

Overview

This is the end: of the Chronicle and the Camarilla both. This chapter presents the events of 410 CE: the year in which both internal and external pressures finally overwhelm the defenses of the Camarilla and bring it all tumbling down. Everything accelerates to a breakneck, blood-drenched climax, leaving the characters wandering through the wreckage and released from all obligation, free to determine their fates. This final chapter comprises one long story.

Neary fifty years have passed since the events at the close of Chapter 2. In that time, the traditional governing structures of the Camarilla have weakened considerably: see the Passage of Events sideline. As the ranks of the Sanctified swell, darkness and solemnity are replacing the old revels. The chariot races and the orgies of Caracella have fallen out of fashion. Tertia Julia Comitor and Macellarius Corbulo are both gone, and may have met their final deaths. Violence engulfs Necropolis, swallowing up many of the leaders on all sides. Thascius Hostilinus is among the victims, and is replaced by Philemon the Damascene, an even more fervent and wrathful bishop. The numbers of the Senex thin considerably as vampires fall to personal attack, are arrested for commission of crime, or simply abandon their seats. Pagan sacrifice is made illegal, forcing the dissolution of the Cult of Augurs and the redefinition of the Veneficia as criminal sorcery.

Everything is falling apart. At the worst possible moment, as the factions of the Camarilla begin to separate and attempt self-government, the city falls to barbarian invasion.

The climax of the chronicle launches with sudden thunder in **The Barbarian Assault**. The incredulous characters find themselves facing a wave of battle-crazed invaders just minutes after the gates of Rome are breached and must decide whether to fight the oncoming army or retreat into Necropolis. Barbarian forces rush into the city in greater and greater numbers, eventually overwhelming its defenses and forcing the Kindred of the Camarilla to retreat underground.

In their flight to escape the flames that threaten to consume the living city, the characters choose their route: either running into a nest of opportunistic Striges in **Owls in Necropolis** or finding the leaders of the Camarilla engaged in a final, desperate bid to reassert control in **The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex**. Either way, they face trauma and great danger. It is now obvious that the

Merits and Change

At this point, characters find that some of their Status Merits are drastically altered. Those who are primarily members of the Cult of Augurs or the Peregrine Collegia can no longer be members of the Senex. Technically, the Cult of Augurs no longer exists as a legal Wing. Those who are primarily members of the Legio Mortuum find that their Status among the Cult and the Collegia suffer as well, since the soldiers have spent most of the last fifty years clashing with them.

None of this means that the characters have to lose the Status they've accumulated. Those with Wing Status: Cult of Augurs may not have legal authority any more, but they are just as respected by the former members of their Wing. Those who must leave the Senex can retain Wing Status: Senex, reflecting the goodwill they are afforded for previous good deeds, even if they are no longer able to participate in legislative assembly. Soldiers of the Legio Mortuum can retain their Status with their newfound enemies as an illustration of esteem for their respectful behavior, even in trying times.

Alternately, you can allow players to cash in the Status their characters lose, refunding the experience value of the Merit and allowing them to spend the points elsewhere.

Camarilla is suffering a series of blows that may prove to be fatal.

After a day's rest, the characters are witness to a gathering of the shattered, demoralized remnants of the Senex in **The Night of Shame**. They are afforded the opportunity to take the lead in attempting to save the Camarilla or to deal the deathblow to the government in a formal debate. This scene brings the climax of the chronicle to an end.

The plot splits into three threads in the denouement. Characters who are lost and seeking direction meet with a young vampire of the Lancea et Sanctum in **The Missionary**, getting the chance to throw in with the Sanctified or cement their position as enemies of the church. Those who are resolved to rescue the Camarilla – or destroy it utterly – meet one of the last loyal soldiers of the Legio Mortuum in **The Soldier's Oath**, and have a concrete chance to move towards their stated goal. Those who choose to abandon Rome see the ruined Baths at Caracella one last time in **The Ghost of Rome** and gain an understanding of that which has fallen.

The Chronicle comes to a close as the characters embark on their chosen path for the future. **The Pilgrim's Path** sets them on the road to rebuilding Necropolis in the dark, somber image of the Lancea et Sanctum. **The Lords of Ashes** casts the characters as the resistance, fighting the Sanctified rule and paving the way for the first footholds of the Circle of the Crone in Rome. **The Journey Outwards** sends the characters on the road to Constantinople, sending them into the heart of established Sanctified territory and the birthplace of the Invictus.

Themes

Chaos and Opportunity

This is it. Everything goes to hell. The Camarilla is rolling towards total collapse, its individual factions splintering into a rapidly descending, disordered mass, like chunks of snow in an avalanche. There's nothing anyone can do to stop it. The backbone of the Senex is tearing itself apart. The Legio Mortuum is no longer taking orders. The Peregrine Collegia are shattering into self-interested pockets throughout Necropolis, discarding all decorum and law. The Cult of Augurs is scrambling to ally itself with the emerging power, and the only organization they can't abide – the Lancea et Sanctum – is rapidly starting to look like the right horse to back. All it takes is one little push to put all of them over the edge – and that comes one night, under the banner of a barbarian army. Chaos reigns.

But in chaos, there is endless opportunity. Every vampire who wants something – something she couldn't pursue because of law, or obligation, or a sense of propriety suddenly finds herself released from every stricture that held her back. Every vampire with a grudge can cut loose. Every vampire with hopes for a better world can work to build it, unfettered by the one that is dying. The crucible of history is afire, and those who can survive the blaze will emerge as the fortunate few, free to dictate the terms of the future. Characters involved in this phase of the story will surely see that the storm is both a terrible threat and a hidden blessing. Even those who love the Camarilla and wish to preserve it will know that they are free to re-establish its reign, with themselves at its head (of course) – as long as they can weather it.

While telling stories in this phase of the setting, be sure to demonstrate this thematic dichotomy. Vampires and mortals alike should be disappearing and dying in the maelstrom of disorder, and the downtrodden should be rising to prominence. Kindred of all stripe are rushing to express their hidden desires, either by trying to build a new law, or by giving in to their basest instincts. Violence explodes. Treasures are looted. And in the wreckage, the prologue to the future of Kindred society is written.

All of the characters in this phase of the setting are forced to make their final choices – the ones that define their ultimate destiny and determine whether they will join the Camarilla in obscurity or survive as part of the new Kindred world.

Judgment and Salvation

Amidst the collapse of the Camarilla, the rhetoric of the Lancea et Sanctum begins to take precedence. The disintegration of Roman Kindred Society and the destruction of a shocking number of its vampires may not turn out to be the all-encompassing apocalyptic judgment that the Sanctified are expecting, but it sure feels like it to those who are there.

People react very strongly when they begin to believe that they don't have long to live, and Kindred are no different. With the world of the Camarilla sliding into destruction, many of the vampires are caught up in a massive wave of doubt and disbelief. Many panic and succumb to their darkest urges, losing their Humanity in a great and final debauch. Others find hope in the unlikeliest of circumstances: the end of everything compels many (including some of the crudest monsters) to turn away from the evil they have known, seeking redemption instead. Some turn to the Lancea et Sanctum, but many more embark on personal searches without the aid of the nascent church. Wandering away from their

obligations to the failing Camarilla, they are inspired to deny duty and work to right the wrongs they feel they have committed.

Characters have an unusual opportunity to attempt to reclaim lost Humanity amidst the chaos of the collapse, compelled by the very real possibility of impending judgment. Even those who don't believe in the teachings of the Lancea et Sanctum may believe that the Gods of Rome are unleashing a furious storm in response to the failures of the Camarilla, seeing the oncoming apocalypse in decidedly pagan terms. True, many embark on their quest for selfish reasons – and will thus find no comfort. But some are genuinely repentant of their evil, and some are soon bound to be.

Darkness Rises

A great vacuum is created by the rapid collapse of the Camarilla, and few of the many forces eager to rush in and replace it have anything approaching a workable plan. Even before the government of the Senex is dissolved, factions are rising within the wings, splitting and diffusing the focus of each individual organization. The resulting chaos presents an opportunity for the crudest, most vicious elements to rise and find purchase – simply because they are willing to seek and exercise power in ways that more civilized competitors would avoid.

Regardless of the best intentions of the vampires (and the arguable necessity of the Camarilla's destruction), the fall of the Camarilla precedes a dark period for Kindred across Europe. In the time between the collapse of the mostly republican Senex and the rise of the feudalist Invictus, violence and ignorance reign supreme. Only the Lancea et Sanctum stands as a bastion of learning in that time – but it is plagued by an internal war of succession that rapidly solidifies its doctrine and freezes out real intellectual progress.

The disordered brutality of the coming centuries is the factor that precipitates the formation of the Circle of the Crone and the assembly of the Invictus. In the meantime, Kindred survive on their wits alone, coming together in small groups and fighting to stay hidden and stay fed. Terrible psychological wounds prevent many of them from seeking to govern themselves by any but the most rudimentary means.

Characters should see the rise of incomprehensible savagery among the Kindred in this, the final chapter of the Chronicle. They should be encouraged to reflect upon the price of the Camarilla's fall, realizing that its ripples touch the psyche of every vampire involved, and they should face the dilemma presented: seek power, and suffer the consequences, or try to maintain their Humanity and survive in a malevolent age. They should be made to understand the forces that drive so many of their kind to the Lancea et Sanctum, even if they don't believe it its doctrine. But finally, and most importantly, they should understand that they have played their part in the end of an age, and while the events that follow are certainly evolutionary, they are also dark and unforgiving to those who experience them directly.

Allies and Antagonists

Barbarian Warriors

Quotes: *(unintelligible shouting) (Intimidation)*

(indistinct, guttural speech in an unmistakably mocking tone) (Socialize)

(deep, rumbling syllables, strung together with clear menace) (Empathy)

Description: *These mortals are fierce, rugged creatures, wearing the heavy hides of a northern tribe. They are weathered and sun-darkened, having endured a long march over the varied terrain of Europa before their arrival at the gates of Rome. Most haven't had the chance to bathe for a week or so, and they look and smell like the bestial creatures of Roman prejudice – even though they are no filthier or unkempt than any collection of warriors during a long siege.*

Many bear the distinctive coloring of foreigners: blond or red hair and light-colored eyes, mixed in with the darker hues that Romans are more familiar with. Their hair is long and braided, their faces bearded. They brandish patterned axes and bows, and dangle stone charms from leather thongs around their necks and wrists.

Background: This is a Visigoth army, led by King Alaric the First, former servant and now proud enemy of Rome. Most of the soldiers in the army once did battle on behalf of Rome, under his command in service to the Emperor Flavius Theodosius. After the Emperor's death, the Visigoths were ordered into a series of difficult and bloody battles in the Julian Alps, losing a great number of men and garnering little reward. Disillusioned and angry, they named Alaric their King as well as commander in 395 CE, and he led them to rebellion.

Taking advantage of his familiarity with Roman defenses, the barbarian army marched unimpeded into Greece and forced the representatives of the Emperor to enter into a dialogue with their new King. Talks failed, a battle ensued, and the Visigoth army escaped, returning to visit their fury on Rome several times, in bloodier and bloodier exchanges, before finally laying siege to the city of Rome itself in 410 CE.



As their scene in the final part of this Chronicle begins, the Visigoth army stands poised at the Northeast corner of Rome, preparing to storm the gates and overwhelm the city. The accumulated hatred of nearly two decades is welling up within the soldiers, and stands ready to be unleashed.

Storytelling Hints: The Barbarian Warriors represent the nightmare of Rome: a foreign force that overpowers the army of the Empire, bursting through the gates and sacking the city. In truth, they aren't the mindless monsters that civilized Romans have been led to expect – but they are very much creatures of war, and they intend to repay the Romans for every indignity and defeat their people have suffered, for centuries, at the hands of the Empire. No Roman corner is sacred to them, and no mercy is shown. They are, in some senses, the students of Roman aggression, and they have learned well.

The attack of the Barbarians initiates the final part of this Chronicle, and should evoke the feeling that the Camarilla has tipped over a precipice. They represent the onrush of the dark ages: the uneducated, uncaring wave of bloody hostility that reflects the hypocritical barbarism of Rome's tradition of conquest.

Don't fall into the trap of playing the barbarians like madmen unleashed, though. That's the bigoted Roman perception of them, not the reality. In truth, they are as rational and tactical as the Roman forces they face – at this point, moreso. The real horror for the Romans begins not only when they see that the enemy has grown stronger than them, but when they realize (if they do manage to realize) that the enemy is no less intelligent, and no less deserving than them.

What the Barbarian Warriors want is easy to understand. First and foremost, they want revenge. The average soldier in the invading ranks wants to bring Rome low: to smash its symbols and idols, to crush its commanders, and to destroy its great structures – just as the forces of Rome once did to their homes. Second, many of them want to loot the city. They've been given leave to do so, and many will grab whatever treasures they can find.

Sample Barbarian Warrior

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Skills: Crafts (repairing weapons) 2, Investigation 1, Warfare 2, Archery 3, Brawl 3, Stealth 1, Survival (wilderness) 3, Weaponry 3, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Intimidation (battle cry) 3, Socialize 2

Merits: Fighting Style: Boxing 3, Fleet of Foot: 2, Iron Stamina

Health: 9

Willpower: 3

Morality: 4

Virtue: Fortitude. The enduring strength of the barbarian warrior keeps him going, carrying him over harsh terrain and through chaotic battles. Exhaustion, hunger, and even wounds aren't enough to stop him: he will fight until the bitter end.

Vice: Wrath. When his stamina fails him, the fuel that keeps him marching is the rolling fire of rage. The degradation of his people at the hands of the Romans – both real and imagined – has turned the barbarian warrior into a cruel, seething avenger.

Initiative: 3

Defense: 2

Speed: 13

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Battle Axe	3(L)	3	-	10
Bow	2(L)	2	reload after 1 shot	5
Knife	1(L)	1	-	8

Armor: 1/0 (hides and furs)

Strix-Possessed Legionnaires

Quotes: *"Not to worry, citizen. Stand away – we'll handle this." (Persuasion)*

"And so it comes to this. After all this time, after all these years, and here we are." (Intimidation)

"Don't fret, little ones, little children. Soon it will all be finished. Blood comes to blood." (Intimidation)

Description: *Their bodies are lean and solid, without a trace of fat or softness to them. They both wear the black Lorica Segmentata of the Legion, and both wear their helmets drawn low.*

The soldiers are wearing their helmets low at all times so as to make it difficult to see their faces in all but direct illumination. They are closed-lipped and seem crudely emotionless – consummate professionals and inhumane killers both.

They are both distinctly Roman-born in appearance, chosen to help ease the fears of the bigoted Kindred of the Senex. One of them still bears the stake that felled him under his armor, sawn off to allow the chest plate to be fitted back in place.

As it is with all possessed victims of the Strix, the eyes of the Legionnaires reflect direct light like a nocturnal beast's.

Background: Both of the Legionnaires were once elite, loyal equestrians of the Legio Mortuum, serving as guardians of the sacred sites of the Camarilla. They are both known to the Senex, having performed duty at official assembly on more than one occasion, and their association with the notorious gladiatrix, Victrix, has only increased their renown.



When the recent troubles began, Victrix kept close ties to both warriors, making sure to foster a friendship while she waited patiently, watching for a sign. When they told her that a recent meeting of the Senex had revealed the resting place of Aulus Julius Senex, and that they had been selected to accompany the delegation of the Senex to his tomb, she understood that her moment had come. Contriving to spend some time alone with one of the two men, she impaled him on a stake and presented him to her allies among the Striges. The betrayed legionnaire was possessed, and he subsequently assisted Victrix in capturing his compatriot and offering him up to the Striges as well.

Now, the Legionnaires are quietly obeying the order to guard the officials of the Camarilla on their approach to the founder's tomb. Victrix has been invited to accompany them as well, and, as they move through Necropolis, the three are poised to strike a devastating blow against the Camarilla.

Storytelling Hints: The Strix-possessed Legionnaires are linchpins in the Striges' assault on the Julii. They take careful pains to remain undiscovered until the crucial moment – when they have an advantage over their targets – and then they strike. They are aware that their eyes can give them away, so they take pains to avoid the direct gaze of other Kindred as much as possible, speaking little and obeying orders wordlessly while they bide their time. If they are alone with a vampire who seems to spot them before the time is right, they will attempt to use their Disciplines to erase his memory of the discovery.

When in the presence of a member of the Julii, though, they are barely able to contain themselves. Only the knowledge that their great prize (Aulus Julius Senex himself) is within reach lends them the strength to resist the urge to grab their misbegotten descendants and destroy them immediately. Characters may notice their stilted, obviously careful movements and speech in the presence of the Julii, though – but it's completely possible that they will mistake it for the normal response of a soldier in the presence of his betters. If you want to maintain the Striges' secret, take pains to describe their mechanical, restrained movements in advance so that the characters can believably overlook their behavior until the secret is revealed.

Once Senex is ash, though, all bets are off.

The Striges are slow in their armor, but they are both at full (or, in the case of the staked soldier, nearly full) health and can take quite a beating before they're in danger of destruction. They won't be quick to abandon

the bodies until their mission is accomplished, and one of them might even be willing to die, if necessary, to guarantee the outcome of the attack.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Legio Mortuum

Embrace: Third Century, CE

Apparent Age: Early 20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Skills: Investigation 2, Occult 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 2, Stealth (silent step) 3, Weaponry 3, Animal Ken 3, Expression 1, Intimidation (wordless) 3, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge (misdirection) 4

Merits: Status: Legio Mortuum 3, Status: Camarilla 2, Haven: Security 3, Haven: Size 3

Health: 9

Willpower: 10

Humanity: 0

Virtue: n/a. The Striges have no Virtue.

Vice: Gluttony. The Striges revel in physical sensation, and will indulge themselves at every opportunity – even if the experience they indulge in is something that other Kindred would find ordinary or unpleasant. It isn't unusual, for example, for a Strix-possessed vampire to bear self-inflicted wounds hidden under their clothes, and they regularly drain their vessels dry.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Gladius (short sword)	2L	2/S	-	11
Pugio (small dagger)	1L	1/S	-	9

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	-2	-2
Shield	-	+2	-

Disciplines: Dominate 3, Protean 2, Resilience 4

Blood Potency: 2

Vitae/per turn: 11/1

Supernatural Powers: (see p. 226, **Requiem for Rome**) Possession, Spiritual Essence, Sense Blood, Embrace, Owl Eyes.

Julia Sabina, Possessed

Quotes: *(Persuasion): "Help me, Julia. Guide me, show me your wisdom. Again and again and again – it never ends, does it? Well then, my little ones. I do have what you need, but one wonders: what are you willing to trade for it? What will you do for me?"*

(Intimidation): "That shit Macellarius will get his soon, I assure you of that. Consider that a promise."

(Subterfuge): "Oh please. The Senex falls, the Legion is lost, the Augurs splintered. I've heard it all before, and it's never anything but so much panicked screeching. Tomorrow night, everything will be back to normal, and the addle-headed morons fueling this fire will be split and peeled for their trouble."

Description: Julia is no different on the surface – she is, as she has always been, an understated participant in the machinations of the Senex. There is a new edge to her now, though, a sort of distillation of cruelty in her expression. Those who know her might mistake her new attitude for a loss of Humanity. So many Kindred are struggling to hold back the Beast in these times of strife, and it's hardly unusual to see a member of the Senex slipping a little.

She has a new habit though: she tries to make sure that her back is turned to the light source in any room, avoiding the possibility that her contemporaries will notice that her eyes reflect light in a strange way now... shining like an owl's in direct illumination.

Background: Some time in the last few weeks, one of Julia Sabina's slave retainers was murdered by a servant of the Strix and subsequently possessed. While she slept, the Strix snuck into her chambers and beat her savagely, pushing her into torpor and leaping into her body, taking control.

Storytelling Hints: Under possession, Julia is barely able to maintain the illusion of her previous identity. The Strix is finding it very difficult to conceal its contempt for the vampires of the Camarilla, and slides into a tone of mockery and disgust with startling ease, often pulling back only after noticing the shocked looks its listeners display in response. When it's caught out, the Strix will usually attempt to pass off inappropriate statements as jokes or idle chatter, but those who aren't fooled will quickly strain its limited patience.

The Strix is planning to do as much damage as possible with Julia's voice and then find itself a nice, sturdy warrior to possess so that it can slay her and move on. Characters with obvious physical strength should notice that she is clearly sizing them up with a hungry eye. Her gaze is nakedly lustful, but the intimate contact she has in mind isn't what most would assume.



All of the advice that Julia dispenses now is destructive and irresponsible. The Strix usually has no idea what characters are talking about when they ask for political advice, and will rely on its Subterfuge to give them what they expect while attempting to conceal its ignorance. Particularly astute characters may notice her sudden inability to remember the details of the Camarilla's elite, despite her attempts to misdirect.

The Strix in Julia is smart enough to know that it's not going to win a battle if the characters discover it and attack. At the first sign of trouble, it will abandon her body, leaving her to them and fleeing in search of another likely target. If it has the chance, it will return to destroy her in another body – but survival is its first priority.

Clan: Julii
Wing: Senex
Embrace: 189CE
Apparent Age: Early 20s
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (History) 1, Religion 1, Occult 4
Physical Skills: Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 4 (dagger)
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation (Cold, glittering gaze) 4, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge (Playing to Expectations) 3
Merits: Haven Location 4, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 5, Noble Heritage 4, Patron 1, Resources 3, Retainers 3, Status (Camarilla) 1, Status (Senex) 2
Willpower: 9
Humanity: 0
Virtue: n/a. The Striges have no Virtue.
Vice: Lust. The Strix that has seized Julia shares her vice – that's part of what attracted it to her. Where she was degrading, though, it is thoroughly corrupt. The Strix visits its obscene tastes on everyone Julia has access to – her servants, her debtors, and her lovers all alike. Her previous sadism has exploded into malicious cruelty, and she takes every opportunity to direct and develop the suffering of her loyal friends, carefully planning their collective demise as she places them under more and more strain every night.
Initiative: 6
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Blood Potency: 5
Disciplines: Dominate 3, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 3
Vitae/Per Turn: 14/2
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1	8

Supernatural Powers: (see p. 226, **Requiem for Rome**) Possession, Spiritual Essence, Sense Blood, Embrace, Owl Eyes.

Dalia, Sanctified Missionary

Quotes: *(Persuasion): "The end is here. Can you not see the signs? Can you not feel the change? Come, then. Come into the fold of the one true faith, and be defended. No harm can come to you if you but pledge yourselves to the Lord."*

(Religion): "The fires come and we endure. The scalding rain is upon us, and we endure. These are the nights of judgment."

(Empathy): "Your expression is hard, but I see the fear in your eyes. I feel it as I feel my own. All must tremble before the might of the Lord."

Description: *She is a Roman-born woman with stringy black hair, wearing a simple dress that is fraying at the edges. She bears no jewelry or accessory, and carries no real equipment or weaponry – she is working to embody a proper Sanctified vampire, distancing herself from mortal accoutrements and vanities.*

She is humble and unassuming in her body language, and she presents a non-threatening (if a little nutty) fig-

ure. Her gestures are slow and calm, calculated to avoid provoking vampires – especially because so many of them are feeling threatened and skittish these nights.

Background: As a mortal, Dalia was Christian-born. She was poor and persecuted – but not more so than most of her contemporaries. She was Embraced by a Sanctified Missionary who was simply in search of bodies, not necessarily looking for anyone of particular quality or caliber.

She took to the Requiem with surprising readiness, though, and is an active and loyal follower of Sanctified scripture. Her wide-eyed, sincere approach has already brought several converts into the fold.

On the night of the barbarian invasion, Dalia huddled with her fellow worshippers under a small church. They overheard a priest declare that the Goths would not harm those who sought sanctuary before the altar of God, and they praised the holy fiat that brought the invaders to Rome to bring a time of trial. The moment the clashes of invasion ended, Dalia and her Kindred arose to visit themselves upon the mortals above. Now she wanders, seeking other vampires to rescue.

Storytelling Hints: Dalia is a true believer in the emerging Sanctified faith. She wants to convert every pagan vampire she meets, honestly seeking to shield them from the maelstrom of chaos all around her. Her charity begins and ends with those willing to hear the word of the Lord, though – Kindred who stubbornly refuse to accept the doctrine are doomed to fall, and while she won't do anything to speed their end, she will also do nothing to provide aid (beyond offering sponsorship into the ranks of the Sanctified). She doesn't really care if those who accept her offer are believers – in her eyes, they will experience their epiphanies when they actually sit down and listen to the scriptures.



Dalia has a talent for finding vampires at their wits' end and making her offer at the moment that promises maximum effect. She isn't above spying on Kindred for some time, waiting for the right circumstances to manifest.

Dalia is meant to provide characters with the opportunity to join the Lancea et Sanctum, if they're willing. She's an escape hatch of a sort, providing relief to those who begin to fear Final Death in the chaotic last nights of the Camarilla. To some, her appearance will be welcome, and will change the direction of their Requiem forever. To others, she represents a crucible of faith, giving them the chance to prove their adherence to the old ways and strike down the temptation of conversion.

She will not resist if the characters attack her. Whether she survives combat or not depends entirely on her ability to escape immediately, vanishing from sight by way of the Obfuscate Discipline. If her attempt fails, she will never raise a hand, instead staring at the characters with an expression of accusation as they strike her down.

Abilities:

Knowing Fear (dice pool 8): Auspex aids Dalia in choosing the right time and place to speak with a desperate vampire. She is quite empathic, and can read their fear without much trouble. She knows enough to hold back until traditional pagan Kindred are truly afraid before approaching them, understanding that those in calmer circumstances are likely to rebuff her once, which makes it less likely that they'll accept her advances later.

Calm Assurance (dice pool 6): Dalia is very good at presenting herself in a level, gentle manner so as to avoid flipping the hair-trigger of a fearful or angry vampire. She rarely surprises Kindred, making sure that they see her coming and demonstrating that she is unarmed, passive, and only speaking out of a genuine sense of concern for them and their souls. She never raises her voice, and does her best to calm anyone who seems to be getting agitated in her presence (even if some of the things she says are the cause of the agitation).

Suffer in Silence (dice pool 5): If she's imprisoned, injured, or otherwise subjected to indignity and pain, Dalia has her faith to keep her going without protest or

complaint. She possesses the aggravating assurance of the true believer and cannot normally be convinced to deny her faith or give her tormentors the satisfaction of hearing her beg or whimper under duress.

Thascius Marcellus, The Loyal Centurion

Quotes: *(Persuasion): "I will not leave this place. Here I stood as a mortal man, and here I rose again in service to the Camarilla. I will face the enemy with pride, and I will not waver. I will do battle to the last, and should I fall, even they will be moved to say 'here stood a true vampire of Rome.'"*

(Intimidation): "Face me, beast. Face me if you dare."

(Expression): "You'll have my heart before you take this blade from my hands."

Description: *Thascius is a powerfully built Nosferatu, with piercing blue eyes set deep in the waxy, grayish flesh of his face. He sports a set of well-worn banded armor – the black lorica segmentata of the Legio Mortuum, scored, broken and repaired many times over. Some of the sections of the armor are held together with leather twine, crafted by Thascius himself. He wears black leather armbands on each forearm, and carries a notched, tarnished sword. His helmet bears the crest of a centurion, marking him as a commander of Kindred troops.*

His expression is hard-set and cold. He is fighting a constant internal battle against encroaching hopelessness, keeping it at bay by turning to his strong sense of duty and discipline.

Background: Thascius Marcellus was a soldier in life, and a soldier in death. He has served the Legio Mortuum with absolute loyalty for the last thirty years, following the dictates of his Equestrian leaders without fail. He belongs to a legion that chose not to follow Helvidius Bassianus in converting to the Sanctified faith, and remains loyal to the traditional pagan Camarilla, not the upstart church.

During the barbarian invasion, Marcellus joined a detachment of troops working to prevent mortal incursion into Necropolis. Together with several of his brethren, he fought off part of Vitericus Minor's mortal cult – now loose and hunting vampires. He was separated from his fellow soldiers by the engineered collapse of one of the upper tunnels of Necropolis. After the battle passed, he was protected from the sun by a great mass of stones that buried him. As soon as night fell, he began working to free himself from the rubble.

Storytelling Hints: It doesn't matter if all hope is lost. It doesn't matter if Thascius is the last vampire of the Legion, left standing alone. He will not abandon his post, and he will not deny the Camarilla. As far as he's concerned, the Camarilla is the only bastion of sanity in the world of Kindred, and he would rather die than turn his back on it.



Thascius is meant to provide those characters who choose to remain in Rome a kind of hope. They may not be able to save the Camarilla, but he demonstrates that the values and pride of Roman Kindred are not utterly destroyed by the fall of government, and that there is always a possibility they will survive. He can serve as a valuable ally to characters carrying the spirit of the Camarilla within them.

To those who choose to side with the Lancea et Sanctum, Thascius is a hopeless throwback – but hardly a terrible threat. The tide of history is about to rise over his head, and his brave declarations are nothing but feeble whispers, all but lost in its oncoming roar.

Thascius shouldn't die in this Chronicle unless the coterie kills him themselves. He is destined to become a guerilla warrior of sorts, concealing himself within the ruins of Necropolis and harrying the Kindred of the Lancea et Sanctum for decades to come. Sooner or later, somebody's going to beat him into torpor, and sooner or later he will rise again, carrying only dim memories of honorable combat in Rome. Chances are he'll end up a member of the Invictus some night, completely unaware of the Requiem he once led.

But for tonight, his is the undying pride and the upstanding honor of the Camarilla's most loyal guardian.

Abilities:

Inspiration (dice pool 7): Thascius is an experienced warrior and leader, and he knows how to motivate his soldiers. Loyal members of the Camarilla will be inspired by his very presence, and those who turn to him for advice or leadership will be comforted by his confident, direct approach. Even in moments of crisis, he presents a self-assured, professional front – which can be exactly what subordinates need to see.

If he encounters characters who are wavering in their loyalty, he will likely attempt to inspire them, encouraging them to remember themselves and their civilized duty. He will also make immediate use of this ability if he sees a character wearing the marks of the Legio Mortuum.

Strategic Planning (dice pool 6): Long years of experience have given this Centurion the ability to size up opponents on a battlefield and quickly select a suitable strategy in response. He is unlikely to be surprised by a combat maneuver (unless it's so ridiculously out of left field that it's almost impossible to achieve), and will give simple, reasonable orders to his subordinates that best apply to the conflict at hand. Characters who let him take the lead in a battle will benefit from that leadership, gaining a small bonus (+1) while they obey his orders.

Lay of the Land (dice pool 5): Thascius knows Rome and the Necropolis like the back of his hand. His patrols have taken him into the mortal city, the upper tunnels, and the deepest catacombs alike. He is unlikely to get lost under any circumstances, and enjoys the benefit of numerous shortcuts in pursuit. Combined with his ability to Obfuscate (adding four dice to relevant rolls), he is very, very difficult to chase or follow against his will.

Event: The Barbarian Assault

Mental: - Physical: •••• Social: -

Overview: This is an action-packed scene of utter pandemonium. After laying siege to the city of Rome, a barbarian army crashes through the gates in the northeast, rushing into the streets and laying waste to those within. A wave of outsider vampires follows the initial assault that night, overwhelming mortal and Kindred Romans alike.

This scene can serve as an action climax to the Chronicle, allowing the coterie to demonstrate its determined heroism or giving them the final push in the decision to abandon Rome. It provides those who choose to stay a disaster to weather and repel, while those who align themselves with the Lancea et Sanctum or depart for a future unknown can justify their choice by pointing out the obvious implications of the attack: that Rome is no longer the power it once was, and that the Camarilla is no longer capable of enforcing its Traditions.

If there is a single event pulls the trigger on the end of the Camarilla, this is it. The conditions that lead to the collapse have been brewing for centuries, but at the moment the barbarians storm the gate, everything is ready to go horribly, irrevocably, mind-shatteringly wrong.

The Passage of Time

Nearly fifty years have passed since the events at the close of Chapter 2. The rapid shifts in the political landscape may weaken the social footing of the characters, but they have still been free to pursue their ends and grow stronger with time.

Give the players 25 experience points to apply to their characters and represent their development over the interval between Chapters 2 and 3. All of the characters involved in the story gain a free dot of Blood Potency as well.

Description: It's assumed that the characters begin this scene outside, in the mortal city (or near enough to it that they are not considered to be in Necropolis proper). If not, skip this "City" section and go straight to the "Necropolis" section below.

The City

Astonishingly, impossibly, the city of Rome is under siege. It started only a few nights ago: an army of barbarian warriors was spotted advancing towards the great city, stopping at its very edge. It was rumored that a Roman delegation has engaged the barbarian king in parlay, and that, as always, a price will be named and met. It was also rumored that six legions were approaching on fast march, moving rapidly into position and readying themselves to crush the enemy. When you lay down before the approaching dawn, you felt a weary sadness. It was not always such. There was a time, not so long ago, when these interlopers would never dare advance on Rome. There was a time when they would be subjugated and destroyed before they ever had the chance to step on Italian soil. But those times, you supposed, are gone.

Never in your wildest imaginings did you expect the scene that greeted you when you emerged from Necropolis tonight.

You heard a rumbling when you arose, and assumed that the hot rains of August had begun to fall. You stepped out of the

upper tunnels, ready to visit your prey for the night, and saw the unfolding of a nightmare.

The thunder you heard was the roar of tens of thousands of the enemy, streaming through the city's northeast gates. Somehow, the negotiations have failed. Somehow, the city's defenses have been breached. The enemy is in the streets.

The din of battle sounds in the north. Fire rages on the horizon, consuming the famed Gardens of Sallust. It is...incomprehensible. Horrendous. There are Kindred who make their homes under that garden. They must be waking to the baking heat, scrambling in terror to survive. You shudder to imagine it.

Panic reigns. You can hear the screaming of mortals all around you. A shrieking woman runs aimlessly, blindly, her dress torn, soot-stains on her arms and face. One of the insulae to the northeast collapses in a roaring, cracking clamor, its roof dropping out of view.

Suddenly, you realize: this is no dream or fevered imagining. This is really happening. The city is falling. You are in grave danger.

And in that moment, the wave of the enemy breaks into your district. Pandemonium is unleashed. Roman citizens run in wild panic, driven by the laughing, roaring army of barbarian murderers. A wild-haired man bursts through a window, his face painted with blood. He steps on the body of a Roman merchant, pulling his axe out of the man's chest with a sickening ripping sound. He growls and spins, seeking the next ready target. He is only the first. More will surely follow.

What do you do?

Necropolis

Don't read this section unless the characters are either in the tunnels when the scene begins, or until they retreat to them while the scene plays out.

If the characters begin the night in Necropolis, begin with this:

Astonishingly, impossibly, the city of Rome is under siege. It started only a few nights ago: an army of barbarian warriors was spotted advancing towards the great city, stopping at its very edge. It was rumored that a Roman delegation has engaged the barbarian king in parlay, and that, as always, a price will be named and met. It was also rumored that six legions were approaching on fast march, moving rapidly into position and readying themselves to crush the enemy. When you lay down before the approaching dawn, you felt a weary sadness. It was not always such. There was a time, not so long ago, when these interlopers would never dare advance on Rome. There was a time when they would be subjugated and destroyed before they ever had the chance to step on Italian soil. But those times, you supposed, are gone.

If the characters have already been above ground, begin here:

The sounds of panic filter down from the city above. Thousands of running feet beat a thunderous, directionless rhythm through the earth, sounding in the upper tunnels and shaking loose little clumps of dirt that fall like a dry, black rain. Strangely, while the sounds of battle above are muffled by the barrier of soil, the screams are no less audible.

Suddenly, you realize that the screams are not coming from above. They are echoing through the tunnels themselves.

You turn a corner, and realize that you have yet much to fear. An unimaginable scene plays out before your eyes: An Equestrian of the Legio Mortuum collapses into ash before your eyes, two of her own soldiers retreating into a tunnel before her. One throws you a guilty glance, pulling his ash-dusted gladius back, as if to conceal his murderous betrayal.

A piercing shout echoes from another direction. "Treason! Treason!" cries the voice, "The Senex is be-"

The voice is muffled, then silenced. Somewhere, deep in Necropolis, the roar of a vampire in frenzy rises from the dark.

How has it come to this? Has law itself collapsed with the gates of Rome? Has the uncomprehending rage and panic of the mortals above somehow found purchase in the Kindred of the Camarilla?

You have little time to think. The cries of grief and frenzy sound all around you in the tunnels. You can hear calls for the officers of the Legio Mortuum ringing out again and again, unanswered. What do you do?

Storyteller Goals: Pull that trigger. Seal the fate of the Camarilla. Give the characters a fight they can really sink their teeth into. Give them a chance, if they want, to settle grudges of their own.

Character Goals: Survive the initial assault, and get to a place where they can plan their next move. Take advantage of the chaos, if they so choose, to settle a score.

Actions: The characters have a few logical choices here. Some lead into each other, while others stand alone. Eventually, all choices must lead to one outcome necessary to carry the story forward: the characters find some kind of safe haven where they can weather the bulk of the storm of invasion and move on to the next scene.

Defend the City

Those Kindred who are confident in battle and loyal to both the Camarilla and the ideal of Rome are likely to stand and fight. For characters who do so, this is the battle to end all battles – the doomed last line of defense that stands at the very border of history, straddling the end of one age and the dawning of another.

This is ultimately a hopeless course of action. The players should know quite well that their characters will not be able to stand alone against the entire barbarian army,

and that sooner or later they're either going to have to back off or die. While you should take the opportunity to give all of the characters their chance to be valiant heroes, this scene shouldn't spell the end for them – it sets the stage for the real climax of the story, and you're still going to need to get there.

Rescue from Certain Death

It's entirely possible that the characters will get themselves into a potentially deadly situation in this scene – something you're going to have to get them out of if you want to keep the story rolling towards its satisfying conclusion. But how do you spare those characters who refuse to stop fighting without ruining the players' fun?

There are a couple of options. First, take advantage of the chaos of the scene. At any moment, the environment itself may provide a momentary chance to turn the tide of a battle – or make a quick getaway. A collapsing building can fall between the combatants, or a panicked mob can crash into the fight, separating the two sides.

Don't forget that individual barbarians who realize that they're dealing with undead creatures – either by direct demonstration (growing fangs or claws, displaying Discipline use) or by inference (noticing that fatal blows aren't slowing the characters down) – are likely to withdraw and head for another part of the city. They're not eager to fight monsters, and might end up giving the characters a wide berth.

If there are any members of the Cult of Augurs in the coterie, you can provide them with an omen that speaks of the danger they're in and hints at the overwhelming strength of the enemy: a smashed statue of a Roman God, for instance, or an eagle shot out of the sky. They can interpret the sign and argue for retreat, "saving" the coterie for you.

The barbarians fight with a combination of vengeful abandon and adrenalized glee. They've been waiting for this moment for years, and are completely energized by the chance to live out their pent-up desires. Most of them take great pleasure in killing and terrorizing the Romans – remember, many have witnessed the Romans plunder their own homes or have been forced to risk their lives so that Romans could benefit from the destruction of their enemies. If the characters have one advantage, it's that the barbarians don't know anything about vampires, nor do they expect to face creatures that can withstand killing blows and keep moving. Take the opportunity to have the barbarians pause, surprised, if the Kindred display unnatural resilience or perseverance – giving the characters the opportunity to launch unexpected counterattacks.

- **Barbarian Details**

  The hulking barbarian smiles, showing stubby teeth. He swings a bloodied, notched axe at his side, bringing it up into a striking position. He takes a tentative step forward, leveling his stance and watching you carefully.

  A wiry, compact warrior leaps forward, growling and yelping in his faraway tongue, clearly trying to distract and intimidate you. He hefts a short axe, tensing and getting ready to strike.

  Catching sight of you, a fur-clad warrior leaps over a fallen table, skidding to a halt just out of arm's reach. He drops into a crouching stance, holding both arms out as if to invite embrace. One hand grips a heavy axe, waving it menacingly.

- **Weaponry (1-2 Successes)**

  You duck out of the path of his swinging axe just as the warrior brings his knee up and connects with your chin. The impact is sharp and sudden, clapping your jaw shut with an audible snap.

  The axe passes over your shoulder, just grazing the line of your jaw.

  The axe bites into your [clothes or armor] stopping just short of penetrating the skin beneath.

- **Weaponry (3-4 Successes)**

  The enemy lets out a whooping cry as he slices downwards with the axe, lopping off the tip of your index finger.

  You turn to avoid a blow, and the warrior reacts quickly, burying his axe in your back. An agonizing pain explodes in your midsection.

  The back of the axe smashes into your face, knocking two teeth loose.

- **Weaponry (5+ Successes)**

  The barbarian laughs as he drives the blade of his axe deep into your shoulder, nearly severing your left arm.

  There is a moment of blackness, and you stagger back, realizing that the blade of his axe is embedded in your face, bisecting it from lip to brow.

  The barbarian launches himself into you, and the two of you slam into the floor together. He rolls away as you realize that you are impaled on a loose piece of broken furniture. You lift yourself up, the splintered timber sticking through your chest – and you count your lucky stars – the wood is no more than a hand's breadth away from your heart.



Start the battle out with individual barbarians – scouts and overeager plunderers. Then, as the bulk of the enemy force draws nearer, replace single warriors with two, then three, then five – making it clear to the characters that the trickle of attackers is rapidly growing into a torrent, and that they aren't going to be able to stand their ground forever.

Try to make sure that the players have a victory condition they can satisfy before beating their hasty withdrawal – that way they won't feel like they've lost the battle, even if they know that the greater goal of protecting Rome proves impossible. Give them a specific barbarian commander they can fell, for instance, driving some of the enemy to a temporary retreat, or give them some object or person of significance to rescue.

Sooner or later, even if the characters manage to kill or frighten off every barbarian they come across, the sky will begin to lighten with the approach of dawn. When that happens, the characters are going to have to head into the underground – those with any common sense whatsoever will realize that no structure above the city can be considered safe with wave after wave of barbarian troops moving through every district. When they finally decide to go underground, switch to either the "Escape into Necropolis" (if they break into full flight) or "Tactical Retreat" (if they move more carefully) action in this section.

Settle a Grudge

Characters may choose to take advantage of the chaos, both above and below the city, to do a little violence of their own. At this point, you can run them through seeking out and destroying an enemy, making it clear that they have no fear of reprisal. Senators are exposed as they attempt to flee their homes (or barricade themselves within). Officials of the Senex are left unguarded by the rapidly disintegrating Legio Mortuum. Decadent vampires and mortals both, used to relying on physically powerful subordinates, are completely unprepared for direct attack. Their outraged cries and pathetic attempts at bribery are all they have left.

If the coterie wants to run wild right now, let them. Give them the first shot, as their victims seethe with paralyzing, uncomprehending indignation. Cover their retreat with a panicked crowd in flight. Let them loot and pillage the homes of the rich and powerful, if they feel so inclined. They will escape unharmed, although their Humanity might suffer for it.

Vengeance and betrayal is the order of the night, and those characters who choose to partake will eventually come to realize that they played a part in cutting the Camarilla's throat at its time of great need. They may or may not be proud of that, depending on their inclination. Don't issue judgment – just play them through the exercise of their whims and apply Degeneration rolls where necessary. They will have plenty of time to think about their choices later.

When they're done, characters in the city above will still have to get underground if they want to stay safe. Switch to either the "Escape into Necropolis" action (if they flee) or the "Tactical Retreat" (if they move more carefully) action in this section when they do.

Escape into Necropolis

Presented with the collapse of Roman defenses, the characters may choose to flee into Necropolis before the arrival of the barbarian army. While the choice is wise, especially if they aren't extremely physically inclined, it leads the coterie into another kind of problem – and one that is no less threatening than the troubles above ground.

If the characters are already in Necropolis when this scene begins, this route of action applies when they try to retreat deeper into the tunnels. If the characters begin above the city but first choose the "Defend the City" or the "Settle a Grudge" actions above, they will eventually have to flee downwards – and the nature of their flight will either take them through this action or the "Tactical Retreat" one below.

If the characters take this route of action and they begin above ground, start the scene off with an extended Dexterity + Athletics roll, modified by Celerity, if necessary, to reflect their hasty retreat before the oncoming enemy and ramping up the tension right away. Set the difficulty so that it takes at least three or four turns for everyone to get to one of the entries to the underground – 10 to 15 successes, depending on how physically capable they are – and follow each roll with a description of the sound of approaching battle cries and the thunder of running feet. Let a single barbarian get close enough to worry them (and give the antsy ones something to throw ranged weapons at) without actually threatening their retreat. All the real action in this option ought to take place underground.

Once the characters get into the tunnels, read them the **Necropolis** section of the Description above.

The failure of the command structure in the Legio Mortuum, brewing for some time now, finally comes to fruition and ripples outward from a dereliction of duty near an emergency gathering of the Senex. As a result, the law is not preserved, and a wave of anarchy breaks throughout the tunnels of the underground. Kindred of all wings are running wild, turning on their enemies (political and otherwise) and cutting loose. Decades-long grudges are getting settled in moments of blistering, unchecked fury.

Those characters seeking to escape into the tunnels and find their way to their safe haven must do so by dint of stealth or strength. They won't encounter an organized force of any kind, but they may cross the path of two or three violently confused Legionnaires, wild-eyed vampires of the Collegia, or panicked Vaticinators of the Cult of Augurs, weighed down by their religious paraphernalia. Kindred might react ferociously to the characters, stuck in a mode of near-mindless self-defense. Others might get the idea that they're headed for safety and try to glom on for protection. Characters should be encouraged to make use of all of their survival skills in order to get to safety: dodging threats, hiding from frenzying Kindred, intimidating or persuading individuals standing in their path to let them pass, and pushing through anything that won't get out of their way.

And vampires aren't the only problem they face. Raging fires cause the collapse of buildings above ground, and

The Specter of Frenzy

It's always possible that characters in a fight-or-flight situation might end up frenzying. The predator's taint might set them running if they get jumped by an unexpected vampire, and the fires in the city above are more than enough to trigger the Beast in some Kindred.

It's actually not that big a deal if one or more of the characters slip into the Rötschreck during this action, since the end goal of the rational vampire and the one caught in the grip of the red fear are essentially the same in this scene: get to a nice, dark, safe place. Describe the onrush of terror, and then black them out, allowing them to lead the rest of the coterie in a pell-mell chase down into the tunnels of Necropolis. If the rest of the coterie doesn't manage to stop them, the frenzying vampire might actually lead them to a safe spot.

If *everyone* in the party slips into frenzy (a real likelihood, if they start to separate and end up leaving each other alone in the tunnels), use their mindless flight to end this scene and run the transition into the next one. Their vision clears, their mind snaps back into focus, and they find themselves deep in Necropolis, far from the panic above – scratched up, dirty, but none the worse for wear. They are the lucky ones.

the shifting of weight brings down the ceiling in some of the upper tunnels, raining heavy stone and burning wood down on the Kindred below. The characters might find their route cut off by one of these collapses and need to reroute on the fly. A collapse directly over the characters, necessitating a Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid damage (and possibly provoking fear frenzies).

Characters who make a successful Wits + Academics or Wits + Warfare check are sure to realize that some of the burning collapses that are happening are...less than random. There is evidence of tactical planning at work, sealing off and burning out certain key tunnels in the Necropolis. The characters won't get a chance to investigate now (though they may later), but it's something they might want to make a mental note of. In truth, the collapses were engineered by the remnants of Vitericus Minor's cult of worshippers turned vampire-hunters, who prepared themselves for an assault on Necropolis during the siege that preceded the invasion. Subsequent investigation will turn up traces of mortal activity in Necropolis, as a number of Kindred in the less secure upper tunnels are slain in the next day's sleep.

How long should this go on?

There is no real time limit on this scene. The escape into the tunnels should be a harrowing, traumatic experience for the characters, and the rest of the story will only work if it comprises one of the most difficult nights of their existence. However, there's only so long the players can run through fleeing and bumping into chaotic, panicked Kindred and scenes of unimaginable destruction before they start to get bored.

Try to gauge the players' enthusiasm as you go. Once you've presented them with at least two or three unexpected encounters in the tunnels and taken the time to describe the collapses, see how they're reacting. If they seem intent on just getting to their safe haven and ending the scene, you can gloss over the rest of the night, explaining that they have four or five similar encounters as they flee. Once the message of widespread panic and disaster is clear, there's no need to keep hammering it home. If they're caught up in the excitement, though, don't speed up. Give them a chance to make their Athletics and Stealth rolls. Let them fight to survive as long as they want to. Remember, above all else: just don't allow this scene to feel *easy*. Even the Kindred who've planned for this eventuality are caught off-guard by the scale of the catastrophe.

Sample Sights in Necropolis

- The shards of a smashed statue of the fates, scattered at the entrance to a small chamber. An overturned pedestal lies within, cracked through the middle. Torn, soot-stained curtains are piled in a corner nearby.
- A columbarium, with all of its niches open, the bronze plates hanging open. Ash stains the wall under two of the plates, spilling forth from the niche. A sole Legionnaire kneels before one such opening, his helmet in his hand, weeping. There are two daggers stuck in his back.
- A Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs, pinned to the wall of a corridor with a makeshift wooden stake, his head caved in. A gore-spattered bust of Aulus Julius Senex lies discarded nearby.
- A pair of burning torches, left in the middle of a small corridor, crossed over one another. The corridor itself is unlit, and the rough-hewn walls fade into impenetrable blackness.

Once they get to a safe spot, deep in the tunnels, the characters can sleep for the day and you can move on to the next scene.

Tactical Retreat

Rather than fleeing in haste or staying to do battle, the characters rally together and move slowly through the streets (or the tunnels below), fighting off any pursuers and staying together. This is a prudent, moderate action, falling somewhere between the other choices offered above.

It's likely that either of the previous choices can rapidly change into a tactical retreat, either when characters already in flight decide to band together in a more orderly fashion, or when those already engaged in battle decide to withdraw.

Once the characters make it into the tunnels below, read the **Necropolis** section of the Description above.

In Necropolis, the imperative to find safety is no different, and a tactical retreat is likely to continue. Make sure to present them with a couple of challenges along the way: a single frenzying vampire here or there, or a collapsed section of tunnel will keep the scene from getting too flat and will help illustrate the growing chaos throughout.

Once they get to a safe spot, deep in the tunnels, the characters can sleep for the day and you can move on to the next scene.

Obstacles/Penalties: The chaos of battle and the stampeding panic both above and below ground make it difficult to concentrate on any mental task (-3) unless

the characters can get to a relatively quiet place. The glow of fires on the horizon (or within long tunnels) will be both distracting and worrisome (-1) to any vampire trying to engage in mental or social activity.

Aids/Bonuses: It's relatively easy to go unnoticed in the midst of a panic, so any attempt at stealth gains a bonus (+3). Characters who stay close and remain calm help buttress one another, so as long as none breaks away to fight, run, or frenzy, all of the members of the coterie should find it a little bit easier to resist the Rotschreck (+1).

Consequences: Characters may be wounded or depleted of Vitae in this scene, and are likely to be weakened as they enter the next. They aren't really going to get a chance to feed until the scene *after* next unless they drink in battle – so things might get very rough, depending on how they do here. Those who choose to take part in the murderous chaos may suffer Degeneration.

• Characters who make it safely into the lower tunnels of Necropolis in this scene and have no ties to the Senex (or do not bother to check in on them) should move ahead to **Owls in the Underground**, below.

• A coterie that remains in the upper level of Necropolis, seeking contact with the Senex, should move on to **The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex**.

• A coterie that remains in the upper level of Necropolis and does not seek contact with the Senex should move on to **The Night of Shame**.

• Kindred who display heroism in the face of the enemy and rescue other members of the Camarilla can expect to be treated with respect by those vampires remaining loyal to the Roman ideal, and may increase in Status.

Event: Owls in the Underground

Mental: ••• Physical: ••• Social: •••

Overview: Once the characters make their way into the lower tunnels of Necropolis, things get strange. Taking advantage of a hole in the Camarilla's defenses, the Striges have poured inwards, rushing into abandoned chambers and quickly converting them into staging grounds for an attack.

This is the beginning of the end for the Julii. The Striges are working in concert with their allies, preparing to attack the Senex, selecting and entrapping suitable bodies for possession, and further weakening the already tottering structure of the Camarilla.

The characters stumble across one of the nests of the Striges and attract the attention of the enemy. If there are any Julii among them, the Striges immediately launch an assault. If not, they react as appropriate – evaluating them for potential possession or destruction, and making their move when the time is right.

This time, there is no escape. The characters are going to have to stand and face the nemesis, and they're likely going to do it alone.

This is a potentially deadly scene. Ideally, none of the characters will suffer Final Death – but those who refuse to run and just can't seem to get any successes on their rolls might fall to the enemy. If you protect them at this point, the danger of the Strix assault will be diminished, and the drama of the whole story will be compromised. Be sure that players are all right with possibility of character death if you're going to run this scene. If they aren't, and you already know that, you may wish to skip ahead to **The Night of Shame** instead of running this encounter.

The End of the Julii

Every member of the Julii without access to the discipline of Obfuscate (either possessing it themselves, or benefiting from the protection of an ally with Obfuscate 5: Cloak the Gathering) is doomed. The Striges are a relentless enemy, carrying out their oath to destroy the Julii and their works, and their unerring ability to sense the presence of blood relations makes it impossible to keep them at bay forever.

If there are any Julii in the coterie, they must come to realize that their nights are numbered. Even if the coterie manages to fight off the Striges in this scene, it should be clear that the clan is being targeted by the deadly Nemeses. By the time this night is done, at least half of the remaining members of the clan will be destroyed. By the end of the month, there should only be two dozen left in the world, and soon after the last will either fall or go to ground. No evidence exists in modern nights to suggest that even a single member of the clan escaped (although the existence of the Ventrue suggests that some might have made their way to Gaul, escaped the attention of the Striges, and Embraced – if, that is, the Ventrue are actually descended from the Julii). There are no vampires who possess a genuine, identifiable memory of being one of the Julii.

The death sentence hanging over the heads of any remaining Julii – especially those in the coterie – makes for great drama. Don't give the characters an "out" beyond the choice to retreat from Rome and go to ground. This is how it happens, and they should have the opportunity the play through all the pathos and soul-searching of their great tragedy.

Description: *You find your way into one of the quieter, less-traveled chambers of Necropolis. The walls are dank and slick here, glistening in the dim, flickering light of distant torches.*

The moment you enter, you realize that you are not alone. There are two vampires here: one, wearing the black armor of the Legio Mortuum, and the other, a woman in the robes of the Senex, crouching in quiet conference. The soldier drags his notched gladius across the ground, scratching a line in the floor as he whispers. He stops suddenly, glancing your way. His motion is quick and strange, the sharp, rapid response of a predator, alert to the sound of potential prey. His eyes shine in the gloom, reflecting the light of the tunnel behind you.

If any of the members of the coterie are Julii, read this:

In an instant, both of the vampires leap to their feet. "Blood," the woman hisses. Impossibly, incredulously, you realize that you're looking at Julia Sabina. You've never seen her like this, though: her lips twisted in a hateful snarl, her voice thick with rage. "Blood comes to blood."

They both move towards you with sudden, startling speed.

If not, read this:

The soldier watches you silently, rising slowly to face you. The woman rises as well – and you realize that it's Julia Sabina, her robe stained with ash and smudged with mud. She doesn't seem to recognize you. Somewhere in the shadows of the chamber, you think you hear the flapping of black wings...

Storyteller Goals: Throw the characters in the path of the Striges. Demonstrate that the Camarilla has truly gone past the point of no return: Necropolis is no longer safe. Allow them to witness the beginning of the elimination of the Julii.

Character Goals: Find a way to escape the wrath of the Striges.

Actions: The characters will not be able to run from the Nemeses – the spirits will chase them relentlessly, forcing an eventual confrontation. Sooner or later, the characters will have to turn and face them. They have a few options when they do:

Negotiation

The Striges are not just mindless beasts. It is possible to engage them in negotiation, but the characters are going to have to work quickly to get them to listen – and they're going to have to swallow the implications of dealing with the devil.

The coterie may attempt to Cut a Deal with the Striges (see p. 82, **World of Darkness Rulebook**), but they're going to have to put something extreme on the table right away. There are only two things the Striges want: to destroy the Julii and to destroy the Camarilla. The characters are going to have to offer up access to a more tantalizing target than themselves to get the Striges to listen at all. The presence of any Julii in the coterie makes this negotiation much, much more difficult, though.

If the characters offer to betray the Camarilla and provide the Striges with one or more of the Julii, or with one or more influential bodies they can inhabit, the number of successes required to strike the bargain is five (plus two for each member of the Julii present in the coterie). If the Striges lose, they back off and let the coterie offer up payment, but will make no promises about sparing the Julii in the future.

A Fast Talk attempt (p. 83, **World of Darkness Rulebook**) could be made, but is extremely risky. Since the Striges won't be fooled by any "we aren't worth killing" arguments, the characters are going to have to try to distract them with a really tempting alternate target. Pretending to be a fellow Strix is only possible for one of the Julii – and it's very, very difficult even then (-4).

Even if they're spared, the characters are going to be stuck with the Striges until they hand over their payment in real Kindred bodies. The Nemeses won't accept promises, directions, or explanations. They will want to walk with the characters to the havens of the vampires in question, and will not be distracted until they get what they want.

If they do, though, they will be so busy attacking their prey that the characters will be free to slip away.

Combat

Battle with the Striges is brutally difficult, but it might be the only way out for characters who don't want to sell the Camarilla down the river. A successful Intelligence + Occult roll will indicate that the Striges are vulnerable to sunlight and fire, and that they can be killed by destroying a body before they get the chance to vacate it.

The two possessed Kindred will fight viciously, concentrating on one target at a time in an attempt to knock him into torpor. The moment he falls unconscious, one of the disembodied Striges in the chamber will move to take possession, turning him against his allies. Use the statistics for Julia Sabina and one of the Strix-Possessed Legionnaires included above.

The Striges will not resort to using fire or dealing aggravated damage. They don't want to destroy bodies that might be useful to them. If the room is set alight by the characters, the Striges will likely flee into the tunnels.

- **Strix Details**

  The soldier hisses, showing his fangs, his eyes flashing with inhuman light. He scrapes the blade of his gladius across one of the black segments of his armor, grinning.

Julia grips the pommel of her dagger, narrowing her eyes. Whatever's in there, it has nothing to do with the noble woman she once was.

The indistinct form of a bird flickers into view, fading again into the looming shadow.

- **Weaponry (1-2 Successes)**

  You feel the blade bite into your back. Luckily, the cut doesn't seem too deep.

  The blade flashes past, and you turn your head away, barely avoiding a serious blow. A piece of your ear falls to the ground.

  Your snarling enemy is inches away from you, snarling as it lands a glancing blow across your chest.

- **Weaponry (3-4 Successes)**

  You are stabbed; the blade sinks a couple of inches into your chest, twisting as it goes in.

  The enemy laughs as she drives her dagger deep into your shoulder. A searing pain spreads from the joint.

  The soldier swings his sword, clipping you across the back and severing the muscles over your ribs.

- **Weaponry (5+ Successes)**

  The soldier delivers a series of swift blows: stomping on your foot, ramming his knee into yours, and driving his sword into your midsection. You both hear and feel the cracking of bone as his boot keeps you pinned in place while the sword strike bends you over at a sickening angle.

  The creature that was once Julia Sabina rams her dagger into your throat and tears it out again in a single, horrifyingly efficient motion.

  The soldier throws his body against yours, chopping downwards as he strikes, nearly severing your leg.

- **Possession**

  A black owl flutters down from the shadows, opening its wings as it glides down towards the body of your ally. It dives into [his/her] chest, vanishing into it with a puff of dark smoke. [Character Name'] limbs spasm, once, and [his/her] eyes snap open.

Exorcism

Characters with at least three dots of Status: Cult of Augurs or Status: Lancea et Sanctum may have learned of or participated in the exorcism of spirits, and may turn the knowledge gained from that experience against the Striges. A successful Intelligence + Occult or Intelligence + Religion roll will reflect the ability to remember the procedure well enough to give it a try.



Exorcism Rituals

Purifying Light
(Level Four Theban Sorcery Ritual)

With Purifying Light, the sorcerer empowers a light source (fire, moonlight, or even the glow of luminescent fungi) with the mystic ability to stun and repel a possessing spirit. The brightness of the light seems to multiply, turning a golden-white in color, and filling every corner of the room it affects. Those outside will see beams of light firing briefly out of every opening in the room: even small cracks and holes will be brightly lit.

Any invading spirit currently possessing a body not its own will quail at the illumination, immediately losing all actions for the turn. It must abandon the body it is possessing or sacrifice a point of Willpower. So long as the sorcerer maintains the ritual, the spirit suffers a penalty on all non-reflexive actions equal to the sorcerer's dots in Theban Sorcery, and must spend a Willpower point to attempt to approach or attack the sorcerer. No bonus dice are granted by the expenditure.

The roll to activate this ritual is penalized by the spirit's Resolve (or straight resistance trait, if appropriate). The Purifying Light lasts for one scene, so long as the sorcerer takes no other action, maintaining the ritual and moving at no more than half her speed rating.

This ritual can only be used on a spirit that is intruding in a body; it does nothing when used on one that is disembodied – or on a body that is not possessed. The Purifying Light has no effect on a body possessed by a vampire using Dominate •••••.

Offering: A mirror (size 1 or larger) of polished silver or gold, which vaporizes in the light of the ritual.

The Hand of Hades
(Level Three Veneficia)

With this ritual, the performer can call upon the blessing of Hades, empowering herself to temporarily push a spirit out of the body it occupies.

To activate the ritual, the performer pushes a point of blood to the surface of her palm (usually cutting the palm to make the bleeding easier) and presses the bloodied palm to the flesh of the possessed victim while uttering a short prayer to Hades. If it works, the intruding spirit flies out through the vitcim's flesh as if physically pushed by the Vaticinator, and cannot re-possess the victim (or enter a new one) for a number of turns equal to the number of successes achieved on the roll.

This ritual inflicts no actual damage on the spirit. It can only be used on a spirit that is intruding in a body; it does nothing when used on a spirit that is disembodied or a body that is not possessed. The Hand of Hades has no effect on a body possessed by a vampire using Dominate •••••.

A Strix ejected from a body still presents a problem, though. The body remains inert and vulnerable to possession by one of the other Striges until it is either awakened (requiring blood of a high enough potency) or destroyed. The characters may well find themselves forced to murder Julia Sabina or an innocent Legionnaire just to keep the enemy at bay.

If the Striges are exorcised and all available bodies are destroyed or revived, they will retreat into Necropolis, seeking easier targets to attack.

Obstacles/Penalties: Engaging the Striges in any social interaction is made more difficult if the characters hold Status: Camarilla (-1) or if any of the Julii are present (-3). The darkness of the chamber makes all action difficult (-1).

Aids/Bonuses: Characters who are known to be enemies of the Camarilla (i.e. outspoken members of the Lancea et Sanctum, Unaligned foreigners, or Kindred who may have been seen murdering their compatriots in The Barbarian Assault, above) will find the Striges friendlier than expected and gain a bonus (+2) in negotiation.

Consequences: The characters may lose some friends in this scene, and they may find themselves agreeing to betray the Camarilla just to save their own skins. Both possibilities will have an effect on their future options.

• Characters who survive this confrontation move on to **The Night of Shame**, below.

Event: The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex

Mental: •• Physical: ••• Social: •••

Overview: This scene is a violent encounter depicting a treasonous betrayal of the Camarilla that results in the destruction of Aulus Julius Senex. It demonstrates the depth of Strix penetration in Necropolis, and hammers home just how bad things are getting for the Julii.

Depending on the characters' goals, this scene may represent the climax of the Chronicle or it may precipitate it. For many Roman Kindred, successfully retrieving and raising Senex himself would provide them with a leader they could rally around and push outwards in an attempt to rescue the Camarilla. When he falls, that hope is crushed.

For those characters loyal to the Camarilla, the way you run this scene is crucial. They may attempt to save Senex, but they are almost sure to fail. If handled correctly, though, their failure won't seem like a total loss –

it will just make it clear that they can't pin their hopes on a relic of the Camarilla's past.

This is a potentially deadly scene. Ideally, none of the characters will suffer Final Death – but those who refuse to run and just can't seem to get any successes on their rolls might fall to the enemy. If you protect them at this point, the danger of the Strix assault will be diminished, and the drama of the whole story will be compromised. Be sure that players are all right with possibility of character death if you're going to run this scene. If they aren't, and you already know that, you may wish to skip ahead to **The Night of Shame**, below instead of running this encounter.

Description: *You arrive in the Camarilla. The seats of the chamber are empty. Three officials of the Senex are standing in the middle of the floor, speaking quietly to three legionnaires – including Victrix. One of the officials, a Quaestor named Cassius Julius Festus, looks your way as you enter. He smiles nervously. "Ah! Ah, my friends, my friends, how fortuitous. A great opportunity has revealed itself, and we could use your help. Our Kindred have located the resting place of Senex himself! We must go to him – go and wake him, to restore him to his rightful place! He will lead us through this time of trial. He will restore us to our glory!"*

Victrix will suggest that the characters join the group. If the characters refuse, you can skip this scene and move directly to **The Night of Shame**. If they attack the gathered Kindred, play the fight out and then move on. Otherwise, read this:

You step out into the tunnel. Festus leads you all on a long, winding walk, taking you deeper and deeper into Necropolis. The tunnels grow narrow and dark, the walls slick with moisture, the torches mounted more and more sparsely. The edges of the soldiers' black armor seem to blur into the shadows as you move, but the white robes of the Senex are still visible in the gloom.

You reach a doorway, recessed into a black, rough-hewn tunnel. Victrix turns, looking over your heads to make sure that no one is following. "Keep your eyes open," she whispers. "This is not a time for mistakes."

Festus bites his own finger, tracing a line of blood on the door. He whispers a short phrase in latin – a plea to Hades – and a small shower of sparks fall from the mark. He names each of you as he speaks. He nods to the soldiers, and moves in through the opening. The soldiers follow behind. Victrix looks your way, inviting you to enter next.

Give the characters time to make sure the tunnel is secure. Let them jockey with Victrix to see if she will precede them into the room – if they hesitate, she will shrug and go in. She'd prefer entering behind them, just because it'll make things easier for her, but she's not about to risk showing her hand by making a big deal of it. Once they're in, read this:

Festus moves forward, pointing at a slab of stone laid up against the wall. The soldiers grab the ends, straining to lift it away. It barely moves. They look to you for help.

Unlocking the portal

Festus is using a ritual of the Veneficia to gain entry to the chamber. A character who succeeds on a Wits + Religion roll will recognize the ritual and understand that the room is powerfully guarded.

The Black Barrier of Hades (Level Five Veneficia)

This powerful ritual allows the performer to draw a shadowy barrier over a portal up to five feet high and two feet across, laying a deadly trap for those who would pass without permission. The performer ritually prepares the portal, spending five nights inscribing a series of complicated markings along its edges. Each night, the performer must spend a point of Vitae, infusing the markings with his blood. On the final night of inscription, the roll is made to activate the ritual.

Once the ritual is active, the material marking the dimensions of the barrier (wood, stone, etc) turns completely black, obscuring the marks. To pass safely, the performer of the ritual or a vampire designated at the time of the ritual (either by name or by blood – i.e. "my siblings" or "a member of clan Mekhet") must smear a point of his own Vitae on a now-invisible glyph (choosing the correct spot), speak a short phrase in tribute to Hades (chosen at the time of the ritual casting), and name all of those who may safely pass. Those named are safe to pass for the next hour.

A character who recognizes the ritual of the Black Barrier but has not been shown the correct spot to activate it must score an exceptional success on an Intelligence + Religion roll, with a –5 penalty applied, to find the right spot. For each level of Veneficia the character has, the penalty on this roll is reduced by one.

Those who pass through the barrier without deactivating it properly suffer one level of lethal damage per success scored on the activation of the ritual. When they do, the caster of the ritual suffers one point of lethal damage as well, no matter where he is at the time. Every success achieved on the activation roll represents a "charge" on the portal – when an intruder takes damage, one charge is used up. When all of the charges are used, the ritual deactivates.

Festus is the last walking vampire who knows that the ritual of the Black Barrier has been placed on this opening and understands how to deactivate it. When he falls, the secret of the chamber is lost forever.

If the players don't help, Victrix and Festus will help them. If the players do, move on to this:

The stone comes away with great difficulty, heavy as it is, and nearly joined to the floor and wall with some sort of sticky resin. Behind it, a recess in the rough wall is revealed, with a great clay urn placed within. "There," says Festus. "There he lies."

He steps forward, reaching for the urn. He speaks in a hushed, reverent tone. "Great Senex, we have need."

Suddenly, before he can reach it, one of the legionnaires flashes forward, ramming a shaft of wood through his back. The soldier laughs, his fangs flashing in the dim light of the chamber. The other two members of the Senex stare in disbelief, rooted to the spot. The other soldier steps towards them, his eyes glittering with unnatural light. Victrix draws her sword and looks to you. Roll your initiative.

Storyteller Goals: Reveal the catastrophic depth of Strix penetration in Necropolis, and hammer home the coming destruction of the Julii as a clan. Challenge the characters to survive a sudden, brutal betrayal. This scene accentuates the crumbling of the Camarilla's foundations in law, trust, and tradition.

Character Goals: Survive the encounter. Characters might have other goals in this scene, but survival is the only one that will allow them to achieve the greater goals of the Chronicle. Depending on the characters' personal desires, secondary goals might include rescuing A. Julius Senex or participating in his destruction.

Even if the characters are set to go down with the Camarilla, this is not the place for all of them to die. Senex represents false hope, not all hope.

Actions: Once the assault begins, the coterie is faced with a dilemma. The remaining two members of the Senex will either fall or flee in the first round of the battle. It should be immediately obvious that they are facing overwhelming force, so while fighting off the attack and defending Aulus Julius Senex is certainly an option, it's not a very good one. As soon as he is destroyed, the characters have only a few options: outwit the agents of the Striges to escape, fight their way out, or talk their way out (possibly striking a bargain in the process).

Immediate Escape

If the characters try to hide or otherwise withdraw immediately, they get a few moments' grace period while the Strix-possessed Kindred attack Senex and the two remaining officials. The only vampire they'll have to worry about at first is Victrix, who might be tough, but she's no genius,



and she might not bother with them if they flee. The longer they wait, though, the more trouble they'll be in.

Combat

If the coterie chooses to do battle with the Striges, either hoping to rescue Senex or avenge him, the enemy will be mercilessly vicious. If the coterie flees, the Striges will not pursue them until Senex has been destroyed, and will only give half-hearted chase unless the characters turn to do battle with them.

The two Striges fight with murderous abandon. They will focus on any Julii in the coterie first, and then move on, concentrating on one enemy at a time. Victrix operates on her own, and she will choose the most physically dangerous character first. She'd rather not let any witnesses to the murder of Senex survive.

- **Strix Details**

  He leaps towards you, leering, his eyes shining with reflected torchlight.

  He waves his sword with menacing calm, showing his teeth in a wide smile.

  He hisses quietly, turning around to face you and drawing the blade of his sword across his armband, wiping it off.

- **Victrix Details**

  She glances back at you, quickly, narrowing her eyes. She raises one hand, as if to say "wait". You know her, though – you've seen her do this before. A blade flashes in her other, held ready at her side. That's the hand you need to watch.

  Suddenly, Victrix whirls towards you, her braids lashing through the air in her wake. For a moment, you imagine her a Fury, her head wreathed in striking serpents, her face a twisted mask of rage unbound.

  She leaps over one of the fallen stones, landing directly opposite you. She clicks her tongue against the roof of her mouth once, in a desultory gesture, getting into a fighting stance.

- **Weaponry (1-2 Successes)**

  The point of [his/her] sword just nicks your hand, leaving a long, thin cut.

  The pommel of [his/her] gladius cracks across the side of your head, knocking you for a loop.

  A blade comes down hard on your shoulder, just barely deflected as you twist out of the way.

- **Weaponry (3-4 Successes)**

  An armored forearm cracks across the bridge of your nose, blurring your vision and sending you stumbling into a wall.

  [His/her] gladius bites deep into the dead meat of your leg, laying it open. You catch a glimpse of the bone beneath the flesh.

  The small, serrated knife flashes in [his/her] off hand, and [he/she] buries it to the hilt between your shoulder blades. A searing pain flashes through the right side of your upper body.

- **Weaponry (5+ Successes)**

  [He/she] spins, plunging [his/her] sword into your chest with alarming force. The blade twists as it goes in, cracking two of your ribs and unleashing intense pain. You know that no living man would survive this blow.

  With the flick of a wrist, [he/she] throws [his/her] serrated knife straight into your neck. You feel the blade rip through the flesh and bury itself deep in your throat, separating the bones at the back..

  [He/she] grins maliciously as [his/her] blade chops down on your hand, severing two fingers and stopping suddenly at the bones of the palm. The shock of the blow shatters your wrist.

Social Confrontation

The characters may attempt a negotiation with Victrix or the Striges, but they won't be able to convince them to spare Senex. If they don't attempt to stop the murder, it's possible to withdraw peacefully, so long as there are no Julii with the party. It may even be possible to bargain with them.

Here's how different Social Skills can play into the negotiation:

- **Empathy:** This may be the first time any of the characters actually gets a chance to see one of the Striges up close. A successful Wits + Empathy action reveals the depth of their desire for vengeance and the pleasure they take in seeing Senex destroyed. Victrix, too, will show her true colors in this room – as a vampire consumed with rage and hatred, eager to see the Roman Camarilla destroyed, and completely unfazed by the savagery of the Striges. This successful action will make it clear that leaving Senex to the Striges might be the only way to survive (and that they are likely to be distracted for a moment, while they kill him), and that Victrix is and has always been a traitor. This success, if communicated to the rest of the coterie, affords the characters a +1 bonus on all further attempts to negotiate. An exceptional success on the action adds a +2 bonus instead.

- **Intimidation:** No amount of intimidation will distract the Striges from destroying any member of the Julii. Victrix may hesitate and hold back if the coterie seems frightening enough, though.

• **Persuasion:** The coterie may attempt to Cut a Deal with the Striges (see p. 82, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). A skillful negotiator might be able to convince them to leave the coterie alive, as long as she abandons Senex to them. Even then, it's not going to be easy – and the presence of other Julii only makes it harder. The Striges want Senex to themselves, and Victrix wants the characters to keep quiet about what they've seen. The total number of successes necessary to bargain is three (plus one for each member of the Julii present in the coterie). If the Striges lose, they let the coterie withdraw unharmed, and may even promise to spare the non-Julii among them if they encounter them again. Characters who want to strike further deals (i.e. to help the Striges attack the Camarilla in exchange for power) are free to make the attempt, but they will be expected to prove themselves later. See the Consequences section below for more details.

Alternately, this Skill could be used to Fast Talk them (p. 83, **World of Darkness Rulebook**). This only serves to convince the Striges that the coterie has no real loyalty to the Camarilla so that they may allow them to retreat unharmed...for now.

• **Socialize:** At best, a Presence or Manipulation + Socialize action will charm the Striges enough so that they're willing to listen to a Persuasion attempt, adding a +1 bonus (or a +2 bonus, in the event of an exceptional success) to the negotiation.

• **Subterfuge:** This skill can be used to achieve the same result as the Fast Talk option, as above.

Obstacles/Penalties: The Striges are prone to react differently to the characters depending on who they are. They will be spiteful (-1) to all members of the Camarilla, stubborn and cruel (-3) in dealings with any member of the Senex, and outright malicious (-5) when addressed by a member of the Julii.

Aids/Bonuses: Characters may be able to garner a measure of sympathy from the enemy if they are Embraced foreigners (+2) or fellow Gangrel (+1). Particularly craven or traitorous characters may get in good with the Striges by actually joining in Senex's murder (+3).

Consequences: It's extremely unlikely that Aulus Julius Senex will survive this confrontation. If the players somehow manage to save him, they will have his body, but no way to wake him. Those who choose to carry him with them should, for all intents and purposes, be treated as if they have Status: Camarilla 5 (or Status: Senex 5) – so long as they are willing to show him to other Kindred.

• Characters who survive this confrontation move on to **The Night of Shame**, below.

Event: The Night of Shame

Mental: - Physical: - Social: • • •

Overview: After a full day's rest, the characters awake to find Rome in a shambles and the tunnels of Necropolis scattered with the ashes of loyal Kindred. They are given some time to rest and regroup and allowed to connect with other survivors. The battle above has quieted down and the Striges appear to have moved on.

This is the chance for socially or politically oriented characters to shine. They can attempt to move the remaining Kindred of the Camarilla – either to revitalize them, or to convince them to surrender and abandon their broken state.

Description: *A fitful day of sleep passes, and you wake to an uncomfortable silence. The chaos of the previous night seems to have calmed – but at what price?*

You emerge into the tunnel, noting a spray of ash and charred bone at your feet. Two nights ago, that was a vampire of the Camarilla.

Your musing is interrupted by the distant call of a soldier of the Legion. "Assembly!" she shouts, her voice echoing up and down the hewn passage. "Assembly of the Senex! The Senex gathers!"

The call fades as she moves further away.

If the players choose to avoid the gathering, you might want to have them encounter another vampire headed that way. The vampire will speak hopefully of the gathering's promise of guidance (if the vampires are loyal to the Camarilla) or of the potential to witness the end of the Senex (if they are loyal to the Lancea et Sanctum).

When they arrive at the assembly, read this:

You step into the chamber of assembly, expecting a room full to bursting, as it always was in nights past. Instead, you are presented with a pitiful sight: there are less than twenty Kindred in the room. The inner circle is empty. No consul stands. Pale, wan faces turn your way as you enter, thin with worry and fear.

If any of the members of the coterie have Wing Status: Senex, read this:

"Citizen," one of the vampires says – a Magistrate, you think, representing the Legio Mortuum. "We meet to guide the governance of the Camarilla. Will you lend your voice to the assembly? Will you advise us?"

Otherwise, read this:

The berobed figures of the Senex see that none of you wear the white robes of the Wing of Ancients. Most of them look away, barely able to conceal their disappointment. "What do we do," asks one of them, a tremulous, whining tone edging into his voice. "Who will rally our forces? Are we all that remains of Rome?"

A Centurion of the Legio Mortuum, standing near the wall of the chamber with two of his soldiers, eyes you with a look of frustrated exasperation. What do you do?

Storyteller Goals: Give the characters the chance to seize the reins of the story again and make decisions about their future. Let the less physical characters have their chance to accomplish their goals.

Character Goals: Decide on the coterie's plan of action. Convince other survivors to support the coterie.

Actions: The Senex is demoralized, depopulated, and on the edge of complete dispersal. The characters in this scene have two options: to try and get the Senex back on its feet and inspire its membership to steer the Camarilla through disaster, or to take advantage of its confusion and loss to destroy it once and for all. The first option requires a show of strength and some social manipulation; the second requires successfully staging a policy debate.

The chamber is guarded by a number of still-loyal soldiers of the Legio Mortuum, who will interrupt any attempt at violence with fearsome outrage. It's worth warning the players that this isn't the time or place for aggressive assault – the characters are likely to die without achieving anything of significance.

How did it come to this?

Characters might wonder how the collapse of command has progressed so quickly. Just looking around this chamber will give them an opportunity to piece together some clues that help explain what's going on. Successes gained on Intelligence + Politics, Intelligence + Warfare or Intelligence + Empathy rolls will indicate that most of the trouble seems to be stemming from a failure on the part of the Legio Mortuum – some kind of breakdown of command – that's left the Senex underpowered and insecure, exposing them to their enemies throughout Necropolis.

Observing the soldiers in the room, characters may realize that they aren't acting on orders from above – that, as far as they know, there are no orders to act on at all. The Legion is currently embroiled in an internal war all its own, and several commanders are struggling to seize power. Helvidius Bassianus' forces are rapidly crushing all opposition – but for now, it's chaos. To make things worse, the enemies of the Legion within the Peregrine Collegia are confusing and falsifying orders all across Rome, using the confusion to create opportunities to strike back for the past fifty years' troubles. More successes on the rolls may indicate that the soldiers are treating all incoming communications with suspicion – as if they can't be sure to trust anyone, even those they are familiar with.

Observing the remnants of the Senex may reveal that the officials of the Camarilla's government are terrified, and that many of them have lost contact with their mentors and superiors, and that most of them are caught in the grip of confused, almost mindless panic.

Rally the Senex

Rallying the Senex is not too difficult, but they need someone to seize the initiative and get them moving before anything will happen. As it is, a couple of low Status Magistrates are speaking in favor of staying strong – but they aren't the most inspiring figures. The characters are going to have to take over and show them what leadership means.

There is no formal debate to rally the Senex, since none of the survivors want to go on record arguing for its official destruction.

For the purposes of social interaction, the majority of the attending Senex is considered to have a Composure of 3. Use this rating for Social Rolls.

An extended, resisted Presence or Manipulation + Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion or Subterfuge roll is necessary to bring the Senex around to a strong resolution of leadership and an official declaration of intent to preserve the laws and Traditions of the Camarilla. 15 Successes are required, and each roll represents ten minutes of speech.

There is no time limit on the roll (except the distant sunrise – at least three hours, or 18 rolls away). The characters should be able to convince the Senex by wearing them down, if not by energetic inspiration.

Once the Senex is rallied, a plan of action to gather the loyal remnants of the Legio Mortuum and establish a base of operations and restore order to Necropolis will be proposed. The characters should be encouraged to take part in this plan and present ideas of their own.

Disband the Senex

The players are free to argue for the dissolution of the Senex, since its remaining membership seems incapable of rule, effectively handing command of the Camarilla to the organized remnants of the Legio Mortuum until the crisis passes.

If they try to take command without doing so, the Centurion of the Legion will encourage them to propose disbanding the Wing of Ancients (at least temporarily) in order to remove the obstacle their dithering presents to the soldiers who remain loyal

to the Camarilla and free them to defend Necropolis without having to obey the orders of inexperienced, terrified neonates.

Once it's mentioned as an option (either by the characters or the Centurion), some of the assembled neonates will suggest considering it simply because they are terrified of taking power and making a mistake. They will refer to the motion as a "temporary measure" or a "show of cooperative faith".

The motion to disband the Senex sparks a procedural debate. The assembled neonates are fool enough to allow it to be tabled, and once it begins, they must hold to it.

Titus Pontius Caecus, a young, idealistic member of the Senex will speak on behalf of maintaining its rule.

Character	Integrity	Target to Defeat	Dice Pool	Technique	Debate Merits
Caecus	3	8	6	Aggressive Logic	Reason 1

Caecus speaks rationally and logically, trying to stay calm as he argues in defense of the Senex and its symbolic role, as well as its operational one. He's relatively unskilled, though, and he doesn't have much to risk if things get rough. He knows – and is quite correct – that removing power from the Senex, even temporarily, will just put one more nail in the coffin of the Camarilla, if not destroy it completely.

Caecus expects to be defeated. If he loses the debate, he sits back down in frustrated silence, disappointed in both himself and those members of the assembly who failed to join in on his behalf.

Obstacles/Penalties: In the initial chaos of the meeting, it's difficult (-2) to be heard. Once a character successfully gains the attention of the Senex, though (with any successful Social action), the penalty disappears.

Aids/Bonuses: If the characters actually manage to bring the torpid body of Aulus Julius Senex to the meeting, they benefit from the Status bonus (Wing Status: Senex 5) mentioned in **The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex**. On the other hand, if they bring evidence of his destruction, they gain a significant advantage (+3) if they push to disband the Senex.

Consequences: If the characters successfully rally the Senex, every member of the coterie gains one dot of Wing Status: Senex. If they disband it, those who are already members of the Lancea et Sanctum gain one dot of Wing Status: Lancea et Sanctum. Any character who participates in debate with intent to disband the Senex and loses to Caecus loses a point of Status, as per the formal debate rules in **Requiem for Rome**.

- If the coterie seems to feel hopeless or lost at the end of the scene, they should move on to **The Missionary**, below.
- If the coterie decides to work to further the goals of the Lancea et Sanctum or if they remain staunch defenders of the Camarilla, they should move on to **The Soldier's Oath**.
- If the coterie decides to leave the city, they should move on to the **Ghost of Rome**.

Time for a Break

At this point, the rapid-fire progression of the climax slows, and the characters are free to rest, replenish, and heal before the next scene. Take the opportunity to describe the new state of Necropolis to them again as they do, and make it clear that Rome itself is in disarray.

Hunting rolls suffer a –3 penalty due to the fear and suspicion of both the Roman citizenry and the invading Goths. Nobody's going about business as normal, and few mortals are willing to spend much (or any) time alone. Characters may find their Herds drastically reduced as well.

Encounter: The Missionary

Mental: - Physical: - Social: ••

Overview: In the aftermath of the invasion, the characters stumble across a Missionary of the Lancea et Sanctum, and she offers them the opportunity to join the Sanctified church.

This encounter is designed to galvanize characters who aren't sure how they want to proceed. Whether they agree with the missionary or not, they're sure to have a strong reaction to her statements. The characters can do no wrong in this scene, so long as they make their choice.

This encounter takes place a night or two after **The Night of Shame**. The characters have a chance to rest, feed, and begin picking through the ruin.

Description: *You step carefully through the scorched rubble strewn across one of the upper tunnels, emerging into the night above. The city is still and silent – no mortal walks the streets, and few lights shine in the windows of the insulae nearby. The horror of the events of recent nights rises within you again.*

Rome, once impervious, once inviolate, is now brought low. Will it ever recover?

You hear a sound nearby: the shifting of stones. A stick-thin, pale figure picks her way over the smashed remains of a fountain, looking your way with wide eyes as she moves. "Brothers," she says, "Kindred, all. In these times of sorrow, the will of God brings us together. Do you stand with the Damned?"

Storyteller Goals: Draw a line for the characters so that they can choose a side, once and for all.

Character Goals: Pick their destiny.

Actions: This is a purely social encounter. The characters are free to attack Dalia if they wish – she won't fight back. She'll either vanish into the shadows or fall to their assault.

If the characters aren't amenable to Dalia's conversion attempt, she will engage them with intent to convince them. They can either resist her efforts passively (relying on their Resolve and Composure to keep them from throwing in with her) or they can go on the offensive. Here are some of the options open to them:

• **Empathy:** A success on a Wits + Empathy roll will reveal that Dalia's compassion and concern for the characters is sincere. She really does believe that the nights of judgment are in progress, and that the characters are doomed if they refuse to side with the Sanctified, so she'll do whatever is within her power to preserve them.

• **Intimidation:** It's very easy to intimidate Dalia. Characters who make the attempt get a +3 bonus on the roll, and any success will send her running. She is likely to frenzy if so provoked, frustrated by the rebuff of her genuine concern. If so, her fangs will spring out, and she will flee, howling, into the night.

• **Persuasion:** Getting Dalia to vouch for the characters doesn't require a roll – she already wants to, as long as they are even willing to pay lip service to Sanctified doctrine. Getting her to vouch for them without exchanging a promise of conversion requires more work – a successful Fast Talk roll (p. 83, **World of Darkness Rulebook**) would be necessary.

It is impossible to convince Dalia to doubt her faith in Sanctified doctrine. If characters begin to make the attempt, she will grow wary – and if they score even a single success, she will fly into a frenzy and make her escape.

• **Socialize:** A successful Presence + Socialize or Manipulation + Socialize attempt will endear the characters to Dalia, but that won't convince her to leave them alone. On the contrary, she will be even more motivated to rescue (or "rescue") them, and will redouble her efforts to convert them.

• **Subterfuge:** This skill can be used to achieve the same result as a Fast Talk roll, above.

Obstacles/Penalties: Characters might suffer difficulties in manipulating Dalia if they are clearly enemies of the faith: those wearing pagan symbols or armor of the Legio Mortuum (-2) and high-Status members of the Cult of Augurs (-3) will have trouble getting her to back off.

Aids/Bonuses: If the coterie includes at least one member with at least one dot of Status: Lancea et Sanctum, that vampire may add his or her Status to any argument with Dalia. Characters who are clearly injured or otherwise seem in need (torn clothing, smashed armor, etc) will provoke Dalia's sympathy (+1).

Consequences: The decision characters make in this scene determines the course of their denouement in the chronicle.

• If the characters agree with Dalia and throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum, move on to **The Pilgrim's Path**, below.

• If the characters successfully rebuff Dalia and resist the urge to join the Lancea et Sanctum, but choose to remain in Rome, move on to **The Lords of Ashes**.

• If the characters choose to leave Rome, continue to **The Journey Outwards**.

Event: The Ghost of Rome

Mental: •• Physical: – Social: –

Overview: After the initial shock of invasion, the characters decide to leave Rome. Their route takes them through the remains of the Baths of Caracalla, reminding them of the glory that has fallen and giving them a moment to mourn the lost.

This event is designed to give characters who decide to abandon the city one last look at a place they knew well – a place that represents all that Rome once was, for them, and all that it has become. It justifies their decision to leave and provides them with impetus to look to the future.

This event takes place a night or two after **The Night of Shame**. The characters have a chance to rest, feed, and prepare for their journey.

Description: *The quickest route takes you up into the city above, leading to a flat run along one of the roads out of the city. You emerge from the tunnels of upper Necropolis, finding yourselves in the tepidarium of the Baths of Caracalla.*

The invasion has touched the Baths no less than the rest of the city. You notice a bloated body floating, face down, in the

warm pool. A spray of dry blood marks two of the pillars of the tepidarium. A small mass of ash swirls slowly on the bottom of the pool, moving gently with the waters. The torches of the Baths are unlit, and the whole of the building is cast in shadow.

Stepping out into the chamber, you are struck by the scent of offal and rot. Peering into the gloom, you realize that there is a pile of bodies in the domed caladarium, thrown up against the wall. Their coagulated blood mingles and drains into the steaming waters of the pool, staining it a blackish red. You recognize some of the bodies – senators of Rome and servants of the Camarilla, men and women of great influence, piled up and rotting like garbage. Rats scurry over the corpses, their bloody paws leaving prints wherever they go. One pauses to pluck the eye from a swollen, red-faced man.

Storyteller Goals: Give the characters a chance to say a goodbye to the Rome they once knew.

Character Goals: Understand what's happening to Rome. Pay respects and say goodbye.

Actions: The scene in the caladarium can be read as an omen of Rome's end and the potential for far-flung glories for the characters. Characters who score a success on an Intelligence + Religion roll may interpret it correctly – read them the following text if they do:

The significance of the scene is not lost on you. The pile of bodies represent the Rome that was, now dead and cast aside to rot. The rats gnaw at the corpses, unaware that the best of their sustenance – their blood – has drained away and into the waters. It seems that the message is clear: follow the blood into the uncertain, ever-shifting future. If you stay with the image of Rome's glory, you will be picking at a corpse. Only by plunging into the unknown can you hope to find power.

Characters who are faithful to the Lancea et Sanctum may see something more in the water. The patterns of ash and bloody silt in the pools seems to gather and disperse briefly into the shape of a spearhead, and then form several other, apparently random patterns. This shifting display will provoke an epiphany in any Sanctified character who succeeds on a Wits + Occult roll, revealing a new Theban Sorcery Ritual to them. If so, read the following to them:

You glance back at the pool of the tepidarium, noticing that the shape of the ash and silt, drifting in the pinkish waters, resolves into something very like a spearhead. You understand: the Lord's work is revealing itself to you in this dead place – this place of sin – and you are gifted with a brief glimpse of divine insight. God knew you would be here to see this. God has chosen you for this revelation.

The character(s) who see this vision learn the Theban Sorcery ritual listed in the sidebar.

Paying Respects

Characters who once celebrated Rome's glory here may choose to pay their respects to the lost souls left to rot. It would be proper to pull the body of the drowned senator from the tepidarium and scare the rats away from the other corpses, clean them all, and prepare them for proper cremation – otherwise they are likely to wander the twilight world as lost shades, barred from the honorable afterlife.

Characters who make a successful Intelligence + Religion roll will know what to do. None of the work is particularly difficult (although it's certainly unpleasant) until it's time to light the bonfires. Then the characters

The Blessing of Judas Thomas (Level three Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This ritual imbues the sorcerer with divine protection when traveling into unfamiliar territory. It is designed to give pause to those who would impede or confine the traveler, encouraging them to leave him be on the path. While the ritual is in effect, it creates the false impression of an unseen ally on the road – someone who is protecting the traveler from concealment, whether or not it seems feasible to the viewer. It does not create an actual illusion – it just provokes the *feeling* of an extra presence, leaving the viewer to rationalize its reason. "Better make sure nobody's hiding up on those rooftops, watching over them," a would-be attacker might say, or "sounds like someone's coming along the road just over that hill."

If any character attempts to interfere with the traveler, they must first garner a number of successes on a single Resolve + Composure roll equal to or greater than the number of successes originally scored on the ritual activation roll. Even if they succeed, the ritual gives the sorcerer a +3 bonus on any Intimidation rolls throughout the scene that results.

If this ritual is to be activated on a willing subject other than the sorcerer, the subject may spend the Willpower point to activate the ritual instead of the caster. If the subject is unwilling to accept the ritual, the roll to activate the power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

This ritual lasts for one hour per success rolled on activation. It only works when the subject is in territory that is unfamiliar to him – no effect will manifest in his home domain.

Offering: A valuable coin of foreign currency.

are going to be faced with a decision: attempt to light the fires themselves, resisting frenzy all the way, or leave them for someone else to light (hoping that they'll do so). Obviously the first is more correct, but it may be more than some Kindred are able or willing to attempt.

Paying respects may not have any material benefits, but carrying out the proper Roman funeral ritual is likely to satisfy the Virtue of many characters – especially since the task is conducted at some risk to the characters, who are likely in a rush.

Desecrating the Baths

It's entirely likely that vampires with a grudge against Rome (or the Camarilla, or both) will want to further desecrate the Baths and the bodies therein. They could paint slogans on the wall, ditch the bodies into the water, or tear them apart – knowing, as they do, that they are probably condemning the souls to an eternity of lost wandering.

Once again, there's no real material benefit to doing this, but it's possible that indulging the urge will engage the characters' Vices, giving them a little jolt of Willpower before they move on.

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant obstacles in this scene.

Aids/Bonuses: There are no significant aids in this scene.

Consequences: Characters who fail to pay proper respects (or, worse, desecrate the corpses in the Baths) may be haunted by a shade in their future travels.

• It's likely that characters won't change their minds about leaving the city, and will move on to **The Journey Outwards**, below.

• If the characters do change their mind and decide to stay in the city, they will either throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum in Rome and go to **The Pilgrim's Path** or try to stay in place without joining the Church – in which case they move on to **The Lords of Ashes**.

Encounter: The Soldier's Oath

Mental: - Physical: •• Social: -

Overview: In the aftermath of the invasion, the characters stumble across a wounded Centurion of the Legio Mortuum who declares his intention to make a stand on behalf of the Camarilla.

This encounter is designed to energize characters who have decided either to throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum or stand with the remains of the Camarilla. Whether they agree with the soldier or not, they're sure to have a



strong reaction to his statements. The characters can do no wrong in this scene – it is played out to allow them to reaffirm their choice and embark on their chosen path.

This event takes place a night or two after **The Night of Shame**. The characters have a chance to rest, feed, and prepare for their journey.

Description: *You make your way through the upper tunnels of Necropolis, considering your future. As you move, you hear a sound – the sound of stone grinding on stone – coming from the end of the tunnel, near the exit to the city above.*

You realize that a section of the tunnel has collapsed inwards. A soldier of the Legio Mortuum is lying there, trapped under heavy stones. He grits his teeth, straining to push the rocks off of his body. Impossibly, incredibly, they shift – but not enough to free him. From the position of the stones, it's obvious that part of his body is crushed almost flat beneath. A hole is above him, revealing the open sky.

If the characters make their presence known to Marcellus, read this:

The soldier looks your way. He speaks through his teeth, his voice quiet for lack of air to push through his throat. "I am Thascius Marcellus, Centurion of the Legion of the Dead. If you be loyal to the Camarilla, I beg you to free me, so that I may rise to fight again. If you are enemy, I curse you and all who stand with you."

Storyteller Goals: Shore up the characters in their decision. Play Thascius Marcellus as a symbol of the last, failing strength of the Camarilla so that the players can choose what to do with him.

Character Goals: Destroy Thascius Marcellus to demonstrate loyalty to the Lancea et Sanctum – or rescue him and demonstrate animosity to the Sanctified.

Actions: Presented with the wounded symbol of the Camarilla, the characters can either drive home the final knife or lend him a hand and thus take the first solid step on the path to their ultimate destiny.

Kill Thascius Marcellus

Thascius is too weak to defend himself or get to a safe place before the sun rises. If the characters attack him, they will drive him into torpor as soon as they inflict two levels of lethal damage and are free to destroy him afterwards, if they wish. If they abandon him, he will languish under the fragment of stone and burn when the sun rises. Both amount to the same thing: disposal of the last loyal member of the Legio Mortuum in Rome.

Stand with Thascius

Lifting the stones off of Thascius is a feat of strength with a rating of 8 (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 47). There is only enough room for three characters to get around the stone and lift it – the restrictive dimensions of the corridor make it impossible for more to get a grip on it. If he's freed, Thascius will manage, through a heroic expenditure of Will, to avoid a hunger frenzy – but somebody better feed him quickly. He will even take Vitae from one of the characters, if they offer it, and the gesture will be much appreciated.

Once Thascius is fed and freed, he leads the characters to one of the Legio Mortuum's secret officers' armories in the upper tunnels of Necropolis, nearby. The location is fortified and contains arms, armor, and a stash of gold.

Thascius leads you into a small columbarium, looking over his shoulder to make sure nobody is watching from the shadows. He indicates one of the small niches, holding the brass plate up. "In here," he says, still keeping an eye out. "Push at the back wall. One at a time."

Admittedly, this may sound like a risky proposition. Suspicious characters can make Empathy checks to discover that Thascius has no ill intent – but he's impatient, and if they hesitate, he will tell them that he has no reason to wish them harm. They did save him, after all. If they go in, read this:

The rough back wall of the niche swings out easily, revealing a hidden chamber behind. You slide through the opening, touching down on cold stone. Dim illumination filters through a couple of hand-sized holes up in the ceiling. The light is multiplied into a soft glow in here – multiplied by the glittering of gold and the shining of steel. Swords, armor, and shields are piled up against the walls – enough for ten men, it seems. Small sacks full of gold coins are arranged in the corner.

Once everybody's inside, read this:

Thascius follows you all in, stepping down with easy, familiar grace. "For the warriors of the Camarilla," he says.

Given the chance, Thascius will lead the characters in reaffirming their oaths of service to the Camarilla and will induct them into the Legio Mortuum on the spot.

Obstacles/Penalties: Kindred who are obviously enemies of the traditional Camarilla (wearing the marks of the Lancea et Sanctum or otherwise declaring their animosity) will have trouble getting along with Thascius (-3 on social rolls).

Aids/Bonuses: Known members of the Senex or soldiers of the Legion who indicate that they do not side with the Lancea et Sanctum will find Thascius predisposed to agree (+3 on social rolls) with them.

Consequences: If the characters slay Thascius Marcellus and bring his ash-strewn helmet to the Lancea et Sanctum, they will establish themselves as loyal Martyrs

and may gain the first dot of Wing Status: Lancea et Sanctum, if they don't already have it. Move on to **The Pilgrim's Path**, below.

• If they abandon him and leave the city altogether, move on to **The Journey Outwards**.

• If they stand with him, they gain the first dot of Wing Status: Legio Mortuum, if they don't already have it, and get to supply themselves with the arms and gold he's hidden away. Move on to **The Lords of Ashes**, below.

Event: The Lords of Ashes

Mental: ••• Physical: - Social: ••••

Overview: The invasion of Rome is complete, the Camarilla in complete disarray. In the uncertain calm that follows, the coterie of vampires remains, walking the empty and ruined tunnels of Necropolis.

This is the end of the Chronicle for characters who choose to remain in Rome without pledging to the Lancea et Sanctum. Some may retain the ideals of the Camarilla, hoping to rebuild the lost glory of the Roman Kindred. Others may abandon those ideals, but refrain from throwing in with the Sanctified Church, remaining unaligned for now (and, possibly, playing a part in founding early versions of the modern covenants).

The characters, having decided to remain in Rome and refusing to join the Lancea et Sanctum, are casting themselves as rebels in the new order. They meet up with a number of other stragglers, learning that they are not alone – and that they are the ones their contemporaries are looking to for leadership. The future is theirs.

This is your chance to tie up any loose threads that may remain in the story, giving the players a rewarding conclusion to some of the sub-plots that have been running throughout. If a former ally is still alive, give them a chance to reconnect. Have the allies show up with the stragglers described below, brought low and looking for help. If a former enemy is still out there, have him arrive as well, significantly weakened, and give the characters the chance to forgive him and bring him into the fold, or destroy him once and for all. Show the characters that their old story is over now, and that their future – their next story – awaits.

Description: *There is an uncertain calm in Rome these nights. The tunnels of Necropolis are silent and empty. The corridors you walk echo only with the sounds of your footfalls. The city above seems crouched, like an animal gathering its strength to rise after a tumble. There is no sign of the barbarian army here.*

You know that the vampires of the Chapel and Spear are out there, somewhere, gloating in their masses, praising their fortune. You'll have to face them sooner or later.

For now, you gather yourselves to consider a course of action. Just as you are on the verge of speaking, you hear a sound. Looking up, you see three filthy Kindred, one of whom is wearing a battered suit of legionnaire's black armor. They are joined by two more, and then two more after than, in silent progression. All of them look to you, and you realize: they are all much younger than you. And they are coming to you in confusion, in fear, and in hope.

"Elder," says one of them, meekly. "The Sanctified hunt us in the tunnels. They say the city is theirs now. They say we must join them or perish. But we heard that you yet remain, and that you will not stand with them. Will you guide us? Will you lead us in these nights?"

Storyteller Goals: Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Put the characters at the forefront of the weakened society of Roman Kindred. Demonstrate that their choices will have a serious impact on the city and the vampires who remain.

Character Goals: Establish a base of power in Rome. Prepare for the age ahead.

Actions: The characters have one final choice to make: agree to lead the burgeoning resistance or reject it and keep to a solitary existence as outlaws. The Kindred survivors won't dispute their choice, no matter which way they go.

Lead the Resistance

It's true that the characters are actually the eldest and most experienced Kindred who both remain in Rome and refuse to throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum, and it makes sense that those who plan to do battle with the church are hoping that the coterie will agree to lead them. If the characters do so, the stragglers will be cheered by the promise of powerful leadership, and they will gush with praise and thanks.

The characters have the opportunity to rally the survivors. A Presence + Expression or Presence + Persuasion roll could instill the young Kindred with hope and confidence, setting the stage for the future and affording the characters a chance to satisfy their Virtues.

On the other hand, they could take the opportunity to establish themselves as tyrants, offering the young Kindred their best chance at survival in exchange for servitude. A Presence + Intimidation or Manipulation + Persuasion roll could represent the attempt to cow the stragglers and force them into a pledge, and would afford the characters a chance to indulge their Vices.

In both cases, the collective resistance of the stragglers should be represented by a Composure of 2. This is an action likely to succeed – it isn't about whether or not the characters will take control as much as it's about *how* they take control.

Either way, bring the Chronicle to a close with a narrative sequence about the stragglers falling into line and taking their cues from the characters. Spin a short tale of the preparations for resistance against the Sanctified: moving into some of the deeper tunnels of Necropolis, arming the stragglers with supplies taken from abandoned caches of the Legion, and settling in for the long haul.

Let the characters congratulate themselves. They were ordinary Kindred, then they were survivors, and now they are leaders. Who knows what glories yet await them?

Reject the Resistance

If the characters reject the resistance, the pathetic stragglers will simply retreat, dejected, resigned to their probable fate. There's no argument, no battle – the young vampires don't believe they have the power to force the coterie to do anything.

If the characters attack the stragglers, one or two of the young Kindred will fall easily, wounded, weakened, and starving for blood as they are, and the rest will flee into the tunnels. None will fight back.

Once the characters are alone, you can bring the Chronicle to a close with a short sequence narrating the feel of the following months, as the characters find themselves safe haven in the deep tunnels of Necropolis, establishing their base of operations, arming themselves, and getting ready for the long years ahead.

Once again, let the characters congratulate themselves. They may not be at the head of a small army, but then again they probably don't want to be. They have survived the worst calamity in vampire history, and they are utterly free to decide where they will go next, unfettered by leaders *or* followers.

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant obstacles in this scene.

Aids/Bonuses: The stragglers are relieved to find the characters and eager to believe (+2) whatever they have to say.

Event: The Journey Outwards

Mental: •• Physical: • Social: ••

Overview: The city of Rome is fallen and the Camarilla destroyed. The characters undertake the dangerous journey eastwards, following the remnants of their society in hopes of forging new glories in the seat of Empire.

This is the end of the Chronicle for characters who choose to leave Rome and follow the last splinters of the Camarilla to Byzantium. There, they will participate in the formation of the nascent Invictus or Circle of the Crone, throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum, or remain unaligned, hoping to revive the nights of old.

By leaving Rome behind, the characters are acknowledging that the era of the Camarilla as it was is at its end, and that their future – whether an attempt to revive the glories of old or a search for the new way forward – lies elsewhere. They embark on the road to Byzantium, beginning the long and arduous journey.

While a trip to Byzantium is the most probable for Kindred seeking to follow the power of Rome, it's possible that the characters will choose to leave and go elsewhere. Britannia, Gaul, and Germania await in the North, Egypt and the Sahara in the south. You can still use this Event to narrate those choices - just make cosmetic changes to the descriptive passages below.

Take your chance here to tie up any loose ends in the characters' story. If an important ally hasn't met her end in any of the earlier scenes, you can bring her back into play on the road, joining with the characters at the beginning of their travels. A hated enemy could be found at the side of the route, weak and wounded, giving the characters the opportunity to show mercy or to destroy him once and for all. Show the characters that their old story – their story in Rome – is over now, and that the future holds something entirely new.

Description: *You step beyond the gates of Rome, embarking on the long, open road. The path is scattered with a few dry leaves, heralding the onset of Autumn. There is an eerie silence to the scene: the city behind you stands broken and still. Even the stone of the gate is cracked. Rome, you realize, is finished. Your choice is the only choice: leave before the mortals do, before the disease and violence draws all but the hardy few down into the afterlife and make feeding all but impossible. Leave, before the surviving Kindred turn upon themselves again.*

[Destination] waits for you ahead. There, you face challenges unknown. Barbarian vampires lurk in the shadows. Splinters of the Camarilla form into isolated, fearful units. And eventually – you know now – eventually, the Sanctified will come.

Your old Requiem is done. It is time, as you take your first steps down the road, to plan for the new.

Storyteller Goals: Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Put the characters on the road to their final destination. Demonstrate that they are cutting their ties

with Rome, now and forever, and that they will have an important role to play wherever they go.

Character Goals: Leave the city. Prepare for the age ahead.

Actions: This event is less a challenge requiring action than it is a narrated coda to the story. Characters need not be presented with significant difficulty on their trip (although you can certainly describe how difficult and unreliable travel has become with the breakdown of the Camarilla's system).

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant obstacles in this scene.

Aids/Bonuses: There are no significant aids in this scene.

Event: The Pilgrim's Path

Mental: • Physical: - Social: ••••

Overview: The will of the Lord is done, Rome is broken, and the Camarilla is destroyed. The characters remain in the city, claiming the remnants of Necropolis for the Lancea et Sanctum and working to establish the powerful foothold of the covenant there.

This is the end of the Chronicle for characters who choose to remain in Rome and pledge themselves to the Lancea et Sanctum. Faithful or not, they have sided with the victor, and must now look forward to establishing themselves for the future.

The characters, having decided to remain in Rome and join the Lancea et Sanctum, are casting themselves as founders of the new order. They stand for mass with a gathering of Sanctified Kindred, realizing that they are among powerful and dedicated allies, and that they are being offered a significant role in determining the city's future.

This is your chance to tie up any loose threads that may remain in the story, giving the players a rewarding conclusion to some of the sub-plots that have been running throughout. If a former ally is still alive, give them a chance to reconnect. Have the allies show up at the mass described below as members of the congregation, looking to the characters for support. If a former enemy is still out there, have him arrive as well, significantly weakened, and give the characters the chance to forgive him and bring them into the fold or destroy him once and for all. Show the characters that their old story is over now, and that their future – their next story – awaits.

Description: *There is an uncertain calm in Rome these nights. The tunnels of Necropolis are silent and empty. The corridors you walk echo only with the sounds of your footfalls. The city above seems crouched, like an animal gathering its strength to rise after a tumble. There is no sign of the barbarian army here.*

You know that the last remnants of the Camarilla are out there, somewhere, planning to take back what they have lost. It will be some time before they are all ferreted out and destroyed. The path of the righteous is long and difficult.

But you are ready. For now, you gather yourselves to pray for guidance. As you enter the chamber of the mass – the room that was once called "Camarilla", now the charred, blackened site of a new Church – Marciana Longina Rhetrix greets you. "My Kindred," she declares, her arms outstretched, her expression fierce and proud. "Our great compatriots return to us. God be praised."

The vampires of the mass turn to you, gazing with awe and admiration. You realize: almost everyone in the room is much, much younger than you. To them, you are great Martyrs, survivors of the persecution and violence of the last century and heroes of the Church.

"Elder," says one of them, a black-clad, skeletal creature. "The city is ours now. The enemy is doomed. Victory is ours. Will you guide us in the nights to come? Will you help us in our holy mission?"

Storyteller Goals: Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Position the characters firmly in the upper echelons of burgeoning Sanctified rule. Demonstrate that their choices will have a serious impact on the city and the vampires who remain.

Character Goals: Establish a base of power in Rome. Prepare for the age ahead.

Actions: The characters have one final choice to make: agree to take part in leading the Church or step aside and leave power to Rhetrix and Bassianus alone. The Kindred survivors won't dispute their choice, no matter which way they go.

Lead with Rhetrix and Bassianus

The characters are among the eldest Kindred remaining in Rome – of those they know, only Rhetrix and Bassianus remain, and only Bassianus is significantly older than they are. It makes sense for those within the Church to look to the coterie for leadership, and Rhetrix and Bassianus are likely to be happy to have their help (or, at least, to be happy that they're not going to stand against them). If the characters agree to take part in leadership, the Sanctified will be cheered by the promise of their active participation, and many of those gathered will praise God. Rhetrix herself will welcome the coterie to stand up by the altar with her and face the Kindred of the Church in victory.

The characters have an opportunity to display their charisma. A successful Presence + Religion, Presence + Expression or Presence + Persuasion roll will instill the vampires of the gathering with a sense of hope or reaffirmation of faith, setting the stage for the future and affording the characters a chance to satisfy their Virtues.

On the other hand, they could take the opportunity to establish themselves as pious, merciless dictators, offering the young Kindred their best chance at survival in exchange for abject obedience. A Manipulation + Religion, Presence + Intimidation or Manipulation + Persuasion roll could represent the attempt to bully Rhetrix and the worshippers into kneeling for them, and would afford the characters a chance to indulge their Vices.

In both cases, the collective resistance of the gathering should be represented by a Composure of 2. This is an action likely to succeed – it isn't about whether or not the characters will take control as much as it's about *how* they take control.

Either way, bring the Chronicle to a close with a narrative sequence about the worshippers falling into line and taking their cues from the characters. Spin a short tale about the partnership that forms between the coterie and Helvidius Bassianus (who is too strong to take down, especially with his elite soldiers gathered around him, but will not interfere with their aspirations within the Church): arming and organizing the Sanctified, ordering the scouring of Necropolis, and settling in for the long haul.

Let the characters congratulate themselves. They were ordinary Kindred, then they were survivors, and now they are leaders. Who knows what glories yet await them?

Bow to Rhetrix and Bassianus

If the characters choose the route of humility, the worshippers will follow their example, making things much easier for Rhetrix (but laying the whole responsibility for their guidance on her shoulders). She will be gracious, accepting her duty without hesitation. There's no argument, no battle – the young vampires don't believe they have the power to force the coterie to do anything.

Once the characters are alone, you can bring the Chronicle to a close with a short sequence narrating the feel of the following months, as the characters find themselves safe haven in the sacked ruins of Rome, establishing their base of operations, arming themselves, and getting ready for the long years ahead.

Once again, let the characters congratulate themselves. They may not be at the heads of the Church, but then again they probably don't want to be. They have survived the worst calamity in vampire history, and they are utterly free to decide where they will go next, unfettered by leaders *or* followers.

Obstacles/Penalties: There are no significant obstacles in this scene.

Aids/Bonuses: The Sanctified Kindred will be happy to see established vampires like the characters at the mass, and predisposed to welcome them (+2).

Experience

Characters participating in three core scenes: **The Barbarian Assault**, **The Night of Shame** and **The Missionary**, **The Ghost of Rome** or **The Soldier's Oath** can expect to gain an experience award of about 3 points. You should wait until the entire story has concluded to award these points.

- **The Barbarian Assault**: Surviving the battle and getting to safety awards 1 experience point to any character that is involved in the scene.
- **The Night of Shame**: Any character who participates in this scene, regardless of the outcome, gains 1 experience point. Any character who plays out an interesting, inspiring or entertaining resolution of the scene gains a 1 point experience bonus award.
- **The Missionary**, **The Ghost of Rome**, or **The Soldier's Oath**: Any character who participates in one of these scenes gains 1 experience point.

In addition, certain scenes provide possibilities for bonus points.

- **Owls in the Underground**: Any character who participates in destroying the Striges or negotiating with them gains 1 experience point. Fleeing awards no bonus. A character who recalls and makes use of one of the exorcism rituals of the Lancea et Sanctum or the Cult of Augurs gains an additional 1 experience point bonus.
- **The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex**: Any character who participates in rescuing Senex or destroying him gains 1 experience point. Fleeing awards no bonus. A character who recalls and makes use of one of the exorcism rituals of the Lancea et Sanctum or the Cult of Augurs gains an additional 1 experience point bonus.
- If the characters bring Aulus Julius Senex, intact, to the gathering of the Senex in **The Night of Shame**, every one participating in the scene gains 1 experience point.
- If the characters bring Aulus Julius Senex's ashes and display them to the gathering of the Senex in **The Night of Shame**, every one participating in the scene gains 1 experience point.
- All of the characters who survive gain an additional 3 points of experience as a Chronicle-ending bonus.

Appendix I: Pre-Generated Coterie

This appendix presents a pre-generated coterie for players to run through the Fall of the Camarilla. The characters listed here are designed so that they could fall on either side of the conflict: loyal to the tradition of the Camarilla all the way to the end, or converts to the philosophy of the Lancea et Sanctum. Complicated loyalties between the five characters are set in place so that everyone has a reason to work together.

All of the characters begin as rank neonates, so that their survival and development over the course of the century-long story will have greater impact.

Julia Aurelia

Description: Julia Aurelia is a thin, pale, young-looking native of Rome, born to one of the noble families of the Empire. She is of the Julii, both in life and undeath, and the marks of the clan are clear in the shape of her nose and the line of her jaw. She walks and moves with the confidence of educated aristocracy, maintaining a graceful, detached expression at all times.

She keeps her hair pinned up in the most modern style, and wears well-cut gowns of imported silk. She is always clean, always well dressed, and always ready with a word or a smile.

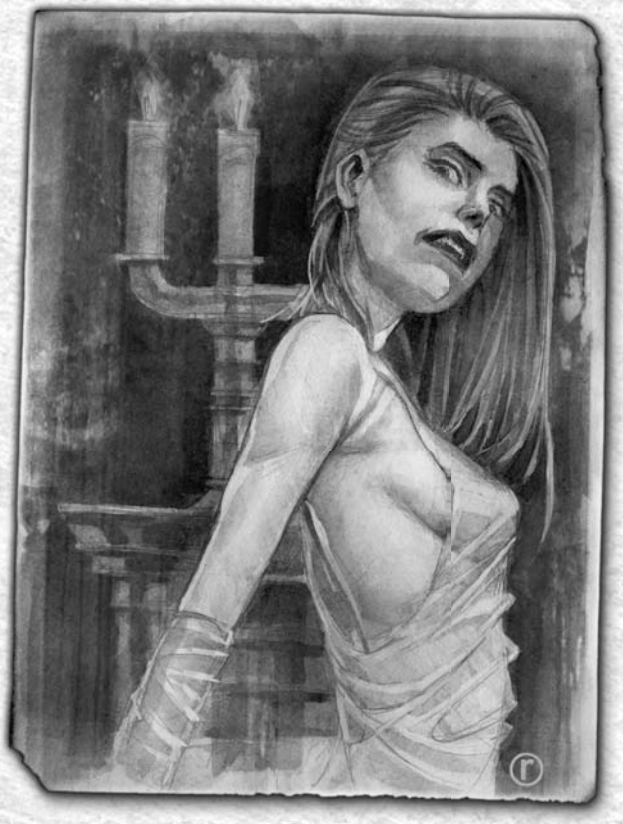
Background: Julia Aurelia was a brilliant child, and she was afforded the rare opportunity to develop her wit at a young age, under the tutelage of her attentive and intelligent parents. Encouraged by one of the family ancestors, her father allowed her to take lessons in subjects that were normally closed to girls: poetry, political history and theory, and logic. She thrived in schooling, eventually surpassing many of her contemporaries – by quick cleverness more than raw intelligence.

When she was fourteen, her parents began to cast about for a suitable husband. Meanwhile, the ancestor who took such an interest in her education – a vampire named Cassius Julius Vitericus – began visiting her in her chambers at night, quizzing her and provoking her to friendly argument. He forced her parents to turn away several suitors, choosing to keep her company for himself. They began to plead for release, begging him to allow her wedding before she age further. He turned a deaf ear to them, realizing that the girl was becoming more important to him than he expected – perhaps more than she should – and that he could not stomach the idea of allowing her to wed. After a few nights of intense consideration, he took his young descendant into Necropolis and Embraced her instead.

Cassius Julius Vitericus introduced his young childe to the Senex, securing her a seat in assembly by right of blood. Soon after her release, though, he began to lose interest in her. Something vital in her had faded after death, and it was something that he came to miss. He grew distant, and eventually stopped hosting her altogether.

Realizing that his attentions had more to do with infatuation than with real interest, Julia Aurelia turned bitterly away from Vitericus, choosing to make her mark with or without his aid.

Player Hints: Julia Aurelia is a young vampire with something to prove. She's been cut loose from her mor-



tal family and her undead mentor, but not from her obligations to her lineage or to the Senex. She's smart, capable, and more than willing to throw herself into difficult situations if it means the opportunity to raise her profile and start amassing personal power.

Julia is a teenager, though, and her inexperience colors a lot of her behavior. She's a bit naïve, and a little too willing to lend a hand to those who provoke her pity. She's friends with Cornelia Alba, who she sees as a worldly sister of sorts. Through Cornelia, she knows all of the other members of the coterie.

While she is fearful of both Virgilius Ambustus and Sextus Petronius Aquilinus, Julia makes an effort to hide her weakness and stand confidently before them. It's hard for her to conceal the occasional flinch when the warriors get into one of their noisy arguments, though.

Julia's come to rely upon Titus Severus for support and advice in matters of politics, knowing that he is both well-educated and strangely predisposed to helping her (for reasons she has yet to ferret out).

Clan: Julii
Wing: Senex
Embrace: 300 CE
Apparent Age: 15
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 1, Politics 3 (legislative debate), Religion 1, Ride 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Animal Ken (horses) 1, Empathy 2 (sensing ulterior motives), Expression 2, Persuasion 2
Merits: Wing Status: Senex 1, Status: Camarilla 1, Resources 1, Noble Heritage: 2, Debate Style: Reason 2
Health: 7
Willpower: 5
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Charity. Julia Aurelia cares for those around her – both Kindred and mortal – and will go out of her way to help someone in need. Her youthful enthusiasm translates quite easily to a selfless urge – especially when she's in a good mood.
Vice: Pride. She knows that she's a talented politician and an able member of the Senex, and sometimes she lets it get to her head. There's still a bit of the precocious child in her, and she's motivated by a search for praise as much as she is for fulfillment of duty.
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Disciplines: Dominate 1, Animalism 2
Blood Potency: 1
Vitae/Per Turn: 10/1

Titus Severus

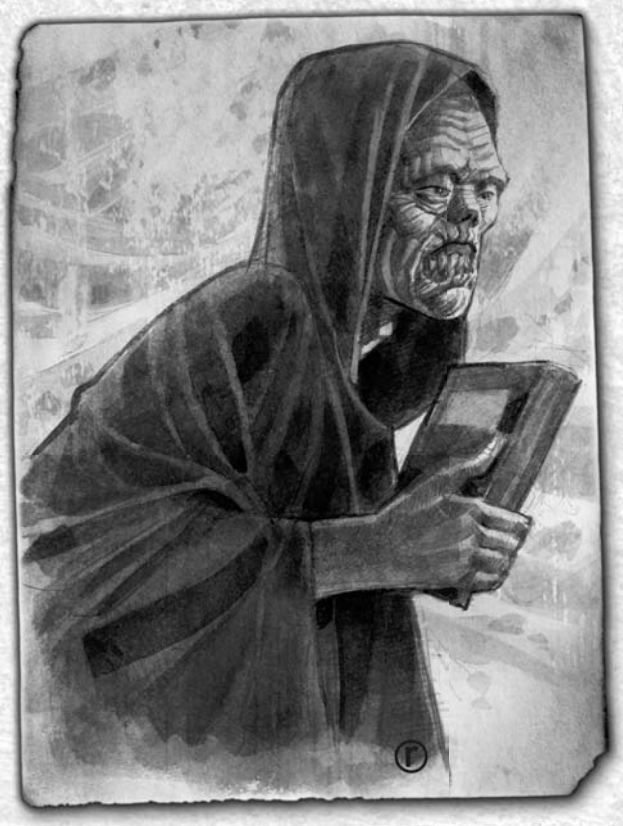
Description: Titus Severus is a tall, severe figure, shaved bald and robed in the black, hooded cloak of a Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs. He wears simple sandals and a leather wrap around one forearm, and rarely carries any obvious equipment (although the voluminous folds of his garment make it easy enough to conceal small objects...and coin).

Background: Severus was a freed man in life – a former slave who had educated the children of a noble senator and found himself released on the occasion of his Domitor's death. Schooled as a child by Greek academicians, he always knew how to make himself useful...until his days of service came to an end. For the first time in his life, he found himself without instruction, and turned to drink instead of plying a trade.

A sheltered servant no longer, Severus learned the hard lessons of life in Rome's slums. He suffered beatings, robbery, and ridicule at the hand of foreign-born rabble. He was shunned by the educated free men for his drunken behavior and derided by his fellow drunks for his high-minded talk. One night, under a heavy rain, Severus fell into an alcohol-hazed sleep in the gutter, and never woke to see the day.

Instead, when he once again opened his eyes, he found himself dead, underground, among horrors. At first he believed that he'd passed into the underworld, finally slain by some footpad on the street. A fellow Worm told him that he wasn't that lucky...he was one of the Vermes now, the undead creatures of Necropolis. None would admit to being his sire. At first, he was put to work digging tunnels with the rest of his brothers. Eventually, though, due to his ceaseless chatter about the ways of the Gods and the myths of old, he was directed to the Cult of Augurs, who took him in and gave him his new purpose.

Player Hints: Severus is knowledgable, wordy, and eager to serve a higher calling. He likes to hope that a sharp mind and a keen wit are all that a vampire needs to get by, but the lessons of life (and undeath) have proved otherwise. He shows a slight contempt for anyone who gets by on muscle, but that scorn is just a way to mask his fear.



He is very capable at reading omens and signs, and will be happy to offer advice to anyone who listens when they are considering plans of action. He's not likely to take the lead in any conversation, but will definitely make the attempt to steer those who do when they start to divert from his preferred course.

Severus has come to know Julia Aurelia through consultations with the Senex, and treats her with some affection. She reminds him of the students he once had, and he'd like nothing more than to help shepherd her to success. As part of his effort to foster a good relationship with Julia, Severus makes a point of polite kindness in dealings with Cornelia Alba as well – since she is clearly Julia's closest ally.

He is a bit ashamed of being Nosferatu, and will only admit kinship with Sextus Petronius Aquilinus with a grudging shrug. In times of trouble, though, Aquilinus is the first one he'll turn to – and the first one he'll jump to defend.

Severus has begun to warm to Virgilius Ambustus, but only because the Gangrel represents a store of information about the north and the Caledonian peoples that Severus has never had access to before. He likes to engage Ambustus in conversation about his foreign origins, but always worries that he will accidentally anger the Gangrel.

Clan: Nosferatu
Wing: Cult of Augurs
Embrace: 302 CE
Apparent Age: 21
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Skills: Academics 4, Crafts 1, Politics 2, Religion 4 (augury), Brawl 1, Larceny 3 (sleight of hand), Stealth 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 1 (ambiguous statements)
Merits: Wing Status: Cult of Augurs 1, Status: Camarilla 1, Resources 2, Herd 2, Allies (mortal priests) 1
Health: 7
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Faith. Severus believes that all of mankind (and Kindred) are directed by a higher power. He has come to accept both the good and the bad that the world has to present, and credits all to a sensible plan beyond his ken. The reversals in his own existence have proven, more than once, that some intelligence must be at work, pulling the strings of life and chance.
Vice: Gluttony. Given the opportunity, Severus will indulge himself in sensual pursuits. He was a drunk in life, and he would be in death if allowed access to enough alcohol-soaked blood.
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Disciplines: Obfuscate 1, Nightmare 1, Veneficia 1
Veneficia Rituals: Apollonian Sight
Blood Potency: 1
Vitae/Per Turn: 10/1

Vergilius Ambustus

Description: Vergilius Ambustus is a wiry, longhaired man with steel-blue eyes and a strange, hard look. He has a long scar running diagonally across his chest, from one shoulder to the bottom of his ribcage, and another, shorter one across his lower back. He wears the clothes of a lowly merchant – most likely stolen straight off the back of a hapless mortal.

It's clear that Ambustus is not of Roman stock. His features are foreign, his latin is accented, and his demeanor is savage. His native language is a Pictish tribal cant which sounds unbearably guttural to cultured Roman ears.

Background: Vergilius Ambustus was once a tribesman of the Caledonian north named Talorc, a fierce little man caught up in the endless battle along the walled front of Britannia. He fought in more than one campaign against the Roman invader, often applying his skills to sneak into enemy fortifications and slay soldiers in their sleep. If he's to be believed, he cut the throats of thirty men with his own hand in those nights.

Whether his stories are true or not, Talorc was brought low by the blade of a surprised Centurion late one night, and his unconscious body was thrown over the wall, where it was assumed he would succumb to his (obviously mortal) wounds. A wolf emerged from the nearby brush, though, and dragged him under cover. The last thing that Talorc remembers of that night was the hot breath of the wolf as it looked into his eyes, as if searching for something.

The next night, he arose from the pitch, made Gangrel. The wolf became a man, and it told him that he was to face the monsters of the south in the name of his Gods and tribesmen. Talorc didn't understand what was happening to him, but he was perfectly happy to take advantage of it to further harm the enemy. Only later, when he learned that he could never go back to his people and never again see the sun, did he realize that undeath was not the great blessing he had assumed.



When attacking the Roman soldiers one night, Talorc noticed the Kindred of the Legio Mortuum at work, fighting off the Caledonian Gangrel. He saw them slay his sire and all of the Gangrel he had come to know, as well as most of his tribe, and he withdrew to the shadows rather than die at their side. He trailed the soldiers of the Legion for some time, studying them and their ways, wondering if he could find a way to make them pay. Never quite finding the right opportunity, he ended up following them all the way back to Rome, where he found other Caledonian Kindred like himself – former slaves or warriors – who were happy to bring him in and show him where the enemy's command originated. He was named Vergilius Ambustus (for the rage that burns within him), and advised to keep to the Peregrine Collegia, where he was safe, while he grew in strength and experience, assured that the night for vengeance was sure to come.

Player Hints: Ambustus hates Romans, and he hates Rome. He knows enough to keep his anger hidden, though, until the time is right to strike. He's lost all of his tribe, after all, and all of his close blood relations among the Gangrel – he sees himself as the last of a dying breed, and doesn't want to waste his final assault on anything less than a mortal blow. He is almost sure that he will perish when the time for his vengeance comes, and is willing to accept that.

He truly cares for Cornelia Alba, and knows that she is as disgusted by the Romans as he is. Even though she isn't Caledonian, he understands that she is no less a foreigner, and that her anger burns as brightly as his own. He will go out of his way to protect and please her, if only because she has done the same for him in the past.

In spite of himself, he has come to respect and even admire Sextus Petronius Aquilinus. While Aquilinus represents everything that Ambustus has come to hate, he is also a consummate warrior – something that Ambustus can identify with – and the two Kindred are actually similar enough in temperament and attitude that they would likely be the best of friends...if they could forget their few differences.

Ambustus has little time for Julia Aurelia, who he thinks is a spoiled, arrogant, Roman brat. He keeps his opinion to himself most of the time, though, just to please Cornelia.

He finds Titus Severus alternately fascinating and tiresome, depending on the topic of Severus' conversation. When the Vaticinator holds forth on matters that appeal to him (like the reading of natural omens or the peoples of the north), Ambustus is all ears. When he

talks of anything else, the Gangrel dismisses him as a wordy windbag.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Peregrine Collegia

Embrace: 303 CE

Apparent Age: 19

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Crafts 2, Warfare 2, Archery 2, Brawl 2, Stealth 4, Weaponry 3 (dagger), Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 3 (silent threat), Socialize 2 (Picts), Streetwise 1

Merits: Wing Status: Peregrine Collegia 1, Status: Camarilla 1, Allies (Pictish immigrants) 2, Haven Security 2, Language (Latin) 1, Fleet of Foot 1, Fighting Style: Boxing 3, Contacts (mortal mercenaries) 1

Health: 9

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Fortitude. Nothing beats Ambustus down – not for long, anyway, and there's nothing he won't subject himself to in order to get a job done.

Vice: Wrath. Ambustus has never forgotten the feel of the Roman blade biting into his flesh, nor the sight of his brethren falling before a formation of undead Legionnaires. The anger he still feels at the loss has a tendency to boil over, unleashing itself upon his friends and enemies both.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Pugio (small dagger)	1L	1/S	-	9

Disciplines: Protean 1, Resilience 2

Blood Potency: 1

Vitae/Per Turn: 10/1

Cornelia Alba

Description: Cornelia Alba is a strange, almost hypnotic figure. She is a stunningly beautiful study in contrast: her jet-black hair falls over the pale, almost luminous flesh of her shoulders. Her expressive, dark eyes seem to suggest a soft, emotional being – but her whispered words are usually hard and cold as ice. She is graceful



and measured in her motion, but not because of noble education. There's something innate in the way she carries herself, something magical and foreign.

Cornelia usually dresses in muted black or gray gowns. She avoids ostentatious accoutrements, preferring not to make a show of herself.

Background: Cornelia never knew her real name. Born to Egyptian slaves, she was taken from her parents at a very young age and sold to a Roman brothel. She worked there as a servant for years, eventually growing into the role of a prostitute, catering to rich and noble customers eager for young, beautiful flesh. She learned to coo and smile in order to attract business, all the while developing a seething hatred for life in Rome and the whole of its populace: merchants, soldiers, slaves and aristocrats all. None were spared her loathing.

Soon after her nineteenth birthday, Cornelia took on a new regular. The customer was a mysterious, nobleman of astonishing wealth, and he showered her with extravagant gifts. While she accepted the precious baubles, she found it difficult to return his affections, even falsely, because he provoked a deep, irrational fear in her – something that she could not understand or overcome. Perhaps it was the lateness of his visits, or the cool, dry feeling of his flesh. Perhaps it was his way of looking at her – as if looking *into* her – or the feeling that his professions of love were no more genuine than her own.

One night, while Cornelia was entertaining another customer, her regular appeared in the room. She had no idea how he got there – and before she could even cry out or protest, he had drawn a knife across her customer's throat, throwing him to the floor like a slaughtered pig. She saw a sudden light, heard a rustling of cloth, and never drew another living breath.

When next she woke, she found herself in Necropolis. Her would-be lover – her sire – apologized profusely, admitting that he had slain her in a mad rage, then rescued her the only way he knew how. Listening quietly – learning what he was and what she had become – she felt the fear within her die and be replaced: with disgust.

In the months that followed, Cornelia abandoned her sire and befriended several Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia. She arranged to have him beaten into torpor and hidden away, and now is free.

Player Hints: Cornelia's a manipulator. She knows she's got several advantages over many of the men (and Kindred) she meets: she's pretty enough to get them to drop their guard, and she's a lot smarter than they expect. She's not above using other people to get what she wants, and she feels a smoldering contempt for almost every vampire she's ever met (most especially those of Roman birth).

To tell the truth, she doesn't really know what she wants. She dislikes the Roman way of life (and undeath), and she has no reliable information about alternative. She's heard a little bit about the Lancea et Sanctum and finds some of their philosophy attractive – but not enough that she's ready to choose the Requiem of a fugitive for it.

Julia Aurelia represents a great opportunity for Cornelia. She's got a seat on the Senex by right of Embrace, she's not overly bright and relatively easy to control, and she is just as enchanted by Cornelia's cold beauty as many others. It seems that Julia looks at Cornelia as an older, wiser sister, and Cornelia's perfectly happy to allow her to do so, if only just so that she can have access to the protection of the Senex.

Cornelia considers Titus Severus to be a competing influence over Julia Aurelia, and does her subtle best to push him out of serious discussions. She has no problem with him as a vampire, and might even grow to like him – but only if he doesn't make a habit of getting in her way.

Vergilius Ambustus is something Cornelia admires: a true foreigner, stubbornly unwilling to conform to Roman "civilization". No matter how abrasive or difficult he is, she keeps a soft spot for him in her heart.

Sextus Petronius Aquilinus is another matter. Powerful, imposing, and stern, he represents a potential asset in physical confrontation and a connection to the Legio Mortuum – both qualities that Cornelia appreciates. He seems to be resistant to her charms, though, and that makes her uncomfortable. She'll probably go out of her way to try and win him over.

Clan: Mekhet
Wing: Peregrine Collegia
Embrace: 301 CE
Apparent Age: 19
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 4 (tracking), Medicine 1, Brawl 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 4 (Necropolis), Survival 1, Weaponry 3, Persuasion 1 (surprising facts), Streetwise 3
Merits: Wing Status: Peregrine Collegia 1, Status: Camarilla 1, Allies (prostitutes) 3, Striking Looks 2
Health: 7
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 5
Virtue: Hope. Cornelia believes that there is something better waiting for everyone in bad circumstances, just as long as they don't lose heart. She will share her hope with anyone who is downtrodden, and all of her attempts to stay tactically aware sometimes play a secondary role to her deep-set optimism.
Vice: Wrath. As someone who has both endured and witnessed countless injustices, Cornelia is vulnerable to bouts of uncontrollable anger. If something provokes her, she can lose sight of the greater situation for favor of cutting loose and visiting her rage on some unlucky passerby.
Initiative: 5 (6)
Defense: 3 (4)
Speed: 10 (20)
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Pugio (small dagger)	1L	1/S	-	9

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1
Blood Potency: 1
Vitae/Per Turn: 10/1

Sextus Petronius Aquilinus

Description: Roman born and brutishly strong, Sextus Petronius Aquilinus cuts an imposing figure. He's nearly six feet tall – a rarity in this time and place – and his expression is one of near-permanent, detached disdain. He is completely hairless, and his skin is a grayish, sickly hue. He has the body of a life-long warrior, and the scars he bears on his leathery arms and back tell the tale of several battles fought...and laws broken.

Aquilinus almost always wears the matte black armor of the Legio Mortuum and displays his weapons without shame or decorum.

Background: Sextus Petronius Aquilinus was once a lowly mortal soldier, serving with the Legio XVI *Flavia Firma* in the East. His life was that of a faceless member of the multitude, undistinguished and unnoticed. He died in battle, somewhere around 250 CE.

What he remembers of the aftermath is now a confused jumble of dream-like images. All he knows is this: something shadowy seemed to grab hold of him as he pressed his hands to a mortal wound in his side, feeling the life flow out of his body. He saw death and chaos all around him, and a blinding, stinking miasma seemed to claim him, dragging him down through the soft earth and away from the battle.

When he next awoke – from sleep or madness, he knows not – it was 302 CE, and he was in Rome. He has no idea how he got there, and no idea who Embraced him – indeed, if he was Embraced at all. He rose among the *vermes*, and was just another Roman Nosferatu, grubbing in the low tunnels.

His power and battle acumen brought him quickly to the attention of the Legio Mortuum, and he was recruited. He has served with honor and dignity ever since. Two years before the chronicle begins, he was assigned to patrol one of the territories of the Peregrine Collegia, and came to know many of the Kindred there. He befriended Cornelia Alba and Vergilius Ambustus, and has become involved in their pursuits.

Player Hints: Aquilinus has no idea why he became a vampire, and he serves the Legion simply because serving a legion (whether living or undead) is what he has always known. His gruffness and quiet scorn provide a ready mask for his sense of confusion and loneliness. At his core, he is a vampire searching for himself.

His alliance with Cornelia Alba is one of mutual benefit: he knows that she is lent legitimacy by having him accompany her, and he gains access to the Peregrine Collegia in turn. Through her, he has befriended Vergilius Ambustus – a vampire with whom he disagrees violently on almost every subject, but feels an undeniable kinship for.

Aquilinus knows Julia Aurelia and Titus Severus because of Cornelia's machinations. He admires Severus for his intellect and his understanding of his place in relation to the Gods – both qualities that Aquilinus considers deficient in himself. He has no real feelings about Julia Aurelia either way: to him, she is another member of the Senex, engaging in pursuits he doesn't understand or care to know. He is loyal to her because she is part of the governing wing of the Camarilla, and that's that.

Aquilinus is designed to discover himself in the allegiance of the coterie, whether they choose to be loyal to the traditional Camarilla or to throw in with the Lancea et Sanctum. Either way, he ought to throw himself fully into the purpose he finds, learning that his origins are irrelevant in the process. He is what he chooses to be.

Aquilinus is, however, the only member of the coterie to suffer from a derangement as play begins. He feels unjustifiably inferior much of the time – especially when confronted with a situation that demands independent thought. This, above all else, is what keeps him from taking control of the coterie – or any group he joins up with, for that matter.



Clan: Nosferatu
Wing: Legio Mortuum
Embrace: approx 250 CE
Apparent Age: 26
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Skills: Crafts 1 (improvising weapons), Occult 1, Religion 1, Warfare 4 (confined spaces), Archery 1, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 4, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 3 (Peregrine bands)
Merits: Wing Status: Legio Mortuum 1, Status: Camarilla 1, Fighting Style: Formation Tactics 3, Fighting Style: Boxing 2, Haven Security 1, Haven Location 1, Resources 1
Health: 7
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 5 (Inferiority Complex: 6)
Virtue: Temperance. Aquilinus has never been one to take things too far, no matter what the situation. He just isn't overly emotional – never was, as far as he knows – and can keep a clear head even when everyone else is losing their minds. He's the one you want close at hand when chaos erupts, because he's one of the few you can be sure will keep his wits instead of running wild.

Vice: Envy. Everybody else seems to have something Aquilinus wants. Cornelia is beautiful. Ambustus is shameless. Julia Aurelia is privileged. Severus is infused with a sense of purpose. In his darker moments, he can't help but dwell on his deficiencies, and the ease with which others seem to surpass him in all things...rather than notice that he is stronger, surer, and more courageous than most of them, so long as he keeps his mind on the task at hand.
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 12
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Gladius (short sword)	2L	2/S	-	11
Pugio (small dagger)	1L	1/S	-	9

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	-2	-2
Shield	-	+2	-

Disciplines: Nightmare 1, Obfuscate 1, Vigor 2
Blood Potency: 1
Vitae/Per Turn: 10/1



Appendix II: Slouching Towards Byzantium

"The good and the gentle pass away all too soon; the bad prolong their life for years."

- Theodoret, Epistle LVIIII

Constantinople. Byzantium. The city has many names. Boldly declared the New Rome by the one man who could make the name stick, rebuilt once and again with the cannibalized remains of the ancient world. With the original Camarilla reduced to tatters and ashes, the Camarilla of Constantinople stands the best chance of uniting the vampires of the Roman world.

Yet Constantinople is not Rome, and never will be. Constantine chose Byzantium as his new capital not only because it was far from the Western frontiers, but also because it was at the cultural and economic nexus of East and West. Few of the powerful vampires of Byzantium owe any blood to Rome, and those who do have considered themselves the true rulers of the night for centuries already. Bishop Carellus rules the city firmly, but the plagues and wars that tear across the mortal world prevent him from extending his rule to the West. Meanwhile, the four great clans scramble to claim the place of the vanishing Julii.

In Byzantium there is no city of the dead, no stygian kingdom and no safe haven. To survive here, the dead must cling to the illusion of mortality every night, or risk undoing themselves and all their Kindred.

The Traditions of the Lancea et Sanctum are now the law of Constantinople, but they are flouted as often as they will be in the modern nights. These violations do not undermine the Bishop's rule so much as justify it; he plays the role of prince in rooting out treason and sin, and the role of priest in choosing whether to forgive it or impose final judgment. All clans now obey a single Masquerade, keeping their supernatural deeds away from the sight of the living.

The sun hangs low over Byzantium, but the Kindred don't know whether it's setting or rising.

How to use this Appendix

This chapter presents Constantinople in the year 543 CE. You can use it as a cap to end your chronicle, or a jumping-off point for epics spanning the Dark Ages and beyond. Depending on your chronicle and the way your characters navigated the stories in earlier chapters, they may enter the city as heroes, bringing the last legitimate Roman authority to the new capital of the known world. The Sanctified Bishop may curse them, bless them, or be thrown at their feet with a stake through his heart. This chapter presents a single setting, but provides different ways to use its elements to suit the tone you choose.

If you follow the history presented in **Vampire: The Requiem**, then no single authority will ever again govern the Kindred. However, the Byzantine dead have the potential to do so. The conflicts in this chapter are among the many reasons why, and among the obstacles that may face a coterie if you choose to deviate from the core setting.

543 CE is also a pivotal year for the mortal Empire. The bubonic plague ravages the city, killing hundreds or thousands by the day and holding the Emperor Justinian on the brink of death. His wife, Theodora, is a capable ruler, but not well liked by the court. Justinian's reconquest of the Western Empire is also in doubt, as not only the barbarians but the former Roman populace push back against his armies. A prophet called John the Ragged raises an old heresy anew in the east, and rumors abound that he will march personally on Byzantium.

History

Constantinople was founded by the Emperor Constantine in 330 CE, on a site already occupied by a

medium-sized Greek settlement; the place was known as Byzantium. From the very beginning, Constantinople was a planned city; the Emperor himself marked its boundaries with his spear, remarking to his companions that Jesus walked ahead of him and determined his path. Christ, then, had remarkable insights into warfare and trade. The new city was set on the Sea of Marmara, an ideal location for trade with Asia, and was far from the barbarian frontiers, which moved closer every year to Rome.

Constantine's relocation of workers and soldiers to Byzantium with their families brings vampires from throughout the Roman world, while the increasing size of the settlement attracts monsters from throughout Asia and North Africa. These vampires begin fighting almost immediately, both with each other, and with the native Vrykolaka brood of Nosferatu. A special detachment of the Legio Mortuum, led by an officer of the Julii, pacifies the city by 328 and institutes military rule.

By 332, Constantinople is ready to be christened the New Rome. The Emperor's palace alone is practically a city. Outside, the greatest statues of the classical world flank a great road. Constantine has built a new city to rule a new age, but has quarried its materials from throughout the Empire. Every inch of space is built upon or being built; the empty temples of Rome are replaced with packed Christian churches. Constantine commands that the great pagan idols be brought to adorn his city, but mounts them in secular spaces. While the pagans are officially tolerated, their gods are commanded to serve the state as mere ornaments.

As Constantinople becomes the capital, the Legio Mortuum moves into position, securing the Camarilla's interests in the city. Decimus Lucius, local Praetor of the Legion, assumes governorship on behalf of the Senex and seemingly cements his power by allying with the monstrous Vrykolaka of the Peregrine Collegia. He consecrates a sea cave on the Marmara as his headquarters. Lucius dispatches messengers to the Senex of Rome to declare his governorship, but receives a surprisingly terse and unenthused reply. The Camarilla, he is informed, is please to have his service, but the Senex warns that it will not brook competitive aspirations from the Camarilla of "New Rome". Lucius is ordered to sign a proclamation guaranteeing that he will not make statements of policy, no matter how insignificant or local in application, without instruction from Rome. Insulted by the request, he refuses. Speaking before the assembled Kindred of Byzantium, Lucius declares that the officials of the Camarilla so frightened of their own loyal servants as to make their ludicrous request are not worthy of their titles. He consecrates his headquarters the Camarilla, honoring the Emperor's declaration that Constantinople should be the new seat of Rome, declaring that it should also be the seat of Kindred Rome. Soldiers, citizens and barbarians all applaud thunderously. The governors of nearby cities and other Kindred loyal to the Roman Camarilla wisely hold their tongues.

Lucius prepares to repel or subvert assassins from the Roman Camarilla, and, within months, they begin to arrive. In the years between 332 and 365 CE, he is purported to survive or repel no less than twenty serious attempts on his unlife. He responds with a series of vicious purges, eliminating most of the Senex in Constantinople and replacing it with officers of the Legio Mortuum.

His greatest challenge as a ruler lies in keeping peace between the various pagan and Sanctified factions. Until 367, he is able to keep every side certain that they are on the cusp of winning his favor. When Julian is assassinated, however, those Roman members of his Legion still in contact with their fellows at home, and influenced by a sudden surge of refugees from the West, convert to the Lancea et Sanctum *en masse*. The pagan Lucius realizes that he must now rely on a Sanctified army to survive and to maintain rule. In 368, he is baptized and converted. Several of his remaining pagan generals plot rebellion, but an Egyptian Mekhet Missionary named Sedeh warns Lucius of the treachery. The conspirators are murdered or exiled, and the Legion is purged of remaining pagan elements. In gratitude, Lucius promotes Sedeh to his right hand, delegating much of the command of the Legion of the Dead to her under his rule.

Over the next two decades, Sedeh becomes the most feared of all Kindred in Constantinople. Her leadership and strategic sense are both undeniably superior, as is her uncanny ability to spot betrayal. At first, her ruthlessness is rather popular; all a vampire has to do is convert and pledge himself to Sedeh's faction, and he knows his enemies will be taken care of. Later, however, her executions and exercises become increasingly bizarre. She orders her troops to wander the city at night slaughtering owls. In 382, she assassinates nine members of the Senex, including four of her own partisans, claiming that they mixed their blood with that of spirits. Pressure mounts for Lucius to remove her or face rebellion; but in 383, Lucius himself, and his three childer, disappear without a trace.

Sedeh attempts to claim the position of Praetor, which would cement her place at the apex of Byzantine Kindred society, but both the Sanctified and the Legion turn on her. She flees to Alexandria with most of her brood and a few loyal troops. Not all of her childer escape. Three are caught by the Legion and crucified. One, Felix, is

rescued by allies, while his siblings burn in the dawn. Felix is adopted by Timothy, the Sanctified Bishop. He is groomed alongside Alexander, Timothy's own childe.

For several years, the lack of a clear successor to command of the Legion (and, therefore, the stacked ranks of the Senex) and the lack of support or representation from the Roman Camarilla – which is experiencing problems of its own – leads to nightly battles between Kindred in the alleys of Constantinople. The remainder of Lucius' Senex divide along family and religious lines, fracturing and fomenting an atmosphere of conflict and chaos. As Nosferatu stalk Mekhet and Gangrel stalk Daeva, the Kindred fear the threat of Roman interference the attentions of the Kindred in nearby territories.

Timothy, as a rising Daeva and the Sanctified Bishop, works with his two childer to bring each faction to the bargaining table. He tells of an elaborate vision sent to him by God. In his vision, a rat is pursued by an owl. Just as the owl swoops to consume the rat, the ground shakes and a horde of rats pour forth, catching the owl and rending it to pieces. The leaders of Constantinople's factions are skeptical, but Timothy wins them over with a miraculous display, willing his own Vitae to flow from his veins and shape itself into the scene he describes.

Timothy's council creates a new Senex assembly, with one magisterial seat guaranteed for each clan. A sixth chair is for the Patriarch, Timothy himself, Vicar of Longinus and Bishop of God's Peace, while a seventh is named the Seat of the Roman Senex and is given to an elder Julian. Who, exactly, that elder is representing is left deliberately vague. Rumors from Rome are as confusing as they are terrifying; Kindred arriving from the west claim that the city has been invaded, the Senex disbanded, and that the Cult of Augurs and the Lancea et Sanctum fight a never-ending war in the depths of Necropolis. Some even claim that there are no longer many Roman living, that the city of the dead is starving. By 415, rumor and speculation settle into bitter truth: the Roman Camarilla has fallen. The Julii have vanished, though no two tales agree on exactly how or why. The most common explanation involves betrayal by the other clans or infighting amongst the Julii themselves. A few blame creatures more terrible than the Kindred, but there are *always* stories blaming creatures more terrible than the Kindred. The Sanctified are more than happy to grin smugly and assume their brothers are responsible. The now-outlawed Cult of Augurs is more than happy to hate them for it.

Then the Julii of Byzantium begin to disappear. Rumors run wild: that they are all going mad, turning on



one another in fits of violent cannibalism. That they are falling to the assassins of the Lancea et Sanctum. That God (or the gods) have cursed them with a fatal disease that even the Kindred cannot resist. Late in 418 CE, the last of the Byzantine Julii vanishes. Her screams echo up and down the streets of the city, and no trace of her remains by the morning.

The mortal Emperor Anastasius grows increasingly obsessed with signs and portents, looking for God's instructions in patterns of stars and spills of milk. As he ages, he looks for his heir in the same way. He invites his three nephews to dinner, and arranges three couches for them to rest upon. In the luxurious cushions of one couch, he places a slip of paper inscribed with the word "Regnum," deciding that whoever sits upon that couch should succeed him. Much to his frustration, two of his guests share a seat, leaving the royal couch empty. Anastasius leaves the dinner in a fury and returns to his chambers to pray; he decides that the next man he sees shall be his heir. Early the next morning, his general Justin enters the royal bedroom.

For nearly a hundred years, the Camarilla of Byzantium devolves, collapsing again and again into inter-clan and inter-faction conflict. By the year 460 CE, several factions are referring to themselves as the Camarilla, each excluding the other. By 475, all of them abandon the pretense and the name falls out of use. Constant battle winnows the city's vampire population down by half.

In 514, Timothy enters torpor and leaves his Bishopric to Alexander, now the eldest of the Daeva. Felix, meanwhile, has risen to the head of the Mekhet, and his ties to the Bishop are as strong as ever. Alexander can easily command half of the city's Kindred, and begins to consider expanding his ambitions. Lucius and Timothy both claimed to represent the legitimate Camarilla, but neither genuinely held sway more than a few nights' travel from Constantinople.

The reign of Justin draws to a close. Unlike his predecessor, Justin has never questioned who his successor should be: his nephew and adopted son, Justinian. Justinian's political acumen is matched by that of his Empress, Theodora, and he has a capable military commander in his friend Belisarius. Justinian is painfully aware that he is inheriting a Roman Empire which barely retains Rome. Like Bishop Alexander, he begins plotting to retake the West. In the meantime, he begins generously paying barbarian tribes to serve as border garrisons. To some in Justinian's court, this is wise diplomacy; to others, the Emperor is on the wrong end of a protection racket.

The Blues and the Greens (described in **Requiem for Rome**) are still mighty political factions. The government now appoints their leaders, and the two *demes* are given duties as law enforcement organizations and city guards. In order to maintain the balance of power, Justinian and Theodora each support a different faction... at least in public. In the privacy of their bedchambers, however, the two plot every move, every gesture. For a time, they believe they can control the populace through an intricate dance of public feuds and private agreements.

Justinian's ruthless efficiency and eye for spectacle serves him well in the shadow of his uncle Justin; however, he doesn't know when to stop. He and Theodora raise taxes throughout the Empire; the thoroughness and loyalty of their tax service only serves to inflame the mob further. Meanwhile, the judge he commissions to rewrite Roman law is brilliant but corrupt. In 532, the opening of the games is interrupted by riots. The city is nearly leveled, and Justinian almost flees. All that stops him is Theodora's combination of courage and goading.

Instead of fleeing, Justinian plots with his friend and general Belisarius to take the city in a military campaign. Any pretense of allegiance to the Blues or Greens is abandoned, and the riots are brought to a swift and bloody halt. In the end, they work to Justinian's benefit; like Constantine before him, he is able to rebuild the city in his own image.

Triumphant at home, Belisarius is dispatched to the West to reclaim Italy. Following the model of the old Legion, the Bishop Alexander sends bands of camp followers behind Belisarius' armies, but they rarely report back. In the society of the undead, he declares that the collapse of the Camarilla's system has made travel between cities too dangerous, and advises his followers to remain within the city. Privately, the Bishop realizes his expeditions were ill prepared, and begins plans for his "Legion of the Damned," a new army with the discipline of the Legio Mortuum and the religious zeal of Sanctified missionaries. He hopes to assemble an army that will push westward, re-establishing safe lines of transit and conquering territories in his name.

Italy returns to the embrace of mortal Empire, but as Justin realizes just how young and popular Belisarius is, he recalls the general to Constantinople. Command of the armies falls to five different generals with no authority over one another. Almost immediately, the Empire's power begins to collapse. Both Italians and barbarians revolt. And as Justinian's proud, new Byzantium begins to rise upon the Golden Horn, traders from the East bring the bubonic plague. The mob dies

by the hundreds. Justinian, accustomed to processing among the people, catches the disease, plunging him by day into his sickbed, and filling him at night with strange animation and fury. Alexander is beseeched by his subjects to allow them to feed upon the dead and dying, lest they starve, while Felix at long last begins to understand his sire's madness.

The year is now 543 CE.

Kindred of the East

Traditions

The law of Constantinople was officially established by the Bishop Timothy, Alexander's sire, but most of the ideas go back centuries further. The core body of law is called the *Traditio Sanguinis*, or "Surrender of the Blood." Based heavily on the *Sanguineous Catechism*, the central principle is "*Deo non bestiae tradite*": "Surrender to God, not to the Beast." Surrender to God comes through surrender to God's representative on Earth, Longinus, and through him, the Church.

As usual, the presence of this law means that it's being broken regularly. Alexander is a more indulgent ruler than his predecessor, but he has not repealed the *Traditio*. He has been known to forgive those who confess their sins, however, and Kindred may sometimes win a dispensation through excellent service to the Church.

The First Tradition: Reveal Yourself Only to Your Kindred

The first Tradition of Constantinople is the Masquerade. Kindred nature makes some version of this law inevitable, and each of the clans of Rome practiced some version of it. In Byzantium, the law is simple: among mortals, no vampire may reveal her dead or supernatural nature. She must disguise herself as one of the living, affecting their dress and their cultures.

By maintaining secrecy, the Kindred of Byzantium withdraw themselves from the many temptations that mortals present: the cults of the proud and greedy, the slaves of the lustful and gluttonous. The First Tradition is therefore considered the most direct practical application of the central tenet of the *Traditio Sanguinis*.

In Rome, the cities of night and day were sharply divided. Vampires rarely assumed mortal identities on any ongoing basis; those who maintained an active involvement with their living friends and family usually did so as shades. Many of the most active members of the Camarilla ventured into the Roman torchlight only when consumed by a need to hunt. Their other needs could be satisfied in Necropolis, or by having a childe drag home a victim as an afterthought. Byzantine Kindred, however, have always had to spend their nights in the company of the living.

The Ancestral Game

Pagan Rome was built as much on the worship of ancestors as Gods. The *Propinqui* often appeared to their mortal descendants as benevolent or vengeful ghosts, and some still do, despite the First Tradition. Ancestor worship is a household cult, with each family having their own rituals, their own ways of remembering lost fathers and grandfathers. There are almost always gifts or sacrifices; often these are buried in the ground or immolated in the hearth. Some treat their ancestors like minor gods, leaving a slaughtered, but whole, animal in the place of memory for a night or two.

There are always stories, too. When a man dies, the only stories told are of his life; what used to make him laugh, what he was like when he was angry. His daughter might retell stories he in turn told about the war, or about his own father. As years go by, though, as the father becomes a grandfather, the stories grow. His daughter, cradling a child, tells him about the time their landlord's bullyboys tried to throw the family out, and how her father brought her gold coins, even though she had neglected his sacrifice. She tells him about his older brother, who died in his blankets, and how her father returned that night to hold her. In her later years, graying and weak, she tells only good things about her father, because she knows she goes to join him soon. She cautions her children to only speak well of the dead, and never to forget the sacrifice.

Somewhat naively, the Kindred who prey upon this superstition believe their Bishop is unaware. Nothing could be further from the truth, and Alexander is ready to make an example of a Roman-born Daeva, Lysander. A popular elder who left Rome early in the fourth century, Lysander has been cultivating his mortal family as a ghoul bloodline for centuries. Arresting him may inspire his childer and friends to vengeance... unless he is widely suspected of more than just a pagan hobby. The characters could expose or invent the crimes of Lysander... or implicate his friends as well.

For perhaps the only time in Kindred history, language and culture are easier to feign than appearance. Constantinople's perpetual influx of foreign traders and provincial visitors means that bizarre behavior or antiquated speech is a matter of course. While most Byzantines, living or dead, speak Greek or Latin, they speak it in a hundred pidgin tongues.

The Second Tradition: Spill only the blood of the living.

The second Tradition of Constantinople outlaws the siring of childer, blood bonds, ghouls and diablerie. The doctrine of Longinus, as determined by the Kindred of the Black Abbey explicitly forbids the creation of childer, and Timothy zealously enforces this rule, going further than their recommendation. The vinculum is forbidden for more practical reasons: since before the foundation of Constantinople, Greek vampires in the region commonly traded blood bonds for significant favors. These pagans considered the increased loyalty and affection more than worth the jealousies and madness they eventually bred. When Sedeh launched her war against the pagans, she faced frenzied tribes of monsters with indecipherable loyalties. Destroying an apparent leader simply caused the next most-loved creature to take his place. Sedeh's coteries even came to believe that the pagans possessed *veneficia* that allowed them to chain the vinculum through one vampire to another.

The law of Timothy tries to ensure a simple social order. Allegiance is first to God and His Church, then to one's sire. Blood bonds, whether the products of pacts or love affairs, represent the introduction of an unholy distraction from the purity of divine service. The practice of the Vinculum is grounds for the execution of anyone involved.

The Third Tradition: Do not worship alongside the living

Bishop Timothy saw the cultivation of the mortal Church as a duty of the Sanctified. The mission of the Damned on Earth is to guide humans to worship of the true God. Hunting or feeding on holy ground, or using the Church directly to recruit servants, undermines this mission. Thus, he banned the dead from taking part in any religious service among the living, or even setting foot on holy ground. However, this Tradition severs the Kindred not only from a source of food, but also from worshiping before artifacts like the True Cross.

The rebellion of the dead, which unseated Timothy, was spurred in part by this ban. Justinian's building campaigns massively expanded the mortal holy ground in the city, depriving dozens of influential Kindred of territory on the fringes of the older churches. If Timothy had been a less capable leader in his earlier years, if he had not shepherded the dead so effectively through the riots of the living, those Kindred might not have survived to challenge him.

Historical Note

The seeds of modern Tradition can be found in the *Traditio Sanguinis* of Timothy. His Third Tradition, however, will never spread far beyond Constantinople, even though it affects the future of the Lancea Sanctum. The Kindred of Constantinople are forced to find their own relics and holy places, and to found their own religious festivals. These effects are only magnified by time.

Some of the resulting divergence between the Lancea Sanctum and mortal Christianities will persist to the 21st century.

Wings

The wings of the original Camarilla are limited in significance in sixth-century Constantinople. However, characters migrating from Rome may still have strong ties to members of their old wings. If a character managed to maintain his political alliances through the collapse of Rome, they become personal contacts in Constantinople, rather than organizational ties. For example, a member of the Senex might retain the loyalty of a younger vampire that he sponsored, or a Sanctified congregant might still hold the trust of the priest who baptized him.



The Senex

The Old Man is dead. Vampires from Rome may still be in shock, but Aulus Julius Senex and his law have been irrelevant to Byzantine Kindred for over a hundred and fifty years. Until the collapse of the original Camarilla, the Camarilla of Constantinople includes the Chair of the Senex. After Rome falls, the post remains vacant. Many Sanctified consider the Senex responsible for the Camarilla's destruction, and point to the elimination of the Julii as evidence of divine wrath. The Wing of Ancients should have acknowledged the True God, they say, or Rome would not have been ravaged by demons.

Former Members of the Senex arriving from Rome may be well served by the resources they accumulated in the service of the Camarilla, but they may actually suffer if their former association is revealed. The body that once formed the Senex of Byzantium has long been shattered, and a council of clan representatives – dictators without obligation to represent or protect their own – has replaced it.



The Legio Mortuum

Along with the Lancea et Sanctum, the Legion is the backbone of Constantinople's remaining government. However, Constantinople has faced its share of division and battle, first with the Camarilla, then against the pagans under Sedeh's leadership, and now keeping the Bishop's law against a Kindred mob on the verge of starvation. Alexander insists on devoting a portion of the Legion's forces to building his dreams of holy conquest, dividing the force into yet again.

Yet the Legion remains strong. Ostensibly a purely Sanctified body now, it has joined forces with the Sanctified Church and now serves as a military arm of the covenant. Kindred of the Roman Legio Mortuum who find their way to Byzantium will find that all of the positions and structures of the wing remain intact, despite the change in philosophy.

The Legion in Byzantium is desperate to recruit, and has lowered its standards considerably in recent years. Trained soldiers now stand shoulder to shoulder with ravening beasts, dishonorable assassins, and half-wit murderers.



The Cult of Augurs

The Sanctified of Constantinople have been conducting purges against the Augurs since at least 370, when Sedeh declared open war upon the pagans. The Wing of Prophets has never existed in Byzantium in any organized sense, though many vampires still make sacrifice to their ancestors and conduct secret rites just before dawn. The Senex of Constantinople outlawed the Cult of Augurs shortly after Lucius' conversion to Longinism.

Characters who openly declare membership in the defunct Cult of Augurs are likely to find themselves tried before the Camarilla. However, they're also likely to have knowledge of the Veneficia which has been unavailable in Constantinople for generations – and that means that the remaining Kindred in the city who seek to maintain ties with the old gods will be eager for their company.

The broken remains of the Cult of Augurs in Byzantium, driven underground and constantly on the run, are one of the many diverse groups that will one day join forces with like-minded worshippers to form the Circle of the Crone. For them, the great tribulation that the future covenant will base itself around begins in these nights, and is sure to drag many down to Final Death before they can find recognition.



The Peregrine Collegia

In Roman terms, very nearly all of the dead of Byzantium are foreigners. The Peregrine Collegia was once the most numerous and, arguably, most powerful wings in the city. However, the internecine warfare of the fifth century devastated the wing, and it splintered into a series of self-interested bands. Despite the best attempts of certain members, those bands never came together to cooperate again, choosing instead to remain independent, unfettered, and weak.

Because of their inability to maintain cohesion, the Peregrine Collegia has been all but destroyed. Pressures to join the Sanctified or the Legion of the Damned have claimed most of the remaining members, and starvation, violence, and hopelessness has taken all but a handful of the rest.



The Lancea et Sanctum

The Lancea et Sanctum forms the spiritual skeleton on which Constantinople's vampire government has formed. The worship of the Loving and Jealous God through his representative, Longinus, is a nearly unquestioned part of Byzantine Kindred society. Until the last century, violent disputes tended to arise between the various heresies of the Sanctum, but Bishop Alexander

has proved remarkably adept at keeping peace, and the Monachal teachings of the Black Abbey provide a clear and popular basis for faith.

Now, the city is under the undisputed control of the Sanctified. Devoted members of the legion patrol the city on the behalf of the Church, bringing pagan Kindred and strangers to its leaders for conversion or judgment. Missionaries and Martyrs walk freely in the streets, safe in the knowledge that their covenant is the one cohesive ruling power left in the city.

Clans



Daeva

The Greco-Roman Daeva are riding high on nearly two centuries of rule over Byzantium. The traditionalists observe with satisfaction that Rome has fallen, as all cities must, while younger rebels enjoy the opportunities afforded by ever-new, ever-changing Constantinople. Their Persian cousins are much the same, while the Indian Daeva spend their nights in elaborate, exclusive political rituals that are part wargame, part endless funerary rite.



Gangrel

Few of the Gangrel in Byzantium have any relationship to those in Rome. Instead, most come from the Romanized lands of Eastern Europe. Some of their sires were Dacians, some Huns; they all came to Constantinople for the same reason: the burgeoning mortal population. Most now serve in the Legio Mortuum.



Julii

There are no Julii. Not anymore. They are gone.



Mekhet

Like the Gangrel, most of the Mekhet in Constantinople came from lands brushed with Roman culture, but have never experienced Rome itself. The elder Seers were Embraced predominantly in Egypt and Greece, and are almost exclusively Sanctified.



Nosferatu

The Worms are everywhere, the Worms will always be everywhere. This is what the elder Nosferatu of Byzantium teach, and they point proudly to the many tongues spoken by those they have Embraced. The largest group of Nosferatu is the extended brood of the Vrykolaka, but a steady stream of immigrants from the rest of the civilized world, as well as the rise to power of a Roman elder, dilute their influence.

Allies and Antagonists

The Emperor and Empress

Quote: "Solomon, I have outdone thee."

Description: Justinian himself is a small, average looking man with a stern gaze and a permanent smirk. He's smarter than any of his subjects, and he knows it. The Emperor is obsessed with order in the smallest details. He has personally revamped every agency of the city's government, whether or not it was already adequate. He has an eye for genius in others, as well, but that can blind him to their faults. With his wedding to Theodora, he caused a tiny scandal; with his tax collectors and judges he caused a riot. Some of the dead believe that Justinian leveled the city on purpose, so that his city could outshine Constantine's and his temples would overshadow Solomon's.

Theodora, Justinian's wife, is tall and austere. Her face has a thin, sculpted perfection that dares you to challenge her beauty. She's the Empress, not Empress-consort or any other half title, and she is second only to Justinian in power.

Background: Justinian is the adopted son of the Emperor Justin. The Emperor Anastasius employed a crude oracle to select his heir, but he was not the fool many of his servants believed. When he invited his three nephews to dinner, he knew that any would be a capable leader. When he decided that the next man to enter his bedroom would be his successor, he knew that it would be a man in whom he had already placed his trust. Justin was loyal and generous, traits that endeared him to his armies and his nephew. He was, however, completely lacking in the practical skills needed to administer his state. His civilian ministers dismissed him as a drooling incompetent, but Justin had spent years as a leader of men, and he knew when he needed help. He sent for and adopted his nephew, who took the name Justinian. With the Emperor's blessing, Justinian became the real power at court. When Justinian married, he and Theodora were made co-Emperor and Empress, and so reigned until Justin's death.

Theodora was an unlikely Empress. A burlesque actress and sometime prostitute, she was reviled by the Byzantine aristocracy as soon as she began attaching herself to men in power. Tales of her sexual escapades were told and retold with equal parts revulsion and jealousy, and no one was particularly surprised when she began sharing the bed of the Emperor-to-be. What shocked the nobility was how well she began to fit in. The witty but vulgar courtesan was swiftly replaced by a proud, majestic consort. For years, wealthy Byzantines had mocked Theodora's past as an actress, but not one had ever considered how good an actress she might be. Over the years, the passions between Justinian and Theodora have cooled, but affection and devotion remain. If Justinian dies, Theodora will mourn him even as she tries to retain his throne. During the day, she often visits his bedside, ordering his cushions meticulously as he would if he had the strength. During his mad walks at night, he spurns her attentions, and it is only in those angry moments when she sheds tears or considers removing him.

Storytelling Hints: Recently, Justinian has been stricken with the plague. Each morning, new sores dot his flesh, and he moans in agony when he can summon the strength. Ordinarily, his bureaucrats and generals would be circling like crows, sending furtive messages to each other and to the armies abroad. They are deterred by three people. First, Theodora. She has all of her husband's force of personality, bolstered by greater courage moderated with humbler ambition. Theodora is content to reign over the greatest kingdom in the world from the greatest city in the world. She sees occidental conquest only as a proving ground for men who would depose her husband. Hence she distrusts Belisarius, the second person who keeps



rebellion in check. Theodora's suspicion led to his withdrawal from Italy, but, in truth, Justinian has no more loyal friend. While Justinian lives, Belisarius reacts to any talk of a successor the same way he'd react to aspersions on his wife Antonina's fidelity: with a resigned smile and very personal violence. Any who would replace Justinian know that the army will rally behind Belisarius.

Finally, Justinian's reign is protected by the man himself. Though Theodora handles the business of state, Justinian is enjoying increasing periods of lucidity. As the sun sets, his plague-fever gives way to deathly cold, his eyes shine, and his expressions become alternately joyous and tortured. He stalks the streets and courtyards of the palace, and his own guards fear the sight of him. Some evenings, he converses with the night-birds; others, he lures them close and rends them with his bare hands. Kindred in the confidence of the palace guards hear conflicting stories, some describe a man who lurches and babbles like a thing out of this world, others a theologian who converses eloquently on the Revelation of John to an avian audience. One soldier recalls being grabbed and beaten by the Emperor, whose face became the very picture of his uncle Justin.

The Kindred agree generally that a fell spirit afflicts the Emperor, and many believe such spirits carry the plague. Some believe that Justinian is already dead, and that his body is now the battleground between his mortal ghost and a Strix.

History will call Justinian the last Roman Emperor, but he won't die this year... or for more than a decade after. By 544 CE, he will have made a complete and apparently miraculous recovery. Kindred suspect witchcraft, and a few of Justinian's courtiers will believe the same. Justinian's historian and sometime friend Procopius will curse him as a very fiend from Hell. Many Kindred suspect some kind of possession, and a few believe the Emperor is sustained by Vitae.

If you're looking to end your chronicle on a down note, the characters could find their way to Byzantium, only to arrive in a plague-ridden hell ruled by a Strix enjoying one last brutalization of the Julian legacy. A more triumphant mood might see them arrange the Emperor's recovery themselves, delivering the state for a few years into the hands of the dead.

Abilities:

Empire Building (dice pool 6)~Even now, with bodies piled higher than bricks in the streets, Justinian's building campaign continues. The rapid changes to the urban geography~and the pushing of residential areas further from the city center~make valuable, central territories almost worthless, while outlying domains fill rapidly with blood and servants.

Reform (dice pool 5)~Procopius observes that there is no institution or agency of state that the Emperor leaves alone. Everything must be reviewed, reorganized, remade in the Emperor's image. Kindred with a vested interest in the status quo may find themselves losing influence, while new arrivals from Rome may find opportunities to get in on the ground floor of corruption in the new civil services.

Religious Persecution (dice pool 3)~Justinian has troubled relationships with both the Patriarch and the Pope, but, as usual, he's sure he knows best. He has outlawed the astrologers, who have been a valuable mask for pagan and Sanctified Kindred alike. Yet, he also persecutes the monophysites (who believe that Christ was human and divine in one being, instead of possessing two distinct natures), which wins him the approval of those in the Lancea et Sanctum who believe that all should suffer for their faith.

Alexander, Vicar of Longinus, Bishop of Constantinople

Quotes: *(Majesty) "Let us pray, and let us listen for the will of the Lord."*

(Persuasion) "God provides, even for the Damned. Serve me, and let me serve you in turn."

Description: The Bishop speaks softly, but is impossible to misunderstand. When he speaks of God, he conjures images of a man so kind that he could love entire nations of men as both father and husband... and who, for the sake of that love, has cast you into living hell. Even as Alexander's words soothe the hunger in your gut, they make you aware of the thick Vitae in your veins, of the hollowness of your heart even when you force it to beat. And he promises you, promises *you* that he can ease that suffering, if only you will do what God expects.

All eyes are on him. All eyes are *always* on him, the tall, olive-skinned man with the silken beard and the eyes as black as the abyss. His robes are pure and white, seeming to glow faintly even in the foul, frightening light of the torch. At his word, the arguments stop. The false breaths stop. The Bishop has arrived, and it is time to listen.

Background: Alexander was the son of a Greek soldier and an Indian merchant's daughter. If he knows the circumstances of the union, he's never chosen to discuss them. His mother raised him on the streets of Constantinople. When he was a child, she begged for their keep, and even then there was something in his eyes that made passers-by give. His charm diminished with adolescence, and his mother supported herself as a prostitute. He jokes that she sold him to the Church; in fact, he became a monk in a fit of adolescent rebellion. Perhaps his charm had never deserted him at all; someone simply needed



to teach him to speak. While his fellow priests tried to beat the Word of God into their listeners' ears, Alexander was soft, poetic. He made God's love sound tender and sensuous, more silk than sackcloth.

His fellows were jealous of the entourage of young men and women he so easily attracted, and were made more jealous still by the fact that he rarely indulged. Though he sometimes had a cruel tongue, the young priest devoted himself utterly to good works and God's business. If he occasionally spent more time than he should with his friend Felix... well, what crime could it be to love two carpenters?

Alexander died on his 33rd birthday. He woke in a black room and was told he had perished. A voice read Alexander a litany of his sins, from his love affair with Felix all the way back to striking his mother as a boy. The voice told him he was Damned, and could not be forgiven until the end of time. Yet, it said, God loves even the Damned, and if Alexander could love a Lord who would consign him to Hell, than he might live again and do that Lord's work on Earth. He accepted.

Timothy, his sire, knew that he would. He'd overseen the boy's conception, murdered his father, and fed him Vitae in his sleep for three decades. He had gifted him with the Majesty of the dead, whispering its secrets in the boy's somnolent ears. At the very age when Longinus had murdered God's son, Timothy claimed his own.

Alexander was groomed for several years before he was introduced to the politics of the dead. His sire taught him what to say, how to say it, who to be. A priest's training and a few drops of dead blood made Alexander persuasive. True Damnation and apprenticeship under Timothy made him a creature to be obeyed. Using Majesty as automatically as he once breathed, Alexander can charm the heartless and lead his prey to communion.

Most of his flock consider the Bishop to be the model of calm and reason, but of course they're wrong. By now, he knows his role all too well; to frighten the living and lure the dead and sometimes the other way 'round. As Bishop, he shoulders the burden of his city's sins. As prince, he must provide their daily bread... a task growing more arduous each day. New construction has pushed elders from their hunting grounds, and the only blood available is increasingly that of the sick. The prohibition on feeding from plague victims is ancient and pagan, and his subjects beg him to free them from it. A group of cenobites from Rome, late the followers of Thascius Hostilinus, raise this cry the loudest.

Storytelling Hints: If the characters need a new patron, there's none better or more convincing than Bishop Alexander. On the other hand, if they want to institute themselves as rulers of a new, Empire-spanning Camarilla, the silken-tongued Bishop will be their deadliest adversary.

Alexander doesn't flatter. He's too impressed with the power and glory of God to pay homage to anyone else. What he does offer, though, are favors and promises... and he truly does his best to keep them. Any word Alexander speaks, he speaks in God's name and office. In the end, that might be the surest way to undo him... assuming the characters don't find themselves too far in his debt already.

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 416 CE

Apparent Age: 33

Virtue: Charity. Alexander sees himself as the servant of his flock, and does all he can to ensure their well being.

Vice: Lust. While death has frustrated Alexander's ability to slake his lust sexually, and the hunt leaves him cold, he's found that religious ecstasy is remarkably satisfying. Alexander lives for those moments in his pulpit, with the congregation under his sway and the dead blood bulging in his veins, when he feels that he can transcend the physical world and caress the face of God.

Abilities:

Persuasion (dice pool 8): Alexander keeps well-fed and well-rested, enabling him to call upon Persuasion and any level of Majesty at will. Characters find themselves lulled and aroused by his low, silken voice, wanting to hear him out, or maybe just listen forever.

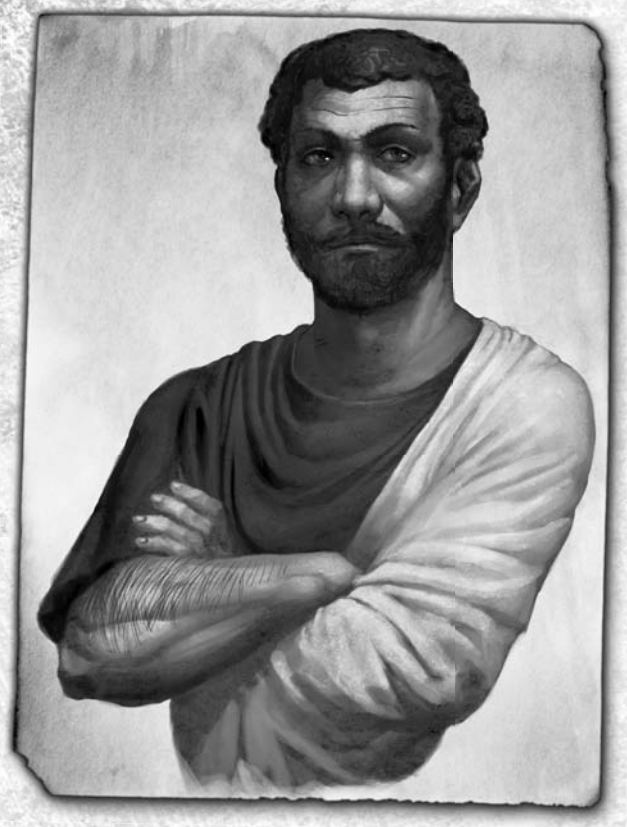
Favors (dice pool 5): A lot of people and monsters owe favors to God through Alexander, and almost as many are willing to repay them. Characters who cross him may find themselves in a tug of war over loyalties they thought they could rely on.

Felix, Speaker for Clan Mekhet

Quotes: *(on the Bishop) "We're mates, yes. You can take that as you like."*

(Intimidation) "That's very nice. Now think about whose bastard you just said it to."

Description: Felix always smells like the street. Not the bad smells, necessarily, and not that Kindred have to suffer more than the occasional breath, but the city's traces cling to him like sawdust to sweat. When he's happy, and he's not the only one around, that's the only way you'll know he's there. He always stands near the Bishop. It's a show of support, even if it's a weak one. Listen to them talk, and they speak in the manner of old friends at a funeral. Whose funeral? Hopefully not yours.



He's a big man. Not tall and not fat, just big. He looks tough even when he's reclined or laughing. His big, wet eyes don't miss much, and they never seem to show fear.

Background: Felix might have been called a rough lad, if anybody had ever noticed him. But in the land of the living it's the brash ones people fear and the quiet ones they ought to watch out for. A carpenter from a line of carpenters, Felix probably could have had a good life building villas and wrestling in the taverns after hours. He could have had a good life... if only he'd never found religion.

The carpenter had always done his duty: candle for his grandfather, Eucharist on Sundays. It was in a crowded market, though, when he realized what it all actually meant. A young priest was comforting a cripple, bringing him water and standing in the way of the pounding sun. Felix was moved, and he did something he'd never done before: he introduced himself.

The priest was named Alexander, and the two became fast friends, and later lovers. Felix was devastated when Alexander disappeared. He searched the city for his lost love, putting strong hands to work to pummel out the truth. A lesser man might have done it for months. Felix kept it up for years. He joined the Greens' patrols, keeping the street safe for everybody, even including the occasional Blue. He had a good eye for the truth, and an honest face when he had to justify himself to a judge. All the while, he kept his faith. Little wonder, then, that he came to the attention of Sedeh. Lucius' enforcer always had need of strong men with good eyes. And she had the one thing that could possibly convince Felix to give himself to an eternity of life-in-death: she could reunite him with Alexander.

The reunion wasn't everything Felix had hoped for. Alexander's love remained, but the consummation was bland and almost painful. Still, they were friends, intimates. Alexander saved Felix from the daylight, and Felix has served the Bishop with faith and love.

Felix was only ever using his sire, and frankly he thought she was a madwoman. The pagans were old and weak even among the dead; he'd broken up their festivals as a mortal and saw the vampiric equivalents as sad and fading echoes. As Sedeh fell deeper into her war against enemies only she could see, he was *glad* to see her exiled. Once he was down from the cross, anyway.

Recently, however, he's begun to understand her better, begun to see things he couldn't before. As always, he dwells in darkness, but now he can see into Twilight, see the capering of spirits and the horrors they work. And he knows they can see him, too.

Storytelling Hints: Felix is the official representative of the Mekhet, but he serves the Bishop more as a detective than anything else. Now, though, he has to decide between loyalty to the Bishop, and admitting he may have inherited his sire's madness. There are Striges in Constantinople, and Felix can see them. The characters could serve as his allies, helping him destroy the threat without jeopardizing his reputation and his relationship with the Bishop. Or they could expose him, discrediting the Mekhet leadership and opening a seat in the council.

Clan: Mekhet (Khaibit bloodline)

Embrace: 420 AD

Apparent Age: Late 30s.

Virtue: Faith. Felix believes in God, and believes in the Bishop. He'll serve either one without hesitation, even if it leaves him with more questions than answers.

Vice: Wrath. Felix controls himself well, but he's bitterly angry. He gave his life up for love and escaped the shadow of a madwoman... only to find he shares her madness.

Abilities:

Spirit Sight: Felix doesn't know it, but he's a Khaibit, one of an ancient line of Mekhet spirit-hunters. Not only can he see clearly in darkness, he can see the shadows of spiritual creatures... including the Striges. With help,

he could fully realize his sire's bloodline and learn the path of Obtenebration, allowing him to control shadow and do battle with the spirits; for now, all he has are the visions that doomed his sire.

Intimidation (dice pool 6): Years of loyal and clearly sane service have bought Felix as much trust as he'll ever get. But if he ambushes a fellow vampire and roughs her up a little, she'll remember just who his sire was and why Sedeh was so feared. That makes it pretty likely she'll tell him what he needs to know.

Matrona Gulfracta, Speaker for Clan Nosferatu

Quotes: *(Theology) "The Bishop and I differ on a few... subtle matters."*

(Occult) "What secrets I could have taught are long forgotten, and rightly so."

Description: Among the living, she could be beautiful if she weren't so rigid. Her clothes are fine enough, her skin perfumed and her hair fashionable. When she looks at something, she turns her whole body, and she's curious enough that her walk becomes very strange indeed.

Without assistance, her neck rolls permanently as if broken, so she inserts a sharp, metal rod along the top of her spine. Among those she regretfully admits are her own kind, she removes the rod from her neck and lets her head roll free. Broken and lolling, her neck twists serpent-like so that she can look you in the eye.

Background: The Broken-Necked Wife is a true Roman Nosferatu, a worm of the earth who shelters her clanmates and venerates the old gods. She'll speak Latin to those who understand it... and to those who don't, when that's the point she's making. Near the end of the third century, the Emperor Probus declared the worship of the Unconquered Sun the official cult of the Roman Empire. Matrona Gulfracta, who claims to have been a leader in the Cult of Augurs at the time, took that as a sign. She entered torpor, entrusting a ghoul cult with her body and a means to tap it for Vitae. She awoke in 380, but not in Rome. Her cult apparently moved her to Constantinople, concealed her in a tomb there, and committed suicide around her casket. She rejoined Kindred society in time to enjoy the zealot Sedeh's exile. She remains bitter that Timothy spared one of the madwoman's childer.

Her pagan faith remains secret, but it's a secret she can comfortably keep, for now. Most of her congregants don't even know her identity, nor she theirs. They do each other the favor of not thinking about it too hard.

Matrona Gulfracta celebrates her rites as the Pythia, priestess of the serpent and oracle of the unseen sun. Her half-remembered Veneficia and retained mastery of the Nightmare Discipline give her the ability to see the shape of things to come--and to cast those shapes as monstrous shadows across her congregation. Recently, Matrona Gulfracta has found an ally in the unlikeliest of places. When Justinian commanded governors all over the Empire to send their greatest treasures to adorn the city, he received pagan idols of every size and origin. (Many, unbeknownst to the Emperor, are still hungry for blood and faith.) In the base of an Egyptian monolith, Matrona Gulfracta uncovered a sleeping Nosferatu. The dead woman speaks only an obscure dialect of Greek, and no Latin at all. Matrona Gulfracta named her new charge in the tradition of Rome: Desicata, "woman whose blood has been drained from the neck." Her skin is the color and texture of blood that has almost dried, and flakes away in the same manner, making her difficult to conceal. Yet, she has an aptitude for the Veneficia, and an interesting story to tell. The Mekhet are well-known for keeping themselves completely secret from the Egyptians they preyed upon... and yet, the Nosferatu are known in every other land. Desicata tells the story of great purges by the Mekhet (or the Khaibit, as she calls them interchangeably), massacring the Nosferatu in the name of a sun God. And there's something in the girl's yellow eyes that the Broken-Necked Wife can't help but trust.



Storytelling Hints: Matrona Gulfracta is a conservative at heart, but she's at the center of several forces. Desicata gradually widens Matrona Gulfracta's distrust of her fellow Camarilla, threatening to turn hidden pit into a gaping chasm. The Broken-Necked Wife has spent a century biding her time, and any worthwhile bid for power will take decades more... but Desicata prods her towards action.

If she survives, Matrona Gulfracta could play an important part in founding of the Circle of the Crone, with the characters' help or in opposition to them.

Clan: Nosferatu

Embrace: Unknown

Apparent Age: Early 40s.

Virtue: Prudence. Matrona Gulfracta knows that the Sanctified are so strong in Constantinople as to be immune to an outright coup. Instead, she makes sure her Gods and ancestors are not forgotten, and prays for them to give her the strength to restore their cults. Not tonight, perhaps, not tomorrow night, but one night.

Vice: Pride. She can't admit that Rome is gone and the Byzantine Camarilla is the only chance to salvage it. She wasn't there when the Striges ravaged Necropolis, and still believes that some of her Brother Worms must survive, that perhaps they have come into their own kingdom at last.

Abilities:

Occult (dice pool 6): With every passing year, Matrona Gulfracta regains more of her memory. The horde of scrolls and codices she hides in her tomb are valuable, as well.

Theology (dice pool 3): Matrona Gulfracta may not *like* the Sanctified, and her baptism may have been one of the most humiliating moments of her Requiem, but she does understand them. The Cult of Augurs was always more a fraternity than a religion. Longinism offers more than just belonging and knowledge, it offers purpose. As the Pythia quietly recruits more congregants to her predawn rites, she's piecing together aher own mythology, one that will offer the common vampire just as much solace as that of the Pretender God.

Valea, Speaker for the Gangrel

Quotes: *(Persuasion) "That sounds so much... better... coming from you."*

(Subterfuge) "Don't worry. I've been planning this a long, long time."

Description: Her skin is flawless, afflicted neither with the waxy pallor of the dead nor the discoloring



pulse of the living. She smells like flowers, real flowers, not layered perfumes. It's a scent you haven't caught since you walked in the daylight, and it's almost enough to distract you from what she's saying. Or rather, what you're saying. She has you talking about yourself again. How did that happen?

Background: For her first few months among the Damned, Valea's claim to fame was that she knew Theodora. Had known her, anyway, back when Theodora was a courtesan and Valea still had her pulse. It was something to talk about, anyway, and the dead can be awfully still. Valea admired Theodora, who had done exactly what she'd always hoped for: shared the beds of governors and Emperors, people of real wisdom and power. Every time she heard Theodora's name, Valea thought "that could have been me. Just a little more luck, a little more work..."

She was probably right; that was why her sire Huneric seduced her into unlife. Huneric had represented the Gangrel in the Camarilla for a century. Early on, he played the barbarian clown; even after that stopped working, he was able to trade on the tendency of his peers to underestimate him. Valea was the next part of that scheme: a beautiful woman to hang on his arm while she watched his enemies. An ornament with a brain. Or maybe he really was just lonely. After all, within a year

of Valea's Embrace, he transfixed himself with a stake in the cellar they shared. Valea had been his prisoner that entire year, trotted out every week or so to be charming and talk about her old life at parties. She didn't hesitate to drag him into the street and leave him for the sun. Nor did she hesitate to reveal the pagan leanings of her brother in blood, Paul, to the Bishop.

Valea took a few years to work through her most brutal impulses before she began to plot again. Her old life, that of the courtesan, was not entirely out of her reach. Regaining her contacts took time, of course, but time was suddenly something she had in abundance. She slept her way around mortal Byzantium again, this time with a little more vigor, a little more determination. She wasn't just accumulating wealth and contacts for their own sake anymore; she was readying herself to take on the establishment of the Damned.

Just this year, Valea has claimed the seat of the Gangrel in the Camarilla. Her enemies are all dead or reconciled, and she's trying to decide her next project.

Storytelling Hints: Valea counterfeits humanity perfectly... except when she wants to be *more* than human. At first, this makes her attractive, but those with eyes to see soon realize that her perfect seductions are inhuman. When she touches a lover, it's not the predatory claw of the Daeva, but a gentle touch carefully moving a playing piece.

Valea's loyalties are up for grabs. Sanctified dogma bores her, but politics get more and more exciting by the year. Unchecked, she'll build herself a brood of courtesans and spies, and make herself more a part of the city than any of its so-called rulers. On the other hand, most of her influence is in the mortal world, a world which, right now, is very unstable...

Clan: Gangrel

Embrace: 528 AD

Apparent Age: Mid-twenties

Virtue: Prudence. Valea always strikes at just the right moment.

Vice: Sloth. The problem with the beds of wealthy men is that they're damned comfortable. The gnawing restlessness of death has mitigated Valea's tendencies to rest on her laurels and lovers, but they come back easily.

Abilities:

Mortal Politics (dice pool 6): Most influential Kindred make some effort to keep tabs on the living, but Valea's ears are sharp and her memory is perfect.

Please, Underestimate Me (dice pool 3): Even as a newly anointed member of the political establishment, Valea tends not to be taken seriously. Elders who haven't had to lure their own victims in years, or who now do so with simple tricks of the Blood, don't recognize the subtle deceptions that work on the living. Nor do they recognize how much better those deceptions work when perpetrated by creatures they're so sure are their prey.

The Khaibit

The Khaibit are an ancient bloodline of Mekhet, charged with the most obscene of tasks: protecting the sun so that it may rise anew each day. Servants of Set, the Egyptian God, they exist as his foot soldiers in the living world, doing battle with the chthonic forces that dwell in dark places, ever seeking to extinguish the light of life on the Earth. The Khaibit know that there are worse things than the burning daylight and that the undead share the shadows with things that had never been alive.

The strange theology of the Khaibit alienates other vampires, but they are respected and feared in many places for their insight into the world beyond, and their fervent dedication to duty. Many places – but not Byzantium. In Byzantium, Sedeh and her mission were misunderstood by the Kindred, and any who claim to inherit her sight (or her mission) are likely to be reviled.

The Khaibit are fully described in **Bloodlines: The Hidden**, but sufficient detail is listed here to make the Byzantine line playable in this setting – up to a point. The only member of the bloodline currently dwelling in Constantinople is Felix, who is unaware of his heritage and uneducated in the ways of the Khaibit. He might be able to instruct a character in the ways of his power, insofar as he understands it himself – and he might even be willing to bring someone into the line – but he doesn't really have any knowledge of the history or the purpose of the Khaibit, nor the explanation for their unique gifts. For the purposes of play in sixth century Byzantium, there is no back-story to the Khaibit beyond the history of Sedeh's brood, as related by Felix.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: The Asps

Wing: Felix is a dedicated servant of the Lancea et Sanctum, so anyone he Embraces or instructs is likely to be a member of the Church. If not, they're going to have to do some real work to convince him to reveal his secrets.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Obtenebration, Vigor

Weakness: As Mekhet, the Khaibit suffer the same weakness as their parent clan. Whenever burned by sunlight or fire, an Asp suffers an additional point of aggravated

damage. Additionally, they suffer a -2 penalty on rolls to resist Rotschreck (fear frenzy) from sun or torchlight.

An Incomplete Discipline

The first three powers of Obtenebration, as listed below, are taken almost verbatim from the entry in **Bloodlines: The Hidden**. The fourth and fifth dot of the Discipline are not listed because Felix doesn't possess them (and is actively resisting their development). It is unlikely that characters will be able to develop them without instruction.

With vampires like Felix out in the dark ages, it's not hard to understand how the Khaibit eventually lost their way. The story characters might become involved in, by interacting with him, can help illustrate the aspect of the line that may have proved most destructive to it: that those members who do not understand what they are tend to react with fear and revulsion when they develop their powers, and they often doubt their own sanity.

Obtenebration

• Night Sight

Vampires innately see better than mortals in darkness, but Night Sight enables Kindred to see without any light at all. But the fainter the ambient light, the stranger the world looks through Night Sight. Under moonlight or equivalent illumination, a user can see as well as he can in a well-lit room with normal color vision. By starlight, colors fade to leave shades of silver and gray. In complete darkness, a vampire sees different shades of black – ebony, jet, sable, and hundreds more than mortal language can name, each with its own tint and texture. While using Night Sight, a Kindred's pupils expand until her eyes are completely black.

When in complete darkness, a vampire using Night Sight can see invisible and incorporeal entities such as unmanifested ghosts. The slightest hint of light blocks this application of Night Sight.

Felix has developed the Night Sight of the Khaibit instinctively, and he is only just beginning to understand that he can control it. With it, he has seen the Striges flying in the night sky, and understands that they are not ordinary birds.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power requires no roll.

Action: Reflexive

The player simply activates the power and explains to the Storyteller what his character does. The vampire suffers no penalties for acting in darkness. He can still be blinded by other means, though. Night Sight does not counteract visual impairment caused by the opacity of a dense fog or smoke. Nor does it help when a vampire's eyes have been removed! The effect lasts for the remainder of the scene.

•• Shadow Play

The user can manipulate shadows that already exist. They can grow, shrink, fade or intensify, change shape or even detach from the objects that cast them and move about. In dark surroundings, the vampire can create whatever shadowy images she wants. All these images remain shadows, though. A person who can see clearly would never mistake figures created through Shadow Play for anything solid or real. (Although, seeing one's own shadow reach out to strangle the shadow of another person could be quite disturbing).

Felix does not realize he has this power. It manifests subconsciously at times – lengthening the shadows behind him when he delivers an impassioned sermon, for example, or silently moving aside when he is looking for something.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Intimidation + Obtenebration

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to manipulate a shadow and cannot use this power again until the next sunset.

Failure: The character cannot manipulate shadows with this attempt, but a successive attempt may be made if another Vitae is spent.

Success: The character can alter shadows cast in a 16 square yard area, but he may locate that area anywhere within line of sight. The zone of Shadow Play can itself be moved as a reflexive action, if the user so desires.

Exceptional Success: As per a normal success, except the area affected can be up to 25 square yards in size.

Shadows can be manipulated for the remainder of the scene, their activities or behavior being modified by the user as a reflexive action. No more than one use of the power may be active at any time. Thus, shadows in two separate areas cannot be affected simultaneously. The user may leave shadows alone whenever he desires. They return to normal if he is knocked unconscious, sent into torpor, destroyed, or loses direct line of sight to the area of effect.

••• Shroud of Night

The Shroud of Night swallows and suppresses light, so a Kindred could darken a brightly lit room to dim twilight, or spread utter darkness throughout a city street at night. Torchlight and other flames still burn, but they fade and their light doesn't cast the way it should, weakening considerably. Shroud of Night provides no protection from sunlight. The sun's direct light instantly burns away the eldritch shadows.

Felix has only used the Shroud of Night once, as a terrified reflex when on the verge of frenzy. He doesn't realize how to control it yet, but characters might be able to provoke a reaction that causes him to call the Shroud forth again – particularly if they frighten him enough – and that might jar him into understanding.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts + Obtenebration

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to create shadow and cannot use this power again until the next sunset.

Failure: The character is unable to manipulate shadows with this attempt, but a successive attempt may be made if another Vitae is spent.

Success: The character can darken an area of about 16 square yards (a room) for a scene.

Exceptional Success: As per a normal success, except each success at five and over multiplies the maximum possible area by three. So five successes darkens a 48 square yard area (3 x 16) and seven successes covers a 144 square yard area (9 x 16).

The degree of darkness that can be achieved depends on the starting illumination.

Starting Illumination	Limit of Darkness
Bright as day	Shadowy, dim light
Well-lit room	Twilight
Poorly lit room	Moonlight equivalent
Twilight	Starlight equivalent
Moonlight	Complete darkness

The user does not need to reduce lighting as much as the power allows. He could dim a well-lit room merely to poorly lit instead of going all the way to twilight.

Darkness persists until the end of the scene unless the effect is dispelled early. Brighter light sources introduced once the power is in effect may increase ambient light. The user may dispel the darkness whenever he desires, and it fades completely if he is knocked unconscious, sent into torpor, or destroyed. Only one area may be affected by the darkness at a time. The user need not be in the area affected, so long as he has line of sight to the area. If line of sight is ever broken, normal light returns.

Appendix III: Rome Tonight

They found the Camarilla last year. The mortals did, drilling for a sewage line. They called the people they always call. Eager professors and overworked students swarmed around the site. Didn't take them long to make their decision. They found a few fragments of bone, but none showed signs of any interesting disease. A few coins, but none from particularly unusual eras of empire.

"Nothing of value."

Same thing happens every year. The mortals overturn rocks and stones, they bore into the flattened upper levels of Necropolis. Whatever they find--bones, pottery shards, someone's garbage pit--they're always looking for the same thing. Evidence that they were great. The living, who flourish and bloom across the globe, who have ruled empires so vast the sun never set upon them... they look for evidence that they were great. Yet when they find the Camarilla, the one room from which vampires from the isles of Britain to the edge of Persia were united in common cause?

"Nothing of value."

Not to the living, perhaps...

Ashes of Empire

What stories do you tell after the end of the world? Maybe you wait for the world to begin again. In the previous appendix, we presented an opportunity to take the characters to the brave new world of the Byzantine Empire, to continue their stories into the Dark Ages. On the other hand, you might want to try a different approach, to thread your Roman chronicle forward into the modern World of Darkness.

One opportunity such a leap forward offers is the ability to explore the gothic aesthetic in a unique way. In the modern nights, Rome is revered for its ruins by the living and the dead alike; and yet, they are monuments to rulers whom only the cruelest of Princes could rival. These massive, ancient artifacts intrude on the present as reminders of an age when the Kindred were far greater and the kine far crueler. Use the ruins of Rome, whether the few surviving tombs of Necropolis or tourist traps like the Flavian Ampitheatre, to remind the players just how much their characters live in the shadow of the past, and bear the weight of history.

Several formats suggest themselves for a sequel or epilogue:

The One Shot: Bring the band back together for one last look at the characters and where they might find themselves 1500 years on. The Fog of Eternity will have shrouded and warped the memories of the characters, but fragments remain, stories and faces stripped from their context but not from the feelings which embedded them

in the characters' memories. Are there old scores yet to be settled? Is it time for them to rise again as rulers of the night, or bequeath it to a new generation of dreamers and monsters? Are fragments of the past spurs to finish old business, or warnings of terrible mistakes?

The Historical Thriller: Throughout **Fall of the Camarilla**, the chaos has scarred Kindred history. What secrets of the past might the original characters, or their modern-day counterparts, uncover? What deeds have been done between the Imperial nights and the modern ones, to hide sins or to invent them?

The Parallel: Tell a story much like the ones you told in Rome, but set it in the present day. Offer different characters the same dilemmas, and discover whether they prove more human or more monstrous than their predecessors. The surface problems of Rome don't have much to do with the modern nights, but the deeper ones – the forgotten curses, the petty vendettas, the temptation to succumb so far into decadence that you forget the coming sunrise – those are all problems that face modern vampires as much as their ancient counterparts. Also, like the Camarilla, the modern Danse Macabre is not as impenetrable to outsiders as it appears, and the Kindred turn against each other as easily as ever.

What was Old is New Again

The original Camarilla watched their own society and that of the mortals around them collapse in a way that's difficult for anyone tonight to understand, whether they're dead or alive. Yet, some of them survived and struggled on for centuries afterwards. The fall of the Camarilla wouldn't be remembered in any form tonight if they hadn't.

Your troupe's characters may have been among those survivors. Did they go to ground before the worst of the purges, somehow escaping the notice of the Strix-ridden Kindred? Or did they witness the atrocities, see their sires and childer torn to pieces by the mob or put to the torch by the puppets of the Nemeses? Any vampires still haunting Rome by the middle of the sixth century would have faced starvation as the sack of Totila reduced the mortal population to less than five hundred. Some undead probably survived, and a few fantasists even claim that they ruled the living openly for a few decades. Nonetheless, most vampires would have starved into torpor, and it's not clear if their successors (if they existed at all) were truly Kindred.

If you choose to awaken your troupe's ancient Roman Kindred in the present night, they may face challenges even greater than those of most neonates. For while torpor thins the blood and clouds the memory, it rarely blunts old grudges. Roman vampires may have gone to the grave and risen again as many as a dozen times since the nights of Empire. (These insterstitial Requiems may make great fodder for flashbacks or even an entire chronicle.) But if they've been dead this long and they're waking again to tell the tale, they've probably got edges as well as enemies. They might know the locations of great libraries of Necropolis, filled with the histories of Macellarius and Bassianus or mortal texts of impossible value. They might know these things. If only they can remember.

Memory, Lost and Found

Kindred memories twist and change during the long sleep. No vampire reawakened in the present is going to accurately remember the past. On the other hand, it can be difficult to play a character with no reliable background. As a compromise, Storytellers might consider telling their troupe that they remember their character's most signficant moments in the Roman chronicle, but that the details and less important events may be entirely different. A hated enemy might not truly have been defeated, for example, or the identity of an important traitor might be entirely different. On a larger scale, consider rearranging the timeline presented earlier in this book.

Another possibility is that the characters remember the earlier chronicle exactly as it was played, but that earlier chronicle is a fiction, pieced together out of dreams and nightmares across centuries. Does our depiction of Rome seem just a little *I, Claudius*, a little *Ben Hur*? Maybe that's because the characters saw those movies the last time they were awake.

Camarilla Invictus

For half a millennium, the Camarilla exerted a level of cultural, political and military influence over a territory that no vampire has been able to match since. They did it with only a fraction of the resources their counterparts have today. Were they, as some Kindred opined for many years, simply giants among the Damned? Was their Vitae purer, were their wills stronger?

If so, then a group of characters from that era might be able to do the same and more with the tools available to modern Kindred. Rather than comically stumbling through the workings of cell phones and fax machines, they might take immediately to modern technology and combine it with the determination and logistical genius that once governed the Empire of the Night. Blackberries,

satellite imaging, the ability to conduct the movement of legions via instant and untraceable communications... the possibilities are staggering.

Their Blood may not be as potent as it used to be, but they're as ruthless and cunning as ever, and now they have instant communications, safer travel, and access to two millennia of additional developments in blood sorcery. The Senex were like chess masters who knew their moves the moment they saw the board, but had to wait months and years to see their opponents respond, to close in for the mate.

Your characters could shove aside the so-called "Danse Macabre" of the present day, rebuild the Legion, and spend the next decade conquering Europe by night. Any of the modern covenants might be allies or antagonists. The Carthian Movement, always dissatisfied with feudal politics, is full of potential soldiers, while both the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum have tried for many years to hitch their stars to Rome. The Circle of the Crone might welcome an Empire consecrated to the old Gods. Or maybe all these soft, modern vampires, who've done so little with the bounty mortals have provided them, should be cleared away in order of a new crop, more worthy of the name Camarilla.

Rules and Alibis

If you choose this option, consider simply swapping the characters' old skills for their modern equivalents. Religion, Warfare, Ride and Archery convert automatically to Science, Computer, Drive and Firearms. This reflects the ease with which the characters adapt to the modern world, as if to its manners born. In character, the only explanation required is that they're simply *that good*.

Lost Blood

Who were the Julii? Those few Kindred genealogists who know the name suspect that they were either ancestors of the Ventrue or a bloodline of Etruscan Gangrel. There's only one reliable way to test Kindred paternity, though, and that requires three things: a blood junkie, a refined palate, and a lot of samples. And for all the torpid Kindred who have been woken in Rome since the Middle Ages (at least one every decade or so), nobody's ever found a legitimate member of the Julii. Surviving members of the modern Macellarius or Licinii bloodlines might be candidates, but most of them don't know it. They believe that they are Ventrue, and have no reason to think otherwise.

And never mind who they were, what *happened* to them? Striges are ancient phenomena, rarely encountered even when they were remembered. Scholars in the Circle of the Crone find the notion of a Strix "species" fundamentally silly; they believe in (and have occasionally encountered) spirits similar to the Nemeses, but, given the diversity of spirits, that does nothing to persuade them of the Roman myth. Members of the Ordo Dracul throughout Europe have scrolls about the Strix in their libraries, but they're fundamentally at odds with most of the Dragons' scientific studies of spiritual phenoma – and no evidence exists in modern nights to indicate that they are anything but myth. Spirits always have a clear niche in the world's ecology, or a clear purpose in manifesting. A group of spirits that simply ape vampires at a convenient and poorly-documented historical moment seem a bit much for the scholars of the Ordo to believe in. Likewise, many of the Sanctified believe that references to Striges in the epistles and the Book of Eschaton are merely a way of explaining the wickedness and savagery of vampires before Longinus. They generally favor the Gangrel theory of the Julii, suggesting that the references to owl-spirits are poetic allusions to the Protean Discipline.

Once again, all it takes is waking the right characters from Rome with the right memories intact to solve these questions. Why hasn't it happened already? Many ancient Kindred have opened their eyes, clearing long centuries of dust from the lids... only to find themselves surrounded by sharp teeth and yellow eyes.

Suicide Pact

Forget about history. History doesn't matter now, any more than it did in the grand and glorious days of the true Camarilla. All that matters, all that ever mattered to the character was his love. She led him from life into death, she brutalized him and emptied him and made him feel whole. They bonded their blood, and they were never, ever to be parted. When the end of the world came, they made sure they could stay together, quarrying their own tomb in a hill outside the city. Two caskets, intricately locked so that opening one would open the other. There was a last kiss, a last breath for old times' sake, and then they shut themselves away for the long forever.

The Striges never came for them, nor did the Sanctified, nor have the grave robbers of any century. At least, not as far as he knows. Because he's woken up just now, you see, and her casket is empty. His sire and lover vanished, with none of the booby traps tripped or his own coffin opened. She can't be gone. The shock would have let him know, the pain in the Blood that comes from the intimacy they shared so long. So where is she? And does she ever want to see him again?

This is a prototypical vampire story: the love across the ages, thwarted again and again by the circumstances of history, and often the beloved themselves. As a story

or chronicle, it's a quest for a grail. And like most grail quests, it's a journey that can teach characters a lot, but which almost never ends with them finding what they achieve. At the end of the story, the characters will find truth, but whether they find peace is often a matter of whether or not they're willing to give up hope. As influences, consider T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, or the movie *Brick*.

Legacies

The triumphs and follies of Empire return too easily to haunt the present day. There's no destiny to it, no eternal cycle of the Kindred rising and falling. Rome is simply *the* enduring myth of the Danse Macabre, and those who go digging after its secrets too often dig up its horrors, as well. In some cities, nearly everybody claims their Blood flows from the Roman clans, never minding that that would require some extremely prolific sires, even granting fifteen centuries to Embrace in. Rome tonight is divided between its Old Guard, vampires Embraced in the Mediterranean in the last few centuries, and the Tourists, foreigners who have traveled to Rome to search for the ancient glories of their clans. Beyond those two sects, they divide in every other way you might imagine: covenant, factions of covenant, clan, bloodline, brood. Yet, many of each hear the call of the past, a sickly excitement creeping from the pit of the stomach, the ghost of an adrenaline rush as another shovel-full of dirt is removed from them and their ancestors.

As a story, this works best with the characters on the verge of a monumental discovery (consider any of the others in this chapter)... but one that they can't complete without the help of members of each side. Can they unify the city's vampires? Or trick each side into aiding them, only to betray both at the end, and take the treasure for themselves?

Shadows of Yourself

Hunt in the wrong place, and your Requiem can change forever. Not just neonate mistakes, like poaching a tourist from an Internet Cafe that belongs to some muckety-muck. No, sometimes the hunting ground's fair game. A museum, say, or an art gallery. Doesn't even have to be in Rome. The character's just about pulled a blue-eyed boy who looks good enough to eat for a week... and then it all changes. She sees the statue. Scarred, pitted, and implausibly good-looking naked, but there can't be



any mistake. She knows that face. For the first time in ten years she's looking into a mirror.

She'll bring her coterie to see it, of course, because she's still only ten years dead and that's what friends are for. They see the resemblance, too. They start turning over stones and haunting libraries. And they find out the statue came from Rome. The sculptor was a Roman Greek, Lachonius, and the sculpture's probably of a prostitute and/or a slave, around 340 CE. One of the local Mekhet turns out to have an interest, too; he's got a dossier a foot high of sources that suggest she was a vampire. He's been working on plotting her resting place. It all follows so easily, clue to clue until the coterie's stolen a backhoe and are standing over the alleged grave.

If the ancient vampire's still inside, maybe she can answer some of the character's questions. Especially that last one, about the statue. Who the hell chiseled out its eyes?

The possible answers are interesting, but they're more the grounds for future stories than the focus of this one. The real opportunity here is to dig into *why* the coterie sticks together, and how far they're willing to go for one of their own. Will they risk daylight to travel to the Eternal City? How many favors will they owe or cash in to get the resources their friend needs? And if someone else is willing to pay in more than tears and gratitude, will they turn the ancient and their friend over for a piece of the action?

The Race

It's the oldest problem the Kindred, as a group, have faced. Keeping the secret of their existence, or at least of where they sleep their days. Gets harder every year, too. Used to be the mortals kept inside and to themselves. Used to be they didn't go poking around old ruins, except when they needed stone for their houses or gold they'd thrown in with their kings. But looting graves is an industry now, and a science besides. The mortals don't just sell treasures and leave them on shelves anymore, either. They study them, catalog them, and then they open up everything they know to other mortals. The worst part? Most of the time their conclusions are *right*.

Rome used to have one of the world's densest populations of vampires, and they maintained an entire city of their own. Worse, it's a place as revered by the living as the dead. As a result, Rome is one of the biggest Masquerade risks on the planet. In Rome tonight, the Invictus have a full-time task force devoted to monitoring mortal archaeologists and historians and beating them to anything that might betray the existence of vampires, or even any significant part of Necropolis.

Though the Invictus see themselves as the keepers of the Masquerade, they haven't been afraid to ask for help--too much is at stake. So the Masquerade committee cuts across covenant and clan. Sanctified historians work alongside Ordo Dracul scientists, while new devotions have been developed to infiltrate sealed chambers without leaving a trace. When there's the hint of a major find, teams of historians, spelunkers and even demolitionists are brought into play. They move in on the site, defuse any lingering wards and scare off spirits, then destroy *anything* that might be of value to mortal historians... or that might wake up at an inconvenient time. Early on, they made it look like vandalism, but the grave robbers have gotten more and more adept at making their work look like the veil of history.

A promising side project involves inventing artifacts and bodies wholesale. Various Kindred tricks (the most dangerous of which being the proper execution of an elder) can create bodies of misleading ages, and even through the Fog of Eternity many vampires are better capable of forging ancient documents than the kine are.

Raising the Dead

There's a line of thinking that goes like this: there's no point in digging for the tablets and parchments of ancient Kindred. If they knew anything good, they'd have been too smart to write it down. Case in point, Macellarius. The first real Western writer among the Kindred, and he hacks up derivative crap for three centuries. The real value under Rome, unless you want to get all mawkish and cry in the fragmented depths of Necropolis, is all those sleeping vampires.

Some archaeological theories say there aren't that many; that any body down there woke up centuries back. In recent years, however, a new generation of scholars has been proving them wrong. With better technology and a few extra decades of mortal science, they're finding that, while most of Necropolis *is* densely compressed rubble, Kindred bodies have a remarkable ability to survive. The characters are a part of this new breed of body snatchers, attaching themselves to mortal archaeologists and stealing away the sleeping dead before anyone's the wiser.

One or two of these weakened elders are in impromptu nursing homes; while parched and fractured bodies tend to make quick recoveries, the mind can be somewhat slower. They're sanitized, nursed back to health, the debris is surgically removed from their dead flesh, and then they spend years in reeducation, learning to speak

modern Italian. Several more are in body vaults, awaiting the same treatment.

There's another line of thinking, and it's a little more cynical: the dead don't have any more to learn from the dead than the living do. Vampires are stagnant, vicious creatures and they better just get used to it. Adherents of this theory are still in the body raising business. Rome's got a prohibition on the Embrace, old Sanctified dogma still strong in the city where it was born. The Church doesn't have any law about digging up the dead *en masse*, though. No law against wrenching them out of torpor with the blood of anybody who owes you a favor or looked at you funny, and then dominating the *shit* out of the confused monsters until they can't even close their mouths without somebody giving the say-so. The market in ancient Roman slaves is a new one, and it's growing. There are absolute gold mines of corpses down there, Nosferatu especially, all waiting to be raised from the dead and repurposed as a revenant army. One coterie's working to expand into American markets, and they've even got a slogan. "Look for the yellow eyes."

Characters could take the role of these smugglers, or of Sanctified Inquisitors hunting them down on the fringes of vampiric law. Alternatively, they could play the excavators themselves, playing mortal academics against each other to permanently obscure the past. If the Masquerade cloaks some human history as well... well, why should the living get to know more about their past than the dead?

Less than Kindred, More than Kine

Don't listen to rumors. That's what everybody says. And yet, the Kindred, who lack mass culture and, well, massive populations in general, rely almost exclusively on hearsay to understand their world. The Kindred often don't test the rules of their existence, and territory lines are memorized far more often than they're marked. Death's hard enough as a walking corpse. Why take chances? Yet, some do, or they just have bad luck, and they encounter the wolves or the witches or things far worse. Sometimes they cross paths with creatures that are almost vampires, but not quite. Kindred who survive to tell the tale never want for an audience, but they're also rarely believed.

Requiem for Methuselahs

Memory is a constant but treacherous companion. Most of the time it's out to either scare you or make you happy, without necessarily making clear which one. Torpor only makes matters worse, weaving wishes and nightmares in among the legitimate past. Kindred tonight know Rome through memory alone.

Over the centuries, however, many Roman vampires remember meeting creatures with much clearer memories than themselves, dead men who bear the Blood of Kindred clans but in obscene potency and ancient vintage. And unlike elder Kindred, few of these creatures exalt their origins, letting the boiling they set off in others' Vitae speak for itself.

Some Kindred say there is only one Methuselah. They identify him with the Biblical figure, and they call him the Wandering Jew. They say that he was loved by God but committed terrible sins, and so was spared the grave yet denied entrance to heaven. However, most vampires who have heard the stories or encountered an ancient themselves believe that these creatures are vampires, even if they are so far removed as to be impossible to consider Kindred.

How such a monster could retain permanent memory is an obvious question, but most vampires are more interested in knowing how it could keep any shred of humanity. No blood sorcery can ward off the Fog of Eternity entirely, and every story of a vampire making a deal with another creature for perfect memory ends with a gruesome and usually comic twist. Kindred, prideful creatures that they are, usually end up agreeing that the Methuselahs must simply be more determined, naturally *better* at warding off torpor and Fog than the Kindred. Neonates shudder at the stories of creatures with Blood so thick it could drive cities full of Kindred mad. Those who lived in ancient Rome squirm at the idea that their enemies might survive, with perfect memories of their slights and crimes.

Of course, nobody's got any real evidence. Kindred are liars from the moment they're Embraced, and if a few have learned to appear much older and wiser than they are, well, it's all just another Masquerade.

The Beating of their Wings

The Roman vampires didn't believe the Masquerade was their oldest problem. They feared evils as old as blood itself, creatures to whom death was not a hollow imitation of life, but a doorway into the world of flesh and breath. Striges. Nemeses. The creatures who poured into the cracks in the Camarilla, striking at its founding clan right at the onset of Kindred society's greatest gathering crisis. The myth of the Nemeses is all but forgotten now, and those who have heard it assume that it must

be allegory, representative of some betrayal or sin that can never be deciphered.

For many vampires, it comes down to whatever they believe about ghosts and spirits in the first place. For all the supernatural trappings, vampirism often leads to materialism. Vampires are creatures of bone and flesh. They hunger and lust for blood. All tangible, physical things. These Kindred believe in very little that they can't caress with their hands or tear between their teeth.

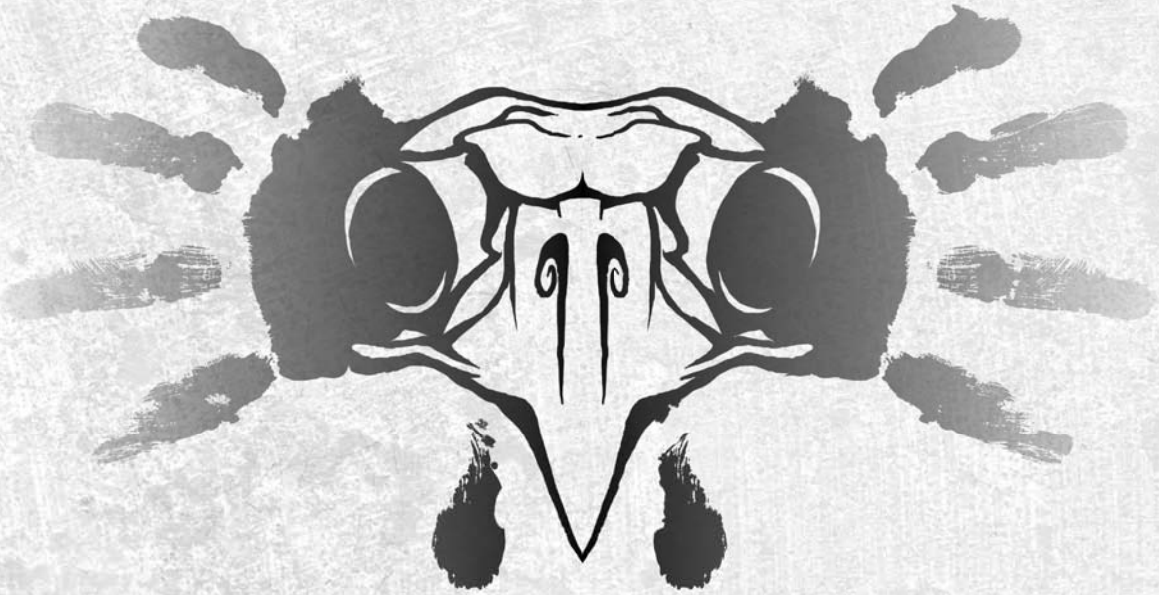
Other Kindred feel just the opposite. The animation of their dead bodies is mysterious. Miracle or curse, it almost guarantees the presence of an invisible and inexplicable world just beneath the surface of theirs. Some fear that world. Kindred, believers or not, have often observed that spirits are to vampires much as vampires are to the living; hidden, hungry and possessed of motives almost impossible to understand from the outside. Some worship them. Some Circles of the Crone venerate spirits as little Gods, part of the divine cycle of life and death, agents of change and chaos. The truth is that spirits do haunt this world, and that one night, the Nemeses were among them. Blood-hungry, playful, brutal, they may well be the sires of the Kindred, vampires to vampires.

The most foolhardy, the stupidest, the maddest of vampires seek the Striges. They scour the *Histories* of Macellarius and the *Augurs* of the Pythia. They look for the names and the bait that will lure the legendary owls to them, seek their scratches and bites that they might find communion with the Beast. Tradition means nothing to these vampires. To date, none of them have succeeded in the least.

For those who believe but are wise enough to fear, a very different question looms. If the Striges really did exist, what happened to them? Did they die with the bastard clan they may have created? Were they exorcised by Sanctified or pagan Kindred who left no record behind? Or did they simply depart, fading away with the dawn, satisfied and triumphant?

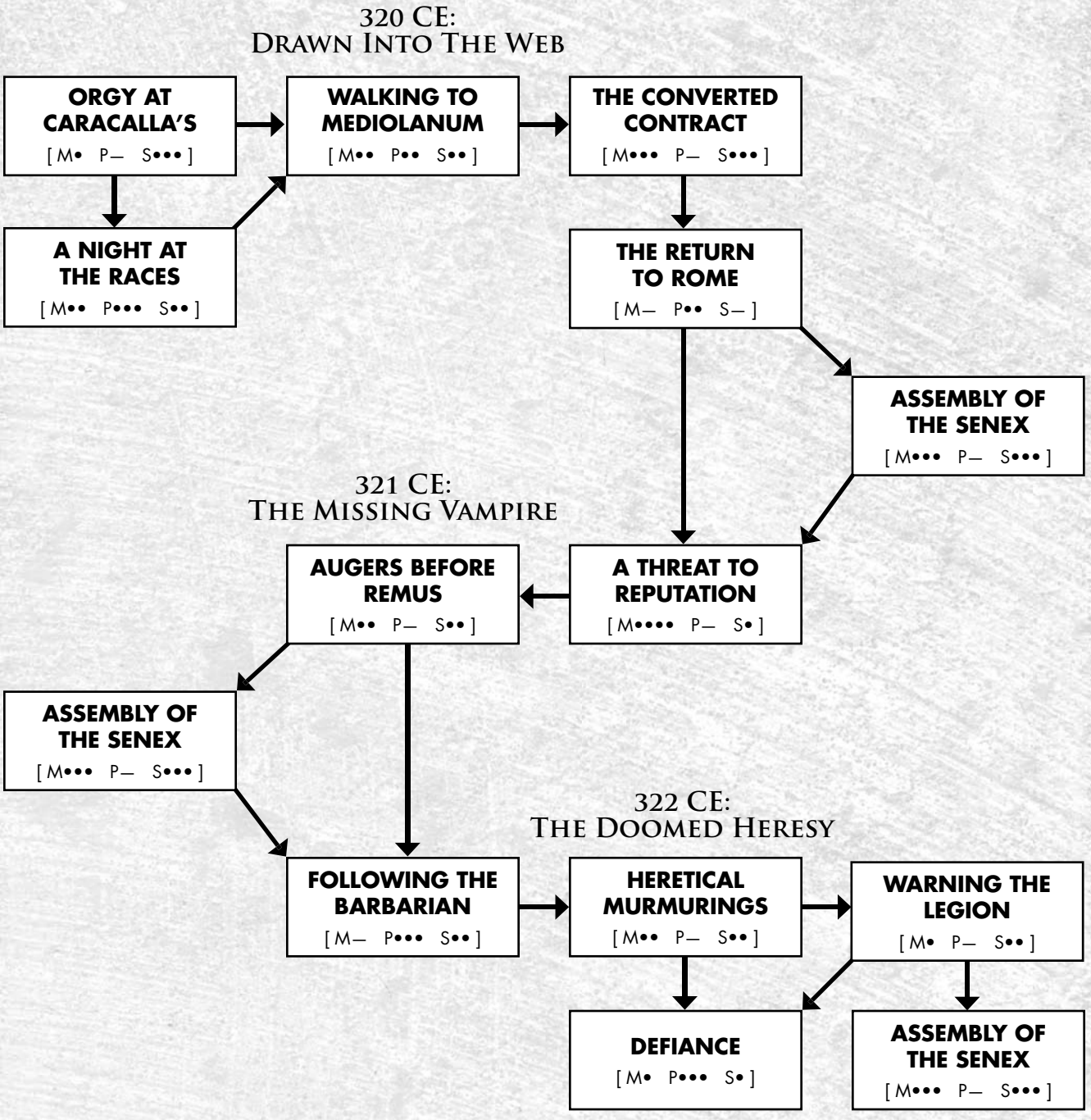
Believing in the Strix, in the end, is a form of paranoia. The vampires who do always watch the eyes of their peers, check their childer obsessively for scratches and witch-marks. Like owls, they mumble, the oldest terrors always come home to roost. No bargain is ever fully paid, no grudge ever truly forgotten. Remember, they rant, as they close their books on Rome and shovel dirt back over the corpses of their forebears. Eventually, these few fools collapse entirely into paranoia, transfixing themselves on their own stakes or walling themselves in their own tombs.

Remember.



Nights of Glory

Scenes 11-15 [Mental ••• Physical ••• Social •••••] XP Level 10



SCENE: ## Sanctified Mass

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

Depend on the known loyalties and Status of the characters.

HELP

Depend on the known loyalties and Status of the characters.

STs	Display the rites of the early Lancea et Sanctum.
PCs	Meet with the Sanctified. For those characters who are believers, seek the blessing of the Missionaries.

SCENE: ## Dance of the Galli

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

Depend on the known loyalties and Status of the characters.

HELP

Depend on the known loyalties and Status of the characters.

STs	Introduce pagan rites, public but not official.
PCs	Meet with the Cult of Augurs. For those characters who are believers, seek the blessing of the Vaticinators.

SCENE: ## Assembly of the Senex

MENTAL •••
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Depend on the reason for the Assembly.

HELP

Depend on the reason for the Assembly.

STs	Debates here really do shape the fate of all vampires; the leadership actually change their policies based on speeches made before the Senex. Demonstrate this.
PCs	The characters want to get the Senex to support them (or exonerate them) in some endeavor or dispute.

SCENE: ## Orgy at Caracalla's

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	—
SOCIAL	• • •

HINDRANCES

Any social misstep could lead to trouble in the future.

HELP

Julia Sabina is hoping to see the young vampires establish themselves successfully; Macellarius Corbulo is looking for someone to do his dirty work.

STs	Display the society of the Camarilla at its most opulent, decadent, and peaceful.
PCs	Get to know the local Kindred of renown. Pave the way for earning Status and establish a name for themselves.

SCENE: ## A Night at the Races

MENTAL	• •
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	• •

HINDRANCES

Making a good impression on Corbulo may be difficult, and may require participation in one of the chariot races.

HELP

None overt, though members of the Julii or the Senex may have an easier time impressing Corbulo.

STs	Get the characters in contact with Corbulo so that he can give them a mission.
PCs	Make a deal with Macellarius Corbulo.

SCENE: ## Walking to Mediolanum

MENTAL	• •
PHYSICAL	• •
SOCIAL	• •

HINDRANCES

The vampires must adhere to the rules and resist feeding on servants of the Camarilla.

HELP

The vampires are carrying a seal of the Camarilla that should dissuade interference.

STs	Demonstrate the reach of the Camarilla.
PCs	Get to Mediolanum safely, and get the job done so that they can return to Corbulo and get paid.

SCENE: The Converted Contact

MENTAL •••
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Scornutor is distracted and uncooperative.

HELP

Scornutor hates and fears Corbulo, and vampires who realize this will have ample leverage for negotiation.

STs	Have the characters deal with a mortal whom they cannot just kill, and make sure that they hear enough about Eupraxus to become suspicious of his cult.
PCs	Find out what the item that Corbulo wants is, and get it. See what else they can learn in the meantime.

SCENE: The Return to Rome

MENTAL –
PHYSICAL ••
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	Reward the characters for a job well done. Give them the information that draws them into the next part of the story.
PCs	Deliver the package to Corbulo's people, if they have it, and collect payment. Tell Julia Sabina what they've discovered.

SCENE: A Threat to Reputation

MENTAL ••••
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

Many vampires are either unfamiliar with the victim or unwilling to talk about him.

HELP

Julia Sabina is more than willing to aid the characters.

STs	Induce a sense of paranoia in the characters. Foreshadow the actions of the striges in later chapters, without introducing the nemeses directly.
PCs	Find out what happened to the missing Julian. Ensure that they cannot be blamed for his disappearance.

SCENE: Augurs Before Remus

MENTAL	••
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

None overt. The ST may wish to add social difficulties based on the characters' behavior and declared allegiances.

HELP

None overt. The ST may wish to add assistance based on the characters' behavior and connections to the Cult of Augurs.

STs	Exonerate the characters. Close off the mystery.
PCs	Find out what the powers of the augurs can reveal about the crime. Seek Flaviana Galla's support and clear their names.

SCENE: Following the Barbarian

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	•••
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	Take the characters through various areas of Necropolis, so that they get a sense of the scale of the city of the dead. Get them to the meeting of Silberic's heretical cult for the next scene.
PCs	Find out where the barbarian is going.

SCENE: Heretical Murmurings

MENTAL	••
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

At ST's discretion, a physical battle may be necessary to escape with the information.

HELP

Characters with known allegiance to the Lancea et Sanctum may enjoy a social benefit in this scene.

STs	Make it clear that worries about the Lancea et Sanctum are not just paranoia or the self-interest of the current ruling elite.
PCs	Learn enough about the heretics to report them to the authorities, or destroy the heretics outright. Alternately, the characters may want to join the sect or ally themselves with it.

SCENE: # Warning the Legion

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

Helvidius Bassianus is a terrifying vampire – characters attempting to misdirect him may lose their nerve.

HELP

None.

STs	Show the confidence and readiness of the Legio Mortuum.
PCs	Help the Legion smash the uprising or help the uprising without getting killed.

SCENE: # Defiance

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	•••
SOCIAL	•

HINDRANCES

This is a difficult battle, and may result in serious character injury.

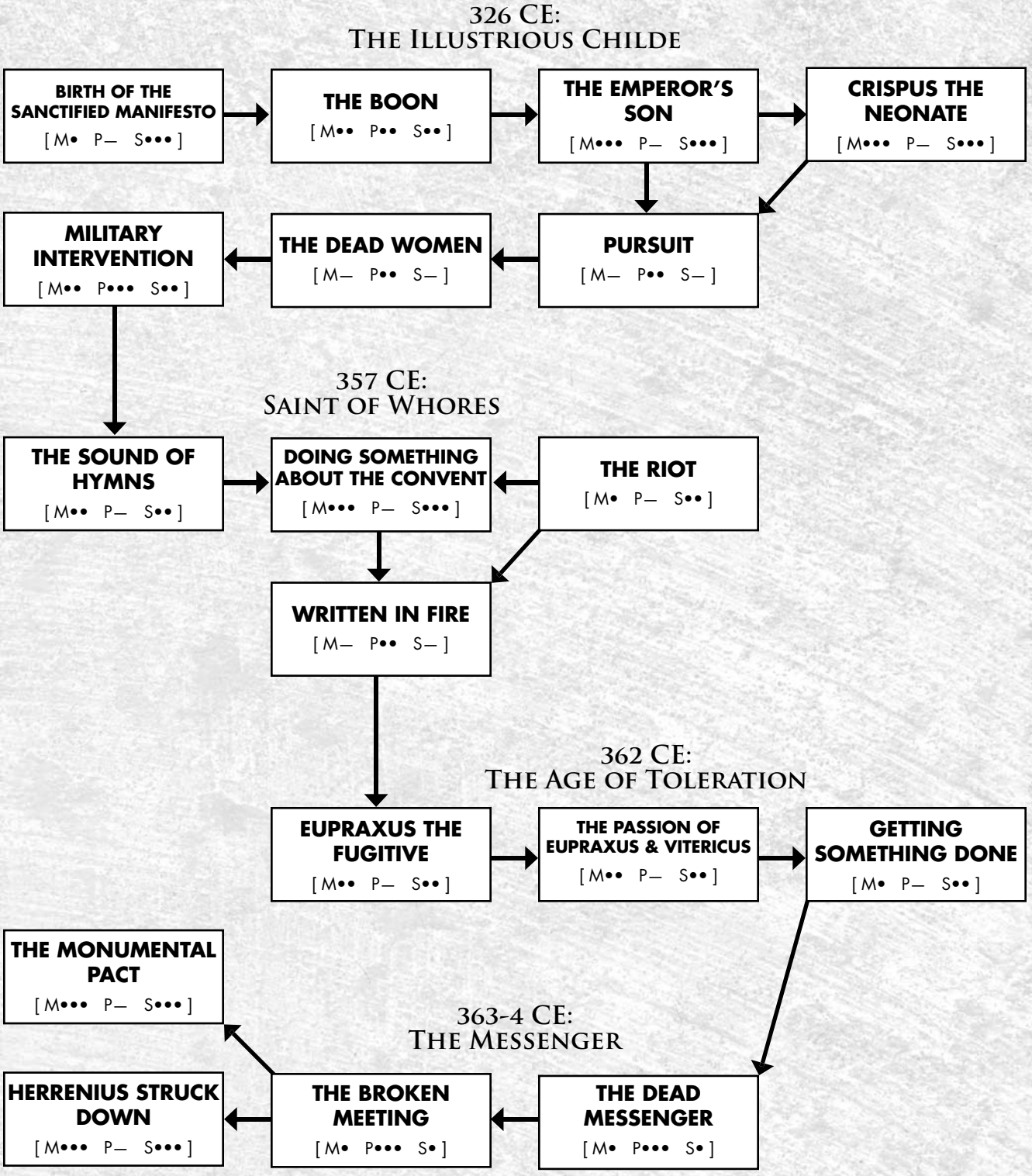
HELP

Characters assisting the Legio Mortuum are aided by the most efficient fighting force in the Camarilla.

STs	Display the might of the Camarilla. When it commands its legions to move, it can crush any one of the groups that stand against it.
PCs	Participate in crushing the enemies of the Camarilla. Alternately, escape the violent response of the Legio Mortuum.

God's Spearman

Scenes 18 [Mental ••• Physical •••• Social •••] XP Level 40



SCENE: THE RIOT

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	—
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

STs discretion can determine the level of physical threat.

HELP

Depend on the known loyalties and Status of the characters.

STs	Keep things moving. Whenever things are flagging, and the vampires are out and about, this is a good tactic to use.
PCs	Escape the riot without getting beaten into torpor.

SCENE: BIRTH OF THE SANCTIFIED MANIFESTO

MENTAL	•••
PHYSICAL	—
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	Through playing out the debate, Thascius Hostilinus sets out the schema for the eventual collapse of the Camarilla and gives Storyteller characters motivations to feel strongly for or against the characters.
PCs	The characters make their allegiances—or at least the allegiances they think they hold—publicly known, if they haven't done already.

SCENE: THE BOON

MENTAL	•••
PHYSICAL	—
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	This scene—which shouldn't last too long—should impress upon the players that the characters matter enough to do this job.
PCs	The players should have a clear idea of what they're expected to do; more importantly, it gives them a chance to flex their bargaining muscles.

SCENE: THE EMPEROR'S SON

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	• • •

HINDRANCES

Crispus' minders are difficult to work around. If things go poorly, a physical confrontation may result.

HELP

Crispus is drunk and easily manipulated.

STs	Reveal the truth about "Gaius Flavius."
PCs	Get Crispus away from his minders and get him wherever it is they're taking him.

SCENE: PURSUIT

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	–

HINDRANCES

Crispus is difficult to handle physically – he may be unconscious or resistant, either weighing the characters down or actively slowing them.

HELP

Crispus is drunk and easily manipulated.

STs	Move things along to the next scene.
PCs	Escape Crispus' minders.

SCENE: CRISPUS THE NEONATE

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	•
SOCIAL	• • •

HINDRANCES

Crispus will not want to be Embraced, and will fight back.

HELP

Crispus is drunk and easily manipulated.

STs	Here's a good time for Crispus to reveal to the characters who he is, if he hasn't already.
PCs	Decide whether or not to Embrace Crispus.

SCENE: # The Dead Woman

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	—

HINDRANCES

The Strix has the physical advantage over the characters.

HELP

None.

STs	Establish how creepy the Striges are.
PCs	Keeping Crispus alive (or undead) is the order of the day.

SCENE: # Military Intervention

MENTAL	• • •
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	• • •

HINDRANCES

Depend entirely on the characters' response to the search.

HELP

Depend entirely on the characters' response to the search.

STs	Impress upon the characters that Crispus matters. He's the son of the Emperor, and his disappearance is impossible to ignore.
PCs	Characters just need to get away with their actions.

SCENE: # The Sound of Hymns

MENTAL	• •
PHYSICAL	—
SOCIAL	• •

HINDRANCES

None overt. The crowd may present a physical hindrance to overbearing characters.

HELP

Female characters may be mistaken for converts and allowed to pass unhindered

STs	This is the set-up of this section of the story; more importantly, you need to get across the atmosphere of this scene.
PCs	The characters need to know what's happened to the brothel, and to be motivated to investigate more.

SCENE: DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THE CONVENT

MENTAL	• • •
PHYSICAL	• •
SOCIAL	• • •

HINDRANCES	HELP
Depend entirely on the actions of the characters.	Depend entirely on the actions of the characters.

STs	Follow the characters' lead.
PCs	The characters themselves determine the goals of this scene.

SCENE: WRITTEN IN FIRE

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	• • •
SOCIAL	• •

HINDRANCES	HELP
Depend entirely on the actions of the characters.	Depend entirely on the actions of the characters.

STs	Play out the consequence of the characters' actions.
PCs	Play out the consequence of the characters' actions.

SCENE: EUPRAXUS THE FUGITIVE

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	• •

HINDRANCES	HELP
At ST's discretion, physical confrontation may result. Characters with secret allegiance to the Lancea et Sanctum will have to be careful not to reveal themselves.	The whole of the Camarilla is aligned against Eupraxus; characters can request aid from innumerable sources.

STs	Present Eupraxus' dilemma to the characters.
PCs	Decide what to do with Eupraxus.

SCENE: The Passion of Eupraxus and Vitericus

MENTAL •
PHYSICAL • • • •
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES

Chaotic violence surrounds the characters. ST discrection determines exactly how difficult it makes things for the characters.

HELP

None.

STs	Demonstrate the folly of careless interference with mortals; demonstrate the dangerous lack of control in both the Cult of Augurs and the Lancea et Sanctum.
PCs	Survive the chaos.

SCENE: Getting Something Done

MENTAL • • • •
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL • • • •

HINDRANCES

Taking any position in this debate will find the characters facing off against capable Kindred. Taking none may require serious Social maneuvering to prevent a loss of Status.

HELP

Taking either position in the debate earns the respect and assistance of one faction within the Camarilla.

STs	Demonstrate the mounting political chaos in the Camarilla.
PCs	Play through the debate. Gain an understanding of the current political landscape.

SCENE: A Dead Man Clutching a Letter

MENTAL • •
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	Give the characters advance warning of a catastrophic announcement.
PCs	Read the letter and decide on a course of action.

SCENE: The Broken Meeting

MENTAL ••
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

Depend on characters' Status and known allegiances.

HELP

Depend on characters' Status and known allegiances.

STs	Demonstrate the mounting crisis in the Camarilla.
PCs	Understand the extensive influence of the disastrous announcement. Work to either hold the Camarilla together or provoke its destruction.

SCENE: Herennius Struck Down

MENTAL –
PHYSICAL ••••
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES

Fire, violence, and panic may interfere with the characters actions. ST discretion can increase the physical threat if necessary.

HELP

The panic of the crowd makes concealing illicit activity easier.

STs	Demonstrate that physical force is overtaking reason within the Camarilla. Presage the violent collapse that is soon to come.
PCs	Survive the attack and the riot that results.

SCENE: The Monumental Pact

MENTAL –
PHYSICAL ••••
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES

Depend entirely on character actions. Serious physical threats may unfold if the characters place themselves directly in their paths.

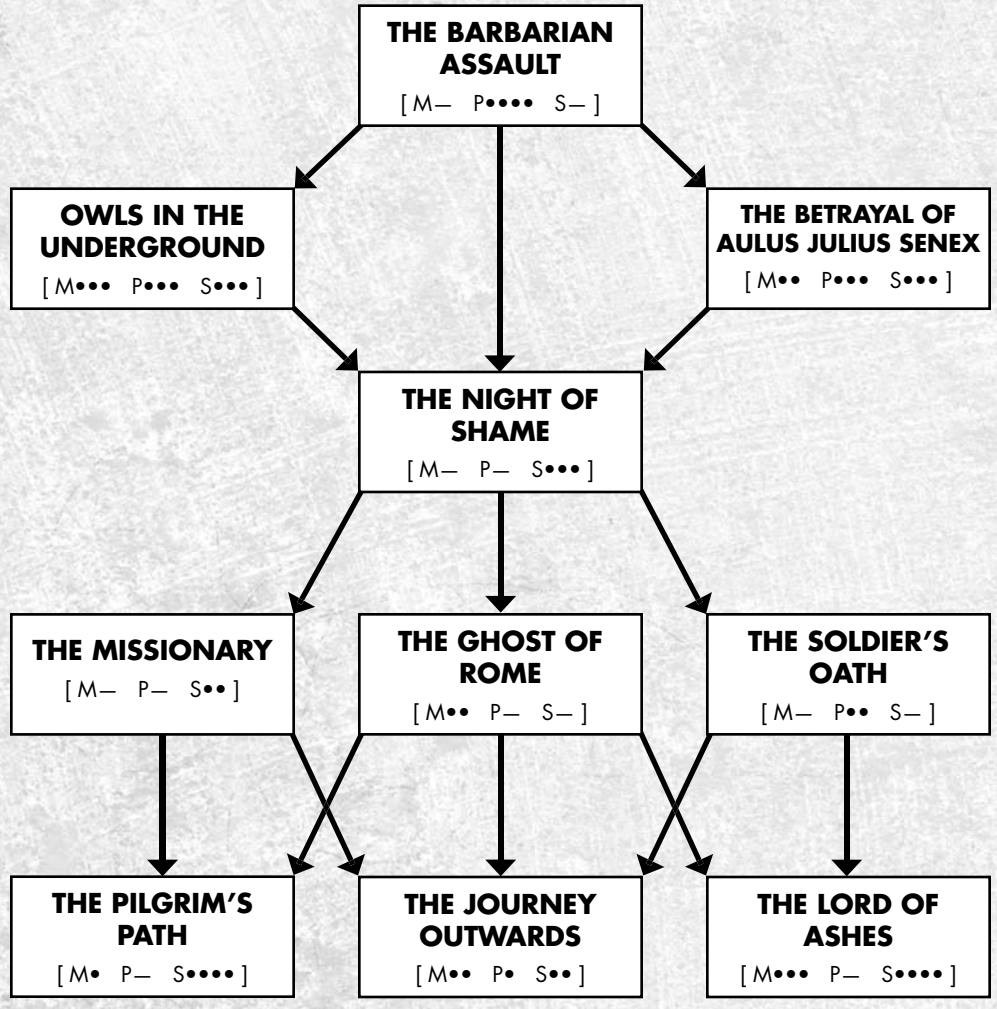
HELP

Depend entirely on character actions. Certain powerful vampires may come to the characters' aid if they share allegiances.

STs	Play out the sealing of the deal that dooms the Camarilla. Give the players the chance to play a pivotal role in history.
PCs	Either preserve the meeting or disrupt it.

Vandals in the City of Emperors

Scenes 10 [Mental •• Physical ••••• Social ••••] XP Level 60



SCENE: The Barbarian Assault

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL • • • •
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Barbarian hordes, collapsing structures and panicked vampires allow the ST to create a physical threat as desired.

HELP

Wild chaos conceals just about any action the characters choose to take.

STs	Pull the trigger. Seal the fate of the Camarilla. Give the characters a fight they can really sink their teeth into.
PCs	Survive the initial assault, and get to a place where they can plan their next move. Take advantage of the chaos, if they so choose, to settle a score.

SCENE: Owls in the Underground

MENTAL • • •
PHYSICAL • • •
SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

Julii and known friends and members of the Senex face a deadly threat from the Striges.

HELP

Gangrel and known enemies of the Camarilla may gain some advantage in this scene.

STs	Throw the characters in the path of the Striges. Demonstrate that the Camarilla has truly gone past the point of no return: Necropolis is no longer safe.
PCs	Find a way to escape the wrath of the Striges.

SCENE: The Betrayal of Aulus Julius Senex

MENTAL • •
PHYSICAL • • •
SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

Julii and known friends and members of the Senex face a deadly threat from the Striges.

HELP

Gangrel and known enemies of the Camarilla may gain some advantage in this scene.

STs	Reveal the catastrophic depth of Strix penetration in Necropolis, and hammer home the coming destruction of the Julii as a clan.
PCs	Survive the encounter.

SCENE: # The Night of Shame

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	•••

HINDRANCES

Loyal members of the Camarilla will have to overcome the panic and incompetence of the scattered remnants of the Senex. Enemies of the Camarilla will face opposition from the remaining loyal Propinqui.

HELP

Enemies of the Camarilla face a disrupted and demoralized Senex.

STs	Give the characters the chance to seize the reins of the story again and make decisions about their future. Let the less physical characters have their chance to accomplish their goals.
PCs	Decide on the coterie's plan of action. Convince other survivors to support the coterie.

SCENE: # The Missionary

MENTAL	–
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	••

HINDRANCES

Known enemies of the Lancea et Sanctum will encounter social difficulties in this scene.

HELP

Known enemies of the Senex will be greatly aided in this scene.

STs	Draw a line for the characters so that they can choose a side, once and for all.
PCs	Pick their destiny.

SCENE: # The Ghost of Rome

MENTAL	••
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	–

HINDRANCES

None.

HELP

None.

STs	Give the characters a chance to say a goodbye to the Rome they once knew.
PCs	Understand what's happening to Rome. Pay respects and say goodbye.

SCENE: ## The Soldier's Oath

MENTAL –
PHYSICAL ••
SOCIAL –

HINDRANCES	HELP
None.	None.

STs	Shore up the characters in their decision. Play Thascius Marcellus as a symbol of the last, failing strength of the Camarilla so that the players can choose what to do with him.
PCs	Destroy Thascius Marcellus to demonstrate loyalty to the Lancea et Sanctum – or rescue him and demonstrate animosity to the Sanctified.

SCENE: ## The Lords of Ashes

MENTAL •••
PHYSICAL –
SOCIAL ••••

HINDRANCES	HELP
None.	None.

STs	Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Put the characters at the forefront of the weakened society of Roman Kindred. Demonstrate that their choices will have a serious impact on the city and the vampires who remain.
PCs	Establish a base of power in Rome. Prepare for the age ahead.

SCENE: ## The Journey Outwards

MENTAL ••
PHYSICAL •
SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES	HELP
None.	None.

STs	Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Put the characters on the road to their final destination. Demonstrate that they are cutting their ties with Rome, now and forever, and that they will have an important role to play wherever they go.
PCs	Leave the city. Prepare for the age ahead.

SCENE: # The Pilgrim's Path

MENTAL	•
PHYSICAL	–
SOCIAL	• • • •

HINDRANCES	HELP
None.	None.

STs	Bring the chronicle to a satisfying close. Position the characters firmly in the upper echelons of burgeoning Sanctified rule. Demonstrate that their choices will have a serious impact on the city and the vampires who remain.
PCs	Establish a base of power in Rome. Prepare for the age ahead.



Salvation in Fog

My childer came to destroy me. They could not. It stings the heart to realize that you have given second life to weak creatures. While I suppose there exists a great part of me that sits relieved that it is over and that I still walk this world, I am also filled with great shame. This shame threatens to overwhelm me. I was able to destroy my vile sire so many nights before, why couldn't they destroy me? I had to put them to dust again, though I know that it all goes around in cruel cycles and that their assault upon me will one night be renewed. Just because they are ash doesn't mean that they can't rise again, does it? How many times now must I go through this? They are born again, born again, Re Natus, resurrected. I am doomed to repeat this. A Hell not of my choosing.

But at least now I have a new partner in my pain. Someone to ease the misery that returns night after night.



Nathalie blinked away the crust of blood that had formed over her eyes.

Was it the same night? It couldn't be. Her head swam. Her body felt full. Sick. Slick. Behind her, the limp arm of the dead girl hung off the chaise, the back of her hand pressed awkwardly (Nathalie recalled snapping the wrist so that she could get at those last drops of fleeting life in the girl's body) against the floor.

And all around her was ash. Dust. The remnants of her friends.

Of her sire.

They thought to help him, thought to extend a hand to the divine Renatus, thought to help return him to life and elevate him to his former glory. And perhaps in a way, they had. The ancient vampire, teeth chipped and cracked where a bullet had pierced his open mouth, leapt. Nathalie could not even comprehend that speed. Vitellus, an old soul himself, expired too swiftly, and in his final demise all of Nathalie's hopes for the future turned to bone and blood and powder. It was not just his end that plagued her now; it was what Renatus had demanded of her. Her sire, almost gone, with striations of red stretching across the skin of his face (and his eyes already going dry and cracking), was thrust upon her.

Renatus commanded her to drink. To drink until she was full.

It was not a command she could deny.

It is a strange and awful thing to devour a soul. It is both pleasure and pain: a mad relief, an empowering pleasure, an enervating disgust in one's self.

And while she consumed her sire, Renatus went around the room, feeding from the remaining few. Leeching them down to their last, and ending them.

Now, one night, two nights, maybe a whole week later, Nathalie could barely move. It had been a parade of new bodies. Humans. One lay dead in the corner, his face in a potted fern. Another – someone that Renatus knew, a "traitor" known as Anthony – lay bent up and broken beneath the archway to the bedroom (an archway decorated with two faces that might have been the faces of Janus, or the faces of the household gods known as Lares and Penates). The mass of bodies. Writhing and moving together, first as entertainment, later as food. The things that Renatus demanded...

She had never felt this way. So full, so fulfilled.

And yet, so base. Vile. She wondered if she could throw up. It wasn't so long ago that she was human. She remembered the way peristalsis felt, the shuddering of food up and out of the gut. Could she channel it? Throw up this blood? These souls? Would it allow her to forget all that had happened here tonight?

She so dearly wanted to forget.

"Shh," Renatus said (she did not hear him come up behind her). "Relax, my dear Lucretia, relax."

"Nathalie," she tried to say, tried to correct him, but her voice was small, too small to deny him loudly.



I am comforted that I do not need to think any longer of Lucretia's death. Dear Lucretia, gone from this world and gone from my heart – or so I thought. And then you march into my world again, young and vital, different but the same. You say to me that you are not Lucretia? Whatever it is that eases the pain, my love. We all do what we must to numb ourselves to agony. I have denied myself in the past. Now you, too, must do the same.

For a long time, now, I have been driven to the edge of madness by my thoughts. The torments I endured in the Black Spring. The horrors I visited on others in return. The long hunts in Necropolis: banishing the Lance and Sanctum, seeking out the whispering puppets of the Strix, or simply trying to find a quiet place to ruminate as a soldier on all the deaths I have made. I felt empty, fearing that the gods had abandoned me. Or that the God and his Spearman had destroyed those old gods (and even now I can conjure the bitter taste of uttering the prayers of that false God and prophet, acting as Bishop and almost forgetting who I truly was and to whom I actually belonged).

I have had to write these thoughts down time and time again.

I have had to tear up these thoughts time and time again.

No longer.



His neck was cold, like the marble beneath her feet. His hands were firm, callused, the hands of a ditch-digger (or a smith, Nathalie thought, like the rough hands of Vulcan). Those hands pushed her to the gill-like slit in the skin that he had made with a small knife. He told her to drink, and so she did.

Odd that his blood should taste differently than any other's. No human blood tasted like this. But neither did what she tasted of her sire, either. Several tastes dueled for supremacy upon the tip of her tongue and edge of her lips. A musty wine, almost gone to vinegar? The back-of-the-tongue richness of fatty olives? The abstract taste – unable to be described as a known flavor – of age, power, lunacy? The feeling of it threatened to overwhelm her. She could barely contain the paroxysms of emotion. Nathalie wanted to laugh, so she laughed (a sound that bubbled up out of her and frightened her). She wanted to cry, so she cried (rivulets of red traveling down her cheek like trickles of rusty water).

"Are you a god?" she asked him.

"No," he said. "I don't think so. I don't remember being one."

Her eyes rolled around in her head. "I think perhaps you are."

Renatus smiled.

"Maybe I am," he said. "Let's go out. I have things I want to do."



This is what Lucretia gives me: she lets me feel good again. I bask in her presence. I was able to do for her what she did for me so many nights before. I was once a callow cur, licking dust beneath the Colosseum for the tiniest taste of life, and now I am so much more. Here, this girl comes to me, and she is nothing, too. Young, untested. Much prettier than

I was once, I'm sure, but a dog nevertheless. Crawling toward me on her filthy belly. It allowed me to return the favor. Circles and cycles.

In feeling good again, I am free to forget everything else. I feel strangely liberated. I've contemplated throwing my strongbox out the window where the glass remains broken, and letting my letters spill out as it tumbles, catching flight on the angry winds above the city. I don't, not yet. But if I throw it all away, my mind becomes my own again, doesn't it? Think of it. Ridding myself of any evidence leaves me free to concoct my own memories. I don't have to be as old as I am. Maybe I'm only a few hundred years old. Perhaps I'm from France, from the village of Caumont in the Pas de Calais. Perhaps I'm much older than what I am. Rubbing the porous belly of a fertility statue in some bygone cluster of huts and tents. I've seen those of our kind who are ageless, who do not sleep, who were perhaps birthed from the earliest darkness. I can be one of those. I could even be one of the Strix, those vile spirits — no, too foolish to even contemplate. Insidious, those foul things. To even think how one could be within me now, pulling my strings as my mind wanders, disgusting. To think of them gives them power.

Instead, I grab hold of the idea —

My mind is my own! My memory so tenuous... why cling to it? Why try to make sense of it? Fortunes past and present are within my grasp. Like clay or mud, I can shape it.

Though...

I have this other feeling.

I wonder — have I done this before?



The altar was a simple thing, a hunk of crooked slate beneath the trellis of the train above their heads, resting awkwardly on beams of corroded metal. On it rested a stone slab with braided rope carved around its edges. Words carved in the rock, in old Latin: "Jupiter, best and greatest." Next to the slab were various animal skeletons — a rat, a cat, a big bird that might've been a buzzard. The bones still offered strings of meat, fur, feather.

Renatus, arm around her, took a moment.

Then he stepped away from her and destroyed the altar.

His hands, mighty and strong, crashed down upon the stone, breaking it into thirds. Bits of sharp rock stuck out of his hand and forearms. He swept the bones away, and they clattered to the ground. In the distance, Nathalie saw a passel of shapes gathered around a ghostly barrel fire. Homeless, probably. They took off running. It was wise of them, she felt — even far away they knew that they were witness to something potent and perfectly unnatural.

"Don't you fear that you'll anger the gods?" she asked.

"No," Renatus said. "I am the only god. Come. I have more such temples across the city, and we must destroy them all by morning."



Consider it.

Am I really Renatus?

A moment's worth of doubt when it comes to one's identity and memory is as simple as a tiny fracture in an aqueduct — the crack spreads, the stone breaks, the whole thing shudders and crumbles.

Was I really a Roman soldier? Perhaps I was something lesser. A slave. Or something greater, like a Praefectus annonae, an equestrian taken from the field of battle and allowed to monitor the grain that comes into the city. (Bread is life, after all. Or it was, once.)

Maybe I am not this Renatus. I am not the stolen name, but possibly the Renatus from whom I think I pilfered the name. Perhaps I was always the Christian who played at being pagan instead of the pagan who later pretended to Christian. After all, I was a good Bishop, was I not? Did my flock not take counsel in my sermons? Did my priests not tremble before me, wisely recognizing the power of The One True God in the dark of my eye? Was I that all along, and this most recent spate of journal pages is just a way of salving the guilt over what I've done to the Lance and Sanctum?

Certainly, my collection is home to a number of history books. Perhaps this is all invented. One could suggest that what I remember of Rome is just taken from books — few of which are first-hand accounts, only secondary sources, these. Is this story spun from someone else's recollections? Patched together from a thousand stories? Was I just a humble peasant or a foolish miller from only a handful of centuries ago?

Did I ever belong to the Legio Mortuum?

Did I ever serve the Senex?

Am I truly me?



As it turned out, questioning Renatus was not a recommended course. Numia found that out the hard way. Nathalie knew her, didn't like her — she mostly play-acted at being a sister of the Circle, gave a lot of lip-service to Sumerian gods that she seemed to pull out of some bullshit New Age encyclopedia. Lip curled in a sneer, she asked Renatus a single question:

"Who are you, really?"

And he answered her. He cut the witch's head off with her own athame. The others, gathered around because he had summoned them, gaped at how fast Renatus moved. They'd witnessed such before, of course, but rarely so close, rarely so clearly. Nathalie could see it on their faces: they maybe didn't believe he was a god, not yet. But he was the closest they'd seen in a long time, if ever.

So when Renatus gave them a list of demands, they hurried off to the four corners of the city to comply.

A canine placenta from a bitch whose haunches did not touch the earth when she dropped the litter?

Snake skin brined in raisin wine?

A jar of earthworms, a hare stuffed with saffron, root of vervain?

Was any of that for real? Did it even matter? Later, Renatus would explain that he had little interest in using those old folk remedies for anything — he was immortal, after all, and such mundane medicines meant nothing to him. He only wanted to test their loyalty. Most of them complied. The few that didn't? Their fates remain unknown to all but Nathalie — well, Lucretia, now — and Renatus. They lurk, still clinging to this not-so-mortal coil, chained up in a distant room in Renatus' penthouse. Though now he called the place, the Fanum Renatus. The place of rebirth.

When he was ready, he gathered his new congregation there.

And he told them how they were going to break the Lance, and bring down the Sanctum.

I no longer concern myself with the veracity of memory.

It became liberating to let go of this worry. In recognizing that my memory is untrustworthy, I became a being only in the present. This night, and only this night, is what matters. Did I once wear the silver ring of the Equestrian? Did I rout barbarians both mortal and immortal from Necropolis, our city a bundle of tunnels shaped like a ball of mating serpents? Did my lovely Augur, Lucretia, ever truly exist in the first place?

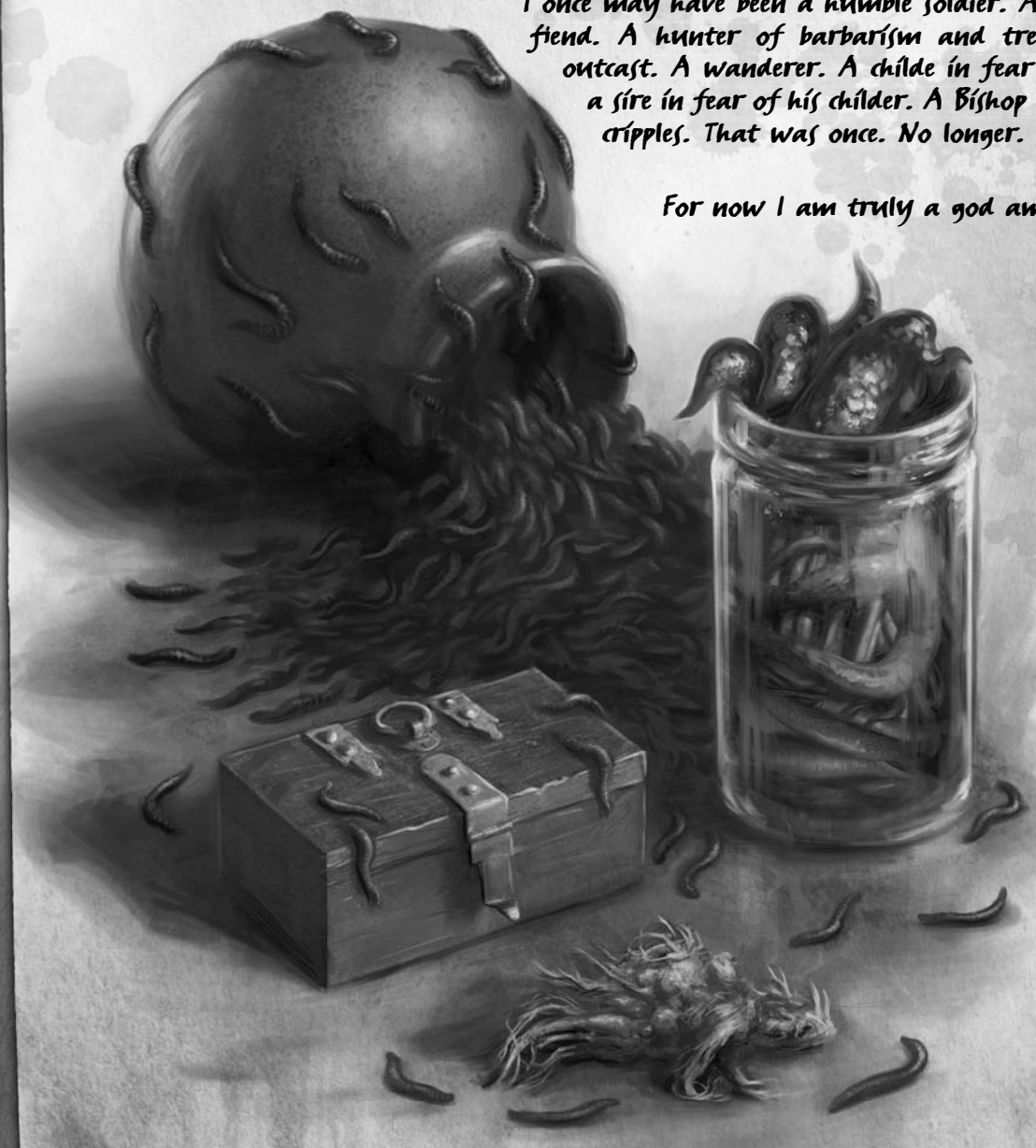
It's good to let that all go. I was shackled to it for so long, chained to my supposed memory and history like a pair of rocks at each ankle.

I've chosen to forget all of that. Whatever truth floats to me, I will look at it, laugh at it, and banish it again.

Tonight, we execute two more priests of the Sanctum. We're working our way up. But before I watch my adherents do these deeds for me, I will burn my papers once more, I shall smash my strongbox and I shall even destroy all of my old books. I don't want to remember, any more. It's too troubling.

I once may have been a humble soldier. A gutter-fed fiend. A hunter of barbarism and treachery. An outcast. A wanderer. A childe in fear of his sire, a sire in fear of his childer. A Bishop of liars and cripples. That was once. No longer.

For now I am truly a god among my own.



We have been lying for decades.
The terrible truth is that
the Gods have fallen silent.

Only thieves and liars
speak for them now.
The prophecies you hear are nothing but a
desperate attempt to rally our forces.

How can they succeed?
You see that chaos
rules Necropolis now.

You know the Camarilla is doomed."
— Kemnebi, Vaticinator of the Cult of Augurs

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