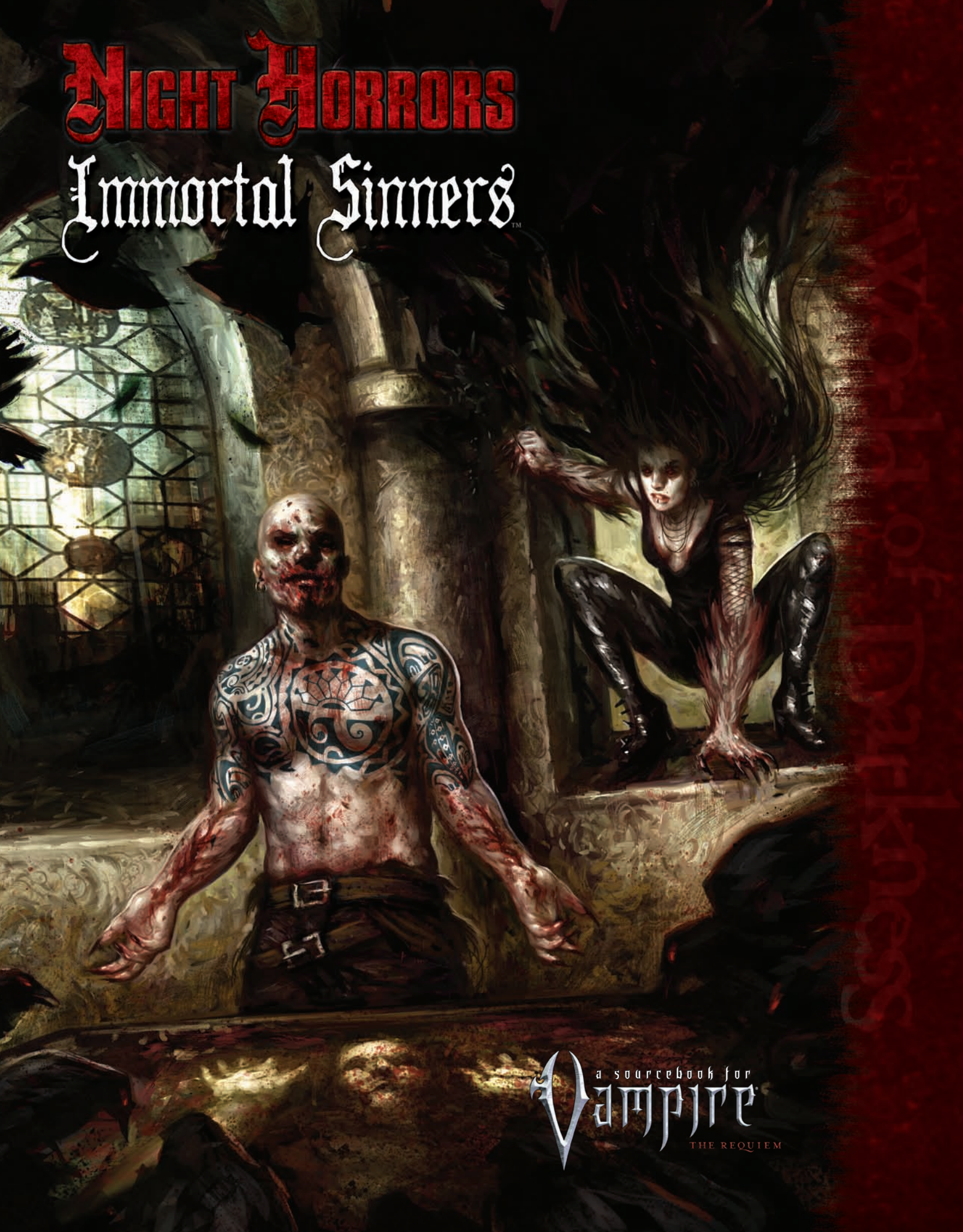


NIGHT HORRORS

Immortal Sinners™



a sourcebook for
Vampire
THE REQUIEM

The dead whisper about her from LA to El Paso. About the barbarian, the cannibal, the big bad blackbird. The monster who sneaks in like a thief in the light, and leaves in a cloud of dust and clotting blood. The Unholy.

Maybe you want to hunt her. Maybe you want to fuck her. But looking in your eyes, I think more than anything you want to be her. To break the rules. To be feared and wanted. To ride alone forever and never take no for an answer.

Well, you better step up now. Pick a side. Because she's here tonight, and no matter what you've heard, you ain't seen nothing yet.

— Sheriff of Santa Teresa, last words

This book is:

- Information on vampires that vampires talk about, from preminent monsters to ancient horrors
- The legacies of these legends among the Damned: new bloodlines, Devotions, and blood magic
- Allies and antagonists for any chronicle, from **Vampire** to **Hunter**



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Vampire
THE REQUIEM

22

The Resurrection Man

By
Chuck Wendig

The tomb lay largely unfinished, though Mother Nature had conspired to finish the broken walls herself—black roots took mighty grip of those walls, laying claim to this dead place. Unmoored tiles, many broken, lay scattered about. Motes of dust whirled. Dead spiders, creatures that had come here looking for a feast but finding none, finding this place nothing more than a trap, reposed desiccated in their webs. Clods of dirt lay here and there. Mushrooms. Moss. The flesh-scoured bones of a rat, maybe a possum.

In the corner, a crumpled metal trapdoor sat, ruined. The hinges were busted. The center had been kicked so hard a cruel footprint remained in the metal—it warped the words engraved across the top, *Est vir qui adest*.

This was a place of death, to be sure, but no part of it looked as dead as the corpse in the middle of the floor, swaddled in white linens gone yellow. The shriveled body lay kinked beneath that pale shroud, bony hands gripping the fabric in arthritic eternity. The body was brown and black beneath the yellowed sheet—little more than a scarecrow whose skin was cracked leather and tough jerky.

The face could not be seen, though—a featureless porcelain mask, no eyes, no mouth, lay crookedly cocked atop the skull. It was the one perfect thing in this mausoleum; the very dust seemed afraid to touch it. This was a city of masks. Did this one hold some untoward power like many of the others?

A claw reached down out of the darkness, tracing a pattern across the top of the mask. Another talon joined it. The two went for the edges and delicately picked up the relic, gently setting it down on the earthen floor. It was the last gentle action that would occur this night.

A talon slit the center of the shroud, a swift and unmerciful slash. The sheet parted, showing its package: the torpid corpse of the heretic elder, Rafael Pope. His eyes were puckered sphincters, his mouth a wretched scream where his own teeth had bit into his diaphanous lips.

But it wasn't his face that drew interest from the woman standing over him, a broad-brimmed hat slung low over her dark face, her yellow eyes. It was his moldering chest and what lay beyond the breastbone—a heart so leached of life it must have looked like a peach pit or a lump of anthracite. With rough claws—fingers of wrinkled dark red skin like that of a cockscomb—she unceremoniously spread the ribcage with a brittle crack, exposing the dull organ within.

The Unholy smiled. Licked a fang. She was going to eat that heart, then eat the rest of him, then swallow his betraying soul like the last gobbet of sweetmeat.

She reached in to curl what passed for her hands around the dead heart—

“Stop.”

The word was like an icicle to the back of her head. She snarled, and felt the air grow thin around her; the dust stirred in ways that denied the currents of air blowing in from the trapdoor's opening. Nothing lurched inside her, no Beast threatening to come to the fore—that awful monster had long come to the surface, and now lived just beneath her tough skin, ever-present but well-reined. Dirt cracked off the walls, thudding in great clumps against the floor tiles. Spider webs trembled. The air grew loud with the sounds of beaks clacking, feathers shuffling, little feet tightening on their perches. Eyes glittered behind her. The room now grew heavy with the presence of a hundred crows, fat-bellied birds roosting on roots and tiles and tucked away in any uneven niche the wall presented.

A man-shaped shadow stepped away from the corner of the room, and she nearly loosed her flock upon it—but he held up a hand, and she had to admit she was curious.

“Birch,” she said, the word hitting like a gob of spit against cement.

“Guilty,” the shadow answered, stepping into the moonlight offered by the trapdoor's opening. It gleamed off his shorn scalp. The light caught in the contours of the scars crisscrossing his skull and face. He held up his hands and smiled. “Nice trick with the birds. You have to teach me that some night.”

She eased the tension in her shoulders, and the birds visibly quieted, too—the bond between them was palpable.

“It ain't the best idea to interrupt me,” she said.

"I assure you, that wasn't my desire. *Technically*, though, you interrupted me."

"You were here the whole time?"

"I was."

He took a few steps closer. It didn't bother her. She wanted it; she and the birds could take him apart like he was a piñata, spilling out whatever candies waited within. Birch was a fascinating sort; one never knew how he'd approach a situation. Here he was in the tomb of an elder well-loathed by the so-called Sanctified, but he wasn't in his sacred vestments. Just a powder blue polo shirt and a pair of khaki slacks. Golfwear covering up a body marked by brands and scars.

"I didn't smell you," she said.

"Good to know I don't have a peculiar odor. I do brush my teeth. Our choice of drink doesn't do well when it rots in the mouth; best to keep our chompers clean." As if to punctuate his remark, he snapped his teeth together.

"If you say so, Birch. Listen, let's just get this over with. You were waiting for me, so say your piece, then leave me to my leisure."

"Oh, but I wasn't waiting for you. Your presence here is unexpected. Then again, it usually is. I heard a story about you in... Detroit, was it?"

"Something like that. About a year ago. Always seems that nobody wants to let me pass in peace. I like to leave them with some souvenirs."

Birch shrugged. "We're all cursed in some way."

"So you're here for the heretic."

"I am."

"I got here first."

"You did."

The two eyed each other up. She wasn't scared of Birch, and she knew he was scared of her—it wasn't just the tickle at the base of her spine, but other things, too. The way his neck muscles tightened into cords. The way his tongue played over his teeth even with his mouth closed. The cock of his hips, giving him a faint slouch (and Birch, he never slouches). And yet, for all that, he wasn't *that* scared. Couldn't be. He was here. He took another step closer, offering his hands up like a Vegas dealer who has just cleared the table.

The Unholy grew frustrated. "So just go the fuck away, then. I've laid claim to this body. His heartsblood is mine. Go find yourself another slumbering fool."

"I don't want to claim the body. I've no interest in devouring this one's soul. Actually, I want to wake him up."

"Well, that's fucking stupid."

"Probably."

Just to make her dominance clear, she put her mortified claws back on Pope's cracked and blistered heart. She'd have pissed on it if she still had the juice.

"Don't much care what you want to do with him," she said. "Doesn't matter if you want to hollow him out and fill him with nuts and stuffing, because I've made my mark. My intentions are clear."

"They are. And yet, I cannot back down. God's will is clear, here."

"Don't you mean *your* will?"

He sighed. "Same thing, I'm afraid. He speaks through me. He acts through me. Actually, I suspect He acts through you, too. That's how God is."

"He moves in mysterious ways," she said, rolling her eyes.

"It isn't mysterious to me. It's mysterious only to the ignorant and the unbelieving."

Birch started to pace a rough half-circle at Pope's torpid corpse-feet (the two ankles crossed, a pose ironically Christ-like). His brown loafers crunched on bits of broken tile.

"You're bold," she said. "I appreciate that."

"Let me be bolder, then. Let's make a deal."

"I'm not good with deals. You have nothing I want."

Birch clucked his tongue. "I don't know about that. We may not believe the same things, and we may not *want* the same things. But I have to believe our interests intersect, here."

"I doubt that very much, Birch."

"Will you at least hear me out?"

She tightened her grip on the heretic's heart. It was now that she realized something—it remained true she had nothing to fear from Birch's physical presence. His words, though, were a different matter. His tongue was a snare; even laid bare, she threatened to step into it. The birds sensed her tension. They ruffled their wings. Shifted nervously from foot to foot.



Birch sensed it, too—he didn't wait for permission to speak, and instead let his words tumble out of him, careless but exact.

"I know the stories," he said. "I've heard tell of you since my earliest nights. My sire was a killer. Elegant in some ways, but clumsy in others. She was in awe of you, but of course as is the nature of our kind she was also jealous and apparently certain that one day she could surpass your skills. She never got the chance, of course, because she was ultimately weak and they put her down like a distempered dog. She told me many stories about you. Some probably true. Many probably less than true. It wasn't just her. Inevitably someone would bring you up. Your visits to cities. Your long journeys down dark highways. The things you did. The unlives you ended. It's more than just gossip. This is gospel, sprayed in blood across a lonely desert road."

"Poetic."

"I try."

"Go on."

"I see a theme in what you do."

"I don't *do* themes. I only do what I want."

"You're elemental that way, I recognize. But that's part of it. You're not just some id-driven monstrosity. You haven't fallen prey to what so many of us have. Your acts have meaning. They reveal *purpose*. Otherwise, you'd just kill wantonly. All would die. All would be blood on your claws and in your mouth."

"You calling me weak, boy?"

"Quite the opposite, I assure you. You're strong enough to retain that purpose well beyond the point that lesser creatures would have become contaminated and driven mad by their sins. God works through you, and with Pope you can let him continue doing so. Release him to me. Let me wake him. I have my people—Emily, and a handful of loyal Brigmans—coming with an offering for Pope. A taste he dare not refuse. Let me rouse him from his slumber."

"Why?"

"You're not just a castigating force. You're a creature that enjoys a certain *random* element. Knock over one domino, see what happens. Pope is a very big domino. You loathe the power structure that sits in place. Help me shake it up. They'll run like ants. Some will woo him, others will try to kill him or enslave him or worship him. The chaos born of such an event surely appeals to you?"

She moved fast. She slammed Birch up against the wall, hard enough that the tomb shook, sending a rain of dirt and dust over everything. His feet dangled. His throat lay soft in her curled claws.

Birch knew it could all end. He'd failed to sway her. She, like him, was a not so predictable presence. She acted. She *did*. Thinking didn't need to enter the equation. Here he was, trying to appeal to her intellectual interests, and it was about to get his head torn from his neck and tossed into the corner of this forsaken mausoleum.

Abstractly, he was sure that if he met his end here as a greasy mark on the earthen wall, it was God's plan. A tiny voice screaming in the bleak distance of his hallowed mind, though, begged to differ. It told him to run, to bite, to beg—this was not God's plan, God did not exist, Birch was not God's chosen glove. He silenced the voice. Dissent was not allowed, not within, not without.

She threw him, then. Wasn't much more than a light toss by the look of it, but his shoulder cracked hard into the busted trapdoor that lay in the opposite corner, and he felt all the bones there give. For a moment his vision was nothing but a red wash—blood or hunger or both, it didn't matter. When it cleared, he saw that the birds had surrounded him in a semicircle, not moving forward, not yet. Their black eyes stared at him like he was little more than roadkill that hadn't yet died.

The Unholy cocked her hat back and strode straight for Pope's torpid form. She planted her black leather boots into the ground and reached into the heretic's chest.

"Wait!" Birch croaked, rubbing his throat. *She may let you live if you keep quiet*, that small voice warned. He ignored it. This was his last shot, and he knew it.

Her head pivoted like an owl's—the neck cracked and her face turned too far. She hissed. It was fucking *reptilian*.

"This isn't a hunt," he said, still choking, his words coming out too fast, too desperate, but there was nothing he could do about that now. "It's not a hunt. Just a kill. Somebody did the work already and you're just pecking at it like—" *Like roadkill*, that voice said, but he didn't speak it aloud. "You're poaching. Just poaching."

Her awful bird arms retreated to her sides.

Bang, he thought. He had hit her where it counted—not her intellect, but her *instinct*.

"What did you say?"

Carefully Birch stood, pushing his shattered shoulder shards back into place as his Blood moved to mend them. Wincing, he spoke in a more measured tone.

"At the least, just let me wake him. Let him go for weeks. Months if you can allow it. Let him grow fat and happy. Allow him to forge his bonds, his enemies, his alliances. Then, if you still find it interesting, hunt him. Hunt him like an owl tracks a mouse scurrying across the forest floor—" He made a little mouse gesticulation with his hand, then grunted because it only brought new pain to his shoulder. "Somebody put him here long ago. They hunted him. And this was the result. You'd just be piggybacking on the kill and you know it."

Or, at least, now you know it, he thought.

He expected her to come at him again. To tear out his heart and smash it up against Pope's and tear into them both like rotten apples, but she didn't.

She only blinked, strode to the trapdoor, and looked up at the moon.

She turned her head toward Birch, and with a snarl she said something utterly unexpected.

"I like you, Birch."

Then with a single leap, she was up through the opening. The birds were gone, too—an oily funnel of shadow, a din of wings.

Birch said a small prayer, then smiled.



NIGHT HORRORS

Immortal Sinners



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Joe Rirman, Alex Scokel, Christopher Simmons and Chuck Wendig*

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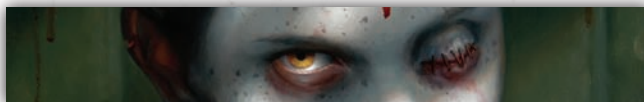
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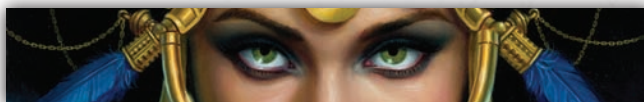
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NIGHT HORRORS

Immortal Sinners™

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Introduction

What is fame? The advantage of being known by people of whom you yourself know nothing, and for whom you care as little.

— Lord Byron

You ever wonder how long it takes somebody to bleed to death?

It's not hard to find out. On the Internet, there's a clip of a girl slitting her throat and bleeding out. Another with this chick being beaten to death and dismembered. Another where her jaw... you know what, I don't want to talk about it. It's sick shit, and you can search it out for yourself. But here's the point.

It's the same woman. Over and over.

She's one of them. The teases. The monsters. They're just beneath the surface of our lives, just on the other side of the screen. So close we'd feel their breath. Except they don't breathe. They don't breathe, they don't die, and they never stop sinning.

This book's about the shit that makes them gossip.

Vampires in the World of Darkness

When the sun fades, the world belongs to the dead. Everywhere we are, so also are the Damned. They look like us, they act like us, they pretend to be part of us. That is their Masquerade.

Vampires feed upon the blood of the living and fear the sun. They have blasphemous powers and magic, can crush a man's will with an eyeblink or fade into ghostly mist. Their bite is ecstasy... until you start to feel the blood loss.

The dead are joined by Blood into at least five great clans. They find meaning by gathering under loathsome Covenants, following awful religions, twisted science or simply wealth. The activities of these monsters are often hidden by their Masquerade, but not always. Sometimes a mortal sees something she shouldn't, or intercepts a message meant to fall upon dead ears. Sometimes an everyday person becomes a thrall to a monster. A few keep vigil, watching for the things that stalk the night. And then there are those vampires who don't give a shit about the Masquerade.

For more on vampires, their clans and abilities, read the Appendix.

Theme and Mood

The theme of this book is notoriety—something many vampires pursue, but few survive to enjoy. Each of the monsters herein is supremely notorious, though they may be so for very different reasons. The three sections of the book deal with the ways notoriety expresses itself: characters who are notorious and approved of are **Preeminent Monsters**, characters who are notorious and hated are **Ravenous Outlaws**, and characters who are so ancient and powerful that the opinions of others hold no power over them are **Ancient Horrors**.

The other side of notoriety is our mood: gossip. Vampires are social monsters, and **Vampire: The Requiem** games are often driven by social relationships. **Immortal Sinners** is all about the creatures others talk about. It's also about *how* they gossip, whether they're whispering in the corner at a ball, venting their jealousies on the Internet or passing down cautionary tales about what happened to the *last* vampire who crossed the Unholy.

The Crowded Night

The characters in this book are designed mainly for use with **Vampire: The Requiem**, but many are useful even if you aren't familiar with that game line. In order to facilitate that, we've provided an Appendix with abbreviated versions of vampiric powers and rules.

Immortal Sinners and Your Chronicle

We've said it before, but it bears repeating: the World of Darkness is *your* world. These immortal sinners are designed to suit a variety of chronicle styles. Solomon Birch asks what sin should mean to the already Damned. The Mistress of Funtopia asks what reputation is, and whether you can really know anyone. Charles and Charlene Greengrass are too busy killing and making up to ask any questions.

Not every one of these characters will exist in your World of Darkness, nor are their myriad mechanical legacies appropriate for every game. You and your troupe

decide who your characters will meet, and who they'll tell stories about.

While we're on the subject of rules... the characters presented here have a wide range of Attributes, Skills and Disciplines. Some are designed to avoid trouble or to be easily cowed, others to stand up to an entire coterie when challenged in their area of expertise. One thing they aren't designed to do is conform to the experience rules given for players' characters in **Vampire: The Requiem**. The rules for players advance characters based upon how often the players play, rather than modeling how a character evolves on her own in the World of Darkness. They don't work particularly well for designing Storyteller characters as challenges, so they haven't been used here.

Fame and Damnation

At first pass, fame seems just this side of sunlight where a vampire is concerned—look at you, a creeping loathsome undead thing, skulking and culling the human herd then suddenly exposed to the flashes of the paparazzi and cutting interviews with the likes of Katie Couric. “Can you explain for our audience one more time how many people you’ve murdered to further your existence?”

Yet, look to the public record of scandal and disgrace perpetuated by the merely human celebrity, and you'll see a litany of sins, sometimes including actual murder, which the public forgives and forgets, or in a worse indictment of collective humanity, eats up with a fucking spoon. Side by side with some true celebrity stories, the tawdry hunger fueled hemophagia of the vampire is almost tame. Fame's a social can-opener—it gets you past the velvet rope, past the zipper on someone's tight jeans, past debts, past having to pay for your crimes.

But there's that pesky Masquerade, and the even peskier bastards with the glowering faces who'll cut off your arms and legs and leave you on the doorstep. You know the joke, don't you? At the end of the night, it doesn't really matter what Mrs. Sofalump of Jerkmeoff, Indiana, thinks about vampires—what matters is what the mumbling guy with the cats who lives next door thinks about vampires. He's the one who'll be knocking on your door at noon like Van Helsing in carpet slippers that smell like cat piss. But he's not going to come gunning for you because he saw your pic in the society pages and recognized you as a notorious eighteenth-century carnie murderer. He's going to come gunning for you because he saw you drain a hooker dry in the alley behind your walk-up last Wednesday, and got entirely the right idea about you.

There are also different ways to be famous—in different communities, your rep and renown might rise or fall. You might be another face in the crowd to the mortal world,

but among your own kind you're Paris Manson, murder maven and fashion fascist. Among the undead, fame and infamy are hard to distinguish. Acts and personae that get jaded vampires gossiping like a quilting circle are by definition bizarre, extreme, unsettling or outrageous. Fame, especially among the Kindred, is a little different from status and reputation. Being important or being influential ain't the same as being famous. Fame is glamour, wholly a construct of what other people think about you. Being famous *for something* is rather irrelevant when you're actually famous. It becomes self-perpetuating. The Ouroboros of fame goes round and round, faster and faster the more attention it gathers inside its coils.

What sorts of things get a vampire famous? Heroics are thin rations for the hungry gossip, and even more than humans, vampires love to wrap their fangs around *schadenfreude* in all its German staccato. Seeing the great and the good fall to humiliating hard times is *delicious*. Vampires who tell you they don't care for it are lying sacks of shit. That little lift they get from saying “Sucks to be you!” makes the endless horrors of the eternal sanguine blah blah blah easier to bear. There's a certain fame to be scraped from total disaster, but it'll be more likely to stir the ghost of pity in the still hearts of your fellows than awe or wonder—unless you eat your shit sandwich with such style that you make it look tasty.

No, to be famous among the dead, you've got to be a very bad person, and you've got to be very good at it. A touch of rock and roll don't-give-a-shit helps too—especially when you dial your actions up to 11. Doing something totally over the top and then shrugging it off like it's nothing is often impressive. Plus, if you can push your atrocities into the realm of the unthinkable, the rational mind rebels when trying to encompass it, and making the rational mind go fuck itself is part of what being famous is all about.

So you've skinned your sire and made a jacket from his skin, burned down the Prince's haven, and run off Belial's Brood, saving the day for Kindred everywhere. How do other vampires find out they should think you're totally pimp?

Technology has been steadily eating into the isolation that defines Kindred domains. One thrall with a Class A license, a big rig, and a bunch of sealed shipping crates can see a whole court of Kindred meander across the wide-open. There's even some talk of a guy who's figured out how to ship himself by FedEx, but if you don't start that trip weird, you'll end it so. Getting around is easier since the advent of the interstate highway system, but talking between domains is even simpler. Enter the Internet.

Too few elders realize just how easily and how frequently their younger subjects communicate with their counterparts in domains all over the world, spreading court gossip, ru-

mor, dangerous politics, misinformation and recipes for doped blood. From its origins in the underground press of the cold war, to trash media and DIY punk zines, the Cacophony has found a comfortable habitat online.

Recall the Cacophony—the cannibalistic shadow legion of vampire journalism, owing as much to the gonzo as to the bardic. Listen to the right lyrics, watch the right TV shows—the vampire memeload is sprayed across the many faces of modern media, a bukake of coded atrocity. It's there for the Kindred to read, and the mortals to absorb—it's prepping them, programming them, teaching them what to expect and how to react when a dark stranger comes at them out of the shadows. Torture porn cinema eroticizes wounds and suffocation, machines for crushing bone—the mechanical destruction of the human body, squirting fluids, an orgasm of gore. The old bugbear of snuff film takes on a whole new grue when the victims can literally be killed over and over, complicit in their own execution. Google “Tisiphone”. You'll see the truth of it. Fame can come with glamour and fashion, or at the edge of a straight razor cutting into a nipple, lit by a single wavering forty-watt bulb.

The Cacophony says there are no more taboos. The skulking secrecy of the antique Masquerade creates the reality it's meant to defend against—by clutching those secrets tight, people get the idea there's something worth knowing hidden inside that clenched fist. The Cacophony throws it all out there and screams, “Look! It's all bullshit!” There's something like belief fatigue in a country where millions profess to believe in guardian angels or ghosts—for which there's shitall actual evidence. Shown a video online of a vampire murdering someone for her blood and they'll shrug it off. Viral marketing? A movie clip? Not bad CG blood, but the shaky-cam was fucking annoying.

Vampires are blogging about being vampires, they're writing vampire slashfic, they're posting YouTube videos, they're advertising on Craig's List. They've taken the purloined letter and cut it up, spelling new stories with the words it contained. There's so much bullshit, so much noise that the true signal gets lost, and the 'net savvy tend to sneer at even the most egregious Masquerade breach.

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THAT'S SO FAKE. THAT BLOOD IS CORN SYRUP!
OBSOLETELY, YOU DUMBASS, IT'S NOT REAL.
FUCKING LAME. THE WEREWOLF WAS COOLER.

But if you know how to decode it, there's real content under the static—the undead are chatting online, and they might be chatting about you.

Something of the vampire's characteristic long view creeps into the notoriously ADD Internet. In the Cacophony, the famous are tracked and discussed in surges as new rumor or information reignites dormant threads. Fame among the Damned has never been easier and cheaper. Considering the number of truthy pearls, it's a good thing the age gap keeps most of the really conservative elders offline. The 'shopped images of them blowing each other would make them flip their fucking lids.

And how can any prince control it? Information wants to be free, and really juicy information and dirty secrets want to find a nice cozy brain in which to live. And the damned contrary thing always prefers to live in the brain of a vicious enemy. A few princes have tried to ban the use of the Internet, but the smirking neonates in the back of the room are texting their friends about it while he declares his new law, or blogging it from their iPhones. There are adhocracies that have sprung up online of self-organizing ideologically aligned Kindred who're plotting cross-domain takeovers. It hasn't worked yet, but the princes are right to be afraid. Their subjects are talking and bitching and organizing. Any regent savvy enough to use Google and hip to modern Kindred slang might find details of his personal schedule casually posted to a thread on blutsaiger. Princes are realizing that the guys on the bottom have no interest in keeping secrets for the guys on the top—all that eternal neo-feudal dickery is biting them in the ass.

Yet, there are information backwaters—places without bandwidth, where the cable TV doesn't run. There are refuges for the most backsliding conservatives who ever drank blood—and they guard these backwards domains fiercely, and use their influence to ensure the DSL never runs out that far and the phone service is incremental at best. Isolation was once the ordinary state for a prince's domain, and now something requiring effort to maintain. These isolated pockets get strange and intensely inverted, incestuous—but there's a tattered grace to be found even here. Where ideas have time to get a patina on them before being replaced with fresh ones from the web, fame can remain stable much longer. Make your bones in one of these pocket domains and you'll be remembered there in a hundred years. But that's not where the action is anymore. Old school secrecy and old school predation are the tiger's stripes when the trees have burned—protective adaptations that don't make sense anymore in the changed jungle. Successful predators adapt, change their hunting strategies, learn to hide in new environments. Hyenas and coyotes outnumber lions and wolves, outbreed them and outhunt them. The modern Kindred must be more coyote than wolf.

The online world has become a new hunting ground, and mortal Internet predators have nothing on clued-in Kindred.

SabineDream33	my mom is gone this weekend
	Feisty_Felix what are you doing?
SabineDream33	nothing ::sigh:: everyone's gone for the holidays
	Feisty_Felix your step-sis still staying with her dad?
SabineDream33	yeah
	Feisty_Felix i'm flying solo too. my dad's deployed, and i'm alone since we had to have mandy put down.
SabineDream33	are you doing ok? i remember when my cat got hit
	Feisty_Felix you know. it's tough
SabineDream33	yeah
	Feisty_Felix well, we got each other baby
SabineDream33	i wish we were closer. you're like hours away
	Feisty_Felix you know what? screw this. dad left me some money. would you fly down? tomorrow?
SabineDream33	crazy!
	Feisty_Felix yeah, i do feel like i'm going crazy...
SabineDream33	YES! you only live once, right?

Into this savage digital garden wander the naked and the famous, Kindred who've pulled something crazy enough to get some buzz going loud enough to penetrate the noise. In the crucible of the Internet, their fame is cooked and transmuted by social alchemy, until even they might not recognize their deeds anymore. Fame is only loosely anchored to reality in any case... when turned over to a bunch of inhuman pathological liars, it flies free.

Sometimes Kindred end up famous and they don't have a damned clue why, the sad case of Andrew Cray being a good example. Somehow Andrew became the meme-of-the-week on viichan. A poster called NosfukU2 picked him entirely

at random and decided to make him famous. By the end of the week, his haven had been photographed, his sire sent threatening letters signed "A.C.", his fake SSN reported to Homeland Security, and dozens of animated gifs posted of his blurry startled form being run over by a succession of motor vehicles (including a Weinermobile). Thinking himself the victim of some malicious conspiracy, Andrew struck out against his known enemies. He found himself outmatched, and then burned so badly he fell into torpor where he remains. Andrew's brief kamikaze flight with fame ended in nothing but pain and misery for the clueless vampire. But mad lulz for NosfukU2 and his cronies.

Chapter One: Preeminent Monsters

22

Wolves and Flies

This night's sermon had a target. The target sat in the back, head down, hardly listening. Blissfully unaware. The rest of the congregation all leaned in to listen, their faces lit by the glow from two lit braziers. All eyes watched embers whirl with fear, as if one might alight on hair or clothing and set them all ablaze, those righteous sinners.



Birch pulled the golden mask down over his face and stepped onto the dais.

"A young girl knelt in the confessional," he said, his voice quiet, somber, yet perfectly heard. "She said to the priest, 'Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.'"

The gathered flock ceased to watch the flickering flames. They now had a new subject of fear, and it was Solomon Birch.

"The Father said, 'Tell me your sin, child,' and the girl sighed and said, 'Father, I have committed the sin of vanity. Every night I stand before my mirror and admire myself for hours, and I tell myself how beautiful I am.'"

He had them now. By the throat. By the balls and tits. By their dead hearts.

"The Father peered in through the confessional window, then shook his head. He said, 'My child, I have bad news. That isn't the sin of vanity, it's just a mistake.'"

He paused for laughter, but unsurprisingly, nobody laughed. They seemed confused. Was this a trick? If someone laughed, would he single them out, drag them up, humiliate them in front of the gathered parliament of fiends?

"It's okay to laugh," he said, shrugging. They did not take it as permission; wisely, they understood it as a direction. Mumbled and uncertain chuckles drifted out over the crowd.

"Of course, it's not really a joke," he added, and the laughs and chortles cut short, the door slammed shut on the now-proscribed gaiety. "It's a lesson contained in a joke, yes. The seed of truth in a moment's titter. Vanity is a mistake. Forever a lie. The priest shakes his head because the girl is ugly, not beautiful at all, but understand that it is her *soul* that's ugly, the very core of her being rotten like a maggot-specked apple. She can never be beautiful like a man of God, and the man of God can never be beautiful like God Himself. They say that beauty exists in the eye of the beholder, and that is true. Yet only one beholder matters, and thus only one beholder even *exists*—that is the eye of God, in which we are all foul, meager little motes. Flecks of shit in the dark of the lens."

Birch began to pace, speaking as he did so. "It was the sin of the angels. They sat between God and man, but felt themselves better than both. The castigation was long but certain, and those immortal narcissists tumbled from Heaven's boughs as a result. We are the new angels. We are those between God and man, the sanctioned plague of terrible wolves and flies. We must never try to climb above our position. To do so is to be struck down. But to be humble and know our place? That earns us reward."



Pope felt Birch's eyes on him, but he kept his head low, as if he weren't paying attention. The Bishop's double-standard washed over him and threatened to suck him under, an undertow of sewage disguised a baptism of righteousness.

The rest of the crowd swayed with Birch's every word, fool heads pivoting on oiled bearings; they thought this sermon was for them. Which was, in itself, a kind of vanity.

But Pope wondered: was it truly a sin of vanity, a mark of hubris, if he *knew* that the sermon was about him? Did that not only confirm his coming power? Was Pride even a sin when it was confirmed, held aloft and made true?

Birch thought he was teaching a lesson. And he was. Just not the one he'd hoped for.



God's Chosen Monster: Solomon Birch

"I am right because God makes me right."

Background

Two things define Chicago's infamous Bishop: the courage of certainty and the certainty of cowardice. Bishop Solomon Birch walks a wavering line between the two. On the one hand, he recognizes that he is truly Sanctified in the literal meaning of the word: God has chosen him, and he is an acting agent of the divine among man and monster. His convictions are so intense that he is provided a great deal of profound courage. If everything he does is God's demand, and every action is the righteous one, then he will gladly step into the lion's mouth and tear the beast apart from the inside. On this, he has no fear. And yet, forever within him is a nagging question, a sharp and scratching hangnail that begs to be picked at, to be ripped and made bleed. The question is, put plainly, *What if I'm wrong?* For Birch, it's the elephant in the room; he never acknowledges the question, never shines a light into that dark corner. Ignorance of it doesn't make it go away, however. It seems only to amplify the fear he has, the cowardice that sits within him like a giant hungry mouth waiting to be fed. His cowardice, unexamined, is therefore forever a certainly, a grim trap into which he steps nightly.

It drives him, though. It is perhaps this dichotomy that keeps Birch on the edge, never staid or content, always pushing to confirm his divinely-inspired judgment. The question remains, though: how did Birch get to be so certain, and yet so scared?

Spare Parts

Birch was a meaningless child in an unloving family, father working Chicago's bloody "scrapyards," mother a seamstress, and six brothers and sisters dead from plague-type illnesses (tuberculosis, cholera, flu). Birch himself worked his small hands to the bone at a young age, plying leather and stitching canvas before eventually settling into an unsatisfying apprenticeship making false limbs (forever necessary in a city like Chicago, where men lost limbs daily in the brutal workplaces of slaughterhouse and factory).

It was this trade that earned him the attention of a murderous Daeva, the devious Amelia Cook, a vicious killer who enjoyed the deaths of her victims as much as

she enjoyed feeding from them. She sought an apprentice of sorts, someone who could help her further craft the posed displays of her bloodless victims. Birch, she decided, was perfect. She'd kill. She'd take their limbs. And Birch would replace them with mockeries of life—false limbs made of hard wood or brittle twig, of rusted hook or kinked wire. She made him her thrall. Then she made him her child.

He didn't help her kill, though that was certainly her eventual plan. Birch was largely ignorant of the Danse Macabre. Amelia kept him on a short leash, limiting his exposure to the nocturnal society of the Damned. That wouldn't last. Eventually, the Prince sent authorities to deal with Amelia for contravening the Traditions time and time again. Carthian enforcers put her to the sun.

That was Birch's introduction to the rest of the city's Damned. They brought him before them, and just as soon as he'd found them out they kicked him to the bottom rung of the hierarchical ladder, casting him out in spirit if not in name.

Beset By Enemies, Real and Imagined

And so it came that Birch's heart hardened against his Requiem. He had no friends, and found the Covenants to be circles of self-interested, backbiting fiends. Solomon grew paranoid. He was certain others were after him. That one night they'd come for him much like they had come for Amelia, even though she was ten times the monster he was. They'd leave him for the sun or exile him to the margins, and that would be that. As a result, he firmed up his certainty that one day he would no longer be allowed to walk the earth, and he readied for that reality.

The truth of it came from somewhere he didn't expect: vampire hunters. Outcast from nocturnal society, Birch was like the weak member of the herd straying from the margins, making easy pickings for those with gnashing teeth. The hunters masqueraded as—or perhaps truly were—members of the United States government, claiming to have connections to the Treasury Department. They put the chase to him, harrying him the way wolves might harry a lost lamb. They almost had him, too—bright lights, batons breaking bones, a torch sweeping over his head to

keep him cowed (and then pressed between his shoulder blades so that he could smell his dead skin cooking).

Frenzy, for all the horrors it brings, is not without its uses—Solomon saw red, then remembers little but scrambling up a fire escape on all fours, agents giving chase and soon giving up. Somehow, he ended up on the cold floor of a warehouse. Skin burned, bones broken, the Beast receded into its corner, leaving him for really and truly dead.

*By The Grace of God,
& Am a Monster*

It might've been true, had he not been tracked to the warehouse by a coterie of Sanctified. They came to him, and they offered what nobody had: honesty, and a taste of mercy. They were not *kind*, not exactly. But they were forthright. They offered him advice. They helped him hunt and heal, but admonished him to keep the burn mark between his shoulder blades as a scar to remind him of what being lost and reckless can cause. Then, when all was said and done, they left him to his Requiem, noting that their door was always open.

It wasn't long before he entered. Just to listen, he said. They did him a solid; he'd do them one in return. Show his face then hit the bricks.

But what they offered wasn't more doublespeak; they painted a picture of the Damned that sat satisfied in Solomon's gut. To be a divinely-sanctioned predator? A righteous plague upon humanity? To still be cursed, but because it was the will of the Lord and not a random horror visited upon him? These were beautiful ideas. They matched his pride, inflating his ego with much-needed faith.

Solomon had found his home. Baptized in a rain of blood, he became Sanctified.

That was fifty years ago. In those five decades, Birch has shot up through the ranks like mercury in a thermometer on a sweltering evening. How? What marks his accelerated rise in a society that's known so often for its relative indolence and stagnation? Birch became the backbone of the city's Sanctified. Previously weak in the knee and without solid guidance, Birch offered a hard-line interpretation of the Testament, assuming a mantle of ingrained righteousness. He took to the pulpit not with hoots of fire and brimstone, but with tangled arguments whose threads swiftly formed a rope—many who listened easily hanged themselves in his words. Put another way, most in the congregation were unaware they were buying what he was selling until they were already sold. It didn't hurt that word travels fast in such a tight, incestuous society.



Even those outside the Second Estate came to see him at the dais. He was charismatic and unpredictable. He was cruel yet didn't seem to enjoy it. He confirmed what they all wanted to hear: they were *all* God's monsters, and now it was time to start acting like it.

Schisms and Unifications

Birch has endured many schisms within his local Covenant, many instigated by those who seek to unseat him. Birch's... coziness with the Prince of the city (having a partial Vinculum binding him to the Invictus Lord) was one such issue, as a rising ride of resentment grew out of fear that the Bishop would become a gauzy-eyed yes-man for the First Estate's doctrines. Of course, Birch's fundamentalist approach provided him a bulletproof argument—he was free to commit deeds that went against his own principles without them becoming a double standard because, as it turns out, God made it all okay. When you're backed by unswerving faith, *everything* becomes okay, even those things that would be treachery when performed by anybody else.



BREEDING THRALLS

God has touched certain bloodlines of man, Birch believes. Some humans are simply better than others; that's just the way it is (and no humans are better than the Damned, not ever).

As such, Birch is a proponent of eugenics, and does his part by shepherding the breeding process of a number of ghoul families, the most prominent of which are the Brigmans (with whom he dwells in their ancestral home). He chooses when and whom they marry. He determines whether a child is allowed to come to term (and if that child is allowed to live to be a teenager, and then an adult). The truly special become his precious ghouls, serving him in whatever way they can (applying makeup, dressing him, satisfying his hunger for blood, satisfying his other strange appetites, even killing when he asks).

It must be noted that, in a strange way, Birch feels he's preparing for a time when vampires simply aren't needed anymore. God will reclaim the Damned from this cradle of sin. He does not believe vampires are predators sanctioned to feed as part of some cosmic food chain—he believes their presence forces humanity to be better, more spiritually healthy. Like leeches, vampires are draining the sickness from the body. That is part of what Birch is doing with these ghoul families: he's making them stronger so they can be the sacred bloodlines serving humanity as righteous leaders. Then again, the other part is that he just likes to tinker with things, pushing his mastery upon them as he does everything.



Plus, the Covenant knows how Birch deals with growing schisms. Those participating in a coming coup will not fare well. Oh, he won't destroy them. But he'll help them destroy themselves. He'll humiliate them. He'll twist them up so badly they'll stab blindly in the darkness, their treacherous knives finding only one another. He'll make them wish they were dead (and one rumor suggests he even sends along a hand-whittled oaken stake with a lovingly penned note asking them politely to exit this immortal coil, thank you very much).

The one thing Birch and his fundamentalist Sanctified haven't been able to do is unite the city under the unified pennons of Longinus. His approach isn't deft enough, not yet. He refuses to leave the door open for anybody to get what they want, and that's a problem. Given that the Covenants are all about their own unique ideologies, he refuses to keep a light on for their bullshit ideals. He won't suffer fools, but that's unfortunately the one thing that *would* probably help him bring others to Longinus, for the city is home to many a fool.

At present, his new plan is this: cause enough of a ruckus in the city that coming to God can be the only rational answer. Faith will save them, and he will lead them to it, but sometimes even the most pliable of horses needs a spur in the flank to get moving in the right direction. Birch doesn't yet know what kind of event or crisis will bring the naïve flock into his open arms, but he's got a number of ideas.

Solomon Birch in the World of Darkness

Birch is connected to the larger World of Darkness in a number of ways. First, as the creator of a number of ghoul families (see sidebar), he has human agents who can serve as gateways to mortal (or even mage) characters.

Second, Birch is the target of a number of hunter groups, chief among them the government-sanctioned Task Force: VALKYRIE. This group has long had Birch on its "red list" of criminals, and would love nothing more than the chance to take him down. But it's underfunded, and it seems someone within its ranks has ties to the nocturnal society of the Damned, and maybe even to Birch himself—because all efforts to bring operations to bear against the Bishop are diverted at the moment of truth.

Third, Birch has no problem utilizing other monsters to get what he wants. He recognizes that the Damned do not exist in a vacuum—so many of his kind are willfully ignorant of the things that walk the streets of the World of Darkness, but Birch isn't. He'll reach out to whatever element will get him what he wants. A pack of werewolves? A cabal of power-hungry legacy mages? A cell of God-fearing hunters?

Personality

Birch, with his lean, ropy body lined with puffy scars (most of them inflicted by his own hand), doesn't care what you think. Birch cares only what *he* thinks. Oh, he'll listen to another person. He'll let her speak, giving the illusion of respect and due diligence. And then he'll take her words, casually fashion them into a razor, and slit her throat with her own argument.

For the most part, he has a calm demeanor, but that hides a violent temper—though one that is sparked only when he's pushed to the upper limits or otherwise made to suffer humiliations at the hands of the great unwashed. He doesn't take well to such indignities, and even a small one (like being interrupted) can bring the Beast to the surface for just a moment, enough time to hopefully put the fear of God in he who would dare to make such an error.

The thing to remember about Solomon Birch is that he's always right. Even when he's wrong, he's wrong because it is the right thing. His doctrine—even when he breaks it into tiny pieces—is always the righteous course, and this is what makes him most unpredictable. His enemies forever step into the trap of assuming Birch will act one way because that is what Birch tells everyone else to do. It never holds water, that bucket. Birch will do whatever he wants, and he'll call it—and truly believe it to be—God's will.

Secrets

Birch's biggest secret is, as already mentioned, that sucking maw inside his chest that sometimes pauses to whisper its grave doubts, casting a broad shadow that makes Birch quietly fear that God isn't real, or worse that God *is* real and hasn't chosen him for jack shit and that, at the end of the night, Birch is just a fucking awful monster with only the illusion of divine mandate to keep him going. He won't look this fear in the eye, and if ever that secret bubbled up out of him ("What, Birch? Afraid that he's *wrong?*"), it would be the certain end of his reign within the Covenant.

The other secret is that, despite the precepts that ask that the Damned all be spared so they may convert, Solomon is himself an unmerciful assassin. He knows he mustn't usher the rest of his Covenant mates into that dark breach, and so he steps into it himself. When the time comes that someone in the city *truly* stands in the way of his plans and is a slight against God and shows no signs of ever bending to the will of the Lord and the Dark Father, Birch steps in. And he ushers them into final death.

Sure, he makes it seem as if someone else did it (the Carthians attacked the Circle, or vice versa, or maybe the Brood's in town), and he admonishes his own Covenant for ever suggesting that sometimes the best course of action is to put others down. But, in the end, this is Birch being Birch: he preaches one thing and then does another, all with a heart full of God's own complexity.

FUCK CHICAGO? FUCK CHICAGO!

Technically, Solomon Birch operates in the World of Darkness version of Chicago, but it's a good bet that *your* game isn't set in Chicago. Maybe it's set in New Orleans (**Vampire**) or Detroit (**Promethean**) or Philadelphia (**Hunter**). Birch fits in any of these cities; he's a vibrant and dangerous fundamentalist personality who can bring his conflict to any city in America or abroad.

Rumors

"You've seen him fiddling with things. The gears or hands of a pocketwatch, maybe, or an archaic combo lock. Then he pretends he's behind the times, that God doesn't give a rat's dick about computers or email or Google. It's a lie. I heard it from one of the Brigman girls—Birch's hooked up. Got an aircard or something on a laptop, and is really savvy with twenty-first-century gear. Don't think he's not listening. Because he is."

Entirely accurate. Birch never really says he's a fool regarding technology, but he certainly gives off a certain Luddite air. Given his early human background, he does like to tinker with old gadgets like pocketwatches, but that extends (to the ignorance of many) into the modern technological realm. He's good with email and search engines, and knows that some vampires (the idiots) post "protected" blogs upon which he keeps tabs.

"From one of God's children to the next, hear my words: Birch is planning something big. Something to bring us all together. It shall be glorious."

Birch isn't planning a particular *thing*, not yet. But he's reaching out. He's shaking hands with and doing favors for factions the rest of the Damned don't even care to recognize (see "Solomon Birch in the World of Darkness," above). Despite giving the appearance of having some great plan (and he usually does), at this point he's relying upon improvisation to carry his ministry forward. He'll know the moment he sees it—and he'll take full advantage of whatever it is. (Storytellers, pay heed: that means if your characters do something that destabilizes the city, Birch might take full advantage of that, not caring whether it helps or hurts the characters.)

"We all know the Brigman family is his pet project. But Birch isn't the type of man to bet on one horse. He's got other families out there. He thinks they're going to replace us when the time comes that we've done our job. Is that how you want the Covenant to act? As if we're trying to urge ourselves toward predatory obsolescence?"

The Bishop does have other families out there—two, actually. The Sutherlands are a family far outside the city at its most rural edge, a backwater clan of isolationist survival-junkies. They know Birch because he visits them once a year to approve their breeding stock and

marriage plans (and he recognizes that they're not likely to be the God-chosen human bloodline; mostly, he's just fucking around and seeing what happens, given that God sometimes works in random ways). The second family is the Decaturs, a local African-American family that's long been a part of the Southside. Birch's hand there is almost entirely invisible; he works with them through proxies and applies a distant touch. When he does get close, he does so with liberal use of Daeva Disciplines to fuddle their minds and ensure they don't know what's truly going on.

STORY HOOKS

- Birch is looking for just the right opportunity to make his move and assure his Covenant's obvious supremacy. At present, he doesn't want to get his hands dirty, so he might come to the characters and give them carte blanche ability to open the door for him. Problem is, whatever they do won't be good enough, and he'll eventually step in. That's not good for them.
- In the grand scheme of things, Birch isn't *on paper* all that powerful. He's not an elder, and yet he's a major mover-and-shaker within Damned society. What does he do when a bigger fish comes swimming along and tries to take that from him? It'll be another schism, and one from which he'll have a hard time wriggling free.
- Someone might whisper in his ear that diablerie is the way to go. And it might be. If he wants a quick route to power, that'll do it. Yes, sure, diablerie is bad, a sin, it's horrible. But Birch will do things that go against predicted dogma under the auspice that God allows him to do them; it's a slippery slope, and Birch is on it. Who would he choose? Can he be turned from such a course of action?

Solomon Birch

Alias: The Black Bishop

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2 (Theban Sorcery), Computer 2, Crafts 3, Occult 1, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3 (Kindred Physiology), Drive 2, Firearms 2, Weaponry 3 (Staking), Stealth 2

Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation 2 (The Faithful), Persuasion 2 (The Faithful), Socialize 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: City Status 4, Covenant Status 4, Disarm 2, Resources 1, Haven (Security 4, Location 2, Size 4), Herd 3, Resources 4, Retainer 4

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 4 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Faith. Is Solomon's faith in God, or is his faith in himself as an agent of God?

Vice: Pride. Solomon's way is the perfect way. Birch believes his wisdom is flawless, or near to it.

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Vigor 3, Theban Sorcery 2

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Blood Scourge, Vitae Reliquary, Curse of Babel, Liar's Plague

VARIANCES

Birch's stats here are close to, but not quite the same as those found in *World of Darkness: Chicago*. Feel free to use either set of traits to determine what Birch is like in your game.

Legacy

Solomon Birch is the keeper of the Golden Mask. This item is detailed below.

The Golden Mask

Birch possesses an ornate ceremonial mask made of solid gold (which means it necessitates substantial strength to wear it, as solid gold is far heavier than one might expect). It affixes to the Bishop's head via two leather straps (long blotched with old stains, stains that are surely blood).

Birch uses the Mask as a symbol of his power in the Covenant, and claims that its power is for the Sanctified alone. Whoever controls the Covenant wears the Golden Mask; it's that simple.

It's something of a self-fulfilling prophecy, because the Mask itself radiates an aura of authority, conferring a preternatural potency to one's words as they are spoken. The origins of the Golden Mask differ depending upon whom you ask: Birch has in the past claimed it is an Artifact of the Dark Father himself, and some translations of the Testament seem to back this up. Others, though, point to the styling of the Mask and note it's quite clearly

Greek in origin, and if Longinus *did* have it, he took it from a Greek. One popular and perhaps lunatic rumor that gets bandied about is that somehow, Longinus "stole" the Golden Mask from a pagan deity like Zeus to confirm Christ's supremacy on Earth.

Birch is either wrong or lying about the Mask's true purpose. He claims it's a Sanctified relic that is bound only to the "true" members of the Covenant, but that's false information. In fact, any vampire can wear it and gain the powers of the Golden Mask.

To use the Mask, one must first don the Mask, which necessitates three dots in Strength to wear (the mask is easily thirty pounds; while that's light for someone to grab with her hands, it's heavy when worn on the front of the face). Then, one must spend a point of Vitae; the blood literally seeps out of the face and into the Golden Mask itself.

For the following scene, the vampire character may double the Social bonus that comes as part of her Covenant Status Merit. It works only upon those of her Covenant, of course, but her words confirm the truth of that Covenant by dint of her speaking them through the Mask's downturned, almost-screaming mouth.

GRIM PLANS

Does Birch plan everything a hundred steps down the line? It seems he does. But therein lies the dark magnificence of Solomon Birch, because, no, he doesn't plan that far ahead. Yes, he's imagined the path the future will take, but Birch is a snake, not a shark—he doesn't just ram his head against things until they yield to his expected desires and chomping teeth. He can fit through small spaces, creep up in the grass, attack from many angles.

Or, better still, think of him as a mad-eyed jazz musician, listening to the cruel syncopations of the Requiem; Birch simply inserts his music where he feels it can, and must, go. His is a callous riff.



The Drowned Poacher: Billy Reed

"Don't tell me where I can't go."

Based on approved 1 yr lease

Stunning Quayside Apt
2 bdrms, furnished, modern bldg. Allocated parking, fitted kitchen. - £238,000- No canvassers. Quick sale needed due to family bereavement.

Quality Oversized Apt
1, 2, 3 bdrm apts. North, Central &

RIVER PLUNGE VICTIM'S BODY NOT YET FOUND.

Police and Coastguard are still searching for the body of a 29-year-old man who fell from the bridge early Saturday. Witnesses claim to have seen the man, who has not been named, in an altercation with another individual near the exit of the Bar 13 nightclub. Anyone witnessing anything suspicious in the area between 2 and 4 should contact the police.

According to Chief Inspector Anderson of the Police Marine Unit, "This marks the sixth death this year in the waterside districts, and once again alcohol seems to have played its part. How many more young people will be injured or killed before the nightclubs begin to act responsibly?"

Date: 26th FEB

Time of Incident: 03:00 APPROX

PAGE	DTG RELEASE TIME			PRECEDENCE		CLASS	OFFICER	AMP	CIC	ORG-MISC IDENT	
	DATE	TIME	MONTH	YR	AC1						IND1
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ROOM	Officer: THOMAS NEWTON										

Description: COMPLETING THIRD SCHEDULED PATROL OF SITE, OFFICER REACHED SHED 3 WHEN HEARD DISTURBANCE FROM DIRECTION OF PUMPING STATION. ON INV, DISCOVERED DOOR TO G25/A HAD BEEN FORCED. WET BAREFOOT FOOTPRINTS LEADING FROM DOOR TO RIVERSIDE FENCE. RAZORWIRE ON FENCE HAD BEEN CUT.

RETURNING TO G25/A, DISCOVERED WATER ON FLOOR AND SIGNS OF DISTURBANCE. GRILLE ON PUMP HAS BEEN REMOVED. NO VISIBLE DAMAGE INSIDE.

WILL INCREASE PATROLS IN AREA FOR THREE WEEKS.

Background

There's something in the water.

"Billy Reed" is a name elders in the United Kingdom are getting used to hearing. Young Kindred, angry at being told they cannot go to this or that place or that the best hunting grounds are off-limits to all except the Prince's favored allies, wonder aloud whether they should "pull a Billy." Rumor spreads through the tentative lines of communication between cities that one fief is on the verge of collapse, its Prince humiliated nightly by a poacher he can't catch. No one admits to being the city so afflicted—to do so would run the risk of seeming vulnerable, with all the problems that entails—and those who look into the matter discover there

are "Billies" in at least ten cities: the poacher has copycats. He's celebrated, a folk hero to rebellious Kindred and an embarrassment to his betters who cannot admit how much of a problem he is without losing face but desperately need to remove him all the same. If they're not capitalizing upon their fellows' failure to do so, that is.

Of course, sadly, few are as skilled at Billy's game as Billy himself. All too often, a Sheriff and his Hound bring a rebellious young Kindred to heel, drag him in front of the Prince, and the domain as a whole crows over the inventive punishments the eldest among them devise for him. One or two have even claimed to be Billy himself—only to have the original show up elsewhere, with a new approach and new elders to torment.

Trouble in the North

The UK's industrial cities were built upon commerce driven by water—docklands, quays, shipping canals and harbors are regular features. In the late twentieth century, the industry went away and these areas were abandoned, declared Barrens by the native Kindred and left alone. In modern nights, there is a fashion for regeneration. Canal-sides throw up expensive apartment blocks. Quaysides become nightspots and docks the new homes and playgrounds of the young urban wealthy. From London's Docklands to Newcastle's Quayside, formerly abandoned parts of town are now teeming Racks. The Kindred with feeding rights guard them jealously against interlopers.

Billy was a street thug and wide boy, ranging all over his hometown since childhood and terrorizing the inhabitants with petty violence since not much later. No one told him where he couldn't go, at least until he was Embraced by a Gangrel neonate trying to build up influence. Billy did not take well to the political aspects of the Requiem; being a vampire, he thought, meant feeding, and his sire lacked the experience to stop him from inadvertently poaching.

When Billy and his sire were brought in to see the Prince, the scale of the problem emerged—Billy's Embrace had not been sanctioned. Guilty of creating another vampire without permission and guilty-by-proxy of poaching, Billy's sire saw the sun. Billy himself was made an example of: banned from feeding from or setting foot in even the scraps of common territory and blacklisted from Kindred society such that no Covenant would take him. It was hoped he would tire of eking an existence in the Barrens and leave, or one day be useful to a Kindred willing to give him scraps from the table.

Feeding Strategy

Billy's two strengths stood him in good stead—he was determined to go where he damn well pleased and he was entirely unused to Kindred society. He'd fallen into trouble for doing what came naturally for a vampire without regard for the convoluted society the Kindred had built for themselves, but that same primitive response and lack of



socialization with others of his kind led to a fresh view on things. It is assumed the Kindred will take a haven, carve out a little fief in their neo-feudal hells and hide their unliving natures.

Billy saw the need for secrecy, sure, but his dead body was an asset.

The water was dark, thick with silt and no longer stirred by shipping. The sun did not penetrate the depths. And prey—inebriated prey, uninhibited prey—spent their nights *right next* to it. Billy had a body that resisted rotting, lungs with no need for air and nothing to lose.

And so now he spends his days buried in the silt, weighed down by concrete blocks and old rope. At night he swims the waterways, watching for a likely target. He has nothing better to do with his time than feed and maintain his nests, so can afford to wait out a few nights between feedings if the moment isn't exactly right. Sometimes the kine come to him—showing off, drunk, climbing over barriers—and sometimes he has to go to them, overpower them and get them into the water.

The Sheriff can't find him—he has a dozen hidey-holes and sleeping places, from submerged drains to the remaining areas of industrial ruin on the banks. Sometimes he keeps prey alive in the Barrens using disused factories on the waterfront, or areas of pipe and sewer unable to be accessed except underwater. His kills are put down to misadventure and the delay in finding bodies he keeps “fresh” is not unusual—the waterways can take days to give up their dead, if at all. He barely speaks, needing no other Kindred's support and not considering prey worth talking to.

And, entirely without his encouragement, Billy has become famous.

Prince of Poachers

Everyone likes a Robin Hood figure—even the Kindred aren't immune to the romantic ideal of a renegade hiding in the wilderness next to civilization and tweaking the noses of the ruling class. Billy doesn't give money to the poor, but his nightly survival is a glaring slap in the face of the Prince who finds himself unable to do anything about it. Nothing but a full Blood Hunt would land the “Prince of Poachers,” and to call one would be an admission that the situation has grown beyond control.

The Prince in such a situation has to spend his nights fending off attempts to give his destabilized regime that final push while Primogen and Prisci enjoy the relative freedom the Prince's preoccupation gives them and don't want Billy to be caught, allowing the Prince to recover.

So it goes on. The Prince looks like a fool and Billy looks like a hero.

The Best Form of Flattery

It is now impossible to say which city it is that Billy inhabits, so popular have his exploits become. So many young Kindred have, upon facing their elders' commands to stay out of those elders' territories, “pulled a Billy” and opted for the unlife aquatic that reports of “fish men” are spreading around the UK. The Kindred in each fief in turn try to hide the specifics of their own “Billy problem,” leading anyone trying to follow up rumors of a creature that lurks in the water and snatches unwary revelers to find traces leading... pretty much everywhere. Gloucester, London, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester, Cardiff, Bristol—Billy could be in any of them.

The numbers of deaths-by-misadventure, suicides and murders involving the waterfront districts grows steadily, thanks in part to the Billy Reed phenomena, and has now passed the point at which it's entirely believable. Reports of water-bound monsters are becoming too common for the Kindred to completely suppress, and people—police, hunters, other supernatural creatures—are starting to notice.

Personality

Billy's first reaction to anyone discovering him is to flee. He attacks only those who insist upon following him as he makes his escape into the water, leading them into territory (usually underwater) in which he has the home ground advantage. Once there, he attacks brutally and quickly, trying to overpower the interloper long enough to make his escape.

Billy's reputation as a creature comfortable in his isolation from both mortal and Kindred society is borne out by his demeanor; Billy doesn't socialize. He's dug his well and wants nothing more than to stay in it and be left alone, needing no one else. Should anyone go through the long process of finding him and get past his immediate response to try to flee, though, the man he used to be will gradually surface. He remains wary and gruff at first, barely speaking in monosyllabic grunts, but with enough time to become comfortable he'll start to warm up and tell war stories with the air of a hard man in a pub telling tales of his own prowess, narrow escapes and things he's seen from his unique vantage point.

Secrets

Billy has no single haven—rather, he spends his days in a range of semi-temporary “nests” he erects as needed. At any given time, he'll have six to twelve of them ready to be used, depending upon which is closer when the sun begins to rise. Some are flooded basements in the Barrens, some are simple weights and tarps on the bottom of the waterways. Should a site be discovered, he simply abandons it and moves on rather than risk a confrontation.

Separate to his sleeping-places, though, are his stashes. Some things, like wearing clothes, are hard to give up, but the nature of his Requiem tends to destroy personal possessions. The stashes are deep in the Barrens, or in dry spaces carefully selected for their secrecy. In these Billy keeps clothes taken from charity dumps, spare materials for building sleeping shelters and souvenirs—things he’s taken from kills after they caught his eye. These take much more time and effort to accumulate, and he’ll defend them with far greater ferocity than his nests, even to the point of frenzy.

Rumors

“Reed took a Lick last month from outside that new club on the waterfront, yeah? No surprise. But he didn’t come onto land to grab her—he hypnotized her. Wonder which idiot taught him to do that, eh? Maybe the Sheriff wants to know, too.”

Billy is, by common knowledge among the Kindred, a Gangrel. Yet he has started to use the Dominate Discipline to hypnotize prey into the water, and his ability to smell blood in the water is surely based upon Auspex. This means someone is teaching him Disciplines he shouldn’t have and there will be hell to pay when the Prince figures out who that is. The Kindred of his city whisper that he was taught the Disciplines as payment for services rendered; following who might have needed something from the waterways might lead the Hounds to their culprit.

“There’s good fishing down there at the waste-ground, unless you run into the mob dumping something. Yeah, there are signs up, but it’s just to cover themselves for kids falling in the river. Just don’t go at night. Trust me. Safety in numbers.”

The mortals of the World of Darkness do, deep down, realize that something is wrong. Billy has not gone unnoticed. Security guards, bouncers, fishing enthusiasts and criminals disposing of things (and people) in the water might catch a glimpse of something in the water and shy away. It becomes something unspoken, a tacit

acknowledgement that lingering near the water alone at night is a good way to never come home.

“Reed is a resource, like any other neonate specialized in one territory, and resources should be exploited regardless of our ruler’s edicts. You’re telling me that if I need to know something about the deal at the marina, I shouldn’t ask the guy who’ll know?”

It happens. Ancillae and older neonates looking to get the drop on their rivals think they’re being original by tapping Billy as an informant. The common wisdom is that they have many things he would want, and he’ll be grateful to gradually earn his way into Kindred society. In truth, Billy’s wants are not something anyone other than the Prince can give, and those who do go looking for him have a hard time at negotiations. The rumors about him being taught Disciplines (see above) are a result of the few successes.

“There aren’t as many of him as people think. You heard that they have a Billy in the next Masked city down the coast? It’s the same guy as ours. He travels.”

Billy has the capacity to travel upriver or skirt the coast from harbor towns. The UK’s canal network may be crumbling and silted, but it still connects cities up and down the country. If he put his mind to it Billy could be a very successful Nomad, skipping from town to town. An often-related rumor is that the “Billy Reed” figures in cities close to one another meet up, compare notes and organize. Another is that Billy has used the canal network to move on when the heat in one city becomes too much; though given his reasons for the initial rebellion, the “true” Billy is unlikely to have done this.

“It was us. We made the first Billy when we agreed to ostracize that Gangrel fledgling. I know we’re not supposed to say that, especially around the Prince, but it was us. Thing is, though... we destroyed him. He lasted about a year before the Hound landed him and showed him the sun. But it keeps happening; how do you kill a legend?”

STORY HOOKS

- Flotsam and Jetsam: Something important—drugs, guns, money or something altogether more darkly exotic—was being couriered through Billy’s city. The courier met with an unfortunate end and the item is now in a place of pride in Billy’s stash. The owners are in town, causing trouble. If the missing merchandise can be traced to the quayside, can the characters get it back?
- Gone Fishing: Billy has finally pushed the Prince too far. He’s taken, fed from and killed a favorite socialite, and now a Blood Hunt has been called over the wishes of the Primogen. Will the characters side with their ruler, or help Billy just long enough to give the Prince the final shove from his position?
- Spawning Season: So far, Billy and his imitators are isolated cases. Should he (or they) begin to Embrace, though, the number of sightings will increase beyond the ability of the Kindred to maintain the Masquerade. Characters could be mortal investigators, Kindred attempting to suppress the sightings or other supernatural beings caught up in the gradually increasing chaos.

What if the original Billy were given Final Death? Would anyone notice? Would the imitators stop? Those princes suffering from Billy imitators are forced to admit, even if only to themselves, that the problem will continue to occur no matter what they do.

Billy Reed

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 3 (Lock Picking), Stealth 4 (Escape), Survival 3 (Water), Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 4 (Secret Routes), Subterfuge 2

Merits: Danger Sense, Fame 2, Haven 1

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 4 (Narcissism (Mild), Paranoia (Mild))

Virtue: Fortitude. Billy was made to endure, and has survived his Requiem for far longer than anyone would give him odds on the strength of his determination alone.

Vice: Envy. Billy wants what's been denied him. He poaches not only for survival, but because he was told he could not have the kine in his hunting grounds. The thought of places he used to go as a mortal being someone else's property cuts him deeper than the Kindred attempting to starve him out of the city.

Health: 9

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Protean 3, Resistance 3, Celerity 1, Vigor 3, Dominate 2, Auspex 1

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Claws	1	Aggravated	N/A	+2 Athletics for swimming

Legacy

Protean ●●●

Variant – Claws of the Deep

Billy's use of Protean 3 adds 2 dice to Swimming-related rolls rather than Climbing ones, as his claws have webbed membranes between them.

Firearms

Avoiding bullets by ducking into a lake is a time-honored tradition in the movies, and characters may be tempted to bring guns to a Billy-hunt or try it themselves if in a tight spot. The truth depends upon circumstances and whether the firearm is fired into or under the water. Firing from the air into water can cause some bullets to shatter depending upon the angle at which they hit the surface, and the projectile certainly won't travel as far. If a weapon, through deliberate design or happy coincidence, can be fired underwater at all, the bullet will have its effective range vastly reduced again. Firing a weapon with air in the barrel underwater can cause the weapon to explode. Some types of firing pin cannot overcome water resistance. Other firearms *will* fire, but only once, as they cannot then eject the casing.

To condense all these factors into the Storytelling system, assume firearms attacks made into or under water have their Damage reduced by 1 for every three yards of range. The surface of the water counts as 2 points of Armor, and the target can apply his defense against the attack. At the Storyteller's discretion, weapons not specifically designed to work underwater may require an Intelligence + Firearms roll (again at -3 dice) or break. On a dramatic failure, the weapon breaks in a manner hazardous to the user. Even then, semi and fully automatic weapons jam on a die roll of a 1 or 2 (1-3 for short burst, 1-4 for medium burst, 1-5 for long burst) as the weapon cannot eject spent casings.

The Digital Diva: Nimue

"Oh God - another rainy night. I think that sometimes,
if you listen to the rain long enough, you confuse it with your own heartbeat,
and the whole world seems to be sighing along with you.

Do you understand what I mean?
Please reply. I don't know what I'll do if you don't."



Icons of oblivion
Take forms into
my hands
Twisted writings
As all around blurs
and merges black
I forbid myself to
create any further
But the creation
holds me like a
puppet
Pantomime
without shape
- Love Lies
Bleeding

NIMUE



[Nimue's photos \(36\)](#)

[Send a message to Nimue](#)

Background

Fourteen-year-old Amanda Fenderwood wrote poetry, drew landscapes and fancied herself the next coming of Virginia Woolf. She graduated middle school to the smiles and applause of her high-minded academic parents, and prepared to take high school by storm.

Six months later, fifteen-year-old Amanda Fenderwood lay in her bathtub a razorblade poised above her wrists. High school had thrown her down to the low rung of the totem pole. Teased, pushed, ostracized and tormented for a body she had never until then thought homely, awkward or overweight, Amanda's grades quickly plunged from As to Ds, much to the bafflement of her teachers. She threw out her poetry books and art supplies, threw up a wall that kept her parents out and found refuge only in the company of Isadora, an older girl who had wrapped the mantle of outcast around herself like a queen's robes. Amanda knew only Isadora understood her pain, and when Isadora finally moved from jokes and suggestions to an outright plan for a double suicide, Amanda could find few reasons to refuse.

First Release

The suicide, however, turned out to be a sham. Isadora was vampire with designs upon all that "potential" Amanda's teachers kept talking about, and when Amanda closed her eyes to the sound of her own dripping blood, she opened them again to the world of the Kindred. While Isadora tried her best to introduce her new child to the comrades in her Carthian cell, she found that Amanda's social awkwardness survived the Embrace, now compounded by a healthy dose of trauma. Her fellows had little patience for Amanda's halting speech and bumbling manner, and soon enough took to ignoring her entirely.

Torn away from the life she knew, scared to return to her family or school, Amanda eventually gravitated to the computers at the Carthian safehouse and began whiling away her nights online. Her blog-reading and posting became obsessive, and, learning from all she saw and heard, Amanda slowly began to access all those creative energies that had lain dormant, reinventing herself online as the Internet goddess Nimue.

Amanda Relaunched

As Nimue, Amanda left behind serfdom in the real world to establish herself as a queen in the online one. Nimue's various pages soon drew hundreds of daily hits, as teens across the nation and around the world began reading and responding to her blog and exchanging videos. Through florid purple prose Nimue described the pain of her unlife as a vampire, lovingly detailing every vicissitude of the Kindred politics happening all around her. It was amazing—just because she was silent or one room away at meetings and parties, everyone assumed she was insensate. But Amanda heard and saw everything, and as Nimue revealed it all. Most of her readers, of course, took all this talk of blood-drinking and such to be either fiction or metaphor. And as for those who knew the truth... well, even some of them became Nimue's faithful readers

and posters. Nimue's self-proclaimed role as prophet for the disaffected touched something in online users both living and undead.

Nimue had a preternatural talent for speaking to this dispossessed. Most teenagers feel alienated and misunderstood, and Nimue offered nothing more complex than her simple acknowledgement, a message of "you are not alone" that has been a mainstay tactic of cults for centuries. It also works surprisingly well upon Kindred, who, no matter how powerful or well-connected they grow, only become more keenly aware of their distance from humanity, of their isolation even from one another. Nimue's writing and chats offered some vampires a secret "release valve", a place to let down the "Masquerade within the Masquerade" and indulge in vulnerability and self-pity.

More than one Kindred began to see Nimue as her confidante, telling her things that for appearances' sake had to be kept from Prince and coterie. Kindred who died before the Internet really transformed society had developed surprisingly few defenses against the false lure of anonymity offered by online text... but Nimue was taking notes the entire time.

Social Networking

By the time Isadora and her Carthian friends realized what Nimue was up to, the Diva's "friends lists" ran in the thousands, including a local Invictus Primogen. Nimue had cultivated this relationship carefully, playing upon the elder vampire's chivalric ideals by setting herself up as a damsel in distress to be rescued from captivity. Through his connections he was able to spirit

away Amanda's physical form to another safehouse where she could continue to blog without fear of Carthian retribution.

Nimue's escape from Isadora's coterie, if anything, only made her more famous.

Of course, fame is an extremely dangerous thing for a vampire to possess. More than a few Kindred raised their hackles at Nimue's bold defiance of the Masquerade, although the fact that most elders really had no idea what social networking websites even *were* limited any punitive response. Indeed, many of the younger Kindred among Nimue's devotees would defend her if necessary. Nimue cultivates people who feel like outsiders, and there are more than a few of those among the Damned.

Join my Friends!

These days, no one ever sees Nimue's physical form, a short, dumpy, bespectacled teenage girl, now hollow-eyed and hungry in undeath. Since, as a vampire, her image cannot be captured on film, Nimue represents herself through a variety of avatars that serve only to increase her mythic status. These representations are always both alluring and disturbing. In one, an attractive and vulnerable face of indeterminate ethnicity (either Asian or Caucasian-made-up-to-look-Asian) simply stares at a close-up camera for two long minutes, silently beseeching, slightly accusatory. In another, a Reubenesque beauty in black eveningwear lies on a bare hotel room bed, staring at some distant point unseen to the viewer, reacting with anticipation or dread, beckoning the viewer to identify with her: either as victim, or assailant.



Despite her popularity, Nimue's strength lies not in controlling an army of devoted followers, but in the vast store of data she commands. Everyone who has "friended" her online has by definition given her access to their own information, and Nimue does nothing more with her nights than use the computer to read this information. Far too many people trust in the anonymity of the Internet and reveal a stunning array of secrets, and even those who don't tend to know people who do. Sooner or later, most courtiers make an offhand comment or let slip some piece of information they shouldn't, and these days anyone in earshot might decide that information is worth blogging about. Nimue reads it all, and has a miner's knack for sifting useful gold nuggets from slushpiles of rumors. Kindred who would dispose of Nimue never know to what secrets she might be privy.

Information hoarded, however, is useless. Nimue has learned how and when to dole out tidbits of what she knows, and everything she reveals comes with a price. Anyone seeking her aid will have to ply her with compliments and adoration, perhaps for weeks, before hoping to receive a carefully selected morsel. Anyone seeking to wipe her out needs to stay three steps ahead of her, and watch for knives in the back from her closet admirers. Nimue is an ideal ally or antagonist in stories that focus upon the "generation gap" between older and younger Kindred, highlighting the universe of difference between the world of meat and the world of data.

Personality

Nimue is arrogant, self-absorbed and extremely dependent upon the admiration of her followers. Praise and adulation are as much her diet as Vitae, and she begins to wither without either. She needs a dozen genuflecting comments each night to keep her even-keeled, while even one hurtful flame can send her into fits of rage and despair.

Nimue focuses the call of the Beast through the rending and biting kinds of social abuse others try to leave in high school. Nimue learned, from her own days of being a victim, every kind of bullying and abuse: the left-handed compliments, the rumor-spreading, the friendships carefully created for the sole purpose of pulling the rug out at the last minute. She has become far worse than any of her former tormentors. She rarely reflects upon this. When she does, it makes her very happy.

In her flirtations Nimue is coy, reeling in only to reject, offering crumbs of affection at just the right moment to keep a would-be suitor (and she has many, of varying ages and genders, living and dead) engaged. While Nimue

befriends only to use and abuse, she has found more than enough masochism among the Internet communities to feed into her web of influence. The list of Nimue's devotees includes a number of successful people. Nimue, with her ever-shifting persona, is adept at becoming the fulfillment of many kinds of fantasies.

Nimue has come at just the right time: other Kindred are aware of the Internet, but most are not conversant in its ins-and-outs and dole out Internet-related tasks to retainers or trusted courtiers. These individuals are Nimue's prime targets, and through them she can lead all manner of powerful vampires down the paths she wants.

Those paths lead, as often as not, to surprisingly pedestrian goals: instead of flirtation being a means to power, for Nimue, the reverse is true. Her network is her vehicle for getting attention. Pitiably, the Digital Diva assumes that the more people there are who love her, the more loved she is. Some buried part of her knows Nimue is a lie, no matter how much she might wish to believe otherwise, and the horrors of being a vampire have only compounded Amanda's sense of self-loathing. When push comes to shove, she simply doesn't trust in any friendship that she isn't controlling on puppet strings.

Frozen by the Embrace in that worst period of post-pubescent angst, Amanda really does live in the hell of freshman year forever. At least as Nimue, she can rule it.

Secrets

Among all the secrets Nimue collects, it is not surprising some are her own. Nimue carefully conceals her appearance as Amanda, hiding in one haven or another and feeding only from trusted blood dolls. Amanda knows how deadly trust can be, and so she carefully limits the number of people who see her face to face, often through actual *culling*.

Nimue arranged the slow and systematic destruction of Isadora and the original cell of Carthians she knew one by one. She leaked the location of the Carthian Sheriff's day-haven to his rival by way of online-addicted proxies, and then begged digital photos of the aftermath from one of the rival's ghouls... photos that, naturally, Nimue arranged to fall into Isadora's hands. The resulting investigation and series of finger-pointing tore the coterie apart, and Nimue made sure the coterie's rivals knew exactly when to strike at the now-disorganized band. Although it may take some weeks of maneuvering and track-covering, Nimue tends to ensure that those who see her don't survive long enough to reveal much. Her current benefactors have arranged her safehouse through third parties, which may mean they've figured this out... or that she's perfected her scam.

Rumors

"Cybersex ain't safe. Knockin' bits with Nimue can be fatal."

Everyone knows that story about the jilted lover of Nimue's who came down with a mysterious, incredibly painful wasting disease: first his private parts developed sores and lesions, then they began to *liquefy*, Ebola-style. After he became a eunuch, it worked its way on up and over until his whole body caved right in, three weeks start to finish. There's no cure either medicine or magic's come up with

for it. It was a computer virus, able to leap from the digital to the biological, and not even the Kindred are immune.

"I've heard she's got a girlfriend. Like, IRL."

Amanda is haunted by the time she let her anonymity slip. She shared a brief and tormented romance with Nyssa Zorana, a Crone cultist. The relationship broke off because Amanda didn't live long enough to learn how to deal with someone caring for her.

Nyssa's still out there. Worse, so's her blog.

STORY HOOKS

- **Psst! Nimue has the goods on the Prince:** Whether it's true or not, this rumor can't help but catch the attention of the characters. Their level of loyalty to the figure in question will determine whether they seek to exploit this supposed evidence or destroy it, but they probably won't ignore it.
- **Web-crossed romance:** A character falls under Nimue's spell. Do the others try and shake him out of it? Help him get the Diva's attention?

Nimue (Amanda Fenderwood)

Aliases: The Dark Lady, Astarte 2.0

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Carthian

Aliases: The Dark Lady, Astarte 2.0

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computers 4, Investigation 4, Occult 3, Politics 4

Physical Skills: None

Social Skills: Expression 5, Persuasion 4 (Online), Socialize 4 (Online), Intimidation 3 (Online)

Merits: Status 5 (Internet Communities), Status 2 (Invic-

tus), Contacts 3 (Internet Community), Fame 2, Haven 2, Herd 1

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Prudence. Nimue adeptly manages her own resources and interests, knowing just when to bestow, withhold or solicit a favor for maximum effect.

Vice: Pride. Nimue has bought into her own mystique, and her self-love knows no bounds.

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 5

Speed: 3

Blood Potency: 5

Disciplines: Majesty 3, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 1

The Diablerie Artist: Jimmy Vellum

"You have everything within you necessary to produce a truly beautiful painting.
Let me show you."

There's a bar downtown called The Arabic. You need to walk down a flight of stairs on 48th, and find the unmarked door with the serpent's head on it. Don't bother going during the day... I've looked dozens of times but I've never been able to find it. Even at night I had trouble finding it. I doubled back a few times and eventually it just appeared to me; had it been the proverbial snake, it would've bit me.

Open the door. I suggest you're dressed well, although I imagine this isn't the sort of place that would kick you out if you weren't. It's a whole different world inside. The walls aren't painted or papered... they're tiled with millions of these tiny little green and cream white tiles. They make these enormous, intricate murals, and each one is itself a work of art that I could've spent months deciphering. Beautiful flowers, picturesque Baghdad scenes from the days of D.T. Lawrence, the Sheik of Araby and his thousand harem girls. Playing on the jukebox is Django Reinhardt and Paul Whiteman; it's almost like you couldn't imagine anything else there at all.

The bartender is a wormy little fuck, all gummy smiles and obsequious, Snidely-Whiplash-style gestures, but he's damn good at his job. Order absinthe if you want the good stuff. I've heard that if you order anything else, you'll die in your sleep the next night, but that's probably bullshit. He'll wink, a wink that will make you want to go to Confession immediately, and say, "That which the Man himself could not bear." Drink the absinthe... you're gonna need the booze for what you're about to see.

When the bartender sees you're ready, the lights will go out. You'll be in pitch darkness for a few minutes. I've heard tell this is the great test of the thing... how long you can stand it. Just relax, listen to the records playing (they never turn off, I think) and in a few a rear door will open in the room. Pick up anything you brought in, and enter. Through this door is the Gallery of Jimmy Vellum, the greatest artist that ever lived. An artist so great that to show his work in a normal gallery would be heresy. An artist so refined and subtle the unprepared may go mad. An artist so spontaneous and real... that it's as if the things and the people he paints are more than real. They surpass reality and bring you into his head.

Near the rear of the gallery, as you're walking toward the exit opening onto a back alley, a small alcove sits in the corner. I don't know what it was originally built for, it looks to me like a urinal box, but whatever was there is gone now, and what is there is too frightening for my tastes. There is a canvas, flipped over, unceremoniously, against the wall. I paused briefly before leaving, I didn't know what to do with it. In my experience, you don't touch what you see in a gallery. It's not what I saw that scared me, it's what I smelled. That canvas, flipped over against the wall like that, smelled like dead roadkill. A few flies were circling it. I didn't have the balls to flip it over.

If you find this note, and you perhaps find your way to The Arabic, it is your responsibility to write one yourself and pass it along. If perhaps we meet again, I'll buy you a drink and we'll talk about what real art looks like. And perhaps you'll tell me what was on that flipped canvas."

Background

The story of Jimmy Vellum is largely a myth and a fabrication, although it is told time and time again throughout the Kindred salons of the world and among some of the more avant-garde artistic circles—vampiric or otherwise—in every Bohemian enclave and filthy coffee bar in the Western world. The point of the reference, of course, is that the “mundane” know nothing about Vellum. The enlightened, the erudite, the cultured, however, all know the story of the painter who won the Green Fairy’s kiss.

As the story goes, Jimmy Vellum was once known as something else, something usually geographically tied to the location dearest to the storyteller’s creative soul. In France, for instance, he was known as “Henri de la Croix,” a struggling surrealist in the late ’20s, eventually learning to paint while fighting for the French Resistance. In Germany, however, Jimmy is known as “Klaus Mabuse,” an embittered Jewish Dadaist forced to penury by the rise of Hitler’s Third Reich. However the story is told, Jimmy is never from wherever the teller is. Brilliance such as his never arises locally. The story changes, of course, but the facts remain clear. Jimmy sought to

create a new art form that was visually distinctive and completely, utterly unpremeditated.

Jimmy eventually succeeded, after becoming deeply alcoholic and increasingly dependent upon absinthe on a regular basis, long after it was outlawed. It was during this struggle that Vellum fell into a drunken stupor, and contemplated suicide. Taking his paintbox and a bottle of Pernod to whatever distinctive landmark is most relevant to the location of the story, he downed the bottle as one last hurrah before plummeting to failure.

Before he could do so, however, the Green Fairy of Absinthe, in all her glorious array, appeared to Jimmy, face to face, and begged him to reconsider killing himself. The rest, as they say, is history. With a kiss on the forehead, Jimmy Vellum became the only artist in history to be able to paint completely without design. The living say he paints blindfolded, that he lives in a commune outside of Waco, that he is actually a she and directs music videos for a living. The kinds of rumors that pass for quirks but get said about anybody moderately talented and vaguely mysterious.

Kindred have their own gossip. Jimmy is a diablerist of the Circle of the Crone, they say. It’s quite easy to

Make no mistake about it... Vellum is a diablerist. Any simple aura check will prove that. The question, of course, is whether or not diablerie, in the case of Vellum, might actually fuel his genius. Those of us who follow his craft note that his style has an odd rotating quality to it... we believe he is painting the ethereal watercolors when he has just committed the act, and the better, brutal works when he is searching for his next target. Is this the price of art? Is he channeling a greater power by delving so deeply into the abyss?

A better question, I think, is why we tolerate him. Is it his swagger and willingness to continue degrading his own soul for the betterment of his craft or is it the sheer act of breaking the ultimate taboo that draws us so? Will we continue encouraging Vellum’s self-destructive behavior for our own amusement as his audience? It must be presupposed when viewing Jimmy Vellum’s work that we, Kindred society, are only encouraging further diableries by continuing to clamor for it.

- Guillaume St. Cyr

The first, most striking impulse upon meeting Mr. Vellum was that I had already met him, decades ago. It was at the library return desk in my home town... he didn’t recall the first meeting, but I’ll be damned if it wasn’t him. How he’s blossomed.

-Eve Fulton, reporter, “Art Scene” magazine

find one of his paintings. And many havens bear one of the uniquely savage Jimmy Vellums. Some claim to know exactly where and how to find him, and describe him in identical ways: seemingly young, dangerously thin, of a dark, Mediterranean complexion, a fan of piercings and high maintenance hair styles.

Jimmy openly believes himself to be a reincarnation of Orpheus, the demigod who descended into Hades seeking his true love, only to discover her trapped there permanently due to a tiny error in underworld protocol. His cosmology is layered, and he is notably rare among Acolytes in that he claims attention from not just the gods and goddesses of a single pantheon, but several, including a distinct attraction to Brigid, the Irish goddess of inspiration and Bast, the Egyptian cat goddess. And, yes, he does take the Green Fairy connection seriously, to the consternation of many who would otherwise give him the benefit of the doubt.

In his home region, Vellum's a celebrity, but his paintings have found their way all over the world. Most prefer the finer watercolors and portraits. Some Mekhet, with their sharper perceptions, are devout fans of his collages of blood and body fluids. Jimmy's popularity comes from his only genuine peculiarity: he's both creative and skilled. A number of Kindred can claim the latter, but very few the former. Whatever it was that makes Jimmy great didn't die with him.

Personality

Jimmy Vellum is, in fact, deeply shy, painfully introverted and actually very sweet to the few he allows into his trust. Truth be told, he has committed diablerie only twice, once a few years ago and once at the very start of his career, and his meeting with the "Green Fairy" is a veiled reference to his first crime. If one is to press him on the issue, he will honestly admit it was a phase in which he currently has no interest. He's polite enough, although he's easily spooked.

Behind the "private face" of the shy, almost awkward artist, there is a calculating mind that considers everything he does before he actually does it... or, at least, Jimmy would like to think so. Vellum's building a legend in his own mind. He's done fairly well spreading it so far, too.

The few individuals with whom he keeps in contact are his human agent, a loosely aligned Invictus



Daeva named Esther Potsdorff, and a coterie of Acolytes who are both slavish disciples to his “technique,” desperately seeking to learn to paint just like him, and bound to each other by a decadent lifestyle of debauched Vitae-fueled ceremonialism. Jimmy claims no territory as his own, instead quietly borrowing Esther’s havens and privileges.

Secrets

The ultimate secret, of course, is the real identity of Jimmy Vellum. Like various mortal artists of substantially greater fame, his every action is a carefully calculated attempt to build his own legend, his very existence being just as much a piece of art as his paintings.

He was born Juan Diego Velasquez in San Diego, California, 1952, the only son of a successful Mexican printer and his Scottish wife. The storm and drang of the legend, the inclusion of almost a century of myth, and the lunatic obsession with his own godhead are all part and parcel to Jimmy’s self-created story and personal self-aggrandizing genius.

His sire is unknown, although Jimmy will admit he was trained to be the Precentor of a local Circle of the Crone cult that worshipped the image of Santa Muerte, the Mexican saint of death. He also hates the Lancea Sanctum, who presumably ended this early study. Among his Crone fellows, however, such dislike is common enough that it’s rarely recognized as a clue to his background.

Rumors

“Dozens of murders, several diableries, Blood Hunts on sight, how does he cope?”

First of all, a group of Invictus art fanatics are actively protecting Jimmy at every step. Second, Jimmy’s soul isn’t as blackened as he’d like to pretend: where others think he’s subtle, he’s actually just innocent. When push comes to shove, though, who’s going to believe that?

“That Jimmy is mixing human blood into the paint is obvious. He’s also mixing in something worse.”

Jimmy’s recently made a deal with a gathering of weirdoes for the blood of beasts that don’t even exist. Whether he’s being taken for a ride or not depends upon perspective.

Then there’s the wizard. Recognizing Jimmy’s brilliance and shitting himself over the potential of vampire hunting mages, a forward thinking mystic has begun to ship him a steady supply of magically altered absinthe. Jimmy is more than happy to give it the ol’ college try, and the mage is certainly happy to have a repeat customer of means. How

much of this dangerous trade Jimmy and the sorcerer conduct is up to debate.

“Yeah, he’s a pretentious dipshit. But you should see his latest...”

If a group of characters were to go seeking one of the mysterious galleries, the unseen canvas in the secret lounge is rumored to be a prophetic work so far-reaching that none who see it can deny its profundity. Those few who have the balls to flip it over are affected permanently... whatever it is is not meant for profane eyes. What constitutes “unprofane” is up for discussion.

Jimmy Vellum

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3 (Art History), Crafts 5 (Painting), Investigate 2, Politics 3, Occult 5 (Absinthe Drinking Ritual), Medicine 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 5, Expression 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 5 (Art Society), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4 (Conversational Evasion)

Merits: Retainer 5 (Esther Potsdorff, Daeva), Allies 3 (Personal Cult), Haven (Size 2, Security 5, Location 5), Resources 2, Common Sense

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Fortitude. Jimmy, at heart, is still seeking the ultimate creative expression of the Kindred state, and will not be talked out of it. He holds truth and creative liberty to be his guiding lights in all things.

Vice: Sloth. It’s not so much that Jimmy is lazy, he’s definitely not. It’s that he is a coward. The slightest hint of confrontation will cause him to Obfuscate and flee, and he does not address his critics at all. He would rather lose everything than his freedom to continue his *raison d’être*.

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Obfuscate 3, Majesty 1

Legacy

Devotion: *Déjà Vu*

(Obfuscate ••••, Majesty ••)

Jimmy developed this defensive devotion fairly early on, and keeps its secret tightly held to all but his closest confidantes. By combining Obfuscate and Majesty, Jimmy has discovered a way to make those who meet him for the first time immediately feel as if they have met him before, always in a positive light. Perhaps as a long forgotten classmate, a friendly motorist who helped fix a tire, a cheery hotel clerk. Regardless of the position, Jimmy is always “remembered,” and so he is more often than not given the benefit of the doubt in any situation upon first meeting a new individual. Introduction into Jimmy’s cult often involves the teaching of this devotion,

under blood-curdling threats and oaths never to divulge it to outsiders.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Duration: One scene

Type: Contested

Roll: Wits + Subterfuge + Obfuscate versus Composure + Blood Potency, Auspex 1 possessors are immediately given a +2 to defend themselves against this power.

Failure: The Auspex user knows something is up, and is free to question (or not, some people are just like that) Jimmy’s first meeting.

Success: Jimmy’s *Déjà Vu* is active, and the individual affected remembers Jimmy in a positive manner. This gives Jimmy a +3 to any Socialize, Persuasion or Subterfuge rolls on this individual for the rest of the night, in reference to making a good impression.

My dearest Reverend Ketcham,

In response to your most recent order, please find enclosed exactly two bottles of “Pranto de Poeta,” my most accessible vintage of the recent harvest, and I thank you most heartily for your prompt payment in exchange. I look forward to being your favored *Lacrima* vintner long into the next century and beyond. Your praise is most appreciated and humbly accepted, as always. Perhaps your next payment will be sufficient for one of my less accessible bottles.

In regards to your query, Mr. Vellum’s rumoured “absinthe” is swill, in my experience. I, myself, have been able to sample but a glass, at no less than great expense and enormous amounts of prestation to my person. However, I find it remarkable that this upstart crow’s reputation is based entirely upon hearsay and speculation. His “magical absinthe” (his followers’ words, not mine, dear Reverend) is little more than cheap Czech licorice-water and a few dabs of whore’s blood for body. To answer your question, no, I cannot, nor would I ever wish to, replicate this mountebank’s concoction, lest my reputation be sullied in perpetuity. If a will-worker wishes to tarnish his own among his own kind with Vellum’s simultaneous lack of style and grace, then so be it, and may he go with whatever god he wishes.

Enjoy your party, my regards to your guests.

Sincerely,

Darling

The Blooded Crusader: Leland Bancroft

"We must all make sacrifices. You first."

David,

I'm afraid I simply cannot honor your so-called request. The Lord God above has not deigned that it be my time yet, and I will not perform for your heathen little cult as if it has any power.

You may continue to dance around your fires and perform your wasteful orgies of blood, but sooner or later God is going to cut you down and, I promise you, I will be the instrument of His wrath.

Yours until the Spear finds its mark,

Leland Bancroft

Dear Lenore,

I delivered the summons to the church as you asked, and I've included the response from that damned crusader that was nailed to my door. It doesn't matter that the Prince has censured him, it doesn't matter how many of us are looking for him. We'll never reach him now. The Sanctified swear that they aren't harboring him, but you should have seen the look of glee on Francisco's face when I confronted him.

He said, "God will take care of his own. Bancroft doesn't need us to protect him, boy." He called me a *boy*. Self-righteous son of a bitch.

D.

P.S., I'll be busy for a few nights, locating a new haven and moving.

In the end, there shall be a wailing and gnashing of teeth. Children will watch as unbelievers are judged and excised, women will watch as sinners' eyes boil in their sockets. I will watch as the years drag by, my skin cracked and split down the center like peeling paint. I will pray for your salvation even as I sharpen the spear that will ultimately deliver you to the fires of hell, as I delivered David.

My God is jealous, Lenore. He burns behind my eyes, bright as magnesium fire. He cannot abide your supplications to another. You continually risk His wrath every time you frolic in your mad rituals. The maggot's lair is reserved for those who attempt to seduce the faithful away from their path, and I shall see you there myself if you do not repent and come to me.

Come to me, Lenore, and I will show you how forgiving God can be.

Come to me, or I will rend you asunder.

Background

Leland Bancroft grew up in the most comfortable and permissive of surroundings. He wanted for nothing. Both his parents were tenured professors, and he was encouraged to explore and discover the world at his own pace. He grew up under the weight of expectation, constantly told he was going to do great things. So he didn't.

His parents insisted that he performed so poorly in school only because the curriculum didn't challenge him

properly. They pulled him out of public, then private, schools and eventually taught him themselves at home. When he went to college, he experienced his first taste of freedom and simply lost control. Drugs and sex became the fulcrum of his existence. Drugs, admittedly, a little more than sex. He worked hard enough to maintain his freedom, but school was only a resource, a connection to the various highs and bodies he could taste.

Or maybe it was more than that. Leland actually found himself paying attention in chemistry classes, and dis-

covered he was actually *good* at something when he cared about it. His grades rose astronomically in his science classes, and he discovered a way to apply his studies to the other passions in his life. He began to cook up his own drugs, first simple (if dangerous) recipes like crystal meth, and eventually his own increasingly bizarre concoctions.

It didn't last, of course. First he was put on academic probation, then suspension. Then he was caught using school labs without authorization and expelled. After leaving school, he moved in with a girl he'd met at a Misfits concert. Over time, he got bored with her and moved on. And on. Bouncing from couch to couch and friend to friend, his natural charisma kept people from feeling taken advantage of, at least while he was around. It was really only a matter of time before he started selling the drugs he created.

Street contacts called the painfully white, sheltered boy "Wasp," as in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, so he took to naming the strange, glossy pills—Fairyflies, Velvets, Yellowjackets and Hornets among others—he sold after wasps. He quickly drew the attention of his competition to his self-named "Wasp Factory." After a short negotiation between Leland's face and a pipe, he agreed to take up a position in research and development for a drug lord called Blizzard.

Leland's so-called partnership with Blizzard was hugely successful for both parties. Bancroft gained access to more complicated equipment and was put in control of an entire lab, including assistants, for what they were worth. Everyone made money hand over fist, and Leland discovered an entirely new addiction beside which everything else paled.

Blizzard's Vitae.

Many of Leland's efforts in the lab were an attempt to duplicate the feeling he got when he drank the blood of his boss. He increased the output of his lab, producing new test batches at breakneck pace, far more quickly than Blizzard or his men could provide test customers. So he started testing his drugs on himself, something his employer would *not* have authorized.

Nothing worked, even the strange hybrid drugs; the dissociative anesthetics like PCP mixed with stimulants like MDMA simply approximated the feeling in much the same way as telling a friend about falling in love. It just didn't begin to approach the truth.

The Embrace

Leland's Embrace came after three years of ghoulish servitude to Blizzard, also known as Pablo Martinez, developing, enhancing and perfecting drugs. Due to the carelessness of one of Leland's assistants, there was an accident at the lab. Leland would have been killed, and Blizzard's golden goose would have laid its last egg. Let-

ting Bancroft die would have been bad business, so he was brought into the Ventru family earlier than planned. His first victim was the incompetent assistant.

Logistically, things only barely changed for Leland. He was still kept under his sire's thumb, "protected" from competitors by armed guards loyal to Blizzard, but his limited extracurricular activities became even more curtailed due to his new, forced sleep schedule.

Mentally, though, Leland had been skating on thin ice for years, and the Embrace finally plunged him into the icy waters of schizophrenia. Voices hissed at him through the gas jets of the Bunsen burners of the lab. Seen out of the corner of his eye, their flames stepped down and scrambled off the tables. Leland started to come apart.

The Escape

The voices continued, grew worse. He heard the hissing at all hours, even in his sleep, and Leland tried everything to silence it. He became obsessed with finding a gas leak in the lab. It had to be there, it had to... But there was nothing. Leland twisted open every gas spigot in the lab, trying to understand what they were saying, hoping he could shut them up by giving them what they wanted. The hissing got louder, louder, deafening, and then *boom!* the gas combusted and leveled the entire lab. Leland was thrown out a window, stunned and burnt, into the river snaking past the illicit laboratory.

Salvation

Bancroft wandered in a fog for weeks. Deep in the throes of his illness, his rational mind blacked out entirely. He must have fed, must have found shelter, but he doesn't remember anything until he met God's messenger.

A severe-looking woman named Amalthea trapped him and locked him in a cage. She whipped him, and read verses from the Testament of Longinus and the Bible to him. She single-handedly picked up the pieces of his shattered mind and rearranged them into that of a True Believer. Amalthea showed him his true purpose and placed him on the path of the righteous.

Together, they began a quiet war on the heathens of the Circle of the Crone in a new city, away from Leland's past. The two built up support among the local Lancea Sanctum, though Leland was banned from Elysium in the process. Now he flits from place to place, never sleeping in the same haven twice and always keeping an eye out for blasphemous behavior.

Personality

It's not that Leland is stupid. He's not. He's just as brilliant as everyone expected him to be, but he is afraid of it. The

weight of all those eyes made him lock his intelligence up in a box and hide it away until he found something about which he was passionate. Whether he's sad or psycho depends upon how sympathetic you can be to a monster who kills his own Kindred.

Other people's hopes and dreams mean *nothing* to Leland, except where they intersect with his own. The experimental drugs he tested on himself warped his mind, and the Embrace shattered it. He needs a touchstone to keep himself grounded. But now he's found that touchstone through Amalthea, in the Lancea Sanctum, as well as something that gives his life worth and makes him feel less hollow.

His faith is the glue that holds him together, and anyone who doubts the word of God and the truth of Longinus threatens to dissolve the very foundations of his existence. He will use whatever means necessary to silence critics of the Lancea Sanctum, up to and including Tradition-breaking violence.

His schizophrenia is classic. The voices in his head manifest as tempting demonic entities or as God's messengers, angels sent to tell him what choice the Lord wants him to make. Leland's hallucinations likewise have been contextualized by Amalthea's conditioning, and have taken on a religious theme and significance.

Leland tries to carry himself like a priest, but his insecurities manifest as the worst sort of arrogance, flickering through in the set of his shoulders, the tilt of his nose. Leland is not proud of his past, but he is extraordinarily proud of "overcoming" it and entering into the shadow of God's grace.

The other Sanctified have not been tempered by the flames and wages of sin, not like Leland. At least, not as he sees it. He has been transfixed by the very Spear of Destiny, and it is *his* place to wipe out the pagan Circle of the Crone. It's not that the other Sanctified are not special. It's just that Leland is *more* special.

Secrets

Leland has tried to distance himself from his drug-designing past and, indeed, has attempted to sever all ties with his sire,

Blizzard. Blizzard, on the other hand, wants to know *where* his childe is, and why he's no longer providing new pharmaceuticals for the delight of Blizzard's customers, not to mention his bottom line. If Blizzard comes to town, Leland's existence will become more precarious, but Blizzard doesn't know about his religious conversion (and doesn't want him dead), while the Circle is unaware of his drug dealing past, so an alliance between the two groups is unlikely.

He still craves the sensation of a good high, so Leland tends to hunt in low rent neighborhoods, searching for junkies to sate his twin thirsts.

The righteous crusader is utterly enthralled by Lenore, a leading Acolyte. Even while enacting God's wrath upon the Circle he works to convert and "save" her. As he gets more desperate, his attempts will become more transparent. It's only a matter of time before she realizes she can exploit his weakness.

Rumors

"Crones are dropping like flies. I hear the Spear took out six of them in two weeks. Shock and fucking awe."

Leland has the potential to ignite a full-scale war between the Sanctum and the Circle. He fully intends to wipe out the Circle of the Crone in his city and then turn his attention to the Ordo Dracul.

"Looking to find a new fix now that Wasp Factory's bounced? Text me and I'll hook you up."

A number of Leland's experiments were unfinished when he escaped from his Sire. Blizzard has employees trying to work out the kinks, and he's willing to dump failed product into the market to try to make back some of his investment. This means bad drugs driving users insane, killing them outright or leaving them vegetative husks. If Leland finds out his abandoned pharmaceuticals are killing people, it might bother him at least a little. Heathen vampires are his primary targets, and humanity in the methods prescribed by the words of Longinus and the will of God. Unleashing a scientific monstrosity that kills without judgment or reflection is not how Leland operates.

STORY HOOKS

- **Nobody's Side:** Leland's war on the Circle of the Crone forces the characters to choose sides or find a way to profit from the conflict.
- **Son of a Dealer Man:** After being exposed to the religious fervor of Leland Bancroft, the characters discover his drug dealing past because Blizzard's in town. No matter who they help, they'll end up with someone unstable and powerful in their debt.
- **Past Imperfect:** Killer drugs are on the street, and a normal ally or contact of the characters ends up in the hospital or the morgue. The drugs can be traced back to Leland, but he's just as interested in getting them off the streets as the characters are.

"Saw a white dude coming out of that crackhouse over on 7th. Motherfucker had a spear. Yeah, fuck you too, Sergeant."

Leland's havens are random, and range from crackhouses to abandoned shipping containers to homes he's invaded. He doesn't like to stay in the same place for too long. He's crazy, but he knows he's made enemies, both within the Crones and among his old cartel buddies. His paranoia has kept him alive so far, but he needs to cement his support from the Lancea Sanctum if he wants to survive for much longer.

Leland Bancroft

Aliases: Wasp Factory, The Spear

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum

Attributes

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2 (Religion), Computer 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Medicine 3, Politics 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry 4 (Spears)

Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 4 (Convert), Socialize 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Covenant Status 3, Mentor 3 (Amalthea), Resources 3

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 4 (Schizophrenia (Severe))

Virtue: Faith. Leland clings to God and the Testament of Longinus as battens against the swirling chaos of his mind.

Vice: Gluttony. Leland has never known moderation. He tries to live the ascetic life of a priest, but when he falls off the wagon, he *really* falls off the wagon.

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 3

Speed: 13

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Resilience 3, Auspex 1, Majesty 2

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Spear	3(L)	4	+1 Defense when fighting unarmed targets	11

Legacy

The Wasp Factory

Leland's past as a sort of boutique creator of designer pharmaceuticals has left a legacy on the streets. The various drugs he created are still being manufactured and sold throughout the region, thanks to the recipes Blizzard retained. The drugs, as usual, do not affect Kindred unless they are in the bloodstream of one of their victims. Other character types are affected as normal. Each of Leland's creations is named after a kind of wasp:

Fairyflies: Also known as Fireflies and Wisps. All dice pools lose 3 dice and traits such as Defense lose 3 points. The character experiences a dreamlike hallucinatory state, most commonly characterized by ophthalmic aura ("trails" as well as strange, vivid flashes of phantom light) and aural manifestations such as the tinkling of bells or odd, distorted voices. The character may manage to realize these exist only in his drugged mind by rolling Intelligence + Streetwise or Empathy, with a -3 penalty. Once a character becomes aware he is drugged, he may roll Stamina + Resolve to resist the Fairyfly's effects.

Velvet Ants: Pain subsides (wound penalties are ignored), but the character enters a vaguely dreamy state for (8 minus Stamina) hours. While high on Velvet Ants (or simply Velvets) the edges of things become blurry and soft to the senses. All dice pools for Resistance traits such as Defense are reduced by 3 while the character is under the effects of a Velvet.

Yellowjackets: One of the first drugs Leland learned to make, Yellowjackets are a staple, a classic barbiturate, Phenobarbital. Leland's version is a little stronger than the standard, with similar rules to the Velvet Ants above, except it lasts for (12 minus Stamina) hours but reduces Resistance traits such as Defense by only 2 while the character is under its effects.

Hornets: The character gains 2 bonus dice in Strength- or Stamina-based rolls, although he loses 2 dice in Dexterity- and Composure-related rolls as he becomes edgy and paranoid. Characters under the effects of a Hornet can remain awake for days, but for every 24 hours the character uses Hornets to forego sleep, he must succeed on a Wits + Composure roll or suffer a temporary Derangement until he sleeps for at least 12 hours.

Monica Michaels and the Signalmen

My only question is: where do you need to go?

Included you will find everything you need for a safe and comfortable journey overseas. The box locks from the inside; the included key is the only one that exists. We encourage you to arrange some manner of code with your handlers that you may know when it is safe to come out. We recommend a pre-determined series of knocks.

Call the number included in the book (a little light reading for the trip, if you need it) for introductions after you've set down. (Do it immediately upon arrival—they don't care for strangers where you're going.)

It has been our pleasure doing business with you. Good luck and pleasant journey.

The Signalmen

Background

Monica doesn't give off the Kindred vibe. She looks wrong, too, like a kid, twenty at best. Her suit fits her with the awkwardness of a tuxedo rented for a freshman's first high school dance. But she strides forward with confidence, a hint of challenge in her eyes, daring a comment about her appearance. "You're the client, I presume?"

Gertrude McCoy's father died on the coast of France in 1944, while his wife and children awaited news, any news, of American fortunes across the sea. At fifteen, Gertrude had been a child of the Depression, and the penury in which she was raised, the death of her father, and the eventual raw power of the atomic bomb had profound effects upon the young woman. Those who did have power could crush those who didn't. Wealth defined power. McCoy unbridled her ambition, working day and night to overcome her economic disadvantages. Her sharp mind absorbed information easily, and while she failed to get a scholarship to the University of Chicago, she was able to convince a local business magnate to bankroll her attendance.

Little did she know that the business leader was the pawn of Arthur Longshanks, a vampire with a taste for

intelligent young women. McCoy entered the Requiem on the winter solstice of 1948 at the age of nineteen. Frozen forever as a teenager at the bottom of a pyramid of *truly* old rich white men, McCoy took a few years to adjust to her Requiem. Eventually, however, she embraced her fate and, despite a philosophical kinship with the Invictus, joined her sire's Covenant, the Ordo Dracul. Transcendence, she reasoned, is a form of power all its own.

McCoy made a driven scholar, eventually garnering the first changes to her own form that constituted one of the Coils of the Dragon. Over the course of her research, however, she became interested in the manners by which Kindred, creatures that apparently have great difficulty traveling and a strong environmental imperative to remain in a single location, spread throughout the world. She interviewed Nomads who passed through Chicago (including, according to some, the Unholy herself), learning what she could of life on the road (which had become more attractive to neophyte American Kindred with the popularity of Jack Kerouac). She learned from a Nomadic Dragon of a Chapter House in the southeast devoted to similar studies, and, during the civil unrest that wracked Chicago during the 'sixties, left the city for her own pilgrimage.



Everywhere you want to go

In the mid-'seventies rumors began spreading throughout the United States of a group of shadowy Kindred devoted to assisting vampires unsuited for the Nomadic unlifestyle in travel between domains. The spokesperson for this group was Monica Michaels, a much transformed, more professional and confident Gertrude McCoy. Kindred who heard of the Signalmen were surprised to find Monica the precise opposite of their every preconceived notion of the Nomad. At first, the Kindred, well aware of the old adage about things too good to be true, seemed unwilling to utilize the expensive services of the Signalmen. A few Kindred, however, whether out of curiosity, desperation or sheer desire to get out from under their sires' molding thumbs, took the Signalmen up on their offer, and, as time passed, the group garnered a reputation for producing travel arrangements that were reliable, comfortable and, most importantly, safe.

The early 'eighties bore witness to the heyday of the Signalmen. Young Kindred and a few adventurous elders began traversing the United States by truck, train and even airplane. It seemed a new jet-set culture of Kindred would develop, creating a community of vampires that spanned entire continents. Rumor spread of international travel arranged by the Signalmen to domains as far away as London and Paris. The Covenants took sudden interest in the group, funneling a great deal of resources into it to insure their messengers and colonists to new domains could travel safely. One Lancea Sanctum bishop even began plans to establish a "pilgrimage service" through the group, allowing faithful Sanctified to travel to the domains of Rome and Istanbul. As one might expect, few domains welcomed tourists, but Monica and her company seemed to have an un-



canny aptitude for feeling out destinations in advance and smoothing the way for clients. In short, the Signalmen delivered everything for which they were paid.

It was not to last. Before the decade had come to an end rumors had spread throughout Kindred society that some of the vampires the Signalmen took on as clients never came back (or ever reached their destinations). Hardwired Kindred paranoia kicked in, and the brief period of relatively safe Kindred travel came to a sudden end. Yet the Signalmen, wealthy from their brief boom, abided into the 'nineties and beyond.

Now they serve as a luxury, providing safe passage to those Kindred willing to risk it for exorbitant cost in money and favors. Most Kindred who take advantage of the group's services speak highly of it: The Signalmen are professionals with three decades of experience in an extremely niche market under their belts. A Kindred can seek out the Signalmen and arrange for exceptionally secure and comfortable passage for herself and her servants to locales as far from the Americas as Istanbul, Tokyo and Johannesburg and awake to find the locals informed of and prepared for her arrival. Of course, some Kindred claim only the success stories ever reach the ears of the harpies. The failures, the disappearances, well, they're just *gone*.

Face or Founder?

While Monica Michaels is a talented, ambitious Kindred, there is no possible way she arranges the various exchanges and balances the many plates necessary to the operation of the Signalmen by herself (especially during the group's heyday in the 'eighties). Yet she is the only known individual associated with the group. All business arranged with the Signalmen goes through her. Those Kindred who have investigated the group have found evidence of her involvement only. And, as some Kindred point out, were every coin that came to the Signalmen's coffers now in Monica's possession, she could have retired a decade ago with more wealth and influence than many elders.

By all appearances, Monica is an employee, the public face of a very private organization. Were it not for the fact that the Signalmen's product (Kindred travel) is so transparent and their apparent goal (the accumulation of wealth and largesse) so typical, Kindred society might not tolerate their existence. As it is, more than one Kindred has attempted to destroy Monica. She has, so far, been capable of avoiding any pursuers.

Yet many Kindred continue to wonder: just who are the Signalmen and what are their goals? Some Kindred point to an item, a simple white card with an orange dia-

mond on it, given to each of the group's clients, as a clue to their true nature. How do they arrange such complex travel arrangements on such short notice? How do they remain so well informed about the political situations in domains around the world? And what part in it does Monica Michaels play?

Monica Michaels in the World of Darkness

As the personification of entrepreneurship run rampant, Monica has the potential to interact with any character in the World of Darkness. She always seems oddly well informed about any group with which she interacts, a fact that likely gives members of other supernatural societies pause. If she comes into contact with an individual, it's because she was either sought out or she needs something from the individual; she approaches either as a business transaction. What can a vampire with contacts around the world get for a mage or a werewolf? What can they do for her?

One organization that has taken particular interest in Monica and the Signalmen is the Cheiron Group, a closely affiliated conglomerate of international pharmaceutical companies. The tactics Monica and her hidden compatriots (or puppet masters) utilize appeal to TCG, and, more importantly, the companies have realized what Monica and her people are doing.

Personality

Monica overcompensates for her own perceived shortcomings. She's emotionally cold and distant in order to avoid being seen as soft. She dresses in a manner she considers adult and professional without regard for the contrast it makes with her youthful features. (Ironically, the overall result is somewhat the image of a child playing at being a grownup.) She exudes a carefully crafted confidence, refusing to take a bad deal and resolving business quickly so she can escape to her home to relax.

Monica loves reading, research and study in a way that borders on the obsessive. She had just been initiated into the joys of scholarship at the time of her Embrace, and those emotions continue to resonate within her like none other. She also enjoys travel, something she never had the opportunity to do when alive. Part of her continued involvement in the Signalmen has to do with the pleasure she takes in walking for the first time new nighttime streets and hearing for the first time new languages spoken.

Secrets

A few Kindred have found out that the Chapter House at which Monica studied prior to changing her name and

joining or establishing the Signalmen vanished from the night in the early 'seventies just before the Signalmen began offering their services. Some Kindred suspect Monica and whatever masters she now serves destroyed it, keeping its arcane research for themselves. Those Dragons familiar with the Chapter's research (primarily upon Kindred migration patterns) suspect the Signalmen may be those missing Kindred. Monica may be the only vampire with the answers to these questions.

Indeed, Monica may be the only vampire who knows precisely what the Signalmen are and what goal they work toward (though she may know only one or neither of those things). Whoever they are, the Signalmen have a vested interest in spreading the Kindred curse in a manner that they can, to an extent, control. They may be a twisted group of Necromancers hoping to extend the reach of death throughout the world or a secretive motley of changelings who have become convinced that vampires somehow keep the dreaded Others away. More frighteningly, the group may be made up of spirits, ghosts or entities more alien yet with motives as esoteric as they are horrible. Whatever the Storyteller decides, the truth behind the group will help determine its relationship to Monica.

For her part, the Travel Agent is no longer interested in money save as a means to an end. Assuming she's maintained her free will, Monica pursues her work out of a desire to study causality. In a way, she's Following the Dragon's Tail (p. 66, **Vampire: The Requiem**) on a grand scale. She's sure the pattern she has begun to unearth heralds an important truth about the Kindred condition, a truth that will bring power far beyond the petty wealth of the elders.

"Fuck that bitch, that's what I think. Half the Licks she helps out go missing. Probably drinks them dry herself."

If half (or even a quarter) of the Signalmen's clients went missing, the organization would quickly be out of a job. A few of them might vanish, but whether that's simply a result of the dangers of travel or something more sinister is left in the hands of the Storyteller. Certainly Monica's not committing diablerie on them (and would find the idea repellant). But that doesn't mean someone else in the organization isn't.

"I've heard a lot of shit about this girl. That's she's part of VII. That she's the only Signalman, and everything else's a ruse. That's she's not Kindred at all. Shit like that. I don't put a lot of stock in rumors myself, but if someone's inspiring this many, well, let's just say I'd steer clear of them. Better safe than sorry, you know?"

Like any group that doesn't keep all its cards on the table, the Signalmen inspire a lot of rumors. The Storyteller can go wild with these, making up stories far more bizarre than those listed above. One of them may even be true. But they can't all be. Everyone has an idea about who these guys are, and everyone's idea is different.

"Think this is a modern phenomenon? It ain't. This group's been around since the Middle Ages, maybe as far as the Second Crusade. Always different names, but always Kindred helping other Kindred get around. And why? That's the million dollar question, ain't it?"

Over the ages, various groups have risen and fallen that make part or all of their business facilitating Kindred travel. The Camarilla itself was just such an organization, and travel throughout its lands was in many ways easier than travel in modern nights. Whether the Signalmen are in any way connected to such a group depends upon the nature the Storyteller chooses for them, but it's always a possibility.

STORY HOOKS

- **Midnight Roads:** The characters need a ride across the country and they want to be safe doing it. Luckily one of their allies has the contact information for one Monica Michaels who might just be able to help, for the right price.
- **Following the Tail:** The characters' patron or prince decides Michaels and her people must be using their ostensibly straightforward business toward some far darker end. He entrusts the investigation of the slippery Mekhet to the characters. Can they find out what she's doing? Will they survive what they uncover?
- **Agent of Change:** The Travel Agent arrives in the characters' city, and they're the first to notice. What is she doing there? Will she be bringing new vampires to compete over resources? Or is she working to engineer an exodus?

Monica Michaels

Aliases: Gertrude McCoy (Birth Name), Dedicated Supplicant of Terror Unchained (Ordo Dracul Title), The Travel Agent

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 2 (International Kindred), Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Firearms 3 (Pistol), Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1 (Stare Down), Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Human Trafficking 2, Transportation 3), Chapter Library 3 (European Domains, Human Migration Patterns, Kindred History), Contacts 3 (As Needed), Covenant Status 1 (Ordo Dracul), Eidetic Memory, Fame 1 (Kindred), Haven (Security 1, Size 1), Language (French, German, Japanese, Spanish), Resources 4

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Prudence. Much of Monica's success comes from the nigh-obsessive care she takes in every experiment (or transaction). She tries to know every variable before putting a plan into motion.

Vice: Greed. Monica's willing to stomp on others to continue existing in the unlife to which she has become accustomed.

Health: 7

Initiative: 6 (8 with Celerity)

Defense: 3 (5 with Celerity)

Speed: 10 (30 with Celerity)

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Coil of the Beast 1, Obfuscate 3

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Devotions: Quicken Sight

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Colt M1911A1	3(L)	2	—	10

XP to Build: 208

Monica's an established Kindred, but she's also fairly young. Between Mask of Tranquility and Chastise the

Beast she's difficult to identify as Kindred. Auspex makes her difficult to get the drop on, and if she's using Aura Sight on a character, she gets a bonus to her Initiative equal to her successes on the Activation roll. If attacked, she'll likely try to escape with Cloak of Night. (Her base dice pool to activate that power is 9, penalized by 1 for every witness after the first. If there are enough witnesses to make success unlikely, she'll use Celerity to escape past a door or down a hall in order to break line of sight before vanishing.) Monica uses Quicken Sight in her work, picking out small pieces of confidential information from documents that pass before her eyes for only an instant.

The Signalmen

Some Kindred claim the Signalmen aren't actually vampires, but rather some shadowy entities bent toward spreading the Kindred curse. Below are two sets of traits for shadowy Signalmen. The first represents a physical individual of unknown nature. The second represents an ephemeral entity. The true nature of the Signalmen is left to the Storyteller to decide (see "Secrets," above, for a few suggestions).

Clan: Unknown (if Kindred)

Covenant: Unknown (if any)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2 (Vampires), Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 2 (Pistol), Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 2 (Veiled Threats), Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3 (The Conspiracy)

Merits: Allies 4 (The Signalmen), Contacts 3 (As Needed), Language (As Needed), Resources 3 (Discretionary Budget)

Willpower: 6

Morality: 3 (Fixation, 5)

Virtue: Faith. Whatever the Signalmen are doing, they're likely working toward (their idea of) a better tomorrow.

Vice: Wrath. And they're willing to destroy those who get in their way.

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Colt M1911A1	3(L)	2	—	10

Supernatural Powers: As desired by the Storyteller. Kindred of the conspiracy likely focus upon Auspex, Dominate and Obfuscate. Werewolf Signalmen may possess Gifts from the Death, Mother Luna, Shaping and Technology lists. Mage Signalmen likely have a strong understanding of Fate, Mind and Space. On the other hand, the conspiracy may be made up of humans in the know, in which case this character possesses no powers at all (unless, of course, this is a project of one of the Hunter Conspiracies such as the Cheiron Group).

Ephemeral Signalmen

Whether the intangible spiritual reflections of undeath or terrible ghosts with a grudge against humanity, the ephemeral Signalmen want only to spread the blight of the undead.

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Morality: 0

Virtue: Faith (if ghost)

Vice: Wrath (if ghost)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 19

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Numina: The Signalmen make use of the following Numina in their quest to spread the Damned: Animal Control, Magnetic Disruption, Phantasm, Terrify, and any other the Storyteller deems appropriate. They may use some of these powers to scare Kindred into packing up and moving on or to protect them on their journeys. All Signalmen have the Possession Numen, which they enjoy using upon Kindred (such as Monica). Possessed Kindred typically have a supernatural tell of some kind based upon the nature of the Signalmen: Kindred possessed by ghosts may cause a drop in temperature in any room they enter, while those possessed by spirits may have a physical tell (the fine scaled skin of a snake or the flashing yellow eyes of an owl, for example).

Essence: 10

Legacy

Monica retains her former Chapter's library, represented by the following Merit.

Merit: Chapter Library • to •••••

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) (equal to Merit dots), Haven (Size) 1

The Dragons hoard information like few other creatures in the World of Darkness, but are not the best at separating the truths from the fictions, keeping a great deal of esoteric information at their fingertips. The particulars of any given Chapter Library tend to vary greatly from those of any other library, as the media and subjects of research tend to be extremely personal.

For each dot in this Merit, the player chooses a subject of interest. Research rolls made in regard to this subject take the usual amount of time but gain an equipment bonus equal to the rating in the Merit. Furthermore, characters utilizing this Merit may substitute any appropriate Mental Skill for Academics when making a Research roll. For example, an alchemist with a weak understanding of the Liberal Arts might substitute Occult or Science when using Chapter Library (Alchemy) to research his chosen field.

Even the best-stocked library doesn't hold the answer to every question. The information that can be gleaned by digging through the character's personal library is left to the Storyteller's discretion.

Ordo Dracul Title: Unchained

Prerequisite: At least 1 Coil of the Dragon

The title Unchained, typically appended to the end of a Dragon's title and always chosen for oneself, is a statement of independence. The Unchained Dragon claims neither Mentor nor Academy, effectively functioning as a free agent within the Ordo Dracul. Such individuals garner no small amount of distrust within the insular and highly hierarchical Covenant, but the freedom to pursue one's interests above all else can make up for the stigma. The Rites of the Dragon expressly states that a Dragon's primary duty is to her studies, so Unchained Kindred face fewer sanctions from their Covenant leaders than they might otherwise. Note that a Kindred who attempts to claim the title Unchained before learning a Coil is simply considered Unbound by most Dragons. (For more on Ordo Dracul titles, see p. 15 of *Ordo Dracul*.)

Scene: The Clandestine Meeting

Overview: The characters have to meet with Monica for one reason or another. Perhaps they are arranging passage to another domain. Whatever it is, they've contacted her and set up a clandestine meeting with her in a secluded area of one of the worst parts of town. She's waiting for them alone and will flee into the darkness if attacked (the primary reason for the seclusion of the meeting is to provide her with the freedom she needs to utilize Celerity and Obfuscate if things go south). Storytellers interested in making the scene more physically dangerous might have one or more Signalmen observing the scene from the shadows, willing to jump in to protect Monica if necessary.

Monica drives a hard bargain, pushing to separate the characters from something they hold dear or asking them to perform some favor that violates their Humanity (if not both and more) in exchange for her services. The characters may be able to talk her price down, though. At least a little.

Description: In addition to the text given after Monica's aliases, above, feel free to sprinkle the scene with the following details to set the mood:

Moths flit about you, attracted by the pale orange street lamp. The scent of a nearby dumpster is cloyingly sweet, like vomit.

Something small scratches about in the darkness.

Monica glances past you, toward the darkness, before shifting her eyes back to you.

The air seems thick, pregnant with some unknown energy about to break free.

The streetlight flickers for a moment, as if about to go off, but then remains lit.

SCENE: <i>The Clandestine Meeting</i>						
MENTAL • •	PHYSICAL –	SOCIAL • • •				
HINDRANCES	HELP	OTHER				
Pursuit, Investigation: Darkness (–2) Cutting a Deal, Intimidation: She has the upper hand (–3)	Recognizing Monica: Fame (+1) Empathy: Characters accept Monica's initial deal (+2) Escaping: Darkness (+2)					
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>STs</td> <td>Introduce the secretive nature of the Signalmen.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PCs</td> <td>Get a good deal. Learn about Monica.</td> </tr> </table>			STs	Introduce the secretive nature of the Signalmen.	PCs	Get a good deal. Learn about Monica.
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PCs	Get a good deal. Learn about Monica.					

The Old Soldier: Jack Cade

"I know what it means to love this country."

Background

Cade's presence fills the room. He's tall and thin, but he seems *huge*. His finely tailored suit smells a little musty, and he wears his long, thin hair combed back from his high forehead. His features are lined and weathered, like an ancient stone set alone in the blistering desert. He smirks, his hand moving to adjust his bolo tie slightly before extending to you in greeting. His eyes are hungry.

Among the Kindred, one name is synonymous with American patriotism: Jack Cade, Lord of the American West, the Texan. They say he first took up arms for the US during the Mexican-American War and has fought in every war since. They say he was tortured for nine months in the basement of a Mexican hacienda. They say he'll break your nose for saying an unkind word about the red, white and blue. That he'll stake you and leave you for the sun for blaspheming. They say his Vitae runs red, white and blue.

They're wrong.

Born to American settlers in the Texas region of Mexico, Jonathan Jackson Cade first entered military service against Mexico during the Texas revolution. History records the death of his father at the Alamo and Cade's own death at Refugio a week later, when the Mexicans overwhelmed a contingent of Texians after dark. Two weeks later a small force of 340 unarmed Texian captives were slaughtered by the Mexicans. Of the three battles, only a handful of men (less than ten) survived. Blood shed on such a massive scale couldn't help but attract the Damned.

Man of War

Cade never discusses his earliest nights. He and several other Texians were kept as part of the personal larder of a Spanish Lord who had called part of Mexico his domain for over a century. The Spaniard abused, tortured and supped from Cade for months before Cade managed to break free, only to be gunned down by the Spaniard's guards before he escaped the hacienda. He awoke one of the Damned, again chained to a wall by his captor, now cursed by the captor's blood and kept as his plaything. A decade later, when the Americans were burning the Spaniard's palatial home, he freed Cade and commanded the neophyte to defend him in his escape. Cade somehow shrugged off the supernatural

compulsion and drove the spear he had been offered deep into the Spaniard's heart. He drank his captor's blood and soul before escaping into the night.

Cade, like the carrion birds and coyotes, followed the Americans into Mexico City, supping from the dead and bringing a very personal war against the Mexican vampires. The vampires called him *El Bastardo*, for he had no sire, and avoided his incoherent bestial rage whenever possible. He existed on the fine line between man and Beast for six months before finally returning to Texas. He carved out a large domain for himself, defending it fang and nail against intruders, but found he was unable to remain settled for long. Instead he began involving himself in the wars of men, first against the native peoples of the American West (and their Kindred) and then the traitorous Americans of the South during the Civil War. Since then he is rumored to have been involved in almost every major military action in which the United States has ever participated, including Korea and Vietnam.

War in the Twenty-first Century

War seemed to become a far more amorphous concept in the last half of the twentieth century. A military campaign might be comprised wholly of an extended missile bombardment, with no room for a bloodthirsty vampire. The first Iraq war illustrated this most clearly to Cade, who considered falling into torpor to wait out this age of impersonal warfare. The War on Terror, however, revitalized his spirit, bringing him an exciting threat to his homeland to defend against an enemy to whom he could put an easy face.

As a combatant in the War on Terror, Cade has slipped his fingers into the Department of Homeland Security. He and his pet agent, Jonas Ford, utilize the DHS for leads in their personal and bloody engagement with the threats to America on her own soil. He travels the country with the assistance of Abby White, slipping into domains, interrogating and passing summary judgment upon those he deems enemy combatants. Those he doesn't he turns over to Ford.

Jonas Ford and Abby White

Jonas Ford is the newest addition to Cade's staff. A DHS agent who was, when Cade met him, down on his luck, Ford has taken to Cade's mission with surprising vigor.

The fact that the work they've done has proven largely lucrative for Ford, turning his fortunes in the Department around, is only part of Cade's appeal to the man. Ford truly believes in his regnant, sure that the often-bloody work the pair pursues betters the nation the two share. Ford, being young and new to his state, still believes Cade considers him a partner of sorts; luckily for Ford, the Vinculum makes the very idea of disagreeing with Cade repellant to him. Eventually, however, Cade will certainly take some action that offends even Ford's withered moral judgment, and the tight partnership the pair has enjoyed to this point will become strained.

Abby White, on the other hand, has the experience and age to know precisely what her place is. Under the bond of Blood to Cade since the early 'eighties, White serves as his link to the modern world, his personal assistant and his financial guru. She acquires new equipment for Cade, outfits and repairs existing equipment and handles all his travel arrangements. In return she receives a healthy paycheck and a weekly dose of Cade's Vitae. White is a hard, loyal, no-nonsense woman who is completely comfortable with her priorities in life. Without her, Cade would be lost (at least until he managed to replace her). While she would never betray her master, she's hardly a warrior herself. She does, however, take self-defense very seriously. Not only has she taken self-defense classes, she carries and knows how to use pepper spray and a gun.

Some tension exists between the two ghouls. Ford chafes at the air of superiority White takes in interactions with him. White resents the closeness Cade and Ford share in their mission to rid the nation of terrorists. Each constantly strives to one-up the other. Cade would have it no other way. In addition to his ghouls, the Texan employs an extensive support staff including maintenance and security workers for his residences and a personal caretaker for his horses.

Jack Cade in the World of Darkness

Cade joined the Lancea Sanctum some time during the Civil War. He only ever behaved as a true member of the faith between the Civil War and World War I, however, when he became known as one of the preeminent Sanctified Crusaders in the South. Rooting out heretics and murdering Acolytes only sated his bloodlust for so long, however, and



with the outbreak of the First World War, he returned to his true love: battle in the name of Lady Liberty. Cade also shares nominal membership in the Invictus, where he holds the appropriate title of Soldier. Cade gives little more heed to his Invictus ties than he does to the Sanctified, but he does understand and respect the Covenant's desire for law and order.

Cade holds particular esteem within his Clan as an Auctor, a rare position in modern nights. The position essentially grants him a great deal of leeway in the pursuit of Kindred criminals (at least among those vampires who recognize it). Furthermore, Cade is exorbitantly wealthy, partly due to his lucrative oil interests in Texas, partly a result of the various rewards he has accumulated from princes for whom he has worked in the past.

Jack is, first and foremost, a bruiser. He's a physical monster, capable of causing a great deal of immediate visceral horror. But he's also got more than his share of principles and ideals. In a very real way, Cade is a danger to anyone. He's not afraid to make snap judgments about someone and investigate (or interrogate, depending upon their nature and status) any individual based on a hunch. Anyone, whether Kindred or not, can find herself under his patriotic gaze. (Those who operate in secretive enclaves or seem naturally suspicious, such as mages, werewolves, created, changelings and hunters, for example, are particularly likely to draw his attentions.) The fact that most vampires give him a certain amount of respect for this behavior makes it that much worse.

Two groups, the mage Guardians of the Veil and the government-sponsored hunters Task Force: VALKYRIE, might find Cade's rising influence in the Department of Homeland Security unacceptable. They haven't moved against him yet, but it seems only a matter of time. While unfamiliar with the particulars of either group, Cade expects just such an occurrence, and has prepared contingencies.

Personality

Cade is a deeply religious man, though not necessarily faithful to Sanctified doctrine. Cade's true loyalty is to the United States and, to a much lesser extent, the ideals it represents. He feels that the States have become soft and liberal in the nights since his Embrace, and he works where he can to further a less forgiving approach to governance. Deep down, Cade thinks of all Kindred save himself as enemies of the greater good. If he thought he could get away with becoming a vampire vampire-hunter, he might.

Cade also suffers from a form of exhaustion. He's tired of fighting, politicking and torturing. Yet he can't bring himself to rest, not while there are still enemies out there. Like a shark, Cade is sure he'll die if he stops moving.

Secrets

Cade is a Kindred of surprisingly few secrets, especially given his age. His rather unflattering opinion of other Kindred (including his fellow Sanctified) as listed above is probably the greatest secret, with the extent to which he has given ground to his Beast over the decades a close second. He has performed the Amaranth more than once, but not within the last fifty years. Though he doesn't have a great deal to hide, Cade doesn't talk about himself much, and most of what is "known" about his past is in the form of rumor and folktale.

Rumors

"You know Cade used to be the Prince of all of Texas? Yeah, gave it up because it didn't give him enough opportunities to bust heads."

Cade has never claimed the title of prince in any domain. There was a period, however, when Cade was the most influential Kindred in Texas and claimed much of the domain (though hardly all of it) as his own.

"You young people like to take cheap shots at Cade, but the truth is there ain't an American Kindred with bigger balls. Let me ask you a question, Would you try to bed the Unholy? Well Cade has, and he's succeeded."

Cade is the subject of numerous folktales among the American Kindred (like David Crockett or Daniel Boone among the living). Like riding a twister or felling a forest in one stroke, bedding the Unholy is an obvious metaphor for taming the Western frontier. Did it actually happen? If so, neither he nor she is talking about it.

"The Texan is hard, man. I hear that after the Nazis fell, the guy walked across Russia to get to Japan to finish the job. And he didn't come back until after Nam. He's like Rambo, if Rambo were a fucking vampire."

Cade spent almost three decades in eastern Asia. What, precisely, he was doing there remains unknown. Some say he was a prisoner of war for much of that time. Others claim it took him that long just to find a ride back to America. Most Kindred simply laugh at the Licks who take the last one seriously. The truth is likely that he spent that time as he has so much of his unlife in the Americas: bringing bloody justice to those who would threaten the American way of life.

STORY HOOKS

- **Someone to watch over me:** Cade takes a personal interest in the characters or someone for whom the characters care. Perhaps their involvement in the mob, gang violence or smuggling drew his attention. Maybe it was just the color of their skin. Either way, they now have a pit bull of an inhuman elder on their case.
- **Strained Bedfellows:** Cade's behavior was all well and good until he entered politics. Now the Kindred is gunning for a spot among the Primogen and someone connected to the characters isn't having it. How can the characters ensure Cade's outstanding reputation doesn't catapult him into the halls of Kindred power? Or do they sell out their erstwhile patron to Cade, hoping to ride the Texan's coattails to the top?

Jack Cade

Aliases: Jonathan Jackson Cade, The Texan, El Bastardo

Clan: Ventrué

Bloodline: Sons of Cade

Covenant: Lancea Sanctum and Invictus

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Science 2 (Military)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 2 (Horse Riding), Firearms 4 (Two Guns), Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 4 (Wilds), Weaponry 3 (Saber)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2 (Equines), Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2 (Military Etiquette), Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Ambidextrous, Clan Status 4, Covenant Status 1 (Invictus), Covenant Status 1 (Lancea Sanctum), Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Disarm, Fame 3 (Kindred), Fast Reflexes 2, Gunslinger, Language (French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish), Quick Draw (Firearms and Weaponry), Resources 5, Retainer 4 (Jonas Ford), Retainer 4 (Abby White)

Flaw: Racist

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 2 (Fixation, 5; Suspicion, 4; Narcissism, 3; Obsessive Compulsion, 2)

Virtue: Justice. For every action there is a reaction. An enemy of the United States tortured Cade. Now he tortures in return.

Vice: Wrath. Violence is the only language many of these people understand.

Health: 8 (11 with Resilience)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Speed: 11 (14 with Vigor)

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 1, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 2, Protean 2, Resilience 3, Theban Sorcery 1, Vigor 3

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Vitae Reliquary

Devotions: Body of Will, Iron Façade

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Cavalry Saber	3(L)	2	+1 from position of height, +3 with Vigor	9
Peacemaker, First Shot	3(L)	1	—	12
Peacemaker, Second Shot	3(L)	1	Negates Cade's Defense if different target	11
Remington Model 700	4(L)	3	9-Again, Scope	13
Bayonet	2(L)	1	On rifle, +3 with Vigor	8

Note: A favored tactic of Cade's is (if forced into close combat while holding his rifle) to jam the bayonet into his enemy and follow through with a point-blank shot against the same target the following turn. Unless the target makes a Dodge action between Cade's bayonet attack and Firearm attack, Cade can make an All-Out Attack (from which Firearms attacks usually can't benefit) with the second attack. Cade must hold his ground to pull this off and sacrifices his Defense for the turn in which he intends to do so.

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Bulletproof Vest	2/3	-1	0
Leather Duster	1/0	0	0

Note: Cade's mind, inundated with the corrupting Blood of Clan Ventrue, has worn down over the decades and under the weight of the atrocities he has both endured and committed. Between his Fixation and Narcissism he is utterly obsessed with himself and his actions, as well as how they appear to others. When caught in the grip of these Derangements, he is particularly prone to Frenzy (-2 to rolls and he can't spend Willpower for extra dice). Luckily the only two people around him enough to understand how insufferable he can become are both bound to him by Vinculum.

His Suspicion tends to focus upon whomever he views as an outsider, which is typically surprisingly in touch with American culture (in the 'forties it was the Japanese, in the 'sixties it was African-Americans, and today it's people of Middle Eastern descent). His Racist Flaw usually comes to the fore only when under the effect of this Derangement.

His Obsessive Compulsion is an American twist on the folktale about vampires counting spilt grains of rice. Cade feels compelled to count any money given to him (or that passes through his hands), no matter how inappropriate the situation. If asked, he'll justify himself saying he doesn't want to be cheated (which ties into his Suspicion Derangement).

Jack Cade is a powerful Kindred, deservedly considered an elder in his chosen stomping ground (largely the south-west US). He's also one of the best-traveled Kindred in the world, having waged war in North and South America, Europe and Asia. Cade utilizes his single Theban rite, Vitae Reliquary, to store Vitae for his travels, instilling the blood into literal canteens. His Animalism allows him to call, converse with and command horses, his chosen mode of transport even after almost two centuries.

Legacy

Sons of Cade (Bloodline)

"All right, boys, let's light 'em up."

Cade, quite unknown even to himself, has changed his Blood to better suit his mission in unlife. The reality of

Cade's transformation will likely remain unknown until such time as his Kindred descendants display a similar aptitude for Vigor and tendency toward outbursts of violence.

Members of Cade's bloodline will be warrior-lords, knights errant in the World of Darkness, living and dying by the sword. These Ventrue will live by a personal (and often twisted) personal code of honor that puts conviction before all else. For the Cadians, might makes right, and no greater might exists than one's own blood-fueled arms.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Resilience, Vigor

Nickname: None Yet

Weakness: In addition to the mental deterioration caused by the Blood of Clan Ventrue, Jack Cade (and perhaps, eventually, his Kindred descendants) gains additional strength at the cost of his self-control. As a brutal warrior, Cade is driven to solve his problems through violence. He (and any future members of his line) suffers a -3 penalty to rolls to avoid Frenzy as a result of anger.

History and Culture: Cade's bloodline has only recently manifested in the soldier's war-inundated Vitae. As such, the history of the line is the history of Cade, and if the bloodline has any culture it is the whole of Cade's behavior. Cade may have sired childer in the last few decades (perhaps one or more of the players' characters); if so, they will forge the culture of the line with their own actions. Will they become petty tyrants of the Damned, or can they maintain a sense of their own dignity and nobility?

Reputation: Obviously Cade's bloodline, being utterly unknown, has yet to garner a reputation in Kindred society. Cade, on the other hand, has, and his repute will likely trickle down his lineage. What precisely Cade's final legacy will be, however, remains to be seen. Will he slip into torpor or meet Final Death before his growing madness and bloodline-born rage drive him to a tragic downfall in the esteem of the Damned, or will he collapse under the weight of his own delusions and rage? Whatever happens, the results will reflect upon the lineage for good or ill.

Scene: The Texan at the Tracks

Overview: The characters get a friendly invitation from Cade to join him at the local rodeo, horse track or dog track (or sports event). The characters may be wary before even attending him, but once they've met with him, it becomes obvious that Cade's investigating them. He's friendly enough, discussing the event and offering the characters pointers, but he's also asking some pretty pointed questions about their activities. Maybe he's just feeling them out as prospective freelance agents for a job, or perhaps he suspects them of furthering terrorism. Whatever the truth, the characters must tread lightly, avoiding giving away too much while feeling out the Texan's motives or looking for a means to make a quick escape. All while surrounded by mortals.

Description: The smell of grass and animal reach you, vying for attention with the acerbic scent of bathroom cleansers. All about you people speak, a dull roar of self-involved humans. The warmth of their bodies seems to radiate from them, caressing your cold skin. The Texan is dressed casually in a pair of faded jeans, a leather vest and cowboy boots. He's even got a Stetson, though it's currently resting in his lap. His hard eyes focus on the track as the animals sprint about the outside turn. Without looking away he says "Who'd you bet on?"

SCENE: <i>The Texan at the Tracks</i>		
MENTAL • •	PHYSICAL –	SOCIAL • • •
HINDRANCES	HELP	OTHER
Lying: Cade's prep work (+2 for Cade) Empathy: Cade's an inhuman bastard (-3) Intimidation: Cade's reputation (-3)	Escaping: The crowd (+3) Gambling: Cade's advice (+3)	
STs Keep the characters guessing as to Cade's motives. PCs Figure out what Cade wants.		

My Pretty Princess: Emily Eupraxus Washington

“Could you get that for me, dear?”

Background

Emily Washington wasn't born a vampire, but she was born to be a vampire. She comes from money so old that it was brought over on the Mayflower, and to make it even tastier, half that money is directly convertible to Yen. The only daughter of Jonathan Washington, a distant relation to the president of the same name, and his beautiful wife, the daughter of a Japanese family that thrived in post-war Japan, a girl like Emily Washington was *born* to be pampered. When Jonathan brought his wife and daughter back to Connecticut, he caused *quite* the scandal, at least in the gossip columns. In practice, Jonathan and Kyoki Washington were the talk of the town, invited to every party, on everybody's lips.

Emily was *always* gorgeous. Although she was a shy child (language being a difficulty at first), she blossomed into the most beautiful young woman in the social scene. In a culture of white-bread silver-spoon-slurping no-chins, the beauty in their midst drew every eye.

Just as the eyes were drawn, they were shut. Kyoki was murdered, Jonathan committed suicide. Some sort of bad business about misappropriated funds. A distant uncle, Herbert Eupraxus Washington, completely unknown to Emily, had been granted legal guardianship. Without even meeting her new guardian, Emily was sent off to the finest girls' school in the state, St. Formosus Academy.

Something was just a little *off* about St. Formosus Academy.

Much less an institution of learning and much, much more a prison against the outside world, Emily Washington's time at St. Formosus Academy was spent having the Catechism drilled into her skull, praying the Rosary at every given moment and, because her mother came from a heathen race, told time and time again about the status of her mother, burning in Hell for all eternity. For six years, until the age of nineteen, Emily was a near prisoner. When at last the time came for her to leave, Emily returned to her uncle's mansion.

On a dark, cloudless night in 1961, Emily came upon her ageless uncle Herbert gnawing viciously on the shoulder of a girl she didn't know. Herbert's eyes flared with a terrible hatred, and within the span of seconds the opiate bliss of the Kiss was on Emily's neck. She was drained

dry in precisely 42 minutes and 12 seconds, Herbert later recalled, and at 42 minutes and 15 seconds, Emily awoke a vampire. She was thirsty, she was confused, and she was utterly terrified. She finished off the dead girl Herbert had been nibbling on.

...here comes a chopper to chop off your head
“Uncle” Herbert's untidy feeding habits left a mark upon Emily, literally. To this night, on the side of her neck she bears a black, gnawed out chunk of flesh, hideous to behold, which she hides with scarves, fur wraps, turtlenecks, just about anything she can come up with. *Everybody* knows what's under there, it's hardly a secret. Nobody will bring it up, though.

As it turns out, the Eupraxus name is one of the most prestigious in the extended Daeva family. With some credibility, they claim to go back to shortly before the fall of the Camarilla, where it's said Eupraxus was a prestigious religious leader in Rome. Many Kindred doubt this, but nobody doubts it to Emily's face. Honestly, few will openly admit *anything* to Emily's face. As the latest scion of a legendary family, she's practically royalty, and she's followed wherever she goes by a clique of devoted wannabes and never-weres, all desperate to grab just a hint of her fame.

The Cacophony has long been obsessed with Emily Eupraxus, just dropping the “Washington” for no particular reason. The odd part about it, believe it or not, is that Emily is not quite as fabulous as the cult around her would have her be. Yes, she's got the name, and yes, she's as pretty as they say, but she's quite terrified. Embraced in a state of fear, that emotion has stuck with her permanently. Try as she might, Emily cannot help but fear every vampire she meets.

Herbert, an Invictus bigwig if ever there was one, dotes upon his childe while never pretending to actual parentage, a fact that isn't lost on the Daeva. In a clan where the pretense to family is paramount, Emily's “orphan” personality brings her a great deal of assistance. Even as she steps into the period of her Requiem where she can safely be called an “Ancilla,” Emily remains a permanent neonate, constantly being led to feeding, constantly being forgiven for errors in decorum (which she only really does just to get the attention for it) and constantly being courted as the way into the Invictus Inner Circle. This

fact is not lost on Herbert, who uses his “niece” as a way to find his latest stooges and yes-men. They quickly sign into his service just to be around her, and he throws them away when he’s done.

Just like Uncle Herbert, Emily knows that, in time, she’ll do the exact same thing to whomever she chooses to be her childe. Each Eupraxus lives on the beauty and grace of her successor, since even among the immortal fame is fleeting. Emily is already at the mercy of the Harpies and the Cacophony, already her fame is wearing thin, and she’ll need to prove her actual worth soon enough. Her nights as the pampered permanent neonate are drawing to a close, soon she will be required to join the Danse Macabre, and not merely as the debutante.

Emily Eupraxus Washington in the World of Darkness

While the external personality of Emily Eupraxus is sugar, spice and everything nice, she’s very frightened. She’s also not stupid. She knows she’s just as much a prisoner of Uncle Herbert as she was at St. Formosus, only far more comfortable. Emily also knows her name means business.

The Eupraxus name is solid gold. In cities where they’re established, the Eupraxus are tantamount to royalty. Their pedigree is beyond reproach. The most valuable asset Emily has, despite her fear of what she is and what she will become, is her multiracial background. Frankly, the Invictus needs some new faces if they’re going to appeal to neonates, and Emily has exactly that face. As she moves out of her sire’s shadow, Emily is going to need to prove her worth to two separate audiences: to the neonates the Invictus needs to court, Emily needs to be fabulous and inviting, exactly the kind of Kindred they can be too, if only they join the First Estate; and to the elders, who are overwhelmingly European and tend to be racist.

The ultimate irony, of course, is that the new face of the Eupraxus is as far from ancient as possible, and as truly American as the salad bowl can get. Emily is neither white-bread Anglo nor samurai-sword Japanese; she speaks in an open, friendly tone common to modern Americans and she professes many progressive beliefs. The bloodline of ancient Roman patricians is now the bloodline of modern American celebrity, and the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The Invictus like that last part.

Personality

Think of a new kitten, freshly brought home from the pound. She’s scared, she’s nervous, she’d rather hide

under the couch, but after a few moments, once she’s realized her surroundings are safe, she will approach you. Now imagine that kitten belonging to someone else coming over to your house once in awhile, leaving half eaten dead vermin everywhere, shitting on the carpet, scratching the upholstery, and you can do nothing but smile and nod and clean up after it because it belongs to the Prince of Dubai.

Emily is a bit like that. When she breezes into town, *everybody* comes out to see her. How could they not want to? It’s not every night you meet a Eupraxus, and this one is particularly special. She’s demure, she’s polite, she’s charming and funny and practically perfect in every way. That is until her particular habits become necessary. Benjamin Franklin once noted that after three days dead fish and unwanted guests are surprisingly similar, and Emily Eupraxus Washington can be a hassle. Herbert calls her travels “Progresses,” similar to those taken by Elizabeth I to unsuspecting noblemen, and Uncle Herbert is always in the wings, watching his childe with the vicious eyes of an eagle. Those who please Emily please Herbert, and those who displease Emily *annoy* Herbert. An annoyed Herbert goes to the city’s Inner Circle, he tells two people, they tell two people, they tell two people, and on and on.

Even worse, Herbert and Emily’s “feeding habits” can be a bit of a strain on any domain. They cannot feed subtly, and while they don’t *always* kill their victims, their vessels always end up looking like they’ve been attacked by a Doberman. While on their home turf Herbert and Emily have this problem under control, things can go bottoms up in a night.

Herbert Eupraxus Washington is *not* to be crossed. At well over a century old and at the peak of his financial success, few of his peers in the Invictus would challenge him. If an Invictus member were silly enough to actually ask his real name, they’d find it is eight paragraphs long, in Greek, and punctuated with pauses where their grandsires are probably inserted. Chances are, in fact, that they are already sworn to him or one of his many vassals, and dealing with the combined White Elephants of the Eupraxus family is just another cross the First Estate needs to bear.

Thankfully, everybody knows where they stand in reference to Herbert and Emily Eupraxus Washington. They stand directly in front of them, with their heads bowed, politely taking it up the ass.

Secrets

The Eupraxus bloodline only two secrets: their bite cannot be resealed by any means short of elective plastic surgery,

and there aren't actually that many of them. With Herbert and Emily the only two Eupraxus in North America, there are currently five others scattered throughout the world. If the Invictus really wanted to rid themselves of the family, they could do so fairly swiftly.

The Eupraxus bite is more than a bite. It's like a lumberjack chomping into a turkey leg; it's huge, it's ugly, and there's slurpy, loud, nightmarish ripping and tearing of flesh involved. Because of this, the Eupraxus vampire tends to actually spill far more blood than is necessary, often leading to truly horrific scenes that would put Jack the Ripper into comparison. Shockingly, Emily tries her best not to kill the victim. Herbert no longer cares. If the victim is lucky enough to survive, the family's inborn capability for Dominate can at least make the individual believe there actually was a dog that bit him. Sometimes Emily doesn't even have time to do that. She just leaves the mess to whomever her host happens to be, and Herbert watches like a dutiful stage mother to see just what happens.

The scarcity of the Eupraxus bloodline is almost unique among the Invictus. Although Kindred have trouble realistically assessing their numbers, Invictus Ventrue lineages can number in the small hundreds worldwide, and Daeva "families" tend to be fairly prolific. When Emily is allowed to Embrace, it will be centuries, not decades into her Requiem. Several Eupraxus have abstained from the Embrace until after their first slumbers.

However, unbeknownst to Herbert, Emily already *has* Embraced, once, and the childe that resulted fled the next evening, missing a huge chunk of his inner thigh. Who he is, and where his now, and even whether he still exists, Emily isn't saying. Should Herbert ever find out about it, that will be the end of both Emily and her ill-favored knight.

Rumors

"Eupraxus, you say? Seem to recall reading about him in the Lancea Sanctum library. Roman priest of some kind, the text was vague. I believe he was destroyed during the Black Abbey Massacre. I think. Er, don't quote me on that. If he was as important as the Eupraxus family says he was, wouldn't he be St. Eupraxus?"



The character of Eupraxus is long lost to history, and while there are a few theories rolling around, most agree he *was* a religious leader of some kind, that he *was* tied to the early Lancea et Sanctum, and seems to have been publicly denied for some sort of heresy. Thanks to the Fog of Eternity, nobody actually knows the story, and since the Eupraxus family aren't called the "Eupraxites," it can safely be assumed the bloodline was born out of familial pride, not out of a cult following.

"Emily Eupraxus is sort of a joke, compared to her grandsire, Pierre of Nice. He's been the one responsible for the goading of dozens of other Daeva bloodlines. Between you, me and the ghoul, he's been behind a lot of mutations of the Blood."

While the Eupraxus bloodline proper is fantastically elitist, the Daeva are nothing if not promiscuous. Emily has a runt of her own running around illegally, and the other seven Eupraxus also have unofficial bastards. Herbert has three. Like any good nobility, the bastards of the Eupraxus are led to positions suited to their personalities far away from the main family.

STORY HOOKS

- **Coming to Dinner:** The domain is aflutter over the imminent arrival of Emily Eupraxus. Nobody knows for sure whose haven they are going to squat in while present, but everybody with any desire whatsoever at impressing Invictus royalty should be prepared for a visit.
- **A Lesson in Sharing:** Emily has taken a fancy to your grandmother's heirloom brooch, so much so that she's willing to take it from you. She doesn't really intend to pay for it.
- **Poor Herbert:** Herbert, Emily's guardian angel, is missing. Nobody knows whether he's gone for good or whether he's just testing the waters to see who snaps at Emily's demands, but the rising consensus seems to be that now would be the right time to remove the conceptual crown over the Eupraxus head once and for all...

Emily Eupraxus Washington

Aliases: The Rich Bitch, Tomorrow's Tyrant Today

Clan: Daeva

Bloodline: Eupraxus

Covenant: Invictus

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 1, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 2, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2 (Dancing), Drive 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1 (Petulance), Expression 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4 (Etiquette)

Merits: Striking Looks 4, Danger Sense, Resources 4, Haven Size 3 (Penthouse), Haven Security 4, Haven Location 2 (Mid-town), Herd 3, Retainer 2 (Driver), Retainer 3 (Bodyguard), Invictus Status 3

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 5 (Paranoia)

Virtue: Hope. Someday she'll be good enough not to need Herbert around... she hopes.

Vice: Sloth. Somebody will get it for her, or they'll not wake up the next evening.

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 1

Speed: 6

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Majesty 2, Dominate 1

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

Legacy

Eupraxus (Bloodline)

"Thank you for the invitation. Expect a party of two with fourteen retainers."

Altogether, there are only seven official Eupraxus vampires. Of the seven, three of them are in torpor, and have been for centuries. The remaining four are split between Europe and North America, one being the Prince of Nice, France, his childe being the leader of the Amsterdam Harpy's Guild, with Herbert and Emily Washington being the American installment. The Old World Eupraxus are deeply traditional, to say the least, while the two New World Eupraxus are rapidly becoming the new, fresh face of an old and tired Covenant.

The truth is the regional Invictus *need* the Eupraxus. Like any nobility, it looks as if they don't do much at all, and leech off the work of those around them. Certainly, that's the Carthian impression of them. The reality is that the Eupraxus lend respectability and tradition to the

admittedly underhanded, if not *evil*, activities of the First Estate. Sure you kill babies and grind their bones up into ink for your twisted magical documents, but you've got vampires like *these* who give your activities a glamorous gloss. Even better, when you're not trying to act exactly like them, you can look and sound cool by saying you're *not* like them. It's a win-win situation for the Invictus: the Eupraxus lead easy lives and the Invictus get to use them as trophies. Much like the Crown Jewels of England or the Imperial Regalia of Japan, the Eupraxus are the core around which the rest of the treasury is piled.

Bloodline Disciplines: Majesty, Dominate, Nightmare, Celerity

Nickname: The White Elephants

Weakness: Besides being slaves to their Vices like other Daeva, the Eupraxus cannot seal wounds with a lick, like other vampires. The pleasure of the Kiss remains, however, which is probably what makes the wound that much more horrific for those who suffer from their predations... waking up with a bloody gash on your person is definitely not something you're going to forget. Each vampire Embraced by the bloodline (proper Eupraxus or bastard) bears the wound somewhere on his person for the rest of his unlife.

History and Culture: Different Eupraxus make wildly divergent claims about the line's founder. Who he was isn't all that important... the real secret to the success of the Eupraxus family name is that it exploits the Invictus's pyramidal hierarchy. Every Invictus is sworn to another Invictus in what appears from the outside to be a ludicrous Ponzi scheme wherein the unholy walking corpses of pretty people in suits participate. And, like any Ponzi scheme, the process has to continue endlessly, both at the top and at the bottom. Since the Invictus elders and elites don't really *like* being sworn to somebody anymore more than the Invictus at the bottom, a Eupraxus offers a convenient solution. Being sworn to the Eupraxus is being sworn to a family that won't ever ask anything of you other than what you can already easily provide. Since there are so *few* Eupraxus, their cultural cache is undiluted, and it is by swearing to the Eupraxus that an Invictus mucky-muck can still claim to be sworn to *somebody* without having to swear to somebody who will actually ask something of them.

For the Invictus of the New World who still have connections to the Old, the Eupraxus are like a visit from missed relatives. Their impeccable manners and taste are the ideal of what the First Estate should be about, even if Emily

looks a little, well, "different." Being able to admit that the Invictus can be of any race or gender is terribly important in North America, especially if they are competing for turf with the far more inclusive Carthian Movement.

As for the Invictus on the bottom, the Eupraxus gives a special incentive to work hard. The name "Eupraxus" means "Doer of Good Deeds," and neither Herbert nor Emily Eupraxus forget *any* favor. While they themselves are rarely in the position to repay a favor directly, all they need to do is point the correct elder in the correct direction and the reward is swiftly produced. And that's assuming anything more than a bag of cash is required.

Since Herbert and Emily make "Progresses" around their region several times a year, word gets around. The Eupraxus never try to rally troops or make threats, but *are* generous with money and gossip. Combined with good manners, this buys them the rare privilege of travel throughout a half dozen cities.

As for joining the bloodline, one doesn't "join." Each Eupraxus is allowed one heir, and bastards are frowned upon, although common. Since bastards rarely know who they are, they rarely recognize the bloodline, even if they do manifest it. Allegedly, this has occurred only a handful of times in the two-millennia history of the family. Because of the system of direct lineage, the entire bloodline could be wiped out fairly easily, or, even worse, supposing one of those bastards did realize what he was, the lineage could be debased with undeserving nobodies. It's not worth anybody's time to make that happen right now, but the gossip would be fantastic.

Reputation: Reputation is all the Eupraxus need. It's also most of what they *have*. They have money, sure, they have connections and servants and several houses throughout upper New England. But it's their reputation, the stories of vast rewards for aiding them, that keeps them in demand.

The Lancea Sanctum, which fancies itself the Second Estate, reacts to "Kindred nobility" the same way medieval clergy reacted to the aristocracy. They're eager to be on hand to "bless" the proceedings when Emily and Herbert are around. The Circle of the Crone and the Ordo Dracul generally show up out of curiosity more than anything. As for the Carthian Movement, opinion is torn. Emily, as an Asian-American born of the twentieth century, has the same appeal as did Princess Diana to Americans of the 1980s. While they disagree (in theory) with the pomp and circumstance of the bent-over-backwards Invictus socialites, they *can* see she represents change in even a small way.

The Farman: Dave Carmine

"Everything seems to be in order. Just sign here. These things take between four and six weeks to process. Your best way of thanking me is to tell your friends."

Background

Dave Carmine is of average height, a little chubby, wears plastic rimmed glasses about fifteen years out of date, a blue tie that is tied a little too short, and the hair on his meaty arms matches the substitute teacher mustache under his round nose. Male pattern baldness, pens in his shirt pocket and a briefcase crammed full of gibberish tax forms and legal pads. Meeting Dave Carmine is as far as possible from meeting anything or anyone that could ever be mistaken for the cultural image of a vampire. He's more like an insurance adjuster than an unholy demon of the night. He likes heavy gold and platinum rings, one for each finger, he likes a chunky tie pin, he likes his two-pound diamond encrusted Rolex, but beyond that he exudes an aura of shabby petit-bourgeois.

So what about the stories? Lawyer named Martin Burke, well-to-do suburban professional, hangs himself from the cross-town bridge shortly before dawn on April 15th. His tax affairs are a mess. According to his ex-wife, he had been distant and secretive for months beforehand, and he had even drawn out all his vacation time and taken a three-month sabbatical beginning in September. Rumors had spread he was making trips to Thailand for sex tourism. Some said he'd taken up cocaine. Everyone agreed he was a nice guy who had just made a dumb mistake, likely got caught cheating on his taxes and decided to take the coward's way out.

In 2001, widower Judge Jared Sloan began acting erratically. He sold his two-century-old house, inherited from his father, a local landmark on the register of Historical Places, and bought a condominium in San Dimas. His funds blown on underage prostitutes, he committed suicide by diving in front of a bus on April 15th of that year. A prosperous sociology professor named Per Arne Sandvik was found dead of autoerotic asphyxiation on April 15th, 2003. A new media entrepreneur by the name of Alex Ingram, an otherwise wholesome and happy urban professional, had been stabbed twenty times with a stiletto during what appeared to be a botched heroin deal. A television weatherman, Kenneth Karlsen, died on April 15th, 2005, after slashing his wrist lengthwise. Each death, several hundred miles apart, raised no flags with

authorities. After all, all these men had been found later to be cheating on their taxes. All these men had a secret acquaintance, however.

They shared an accountant, under the table. And all of them played the horses.

Mr. Carmine doesn't have an office. He has a small, out of the way, completely mundane suburban split level just off the interstate. A sign on his yard advertises "Certified CPA" but he doesn't take out ads in the Little Nickel or even have an entry in the Yellow Pages. The only advertising Mr. Carmine has is a single panel in the Racing Form, which goes out every week and is read religiously by men who play the ponies. Every evening, long after the races have finished for the day, you'll find Mr. Carmine in the track lounge, filling out paperwork, making small talk with the day's winners and losers, fishing for his prey.

Dear Tommy, John
and Amanda,

I go now to my death. I
have squandered my many
gifts on gambling. Do not
mourn me, as the place
I am going now could eas-
ily have been avoided had
I not been thinking about
how to feed you.

Love, Daddy

The Ponies and the Players

Carmine's picks *always* win. It's just a fact. Carmine is a Ventrue, and a clever Lord at that. Unlike his clan-mates who play the power politics of city hall or cruise the society balls handing out five-hundred-dollar handshakes, Carmine *owns* the track. This is his domain, and any would-be neonate who wants in on the hustle goes through him. Every couple of years, of course, he

moves on. There are always plenty of suckers to latch onto. Carmine has a secret up his sleeve: he can command the horses to do what he wants them to do. He knows the winner every time. He never bets, naturally. That would be too dangerous.

Like the ponies, Carmine can control the players, too. They're usually half-hearted schmucks who play the ponies with the hopes of making a quick few dollars, never placing bets more than a sawbuck. Sometimes they get in over their heads. Sometimes they bet the farmstead. Sometimes they lose. When they lose, they wind up in the track lounge, crying into a beer. It's there Carmine offers his services. Over a few pints (discreetly stepping out from time to time to vomit up the suds in the restroom), Carmine convinces the loser to give it a second chance. Hell, Carmine will even throw in a few bucks out of the kindness of his heart to keep things going. The next night, after the races are over and the mark has come out in the black, Carmine slaps him on the back and makes a few more suggestions. As expected, Carmine's picks *never* lose. Before long, the mark has tons of money.

There's a hitch, of course.

To: [pasandvik](#)

From: [davecarmine](#)

Subject: RE: Tomorrow's Picks

Arne: I heavily suggest Le Vie En Rose for the third and fourth races tomorrow. She hasn't won in three days, but I gotta tell ya she's giving me a vibe. Come by the lounge tonight, I'll buy you an R&C.

The mark can't go home and explain how he got the money. For whatever reason (a subtle Dominate command, of course), the mark is embarrassed by how he made the money. It's then Carmine presents his card. He's a CPA, another working guy, and he'd be more than happy to work out a way to let the winner keep the cash with no notches on his tax form. Easy! Everything is great! Carmine just happens to have a few pieces of paperwork he needs filled out, he needs a bank account number, a Social Security Number, two pieces of identification, and tells the mark to open a separate bank account without his wife being on it.

Combined with heavy amounts of booze, tons of Conditioning, and a little stupidity on the part of the mark, Carmine suddenly has a handy source of both blood *and* cash. It starts out easy. A few hours a night at the track

lounge, an oblivious few moments in the men's room as Carmine feeds, and a hundred bucks or so a month siphoned from the mark's bank account. As it reaches tax day, the amount transferred increases, and the mark becomes a devoted, brainwashed servant of Carmine. The mark starts ignoring his obligations at work and to family. Every day, every night, he's down at the track, bringing in hundreds of dollars, which he hands over to Carmine. Carmine, with a complete identity stolen at this point, can make enormous purchases, such as houses, vehicles, even guns and prescriptions, all under the name of his helpless devoted gambling addict tool.

Then, starting in January, all the houses have been stripped, flipped and resold, the cash going to Carmine. The mark, at this point, is likely entering into divorce proceedings (yet more of a reason to hang out at the track lounge, right?) and occasionally slips in some talk about putting his "affairs in order." Hints about "taking a long trip" suddenly slip into the mark's conversation. He loses his job, inevitably, all as his life begins to spiral out of control. Occasionally one snaps out of his Conditioning briefly to realize what is going on, but when he heads back to the track lounge to confront Carmine, it's too late. He's drawn back into the web. Carmine has stolen his life, his identity, his money, his hope. By April 15th, Carmine has made the appropriate *mise en scène*, and the mark trots off to his death, suicide by dawn.

At dusk the next night, Carmine is glutted with cash, sometimes millions of dollars, and on his way to the good life as a free spending, high living, well dressed Lord in the next town over. A year or so goes by, he's already spent all the cash like Timon of Athens on speed, and he's forced to do it again. Addicted to high living, trained to steal identities, and bearing that sheepskin in Accounting, he heads off to do what he must.

Personality

There are two sides to Dave Carmine: the quiet, unassuming, professional CPA, and the flashy, annoying, high-rolling spender. When he's sitting quietly in the track lounge, he's usually holding a rum and coke, passively reading the racing forms, occasionally raising his eyes to find a mark. Once he finds it, he's locked on like a laser. Because his feeding habits are intrinsically tied to the squeezing of cash out of his victims, it's a win-win for him. He's willing to say or do anything to get his fix.

When he's living high on the hog, though, Dave is not merely a poseur, he's downright intolerable. When he's got cash, he's a modern Trimalchio. Spend, spend, spend. He gives gifts to anybody and everybody, throws ludicrously

elaborate parties and is always surrounded by mortal sycophants desperate for a taste of the money bug.

Secrets

Dave is, without a doubt, deeply sociopathic. Although he is physically unattractive and looks like an extra from **The Office**, Dave Carmine can squeeze blood out of a turnip. He's not content with the mere money of his victims, he wants their absolute servitude and their blood.

Dave's biggest secret? He's not dead, legally speaking. He's still got a Social Security number, he still has his driver's license, and he's got a stack of credit cards with his name on them. He's got collection agencies following him, he's got private investigators on his ass, and the second he tries to open a new bank account the courts have a lien prepared to seize his money. Why doesn't he fake his death? Truth be told, Dave doesn't care. He

wants to live like a millionaire on a bender forever. It just won't be that way however, and the wolves are at the door.

Rumors

"All I know about Carmine is what I heard from Tommy the Haunt down at Joe's Poker Room. Word is, Carmine won a bet against some high-hat member of the wizards, some crazy Dumbledore-lookin' fuck named Black Heed, who runs a strip joint down on 4th. Heed promised Carmine all the luck he could ever need if he answered a riddle. Carmine answered the riddle, sure as fuck. He's got a guardian angel now, that's for sure. I'd never play with him, and I warn you to do the same."

Utter gibberish, of course, but Carmine loves to spread the rumor that he's "blessed" in some way. Sometimes it's a wizard. Sometimes it's a fairy godmother. Sometime somebody's going to hear it and be pissed.

STORY HOOKS

- **Gift Horse:** Dave approaches the coterie with a no-lose proposition: that the horse will come in. In fact, he's willing to guarantee it. All they have to do is lay down some payola up front, and he'll take care of the rest.
- **Ahead of the Game:** The Nosferatu Priscus is seen huffing out of a gathering where Dave is bragging and flashing around his latest acquisitions. How did Dave know about last night's Priscus Council? How did he know the Nosferatu Priscus just had his child staked for sassing the Sheriff? And what is the Priscus going to do about it?
- **Another Brush with the Fuzz:** Dave has just sidled in on a local undercover police detective. Now the cops are tipped off to his scam, and he's got to get out of town quickly. He's banging at the coterie's door, begging for help, and the cops are watching him do it from around the corner...

Dave Carmine

Clan: Ventrue

Bloodline: None

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3 (Accounting), Computer 1, Investigation 2, Science 3 (Statistics)

Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3 (Horses), Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts 3 (Gamblers, Jockeys, Accountants), Resources 2 (Remember: This is just the cash he regularly has on hand. This number is likely to vary wildly depending upon his latest score.), Haven Size 1, Haven Security 1

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 5 (Narcissism, Irrationality)

Virtue: Hope. That next score is always around the corner! Why save today when tomorrow is going to bring a fortune?

Vice: Greed. It's not just about money. It's about the blood he can squeeze from his victims as he steals their cash.

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Dominate 4, Animalism 3

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

Devotions: Leader of the Pack, Greed

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Small Pistol	1(L)	1	-	4

Legacy

Devotion: Leader of the Pack

(Animalism •••, Dominate ••)

Animalism and Dominate are two Disciplines that work differently, one upon animals and one upon sentient beings. However, with this clever devotion, Dave has discovered a way to choose which horse will be the winner in a race. By using the ability to summon a group of horses (or, in this case, get their attention), he can implant a group command into them. This power works only upon one kind of animal, such as horses or dogs, but could not work with a mixed group of animals, such as rats, cats and dogs in a room.

Type: Instant

Roll: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism – Highest Composure among the group of animals

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dramatic Failure: All animals present violently resist the presence of the vampire, possibly even attacking the user. Horses may buck and attempt to trample the vampire, while dogs might try to bite and maul the vampire.

Failure: The power fails and none of the animals pay attention.

Success: All animals calm and come to attention, looking toward the vampire using the devotion for guidance. In turn, each animal must be addressed by the vampire individually, and is told which of the group to obey. In the case of horses, Dave would enter the stable, activate the devotion, and select one horse to be the “leader.” The horse chosen to be the leader is given a single instruction, such as “Win tomorrow’s race,” and all the other animals will do what is necessary to help that animal achieve that command, such as deliberately throwing the race. In the case of predatory mammals, such as dogs or wolves, this power can be used to build a pack mentality where one wasn’t before. Other commands, such as “Maul anyone who enters the property,” “Guard my haven from intruders” or “Accompany this man to his desired location” are all possible, although self-destructive commands such as “Jump off this cliff” would not be. This power fades at sundown of the following day.

Exceptional Success: The pack of animals remains a pack until the vampire wills the pack connection away.

Leader of the Pack costs 15 XP to purchase.



Scene: Gambling Addicts Anonymous

Overview: Dave Carmine has just hit town, he's made a few quick scores off the local gambling addicts, and now he's moving onto more sustainable prey: Gambling Addicts Anonymous. The Prince has declared Dave to be a troublemaker, and while he has refrained from an actual Blood Hunt, your coterie has been assigned to track Dave down and tell him to hit the road. You've tracked him to Gambling Addicts Anonymous, a small meeting in the basement of a local Presbyterian church. Dave can be seen smirking at you devilishly as you enter, hoping that you too, perhaps, will catch the bug. The meeting is due to last another four hours. As your coterie sits down and waits for the meeting to end, you notice another figure stomp down the stairs.

Description: The basement of the Presbyterian church is lit by flickering fluorescent bulbs, decorated with cheap faux-wood paneling and orange shag carpeting that hasn't seen a cleaning in forty years. Everyone is seated on folding chairs in a circle, with several empty chairs you and your group can take. The leader of the group, Mrs. Chesterton, invites you in and it is up to you and your coterie to pretend to be gambling addicts. She is a kindly old geriatric who spends the meeting knitting something purple and lengthy, while casting matronly glances at everyone who speaks. Painted on the wall in big red letters is "JESUS SAVES."

The man who just entered the room is middle-aged, stocky but attractive, and staring knives at Dave Carmine. With a successful Wits + Investigation roll, you know this is Detective Tony Moore from downtown, and he's here to arrest Dave. Your characters will have to successfully keep Dave from causing a scene, and then get him out of the way of Detective Moore, all the while pretending to be gambling addicts.

Storyteller Goals: Emphasize what the effects of Humanity can do when forced to talk to humans on a face to face basis. Play up the oblivious nature of Mrs. Chesterton, and emphasize Detective Moore's suspicion by placing him between the players and the door. A clever way out of the situation could be the highlight of the chronicle, even in a small scene such as this. Once Dave is out of the church, he'll listen to what the characters have to say and ditch town. If they threaten him, he might become very vindictive and wreak a little havoc in town before he leaves. If they make a scene with Detective Moore, bring him back later in the chronicle. He could easily become a recurring foil if the characters let him be.

Character Goals: Pretend to be a gambling addict long enough to get Dave out of that church safely. He cannot be allowed to be arrested. Avoid violence at all costs and don't hesitate to use unobtrusive Disciplines to get the job done.

SCENE: <i>Gambling Addicts Anonymous</i>		
MENTAL •	PHYSICAL •	SOCIAL • • •
HINDRANCES	HELP	OTHER
Unfamiliar crowd -1		
STs Emphasize what the effects of Humanity can do when forced to talk to humans on a face to face basis.		
PCs Pretend to be a gambling addict long enough to get Dave out of that church safely.		

The Guru: Krystof "Bugman" Wocjik

"Let me just pull that up..."

To: [GangWolf156](#)

From: [BugmanExperiment](#)

RE: His brain hurts

Dear Gene:

Thanks for your query.

This sounds like something out of a John Carpenter flick, but there's an amoeba, basically a unicellular sac of goo, called the *Naegleria fowleri*. It attacks humans exclusively, commonly found in warm bodies of fresh water in 3rd world nations, kills within 7 days by drilling into the brain. In the 200 cases of it found in the United States in the last 80 years, only two victims have survived. Congratulations, your ghoul's vacation to Cabo brought back a little visitor. Can I have his brain?

Best regards,

Bugman

Meeting the "Bugman" is a little unnerving, without a doubt. He's the anti-suave. Suave, conceptually, makes a B-line out of the room when the Bugman is around. He's not short by any stretch, but even though he's over six feet tall, he just feels short. He hunches. The Bugman isn't a doctor, he isn't a scientist, hell, he isn't a trained professional of any sort. So the twist is obvious: there's not a damned thing the Bugman doesn't know something about. If he doesn't know much about it, he'll find it for you. The Bugman can find out what the weather's like on Pluto's fourth moon next Tuesday, and the best part is he'll do it for free. 'Course, you have to be his friend...

Background

Krystof Wocjik is what you might call a "secret weapon." He's so secret his name isn't spoken in public; he's called just "the Bugman." His email address is spread on secret Carthian Internet message boards, on IRC, spread along via Carthian Nomads from town to town, and sooner or later *everyone* needs him. The Bugman is the Carthian Movement's information storehouse, and he's personally in charge of more top secret information than nearly any Kindred on the planet. His politics are vague, and he seems to find common ground with just about any kind of Carthian. Usually, that makes them feel like they need a shower.

His haven, a subterranean bomb shelter just outside Baltimore, is a literal *museum* of Carthian history. In his desk drawer is what he believes is the last remaining copy of the *De Graaf Manifesto* in Francesca De Graaf's longhand. On the walls are crammed framed (somewhat haphazardly, since it's not like you can take these things to Michael's for a professional job) copies of manifestoes, charters, constitutions and contracts. There are rows upon rows of obscure books covering nearly any subject of need to Kindred, and most specifically Carthian Kindred. Books dangerous to own, such as *Rites of the Dragon* and *Second Eschaton* are made available on .PDF to anyone needing a copy. A particularly prized book, *De Roerum Lamiae*, an account of the fall of the Camarilla written in Byzantium by a survivor, is locked away *very* carefully in a fireproof, bombproof, lead encased safe under the floorboards. The Bugman seems to know everything.

Of course, only a few get to visit the haven. Wocjik has a few local Baltimore Carthians on hand to scan and retrieve the documents into a central database, but besides this handful, nobody even knows it exists outside of the Covenant. Wocjik is a mystery even to the locals, and his Blood seems to be a bit *odd*. Whispers circulate that Wocjik is half Mekhet, half Nosferatu, a one-off freak never meant to be. The few Dragons who need his services (and they occasionally do, but the price is usually outrageous) suspect he is the result of an experiment gone hideously wrong.



The Bugman in the World of Darkness

The Danse Macabre is an intricate weave of lies, half truths, puzzles and the tugging of the Predator's Taint. As the youngest Covenant, the Carthian Movement is often at an enormous disadvantage: few elders, no sacred texts, no oral tradition to speak of. So to those who know about him, the Bugman might as well be the Oracle of Delphi. It's for that reason that even Carthians are loath to share much about him to other Carthians. If just one Carthian in a city knows how to contact the Bugman, that one Carthian is suddenly the Covenant's inlet. If two Carthians know how to contact the Bugman, both know of the other's secret, and it's just a matter of time until everyone knows how to contact the Bugman, and by then the Bugman has been known to be a bit cantankerous about frivolous requests. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Three people can keep a secret if two of them are dead."

The Bugman may be willing to help creatures other than vampires, though he's not going to do it out of the goodness of his... you know. He's been known to work with some of the seedier witches of Baltimore, and he's bought Artifacts from all manner of awful beings. Many of them on credit...

Personality

The Bugman has the air of "perverted college professor" to him, sometimes wearing shabby tweed hunting jackets, sometimes wearing hunting vests. Since it's mostly only the local Baltimore Carthians who actually see him, nobody really knows what he's like when he's alone, although rumors fly that he's often nude when filing his bugs and books. When forced to emerge from his haven, the Bugman is brutally socially awkward, often making off color jokes, dropping in some casual racism and then trailing off into some obscure piece of trivia. While his English is impeccable, the Bugman's Polish accent can sometimes make him sound a little like Peter Lorre, and Carthians who know him frequently do a cruel impression of him behind his back. His black eyes, his signature feature, are a great embarrassment to him, and he hides them behind huge sunglasses a la Jackie Onassis.

When contacted online, the Bugman is elusive and requires some sort of verification of Carthian bona fides before getting to the meat of the matter. A single question can sometimes take weeks of back-and-forth just to get to the answer, and although this seems a hassle, there is a method to the madness. Besides proving the Carthian is,

in fact, a Carthian, the Bugman is gathering information about how various Experiments are carrying on all over the world. Possessed of Eidetic Memory, the Bugman can then later add this information to one of several hundred ledgers he keeps in his possession, written in inscrutable half-Polish gibberish, to which he can refer later if called upon to give advice on how to run an Experiment. Often, the actual question itself is never even answered, as what the asker was actually looking for was just advice on how to proceed. The Bugman is eccentric and an extroverted introvert. He won't answer some questions but will pour vomitously on others.

Secrets

The business of knowing, especially among beings who do whatever it takes to keep others from knowing what they know, can lead one to some peculiar situations. What the Bugman *doesn't* want known is that he is not exactly Mekhet, not exactly Nosferatu. Nobody can answer what he is. For a man who seems to know every secret, the one secret the Bugman can't answer is just what the hell he is. If pressed, of course, he'll say Mekhet, since he figures he'd rather not be known as a Nosferatu. He *does* suffer from the Nosferatu weakness, as well as the Mekhet aversion to fire and sunlight. In only a single text has he found any reference to anything that describes himself, but the actual name is not referred to except as "*włpierz*," which could just as easily be translated, as it is elsewhere, as "vampire".

The only clue the Bugman has to go on is his black eyes. Stories of demonic followers of the Slavic demon, Czernobog, hint at a similar deformity, although the tales seem to describe faerie raids more than pure vampire antics. To cement the connection between the Bugman and Czernobog, every year on Walpurgisnacht, May 1st, the Bugman goes into a mysterious fugue, waking up in his haven the next sundown, completely unaware of what the hell happened. The only "souvenir" of this fugue is some piece of human body part, some years it's a finger, some years a foot, one year it was a penis, and two years

ago, it was the head of a young blonde girl. Out of respect, the Bugman does what he is trained to do, and that is place them in a jar of formaldehyde, making a spot on the shelves for them. Coincidentally, the First of May is a commonly celebrated Carthian holiday, as May Day has long been connected to the labor and socialist movements. These May Day fugue states distress Wocjik immensely, so much so that he can grow increasingly erratic and snappish the closer he gets to the first of May, convincing some of his fellows that he holds some kind of political grudge toward the holiday.

Rumors

"There's not just one Bugman, there's about five of them, spread out over the globe. They're gathering our info, they're putting it together, and they're going to auction it off. This is fucking true, don't believe a word you hear about him being a Carthian. They're going to sell our information off to the Vicks, and if the Vickies don't buy, VII sure as hell will."

Certainly not true, of course, but this one makes the rounds fairly frequently on the Internet message boards and chain emails. Often, the name of a well-known Carthian rabble-rouser from two counties over is attached, just to add authenticity to it. Shortly thereafter, this makes the rounds...

"Please disregard the previous message. Apparently this list has been compromised. You will be contacted shortly regarding the new secured list. I can assure you the Bugman is very real, that he is a Carthian in good standing and there is nothing to worry about. To the Invictus Birdies reading this, you have been caught, and you will be found."

...which, understandably, doesn't clear the air any at all. Like any good secret, how does one know whether the rebuttal is real or the rebuttal to the rebuttal is the real one? The answer, most depressingly to all those stupidly optimistic Carthians out there, is that nobody really knows. Perhaps the Bugman doesn't exist at all. Perhaps he's already been caught and flayed alive. Perhaps he's switched sides. Worse, maybe he's stopped giving a shit and is now answering questions for anybody.

STORY HOOKS

- **Silence on the Line:** The Bugman's answers have stopped coming, and his emails are being returned as undeliverable. Worse yet, the Dragons of the domain seem to be unresponsive, if not volatile, to Carthians at Elysiums.
- **Exodus:** The Bugman announces via the Carthian communication networks that he is about to undertake a great research trip to New Mexico, keeping his motives to himself. He'll need help to pull it off, and that's why he's calling in favors. Especially in the characters' city...

Krystof "Bugman" Wocjik

Aliases: The Guy with the Little Bottles, Mothman, The Abominable Dr. W

Clan: Unknown (suffers from both Mekhet and Nosferatu weaknesses)

Bloodline: Unknown

Covenant: Carthian Movement

Attributes

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 5 (Research), Computer 2, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 3 (Biology)

Physical Skills: Larceny 1, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 3 (Freak Show), Socialize 2, Streetwise 3

Merits: Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven Size 3, Haven Security 4, Resources 2, Contracts 5 (Animal Breeders, Animal Control, Librarians, Nerds, Occultists), Language 2 (Polish), Language 2 (Latin), Language 1 (Spanish), Language 1 (French), Carthian Status 4

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 5 (Fugue: Triggers on May Day; Irrationality)

Virtue: Prudence. The Bugman has a level head, and is more than happy to share his knowledge with others.)

Vice: Gluttony. The Bugman is hungry for knowledge at the expense of other activities.

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Obfuscate 2, Animalism 1

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

Legacy

Merit: Bugman Network Membership

(●●● or ●●●●●)

Once you're in, you're in. The Bugman knows you. The Bugman knows you're real and the Bugman knows you're worth knowing. This is a coveted position. It's also a precarious one. If a Carthian ends up bothering the Bugman too much, he will quickly grow frustrated and cut the cord.

At 3 dots, the hook-up is fairly basic. The character can email the Bugman up to three times a month and get an answer to something obscure, although not mad, bad or dangerous to know. In mechanical terms, this allows the character access to any piece of information covered by any Mental Skill, assuming it is capable for research to uncover such a thing.

The answers aren't always simple. The Bugman could send a .PDF of a relatively obscure text or send the character a package of xeroxed pamphlets he thought might be interesting. In fact, sometimes even without asking, the Bugman may surprise the character with an odd book or packet of information, just because it seemed "what I know you're into."

At 5 dots, the Bugman can find just about anything for the character, even *incredibly* dangerous shit. He could provide a handbook written by Anoushka Tepes (written in mirror writing and copied in Greek) on how to learn the Coil of Banes, or a fifteenth-century textbook written in Persian about how to deal with a stranger from the wrong side of the sky. It's hard to tell what he'll come up with, except that, in some form, it's an answer to the character's question. The Bugman trusts his contacts not to misuse the information, and that trust can be revoked at any time.

Drawback: While it seems as if the Bugman can get anything for a character, remember that he's not infallible. Learning something from the Bugman might have disastrous consequences, especially if the information is flawed or inherently dangerous. He's also not as discreet as he thinks he is; using the Bugman for government records, for instance, could be very dangerous.

The Mistress of Funtopia: H. M. Delphine Regina Imperiatrix Sweet Queenie Dearest

“Darling, look at you, puffed up and strutting, your spurs all shiny and cockadoodle doing—we so have to use that, I think. All that passion is not to be wasted, and there’s few things sexier than a man all hard clenched up.”

Background

Meeting her is every time like meeting a stranger. Yet she recalls you in unerring detail, your loves, hates, hang-ups, fashion sense, favorite music, movie and childhood pet. You are cataloged, filed, labeled, and all your parts traded like a paper doll’s clothes in her mind, as she shuffles your persona like a poker champ dealing stud. This time, she’s radiant in vintage evening attire, next time she looks like a punk rock gun moll. Once, she was the mousy librarian, shy and faltering. Another, every inch the spoiled rich whore. And her eyes are razors, flensing you to your essence, and clothing you in new flesh, new identity, and she cares for you only so long as you remain fascinating to her.

Dearest is also deeply unnerving. If people aren’t a little put off by the fact that she’s perpetually a stranger, they’ll notice the other thing. The sense that someone’s looking over their shoulder. That there’s something crawling just below their cheek.

The Mistress of Funtopia’s personal history is a nearly quantum uncertainty—her own obsessive study (and manipulation) of reputation and fame is not reserved only for others—like the scientists of old, she experiments upon herself constantly. She’s a shark, and the seas she swims are those of fame. She herself is justly famous as king-maker and king-breaker, image consultant and character assassin. Vampires are social creatures, sometimes desperate for any acknowledgment by others, even if the actual company of other Kindred can be ugly and mean—the drowning man will climb his fellow’s back to get a gulp of air. The Mistress is famous for being famous... and for making others famous as well.

Dubious Genesis

The most common story of her origins places her in Berkley during the ’sixties, her experimentation with psychedelics, then recruitment to the CIA’s MKULTRA program, and a tawdry affair with Timothy Leary—there’s allegedly an 8mm film of the Mistress in a drug-fueled sex sandwich with Leary and Hunter S. Thompson. Flower child turned CIA spook turned counter-culture revolutionary? Honestly, it’s not the most outlandish rumor about her.

All those drugs might explain her hallucinogenic qualities. The Mistress has never had a flashback, because she’s inflicting them upon other people.

A Queen, her Kingdom

It’s fairly certain that during the ’sixties she founded the Funtopia Collective (later, The Funtopia Foundation, then Funtopia Enterprises LLC, then Funtopia Network), a group of experimental artists, thinkers, social theorists and chemists, which quickly transformed with her Embrace into her coterie and then a self-declared independent geography-free domain—of which she is, essentially, Prince. Funtopia has changed and evolved with the media, and now exists primarily on the Internet, where it’s an online “home” for many cacophonoms and ’net vampires. While no great web maven herself, the Mistress acknowledges the sound practice of outsourcing. She enthralls and Embraces for skill rather than beauty. Even viichan began as a Funtopia experiment, an anonymous place where Kindred could flaunt the First Tradition.

Tonight you shine, baby

The Mistress is the bitch-queen of modernity, the whirlwind that wrecks the trailer park of tradition. She made her

bones in the smiling viciousness of LA's nighttime dance, where the obligatory air kiss can turn into a bite just like that. She's pioneered a politic of aggressive vapidness: that *nothing* matters but what others believe about you. Style without substance, reputation without merit, renown without accomplishment. Nothing matters but what others think about you, so commanding that most vital element is an awesome power. Her backgrounds in PR and fashion are obvious from her skill, but her uncanny insights into human and Kindred needs psychology suggest a more studied upbringing. Her knowledge of deep cultural history seems older still. Yet her easy acceptance of modern technology and media—particularly the Internet—hints at a more recent origin.

What's certain is that she's a goddess of advertising. She doesn't sell widgets, she sells the *desire* for widgets (and for "widget" you can insert "hit man" or "worthy champion" or "ideal husband" or especially "just and rightful ruler"). Humans are driven by needs and the instincts evolved to feed them—that's why puppies and heroin are such easy sells. Puppies trip our instincts to cuddle and coo to babies, and heroin ejaculates pure pleasure into our brains. And compared to vampires, human instincts are a stomp in the mosh pit. The Beast hungers, it rages, it cowers, it dominates, and it drives action harder than any merely human urge. Selling to vampires means knowing the Beast. It means *using* the Beast. It means being utterly and shamelessly cynical and duplicitous.

Sweet Queenie Dearest in the World of Darkness

Your reputation is, in the end, all you really have in the hard world. The trust, respect, fear or gratitude of your fellows is a means of survival. Some monsters gaze into your eyes, kick down the doors of your brain and ransack the place, moving the furniture around, pissing into your coffee cup. Some monsters control what you think. Queenie couldn't give a fat fuck what you think. She's interested instead in what everyone else thinks of you.

When the Mistress of Funtopia is in play, the very stuff of reputation and renown is in flux—opinions shift, memes spread, and names previously unknown are on every lip, bending every tongue. Yet others, well... how easily they slip your mind now. Fame is her sword and shield, weapons she might be persuaded to wield for rather than against you.

In the Kindred community she has a duality, inspiring both anger and awe. Her consultation has saved



the reigns of weak princes, but it's also toppled the rules of a couple of strong ones. She simply does not travel quietly—upon arriving in a domain she'll demand the prince who's securing her services to cede part of her realm for the establishment of a temporary Funtopia-in-Exile, ruled by the Mistress herself, with her entourage enjoying the domain for the duration of her stay. The large sums of money are almost incidental when weighed alongside this sacrifice of pride (but then, perhaps that's the point).

If she's not working for the prince, she'll certainly attract a great deal of official attention, but few rulers wish to antagonize her, especially when she obeys the forms and local edicts with such deliberation.

Her arrival heralds changes in fortune... but whose? It's almost never obvious.

She's not as widely known outside Kindred circles, but she's got contacts with mortal PR firms in New York and LA both, and sometimes works to rehab celebrity reputations. If the rumors are to be believed (and at this point, you really should know better) she's plotting a course for Lindsay Lohan that will see her youthful wholesome fame annihilated, leading to a surprise Oscar win for her role as the abused wife of a famous historical figure. If she wins, it's six figured and the undying head of John the Baptist. If she loses, she has to wear the same clothing for a whole year. She's *extremely* motivated to win.

As odd as the alliance seems, she's had several fruitful contacts in Lupine circles. She's realized werewolves are as obsessed with reputation and fame (in their own quaint way) as the most rapid jet-set starlet.

Her other—and more tenuous—contact is with a beleaguered group in Seattle claiming to have survived occult kidnapping and transformation. They approached her seeking help destroying their own fame, removing them utterly from the notice of their betters. She's fascinated by the concept of *annihilating* reputation, rendering someone not just inconsequential but unable to ever become someone of renown. If she does master a technique like this, she'll become the bane of every leader, celebrity and reputable professional in the world.

Personality

What direction is the wind blowing? The Mistress of Funtopia changes personalities as often as she changes clothes, but she's always glib and clever (within the context of her persona), always striking in some way, always memorable in word and deed. If a dozen people were asked about her, they'd give oddly revealing portraits of her personality, indicating she was a lot like them.

Her trick is to ape the prejudices of those with whom she interacts, just short of being obvious. She acts to inspire their Virtue and tempt their Vice, and so mirrors the personalities and drives of her audience.

What this creates is a startling sense of familiarity when speaking with her, even after meeting her for the first time, or after speaking with her after a radical shift in persona and style.

Secrets and Rumors

Separating what is true about the Mistress of Funtopia from is believed to be true is perhaps truly impossible. Efforts to do so meet active resistance from the flow of new and more exotic retakes on the truth emerging from the Mistress's own rumor mills—she plays with her own reputation and fame as readily as those of her clients. (What's said about a dealer who takes her own drug?) These might all be true, none might be true, or they might be true *today*.

"There's no such person. How could there be? I've got a man who swears she was in LA while I watched her slink around my Prince's residence here in Boston. She IS Funtopia."

If true, then the reason the Mistress changes clothes and personalities so often is that she's a front for a whole group—perhaps the Funtopia Collective (or whatever true group hides behind that mask). What would such a group's agenda be? They'd have enormous influence. Were such a group to be uncovered, the mighty could see it only as a threat.

"Here's the thing, right? Here's the thing. It's a puzzle, dig? She's encoding a message in the shape of Kindred society, her clothes, her manner, it's like the key to the cipher. You got to watch her, you got to write it all down, right? You got to decode it because she's up to something, and she's testing to find the one worthy enough to join her."

A stalker's ramblings, or is there some truth in this one? It pops up surprisingly often, seeming to follow her in her gypsy wandering—the mutterings of some obsessive, crackedass-crazy from staring so hard at the enchanting mysterious fame-maven. What is she doing anyhow? Take everything you can learn about her and stick it to the wall of your apartment with little strings and lines connecting the bits of evidence. Don't wash yourself or sleep for a few weeks. Stare at your crazy wall, that sense of *something* going on behind all the nonsense and show begins to beat out a code on the inside of your skull.

"Then, she totally lost her shit. The goth party girl vanished, and she was spitting and cursing in a thick Jersey accent. She packed up that night, and was gone before morning and now she won't set foot in Vegas."

Sometimes the Mistress's personae shatter, and a furious foul-mouthed Jersey girl emerges. It's usually an innocuous remark or even a compliment that sets her off. Does this imply something about her true origins, or could this outburst just another mask beneath the first? Walk up to her and say, "Andrew sends his love," and see what happens.

"Yeah, you heard of me I see. Fucking wonderful. That explains the blade. Look, I know you've heard some shit, but I swear I'm not the most vicious diabolist on the East Coast. I didn't kill my sire. He's doing just fine. I can give you his cell number. Just put the blade away and... FUCK!"

If the Mistress decides she doesn't like you, she'll make you famous. Before you know it, you'll have paparazzi (and snipers) camping out on your lawn, people asking how it is to date Ashley and where you buried Mary-Kate's corpse. If you piss her off a little bit, your new fame will only in Kindred circles. Piss her off a whole lot, and the mages, werewolves, changelings and, worst of all, mortals, will be snapping shots or taking them.

H. M. Delphine Regina

Imperatrix Sweet Queenie Dearest

Aliases: Madame Clignotement, Renommeemörder, Cassia (or Cassius) Cryptogasm, rumormonger59

Clan: Nosferatu

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 4 (People's Dirty Secrets), Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3 (A Deal You Can't Refuse), Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3 (Lies You Want to Believe)

Merits: Retainer 1, Status 4, Fame 2, Allies 3, Contacts 3

Flaws: Obsessive (Experiment with Other People's Reputations)

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Fortitude. Sweet Queenie Dearest knows what's best and she sticks to it, especially when that means sticking it to somebody else.

Vice: Pride. The Mistress has her eye on you, yes she does, and she knows just what's good for you, even if you don't. Her work is her life (or her life is her work), and she is

very proud of her persona, and very proud of the persona she crafts for you. Don't fail to live up to the expectations she's crafted for you. Or else.

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Majesty 4, Nightmare 4

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Devotions: Whisper Campaign, Eye Catcher, Feed the Hungry Eyes

Legacy

Devotion: Whisper Campaign

(Majesty ••••, Nightmare ••••)

With this power, the vampire may dramatically alter the nature of a target's reputation, warping her notoriety or granting the target her fifteen minutes. A sinner can become known for saintly reserve and calm. A murderer can be thought innocent. Shifting well-known reputations is more difficult, but no reputation is safe from a skilled practitioner of this art.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize + Majesty - target's Composure + Fame Merit

Action: Extended (Consuming Pace)

Over the course of days or weeks, the vampire spreads rumors carefully crafted to turn opinions, and invested with a subtle measure of irrationality and striking certitude. When ten successes are reached these rumors become self-perpetuating, and the target gains 1 Fame and, if desired, the Notoriety Flaw. The nature of this fame is entirely up to the vampire to decide, but to create fame for a target outside her normal community requires an additional five successes per point of Fame granted.

Simply shifting the nature of the target's existing fame requires only five total successes.

The reputation-altering effects of the Whisper Campaign are effectively permanent, and persist until active efforts are made to rehab the altered reputation. Fame created with this devotion will fade if the target does nothing to earn further attention or reinforce the fame for a month per point of Fame.

Example: Her Majesty, the Mistress of Funtopia, grows enchanted with the maverick revenge schemes of Morris Spiegel, and decides to make him justly famous for them. She uses this devotion, and accumulates ten successes over several days of

rumor-mongering, but decides to make things more delicious still by extending Morris's fame beyond the Kindred community. She wants him on TV, and so accumulates another five successes. When Morris arrives in Boston, he finds a composite artist's sketch of himself on the evening news, branded with the title "the Faircourt firebug."

Devotion: Eye Catcher

(Majesty ••, Nightmare ••)

Eye Catcher overcomes social anonymity in much the same way flamethrowers overcome thatch huts. The target of this devotion (who may or may not be willing or even aware of its effects) becomes *remarkable* to all witnesses, his every action and word somehow fascinating and, more than that, memorable. People forget thousands of things about other people every day—nobody who sees the target of Eye Catcher forgets him. The value of this attention and this vivid recollection is neutral: to someone trying to maintain a low profile it's a bane, to someone trying to raise his profile or earn (or change) a reputation it's most certainly a boon.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty – target's Composure + Obfuscate + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

A successful use of this power renders the target unforgettable for a scene. An exceptional success imbues him with this glamour for an entire night (until he next sleeps). The successes rolled on Eye Catcher act as a penalty to rolls intended to avoid detection or go unnoticed or unremarked, but as a bonus to rolls for actions intended to make an impression or be remembered. The target of this devotion leaves a strong impression upon any who encounter him, be that an audience, a date, a potential ally, the bank teller being robbed, or a victim chosen to slake thirst.

Devotion: Feed the Hungry Eyes

(Majesty •••, Nightmare ••••)

Even when we're alone, we're not—the imagined presence of all those we know and whose opinions motivate us looms still, even when they are physically distant. Humans are social beasts, and the Kindred share this dependency upon the attention of others. Expectations are a binding, conjuring and direction behavior, forcing action and mocking free will. The roles into which we are cast become who we are. By manipulating the way a target is treated, Feed the Hungry Eyes trains the target to conform to a new role.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Nightmare – target's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Instant

This power produces a profoundly disquieting effect, ranging in subtly from a vague impression to a sanity-rending shift in the way the target is treated. Feed the Hungry Eyes changes the way people who know the target treat her. The power is immediate, but the long-term effects of the devotion take awhile to fully manifest. With a successful application of this power, the target is treated as if she is known to be significantly different in one or more major ways—different Virtues or Vices, possessing mental or social Flaws, Derangements, a lower or higher Morality, different politics, different allegiances, prejudices, opinions or beliefs. A fanatical member of the Lancea Sanctum might be treated as if she were an apostate reformer, a strong supporter of the Prince's regime as if she were a dangerous radical.

Each time these altered perceptions afflict the target in some way, she must pay 1 Willpower to overcome the urge to conform to the expectations. Until she's paid Willpower points equal to the total successes rolled when using this power, the effects remain. If she's ever unable to pay the Willpower to resist, she changes to conform to expectations—changing her personality, beliefs or core values to suit.



Chapter Two: Ravenous Outlaws

— 22 —

Heretics

He seemed shocked at what he had done. The parents in the house were dead, but the teenage girl was still breathing, bubbles of blood coming up through her nose and lip. The blood was good for the room, honestly. Those shades of pink everywhere. Violet, too. An assault on the senses, all made so much more palatable by the streaks and spatters of red.



Eddie did not seem to agree. He looked around, wide-eyed at what he'd done. He looked at me with eyes I've seen before. That pleading stare. Help me. Kill me. Save me. **Something, anything.**

"Maybe we can save the girl," he said to me, not even knowing who I was or where I'd come from. I nodded. I lied: of course we can save the girl. She'll be fine. I looked to her, and her broken body lay amidst the shattered remnants of her room—shards from porcelain theater masks (too familiar to me), broken dolls, a shattered drawer.

"I know you," Eddie said. "We all know you."

He asked me if it was true. The way they brought me back, *enticing* me to return. I didn't say, I only cocked my head and pretended not to hear.

Then he said something fascinating to me: "The demon says it's true."

I just nodded. Demon. We all have our demons, I said, and he said his was real, and I explained that they were all real. Whatever his delusions, I cannot be bothered. I had been hunting Eddie for nights, now. It's been months since my return to the city, and I'm still only growing acclimated to everything around me. Worse, I'm desperate to find a handhold in this self-congratulating circle of dogs. Birch thinks I owe him and his covenant my fealty, but how is that, again? Most of them want me back in that tomb, or worse, just a pile of salt and ash. The others in the city regard me with a sense of awe, fear, and detestation. I need something. I need to find my handholds.

Then a tiny piece of information fell into my lap, and with it, the name of *Eddie Vines*. All may know me, but few seem to know Eddie, an error he's tried to correct time and time again to a cruel lack of fanfare. Seems he's now going the route he should've gone all along: he's gathering secrets. He wants to play in this game, then he has to come to the table with something. I want what he has. I want his secrets.

"I'll help you," I said. "They all know me. If you're with me, they'll know you, too."

He nodded gamely. I said I'd come back and help the girl, but for now, he had to come with me. I held his hand, like a parent guiding a child, and I took him out of this house and we had enough hours to walk back to the garish lights of this awful, beautiful city.

SS



The Honeymoon Hijackers: Charles and Charlene Greengrass

"You can take that 'death do us part' horseshit and shove it up your ass, old man. Hell, I'll do it for you—hold still."

Background

They've cut a swath across the American heartland. Pink motels with champagne glass hot tubs now sit behind police tape, walls spattered with blood. An old chapel with a powder blue door is a similar scene of brutality: pastel pews chopped with an axe, a heart-shaped pulpit darkened by arterial spray, a pair of fingers chopped off (glittering rings, diamond and gold, forever fixed around the swollen digits) and lying off near the overturned Casio keyboard. A cabin at the lake tells a story both more awful and more merciful: the honeymoon bed is home to two bodies, one living, one dead. The new husband lies face down on soft pillows red with his blood, and the new wife sits chained to the radiator in the corner, her face clowned up with lipstick, her throat empurpled with hand-shaped bruises.

All of this is the handiwork of the Honeymoon Hijackers, a pair of predators that roams the American West and Midwest, killing and coupling with whoops of joy and hands clasped tight in some twisted version of love. They've been evading both local police and the FBI now for a good ten years, always popping up somewhere to once more reveal their own brand of matrimonial horror.

Of course, they're not alive. That's part of the secret: these two have capacities well beyond the human norm, given that they're vampires and all.

The Honeymoon Suite

These two Damned share a similar origin, if not a common one. They came together for just such a reason, finding a deep and awful hole in their hearts that each could fill.

See, both were taken on their wedding nights. Both were killed. Both were thrown into the endless night of the Requiem. Worst of all, each watched their mate die choking and gasping on the bed without being given the chance to be reborn.

The grim honeymoons happened over a hundred miles from one another. Neither incident was related; it was merely a strange and terrible coincidence.

They didn't find each other right away. Took damned near a decade, actually, before they did. Up until then, they had nothing. Each had a cruel sire dragging them to Elysium, abusing them, humiliating them, parading their grief-struck hearts before their cackling peers. Their paths didn't cross. Their sires ran in different circles.

Came to pass, though, that one night their dark orbits did overlap—some affair of the bloodsuckers that, through each bleak depression they can barely recall (a new Prince? a visiting dignitary? the waking of an elder?). But they found each other that night, and even before they got the chance to

LIFE BEFORE DEATH

Does it matter who these two were before they heard the first discordant chords of the Requiem? Depends.

If you're using them as iconic horror figures—serial killers or slashers, really—then probably not. They're urban legends, and the only information in their tales that is critical is that element of "honeymoon horror." It's possible these two don't even remember who they were; all they see is blood and pleasure.

However, if you see these two as characters to be redeemed, then maybe their backstories *do* matter. In which case, you can go ahead and use the following:

Charles Waltham came from an upper middle-class family, probably somewhere in Indiana. He was a bush league investment banker, still finding his feet, but growing in capability. His wife was Marjorie Baker.

Charlene Jones hails from Ohio, but has that faint Kentucky accent of some living in that end of the state. She was a housewife-in-training, forever on the hunt for a sweet and loving husband to give her a place in this world. She found that husband in Henry Dole.

share stories, their gazes crossed. They found one another. Who knows what it was—maybe they saw something in the dark of each other's eye that spoke to the great void within, to the common story that both made them and broke them. They found each other that night. They knew one another's story without needing to speak it aloud.

The First Murders

Is killing a vampire really murder? Does it even matter, at that point? It mattered to Charles and Charlene (who, at this point, had not yet chosen the shared fake surname, "Greengrass"), because those two *wanted* to murder. Their sires had taken something that could not be replaced. That was deserving of an epic dose of suffering.

And so, they plotted the murders of their sires. This was not destruction for the sake of reducing competition. This was no power play. This was revenge, sweet and awful.

They did not take their time. Patience wasn't and isn't a virtue they possess. They wanted it done, and so they did it. Both sires in a single night. Rain coming down. Lightning splitting the sky. They used kitchen knives. Their teeth. Their claws. It was bloody. Their sires turned to dust, still screaming. Charles took the heartsblood of his sire, and Charlene sucked down the soul of hers.

And suddenly that empty spot within didn't seem so empty anymore. Killing was quite a thrill. This wasn't just drinking blood. This was something altogether different. *Altogether better.*

Speak Your Vows with Bloody Tongue

They got married that night, not far from morning's light. They broke into a jewelry store, stole matching golden bands. They kicked in the door to a church soon after, put a knife to the padre's throat and made him seal the deal. They kissed one another, then slit the priest's throat and let him bleed out into the holy font (though they had a taste before they hit the road).

Each took a measure of one another's blood, and that's a tradition they keep every night to the present: frenzied, they devour one another. Teeth at neck, tongue probing mouth and ear and wounds. Their Blood bonds are so circular at this point it's damned near impossible to know where one's Blood begins and the other's ends.

They chose the name Greengrass as their communal surname, though even now they're not sure why. Maybe the grass is always greener for them. Or maybe it's because blood makes the grass grow. And they do love blood, don't they?



Marriage is Hell

They're serial killers. They travel the heartland in blood-stained wedding outfits (he in either a black or powder blue tux, she in a sleeved white Victorian number spattered brown from old blood or a slutty red vampy bridesmaid dress). Their primary targets are those couples on their honeymoons. (Most recent victims: a pair whose honeymoon destination was the Lawrence Welk home-
stead and museum in Strasberg, North Dakota. They died screaming to big band champagne music in a motor lodge off the interstate.) That said, they're happy to include anybody related to the matrimonial act—pastors, drunken groomsmen, wedding planners, the jilted left at the altar, and so forth.

They generally pretend to be folks on their honeymoon, too. They're genial, if a bit wild. They don't spook their victims immediately (though some get the sense early on and make an intuitive escape). They vacillate between an "aw, shucks" demeanor and a pair of hellcats ready to get down, have a little fun. If possible, they lure an unsuspecting couple back to their motel room or cabin with the promise of drinks, drugs, music, whatever gets them in the door. If that doesn't work, out-and-out kidnapping is just fine.

From there, it's anybody's game. Their level of interest dictates the pace of the evening. Do they get it over with in a gory rush? Maybe. Sometimes, though, they like to savor it. Let it last a handful of nights. Work on it slowly. Mess with their heads. Get it so the victims love their keepers, will do anything for them (even better if they can work one of the couple against the other—so sweet, that betrayal).

Individuals, they always kill. If they take a pastor, he's going to die. Probably fast, too. Couples, sometimes they don't kill both of them. It's a haunting echo of their own wedding night atrocities, though they don't seem capable of recognizing the similarity, as if they just don't want to revisit those dark terrors. Sometimes they leave one alive; they play with her or him, then shackle the victim up while they do something truly awful to the other one. Maybe the one kept alive will watch. Maybe she'll help. Hard to say; these two love to get creative.

And what do they do with other vampires? Not much, usually. Other vampires don't interest them. This isn't a competition; everybody can have a taste. Sometimes they'll actually invite another of their kind to join in, have a laugh and a scream. If some vampire gets uppity or tries to come after them, they'll either flee if they think they can't handle it, or they'll ambush the poor bastard and suck him until his heart's in their mouths and his skin's turning to oily flakes on the wind.

Eternal Love

Is this love? Love's a difficult-to-define thing. It isn't hard numbers. But these two, they're sure they love each other. Part of it is the endless bond of Blood, yes, but even before that they were all goo-goo for one another. Amongst the Damned, it's perhaps as much love as one can get. Sure, it's codependent. It's absolutely like an unhealthy addiction; if these two could swallow one another whole and live inside the other's guts and marrow, they would. But to them, this is love. It tastes of blood. It lasts forever.

Charles and Charlene in the World of Darkness

The pair work very well outside a **Vampire** game, because they care little about the Danse Macabre. They're serial killers, and travel from place to place. They could easily draw the attention of humans and hunters, given the trail of dead they leave. Even still, they might make enemies of some far worse creatures: what happens when these two end up killing two wolf-blooded kin of the Lupines? What happens when they chop off the head of some mage's newly-married little sister? If you possess a book like **World of Darkness: Slasher**, you might even want to give these two some additional abilities (in the form of a slasher's cruel Undertakings) to complement the horror.

Personality

These two devils put on a real good show. They're all smiles and bright blue eyes beneath their too-blond hair. Even when they drop the façade, they don't get feral: they still call each other a wide variety of pet names as they suck the last drops of blood out of the bride's calf, they still tell curious little down-home jokes and stories as they watch a groom slit his own throat while his new wife is made to look on, hungry. Both are preeners, too. Total narcissists, they can't help but look in the mirror or stare at one another as they do their horrendous deeds.

On the surface, Charles is the one in control. He's the man. She fawns over him, like she's always about to succumb to some kind of lusty vapors.

It's not the way it really is, though. Charlene's actually the one pulling the strings. When they get into the bedroom (or wherever it is they're going to do all their killing for the night—a forest clearing, an abandoned building, some sleeping family's living room), Charlene takes charge. She tells Charles what to do. And he listens like a faithful dog.

Secrets

Story goes that they don't keep secrets from one another, but that is perhaps the biggest secret of them all: they *do* keep secrets from one another. Those secrets include:

Charlene cheats on Charles sometimes. She'll get in a fight with Charles, then bust out and take home some vampire or human and fuck him 'til everybody's half-past-dead. She never kills these victims, though. She maybe messes with their heads. Gets them to do stuff they wouldn't normally do. Sometimes she roughs them up a little. The other secret here is that Charlene *wants* to be found. She wants Charles to come along and see what she's done and have him go apeshit and start tearing her new lover apart. It hasn't happened yet, but she's getting bolder about it.

Charles has been having weird dreams lately. Nightmares, really, of that night when his wife was killed. He's starting to actually feel *bad* about what they're doing. Oh, not bad enough to stop. And those dreams will probably go away. Probably.

Both want "children." Each wants to sire a childe to share, but neither's broached the subject with the other. This is the kind of thing that could come in the middle of a brutal scene of these two doing their serial killer shtick. Imagine it: blood on the bed, someone crying in the corner, something dripping from a ceiling fan, and suddenly one of these two breaks it to the other that she wants a childe, and he agrees, and they hug and kiss and it's a total *awwww* moment. You know, except for all that blood and weeping.

Rumors

"The cycle continues. They don't know it yet, but they've sired a childe. Killed some poor fuck and his new wife and their new baby (that's how people get married today, don't you know). Poor fuck, though, somehow he gets reborn. Made into one of us. Don't know how they did it that they don't know about it—maybe they were all goofy on drunk blood. But this guy, he's out there, and you know what he's doing? Killing people. Left and right. Not near the elegance and grace that these two possess, if you can call it that, but murder's murder."

It's not true. Whoever the killer is, he's not their childe (though whether or not he is one of their victims who "died" remains to be seen). That's not to say this isn't an implausible scenario, though. They *do* lose themselves in the moment. "Accidentally" Embracing someone isn't completely beyond the realm of possibility. Oh, one more thing: they don't kill children. Never have, though with them you can't really say "never will."

"One of their sires was... prominent. Famous face in this city. Worse, he was a secret childe of the Prince himself. Oopsie. Now that Prince has called the bloodiest of Blood Hunts upon these two, a long-standing order to bring their heads to him. Of course, they're nowhere to be found. But they always make it back around this way. When they do, the Prince wants to let slip the dogs, as it were."

It's true. Her sire was actually the Prince's own progeny, and the Prince is none too pleased about what happened to his bastard childe. He dreams of revenge against these two, and they don't even know it.

STORY HOOKS

- **Revenge Served Hot:** That Prince from the rumors section? He's tired of waiting. Who knows when the couple's murderous orbit will once more coincide with the city? Will it ever? The Prince wants this handled now. If the coterie takes the job, he's the Prince, and he can offer them some big favors. What they don't know is that they're not alone; he's pegged at least three other coterie to go on the hunt, too, which means this is as much a competition as it is a job.
- **Unwanted Attention:** Clearly, a pair of supernatural serial killers isn't so good for the Masquerade. These two sweep into town and then back out again, leaving shattered Traditions in their wake. It draws the attention of mortal authorities and vampire hunters. Can characters survive the sudden attention? Can they turn the attention against their enemies?
- **Homewrecker:** One of the characters is drawn into the web of one of the Greengrass killers. Perhaps Charles tries to legitimately befriend a character (needing someone to talk to about his bad dreams, or needing someone to accompany him on some thrill-kills away from his "wife") or Charlene attempts to seduce one of the characters. Either way, these two share their own awful gravity, and getting pulled into it is a one-way trip.

Charlene Greengrass

Aliases: Bonnie and Clyde, The Honeymooners
Clan: Daeva
Covenant: Unaligned
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Investigation 3 (Investigate Identity), Medicine 2, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2 (Chase), Brawl 2 (Cat Scratch), Larceny 2, Weaponry 3 (Straight Razor)
Social Skills: Empathy 2 (Sense Fear), Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Fame 1, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start 1, Striking Looks 2
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 3 (Narcissism)
Virtue: Charity. She's quite happy to give to others—sometimes that means a handout to a homeless man; sometimes it means a knife to the femoral artery.
Vice: Lust. She's uncontrollable when slaking her body's thirsts.
Health: 7
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 13 (with Fleet of Foot)
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Majesty 3
Vitae/per Turn: 11/1
Devotions: Bloody Tandem (below)
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Straight Razor	1(L)	1	-	7

Charles Greengrass

Clan: Ventrue
Covenant: Unaligned
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1 (Hotwire Car), Investigation 2, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3 (Grapple), Drive 3 (Getaway Car), Stealth 3, Weaponry 3 (Big Knives)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 2 (Play Dumb)

Merits: Danger Sense 2, Fame 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Boxing 2

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 4 (Depression)

Virtue: Justice. In a demented way, Charles gets his rocks off “punishing” those he feels deserve it. Sometimes he gets lucky, and you can call it “justice.”

Vice: Wrath. Sometimes it's just “revenge” against perceived slights.

Health: 7

Initiative: 7 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Dominate 3

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Devotions: Bloody Tandem (Below)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Bowie Knife	2(L)	2	-	9

Legacy

The following Devotion comes from the Honeymoon Hijackers, but other characters may possess this ability provided they meet the prerequisites (and this can make for a story hook: trying to learn the Devotion from these two spree killers). Charles and Charlene have manifested the effect spontaneously; the prerequisites are for another vampire to understand and duplicate it.

Bloody Tandem

(Blood Potency ••••, Auspex ••••, Majesty •••)

Sometimes vampires connect with one another in a way that is imperceptible—the Blood calls up a strange sympathy, and the two exist on the same wavelength, sometimes without even meaning to.

Cost: 1 Willpower dot and 1 point of Vitae to “bond,” but no cost to use

Dice Pool: None; this Devotion is considered “always on”

Action: None

Both vampires must possess this Devotion (though one can always teach it to the other). Each must spend 1 Willpower dot to forge a sympathetic connection, with each consuming a point of the other's Vitae.

Once this is done, the connection is formed. This connection exists outside a normal Blood bond, though if

the Vinculum is present, the two vampires can avoid the cost of 1 Vitae to forge the sympathy.

When the two work in tandem with this Devotion (and it's always on), the following elements are in play:

- The two may always read one another's surface thoughts. This necessitates no roll, normally, though one can attempt to "hide" his thoughts with a Resolve + Composure roll. The other in the pair may try to expose hidden thoughts with a contested Wits + Empathy roll. The distance between the simpatico vampires doesn't matter.
- Each always knows where the other is. This is a rough approximation (she's that way, about a hundred miles), but doesn't tell the vampire any details about the surroundings.
- Each always knows if the other suffers harm or is in danger. This has a downside: if one suffers wound penalties, the other suffers those same penalties even if she's free of physical damage.
- Each can always see the other's aura with no roll. As above, one can hide her aura or "fake" a different

one with a Resolve + Composure roll, contested by the other vampire's Wits + Empathy.

- If the two are within sight of one another, they may add both their Blood Potency scores to Resistance rolls.
- Each gains a bonus to Majesty rolls equal to the other vampire's Manipulation score.
- Each can spend Vitae for the other (i.e., Charles spends a point of Vitae to heal a point of Charlene's damage). This has one limitation and one downside, though. The limitation is that, regardless of Blood Potency, spending Vitae for another is limited always to 1 point of Vitae per turn. The downside is that having the Blood so intimately fettered to the other vampire can be damning; if one vampire enters a hunger frenzy, the other automatically enters as well, even if her belly is full of blood. This is not limited by distance: if Charles enters a hunger frenzy in Topeka, Charlene will enter one even if she's in Milwaukee with a full Vitae track.

This Devotion costs 21 Experience points to learn.



The Devil's Plaything: Eddie Vines

"Someday you'll want what I have. And then I'll give it to you because you'll beg."

Background

It sucks being a nobody. That was, once, Eddie Vines's greatest crime amongst the Damned. Being a nobody in the society of the Kindred casts you to the outer edges of the Danse Macabre: as the rest of the monsters twirl and pirouette, you're hugging the wall, hungry for blood, desperate for attention. Oh, Eddie tried. But his sire left him adrift. He had nobody to whom he could turn. Every attempt to ascend above mediocrity happened not with a bang, but a whimper. It would've been better had he suffered grand failure—at least that's memorable, at least it invites *attention*. But the things Eddie did inspired nothing more than a half-hearted shrug of the shoulders, or an eyebrow raise followed by that tormenting question: "Who?"

Vampire Suicide

Came a time, then, when Eddie entered a bleak depression. Blood provided meager and short-lived highs, but he swiftly came down off the rush—in fact, every descent from his blood-fueled high dropped him deeper into a black valley. He was worthless. He was meaningless. He was nobody. Vampires were exceptional creatures. Elevated predators. Glorious misfits. And yet the Damned paid more attention to their worthless *thralls* than they did him.

Lost in a fog of self-loathing, Eddie figured it was time to end it all and kill himself (or whatever passes for "suicide" amongst the already-dead). Turns out, it was the one thing he was good at. Starving, he jacked himself up with what little blood was left in his body, then broke both his legs. Riding the edge of frenzy, he chained himself to a rooftop pigeon coop with less than an hour to go before sunrise. He pictured the sun immolating him in its rays, his flesh seared orange at the edges like burning paper, and it gave him a weird kind of comfort.

And then something threw a wrench into the works. It did not appear to him, but it was a presence nevertheless. It was a liquid whisper, a coil of smoke encircling his spine, a forked tongue flicking past his lips and forcing its way down his throat.

As the distant horizon became a searing pink line, the demon Nybbas made Eddie an offer. It asked for a chance to show him just how perfect he could be. It offered itself

to him, to join with his flesh so that he might become so much better than he appeared to be. Eddie felt the searing rays of the sun start to work at his exposed skin, and he smelled the first wisps of burning hair and skin.

Seduced by the idea he had some measure of potential (he didn't) and certain he was about to go tumbling off this immortal coil, Eddie opened himself up and let the demon in.

The Upside of Demonic Possession

Thing is, Eddie should've still perished then and there. His legs were shattered by his own twisting hands. He was chained up. And the sun was about to stab him in the face with its damning rays, blasting his skull to dust.

And then an amazing thing happened: Eddie saw the sunrise for the first time in a decade. It was beautiful. He wept tears of blood. The Beast within fell silent, and was replaced with a lyrical susurraton, a hissing tide of many voices.

The demon Nybbas told him he was safe, now. He was different. Most importantly, he was *better*.

And, like everything in life and unlife, it didn't come free.

Pay to Play

Eddie felt a changed man. He looked better—leaner, taller, not a hair out of place, his eyes dark and persuasive. His words seemed to land with greater impact. It was as if someone put a metal rod up his spine, forced him to stand tall. Plus, he could walk in the sun! He could see through to another's soul and hear secrets whispered back! Finally, Eddie was *somebody*.

The demon gave, of course, but the demon also wanted to *receive*. It had demands.

The first was for Eddie to give in to a measure of sin. Before the demon, Eddie was an all right guy, and that may have been part of his problem. He could never bring himself to kill a victim, couldn't force himself to torture anybody or do something truly horrible. That, the demon hissed, would have to change. The demon was a creature of iniquity. It survived on sin the way a vampire sustains himself on blood. For Eddie to keep the power Nybbas had granted him, he had to continually degrade himself.

The second was that, as it turns out, demons have friends—or whatever passes for “friends” amongst the diabolical hierarchies. Nybbas sought for these other entities to have homes of their own, much as Nybbas had Eddie. Demons cannot reside long in this world, it seems, and so they seek bodies in which to linger longer. Human bodies are all well and good, but the flesh does not always sustain the possessor. Undead hosts, on the other hand, are perfectly resilient, being already dead with the corrupting forces of decay forever held at bay.

Eddie agreed, of course. He’d drag his own Humanity through the mud and blood, and with his newfound abilities would help to engineer hosts for other demons. It would all be simple. It would all be perfect.

Best Laid Plans

Eddie returned to the Danse Macabre, striding headstrong into the grandiloquence of Elysium expecting to stir undead hearts to beat anew, if only for a moment. They would swoon for him. The Harpies would chatter his name. The gossip would hit the street: who was this dark horse?

It didn’t happen. They didn’t know who Eddie was before, and they didn’t know now. Worst of all, they just didn’t care. Their world was insular. Protected. Eddie hadn’t belonged to it before and, without taking the Prince hostage, he wasn’t going to belong to it now. He tried. They ignored him.

It was enough to drive a man mad.

Desperate Nights

And this is Eddie now: bedraggled and lost, he has worn off his human edge. The demon has promised him that given enough time they’ll accept him, but in the interim he’d better pony up. And he has. He’s killed, finally. He’s taken lives, and taken others’ will from them. He’s lied and cheated and stolen. He feels hollow. Nothing about it makes him feel good. But he continues, hoping one day it’ll all click.

Eddie hates them all. He hates the other vampires, and yet he loves them, too. He’s started to collect information. They don’t seem even to see him, nobody notices him, and he finds it startlingly easy to dig up dirt on these monsters, to unearth their secrets. He’s got files. He’s found their sins. Maybe this’ll get him noticed. When he comes knocking on their haven doors, their treacheries and weaknesses in hand, they’ll have to notice him.

And then, if they want what he has, they’ll have to open themselves up. They’ll have to let the demon inside. They’ll want it. It’s so much better.



Eddie Vines in the World of Darkness

Eddie's got a demon inside, which pits him as a potential antagonist for a number of the World of Darkness's denizens. The Lupines have little love for those who get "claimed" by outside spirits, and this looks enough like that to them to be worth their attention. Some hunters are connected to and can command demons, while others have a great desire to see anything infernal snuffed out like a candle flame. Mages, on the other hand, might see a demon as something from which they can learn—endlessly hubristic, mages might think they can "control" Eddie and Nybbas long enough to get a taste of ancient knowledge.

Personality

Eddie looks good these days, almost as if his look has been *arranged* or somehow pre-approved by test audiences and focus groups. He's handsome, but with an edge. He's dark, but sexy. He's the epitome of every dark television vampire or sexy anti-hero.

And his personality doesn't match. Not at all. He approaches every social situation from an assumed position of weakness. He doesn't come across as sniveling, exactly, but he's a bit obsequious what with the flattering compliments and the forced laughs. Lately another thing's started to come through, too: his hatred for his subjects. He hates whomever he talks to because he assumes they're better than him. He has a powerful ancient *demon* inside him and somehow they still remain more important, still have more influence. He says nice things. His mouth smiles. But his eyes radiate hatred, raw and stabbing.

Secrets

Eddie's got one big secret that—so far—he's managed to keep from, well, the demon that lurks within his flesh.

He's actually started to investigate getting rid of the demon. He's starting to look into exorcisms to see what his options are regarding casting out the fiend. Frankly, he's not sure the demon possession thing is really working in his favor. Like an addict, he feels ridiculous highs and lows, powerful triumphs coupled with enervating shame. He's had a few moments of clarity, and that's what's put him on this path.

Those moments of clarity won't last long. Soon either the demon will find out or he'll actually begin to grow comfortable with that awful feeling in the pit of his gut. Then again, maybe he'll just go for another suicide attempt, but it's certain Nybbas isn't going to go for that.

Now, what about the demon? Nybbas is a demon embodying the sin of Pride, which is why it does so well

within Eddie Vines. Between the two of them exists a kind of sympathy: Eddie feels weak and has very little ego of which to speak, and Nybbas is a creature arguably composed *entirely* of ego. Eddie's got great gaps in his soul, and that's where the demon finds its niche, where it nestles up nice and tight against Eddie's soul (or whatever passes for a soul amongst the Damned).

Is Nybbas a creature of Hell? Hard to say, but it certainly thinks so. It recalls great pillars of glass, wings made of fire and ideas, mammoth sextants and astrolabes inscribed with a Babelian tongue. Then again, demons are notorious liars, and that might even mean they're quite capable of lying to themselves about what they really are.

Rumors

"Something has to be done. Someone broke into my haven yesterday. No, you heard me, yesterday. The security cameras caught it. And what do I see but one of us. That's right! Us. I can show you the bloody footage. Wherever the figure went, it looked like someone had smudged Vaseline on the lens. Yes, I realize this isn't possible. Are you going to help me, or not?"

We already know Eddie can walk around during the hours of daylight without his skin catching flame—this is one of the joys of demonic possession. What he's been doing is breaking into vampire havens during the day, when their defenses are relatively weak and, for the most part, they don't expect intrusion from one of their own. That's one of the ways he's digging up some dirt on the local Damned.

"Yo, it was a motherfuckin' bloodbath. I ain't ever seen anything like that. Someone just went up in that place and tore shit up. I was just there to collect what's mine, you know, taste a little protection blood from Big T, but even I felt sick lookin' at all that. Sick and hungry at the same time, you know? All that blood fucked me up. I had to bounce up out of there before I got crazy."

Eddie's on a downward slide. His Humanity is plummeting downward because that's what the demon wants. It asks him to perform certain... tasks, and these tasks always lead to potential degeneration. Everything is about Eddie acting like the big man and exalting his ego. And, a lot of the time, people get hurt or killed. The latest was at a local whorehouse—Eddie went into Big T's place with all the Romanian and Ukrainian prostitutes, and at the demon's urging he cleaned house. Big T got out of there, but none of the women made it out alive. Thing is, Eddie's finally starting to get his wish even though he doesn't know it yet. He's making waves by breaking the Masquerade and by damaging resources possessed by or connected to other vampires. They're not happy about it, either.

STORY HOOKS

- **High Noon:** It's the expected story hook where Eddie approaches one or all of the characters and shows them the dirt he's dug up on them. He lays it bare, tells them what he wants in return for his silence. Maybe he wants their respect or a way to get noticed at Elysium, or maybe he wants to pitch the demon possession thing. Here's his problem: his information is wrong. What he shows to the characters isn't about them at all, but about some other vampire (potentially one of the characters' enemies). What do they do? He offers them only a taste of the information, but more surely exists, and it's info they want.
- **The Devil's Owned:** A howling pack of Belial's Brood vamps comes rolling into town and sniffs out Eddie Vines. Question is: what do they think of him? He's nothing like them (not yet, anyway). Do they perceive him to be the real deal? Or, more likely, do they think him some kind of poseur deserving of a few nights of rough torment before dispatching him? Of course, he has a real demon at his disposal, so there's no telling what'll happen. Bottom line is the Brood pack is stirred up. Eddie's cornered. This can't be good for the Masquerade.
- **Invasion:** Eddie's been working hard, and finally, he's seen some success. His insidious influence has finally paid off, and now a number of upper echelon vampires have fallen prey to demonic possession. They're not quite "pod people," but they've all changed, and not for the better. These monsters are in control of the city, and they're shedding any remnants of their Humanity like an old coat. They seem to support some sort of shared agenda that may involve loosing more awful spirits and demons into the city. How can the characters catch wind of this? What happens when one of their sires suffers this strange "change?" How can they stop it? Is it worth working with a cabal of vampire hunters to help make this happen?

Eddie Vines

Alias: The Devil's Bitch

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 3 (Demonology), Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2 (Foot Chase), Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2 (Impress)

Merits: Fleet of Foot 3, Haven (Size 2, Security 1, Location 1)

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5 (Depression)

Virtue: Fortitude. Eddie's like a Timex: he takes a licking and keeps on ticking.

Vice: Envy. He's a classic case of wanting what everyone else has.

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 14 (Fleet of Foot)

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Obfuscate 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

Legacy

Eddie's Legacy is, sadly, his demonic investment; he himself possesses little of value but the demon that lurks within him.

Demonic Investment

The demon inside Eddie Vines provides him two tiers of benefits. The first tier is ingrained and ever-present; he needs to do nothing to bring them to the fore. The second tier is made up of benefits he gains only when he spends a Willpower point. Doing so invokes those benefits for a whole scene.

First Tier ("Always On")

- Gains +2 to resist any and all Frenzies (the demon is not well-served by him being a mindless freak)
- May re-roll all failed dice on a Perception roll (the demon's sight)
- Striking Looks 4 (the demon's innate charisma)
- **Second Tier (Spend Willpower; Lasts One Scene)**
- Gain a bonus to all Strength rolls equal to 7 minus his Humanity
- Gain a bonus to his Health equal to 10 minus his Humanity

The Dragons' Dirty Secret: Jacob Skinner

"Now, then, Subject 38, tell me about your dreams."

Damon,

This job gets weirder and weirder. We're still taking the old house up on Mulberry apart—the owner vanished last year and it's been derelict ever since. Most of the place is normal, rotting wood and unsafe electronics aside, but the basement.

The basement's creepy. I mean, really creepy. There's tools down there for metalworking, lengths of iron bar and copper tubing. Stands like you put IV bags on and—this'll make you sit up—six honest-to-God sarcophagi. Yeah. I had to look up how to spell it. Great big concrete and rebar boxes, six by four by four. The lids are off and there's chains and stuff inside them.

I think we need to call the cops. Who WERE these guys?

Transcript D4501 28/07/1998

Subject 18 (G) T/p 118n cause exsan.

S18 began w/ usual requests, denied. Became belligerent and fl/res loose—NB REPAIR

Assessed tape 14 w. focusing tech.

42% recall 1st attempt, after 3 attempts and focusing ~78%

PoA: Emphasis recalled sections and apply tape to S19. Return S18 T/P cause stake.

Damon – Found this behind the "boxes" pinned down by one of the lids. Is that blood?

Peaceful Waters Institute, January 1962

Damon-

Found this behind the 'boxes', pinned down by one of the lids.

Christopher,

I have received another message from our mutual friend, demanding further resources. While the work the good Doctor performs makes him valuable, I have seen precious little progress for the effort expended so far. Please be so good as to impress upon him the importance of results to his future backing. The demands the project has made so far are already beginning to attract notice, and the resources are starting to be missed.

We may have to move the project again to avoid another situation. When you talk to our friend, tell him to be ready to move at short notice. Ensure that the backup locations are secure, and this time make certain that all resources are moved.

On another note, may I congratulate you on your advancement to Scholar? I know the project is demanding, but do not think me ungrateful. If you still wish to become Sworn, I will gladly be your sponsor...

Background

There are things of which all Kindred are afraid: helplessness, the gnawing hunger of blood starvation, torpor, being preyed upon as they prey upon the kine, used and exploited as a resource in defiance of their apex predator self-image. Diablerists are hunted not solely because they commit blasphemy, but because they do to their victims as the Kindred do to mortals—and that reversal terrifies their peers. How much worse is a vampire who traps his fellow Kindred and tortures them not even for their blood, but out of detached scientific curiosity?

The incomparable Dr. Skinner is the stuff of such nightmares. An outcast from the Ordo Dracul after even they found his research distasteful, Skinner is still at large. No one knows where he makes his haven, though it is sure to be out of a major city. He sends his servants, the legend goes, to subdue and capture young Kindred, bringing them back to his collection. There they are sealed into containers and left until they starve into torpor. When they wake, after months of nightmare-visions, the experiments begin. The poor wretches spend their Requiem incapable of movement, unable to feed and kept conscious on the drip-feed of blood when they are awakened for more tests. After the testing, they are sent back into torpor—some by starvation, some by staking and some by careful, meticulous torture. Once they are irrevocably insane, they are given the Final Death and disposed of.

For the most part, that's where the story ends—a horror tale to spook the fledglings. Be good and obey your sire or Skinner will take you. Those Kindred rising to positions of trust in the Ordo Dracul, however, may hear rumors of a new and blasphemous Coil of the Dragon researched by a dedicated coterie of Dragons, a Coil that gives some measure of respite from the worst effects of torpor. Only those who learn the Coil ever learn whence it came; Dr. Skinner, they are told, is very real. His research is everything the horror stories claim and more... but it gets results. A group within the Ordo Dracul has been protecting Skinner ever since his methods were reported, and if the young Dragon hearing of it objects, the Doctor can always use another test subject.

In Vivo

Jacob Tannin grew up in Philadelphia in the 1940s as an exceptionally bright young man, winning a scholarship to medical school just after losing his father to the Second World War. He gained his medical degree just before the Korean War; he was drafted as a medic shortly after. The war changed him, removing any view of humanity as anything other than violent animals. Upon his return from Korea he became a scientific psychologist of the

radical behaviorist school (founded by Burrhus Skinner, after whom Jacob would name himself once Embraced) who believed all organic behavior to be determined by the environment. Jacob's experiments in the field on animals, sealed into so-called Skinner Boxes and studied for their reactions to stimuli, attracted the attention of the Ordo Dracul.

Embraced and initiated into the Covenant, Skinner's work continued. He was an early contributor to Ordo Dracul works studying the psychology of the Kindred and how the use of different Disciplines alters the mind of the user. While studying the effects of frenzy as a prelude to attempting the Coil of Beasts, Skinner was badly mauled by an enraged Gangrel and put into torpor.

Fearful Dreams

After a month of terrible nightmares of being torn apart, Skinner awoke and immediately went into a hunger frenzy. He remained shaken by the experience for months, but as he reacted in the "proper" way by attempting to understand what had happened, the Covenant indulged him in his fixation. He interviewed Kindred coming out of torpor, but based upon his background grew increasingly convinced he wouldn't be able to understand torpor—and overcome it—without controlling all the variables.

Skinner's first test subject was of his own creation. After carefully preparing his haven to hold a vampire against that vampire's will, he Embraced an anonymous woman off the street. Subject One—Skinner never bothered to learn her name—spent the next year locked in a steel and concrete casket being repeatedly starved into torpor and drip-fed back to waking before being interrogated. Eventually she managed to kill herself, which taught Skinner the value of sturdy restraints.

Over the next ten years, eight more Kindred found themselves imprisoned in Skinner's haven, all locked into caskets and forced into torpor. The first two were his own childer, but he soon decided the Blood sympathy between them was another complicating factor and that he required control subjects; the rest were low-status abductees taken from the streets. Fortunately for Skinner, the Ordo Dracul realized before the Prince did.

Trial and Tenure

A Dragon Jury was convened in 1972 to pick over Skinner's work and decide what to do with him. The other Covenants were already searching for Subject Nine—he and the others had to be given Final Death to avoid an embarrassing scene. After examining Skinner's notes, though, the Covenant soon realized he was far too important to be given over to the Invictus. Skinner recovered





from being subdued for transportation to his trial remarkably quickly and was able to explain how, based upon his experiments with the nine unfortunates, he had successfully transformed himself using a hitherto-unknown Coil of the Dragon.

Publicly, Skinner's work was denounced and he was expelled from the Covenant. The sires of his subjects were compensated, and a Blood Hunt called. By the time the hunt convened, though, Skinner was long gone, transported in secret to the first of several havens. The Covenant provided him with new test subjects, and the work went on.

The Works of Jacob Skinner

Skinner is now as much a prisoner as the unfortunate Kindred in his lab. Of course, he's not being tortured, which gives him a leg up on them. For now.

The city's Order wants the Coil of Slumber and will tolerate Skinner's needs as long as he continues writing his books. His first volume, "On the Sleep of Ages," is passed around Covenant salons with all the illicit status of a banned text, and there are enough success stories to prove the Coil it describes is real. His handlers never enter the lab, though, preferring to stay out of his experiments rather than try to put limits upon their pet genius.

As for Skinner himself, he feeds upon mortals brought to the haven by his handlers while he plans and conducts his experiments. He refers to the vampires sealed in their caskets only as numbered "subjects" and begins each waking-cycle with an interview regarding what the subject dreamed about while in torpor—once the subject stops screaming and pleading to be released, that is. Recently, he has started to experiment with introducing stimuli to the caskets—playing recorded sounds into the caskets while the subjects are in torpor and determining whether they can remember these when they wake.

Personality

Skinner is careful, meticulous and precise in his movements and speech, treating every conversation as an interview and digging, as if by reflex, into the causes of others' behavior—Skinner habitually tries to figure out why a person might act in a certain way, and he peppers his speech with questions such as "Why do you think that?" and "How does that make you feel?" He is also entirely without mercy—the test subjects are material provided by the Covenant, nothing more, and a necessary sacrifice on the altar of science in exchange for the techniques he's designing.

His own confinement is also a necessary sacrifice—Skinner recognizes that his handlers are there to make sure he does his masters' bidding, not the other way around. That said, they're not as important as he is and he regards them with an air of detached disdain. Respect for those protecting him means he follows their edicts the majority of the time. If there's a reason to slip past them and go out into the night, though, Skinner will do it.

In conversation with another Sworn of the Dying Light or similar student of the Kindred condition Skinner becomes both eager for a connection and vain regarding his own successes—the Covenant keeps him at arm's length, so he has no one his intellectual equal with whom to talk.

Secrets

Because Skinner's handlers don't interfere with his experiments, there are matters that have so far escaped the notice of the Grand Wyrms overseeing the project.

First, Skinner is quite phobic of torpor following both the mauling early in his Requiem and the harrowing journey from his first lab to the Dragon Jury. Being surrounded by bodies in torpor every night is causing him psychological problems, and he is determined to hold off his own torpor as long as possible. His handlers are supposed to bring him books and materials when he requests them, and they're becoming increasingly skewed toward attempting to retard the thickening of his own blood at the cost of taking time away from the work for which the Covenant keeps him. Similarly, he is painfully aware that the work on refining the Coil of Slumber would go much faster if he were to experience multiple torpors himself. When quizzed about either topic by his sponsors, he becomes defensive, employing a "you wouldn't understand" tactic for scientific inferiors and a "I don't have time to waste on hibernation myself" justification for less credulous Dragons.

Skinner is now on his fourth safehouse, the others having been abandoned when their locations were compromised. Sooner or later, no matter where he goes, his test subjects will be missed and sought. Evacuation happens at very short notice, and mistakes happen—victims have, in some cases, been accidentally abandoned, still sealed in their caskets. The situation is exacerbated by Skinner's habit of Embracing the mortals he's brought as food, with perhaps one a year winding up tucked away as an extra off-the-books subject.

Rumors

"Stay away from Fourth Street. There are Kindred there no one knows, making nice with anyone who'll stop and

GATEKEEPERS OF HORN AND IVORY

Because Skinner is kept virtually imprisoned in his lab, the most likely means of involving him in the characters' story is through the Ordo Dracul members running the operation. Not every Dragon in the city knows about the project—not even most do.

The operation requires a level of care, resources and handling supplied across city boundaries (with all the problems for the Kindred that entails) and the conspiracy looks for the ability to provide those resources in its recruits. Only members of the Ordo Dracul in good standing (those who are Sworn or expected to soon become so) are eligible. To begin with, candidates are introduced to the Coil of Slumber as described later in this section and then, after they've successfully gone through the chrysalis, invited to join the project. Although they provide resources, they are not yet told of Skinner's existence (though many, putting the urban legend of the mad Daeva together with what they're asked to do, figure it out). As with most sub-factions and cliques in the Ordo Dracul, members identify themselves to one another with code-phrases buried in their formal titles. Members of the conspiracy who provide resources but have not been told the truth and crucially do not know of Skinner's location so they cannot reveal it under duress or enemy Discipline are called "Gatekeepers of Ivory." The select few who know the gory details are "Gatekeepers of Horn."

The Gatekeepers of Horn consist of Skinner's Sworn of the Axe handlers, the Dragon Jury who convicted him and the Grand Wyrms who spared him, plus one or two Dragons in each city Skinner has inhabited since. These individuals do not—apart from the Axe-Sworn handlers—provide any material resources to the project, instead coordinating the efforts of others and passing messages amongst themselves. The conspiracy looks to recruit Dragons with the proven ability to keep secrets and allow no personal misgivings to get in the way. More importantly, they must have a way to reliably send messages to conspirators in other cities, whether that's through ghoul couriers, technology or their own status as Nomads.

The Gatekeepers of Ivory are recruited by the local Gatekeeper of Horn to fill the material needs of the project: mortals for the inhabitants of the safehouse to feed from, the safehouse itself, fledgling Kindred who can be safely spirited away, any consumables and research materials the experiments require, materials for constructing the caskets and, most importantly, a source of alibis, double-blinds of secrecy and careful rumor-mongering put about in such a way as to distract from the project. The conspiracy has learned that having a Harpy on its side is worth a dozen ghoul thugs. Any member of either tier of the conspiracy who tries to expose the project ends up as one of Skinner's test subjects.

Any of these roles can be filled using characters from your chronicle, whether they belong to the players or the Storyteller. The most vulnerable time for the wall of secrecy surrounding the project (and therefore the best time to showcase in a story) is the recruitment of a new member, during which time a Storyteller character familiar to the players may act strangely, withdraw or even (if he rejects the conspiracy) disappear entirely.

asking where the good grounds are in the city. Don't trust them—don't speak to them. Don't let them see you. They're headhunters, kid—you'll wind up in a van on your way to Dr. Skinner."

Whether details were released by members of the Ordo Dracul in the know who want to put a stop to Skinner or whether the rumor mill simply came to the same ideas about how to evolve Skinner's snatch-from-the-streets tactic as his actual handlers, the way in which the Doctor finds his test subjects is now part of the folklore surrounding him. Typically, a handler or two goes to a nearby city and present themselves as newcomers on the street level, being careful to pick parts of town haunted by Kindred of low status. After befriending a local, they overpower their new friend and vanish into the night.

"I had the buried-alive dream again last night. Lying side-by-side with... others... all unable to move, staring at the inside of a metal lid. God, I'm hungry."

With multiple vampires in a small area, all suffering terrible nightmares of starvation and torture, the weight

of misery in the lab has its own effects—psychics and sensitives nearby pick up on it, as may other supernatural creatures. Often, they have no idea that vampires are the cause of the disturbances... if they know about vampires at all. Additionally, the experiments that have led to the creation of the Coil of Slumber sometimes have an unexpected side effect: those who share a Blood relationship with one of the subjects may experience these dreams as well.

"Don't let that one catch you in his territory, and don't back him into a corner. He doesn't like it and you don't want to get him excitable. Yeah, I know. The claustrophobic Gangrel. Funny. Less funny when you know why. They say Skinner caught him..."

Sometimes one gets away, or so they say. As a handy explanation for any quirks fringe members of Kindred society might have, "he was tortured by Skinner" is gaining popularity in the cities where the good Doctor's name is known. A popular version has the escapee as a Gangrel who, after years of agony, finally trained himself to Earth-meld through the concrete of his prison.

STORY HOOKS

- **Oublette:** A character is captured and is being shipped to Skinner's haven. Can his coterie save him before he gets there or find "there" if the torture has already started? As a variant approach, good for the start of a new chronicle, a mortal character could be taken as Blood, Embraced and put to the tests. When his fellows find him, he's a monster—a vampire with good reason to distrust other Kindred and especially the Ordo Dracul.
- **Damaged Goods:** Characters going about their nightly business may discover one of Skinner's abandoned havens containing an occupied casket. What will the creature inside do once freed?
- **Research Ethics:** An Ordo Dracul character is given the opportunity to learn the Coil of Slumber and then begins to learn whence the knowledge comes. How far is she willing to go to keep her Covenant's dirty secret? What if she is told to find new test subjects? What if she is ordered to Embrace a mortal meeting a "shopping list" of qualities, and suffers sympathy with that tortured child?

Jacob Skinner

Aliases: Dr. Jacob Tannin, Remarkable Master of Blooded Sleep, The Skinner

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3 (Behavioral Psychology), Crafts 3 (Metalwork), Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Occult 3 (Kindred "Biology"), Science 3

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Eidetic Memory, Retainer 3, Haven 4, Resources 3, Allies 2, Ordo Dracul Status 3

Flaws: Notoriety

Willpower: 6 (Skinner has not yet bought back his seventh Willpower dot after the last time he Embraced.)

Humanity: 3 (Phobia: Torpor, Insomnia)

Virtue: Hope. Skinner's work is dangerous—if one of his captives were to get free while frenzied or his location given up, he would be in very real risk of Final Death. He perseveres not just for himself but out of a fervent belief that his works better all Kindred learning his Coil.

Vice: Lust. Skinner's need to develop his Coil has gone past craving and into obsession. It respects no authority, and he has no qualms about reducing other Kindred to laboratory animals or worse in the process.

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Majesty 2, Vigor 1, Obfuscate 1, Coil of Blood 2, Coil of the Beast 1, Coil of Slumber 3

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

Legacy

Skinner's work is circulated primarily within his local Ordo Dracul, and consists of several volumes written in the style of textbooks. The first, which serves as a taster, is entitled "On the Sleep of Ages" and describes the torpor experience in clinical detail. It is technically a banned text, but a Dragon of Ordo Dracul Status 2 or more can easily find a copy. The text is available in the libraries of Orders outside his home city, but it has not gained the notoriety nor garnered the scholarly attention it has at home.

To become eligible to learn the Coil of Slumber itself a Dragon must be trusted (at least Ordo Dracul Status 3) and be thought a good candidate for becoming Sworn. At that point, he may be passed one of the later works by

a more experienced practitioner and receive guidance on the chrysalis for the Coil.

The Coil of Slumber

First Tier: The Sleep of Early Years

First, the vampire learning the Coil learns to focus his sleeping mind so the weight of his sins are not so heavy and dreams are easier to shrug off. The character's Humanity rating counts as if it were 2 higher for the purpose of determining torpor duration.

Second Tier: Denial of Morpheus

At this Tier of understanding, the character has learned to fight for wakefulness even when gripped in torpor. The character acts as though all torpor were voluntary, so may make a Resolve + Composure roll to attempt to wake up once per torpor period. A character in voluntary torpor may roll twice per base period.

Third Tier: Stir the Blood

The character has now gained some measure of control over his torpid blood, and is able to stir his Vitae into action despite the thickness brought on by age. The character's Blood Potency is halved (round up) when determining torpor length *before* any additions for excessive damage that apply. This ability stacks with the First Tier.

Skinner is now working on the Fourth Tier, which he hopes will mitigate the Fog of Eternity. He expects to chrysalis into this new power sometime in the next decade.



Savior: Heinrich Haldane

"Of course there's something wrong with you. Now hold still."

From: Thomas S.
Subject: Another one.
Date: April 26, 2008 9:51:13 AM EDT
To: J. Sanderson

We have another one, Jack.

Even if what they're saying isn't true, this doctor's guilty of something. I think he, at the very least, Embraced without permission. I'm including a transcript of my conversation with the new one below. Read it over and let me know how you want to proceed.

We went to the warehouse that Mr. King mentioned in our conversation, but there was nothing there. Even the Mekhet couldn't find any evidence that Haldane had ever been there.

TS

TS: OK, sit down. The recorder's on now. First, state your name.

RK: I told you before, it's Rudolph King. We've met, Stearns.

TS: I'm sorry, I don't recall meeting you before, Mr. King—

RK: Not surprised. [yelling] I didn't look like fucking roadkill last time!

[The subject had an outburst here, it took a few minutes to calm him down. Vince was injured slightly in the tussle.]

TS: Please, tell me your story again. For the record, so I can give it to the Prince.

RK: Tell your friend I'm sorry about his collarbone. It's not his fault.

TS: I will. But please, your story?

RK: Like I told you earlier, I've been Kindred for over a year now. My sire was Marcus LaCroix.

TS: Marcus LaCroix, the Daeva? He—

RK: Yeah, he's been brightening sunsets since October. I know.

TS: Convenient that your sire cannot corroborate your story.

RK: I'm not a fucking liar! I'm telling you that doctor—fucking hamburger face little toad—knocked me out. I've heard the stories, and I know I was in his territory, but [yelling] I was just so... [calms] I was just so fucking hungry, you know?

When I came to, I was strapped down on an operating table. Not that I needed to be strapped in. There was a stake in my chest, Stearns. He staked me for feeding in his territory.

TS: You can hardly fault him for protecting his domain.

RK: It's not that, it's what he did after. He came in, wearing a lab coat and all that freaky Doctor Frankenstein bullshit. He told me he was doing me a favor. A favor, Stearns. Then he turned on his machines, and he made me look... like this. I know where it happened, I can show you the warehouse. I'm a Daeva, I swear. I'm not a Nosferatu.

This is like some kind of fucking nightmare.

Attempted new Harrow configuration 14b on the machine.

Results were satisfactory.

Subject 26 escaped. I must endeavor to discover what exactly allows some patients to resist the ameliorating effect that my Vitae has on their attitudes. Perhaps that will allow me to isolate the element of the Vitae that creates the so-called Blood bond?

Thomas Stearns, the Prince's hound, visited tonight. Subject 26 has officially lodged a complaint with the Prince. However the investigation bore no fruit thanks to Subjects 14 and 15. I must find some pretense to examine Subject 26 to make sure his enhancements are holding.

From: Thomas S.
Subject: Rudolph King
Date: April 26, 2008 9:51:13 AM EDT
To: J. Sanderson

I got word this evening that the Nosferatu I mentioned, Rudolph King, stayed out and greeted the sun this morning. That's that, then.

TS

Background

There is no proof.

As far as the Prince is concerned, Haldane may not even exist. The stories the Nosferatu tell him, the witnesses they bring... It's all so far-fetched, isn't it? It's sad of course, but who's really surprised when a Nosferatu cracks? For their entire Requiem, they've been given the short end of the conductor's baton. Really, it's a wonder more of them haven't gone mad.

The Living Years

Heinrich Haldane was a driven man. He had to be. His parents were clear that anything less than overwhelming success was failure, and he worked hard to exceed even their lofty expectations. He should have had a future so bright it could ash a vampire. He was charismatic, attractive and brilliant. He was top of his class; he landed a prestigious internship and then an even more prestigious residency. Haldane was brilliant in the emergency room, and he actually *liked* working trauma. He saved patient after patient.

Until one of those patients was a ghoul.

The ghoul's master, a Nosferatu named Patty the Eye, was impressed by Haldane's work. She had already written her servant off for failing her, but Heinrich saved him. Of course, she killed him anyway, but she was intrigued by the tireless determination of the young doctor.

Suddenly Haldane found himself acting as a sort of mob doctor, removing bullets in back rooms, giving stitches and worse. When Patty finally revealed herself to Heinrich, he was not horrified. He did not shrink away from her. He was nothing but curious.

So she showed him what it was like, firsthand.

Experiments and Continuing Education

After his Embrace, Haldane joined the Ordo Dracul. The Dragons have been both a boon and a hindrance to Haldane's work. To his mind, they lean a little too heavily upon mysticism, whereas he prefers the cold fluorescent lights of reason. Heinrich believes it is intellectual laziness to simply assume that because science has no method of explaining the vampiric condition or many of the vampire's abilities, that vampiric existence is necessarily *supernatural*. To that end, he began experiments, keeping exhaustive notes and records cataloging the behavior of his own body. He performed dissections on his own arms and legs, prodding at nerves and muscles so that he might understand the body's nervous system in ways mere Gross Anatomy could never match. When his own body no longer yielded useful results, he moved on to transients dosed with his Vitae to make them more resilient.

The Machine

His experiments continue to grow in complexity and Heinrich has become more and more fascinated with the machinery of change. Because he no longer had access to the ubiquitous machines of a cutting-edge hospital, he became determined to recreate what he could not acquire by... expedient means. As his experiments moved further afield from accepted medical practices, he found himself having to create new machines, purpose-built, specialized amalgamations of exposed wire and metal, cables and raggedly upholstered examination tables.

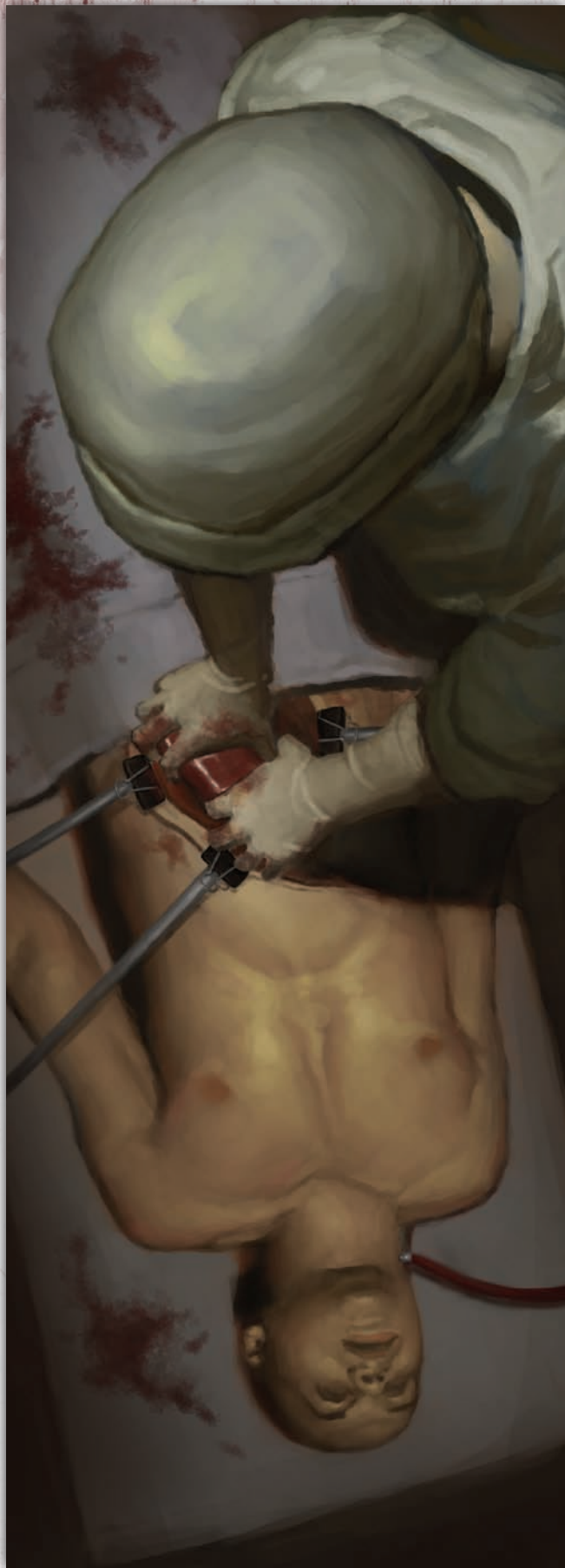
His philosophy of excellence began to evolve as he learned more about human physiology. Physical beauty seemed to him a crutch, a method of ensuring the continuation of the human species, yes, but simply limiting in terms of physical power or mental acuity. Beautiful people have the world given to them. They never have to try as hard or learn as much as their less "fortunate" brethren. Constraints create opportunity for growth, breed creativity and spark the intellect.

Now that he was free of the curse of beauty, he understood that he had never lived up to his full potential when he was alive. He couldn't count the number of times he had been given preferential treatment due to his magnetic personality or his handsome features. Now, "ugly," Haldane knew that the respect he received was solely due to his accomplishments. It was nice to know that his hard work garnered praise despite his toadlike appearance. If only he could share that experience with others...

So he began to build the Mutilation Engine. It started as a two-piece apparatus, made up of the bed, upon which the patient would lay transfixed, and the harrow, a complex arrangement of glass needles, surgical blades and hooks. Through time and experience, the machine has become more and more complex, introducing concepts gleaned from the Coils of the Dragon. By alternately mutilating and then injecting his patients with his own Vitae, reconfiguring their flesh, Heinrich discovered a method of artificially approximating the curse of the Nosferatu.

One side effect of this is that over the course of the procedure, most of his patients end up bound to him, chained by the very blood that so afflicted them. Only a rare few have turned on their erstwhile savior, but they lack credibility and evidence. As far as the Prince and his hounds are concerned, they're simply orphaned Nosferatu, not some sign of radical experiment. Of course as more turn up, each pointing their deformed claws at Heinrich, they'll be forced to look into things a bit deeper.

Heinrich's position in Kindred society is stable, if unassuming. He is well-known (and well-respected) among the Ordo



Dracul and the Nosferatu, but he is all but ignored by the other clans and Covenants of the city, which suits him fine.

Heinrich Haldane in the World of Darkness

Haldane's presence in a chronicle can be twofold. He works best as a hidden canker on the city's vampiric society. He can be one of the characters' most valued allies and primary antagonist, often at the same time. If a character, especially a Nosferatu, does something extraordinary, Haldane will be the first to congratulate him. He believes excellence should be rewarded, and will surely find a way to make use of an exceptional young Kindred. Of course, if she *isn't* a Nosferatu, he has just the thing to help her achieve her *full* potential. It's completely possible that, as unusual as the character is, she still might do more, go further, with the proper push.

Non-vampires are most likely to encounter Heinrich in his search for test subjects and spare parts.

Personality

Heinrich knows how to hide.

On the surface, he's almost urbane. He insists his friends call him "Rich," and oh, of course, you must call him Rich, because we're all friends now, aren't we? He's polite and cooperative, and always, *always*, happy to help.

And the truth is he *wants* to help. Heinrich is dedicated to the idea that being simply "normal" is a curse. Throughout his life he was taught there is no greater sin than toeing the line. Being normal. Performing up to everyone's expectations. Haldane has nothing but pity for the people who consider themselves his peers, but he would never let them know how he feels.

Doctor Haldane wants to cure people, cure them of their assumptions and of their mediocrity. He is certain that by removing their crutches, his patients will eventually strengthen and rise above the challenges he places in their paths. While a small number of his patients have washed out, wallowing in their "mutilation," a surprising number are actually doing just that.

Secrets

Right now he's safe, because the prince's people aren't taking the escapees' stories seriously. But he knows sooner or later he's going to have to relocate to another town if he wants to continue his experiments. To that end he is continually refining the machine, shrinking it and making it more easily transportable. He has a small warren of "converted" Nosferatu who act as lab assistants, helping

him to set up, break down and stash the machine with frightening efficiency.

Heinrich receives visitors in a shabby apartment decorated with the sorts of inoffensive landscapes, still lifes and Norman Rockwells one might find in a doctor's office. His actual haven is in a subbasement of the hospital, closed off in the 'fifties for unknown reasons. The entrance from the hospital has been walled over, but there are multiple—well-hidden—entrances from the sewer. Haldane performs only *special* experiments there, the sorts of experiments that don't leave witnesses.

Rumors

"See that Nosferatu over there? Freak's not happy just being fugly, he's crazy too. Swears he's Daeva... Right, and I'm Solomon Birch."

It's only a matter of time before Heinrich has to overcome the challenge presented by his escaped patients. Eventually someone will believe them, or at least start sniffing more closely than he's comfortable with.

"I saw lights flashing in the windows of that abandoned warehouse over on Burrell St. last night. Joey thinks it was just a rave, but I didn't hear any music. Mark, you know Mark, right? He went to check it out, see if he could score some X, but I haven't seen him since. I don't think it was a rave, man."

Heinrich's machine, regrettably, requires a pretty hefty amount of power to operate. It sometimes draws the attention of passersby, and Haldane is forced to invite them in to see the source of the lights firsthand. As far as he's concerned, it works out, because the machine's operation requires a large volume of his Vitae as well.

STORY HOOKS

- **The Familiar Stranger:** An unfamiliar Nosferatu approaches the characters, insisting she is a vampire with whom the characters have been acquainted in the past. She knows details of their original dealings, but nothing a savvy Nosferatu couldn't have picked up. The problem is nobody's seen hide nor hair of the vampire in question for over a month. And now the Nosferatu has disappeared as well.
- **Fiends and Family:** Heinrich still has a tendency to perform many of his experiments (particularly experiments on which he doesn't *mind* the Hounds discovering him working) upon the various transients of the city. Some of those transients are relatives, contacts or retainers of the characters...
- **Doc Workers:** If characters have influence in the manufacturing or medical spheres, Haldane might work through them to procure items and equipment he requires to upgrade his laboratory. It can lead to a great business relationship if they don't look too deeply... Or they can find themselves scheduled for a procedure, if they do.

Heinrich Haldane

Aliases: Doctor Frankenstein, Herr Doktor

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Medicine 4, Occult 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies 4, Clan Status 2, Covenant Status 3, Haven 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 5 (Narcissism (Mild), Paranoia (Mild))

Virtue: Fortitude. Heinrich values challenge as a means of growth and evolution.

Vice: Envy. Though Haldane does not like to admit it to himself, he does envy the pretty people for the ease of their lives.

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 4, Vigor 1, The Coil of Blood 3, The Coil of Banes 2

The Tunnel Terrors: House Telamones

OVERSEER ONE: We shall require a steady drainage system for maintenance purposes topside, the presence of a private security staff, armed, at all times, two million Euros or an equivalent amount in gold is our fee on top of supplies and work expenses, and a hand-inscribed copy of the *Enchiridion of Epictetus*, in High German, preferably bound in the skin of a hanged man. Too much? Big project.

OVERSEER TWO: I wonder if, perhaps, the thickness of the foundational pylons under your haven is sufficient to withstand sustained damage, Archbishop. We'd hate for that to be a question of workmanship on our behalf.

Background

Think of the world you walk in every day, particularly if you are an affluent member of a First World nation: comfortably urban (or suburban), wide streets, your car safely parked in a tidy, well-lit parking lot, entering safely constructed modern buildings where the electricity is working, the ceiling is free from leaks, and the windows are vast, bright and open. Consider, then, that the daytime world of architecture is made for humans, with human needs and human aesthetic choices in mind. What about architecture for vampires?

The Telamones, an ancient bloodline of Kindred architects, has maintained the tradition of building the secret places of the night for over two thousand years. Havens, temples, chapels, Elysia—all have been built by the skilled and capable hands of the Engineers. Entire dynasties of Kindred have walked, lived and fallen in their hidden structures. Yet they seek always more than the mere respect of simple craftsmen. They demand a monopoly over their trade.

Non-Telamones who dabble in the architecture trade for their kind sometimes discover they are targeted by the hideous bloodline. Kindred who connect their havens to the sewers and the subways are marked for sabotage, blackmail, even outright assassination. It's all right to live there, say the Overseers. It's alright to find an abandoned spot and make it your own. It's unacceptable, according to the traditions of the Telamones, to build such places, however.

Rumors of the Engineers being founded on diablerie have changed the fortunes of House Telamones. As word spreads of their peculiar traditions, the city's Lancea Sanctum has increasingly dropped the service of the Engineers, since the Tradition of Amaranth is too strong to break.

The local Carthian Movement has taken a strong stance against the Telamones as well. The idea of a workforce

little more than slaves to the masters of their bloodline is repellant to the modern idea of employees' rights and Teamsters. Add the Carthian hatred of diablerie to the list of anti-worker offenses, and the Telamones are far from welcome in Carthian domains. Entire work squads have been killed in a single night, while the Overseers hear from afar that what amounts to a clique of Liberal Arts students jumped up on the Blood have diverted their precious work. The Ordo Dracul college, always in need of grandiose spaces for its academies, remains tolerant of the Telamones... for now. A few have questioned the logic of allowing non-Dragons the freedom of knowing the layout of a Dragon exclusive property, and thus contracts from the Ordo Dracul have begun to dry up as well.

The city's Invictus, especially the young Invictus, are currently questioning whether their use of the Telamones is even necessary. Modern architecture is easier to build, and Dominate is certainly easier to secure secrecy than the complex traditions and excessively grandiose demands of the Overseers. As long as the Overseers of House Telamones remain loyal, however, they are safe.

Recently, though, Overseers in other cities have offended too many Kindred in high places. In Seattle, an entire city block was destroyed as a Circle of the Crone temple was crushed from beneath, the Acolytes inside having failed to supply the Overseers with five hundred sheets of real lamb vellum. In Dusseldorf, an Ordo Dracul Kogaion was held for ransom for three years after the local Dragons backed out of a contract. In Kingstown, the Carthian meetinghouse was totaled after the Telamones were refused a bid.

Personality

The Overseers of tonight are two dreadful, glowering specimens of Nosferatu deformity. Overseer One, male,

is the more talkative of the two, even if his hunchback and cleft palate are enough to make David Cronenberg vomit, with his grey skin oozing pus and revolting horny skin covers over his hands. Still, Overseer One has the ability to communicate with the Invictus on their level. He is ingratiating and polite, in a vile sort of way. Overseer Two, female, is the quiet one, and the one who makes the veiled threats and collects the past-due debts. Almost as hideous as her brother, Overseer Two carries an enormous, razor sharp Obfuscated pick axe on her back at all times. She intends no real concealment; indeed, most who know her admit she rather hopes those she deals with do see it.

The Overseers will happily tell those with whom they deal that they were twin siblings as mortals, and, in fact, they believe it is this that allows them the freedom to not name successors.

As to the Telamones drones, the Overseers are still able to sway them to work, for now at least. They still have a few years until their century is up, and the Telamones are willing to give them time to change their fractured minds.

Secrets

The Overseers have an ace up their sleeves, especially as the hits from the Lancea Sanctum and the Carthians begin mounting. The fact that almost all Telamones look alike to outsiders has made it possible for a few very close retainers to slip aside and learn the mannerisms of the Overseers, meaning there are at least three almost identical servants of each Overseer toiling in the building projects. These servants are intensely loyal, and all carry identical signet rings, meaning even if the main two Overseers are destroyed, there is always a possibility for more to step in to replace them.

Overseer Two plans to ditch her brother at the earliest convenience, hopefully to strike out on her own within the Invictus. If she succeeds, this spells the end of House Telamones as a distinct entity, and will drive the bloodline into a frenzy.

The Overseers intimately know the layout of all havens they build. Like deviant computer programmers, they usually build a weakness or a secret passage in, so easy return access is possible.



Few owners have realized it yet, but at least one Lancea Sanctum priest discovered that his supposedly enormous and airproof haven was riddled with crawlspaces under the floor stones, linked to the sewer system. If this practice becomes public knowledge, the entire bloodline is in jeopardy from enraged patrons.

Overseers One and Two

Aliases: The Worms Underneath, The Diggers, The Mole People, "Our Engineers," Red-Eyes-Dirty-Claws

Clan: Nosferatu

Bloodline: Telamones

Covenant: Invictus

Mental: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computers 3 (Computer Aided Drafting), Crafts 5 (Practical Masonry), Occult 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 5, Survival 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3 (Rats), Empathy 3, Intimidation 5 (Backroom Deals), Persuasion 3, Expression 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Invictus Status 1, Resources 5, Retainer 4 times 6 (Body Doubles), Allies 5 (Telamones), Haven Size 5, Haven Security 5, Haven Location 5, Herd 3, Strong Back

Flaws: Overseer One: Deformed. Both: Full Vinculum to the other

Willpower: 8

Humanity: Overseer One: 3 (Irrationality; Paranoia), Overseer Two: 2 (Schizophrenia)

Virtue: Fortitude. Both Overseers are blessed with the virtue of Fortitude, honed sharp in the caverns under the earth.

Vice: Overseer One has the Vice of Greed, manifested as being willing to do anything for a high enough price. Overseer Two has the Vice of Wrath. She does not suffer fools gladly.

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 4

Disciplines: Overseer One: Animalism 5, Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 5

Overseer Two: Animalism 2, Nightmare 5, Obfuscate 2, Vigor 5

Legacy

Bloodline: Telamones

"We are the children of the Roman tufa and we are the vermin that built your empires."

The Telamones bloodline is large and, in many places, respected, believed to be descended from the original slave vampires of the Camarilla during the Roman Republic. The stories vary, but one of the Dalmatian Nosferatu imported to the Necropolis beneath Rome is rumored to have been named Telamon the Rat, and in life had been a student of the Pythagoreans, thus leading to his mastery of the mathematics necessary for the enormous engineering tasks necessary to build the catacombs. It was he who brokered the deal for freedom in exchange for service, it was he who trained the Nosferatu of Rome to dig, and it was he who made them strong enough to survive after the fall of the decadent Camarilla.

Tonight's Telamones are free to leave the family business, but most choose to remain working as their forebears did, as their hideous mien makes it difficult to leave the warrens and tunnels they themselves are best at building. Certain names, "Miletus," "LeFleur," "Furniss," seem to cycle, as small lineages crop up among the bloodline, tracing a commonly respected ancestor. When they choose to leave, they are most commonly known for havening in sewers and the dark places of the city, far from mortal eyes.

Nickname: The Engineers

Appearance: All Telamones descendants are similarly cursed with a familial blight, even before they accept the privilege of becoming a true member of the bloodline. Their skin turns a stony green-grey at Embrace, rough and ragged to the touch, and their eyes become red and unnaturally beady, glowing even in pitch blackness. Some manifest further physical deformities, such as lameness or withered limbs, while others develop the appearance of rodents with elongated noses and vicious buckteeth. They tend to favor simple garments of sturdy cloth that can withstand the moisture and grime of the underground life.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

Weakness: A Telamones suffers from the same weakness as his Nosferatu cousins. In addition, when in a well-lit area, the Telamones lose benefits of the 10-Again rule on uses of Stealth, including the Obfuscate Discipline.

History and Culture: Vampire architecture is the trade and practice of the Telamones bloodline. As the legend goes, the Telamones are not descended from a single Nosferatu, but rather a clutch of disfigured, loathsome

creatures brought from the province of Dalmatia to serve the Camarilla of Rome. Little more than slaves, the leaders of the Camarilla demanded that the Telamones dig enormous winding catacombs and unearthly great halls for their depraved tastes. Most importantly, the vampires of the Camarilla demanded that the Telamones not be seen.

In exchange, the Camarilla gave them a small herd, safety from the sunlight and a voice in their ruling council. The Telamones nodded in assent, and went about their burrowing, more worms and vermin than vampires.

To serve in silence and humility, that was the Telamones way.

Such affairs have a tendency to end suddenly. This was no different. The Camarilla fell, and vampires of modern nights have few theories why. The Telamones, hidden far beneath the surface of burning Rome, were safe. They knew the secret ways out. As the patricians of Rome's vampires were being exposed to the barbarians and the fire they brought, the Telamones were able to escape. For the first time, the Telamones were free.

The Dark Ages brought the rise of the guilds. As the Ventrue waxed fat, they demanded secret keeps for their kind. The Daeva came to seek pleasure palaces to their own vanity. The Mekhet planned beautiful temples and secret churches. All but the Gangrel came to seek the skills of the Telamones. These last stood aloof, staring from the forests with their black, hateful eyes.

The Telamones scuttled and scurried beneath the great cities of Europe. The tradition of the Overseers grew. Each century, two of the Telamones were chosen to diablerize the previous Overseers and take their place. To the Telamones, this was not a crime. The Fog of Eternity was far worse than losing the truth of the Overseers. The previous Overseers would choose their successors personally. Woe to the Overseer who neglected to select a successor, for he would be encased in the next project they finished, to await Doomsday, trapped in rock forever. Of the several hundred extant Telamones, all hope to one night be chosen as an Overseer, for it is the Overseer who is granted the privilege of being called the "Master." It is the Master who stamps the Telamones seal, a skull writhing in rats, upon the last stone of any great Telamones project.

Tonight's Telamones Overseers behave as an Invictus "House," To outsiders, all Telamones look nearly identical, frighteningly so. As they have allied themselves with the First Estate, House Telamones enjoys certain rights and privileges within their Covenant, including the freedom to use an enormous number of Kindred and ghoulish retainers, all Blood bound to the Overseers. It is the sheer number of the Engineers that has cowed the Invictus into

ignoring the Overseers' predilection toward Amaranth, as it reminds the Lords and Succubi who serve the First Estate of the days when they, too, could wield a huge workforce that offered absolute loyalty.

Reputation: The average Telamones is more often an object of pity to other Kindred than actively feared. The Telamones workers know they're expendable, and seek to keep a simple trade that will lead other Kindred to leave them be. The Overseers, however, are seen as tyrannical, vindictive and mad, even by the Invictus, who are themselves usually tyrannical, vindictive and mad.

Most Kindred who encounter a clutch of Telamones consider them to be hardworking, if slightly dim, creatures, best left not discussed, let alone invited to events. When the rare invitation to visit the vampires of the surface arrives, it is often politely rejected, since the Telamones are uncomfortable with leaving their protective darkness. The tradition of Obfuscating when in the presence of a non-Nosferatu still applies and, in fact, most Kindred might not even be aware of just exactly how many of them there are, since they all look more or less alike. A Prince might believe there to be only one or two when dozens may be scurrying below his feet. This, naturally, leads to urban legends about the legendary productivity of the Engineers, building enormous tunnels in far too short a time for their numbers.

Devotion: The Beast's Own

(Animalism •, Obfuscate ••)

When vampires live a subterranean life, it is likely they'll come across other, simpler subterranean creatures at any given moment. Rats, moles, worms, even the occasional pet alligator of urban legend, is likely to cross their path. To the Telamones, these creatures are as common as the stone they crawl through, and this Devotion is as old as the Camarilla, so it is said. A Nosferatu's weakness, normally, extends to even the animals he meets. With this Devotion, the Nosferatu weakness no longer applies to Animal Ken rolls and the Discipline of Animalism. So far, it is known only by the Telamones, who keep it a tight secret. It is with this Devotion that many Telamones, living in the tunnels, often keep cats, rats and other small animals by their sides to pass the time and somehow keep the loneliness of the Nosferatu condition at bay. This Devotion costs 10 points to learn.

Cost: 1 Vitae per night

System: Like Obfuscate 2, this power is on all night as long as the Vitae is spent to power it. Animal Ken rolls are no longer subject to the Nosferatu weakness. However, since Animalism 5, Leashing the Beast, depends upon Empathy, this Devotion does not extend to that Discipline.

A Fucking Freight Train: Morris Spiegel

"I got nothing against you, kid, but if you keep standing there, I'm going to have to fuck up my boots real bad stomping your guts out."

Background

He looks like a fucking mook, the benchwarmer backup from the Adam West *Batman*, standing there on his bandy legs, his gorilla hands pocketed, and you're almost smiling when you meet his eyes, and then it's all you can do not to puke. His eyes make you want to stare at the rest of his face, twisted with old burn scars, because his eyes make the gross deformity sexier than Internet gang-bangs. If the eyes are windows to the soul, then Spiegel's is a burning oil refinery filled with screaming people, all covered in flaming tar, thrashing, their bones cracking from the heat. But they don't die. Whatever it is inside him that made him do the things he's done, it ain't dying, and oh it hurts like fuck.

The American Nightmare

Spiegel's the worm-eaten underside of the American Dream. He was born in the Kaiser's Germany to a Jewish father who played a role in the post-war socialist revolution before hightailing it ahead of some pissed off former allies. Spiegel was already a meat wagon at fourteen when he and his old man hit American soil. He started putting his beef to use, and building a thick layer of scars on his knuckles as his father's bully boy when the senior Spiegel started rabbleroxing with the unionists in Minneapolis, and striking a blow for the revolution against the capital classes.

When he wasn't delivering the pain to scabs and strike busters, Morris made a name for himself as a prizefighter. He was called "The Minneapolis Monster" on account of how astonishingly ugly he was. According to one sports-writer, "Spiegel's greatest advantage in the ring is that every punch that lands can only incrementally improve his looks." Morris's face looked like a fist, and his fists looked like prize hams.

You'd be forgiven for thinking he was a fuckwit, because he liked being underestimated in the ring and out of it—a quality that got him scouted by Teddy Cussler, a Teamster whose Mafioso bedmates occasionally needed a bit of outside legbreaking, and paid good. While his old man was doing ten to twenty-five for firebombing a police car,

he started beating people's teeth out for 'leggers and wise guys. He adopted an Italian-sounding pseudonym and got the reputation for a style of merciless violence that involved beating a guy so bad he was never quite right again, but when he was mostly healed could still go back to work and pay what he owed.

Made Man

When he caught the eye of Byrne Reimler, he was doing well enough to afford fifty-dollar whores (it was the 'thirties, baby, give the man some credit), and didn't fancy working for some rat-toothed bastard who smelled like a cattle yard, but Reimler had plans for the Monster. His Carthian pals were riding the same wave as the Teamsters. They had the Minneapolis Invictus by the sack, and wanted to start squeezing. Reimler came for Morris, and it was the first fight the mortal ever lost. Reimler beat seven kinds of shit out of him, and the Embrace was brutal and perfunctory. Reimler gave him the crash course on immortality, and after starving him nearly into torpor, turned him loose on some confused Oakies who'd wandered east instead of west so he could pop his cherry and be done with it.

The Embrace didn't do much to Spiegel's looks or his temper, but he resented the hell out of Reimler for it despite reveling in the physicality of the curse. Along with his coterie of similarly taken neonates, Spiegel's crew was supposed to hit the Prince's allies while playing the rough out-of-towners, and incidentally to eat the worst the Prince's faction could throw at them.

They said, "Fuck that."

Muerte la Revolución

They declared their own revolution, and took it hard and fast back to Reimler's faction, using guns, fire and dynamite. Trying to take an elder with a century of experience in a stand-up fight was a sucker's game, and Spiegel had boxed enough to know the difference between a prizefight where it was pride and the purse on the line, and a street fight where it was your ass on the line. When he killed Reimler, he used pipe bombs and gasoline and turned the old Nosferatu's haven into an inferno just as dawn

was breaking. He got hideously burned getting to cover, and his Nosferatu Blood returned with a vengeance as he healed. The scars of his patricide would stick with him forever.

After wiping out the revolutionary cell, Spiegel's crew suckered the city's elite together into the same place and then blew them to hell, leaving the Prince and most of his people to burn.

And it was good.

The surviving Carthians nominally took control of Minneapolis, and Spiegel stayed in town through WWII, the Atomic 'fifties, and the Culture Wars, then the hammer fell and pounded out a disco beat on their asses. It was a lesson he'd always remember about vampires and vampire politics—immortals never forget, and have forever to plan the perfect way to fuck you.

Scars

The displaced Invictus Primogen had been maneuvering for forty years. The Carthians fell apart, and while they were busy killing each other in factional fighting, Spiegel watched his allies betray him, his coterie disintegrate and fall upon each other and everything in his city turn to shit before the smirking pricks came back and put him in chains. There are so many ways to torture a creature who dies as hard as the Kindred die.

Spiegel spent most of the 'seventies as the new Prince's conversation piece, getting progressively uglier as his wounds scared over rather than healing clean. Something happened during his decade of humiliation and pain. It was a crucible that cooked out his impurities, leaving only his hate. Not an irrational hate. Not a passionate hate even. A patient hate. He'd learned that lesson at least: lump it, endure, and when it's your turn, put the other guy down so hard and permanently he's never going to come back at you. When his turn came, he took it.

What Comes Around

He'd put that keen mind of his to work, and memorized every face that ever looked at him while he was chained up on display. Every face that smiled as the molten metal dripped on his belly. Every face that laughed as they emasculated him. Ten years of galas and conclaves—it was the 1970s and everybody was partying. He's got a lot of names to put to a lot of faces, and a lot of old acquaintances yet to visit.

When his chance came, dumb luck saw him freed, his benefactor dead, and him on the lam and addicted to a something better than fucking and drinking and shooting smack, something even better than blood.

His first payback kills were messy. He jumped a train for Atlanta, looking for a slick prick named Howard (half whacked out of his goddamned mind on blood doped with 'ludes and cocaine) who'd laughed when they cut off his toes and fed them to baby alligators. Spiegel caught him coming out of his apartment, and they fought in the alcove—ugly, close quarters fighting. Spiegel got a thumb in the eye, but he bit off Howard's nose, and finally smashed his head over and over into the heavy exterior door until it split open. The kill lit Morris up like a homerun scoreboard, made his heart start beating, made his cock hard—the righteous fury wholly unleashed, and the object of his hatred *totally fucking destroyed*. He rode that high for hours, until he crashed. The comedown was ugly, fear, paranoia, doubt. He needed more of it. He needed more revenge. And so he started looking.

He stalked his way through the 1980s and '90s, getting progressively more messed up and scarred, so now he looks like he got tossed into a wood chipper and sewn back together with twine. His scars have scars, and each one's a story he doesn't want to forget.

He's worked his way through his Faces, and the list is getting short. But he's starting to think that they aren't the only ones who need seeing to. They sired childer, they had friends. Plenty of bastards still need sorting out.

Morris Spiegel in the World of Darkness

Morris doesn't give a fuck about you or your politics. He doesn't give a fuck about the damage he causes, or the mess he leaves. He's got his eye on something; if you get between him and it, he's going over you, around you or through you, but you're not slowing him down. Come at him with something nastier than he can bring and he'll run like hell. His ass is worth more to him than his pride, but if he runs tonight, he's doing the math. If you're scary enough to make him run, what would even the odds?

Spiegel does for any of the secret occult communities what he does for the vampire community. He changes the political landscape by carpet bombing part of it. He'll take political structures that have lasted for decades and annihilate them in a single night, all to take out one of his Faces—one of those he recalls from his time in chains (and that's a list that can include *anybody* who was running around in the 1970s).

This makes Spiegel a catalyst for some major and unexpected shifts in the social setting. He hits without warning, like a fist on the dance floor. Who he is, why he did it, and where the hell he is now are all fat taunting question marks that'll straighten out, flicking you off, exclamation marks when you get close to him.

His drives are simple and goals simpler—he's so simple, in fact, he flies under the radar, and many can't believe after all the noise and disaster that all he was looking to do was extract a little payback.

Yet he's an arrogant enigma, and makes almost no effort to hide himself in his travels. The Masquerade is another thing about which he doesn't give a fuck. Anybody asks, and he'll shrug and tell them he's a vampire. If they ask him to prove it, he'll tell them to fuck off. Spiegel's got nothing he cares to prove anymore.

As a result, others scramble to keep a lid on his antics, their efforts to find him and feed him into an industrial sausage press frustrated by a profile swinging wildly from the highs of public ultraviolence to something lower than a roach's balls.

He's got an obsessive following in the Cacophony that trades Spiegel trivia, argues about his canonical victim list and tries to piece together those who've yet to get a visit. Dedicated Internet forums have waves of activity spiking with verifiable instances of Spiegel extracting some payback.

There's a cell of mortal hunters that follows his movements as it can, and feed him information about his Faces. He's perfectly willing to serve somebody else's agenda if it gives him meat to feed his wrath.

The FBI tracks him too, as does Homeland Security... though both think he's a domestic terrorist organization. The FBI tracks him as The Three Trumpets Society (a name fed to them by a Cacophony blogger as a joke). The TTS is believed to be a radical Christian fascist group.

He's encountered mages, and doesn't think much of them, and has had several tangles with werewolves in his travels, but since he doesn't fuck with people he's not trying to kill, they've ended amiably enough. If somebody else is looking to make a run at one of his Faces, he's happy for the company, but will annihilate anybody who gets between him and dropping the hammer personally.

If you wake up one evening, and there's a charred hole in your power structure, well... the Prince who put Spiegel in chains had lots of friends and threw fantastic parties. And who the fuck even remembers what happened in the 'seventies, anyway?

Personality

The way Morris deals with a tricky social situation is to start a fight. Try to manipulate him or persuade him or sucker him, and he'll start beating you in the face. Try to sell him a shit sandwich, and he'll give you a knuckle sandwich for free. He's not immune to social influence; he's just got a really low tolerance for bullshit and no hesitation separating



"Morris sitting down to have a chat" from "Morris crushing your skull with a decorative statuette."

When he's gunning for a Face, he's terrifying, like watching a tornado set down. Scream at it, run from it, beg God to save you from it, but it's still ripping your trailer park a new asshole and dropping an alligator in the street. Back in the days of wooden ships and pirates, one way of dealing with a storm on the sea was to "fly before the wind," raising sail and racing with the storm, at the storm's speed, letting it carry you 'til it played out. If Spiegel's goals and yours align, then it's possible to fly before him rather than be swamped and destroyed. He's not perverse enough to enjoy torture, and he's not witty enough to appreciate ironic death. If he's gunning for you, then he wants to end you, and he'll do it any way he can and to hell with the Traditions or any Prince's laws.

Outside his revenge kick, or his tendency use the headbutt as a rhetorical tactic, he's remarkably easygoing. His Beast is like a bear. It gorges itself upon blood and horror, and then hibernates all winter. When he's in one of his quiescent cycles, he's quiet and reasonably good company. He's also surprisingly funny, and has perfected a deadpan style of cracking wise.

Yet even at his amiable best he's got an aura of barely suppressed violence. It's writ in his stance, his way of speaking. He's a man who's comfortable taking things straight to the most lethal finality possible, without reserve or hesitation.

If he's got some reason to do it, he will fucking kill you.

Secrets

Simplicity does not mean stupidity. Morris knows how to work a computer. (He's had a thing for Apple laptops ever since he crushed a guy's skull with one.) He's savvy about the way things work on the Internet, which he finds pretty similar to the speakeasies of his youth, and the anonymous gin joints of the 'thirties, except nobody will smack you in the mouth for spouting your rancid politics. He's oddly vain about the character of his mythic persona, and posts to several of the boards and lists dedicated to tracking his movements, sometimes with corrections and sometimes with misinformation. Online, his persona is inverted, and he's sneaky and duplicitous, cutting deals and starting rumors. He's even tracked down other posters and beaten them to hamburger for slagging him off online and others for playing fanboy suckup. He's posted in his online persona about getting the crap kicked out of him by the real Morris (complete with pics of a kicked-in door and busted up haven). He knows most of his remaining Faces have figured out what's going on, and some follow the

boards, so his efforts to screw with the information flow is in part to sucker his targets into revealing themselves. On the Internet, Spiegel's manipulative vampire instincts find an outlet.

While some sources say he's slaughtered dozens of other Kindred (the actual body count varies, grows with the telling, gets debunked, fought over), what they're less clear on is his feeding habits. There's a great deal of speculation about whether he's slipped into cannibalism and must drink the blood of his own kind. Some of his canonical victims were certainly drained, but diablerie? The evidence is spotty. The truth is, he's tried it but something held him back from the final sin, something inexplicable that he can't explain (if anybody ever had the balls to press him on it). On some level, he considers his revenge *clean*, a perfect thing, righteous even, and tainting it with diablerie sickens him a little. He's afraid that if he loses control one night and takes it this far it'll break him, and he'll lose the fury that's driven him and given him purpose.

Perhaps his strangest secret is his relationship to the descendants of his mortal family. His father remarried when he got out of prison, became a practicing Jew and had three children. There's a Rabbi in Newark, New Jersey, who gets a big roll of hundred dollar bills by FedEx every Rosh Hashanah, the "cabbage roll" arriving on the traditional day for tithes of vegetables. Rabbi Spiegel has tried and failed to identify the source of the money, and now accepts it as one of those "mysterious ways." Likewise, several others in different branches of the family receive similar anonymous support. Morris's feelings for his mortal relatives are complicated. Not exactly filial piety, not exactly affection—perhaps some residual obligation from a time when being a stand-up guy involved looking after your own.

Rumors

"I couldn't talk 'cause he'd busted my jaw so bad, but I wanted to say 'holy fuck' when he opened his shirt and showed me the scars."

Everybody who talks about Morris Spiegel says something about the scars—that he's covered in them, and they're an inch thick over most of his body. What they don't usually talk about is what they really are—every time he kills somebody, he cuts himself and rubs a handful of rock salt mixed with his victim's blood into the wound so it forms a thick black keloid when it heals. Anytime he needs a boost, he just rips the scar open and the Vitae of his victim pours out. He's got so much now he could go a year without hunting. He'll teach the trick if you ask him, but if you learn it you'll end up looking like him in a few years.

"He had me up against a chainlink fence, and he kept punching me in the gut until I was puking blood all down the front of his shirt, and then he just quit and stared at my face for a second and said, 'Fuck me. Man, you look just like somebody else,' and then he let me go."

Sometimes Morris isn't sure he's got one of his Faces in the crosshairs, and he'll hesitate. His memory might be fogging up on him. They say he threw a Shadow librarian in front of a train, but she'd been Embraced only since '87. He's either losing it or he's throwing a wider net.

"I watched him throw a firebomb into my sire's car and burn her to ash, then he took my knives away and broke my hands. I knew he was going to kill me too, but he said, 'Kid, I got nothing against you. You want to get the hell out of this shithole?'"

Morris sometimes travels with other Kindred, younger, disenfranchised striplings who've already had an assfull of court politics. He runs with them for awhile, and they go their separate ways, some of them adopting Spiegel's methods for their own payback. There's chatter about a murder union—a bunch of angry neonates banding together to help deliver revenge and protect its members from the blowback. If it's true, Spiegel inadvertently started it.

"We put enough lead into him for a fleet of Zeppelins. It didn't even slow him down, and he tore us up and got away."

Spiegel's learned a seriously messed up magical ritual that involves skinning his enemies and sewing their skins into a suit. He's not scarred up, he's wearing his victim's skins. He has to soak the skin suit in blood to keep it going, but it means he can't be hurt by anybody related to the suit's skins. Why do you think he likes fire so much? Because it covers up the skinning.

"His whole legend is bullshit. Who the fuck benefits from his 'revenge'?"

When Morris decapitates a city, politically speaking, the second and third tier players in the local political game scramble to assume power. Too many people get too much out of his so-called independent violence—there's no way he's independent. Spiegel is a hired hitter brought in to waste powerful politicians, and his whole persona is a mask. Under those "scars" (amazing what modern makeup can accomplish), he's one of half a dozen vampires, all using the same imaginary character as their operational cover.

STORY HOOKS

- **Cleansed with Fire:** After vicious political wrangling and some vile betrayals, the characters have been soundly defeated by the local powers that be, until just before the credits roll some maniac in a hijacked gasoline truck crashes through the Prince's court and detonates the thing. The city is suddenly bereft of its Prince, his officers and most of his supporters, leaving control up for grabs and, as the new season begins, the characters in the best position to snatch it up. But the first task is to prove their legitimacy, find the assassin and bring him to trial.
- **The Enemy of my Enemy is a Goddamned Psycho:** Morris comes to town and, lo and behold, shares a common enemy with the characters. He's not going to play the usual games, and he's not going to mind his manners or clean up after himself... he's easy enough to work with, but getting him to play a subtler game is itself a challenge. Dealing with the enemy might be as easy as letting Morris work, but can the characters afford the noise and publicity his preferred mode of operation will attract?
- **A Face to Launch a Thousand Punches:** Yeah, you went to a whole lot of parties. It was the 'seventies. Mostly you were so loaded you can't remember what kind of party tricks the hosts put on, but you do remember this one time how the Prince of Maryland (or was it Monroe? Some place starting with "M" anyway) had this big ugly guy nailed to a table with railroad spikes, with his abdomen hollowed out and filled with ice, and blood cocktails and other drinks nestled down in the ice to keep them cold. The undead ice bucket wasn't the most fucked up thing you saw in the 'seventies, but it's one of the most fucked up things you can remember.

Morris Spiegel

Aliases: Morty Spine, "The Princeton Pyro," Martin Spaloni, The Minneapolis Monster, The Three Trumpets Society

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: The Carthian Movement (nominally)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts 3 (DIY Explosives), Investigation 3

Physical Skills: Brawl 4 (Fighting Dirty), Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 3 (Ambush), Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Armor of Scars 4, Contacts 2, Fame 3

Flaws: Addiction (Revenge), Deformity (see description for Armor of Scars Merit)

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath. Spiegel suffered the cruelty of more imaginative Kindred, the subtle tortures, the artistic atrocities—and he's done with that shit. His wrath is a pure thing, untainted by irony or cleverness. He aches in his marrow to see the faces that smiled at his humiliation smashed in, pulverized, and burned. He'll leave the torture for the pervs—when he acts upon his wrath, it's fast, final and utterly merciless.

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 3, Celerity 1, Fortitude 1

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

Devotions: Mark of Shadows (Obfuscate 3, Fortitude 1, Vigor 1)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Fist	+0B	-	-	Strength + Brawling (Fighting Dirty) + Vigor (12)
Leap Pipe	+3 B	1	-	Strength + Weapons + Vigor (11)
Sawn-Off Shotgun	+4L	1	9-Again, 2 shots, Strength 4	Dexterity + Firearms (8)

Morris uses improvised weapons extensively, favoring objects he can use to inflict Lethal damage in close quarters. Failing at that, he delivers Bashing damage as fast as possible to pulverize an opponent.

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Scars	4/4	0	0

Legacy

Morris has two unusual advantages.

Merit: Armor of Scars

(• to •••••, vampire only)

Effect: Something is off-kilter in your undead state. The physical stasis that marks the Kindred is grossly deficient in you. When you're injured and heal, rather than return to your eternal state, your body grows thick lumpy scars. Serious injury like burns over wide areas of your body transforms whole sections of flesh into calloused cracked scar tissue. Over time, this dense tissue has formed across enough of your body to act as armor. Each dot in Armor of Scars grants 1 point of Armor that works equally well against all forms of attack.

Drawback: The scars that protect you also make you hideous and gross. You have the Deformity Flaw as described on p. 209 of the World of Darkness core book, but the penalty is equal to your rating in Armor of Scars. The scars also reduce your sense of touch, imposing a penalty equal to the rating on such rolls.

Devotion: Mark of Shadows

(Obfuscate ••, Fortitude •, Vigor ••)

This technique allows one to mark an object with a measure of Vitae, and cloak it from sight as through use of Touch of Shadows, but the sacrifice of Vitae extends the duration of the effect for an entire night, and doesn't require the vampire to remain present. The vampire rolls for this effect, and then the results are compared to that of any searchers who encounter the object for the remainder of the night.

The effects are otherwise identical to Touch of Shadows, save for the cost of 1 Vitae.

Scene: Genovese Syndrome

Overview: The characters arrive at a scheduled rendezvous or meeting with a mentor or powerful elder ally, a Storyteller character the players have gotten to know. They find this character being viciously beaten by a huge hunched man in a dirty sweater and ski mask. They'll have to decide to intervene, ride it out or pursue when the assailant flees. There's also a revelation about their ally's past.

Description: The attacker, Spiegel, has ID'd the characters' ally as one of his Faces, and he's unloading on him. The characters arrive in time for the final few rounds of what must have been a vicious fight from the wreckage of their ally's haven, and find him with Morris astride him, driving his huge knotted hands into the ally's face over and over. (It already looks like raw meat, and every punch comes with wet crunching sounds.) Morris will pause to use Nightmare to ward off eleventh-hour heroics, and failing that he'll use violence, but he won't stick around if the odds don't favor him—he'll use Obfuscate and flee, leaving behind a "gift" ticking away somewhere in the room. If the characters don't intervene, Morris will beat their ally into torpor, and then continue to true death. It's not a pretty or quick process—watching the beating without fleeing or falling to frenzy is itself a challenge.

Actions

Dice Pool: Based on action (Strength to throw a sofa over the blast, Wits to find solid cover, Dexterity to dive to safety, etc).

Action: Evade the Blast

Roll Results

Failure: Catch enough to feel it in the morning. The bomb has a dice pool of 6 and inflicts Aggravated damage. Defense doesn't reduce this dice pool, but Armor might.

Success: Evade the worst of it. The bomb has a dice pool of 6, and inflicts Lethal damage. Defense doesn't reduce this dice pool, but Armor might.

Consequences: Regardless of whether they intervene or not, there's the small matter of the fucking bomb in the corner. All the characters are going to get mildly blown up. If the ally survives, he's going to be slammed into torpor by the blast and unavailable for questioning any time soon.

Aftermath: If they don't intervene, then an ally is going to be killed, and they're going to have to deal with having allowed it without trying to help. If they do get involved, then Morris has them down as potential threats to his payback down the line, and he'll do his damndest to make sure they're not in a position to mess with his shit again. There's also the question of why Morris was gunning for their friend.

SCENE: <i>Genovese Syndrome</i>		
MENTAL • • •	PHYSICAL • • • •	SOCIAL • • •
HINDRANCES	HELP	OTHER
Blood slicked floor -1	Lots of cover +2	If they chose not to intervene, they may need to make Humanity rolls to avoid losses (if they're ratings are high enough), and to avoid frenzy when the stink of blood and violence hits them. Identifying Morris and putting two and two together can take place in this scene if the characters recognize Morris.
STs Mess up an ally, demand players chose action or passivity, run combat with a savvy foe or force consequences of inactivity (Humanity roll or Frenzy). Call into question an ally. PCs Intervene or stay hidden, chase the assailant, deal with getting blown up.		

The Heretic Resurrected: Rafael Pope

"Yes, there are shards of truth in the cold hard benedictions of the Sanctified and the hot wet rites of the Acolytes. That doesn't mean that truth is relative, however. Come with me and I'll show you how to draw eternal truths from ancient falsehoods."

Background

It's not his looks that are compelling. He's just a middle-aged man, perhaps a bit taller than average, with dark hair and Mediterranean features over olive skin that's a little too waxy to be entirely healthy. No, it's the way he moves, the way he leans toward you as you speak, the obvious captivation in his eyes. In this moment, he exists for you.

Vampires have long memories, but Kindred society can be remarkably quick to forget. Which is why most neonates Embraced in the last fifty years hadn't even *heard* of Rafael Pope, a heretic notorious among the local Sanctified back in the 'thirties, until he came out of torpor recently. Pope's a moving, speaking black eye on the Covenant, an animate reminder of its failure to keep its secrets secret and restrain an anointed member of the flock from delving whole-heartedly into heresy. In 1928 he withdrew from activity within the Lancea Sanctum after fifty years of loyal (and zealous) service, retreating into a life of quiet inquiry and study.

He began by delving into the esoteric and unusual. At first he was merely an eccentric former priest, a local luminary more interested in pursuing greater occult truths than ministering to his fellow Damned. Then he became an Elysium embarrassment, discussing with the wide and hungry eyes of the converted his growing interest in mortal philosophies modern and medieval. Before long, the Covenant elders had convinced him to retire from the public sphere. But his words had garnered him attention, and those Kindred interested in his teachings began to seek him out. It wasn't every night that an ancilla would flout the precepts of his Covenant, effortlessly blending the philosophies of Renaissance thinkers, church fathers, psychoanalysts and existentialists into a morass particularly tantalizing to young, inquisitive Kindred impatient with the ancient assumptions of the major Covenants.

Furthermore, Pope seemed to *care* about his pupils in a way few other Kindred ever manage. He expressed an open and genuine interest in their ideas and philosophies, often borrowing from them and spreading them through-

out the group. He usually gave credit to the person who first voiced the idea, but if he forgot, well, he had a lot on his mind. He attracted to himself a veritable cult, almost exclusively neonates, many with close or former ties to the Circle of the Crone. These Kindred were exuberant, eager to get involved and be heard.

The Heresy of Desire

Little did they know, the same motives drove Pope. The Daeva's enthusiasm for the faith began to flag when he found that after his decades of service to the Spear he was no closer to power than he had been the night he had taken the cloth. He wanted to lead, to be followed, to *matter*, and in the static hierarchy of the undead, his prospects looked grim. Other Kindred in his position might have turned coat and joined another Covenant. Pope, however, had no reservations about the likelihood of a quick ascension in the other Covenants. So he decided to build his own.

Not quite willing to openly break ties with the Lancea Sanctum, he slowly pulled away from them. His public "fall from grace" in Elysium was carefully calculated to grant him maximum exposure to the youth he planned to make his own base of power while encouraging the Sanctified to distance themselves from a Kindred obviously senile with age. Meanwhile he used knowledge garnered from spending much of the 'twenties in speakeasies and on college campuses conversing with the young, the alive, the vibrant, coming to understand what energized the flappers and philosophers of the era, to ingratiate himself to the newly Embraced. His plan worked for a time; it was only when rumors began circulating of Acolytes with a penchant for the Theban Miracles that Pope's experiment drew the furious attention of his former coreligionists.

Before that happened, he had attracted a number of Kindred interested in open and honest debate about the Kindred experience and the philosophical ramifications thereof. Pope played moderator and mediator, expertly guiding discussions to conclusions to which every party present could give some credence. Few recognized that

he rarely interjected any ideas of his own into conversation, instead molding with expert hands the ideas his disciples brought to the discussion into a liberal, permissive philosophy that forbade little and required almost nothing. Compared to the harsh strictures of the Covenants, Pope's take on the Requiem seemed absolutely liberating.

Not that it was all an empty falsehood. The discussions occurring between these Kindred were *real*. They were frank and energetic considerations of the eternal night that stretched before the neonates framed in modern terms without the heaviness of ancient dogma. Pope may not have been contributing much in the way of discussion, but he was an expert facilitator and organizer. He kept discussions civil and convinced Kindred to return to his gatherings week after week. And while Rafael intended for his cult to buoy him in his ascent to power, he had seduced himself as thoroughly as he seduced others. He *needed* to know the Truth, the purpose of his Damnation. He gave the impression that he knew a great deal in order to garner the affections of those who truly did, but he did so in order to learn from them in turn.

Which is why the bloody truths of the Acolytes became lodged in his mind. Without the guiding hand of the elders he had successfully alienated, Pope explored the philosophies of the great rival to the Sanctified with surprising freedom. He plumbed his youthful disciples for information, expertly drawing it from them as one might a worm from the earth, and discarding everything he didn't find immediately appealing. Some of these young disciples, who hardly possessed comprehensive understandings of their own Covenant's philosophies, took it upon themselves to bring their eager elder pupil into the blood-drenched fold. He encouraged freedom of expression and thought in his pupils, and they, in turn, taught him some of the dark sorceries of the Circle. A true explorer of the Requiem might have taken this opportunity to compare the two forms of sorcery, to attempt to bridge a gap between them or at least come to an understanding of what separated each from the other. Pope, however, merely recognized a sure sign of his growing power.

Some of his explorations, however, gave even his followers pause. Even if the Circle frowned upon diablerie, Pope reasoned, was not the Amaranth the perfect expression of the hunt? Was not a Kindred willing to partake of another's soul the ultimate predator? Did not the difficulties inherent in hiding that most foul sin count as the greatest of tribulations? Pope seemed utterly unfettered by morality, and while several of his followers found his attitude invigorating, others harbored enough doubt

to drive them to approach their friends and mentors. While they may have expressed their concerns to their companions in confidence, it was only so long before the truth behind Pope's study group reached the ears of the Sanctified.

The Life and Death of Rafael Pope

Pope has always been a willful creature, more interested in shaping society around him than conforming to it. Embraced in the earliest nights of the nineteenth century, Pope spent the first five decades of his Requiem as an unbound Nomad. He traveled the dark expanses between cities, charming his way into havens for the day and performing nighttime children's show with the help of a magic lantern. The captivated children were perfect hunting stock, and Pope rarely wanted for Vitae.

But a mortal lifetime spent stealing blood from children took its toll on Pope, and when the guilt became overwhelming, he sought out the self-proclaimed experts on Kindred morality: the Lancea Sanctum. Pope, already more man than Beast, took to the Covenant with ease. Rather than find the absolution he thought he wanted, Pope learned to accept his rapacious inclinations; he knew now that his predations served God's divine plan. In short, rather than curtail it, the church only blessed his monstrosity.

Pope worked well within the Lancea Sanctum. Years of living in the untamed rural World of Darkness had honed him into a powerful creature, and he quickly became one of the church's preeminent leg-breakers before becoming an anointed Priest in 1880. Particularly capable of drawing others out, he became the domain's preeminent confessor by the turn of the century. Rumor among the other Covenants claimed he also served as a torturer for the Covenant, a "confessor for the unwilling;" the rumors were not without truth.

It was during this time, gifted with a great deal of leeway in the execution of his duties, that Pope initiated himself into the dark pleasures of diablerie. His first victim was a Nomad suspected to be a member of Belial's Brood. So tainted a soul, Pope rationalized, could find salvation only through absorption into a more blessed vessel. Over the following decades, he partook several more times, often from victims who were themselves diablerists. He became bloated on blood, his potency so great that he felt his hunger for the blood of humans giving way to a thirst for Kindred Vitae.

By the end of the 1920s, Pope found his desires for ever-greater power and meaning frustrated by the stagnant political landscape of the Kindred. After more than a century as a vampire, he was taking orders from the same old bloodsuckers who had been in power the night he



was Embraced. He began pulling away from the church, instead turning his eyes to his new cult.

When a few weaker members of Pope's cult exposed him, claiming knowledge of the Theban Miracles inappropriate for anyone outside the Lancea Sanctum, the Sanctified immediately reacted by declaring Pope a heretic and anathema. Blood Hunts were organized, and the priests promised absolution to any who destroyed Pope in the attempt to bring him in. Pope's cult scattered, unwilling to stand up to the church for the sake of the study group, and only a few faithful helped him slip into torpor. Even those faithful, however, broke under the questioning of Sanctified Inquisitors, but when the Lancea Sanctum raided Pope's home (where his torpid corpse had been interred), they found nothing.

Rafaël Pope in the World of Darkness

The story of Pope eventually dropped into obscurity. By the 'forties and the advent of the Second World War, even the Kindred had more important things to think about. The former members of his cult slowly reintegrated themselves into Kindred society, some of them eventually becoming the current movers and shakers in the city's politics. The world of the night forgot about Pope, contented with moving on and leaving the past buried.

Now he's back.

POPE AND THE RESURRECTIONISTS

Readers may recognize Pope from his appearance in the *SAS The Resurrectionists*, available online (see <http://www.white-wolf.com/sas> for more details), in which the players return Pope from the grave (or see him burned to cinders). While some liberties have been taken in this text with the Pope who appears there, this section is intended to be fully compatible with *The Resurrectionists*. Players or Storytellers can ignore that product completely, can use this to flesh out Pope when using that product or use that product to learn more about Pope and the details of his return.

You don't need *The Resurrectionists* to use Pope. The Liar is yours to use however you need. Change whatever you need in order to make him a part of your World of Darkness.

Recently (perhaps as recently as a few months ago, perhaps as recently as tonight) Pope returned from the grave in a miasma of scandal. While the very fact of his return would be enough to fuel the Elysium gristmill, even the *manner* in which he returned was scandalous. The precise details of Pope's resurrection (and how he avoided capture in the 'thirties) are left up to the Storyteller, but they almost certainly involved a clash

between two or more Covenants or important elders and possibly involved one or more Kindred deaths (and perhaps another diablerie on Pope's part). The players' characters may have been involved as well, in which case they're now the focus of Kindred attention and share a portion of Pope's infamy.

Whatever happened, the Covenants now wait to see what happens next. Pope hasn't made a move yet (he's desperately trying to catch up on seven decades of Kindred and mortal history as well as the greatest technological leaps the world has ever known), and the Covenants are watching one another to see who will make the first overtures to (or assaults against) the returned Kindred.

Pope is old and knowledgeable (not to mention a free agent with access to potent sorceries of two major Covenants), and despite the storm of scandal that surrounded him before his torpor, he would make a strong addition to any of the Covenants. They all know this, but they also know that Pope has bitten the hand that feeds him in the past. Each Covenant can see a way to turn this to its advantage, from the obvious desire on the part of the Ordo Dracul to gain access to the secrets of the Circle and Spear to the more oblique intentions of the Carthian Movement to cast him as a revolutionary hero (or, if failing that, sell him to one of the other Covenants for political favors in court). Even the Lancea Sanctum recognizes the political coup that bringing a heretic back into the fold would represent.

Pope, for his part, wants more than any Kindred group can offer. He wants power. He wants respect, status and wealth, and would just as soon get them from the mortal world as the Kindred. Worse yet, he hasn't internalized the modern state of surveillance and communication technology, making him a severe risk to the Masquerade. Driven by his desires, he'll likely attempt to repeat his experiment of the early 'thirties, building a new cult about himself. This time, however, it'll be made of the wealthy and elite among the living.

Pope also seeks understanding. He has never quite come to grips with the complexity of the World of Darkness. Some part of his deepest subconscious still refuses to acknowledge that vampires exist. In his quest for power and knowledge he will begin to seek out the other supernatural denizens of the night. Perhaps mages or werewolves hold the answers to his existence that the vampiric Covenants have so far failed to deliver.

Personality

Pope is a con man, a carnival huckster. He offers easy answers in the form of questions that truly serve to draw

forth information that *he* desires. He has found himself particularly capable of playing the pedagogue, gathering students about him and leading them in their own journeys of discovery. He doesn't mention, of course, that he too is along for the ride. He truly does seek knowledge, however, and the discussions he manages to spark through sheer personality typically contain a surprising amount of substance. Where so much of Kindred society is made up of empty conversation and hidden secrets, Pope possesses an unnerving talent for brushing away the bullshit and getting at the questions that keep Kindred up at night.

Pope learned two centuries ago that a person earns the respect and awe of another by knowing something she doesn't. His audiences celebrated him as Doctor Illuminatus when he gave his magic lantern performances because he understood what they didn't: how the magic lantern functions. He still desperately wants others to respect him, but he refuses to give respect in return. He sees the Covenants as cabals of ancient monsters who maintain respect by keeping all the answers hidden. Now he seeks those answers for himself so he can be the man holding all the cards. To him, this is justice.

Secrets

Were anyone to unmask Pope as the fraud he is, he would likely become that character's worst enemy. Pope has taken such care to construct his legendry about himself that it serves as his Requiem's crowning achievement. Taking that from him would be akin to destroying another vampire's herd, haven and standing in Kindred society in one fell blow. Pope would work to quickly take all he could from his new nemesis before finally taking her soul and fleeing to another domain, preferably one to which his story has not spread.

Pope is also infamous for knowing (and spreading) the secrets of others. While he is hardly willing to spread knowledge of Theban Sorcery and Crúac to whoever asks (he remembers well the fury of a Covenant spurned), he *can* be convinced to teach them to someone who manages to suitably impress him or serve his goals. Of course, the Harpies are going to assume anyone who spends too much time with Pope *must* be learning at his feet his stolen magic and peculiar brand of heresy.

Rumors

"Pope's insane. Think about it. The guy must have had a screw loose in the first place to leave the Spear for the Acolytes. Now he's spent almost a century in the ground and we're welcoming him back like some kind of fucking war hero? We need to assume

he's just waiting to nuke us all with some fucking crazy magic. We need to be fucking scared."

One of the most common rumors about Pope is that his time in torpor robbed him of his sanity. In reality, Pope weathered torpor remarkably well. On the other hand, he was a mad, inhuman bastard before going into the ground and he hasn't exactly improved with torpor.

"Notice how everyone's talking about the night Pope came back but nobody's actually saying anything? Well my Mekhet friend said

she had a nightmare that very night, a dream about the Prince's sire and a diabolic ceremony. She says it's not a coincidence."

There's a lot of talk about what happened on the night of Pope's return. Many Kindred point to the fact that those who woke him up managed to awaken a Kindred of such obviously potent Blood and loose morals. Whispers of a secret offering of diablerie run rampant. The truth is in the hands of the Storyteller, but no matter the truth, the rumor has a life of its own.

STORY HOOKS

- **The Ground Floor:** The characters encounter Pope during a night out or at Elysium. They apparently impress him, because he decides they're going to form the basis of his new cult. Pope offers power, but is the price worth it?
- **The Miracle Workers:** Pope has been seen shaking down mortal members of local occult circles, seeking out "those who perform miracles." Such a blatant search for the supernatural makes him a threat to too many groups to count. Will the characters stop him?

Rafael Pope

Aliases: The Liar, Doctor Illuminatus

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 5, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics 2 (Religion, History), Crafts 2 (Woodworking), Investigation 3, Medicine 1 (Nineteenth-Century Surgery), Occult 2 (Mystery Cults, Vampirism), Politics 2, Science 2 (Chemistry, Optics)

Physical Skills: Athletics 2 (Climbing), Brawl 3 (Dirty Tricks), Drive 1, Firearms 2 (Rifles), Larceny 2, Stealth 3 (Motionless), Survival 3 (Urban), Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1 (Horses), Empathy 4, Expression 5 (Speeches), Intimidation 4 (Torture), Persuasion 4 (Rally, Peer Pressure), Socialize 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 5 (Lies)

Merits: Clan Status 3, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Inspiring, Iron Stamina 2, Language (English, French, German, Greek, Latin), Resources 4

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 3 (Irrationality, 5; Delusional Obsession, 4)

Virtue: Charity. Pope is surprisingly capable of giving of himself, especially to those willing to give him what he really wants: respect.

Vice: Greed. But he gives away only that which he doesn't want for himself. His is an existence driven by desire, whether for knowledge, power or simply respect.

Health: 9 (12 with Resilience)

Initiative: 10 (13 with Celerity)

Defense: 4 (7 with Celerity)

Speed: 13 (18 with Vigor)

Blood Potency: 5

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Crúac 3, Dominate 2, Majesty 5, Protean 1, Resilience 3, Theban Sorcery 3, Vigor 5

Vitae/per Turn: 14/2

Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina, Rigor Mortis, Cheval, The Hydra's Vitae, Touch of the Morrigan

Theban Sorcery Rituals: Vitae Reliquary, Curse of Babel, Liar's Plague, Malediction of Despair

Devotions: Arcane Sight, Liar's Mark, Veridical Tongue

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Vigor Strike	0(B)	—	w/Dirty Tricks	13
Sword Cane	2(L/B)	2	Bashing damage when sheathed	15

Rafael Pope, as presented here, has about 1,000 Experience points on him, not counting the 112 Experience points necessary to raise Blood Potency from 1. This number is slightly misleading, as Pope has committed

diablerie multiple times (thus garnering free dots in Disciplines, but having to spend Experience to maintain his abysmally low Humanity). His specialties help illustrate he's from another time.

Pope is, in many ways, a quintessential Daeva: he is capable of convincing you of anything and talking his way out of almost any situation (or using Majesty and Dominate to defuse it), but if things come to a fight, he can certainly hold his own. Between his Aura Sight, Revelations, Liar's Plague and Veridical Tongue, it should be *incredibly* difficult to lie to the Liar.



THE POTENT POTENTATE

Readers familiar with *The Resurrectionists* will note that Pope as provided here has lower attributes, skills and Blood Potency than in that story. This was done to keep Pope's power level in line with other characters in this book. Pope does keep his wide spread of Disciplines and even picks up a new Devotion, Liar's Mark.

Storytellers who would prefer the stronger Pope of *The Resurrectionists* are, of course, welcome to use that with this product, and there's no reason these traits can't be used for Pope by Storytellers running *The Resurrectionists*. One could even use both, justifying the higher traits in *The Resurrectionists* as a result of the arcane ritual used to wake him (traits that eventually wear down to the level presented here).



Legacy

Pope may have contributed very little to the world around him, but one thing he has created of which few others have ever had the opportunity is a Devotion combining the powers of Crúac and Theban Sorcery.

Devotion: Liar's Mark

(Crúac •••, Theban Sorcery ••)

With this power, Pope can levy a powerful curse over a character. The curse gives Pope power over the character, but only if the character lies. If she does, the liar become's Pope's puppet, her mouth becoming bloody as if she has bitten her lip or tongue. Not only is this disconcerting for others involved, Pope can also choose to see through her eyes for the remainder of the scene or burn out her forked tongue.

Cost: 1 Vitae, 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Crúac - target's Resolve

Action: Instant

If the roll is successful, the target becomes the object of Pope's curse, but no immediate effects occur. If the character lies, Pope becomes immediately aware, regardless of his distance from the character (so long as it is night for both parties). He may choose to see through her eyes for the remainder of her scene (though he does not learn the nature of the lie unless it somehow comes up again as he watches the scene). Conversely, he may choose as an Instant action to inflict a number of Lethal damage equal to his successes on the Activation roll. In the case of the latter, the blood boils in the target's mouth, burning out her tongue. The character becomes unable to speak until the damage has healed. The effects of the power last until sunrise or Pope uses one of the above abilities, whichever occurs first. (He need not expend this power to know the target has lied.) Use of this power requires that Pope be able to see the target and that he perform a short ritual recognizable to both practitioners of Crúac and Theban Sorcery as a bastardization of their sacred rites. Pope may have a number of curses active at any given time equal to his Blood Potency.

This power costs 17 Experience points to learn.



Scene: The Teacher's Circle

Overview: The characters are together at a location where Kindred gather, likely the Rack, Elysium or some other important nightspot. They spot a rival, ally or group of either speaking with Rafael Pope. If they move to join in, he invites them eagerly. If they look as if they're going to avoid the confrontation, Pope notices them and waves them over, possibly leading to an awkward discussion (especially if his companion is an enemy of the characters). For a twist on this scene, perhaps Pope is speaking with mortal acquaintances of the characters such as lovers or family.

Pope leads the characters into a discussion of philosophy and religion. If the characters are all Kindred, he focuses upon their faiths. If not, he skirts the Masquerade in his discussion, but never quite steps over that line. He challenges the characters and their beliefs, drawing out their ideals. When he finally leaves, they may realize they've told him quite a bit about themselves but gotten nothing in return. Conversely, they may feel honored to have had the rapt attention of an elder, even one as loathed as Pope.

Description: You notice an acquaintance the moment before you realize that she's speaking to Rafael Pope. The man, dressed in a surprisingly fine suit given that he was supposedly in torpor until recently, speaks to her with friendly ease. His dark eyes slip from her, turning toward you, and the faintest smile flickers across his dead lips. He says something to her, something you can't make out, before waving you over, his posture open and inviting.

If the characters approach Pope, he says something along the following lines:

"Ah, compatriots. My companion and I were just discussing the role of religion in governance. Can there ever be a true Sanctified Prince? Can the Estate exist without the guidance of the church? What about you? What do you think?"

SCENE: <i>The Teacher's Circle</i>		
MENTAL • • •	PHYSICAL –	SOCIAL • • •
HINDRANCES	HELP	OTHER
Academics/Expression/Occult/Politics: Characters must protect the Masquerade while speaking (-2) Empathy/Persuasion/Subterfuge: Characters' enemy is present (-3)	Academics/Expression/Occult/Politics: Characters are familiar with Pope's ideas and can exploit them (+3) Empathy/Persuasion/Subterfuge: Characters realize Pope is plying them for information (+3)	
STs To present Pope as a charismatic and sympathetic character even as he manipulates the characters PCs To successfully navigate an uncomfortable social situation		

Chapter Three: Ancient Horrors

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The Man Behind the Meat Curtains

I am still staggered. I feel dizzy. I feel drunk. The room—the room! The floor, the way the lights fell only to the man on the conversation chair, I couldn't see what I was walking on but I felt it—soft, giving way to my shoes, undulating slightly, murmuring as I stepped. As my eyes adjusted, I saw: it was a floor of flesh, of bodies meshed together, hands gripping hands, legs locked together at the joints, lips pressed to the spaces between shoulder blades or to the warm crook of the neck.



He, with his sallow chest oiled with some unknown unguent, with his long and greasy hair bound behind him, bade me to sit on the other half of the conversation chair. Zagreus the Liar faced one way, and I faced the other. It was like confession, in a way; you cannot see your confessor, the one with whom you make your deals and pleas.

He gripped my hand. His fingers—small and slick—gripped my own tightly enough to crush them into paste.

"The Heretic," he said, his voice a deep and rumbling tremor, a clumsy bow pulled across an ill-tuned up-right bass.

"The Liar," I said. My own voice was small, smaller than I had hoped for.

He laughed; that was shrill, though, a girlish titter. "How do you come to me, Heretic? Few know I even exist, much less that I am here in this domain."

"A novitiate into the Blood. A neonate who claims to receive messages from a demon."

He squeezed my hand, giggled again. "*That* is unforeseen. Fascinating. I am happy with this. I shall let it stand."

"So," he continued, "what is it that you seek from me, Heretic? Your exploits have entertained me so far. You've reached out so many times, only to have your traitorous hands slapped away. You've many admirers, but few friends. You're like a ruined woman, eagerly-watched. In their minds, they all want to take you to bed. But publicly, they spurn you. And yet, *you* spurn the only ones who want you back in their precious flock. Curiouser and curiouser."

"Birch has them wound tight," I explained. "I can do nothing there I haven't already done. Just because one offers me the dog's house doesn't mean I'm inclined to accept the invitation."

The elder snapped his fingers, then, and I saw a part of the floor writhe and rise—a beautiful woman with small eyes and wide hips slithered up to me, putting her cheek against my thigh. She reached toward her neck where there waited a small incision that had started to heal. With thumb and forefinger she pulled it aside, reopening the wound. Fresh blood ran, and I could not help but pull her to me and drink.

When I was done, I let her slide from my grip and she crawled back to her place on the floor, where she eased back into it—a puzzle piece, trailing a drizzle of blood.

"Tell me what I can do for you," Zagreus said.

"Change things for me. Put things into my favor. Help me somehow, gods, just help me."

Then his wrist was in my face, and it too was open and bleeding. The blood that came from that wound was unlike anything I've ever seen. Black as midnight, thick as the sap running from cut pine. I drank. Gods help me, I drank.



The Shadow of Buda: Hunyadi Dorján

"This is not just my domain. This is my body, my blood, my soul. Return whence you have come or the very ground you walk upon shall rise up to consume you."

BUDAPEST LABYRINTH

The natural limestone tunnels - over six miles of them - beneath Castle Hill were eroded by hot springs and show signs of human habitation dating back thousands of years. They have been expanded by tunneling and excavation, meeting up with the cellars of Buda Palace and the buildings of the Castle District in many places. In the Second World War, they were used as a shelter and makeshift hospital during the siege of Budapest and under Soviet occupation were reinforced and used as a military base.

Only the top levels of the Labyrinth—now housing a modern art collection—are accessible to the public. The entrance is at 9 Úri Street, and costs 1,500 HUF for adults. Be warned—the tunnels are slippery in places, and lighting deliberately placed to form patches of darkness. Be sure to see the great stone head of the king, representing Hungary's status as doomed never to rule herself.

Czako Margrit, May 4th 2007

FI: So, you took refuge in the Labyrinth?

CM: That's right. November, I think. We stayed there for most of the siege, like thousands of others. Those poor people...

FI: Were your family with you?

CM: My mother and my uncle Aba. My father was out of the city when the Soviets arrived, looking for food for Christmas. We never saw him again.

FI: I'm sorry.

CM: It's all right—I can barely remember him. I remember the cold. It was a hard winter, during the siege, and the tunnels aren't warm. All those people, huddled together, slowly starving. Some went aboveground looking for food, and died in the shelling. We could hear explosions. I looked it up on a map when I was twenty, years after—we'd been directly below the old Ministry of Defense.

FI: I've heard that some of the people would sing...

CM: Sing. Play cards, tell stories... Anything, really. Time passes differently down there in the dark. Some would say that when the Turks came, centuries before, the tunnels were used to escape. They tried to find ways to go deeper. They never came back either.



Lantos,

Another "dark man" painting. This makes seventeen so far this year alone, and the third within close proximity of a murder. I've a contact in the police who says the murder on Villányi Street last week had one, too - painted in the victim's blood. I think we've gone beyond a repeating motif for vandals and into stranger territory here.

Let me know what you think.

Background

The twin city of Budapest straddles the river Danube in the heart of Europe, with the old townhouses, castles and hotels of hilled Buda facing the more modern sprawl of Pest. Melding Gothic majesty with a modern European city, conquered too many times over its unhappy history, the city bears its scars even after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Although the statues of Stalin have been dragged from their plinths and taken out to the city limits where tourists can visit them, the old buildings of downtown still bear bullet holes and the ruined shell of the old Ministry of Defense stands in the middle of Buda's Castle District. Budapest never forgets its history of blood.

Hungary had vampire legends before they were fashionable—"vampir" is a Hungarian word. For the Kindred, the cities of the region are the heartlands of the Ordo Dracul, the birthplaces of bloodlines and the scene of some of the Carthians' greatest successes.

The Kindred of Budapest, though, are notorious for their clannish and insular ways. They hurry about their business as quietly as possible, averting their eyes from the Castle Hill that dominates Buda's skyline. The Carthian Movement claims the majority of Kindred in the city along with most of the Primogen, but rebellion against the Prince is unthinkable. The stories they tell of the Prince make that very clear.

They say he is always watching. The bricks and stones of Budapest are tainted with his blood, it is whispered. Shadows all over the city flicker, occasionally forming a suspiciously familiar humanoid outline. The animals, mortals—even the plants—are touched by his shadow, though most mortals can't sense it.

Most Kindred wish they were so fortunate.

Budapest's Prince is Hunyadi Dorján, the Tenth Dragon. Ancient in years, one of the founding members of the Ordo Dracul, he has ruled Budapest for nearly two hundred years after conquering it in the span of a single week. The originator of a Mekhet bloodline who have mastered techniques that grant them control over their territory through Blood sympathy, Dorján's Curse has been pinned to the land through ritual, his shadow merged with the darkness of Budapest and his Beast and Vitae channeled through it into the city's heartbeat. The entirety of Budapest is suffused with his presence, reacting as though he were its sire, obeying the call of his Blood.

Other Kindred can feel this presence at the back of their minds, their Beasts constantly reacting to the Predator's Taint on a subconscious level. When Dorján focuses his force of presence, pulling what is normally spread thinly across a city into one place, the walls run with blood. His

presence congeals in the veins of mortals in such areas spontaneously transforming them into his ghouls. Kindred feel the pull of a Vinculum into which they haven't entered while their Beasts shriek on the verge of frenzy. The furthest edge of his reach, out in the city limits, is an insurmountable wall—any foreign Kindred attempting to enter Budapest react to the Predator's Taint as though he were right in front of them, miles before they see the lights of downtown Pest.

Origins

The honorific "The Tenth Dragon" is used for Dorján by members of the Ordo Dracul: it is said he was the tenth vampire to join the Covenant, recruited by Lisette, the third Bride of Dracula. Records of the Ordo claim he joined the Sworn of the Mysteries at some point in the 1500s. Originally, though, he was a neonate in the Circle of the Crone. The affinity with blood magic from his early nights would stand him in good stead in centuries to come.

HUNGARIAN NAMES

Hungarian (or, properly, Magyar) is a complicated language that evolved out of a different root from the Latin languages. Names are reversed compared to English, so "Dorján" is Hunyadi Dorján's given name. In the interests of clarity and allowing the character to be used elsewhere, place names in Budapest have been rendered into their English translations, so this section says "Castle District" rather than "Várnegyed." The exception is the Család bloodline's name: it means "Family" and is pronounced roughly "Cho-lard."

Red Danube

Dorján appears in chronicles of the Ordo Dracul sporadically from 1580–1700, sitting on Dragon Juries and maintaining the Oath of Mysteries during the slow expansion of the Covenant. In 1719, he and a coterie of Dragons (actually his fledglings) arrived in Budapest to stay, swearing fealty to the Invictus Prince of the time. Dorján and his companions made their haven in Buda, feeding carefully and working to establish the Covenant against the political might of the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum. He made allies among the Carthian Movement, equally small, but under his guidance the Ordo Dracul played a long waiting game.

After a period of torpor, he reentered Kindred society in 1806 and was shortly thereafter elevated to the Primogen council. The same period saw the founding of the Család

bloodline—the “Family”—and his earliest experiments with his new abilities included the creation of many of the Rituals and Devotions still in use in modern nights. Because it was tradition in the city that each member of the Primogen should be granted additional domain as their “lordly portion,” he asked for and received the area of Buda tucked away behind the Castle District.

Conquest and Metamorphosis

In 1848, a revolution raged among the kine, as the Hungarians briefly broke away from the Austrian Empire. While the Kindred rulers hid in their havens, Dorján and his allies put a long-planned revolution of their own into action. The Carthians fanned the flames among the kine, while Dorján proceeded to the Castle and entered the labyrinth beneath it. By the end of the week, virtually all the Invictus met the Final Death, the Prince was missing, the Carthian Movement celebrated and those Kindred who ventured near the Castle District felt as though something was watching them.

Though the mortal revolution failed, the Ordo Dracul and Carthian Movement divided the city among themselves, with the Carthians tending to the night-to-night running of things while the Ordo Dracul were free to continue their studies. Dorján, emerging from the labyrinth, declared himself Prince and ennobled his key supporters from both Covenants.

From what has been pieced together since the nights of conquest, Dorján conducted a ritual in a Wyrm’s Nest hidden within the labyrinth. He merged his shadow with the darkness beneath the hill and impaled it with a ceremonial weapon. His shadow welled up with Vitae as though a living, wounded thing, and that blood sank into the stone of the catacomb, linking him to the land. Using blood magic rituals devised over decades, he directed his followers in hunting down and killing the Invictus nobles while preventing them from escaping, unveiling the use of terrifying Devotions and clan Disciplines learnt from his allies.

Blood in the Stone

Dorján spent the next century cementing his grip upon the city, codifying the rituals and abilities he’d spent years building out of Ordo Dracul philosophy and half-remembered secrets from the Circle of the Crone into a new form of blood magic that operated on the ancient occult principle that the lord and the land are the same. Of course, this principle ended up tied to the Blood through the Blood sympathy of the Kindred, so that the land reacted to the caster as though it were, in some way, his childe. The Család’s power over territories, his ability

to sense what went on within them and the most powerful Családs’ ability to influence the Blood of their “subjects” as though through the Blood bond proved effective tools in a decades-long pogrom that saw Invictus-loyal lines cut away; those who didn’t flee to other masked cities were forcibly Blood-bound from afar and executed by the waiting Carthians. Modern Budapest is dominated by only six Kindred “families” comprised of the childer and grandchilder of Dorján’s revolutionaries, with immigrating vampires making up the few extra. Blood sympathy, the awareness of who is related to whom, has become the obsession of the local Kindred, taking their lead from their grim Prince. The power proved to be teachable only to members of Dorján’s bloodline, bound up as it is in notions of relation and connection. Budapest became—and remains to this night—a collection of little fiefs, with individual Család acting as Regents over their own turf, imposing their psyches and Beasts upon their holdings. Above them all, however, ruled Dorján, his essence superimposed over the whole city. Beyond the absolute rule of the bloodline members over their fiefs, the Carthians were given free rein to do as they pleased, while the other Covenants were banned save for special individuals as decreed by Dorján himself.

Periods of Unrest

Seemingly in mockery of the stable, pinned-down existence of Budapest’s Kindred, the modern city bears the bullet holes and scars of upheaval after upheaval. The city was conquered during World War II by first the Axis and later the Soviets. Trapped on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain, the people rebelled in 1956, a revolution that was brutally put down. Finally, in 1988, the Communists were ousted.

Each conflict partially demolished the city and brought with it a new generation of Kindred distrusting one another’s ideologies, with Dorján remaining the stern ruler most Kindred felt but rarely saw, holding court only occasionally. The task of making a stable community of Kindred out of Embraced Hungarians, Austrians, Germans and Soviets—all of whom hated the others—was left entirely to the Carthian Movement, who took in each wave of new vampires following Embraces during violent times. The Movement was left in the position of attempting to anticipate its Prince’s wishes, and “quiet stability” was thought to be the wisest goal for which to aim. When Dorján didn’t approve of a new vampire or group he wiped them out of existence, and the Movement was left to chalk such things up to experience. The prohibition on Covenants other than the Ordo Dracul and Carthian Movement was very clear,

and the Movement learned to scrutinize the genealogy of any vampire entering the city for the newcomer's own safety. Having certain figures in one's family background seemed to be a Final Death sentence as far as Dorján was concerned and the Primogen began to keep lists of names for which to watch.

During the late twentieth century Dorján appointed a Seneschal of his bloodline to convey his wishes to the Primogen, the first time he'd ever done so. Shortly thereafter he entered torpor, though some claim he merely retreated into a prolonged period of isolation. In either case, he was absent during the fall of Communism.

Personality

Awake and active again since the turn of the millennium, Dorján has taken up his position as Prince but is rarely seen. He attends Elysium only upon rare occasions, preferring to remain in his labyrinth. His subjects know him best as the constant psychic presence in their minds, the tugging of their Blood toward something that isn't there and the terror in their Beasts when he's angry. He sometimes manifests as a shadow cast by nothing to deliver curt messages to members of his bloodline, of the Ordo Dracul or Kindred holding positions of responsibility in the city. Only his immediate childer are permitted to enter his haven, which sits on a Wyrms' Nest sealed in the run-up to World War II and remaining so despite the labyrinth's upper levels now being used as a tourist attraction.

When he does leave his haven, Dorján likes to appear unannounced in incongruous locations and declare that for the rest of the night he is holding a salon for his subjects. He visits neonates and elders alike this way so that no Kindred knows whether the Prince will just be an uncomfortable feeling tonight or he'll turn up in the flesh in that Kindred's favorite feeding ground. Not only does this tactic allow him to put his researches and personal evolution first, having to deal with the lesser Kindred only when he has time, but anyone capable of challenging him must be constantly looking over her shoulder, expecting him to be there. Such measures, it is generally agreed, have led to a stable rule.

In person, Dorján is imposing and serious, his rumbling answers to questions coming after a few seconds' thought, and his demeanor that of someone who has much better things to listen to than whining about feeding rights. He detests being pulled into petty matters, and his rulings tend toward the punitive as a means of encouraging the Carthians to solve disputes themselves. Despite this, he retains the loyalty of the Kindred population because—aside from his regard for his own bloodline—he is without bias. A rank neonate in Budapest knows if she has a problem

that legitimately requires the Prince's attention he is likely to treat her fairly and rule in her favor, assuming she can learn of one of his salons in enough time to see him. He has a tendency to see Kindred as extensions of their clans and bloodlines, and will ask after a subject's sire and childer.

To his own bloodline and to the Ordo Dracul, Dorján is a stern father figure who wants them to do the tasks he sets for their own good but holds a detached fondness for them. He is still gruff, but a Dragon who has done well in attaining a Coil or a Család who has seen off a challenge might get a smile and a small gift of a herd, a street's worth of territory or an occult secret.

Secrets

As a founding member of the Ordo Dracul, Dorján is occasionally sought out by Dragons seeking secrets of their Covenant's occluded past. Those who make it into Budapest despite the blanket of Predator's Taint find he is not in the habit of giving lectures on what it was like to be in Dracula's coterie back in the night—his response to questions about Dracula or the Brides is that Dracula and Lisette's secrets are their own, and that Dorján has too much respect for his long-absent master to give out details to just anyone who comes along with the temerity to inquire. He is quite clear on one thing, though: Dorján calmly believes with utter certainty that Dracula has not gone to Final Death.

Dorján has forgotten all but a few scraps of who he was with the long centuries since his Embrace. His appearance gives some clues: physically, Dorján is ethnically Hungarian, large and well muscled like a laborer, with a mane of dark hair and a full beard. He remembers growing up in the mountain countryside, but not much more—even the sight of the sun is a faint memory when one is nearly five hundred. Anyone able to fill in some of the gaps of his own history lost to the Fog of Eternity could earn a reward.

Dorján's attitude concerning the Covenants that aren't Ordo Dracul or Carthian Movement is inscrutable and, at least as far as his subjects are concerned, occasionally antagonistic for no good reason. Membership of the Invictus is banned outright upon pain of destruction, while the Sanctified and Acolytes operate under severe restrictions and must apply for permission from him to accept new members. The Lancea Sanctum is limited to two—a confessor and missionary to the city's Kindred who is permitted to sire a single child to take over when he enters torpor or retires—while the Circle of the Crone is restricted to a particular family of Daeva who, unknown even to them, are descended from Dorján's original priestess and tutor in the secrets of the Crone.

Rumors

"We're rats in a maze, man. Rats in a maze. It's sensitization, right? We're all used to it, to him being there in the back of our minds? What happens if that goes away?"

A popular theory among those Ordo Dracul members who aren't Család is that Dorján is running Budapest as a social experiment writ large, with the Kindred as his objects of scrutiny. What he's hoping to achieve depends upon whose theory it is, but inevitably has dark consequences for the Kindred in the imagined scenario. Interestingly, one particular Nosferatu would claim to anyone who'd listen that Dorján was slowly working his way into the Kindred of Budapest's Vitae in preparation for transcending his own body and existing as a gestalt entity within his subjects' blood. That Nosferatu vanished shortly after Dorján last emerged from torpor, never to be seen again.

"How'd he do it is what I can't figure. Look at Janos or Rosza—they're Család, too, probably more powerful than he was when he took over. They couldn't do what he did... Something doesn't add up. I'm thinking an inside job."

That Dorján would be holding out on his descendants, keeping some of his powers in reserve, makes sense to most Kindred. That's just good practice. But for those who suspect he had help with his coup from within the Invictus (a popular rumor in nearby Vienna, to which some of the Budapest Invictus fled), the way in which the old Invictus Prince remains nameless is a source of much frustration. None of the Kindred who existed back then will name him, and Dorján's revolutionaries destroyed records and images that might show who he was. One persistent hypothesis is that one of the city's current Kindred is the old Prince himself, emerging from torpor into an assumed name long after the supporters he sold out to Dorján met the sun. He was in on it from the start, they say, and agreed to give up his throne in exchange for... something.

"Tenth Dragon? Tenth? Are you sure about that? Look... I know he says he's a Mekhet, but he can grant his bloodline only to direct descendants, and doesn't he strike you as acting almost like a Ventrue? No—no, I'm not saying he's a Ventrue. I'm saying he's... well... neither. Skip the 'Tenth' and you've got it."

Only one member of the Ordo Dracul, a Gangrel who'd made the arduous journey all the way from Kiev, has dared ask Dorján whether "Dorján" is an assumed name and if he is, in fact, Dracula. On the face of it, the strangeness surrounding the Család



could be explained if they weren't Mekhet but an unknown sixth clan spawned from someone directly Cursed by God, and Dorján does look awfully like some artistic representations of Dracula held by the Covenant.

Dorján laughed for an hour, granted the Gangrel an interview and sent him back to Kiev with an Artifact from his collection.

But, the rumormongers note, that isn't a denial.

STORY HOOKS

- **The Shadow in Twilight:** Dorján's psychic presence—the shadow that blankets the Twilight whenever he uses his magic—does not affect just the Kindred. Mortal occultists, werewolves and mages must all contend with the presence and Család, using their powers in a particularly haunted area, may drive the ghosts to manifest, maddened by the assault.
- **Bloodlines:** A character meets Dorján for the first time, and against all expectation is treated well and granted feeding grounds and favors that he has not, as far as can be told, earned. The Prince has recognized the character as a member of a lineage that impressed him in the past—good for the character, at least until Dorján expects him to live up to his ancestor...
- **Decompression:** Dorján vanishes, the presence of his spells is no longer felt and the city's Kindred go into meltdown. Has he left? Gone into torpor? Has he foreseen some disaster and absented himself? Is he simply seeing whether the Carthians will try to overthrow him in his absence?

Hunyadi Dorján

Aliases: The Tenth Dragon, The Wounded Shadow, Sire of Stones, Illuminus of the Sanguine Terror, Oathsworn of Mysteries, Grand Wurm of Budapest, Prince of the City

Clan: Mekhet

Bloodline: Család

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 6

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 7, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Occult 5, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 4, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Eidetic Memory, City Status 5, Ordo Dracul Status 5, Haven 4, Herd 2, Resources 2, Meditative Mind

Willpower: 10

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Faith. Dorján is possessed of an overpowering conviction, an assuredness that he is correct in his actions. His abilities have shown him that the city is not as chaotic as it might seem—everything happens for a

reason, everything makes sense in the view of Budapest as a vast organism.

Vice: Pride. Dorján tries to be a fair tyrant, but his subjects know he is, at heart, a tyrant. Disagreeing with him is a good way to lose one's privileges, and he is not prone to explaining his decisions. His edicts, among his stranger declarations, regarding the Covenants are a source of dissent for young Kindred who find they are not allowed to join the organization of their choice.

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 7

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 5, Celerity 2, Majesty 5, Nightmare 5, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 2, Vigor 2, Crúac 1, Lithopedia 5, Coil of Blood 3, Coil of Banes 2, Coil of the Beast 3

Vitae/per Turn: 20/5

Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Proserpina, Rigor Mortis

Lithopedia Rituals: Lair of the Beast, Taste the Land, The Lord's Ire, Territory's Mark, Kin to the Land, Tie to the Land, Servant of the Land

Devotions: Arcane Sight, Quicken Sight, Touch of Deprivation, Veridical Tongue, Shadow in the Land, Prince's Wrath

Legacy

Dorján's strong grip on his city relies upon three things: his bloodline of devoted servants, the magical control over their territories he and that bloodline share and the Devotions he has created to exceed his offspring and make his terrifying ghostly appearances to his subjects.

Család (Bloodline)

Quote: "The blood and the land are one."

Dorján has acted as Avus to his brood of Mekhet and their own fledglings, who now act as Regents over their own personal fiefs within Budapest, slowly becoming one with their territories. Curiously, the bloodline is so tied to Blood sympathy that it can be taught only to Kindred within two "relation" steps of the Avus: Dorján was able to teach his childer, whom he sired before creating the bloodline, to change their blood in the proper way, but he cannot teach it to an unrelated Mekhet. As such, the Család are confined to Hungary with the few who have left Budapest making their Fiefs in other cities of the region.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Lithopedia, Obfuscate

Nickname: Stone Sires

Weakness: Members of the Család bloodline are tied to their haven by more than the normal bounds of comfort and familiarity common to other Kindred. They find rest in other locations only with great difficulty, and are often sluggish for periods after doing so. After sleeping outside her haven, a Család suffers penalties as if she had awakened during the day for the remainder of the night.

History and Culture: Limited to the members of one family of Mekhet, the Család organize their overlapping domains as a microcosm of Kindred society with individuals deferring to older members of the bloodline. As an example, the vampire known as Janos holds the territory Dorján once held as Primogen in the "Bloody Meadow" district of Buda, despite that being within both his own sire's territory and Dorján's. Feeling crowded, some of the members of the family have made the journey out into Hungary and neighboring countries, where they have come into contact with other bloodlines of the region. Budapest is the largest city in the region, which suits these emigrants fine: in the smaller cities and towns they have only one or two other vampires with whom to contend, and many have entered into mutually-beneficial alliances with the native kindred.

Reputation: Among the Ordo Dracul, the Család are an afterthought, though a deadly one on their home turf. None have made as much of an impression upon

the Covenant as their Avus, so Lithopedia is noted as being "his" Discipline, not "theirs." The rival Architects of the Monolith bloodline does not have the limitation on creating new members that the Család have, so has taken what it sees as its rightful niche except in Hungary. The bloodline has especially good relations with the Morotrophians, whom it regards as cousins in method.

Lithopedia

Literally "Stone Child," the Család bloodline's magic creates a relationship of Blood sympathy between the user and the territory she claims. By meditating in a dark place, the Család's shadow merges with those of the surroundings and infused with blood, usually by the ritualist stabbing her shadow with a ceremonial weapon.

Cost: Using Lithopedia always costs 1 Vitae. Further, the blood magic can be performed only within a character's haven or a site of supernatural significance such as a Wyrms' Nest. A character's mastery of Lithopedia determines the highest level of rituals she may learn, but the rituals themselves are bought separately with Experience points as with other blood magic forms.

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Lithopedia

Action: Extended. The successes required are equal to the level of the ritual, each roll being one turn of casting. The Vitae cost for the ritual is paid at the start of the extended action and is not recovered if the ritual is cancelled partway through.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The ritual fails, and the caster loses further Vitae equal to the level of the ritual. Vitae drain in excess of a character's remaining pool is inflicted as Lethal damage, and the character enters torpor.

Failure: No successes are accumulated toward the required total.

Success: Successes are accumulated to the total required.

Exceptional Success: Five or more successes are gathered than needed to perform the ritual. The effect takes place as described, but may last longer.

Like Crúac, upon which it is based, Lithopedia rituals double any blood sympathy bonuses that might apply, but a distinction must be made between those that apply "naturally" and those a character can create with these rituals; the doubling does not apply to the latter. Rituals last until the end of a scene by default, but several can be extended to last until sunrise by spending a Willpower point.

Lithopedia rituals are all based upon the concept of the user's "territory"—the parts of a city she claims for her own and has come to regard as an extension of her own body.

The area a Lithopedia ritual can affect is determined by Blood Potency as follows:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Room |
| 2 | Building |
| 3 | City Block |
| 4 | District |
| 5 | Three Districts |
| 6 | Sub-City (e.g., Buda) |
| 7 | Entire City |
| 8 | Metropolitan Area |

Lair of the Beast

(Level-One Lithopedia Ritual)

The ritualist allows his Beast to touch the sympathetic link to the land. The Predator's Taint comes into effect when an unknown Kindred enters the territory or is in the territory when the ritual activates, affecting both caster and interloper normally despite their not being face to face. By spending a Willpower point, the duration of this ritual can be extended until sunrise.

Taste the Land

(Level-Two Lithopedia Ritual)

Attuning the ritualist to the land, this ritual allows the user to sense what is happening within the territory. Use the system for sensing the activities of a blood relative in **Vampire: The Requiem** p. 163, but the results give the communal response for the mortal population. By spending a Willpower point, the sense can be focused onto a selected individual, including other Kindred.

The Lord's Ire

(Level-Two Lithopedia Ritual)

A variant of Taste the Land, this ritual allows the practitioner to send emotional information rather than receive. Again, the Wits + Occult roll specified in **Vampire: The Requiem** applies and focusing the effect onto one target costs a Willpower point.

Territory's Mark

(Level-Three Lithopedia Ritual)

The ritualist focuses her attention upon a particular site within the territory, allowing the qualities of that place to enter her through the sympathetic link. The character receives a +2 equipment bonus to rolls involving any one skill for the rest of the scene, the skill being selected upon casting and reflecting the location used (a nightclub for Socialize, for example). The Storyteller should disallow any skills that have no appropriate sites within the character's

territory. By spending a Willpower point, the equipment bonus can be made to last until sunrise.

Kim to the Land

(Level-Three Lithopedia Ritual)

The blood—mortal and Kindred alike—present in the land reacts to the ritualist's Vitae. For the duration of the effect (which can be extended until sunrise by spending a Willpower point) all characters in the territory count as "relatives" for purposes of the Discipline bonus such relationships allow. The ritual does not duplicate any other effects of Blood sympathy, only the ease of using Disciplines upon the territory's inhabitants.

Tie to the Land

(Level-Four Lithopedia Ritual)

The ritualist's Vitae enters the land, the faint taste of it entering all those within. Everyone in the territory temporarily gains a stage of Vinculum as though they had tasted the ritualist's blood. If this brings them to the "third" stage, they can resist as normal. Supernatural creatures immune to the Vinculum are not affected. At the end of the ritual's duration—which can be extended to sunrise by spending a Willpower point—the artificial Vinculum ends with no further effects, and is not counted when determining the number of times a character has tasted the ritualist's blood in future.

Servant of the Land

(Level-Five Lithopedia Ritual)

By focusing the link to the land onto one creature within the territory and spending 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower point (in addition to the Vitae used to cast the ritual) the ritualist can "invest" a point of his Vitae, causing it to mystically appear within the target as though he had fed her it directly, with all the effects of creating Vinculum stages, causing hunger frenzies and turning mortal targets into ghouls, that would take place. Kindred reflexively resist by rolling their Blood Potency, a single success cancelling the effect. If the ritual succeeds, the total possible Vitae of the caster is reduced by 1 until the effect ends, either by the caster's choice or by the target reducing her Vitae pool to 0, simple for newly-created ghouls, who will use it up maintaining their agelessness, but a dangerous cure for vampires who must starve themselves into torpor to be rid of it. The ritually-imposed Vitae point is always considered to be the last one remaining in the target, and the ritual can be cast on the same target multiple times. The ritual counts toward the number of times a character has tasted the ritualist's blood only while it is active; once the ritualist's blood has left the target's body, the imposition of any Vinculum ends.

LITHOPEDIA AND DAMNATION CITY

If you use the special systems from **Damnation City**, the Lithopedia Ritual "Territory's Mark" is made easier to adjudicate, as that book contains lists of example sites and the skills to which they count as equipment bonuses. Additionally, the following ritual also exists if the Influence rules are used in a chronicle.

Direct the Land

(Level-Three Lithopedia Ritual)

By manipulating the link between the land and the ritualist in subtler ways than mere emotional impulses, the ritualist can gain a subliminal level of control over the mortals within the territory. The ritual grants the ritualist a bonus to Influence equal to Lithopedia within the territory for the next scene. It can be extended to last until sunrise by spending 1 Willpower point.

Család Devotions

Lithopedia does not include the manifestations for which Dorján is known among his subjects. Those abilities he keeps for himself: Devotions of Auspex, Majesty and Lithopedia that he has yet to teach anyone.

Shadow in the Land

(Blood Potency 6, Auspex •••••, Lithopedia •••)

Cost: 1 Vitae, 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Lithopedia

Action: Instant

This power allows the character to project into Twilight as per the Auspex power "Twilight Projection," but while within the character's territory as defined by Lithopedia the character can manifest as if a ghost using the Manifestation Arcanos, allowing the character to use Disciplines and speak to other characters.

This power costs 24 Experience points to learn.

Prince's Wrath

(Blood Potency 7,

Majesty •••••, Nightmare •••••, Lithopedia •••••)

Cost: 3 Vitae, 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare opposed by Opponent's Composure + Blood Potency.

Action: Instant

Upon activating this power, the character selects a location anywhere within the character's Lithopedia territory. That area becomes filled with the character's presence in an overpowering psychic visitation. Blood leaks from the walls (though is inert for feeding purposes), the ground appears to shake and all characters present are subject to the effects of "Sovereignty," "Mortal Fear" and react to the Predator's Taint, even if they have met the character using the power before.

This power costs 45 Experience points to learn.



The Goddess of Three: Prytania Hecate

"You will not be harmed, daughter."

On the last night, she came again. The bars Father put on the window didn't stop her any more than they stopped the wind through the seams of the sill. First she was there, and I saw her. Then she was gone, and the night was nothing but fog. The room filled with it, clinging, slipping and sliding over the dresser and the floor, up the side of my bed, and then she was there again, coalescing at the end of my bed.

She was so beautiful. Luminescent. That's a word they taught me.

"Don't cry, Marley," she said. She told me he wouldn't hurt me again. She told me her mother had sent her to take me somewhere safe from Father's belt. From his fists. She didn't lie to me. He never touched me again.

Eventually I was ready. When I was initiated, I saw my new grandmother for the first time, the Keeper of the Crossroads. I was brought before Grandmother Enodia, and her avatars undressed me. I was baptized in her blood, bathed in the light of her salvation.

After the ritual was over, they took me for my first meal as one of the anointed. It was the first time I had seen my father since I was freed from his home. He looked so elegant that night, dressed and prepared so nicely. I owed him so much for helping me to reach this path, so I showed him the respect he deserved. I took up the knife and I carved off my first helping.

I am nothing. I am everything. I am I. Grandmother Enodia, the Queen of Ghosts and Keeper of the Crossroads, Lover of the Hydra, chose me from the pack. I will not simply be anointed in her blood any longer. Prytania Hecate will take me into herself.

I will have the honor of sustaining my beloved grandmother. She will be anointed in my blood. I pray that I am worthy of her.

The ritual is over. I am no longer of the pack; I am above it. Hecate smiled on me, and granted me my fondest desire. I am adopted, the daughter-priestess of the Goddess of the Three. Marley is no more. I stand bare and newborn: Medea of the Empusae.

Background

Prytania Hecate rarely dwells upon her living days and never talks about them. In a small village in New England in the late seventeenth century, Abigail Hope, the young girl who would become the Queen of Ghosts, listened to the voices hidden in the waves, echoes of the lost, and of the dark whispering things underground. While other girls were taken before the courts and accused of witchcraft, of consorting with the devil himself, Abigail slipped by unnoticed, simply listening. She heard many things in the darkness, and learned many secrets.

Over the course of years, Abigail was passed by, ignored by her peers and elders alike. The only attention she received was from her father's belt. But the voices continued. One of them came to the forefront, and the others melted away. At first the girl merely listened, like she always had, but this voice was different. This voice asked questions, she seemed *aware* of Abigail, and she had a name. Asteria. Being noticed by someone who wasn't beating her thrilled the young girl, and she spent more and more time by the ocean, losing herself in conversations with the voice that washed up with the waves. Asteria told her stories of old gods, heroes and monsters, forgotten and ignored like the young girl herself. She led Abigail along the beaches, through the rocks and frothing water, to a crack in the world.

The Embrace

Abigail swam into the undersea tunnel until she was sure her lungs would burst. Eventually, coughing and gasping, she emerged to perfect darkness in a small grotto, still listening to Asteria's voice in her head. Then, for the first time, she heard her only companion's voice in her ears rather than her mind. Asteria congratulated her on her bravery, the shy girl shivering in the dark, still gasping for air. Abigail reached out to the darkness, and was enfolded.

As the blood drained from her, Abigail felt her frail mortal soul extinguished. The heat of Asteria's Vitae flooded her, revived her, *renewed* her. When she awakened, she knew instinctively that the fragile girl she had been was gone forever. She was Asteria's daughter now, and her parents and the village elders held no sway over her. She was the thing they railed against, a goddess and monster. Abigail would not be forced to bow to her father's belt any longer. But Asteria's voice was gone from her head, and her presence was gone from the grotto as well.

Abigail was alone. She left the way she had entered, but her lungs no longer craved breath, so she took her time. She lingered under the sea, listening to the rushing

whispers of the other voices, to the secrets of the waters. When she emerged from the ocean, Abigail knew who she was, what Asteria had told her. She was a vessel for the Goddess of Three, the Lover of the Hydra, the Lady of the Crossroads and Queen of Ghosts. She was the dark goddess Prytania Hecate, and she was *hungry*.

Her father was a righteous man. He never once spared the rod with his daughter. She knew he had done only what he thought was right, that she was more pure, more deserving of God's love because of his punishments. And she had reaped her reward, had she not? She was a goddess now, raised up from the ruck and run of humanity, and it was his doing. It was only right that he share her first true communion, that he provide physical sustenance after years of sustaining her spiritually.

But he didn't agree. He called her blasphemous, horrible names, and he laid hands upon her, one last time. She was a *goddess*, and he was merely the human who had been blessed enough to minister to her. And he thought he was better than her? The anger crashed inside her, tearing at the seams of her skin, and Hecate was gone. The rage itself stepped from the loose pile of her viscera and growled at the man who called himself Prytania's father. He died in a storm of fur and flesh and blood.

There wasn't enough blood in him to douse her rage.

Legendry

According to the narrative written by Goody Prynne, "The devil himself came upon our poor home clothed in the form of a wolf and took many of our flock, the sheep of our Lord and it was only through the grace of Almighty God and providence that I was spared." Hecate's fury cut a swath through the inhabitants of her village. As the sun began to rise, she padded into the sea, her fur matted with the blood of nearly half her neighbors and elders.

The wolves of the surrounding forests bore the brunt of the village's revenge. The elders set a bounty for pelts and hunters slaughtered animal after animal. Hecate ignored them, feeding upon fish and the occasional fisherman. Tentatively, life returned to normal in the village.

The Warrens

On one of her visits to the township, she visited her father's grave in the cemetery, next to a massive oak that stood sentinel over the dead. She had become accustomed to being treated as a legend, or a ghost. She had become the devil's siren who took a tithe of the village's fishermen, unseen and unheard, except in whisper and song. When one of the village's night watchmen approached the cemetery, she willed herself into the ground, slipping silently into the earth, past her father's bones. But the

earth was not so deep as she expected. She discovered a series of tunnels beneath the village, a warren of rock and hollow earth.

The tunnels were smooth, their walls reinforced. They had been dug by man, or something in his image. But they appeared to be abandoned; so the goddess annexed them, adding them to her underground kingdom. She wandered the subterranean halls, internalizing their twists and turns, the geography of her own underworld.

A Goddess Without a Congregation

She may have become a goddess, but she was faded, forgotten. Gods and goddesses have no purpose if they have no followers. In the empty halls of her warren, Hecate's only company was the ghosts of the dead buried in the cemetery above. They weren't very good conversationalists considering she had killed many of them. Even the rats scurried for shelter at the Queen's approach. She had discovered very early on that despite her ability to transform into animals, natural creatures were violently afraid of her.

Hecate was lonely.

She watched the township, so different now, a century after her apotheosis. Everyone she had known was dead; their grandchildren were dead. The world was changing. The township was sending its children off to war to fight the people Prytania's parents had come to this country to escape. Of all the people she watched, Emeline, a young and shy, but observant, girl reminded Hecate of herself. She spied quietly as the girl went about her nights, barely contained herself when Emeline's father beat her. She began to whisper to the little girl in the same way Asteria had whispered to her, to comfort her and cajole her.

Eventually Prytania lured the girl into the woods. She waited in stolen clothes, unused to speaking or, indeed, to the idea of treating mortals as anything more than meals. It took a supreme act of will not to simply fall upon Emeline and devour her right there. She trembled and whispered, awkwardly stumbling upon a language she'd had very little use for in almost a century of stalking land and sea as an animal or haunting her personal underworld. As she talked, it became harder and harder to *stop* talking.

And then Emeline asked her, unafraid and full of wonder, "Are you a ghost?"

Prytania just nodded, remembering the words Asteria had said. "I am the *Queen* of Ghosts, child." Emeline visited her as often as she could slip away from the house. Her father caught her sneaking out a



few times, and beat her bruised and bloody. Eventually he stopped noticing, as he forgot her and became embroiled in planning for the coming revolution.

Hecate shared her blood with the curious girl, taught her to see spirits and hear the wet whispers of the ocean. Then, when the time came, she performed the communion ceremony, just as Asteria had done with her. When the girl was reborn she was no longer Emeline. Hecate saw it in her eyes. She was the first, the High Priestess of the Queen of Ghosts. Prytania dubbed her Danae, after the mother of Perseus.

Hecate's first gift to her new childe was her abusive father. She brought him to the warren, beating him in his house and dragging him down through the black soil of her own father's grave, long overgrown and forgotten, next to the mighty oak. There, she offered him to the starving Danae, and together they turned his death into the First Communion.

Prytania taught her new priestess to worship her, and when she was done, she commanded her daughter to go out into the world and find followers. Danae was a crafty girl, cleverer by far than she was given credit for, and bit-terer than Prytania recognized. She remembered the way Prytania's blood had made her feel, and used it to her advantage. She enslaved the schoolmistress, and over the course of years kidnapped a small group of children. The teacher educated the stolen children and Danae raised them to venerate their new grandmother and goddess, Prytania Hecate.

Over the years the "family" grew, its ranks filled by abused children chosen by Danae. The schoolmistress was eventually embraced as Hecate's second High Priestess, taking the name Euterpe as her own. As the cult grew, so too did Hecate's mythology. Now she is known by many names and titles that have accreted over the centuries. Danae also conceived of the method by which the vampires disposed of their victims: she turned Hecate's followers into cannibals. It has become tradition for the children, when they come of age, to banish the specter of their past abuses in a ceremonial feast, the main course, of course, being their abusers.

Those children who are *not* Embraced leave the warren, taking up residence in the town and continuing to serve their goddess. The tiny village that birthed Abigail Hope has itself been renamed in the intervening years. It is now known as Siren's Rock.

The Avatars

Hecate is extremely active. She oversees the growth of her family, makes appearances at her childer's religious ceremonies, and still has time for her own studies. Her

childer hold up her omnipresence as a sign of her divinity. Each of her childer insists she is directly descended from Prytania Hecate herself, the universal mother of them all.

The truth is she has only three surviving progeny: Danae, Euterpe and Medea. Danae and Euterpe act as Hecate's avatars. Their words are her words, and Hecate's followers are, for all intents and purposes, their followers.

Isolation

The Queen of Ghosts has never, in over three hundred years, encountered a vampire outside her lineage. Her childer hide themselves from mortal society through a tyrannical grip upon the small town, and the growing number of mortal citizens who have been raised by Hecate's cult or enthralled to its mistress.

Prytania Hecate in the World of Darkness

As her insular coven expands, Hecate sends her childer further and further out from the warrens, tasking them to steal infants that can be taught to worship her. As the infants grow, they, like many before them, are indoctrinated into the cult, coming to view Prytania Hecate as their goddess and true mother.

Encounters with Hecate are rarely direct. She prefers to stay in the warrens, and send out her ghouls or progeny to interact with the world. Beyond kidnapping and stealing food and clothing for the warren, the followers of the Queen of Ghosts act upon seemingly random orders from their mistress. One might simply be tasked to go to a specific location at a specific time, and stand there for five minutes. They are taught not to question their Goddess. It is not their place.

Changelings are more likely than most to notice Hecate's activities. The kidnapping of children by a beautiful "ghost" may sound a little too familiar. Task Force: VALKYRIE is involved extensively in missing persons cases, using various statistical models to highlight patterns of disappearances consistent with supernatural predation. The Feds may soon find a reason to come to Siren's Rock.

Personality

The Queen of Ghosts is at once matronly and dismissive toward her followers. She will protect them from any outside threat, then turn and slaughter them for a slip of etiquette, or simply because the stars were in an auspicious alignment.

Prytania Hecate sees the world through cracked and moldered glass. She only barely understands or acknowl-

edges the extent to which things have changed since her Embrace, and very few of her childer (vampiric or adopted) dare to tell her otherwise. She speaks archaically, in stilted terms that were anachronistic even when she was alive, and truly believes she is the goddess Hecate or at least an aspect thereof.

Secrets

Prytania Hecate does not sleep in the warren itself with the rest of her followers. She prefers the small grotto where Asteria embraced her, where the sea washes in and strange, forgotten creatures skitter, sightless and pale. The grotto has only one entrance, deep underwater along the coast, and even her most beloved childer don't know the location.

She is over three centuries old, and feels the beginnings of a long torpor. The Goddess of Three has begun to groom one of her childer, the unknowing Medea, as her eventual surrogate priestess. The girl is young, and Hecate believes she has not yet matured enough to have her own will and personality, and can thus be hollowed out, to become an empty vessel for the will of the Queen of Ghosts. The other priestesses do not know of Hecate's plans, or indeed anything beyond that their mother seems inordinately fond of their newest little sister. Danae will not take the news well.

Hecate does not allow most of her childer to see her in her true form, choosing instead to appear as a young and beautiful woman. Only Danae and Euterpe have

been blessed by the sight of her full glory. Her body has been transformed by the Gangrel curse into something resembling the spawn of Titans. From the waist down, her legs have metamorphosed into ghostly pale, slick tentacles that writhe and lash, pulling her along the floor. Her skin has the same luminescent sheen, and her eyes have taken on the appearance of glossy black soulless orbs.

Rumors

"One of my friends was up 'round Siren Rock, hitting the beach with his girlfriend. I guess they got into it. He called me on his cell while they were fighting, I mean really going at it. We lost connection... That was two weeks ago. I haven't seen or heard from either one since."

Hecate and her childer are merciless when a man harms a woman. Protecting their sisters is doctrine, but since so many of them were abused before they were chosen, it is also instinct.

"I ran into the weirdest girl the other night... She kind of got freaked, seeing me. Complete yokel, though, must have been new. Didn't know what 'Kindred' meant, or anything. She told me she was a Daughter of Hecate. You hang out with the Circle, yeah? She one of yours?"

It's only a matter of time before the Empusae clash with other vampires. They're complete novices in the ways of vampires, but they shouldn't be underestimated. The Daughters of Hecate are no less dangerous or cunning for their ignorance.

STORY HOOKS

- **Unwanted Visitors:** When traveling, the characters trespass into Siren's Rock, the small and largely forgotten town Prytania Hecate and her followers claim as their own. The townsfolk seem off, and if the characters aren't careful, they might be invited to dinner.
- **Theft Most Precious:** One of the characters' children is taken by one of Hecate's daughters, whether by an actual Empusa or by one of the living cultists. The trail might lead back to Siren's Rock, or it might lead to one of the urban prodigal covens.
- **The New Kids:** An Empusae coven unwittingly moves into the characters' territory, clashing with the coterie over feeding rights and drawing the Prince's ire when they fail to present themselves to him.

Prytania Hecate

Aliases: Abigail Hope, The Queen of Ghosts, The Devil's Siren, Keeper of the Crossroads, Sinethella, Mother, Kurotrophos, Grandmother Enodia, Wolf of the Waves

Clan: Gangrel (Empusae)

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Occult 4, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 5, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies 3, City Status 5, Covenant Status 5 (Circle of the Crone), Danger Sense, Fame 2, Haven 15 (effectively), Herd 4, Retainers 5

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 4 (Megalomania (Severe), Paranoia (Mild))

Virtue: Faith. Prytania truly believes in the mythology she has built up around herself, and she finds comfort in it.

Vice: Wrath. Prytania cannot abide mistreatment of her followers... unless it is dictated by the warped logic of her beliefs. If offended, her anger is awesome and terrible to behold. To many of her childer, her Wrath is Justice, and will remain so until it is turned on them.

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Protean 5, Obfuscate 5, Resilience 3, Crúac 5, Majesty 3

Rituals: Hecate has created an analog of nearly every Crúac ritual in **Vampire: the Requiem** and a few new ones besides.

Devotions: Arcane Sight, Drawing Upon the Mask, Instantaneous Transformation, Knowing the Stranger, Partial Transformation, Spirit Senses, Yielding Soil

Animal Forms: Hecate can transform herself into either a wolf or a squid.

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

Legacy

Prytania Hecate's presence in a chronicle is likely to be felt largely through her legacy. Her followers and the

bloodline she created act as a buffer separating her from the characters. Even if the characters speak to Hecate, there's no guarantee it's the real deal and not simply one of her priestesses in disguise.

Siren's Rock

Hecate's cult does hold a great deal of influence in the tiny town of Siren's Rock, but its members are by no means the only occupants. Hecate and her childer *are* the only vampires in the town, and ever have been. Now, the village is postcard perfect, a dream of a place to raise your children. Violent crime is uncommon, though there is a small problem with missing persons reports.

The beaches are breathtaking, and the sunrise over the brilliant seas is to die for. The few tourists who find this hidden gem of New England enjoy swimming out to a large rock jutting out of the sea: the town's namesake, Siren's Rock.

Devotion: Drawing Upon the Mask

(Protean ••••, Obfuscate ••••)

The animal traits of the Empusae make it difficult for them to remain inconspicuous when stalking a child they choose to kidnap, not to mention when seducing potential prey. This Devotion allows the vampire to shapeshift temporarily into another human form. Beyond its practical uses, it also plays a vital role in the religious ceremonies of Hecate's daughters.

Cost: 1 Willpower point, 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Drawing Upon the Mask allows the character only to shift into human forms. This power may be used to shift into a "generic" form without a roll. However, if the character is attempting to mimic a specific person, she must roll Wits + Composure to determine how closely she mirrors her chosen target. The effects of this Devotion last until the dawn, when a vampire's ultimately static form returns to her "original" condition. Like Shape of the Beast, the transformation from one form to another requires a character's action in a turn.

Action: Instant

Devotion: Yielding Soil

(Protean ••, Resilience ••)

Though it is indeed useful for a vampire to merge with the ground, as with Haven of Soil, sometimes it is not the preferred result. This power allows the vampire to pass through natural substances while retaining her solid form.

Cost: Special

Dice Pool: No roll is necessary. Passing through a natural substance is automatic and takes a character's action

in a turn to complete. The vampire can pass through any substance with which she can meld (see **Vampire: the Requiem**, p. 139, for more information). This power usually costs 1 Vitae to activate, but if the character wants to bring a “passenger,” she must expend 1 Vitae and 1 Willpower point to do so. If the passenger is unwilling, she must first be successfully grappled.

Action: Instant

Devotion: Spirit Senses

(Auspex •, Crúac •)

Prytania Hecate has always seen more than her brethren, even in her living days. The spirits of the dead can be invaluable as guides or sources of information, as sentries or servants. Hecate’s followers have a deep respect for any of their sisters with this ability, because they see it as a sign that the Queen of Ghosts has blessed her.

Cost: –

Dice Pool: Like Heightened Senses, this power typically involves no roll. The player simply activates the power, allowing him to see and hear across the veil. This devotion does not give Kindred the ability to see or interact with the spiritual world of werewolves, simply the unquiet dead. If the area is highly populated by spirits, the resulting clamor can overwhelm the vampire unless the player succeeds on a Resolve roll. Failure disorients the character, making him effectively unaware of his surroundings until the end of the following turn.

Action: Instant

Empusae (Bloodline)

Quote: “Don’t you like what you see?”

Hecate’s daughters, chosen from the children raised in her cult, are, almost to a one, the most zealous believers in their “mother.”

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Protean, Obfuscate, Resilience

Nickname: Daughters

Weakness: A Gangrel’s heart is wild, and the childer of Hecate are no different. They feel most at home in those places where man does not linger. But in order to achieve transcendence and join the Priesthood, the Empusae must sacrifice their affinity for lesser creatures in favor of second sight.

Upon initiation into the Empusae, the character relinquishes any dots she had in Animalism, and gains an equal ranking in Auspex. Further, animals are repelled by the presence of an Empusa. Animals panic when confronted

by a Daughter, and if flight is not immediately available, they *will* fight. If the character relearns Animalism, she must buy it as an out-of-clan Discipline, and all rolls are attempted at a –2 penalty.

History and Culture: Empusae make up the entire vampiric population of Hecate’s territory. They all live in the underground warrens and abandoned homes that have been claimed by the Queen of Ghosts. The covens that have spread to nearby cities tend to stick together in communal havens, for protective as well as religious reasons.

All Hecate’s daughters share a common animal feature—the legs of a goat—when they are in their true form. Beyond that, Hecate and her childer prefer young women who have experienced the oppression of men and are stronger for it. There is a certain tension in the set of their jaws, a hardness in their eyes, that melts when they go in for the kill.

Almost every Empusa belongs to Prytania’s flavor of the Circle of the Crone. Whether this is due to loyalty to their progenitor or simple sheltering is up for debate. Certainly the covens that have spread out to more urban environs will become more cosmopolitan, with unaligned members and even those who join the Ordo Dracul. Even still, the Circle will remain the most prominent Covenant among the bloodline, and those who turn their back on Prytania’s faith are often persuaded to return, or ostracized by their siblings.

Those of Hecate’s childer who have remained near her act as high priestesses of her cult. They oversee the education and rearing of Hecate’s favored stolen children and answer to Mother. The prodigal covens each have a high priestess in charge, and a number of initiates. A region’s Empusae gather once a month on the full moon for religious observance and feast. If a coven has grown too large—above thirteen members—then the high priestess will choose a second high priestess from her followers and split the coven in two. The new coven must then move to the next city, spreading the faith and the bloodline outward.

The ways in which Empusae doctrine mirrors Kindred society, from their odd little denomination of the Circle of the Crone to their observance of the Masquerade, are coincidental. Prytania Hecate and her children have never encountered another vampire. They do not understand vampiric slang or the feudal class system of mainstream Kindred society. They are ignorant of the etiquette required when a vampire enters another’s domain, or of the power of the Prince or Primogen. They do not even know they are descended from the Gangrel.

The Beautiful Liar: Zagreus

"I've said it before: I did not drink from the pool of Lethe. I instead chose the pool of Mnemosyne. I grow bored with this conversation."

Background

Zagreus will tell you one true thing: he is very, very old. The dirge chords of his Requiem have played for many millennia now, and most exceptional is that he has lost none of his mind to the Fog of Eternity. His sanity, perhaps, is no longer intact, but his memory is perfectly crisp, as sharp as a needle.

The rest of what he tells you will be a lie. He seems incapable of telling even the smallest of truths, inventing wild stories to go with even the most mundane of experiences. What's frightening is how easily his deceits slide into the mind like a tongue in the ear, and how quickly those falsehoods become true. So potent and rich is the Blood of Zagreus that his very words are capable of subverting fact into the fictions he finds so much more interesting.

The Truth, For What It's Worth

This is not the story Zagreus tells. It is what happened, though. It's maybe how he remains the eternal monster he is, with a mind whose thoughts ring with alarming clarity. But it isn't and won't ever be the story he tells.

Zagreus was a young Greek man in the city-state of Athens. His sire was a singer named Tryphos, a soft-bellied hedonist who, sadly, was not well-liked by his peers. They found him weak. Decadent in all the wrong ways. Something about Tryphos invited ire. The way he sniveled, perhaps. Or his shrill laugh.

Tryphos dragged Zagreus—an actor—into the Requiem in an effort to show strength, to birth himself a home-made ally. It was a false move. Zagreus was no creature of strength. He was beautiful, yes, bearing the grace and splendor of a woman. But he was not strong. He was worthless in a fight. And, above all else, even he hated his sire, finding the man to be obsequious and fey.

The night came that a mob of blood-drunk vampires appeared at Tryphos's door to drag him into the streets and beat him into torpor (or better still, until he was just a pile of inhuman char and ash), and Zagreus was not one to stand in their way. Ah, but the words of his sire commanded him to throw himself in the mob's way, and unable to resist he did just that. Happy to have a victim

upon whom to "express" itself, the mob dragged Zagreus into the street instead. There, they tore him limb from limb, bone from body.

Only his heart remained, encased in a ribcage draped with shriveled meat. The mob retreated, happy at what they'd done, and Tryphos, given over to great guilt, took the heart and its cage to the highest point outside the city and there prayed to the gods of Mount Olympus. He wept blood. He wrapped the remains of his childe in a swaddle of sackcloth and slaughtered two lambs and a slave girl. Tryphos piled the carcasses atop his childe's heart and then heaped rocks atop them all.

Then, knowing how dearly he was hated, Tryphos leapt from the peak. His soft body broke against the rocks below; the white churn of the sea stole the body.

By some bleak, black miracle, Zagreus's body slowly grew—tiny tendrils of blood, capillaries crawling like worms, reached out and began to knit together. As the lambs and slave girl decomposed, Zagreus's body did the opposite.

It took months for his body to reanimate itself. He shoved the rocks and skeletons from atop him and crawled, naked, back toward night-clad Athens to wreak his revenge upon those who had done this to him.

Truly, it was a miraculous rebirth. His mind, gone, was reawakened by the prayers of his sire and the corpses stacked above him. It's perhaps what keeps his memory so sharp even still.

And yet the story wasn't miraculous enough for Zagreus.

The Lie

This lie was born the night Zagreus destroyed the members of the mob that left him as little more than a dead heart and a rotten ribcage. It was the story he told them as he cut them to pieces, proof that they were criminals of the highest order, proof that he was a divine hand doing divine work.

He said that, after they had torn him apart, he was visited by Zeus in the form of a giant serpent. Zeus consumed Zagreus—then just heart and bone—and digested him before regurgitating him into a slave girl's mouth. The girl drank Zagreus down and became pregnant, and

swiftly gave birth to Zagreus whole—this miraculous nativity destroyed the girl, of course, splitting her in twain, but that’s the cost of being a sacred vessel.

Zeus told Zagreus he was his son and was now something different from all the others. He was not merely vampire, nor was he merely man. He was divine. And as such, he would act as a thunderbolt against those who had beat him.

That’s what Zagreus told the mob as he tore them asunder, one by one, in their homes.

In modern nights, Zagreus has an addition to that story, which is how he explains his long-lived and seemingly perfect memory: he says that upon being “reborn,” Zeus offered him a drink from one of two rivers. The first was the River Lethe, and whose waters would offer the chance to forget all the horrors that were visited upon his body. The second was the River Mnemosyne, and a drink from it would hone Zagreus’s memories into a sharp knife, painful but potent. Zagreus cupped a draught of water from the River Mnemosyne, and thus gained his eternal memory.

From Thunderbolt to Audience Member

The “vengeance” angle didn’t last. It was one and done for Zagreus—while he still claims to be the “divine hand”

of Zeus, he’s not interested in making people pay for their crimes. He’s too fascinated by those crimes to punish them unduly.

This is Zagreus’s *modus operandi* in modern nights: he watches and waits. He is largely passive, an audience member watching the circus and theater play out in front of him, giving little golf claps when something pleases him and spitting on the ground when it doesn’t.

From the Audience to the Director’s Chair

One problem, though: Zagreus gets bored easily. Something might entertain him for weeks, months, even years, but eventually the moment comes that he grows weary of it. It’s like a switch is flipped. One minute he’s rapt by the show, engaged utterly by the whirling movements of the Danse Macabre. The next minute his face sours, his smile turns upside-down, and his fingers start plucking the air like an invisible instrument waits before him.

It isn’t good when Zagreus’s ennui manifests. At that point, he moves from his seat as an audience member and settles into the director’s chair for a time. Zagreus will set elements in motion that amuse him. He’ll pit allies against each other. He’ll stir one vampire to become the nemesis of another. Comedy becomes tragedy, and vice



versa. If the Prince is a moderate sort, good for the city, with well-measured policies, that can easily translate to boredom when it comes to Zagreus. Far better for him to implement a series of events that pushes a far more entertaining figurehead into place.

What happens when the Sanctified Bishops discover a traitor in their ranks? What happens when a pack of Belial's Brood rises up and starts setting fires around Elysium? Why does the VII sigil keep showing up on alley walls and getting spray-painted on manhole covers? None of it's real, exactly. But Zagreus ushers such lies into being, creating amusement for himself (and anybody he chooses to sit with him from such a lofty viewing position).

In a city, Zagreus doesn't always make his presence known. It depends upon whether or not that would make things interesting. For the most part, he gladly waits behind the curtain, manipulating events when need be—basically kicking over ant hills so the ants never see the giant foot that does it. Only when he's forcibly revealed or feels his presence would up the ante does he move into public view (and even then he may still conceal his machinations).

Once he feels he's suitably set events in motion, he's confident enough to retire once more to a watchful position from deep in the shadows of the theater.

Zagreus in the World of Darkness

Zagreus brings a few interesting crossover hooks into any story you choose to tell.

First, his Devotion allows him to basically rewrite the truth into whatever amuses him. While this should never be overused to the point of frustrating players, it is a good means of chaotic conflict: forces from beyond the players' and characters' ken seem to be twisting fate and "editing" what has come before. He's a giggling puppet master, and the strings of his marionettes need constantly to be cut. In this way, Zagreus can make an excellent antagonist in any game, one who can be a persistent problem. Even if the characters aren't directly affected, what Zagreus does is sure to appear in the background, indirectly causing the characters some measure of pain and confusion. The nocturnal society of the Damned suddenly starts breaking its own rules? Why? Zagreus, of course.

Second, Zagreus is approaching three thousand years old. He's a Methuselah, with a memory given over to startling clarity. He remembers everything. He knows things the characters may dearly want to know. History is a living thing in the World of Darkness, a series of scars just beneath the surface of all those shadows. He remembers how the world earned its scars. He has answers the characters may need. Of course, he's happy to answer

questions—but they don't come free. What strange things will he ask them to do for him?

Third, Zagreus is a mystery. His very existence contravenes known information about vampires. He's not like anybody else. He can be as much a giant question mark as a big antagonist or a bundle of answers. In the World of Darkness, giant question marks tend to stir the obsessive to action. Are the characters just such obsessives?

Personality

Lean and bare-chested, often with a sheen that suggests he's been ladled with fresh olive oil, Zagreus could easily be mistaken for a woman when seen in half-shadow. The eyes, rimmed with kohl, the earrings and other glittering adornments, the long dark hair flowing to the center of his back—all of it suggests a certain femininity. This contrasts with his deep voice, which further contrasts with his high-pitched giggle.

This Methuselah has two modes, more or less: the first is that of a young boy perched on the edge of his seat, waiting for the big show to start. It's a mode of giddy anticipation, of eager need to be entertained. The other mode is just the opposite: that of a moping, discontented child who grows weary with all the adults talking.

Secrets

Certainly Zagreus has a hoary host of secrets accumulated over the millennia. He's seen the rise and fall of cities, clans, Covenants. He's taken credit for quite a bit of this, as a matter of fact, true or not. Still, most of these aren't secrets, per se—just because a vampire doesn't know them doesn't mean Zagreus is necessarily keeping this information close to the vest. In fact, if asked, he's proud of the things he's done.

Over the course of thousands of years, there exist only two secrets Zagreus truly keeps, and that truly disturb him.

The first is that he's met others who are as old as, or older than he is. That in and of itself isn't impossible, but some of these elders aren't just that—they're Methuselaha like him, capable of calling back any fact, any memory, from a mind free of fog. Zagreus will never admit this. He claims he is the only creature of his kind, and will jealously guard the locations and identities of other Methuselaha.

The second secret is that his memory is *not* perfect. In fact, during his Requiem, Zagreus is missing about a hundred years—this missing block of memory comprises approximately the whole of the fifteenth century. He is nearly certain he wasn't torpid during this time. He recalls being at the foundation of St. Andrews University in

Scotland 'round the turn of the century, and then recalls a sudden return to memory while watching the hanging of Girolamo Savonarola in Florence's Piazza della Signoria—an act that occurred at the *end* of the century. He doesn't know what happened in there. He doesn't remember how he got from Scotland to Italy. And the thing is, he didn't remember *then*, either. It's not like the memory now escapes him—it's simply never been present.

Rumors

"Nothing's been right lately. The Prince, deposed. The Primogen, vanished. Everybody's turning on each other. I don't understand. Everything we've worked so hard for, shattered."

This is the rumor that gets the characters on the path to discovering Zagreus. Things *have* gone wrong, and it's happened fast. It's far out of the norm. Vampires are treacherous and unpredictable, but it's usually slow—so slow, you never see it happen. Here, it's like it's the playing out of some bad tragedy. It is. Straight out of Zagreus's head.

"Stoker didn't learn of Vlad Tepes on his own. The discovery of old Dracula, that was Zagreus's doing. He exposed it all—and

it's not the first time he's gone exposing our clandestine history, shining bright light into purposefully-dark shadows."

True. You want to know how Stoker knew so much about the Count? Because Zagreus wanted him to. And it wasn't out of any kind of enmity. Dracula didn't even know about Zagreus, most likely. It was merely because Zagreus had grown sullen over the dull happenstances at the time, and sought to... shake things up a bit. It's something he'll do even now. The Traditions mean little to him when they prevent his amusement.

"He writes it all down. Everything. I don't mean he goes back through his memories and writes down what he finds there—no, he doesn't have to. Because night after night he keeps a detailed diary of what he's seen and done."

This is true, to a point. He does write everything down. Of course, despite his perfect memory, the hundreds of books are themselves chockablock with lies. Every page stuffed with falsehoods. That's not to say some degree of truth doesn't lurk between the lines; it does. But it would take a powerful researcher (or at least one who is inhumanly intuitive) to perfectly discern fact from fiction.

STORY HOOKS

- **Primary Source:** A page is found. The characters are put on the task of analyzing it. It's a page from one of Zagreus's lie-stuffed journals, and it contains something that is either a horrifying truth or a damning lie (perhaps something about the true nature of the founding of a Covenant, or a point of fact concerning the long-standing Prince of the city). At this point, the characters have no idea who Zagreus is, but this serves as an interesting introduction. And, of course, Zagreus is the one who let the page slip into the wild to begin with, just to see what would happen.
- **The Lost Years:** Zagreus, existing behind the scenes, kicks over the hornet's nest. But, in the interim, he starts working through intermediaries to contact the characters. He wants to know what he did during his "missing time" in the fifteenth century. He offers them a few places to look—the first being the St. Andrews Library in Scotland. They don't know it's him that's asking, though—it's all ordered by a "mysterious patron."
- **Center Stage:** Zagreus comes out from behind his curtain and summons the characters. He provides them a curious offer: he has grown bored and wants that to change. He's willing to spare the characters the coming storm he hopes to create (putting them in the eye of the hurricane, so to speak), but that means *they* have to be his agents of change. He tasks them with changing the current political landscape however they can, and they must entertain him with the results. If they do, he can offer them great reward—the things he can teach them are endless. Do they do as he asks? Do they try to betray him? Can even a whole city up in arms actually bring Zagreus low?

Zagreus

Aliases: The Methuselah

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 7, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 7, Manipulation 9, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Investigation 5, Occult 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Larceny 2, Weaponry 3, Stealth 5

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 5 (Sell Ice to Eskimo), Socialize 5 (Loose Lips), Subterfuge 5 (Lyrical)

Merits: Allies 5 (Cultists), Danger Sense 2, Herd 3, Language 10 (All Ancient Languages), Inspiring 4, Retainer 4

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 2 (Megalomania, Irrationality)

Virtue: Faith. He possesses unlimited certainty that all will work according to his whims.

Vice: Sloth. Zagreus is a watcher, not a participant.

Health: 10

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Speed: 16

Blood Potency: 9

Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 5, Dominate 5, Majesty 5, Vigor 5

Vitae/per Turn: 50/10

Devotions: Knowing the Stranger, Quicken Sight, The Dark Decree, Touch of Deprivation, Veridical Tongue

XP: 1723 (approximately)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Sharpened Fingernails	1(B)	-	Might become infected	10
Turkish Scimitar	3(L)	-	-	11

Legacy

The following potent Devotion is one that has been hammered out in the forge of Zagreus's Blood over the course of his long Requiem.

Devotion: The Dark Decree

(Blood Potency 9, Dominate •••••, Majesty •••••)

Sometimes Zagreus likes to have a challenge. He expends effort to put things in motion: he makes promises, brokers deals, dangles the carrot or lashes out with the stick. Truth is, though, his seemingly endless Requiem has left him more than a little lazy. Complacency is king, here, and with this Devotion, Zagreus needn't put forth all that pesky effort. With his potent tongue, he merely needs to demand what will happen—and the world will conspire to make it happen.

Cost: 3 Vitae

Dice Pool: Resolve + Expression + Dominate

Action: Instant

It is, in a way, a curse. The vampire using this Devotion speaks aloud that which he wishes to happen ("The Prince

will be dispatched by his childe," or "The Third Tradition will be broken three times"), and the warp and weft of fate twists in the loom and works to weave this decree.

Successes gained on this roll each count as one "story element" or "conflict" that manifests to make this happen. For example, four successes on the "Prince will be dispatched by his childe" puts into play four story elements into the game that will lead up to that very occasion occurring. The Storyteller determines these elements, and in this case they might be:

The Prince drops a casual insult regarding his childe during Elysium (1); the Harpies blow that insult way out of proportion to the point where it begins to haunt the childe (2); the childe receives a packet of evidence under his haven door that reveals a number of the Prince's indiscretions over the last decade (3); when the childe confronts the Prince about this, one or both of them enters frenzy (4).

These elements lead to the childe having to put down the sire—in this case, the Prince. The curse has come true.

But the die is not ineluctably cast. Characters may work to undo or prevent these story elements and conflicts, though simply stopping one such point doesn't necessarily halt the coming event. (It's like a table—remove one leg, and it may still stand.)

This Devotion has limitations. For one, the decree cannot be bound by a timeframe. The decree may demand that the childe dispatch his sire, but it can't be made to happen in two nights, two weeks, two years. Now the Devotion puts the story elements into play as soon as they can happen—but this cannot be a fixed timeframe.

Also, the decree cannot rewrite the past. While Zagreus is fond of lying and rewriting the past by dint of nobody knowing the truth but him, he isn't supernaturally changing what has already come to pass—he's just telling stories. Here, the Devotion cannot rewrite history; it can only put in motion future events.

Those "marked" by a decree (like the childe or Prince in the above example) may feel as if they've been targeted by an unseen hand. Success on a Wits + Occult roll gives them the feeling that someone just walked over their grave. If they possess dots in Auspex, they may add those dots to the roll and success becomes a little more meaningful: now they sense they have been cursed (or blessed) from afar, though they have no more information than that. (An exceptional success may provide clues, though.)

This Devotion costs 27 Experience points to learn.

The Butcher Worm: Holger Kochfleischer

“Bah! Hinterm Berge wohnen auch Leute!”

Background

Bulla Aurea: The Golden Bull

Every city has its pits, tunnels and shadows. And every pit has its king—the ant lion, the crocodile, the waiting maggots.

Holger Kochfleischer rules the pits in his city. He sees himself as a Prince of the Pit, the Lord of Offal, the true keeper of the city’s nocturnal underclass. He’s a giant beast five centuries into his Requiem, with a body more like a mammoth grub than anything resembling the human.

Once upon a time, Holger was a beautiful man of fair skin and pale straw hair—a prince of Mainz serving as one of the seven electors (*Kurfürsten*) of the Golden Bull of the Holy Roman Empire. It was the electors’ task to uphold the Golden Bull decree, helping to elect the next King of the Romans (who the Pope would then declare to be the Holy Roman Emperor). This was the *rex in imperatorem promovendus*—the king who would be made emperor. Seven electors helped to guarantee that the choices would never be deadlocked: the majority of four could always diminish the minority of three.

Holger (whose surname was actually Henneburg-Römhild, rather than the gutter surname he’d take years later after becoming a vampire) thought himself a proud child of God, a fortune-blessed prince-electoral with the world in his palm. He was happy. Blissful, even. And woefully ignorant.

To this night, he doesn’t know whether his Embrace was somehow political or just a random misery. Was he the swing vote that could make three electors into four? Or did that never figure into the equation?

Holger found himself attacked while walking one night down the Kaiserstrasse. A gang of what he perceived to be thieves seemed to appear out of nothing—when their hoods pulled back he saw that these creatures were by no means human, what with their bloodless faces and black veins spider-webbing through the flesh.

They tore into him. He doesn’t know which one made him like them, but they did. God had forsaken him. His beautiful life was done.

Time Among the Sanctified

For much of his unlife Holger worked within the Lancea Sanctum, identifying their work as a parallel to what he had done as a human. It was an empty effort. He never felt connected to them, nor to God. In fact, he felt utterly abandoned. The lack of privilege and the loss of a blessed life gnawed at him. Didn’t help that nobody within the Covenant seemed interested in allowing him to rise to any sort of power. They found him strange, cursed, crass. He was kept low.

The question rang out in his mind again and again: *why me?* No answer was forthcoming. It chewed at him until little hope was left. He abandoned the Sanctified and retreated to the wastes—garbage pits, underground rivers, beneath bridges, anywhere that would hide his wretched self.

Giant Maggot Man

It was about 150 years ago that Holger’s body started to change. His teeth started to curl, more like fishhooks than anything else. His skin turned paler, almost translucent (so much so that when he had freshly consumed blood you could see it collecting in dark patchy blotches beneath his skin, like so many mottled bruises). Most important of all was the way his body grew: it bulged and stretched, the torso becoming bulbous in parts. His arms atrophied somewhat. His legs, too. About every fifty years or so, Holger continued this transformation. It didn’t happen night after night, but seemed as if with every half-century down he would go through a growth or molting period: his skin would stretch, some of it might slough off to make way for new swollen protuberances.

It had a profound effect upon Holger’s psyche. Where he had for centuries felt worthless, as base a creature as one can get, he now started to perceive his power at this strata of vampire society. With the swell of his body came the swell of his own perceived value.

Tapeworm in the Underbelly

Over time, Holger’s carved out a very distinct niche within the Danse Macabre: he is the Prince of the downtrodden, the forgotten, the grotesque. He is an awful creature, yes.

And he openly flaunts his inhuman nature. But his freaks' court makes a comfortable home to those vampires that lurk at the bottom of the nocturnal food chain. The Danse Macabre offers vicious social circles, and so many are left abused and abandoned—but, under the lordship of the howling Butcher Worm, those at the bottom are now (in a way) back at the top. His court openly competes with that of the Prince's own. He may stick to the shadows, but he doesn't hide. Not anymore.

Holger in the World of Darkness

Holger is an emblem of what lurks in the darkest parts of the World of Darkness. And he's also a lesson that if you shove something deeper into the shadow and further from sight, it doesn't just go away.

Holger is present in the strangest and most distant parts of the city. What happens when a human runaway ends up as part of his mad court—or, worse, ends up as nothing more than blood sauce in his maggot's belly? Where do lost items go? What atrocities lurk in and around his physical presence that continually tear open the spirit world and let terrible demons of hunger and viciousness free? His court also needn't include only vampires. He may in fact have any number of motley horrors operating at his behest, existing at the margins of human thought and civilization.

Personality

Holger is a monster. He acts like one, too. He howls, shouts, screams. Flecks of blood fly free from his spouting jaws, his nest of teeth gnashing. Worse, he usually speaks only in German. It's not that he doesn't know English. He does; he just doesn't like it much. Moreover, it helps distance him from those who do not choose to follow him—if you want to really listen to what he has to say, learn German.

He does have a translator—another Haunt by the name of Roddick—but, when he really wants someone to show how well she can serve him, he silences his attaché.

Secrets

Holger's got a good thing going these days. How? Because contrary to what he says he's doing, he works *with* the Prince, not against him.

It's all an act. The two clash in forums both public and private, the Prince always providing the measured debate and the Butcher Worm offering wanton displays of grotesquerie and brash argument. Their people war. Sometimes they fall to the final death.

But at the end of the night, the two work together. They divvy up their power, their resources. They share



information. The Prince knows he'll never control the lowly masses, and the Butcher Worm knows he'll never be master to those so-called upper echelons. It's power-sharing that works.

And if the Damned of the city ever found out about it, they'd riot.



ANOTHER IMAGE FOR YOU

When Holger drinks blood, it's like you or me sucking the juice from an orange. Put the whole slice in your mouth. Chew down. Feel the crunch of the fruit's flesh as the juice drains out. Then you withdraw the rind and the flesh (now free of its succulence) and spit it back out. That's what he does with people. Draws whole parts of them into his mouth, where he grinds them up and mashes the blood out and down his throat. Then he spits out the remains, picking his teeth.



Rumors

"He's got these three childer, right? Two of them are devoted to him—they wash his awful body, they bring him food because, shit, he can hardly move what with his legs all tucked up in the bloated folds of his... thorax, or what-fucking-ever. Those two you'll never see, and I don't even know their names. But the

third, you'd never know that the ol' Worm is her sire. You've heard of her. She's one the Prince's Seneschals."

It's one of the ways characters might start to investigate the connections between Holger and the Prince. One of Holger's first childer, Riszla, actually operates on the Prince's payroll. She's never made public her sire's identity, instead claiming that the man is long since burned. But she's one of the few who know the true relationship between Prince and Butcher Worm. The other two childer—Gorten and Quint—are both half-minded mutant sycophants who, as described, are devoted to their sire's every comfort.

"I hadn't heard that about the Seneschal, but you know what I did hear? That monster doesn't Embrace like you or I might. He's got his own... awful way of doing it."

True, sort of. The way Holger Embraces isn't natural, though it technically follows the same mechanic. He actually eats the victims. Swallows them whole by distending his jaw. They slide down into his belly, and there the human suffocates, and his blood works to digest the body. Except he expends his will and commands his swallowed victim to arise again, the Blood seeping into mouth and pore and pocket. It's the same basic idea, but it sure looks different, especially when he regurgitates a new vampire, slick and red and totally foul. Though, he deserves credit: it actually looks like a birth. Somewhat.



STORY HOOKS

- **The Descent:** They say he's gone over the edge. The Butcher Worm's always been a crass beast—always the glutton, never the gourmand, a king of garbage and waste. But word's hit the street that he has some of those demon-worshipping freaks working for him. They don't give a shit about the Masquerade, and Holger's always at least stayed within the Traditions (because he knows it keeps him and his monsters safe), but this? Will the characters do something about it? If not, what happens when the backlash or the chaotic actions of the Belial's Brood Damned start to affect the coterie's own plans?
- **Between Friends:** One of the coterie is staked. She's dragged into the darkness and laid before the swollen gut (thorax?) of Holger, and he has his translator put a packet on her chest. It's a blackmail packet. Every vampire's got secrets, and here are the dark secrets of her and her coterie laid out before her. The choice is to let that blackmail slip into the hands of her betters, or to start doing some work for the bloated monster.
- **Family Business:** Someone's left Holger's two mutant childer out for the sun. That doesn't sit well with him, and he's left, a yowling beast beneath the streets. He's ready to go to war over this, to just tear the city asunder until he finds the criminals. Someone's got to find the answer before he goes ruining everything. Will the characters step up to the plate? Or is this a good time to impede the investigation and hope the fallout harms their enemies?



Holger

Aliases: The Tatzlwurm

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2 (History), Investigation 2, Occult 5, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 5 (Grapple), Survival 4, Weaponry 4 (Blunt Instruments)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 5 (Body Horror), Persuasion 4, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies 3 (Freaks), City Status 4, Haven (Location 3, Security 5, Size 5), Herd 5, Resources 3

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 3 (Sanguinary Animism)

Virtue: Justice. Holger has a very strong sense of frontier (or underworld) justice.

Vice: Gluttony. His awful mouth crunching down on the bones of his enemies makes this Vice very transparent.

Size: 8

Health: 14

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 9 (-6 due to Devotion)

Blood Potency: 7

Disciplines: Nightmare 5, Resilience 4, Vigor 5

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

Devotions: Wretched Bite, Terrible Flesh

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Headcracker	4(B)	3	Giant Club	15

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Flesh	3/3	na	na

Legacy

Certainly the Butcher Worm possesses the following Devotions, but they are available for purchase by characters who meet the prerequisites.

Devotion: Wretched Bite

(Blood Potency 4, Nightmare •••, Protean •••)

The vampire's mouth becomes an awful nest of fangs, each many inches long. The jaw's muscles grow tight, corded with bone-snapping tension. But it's not just the ferocity of the bite that matters here—it's what happens after to those whose flesh and blood is punctured by such grotesque, foul teeth.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl + Protean - Defense where appropriate

Action: Instant

The roll counts as an attack roll made by the vampire using this Devotion. Successes on the roll translate as aggravated damage—so, if the vampire gains five successes, then the victim suffers a terrible bite wound equivalent to 5 points of aggravated damage.

That is not all of the horror conferred by this bite, however. While the wound itself is immediately infected, that's purely physical. A successful attack also invokes a deep-seated spiritual infection.

Those bitten by this Devotion feel weak and worthless afterward, as if all that's good and holy in the world has truly left them behind. They feel the absence of God and light strongly. They are certain to feel truly bottom-of-the-barrel wretched.

For a number of days equal to the Blood Potency of the vampire casting this Devotion, the bite victim suffers a penalty to all Mental and Social rolls. This penalty is equal to the Devotion user's dots in the Nightmare Discipline.

Vampires have a bit of inbuilt protection against this, however—at the time of a bite, a vampire's player may roll that character's Blood Potency. Successes on that roll reduce the penalty (to a minimum of -1, as it can never be completely countermanded). Humans gain no such chance to combat the deep grief and sense of worthlessness. It is then, no wonder that those mortals bitten in such a way often kill themselves soon after, or beg to join the ranks of the hideous undead.

This Devotion costs 18 Experience points to learn.

Devotion: Terrible Flesh

(Blood Potency 5,

Nightmare •, Protean ••••, Resilience •••, Vigor •)

A vampire's body does not always change as the creature ages, nor does it necessarily need to shift or swell as the fiend's Blood grows thicker, more puissant. For some, though, especially those creatures possessing this Devo-

tion, the body *does* and *can* shift, growing to accommodate its awful lurch forward in power.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Resolve + Protean

Action: Instant

When the vampire's Blood Potency increases by one, the vampire has a chance to invoke this Devotion. It cannot be invoked at any other time—only when the creature's Blood becomes more concentrated does he have the chance to perform it. It must be performed *that night*; failure to do so means the vampire has lost the chance to mold his body to his swollen might.

Successes gained on the roll can be spent in a number of ways:

- A success may be used to increase the vampire's Size by 1 (which then also increases the vampire's Health score).
- A success may be used to grow some manner of armor—each success spent in this way adds +1/+1 to the vampire's existing bodily armor.
- A success may be used to increase the creature's Max Vitae pool by 1, even beyond what his Blood Potency allows (though on the next Blood Potency dot gained the Max Vitae goes up to the expected level of the new dot, but no more beyond that).

- A success may be used to increase the creature's Strength score by 1. This does *not* increase the creature's Speed score, however (see below).

The flesh doesn't appear normal after use of this Devotion. The player may define how the flesh appears (though the character has no choice in the matter), and it's always horrible. The skin bloats or cracks. It may suffer strange striations, stretch marks or black streaks. It may occasionally rupture and leak some kind of clear run-off. (Though this causes no damage, it may incur minor irritation.) Anything from bed sores to reptile scales are possible.

However, invoking this Devotion has two downsides. The first is that, regardless of the number of successes, as long as one success is gained on this Devotion, the vampire's Speed suffers a permanent -3 reduction to Speed. Every time he uses this Devotion successfully, his Speed suffers. This does mean that, eventually, it's possible the vampire will be largely without the ability to move.

The second downside affects the vampire's Humanity score. The flesh is so plainly inhuman that it is actually more difficult for the vampire to convince himself of his own connections to the human world and mortal physiology. As such, every time this Devotion is used successfully, degeneration rolls suffer a cumulative -1 penalty.



The Big Bad Blackbird: The Unholy

"I am what you wish you could be. Consider me a reminder."

Background

Everybody's got a theory, because everybody knows who she is. That's barely an exaggeration: soon as some poor fucker is dragged kicking and screaming into the Requiem, he'll do something he's not supposed to do and then they tell him. Maybe it's cautionary: "You keep on like this, and you'll be like *her*." Or maybe it's a kind of pride: "You want to know just how scary we can get? Let me tell you a story."

No one theory or rumor agrees with the next, though certain themes make many returns. She's the daughter of Dracula—no, wait, she's his lover. She's got hands like bird claws, or maybe she's got hands that *are* bird claws, or maybe she's just a skin suit stuffed with hungry birds ready to peck holes in tender flesh and suck out the blood. She's found Golconda. She's found the *opposite* of Golconda, some surrendered place where the Beast is All. She's got an army she commands. Or maybe it's a cult. And maybe they command her. She comes from Mexico—or straight out of Xibalba, the Underworld. Or Hell itself, right from the Devil's own mouth.

The Unholy's the bogeyman, the Beast, an agent of chaos. She's an epic urban legend that inspires equal parts fear and awe. Her stories grow in the telling, like a blood-soaked game of Whisper Down the Lane (or Scream Bloody Murder Down The Lane, anyhow). The truth, however, remains elusive—even to the Unholy, herself.

I Am My Mother's Daughter

The Unholy doesn't remember. Could be she just can't remember what with the way a vampire's thoughts and memories fray and molder over the many long nights, or it could be that she just doesn't want to remember (or worse, doesn't *need* to because it just doesn't matter anymore). Her story is lost to her.

But it's still out there. Some have stumbled upon it by dint of guessing. Others just *know* it, like it's whispered to them from afar and remains echoing in the chambers of their dead hearts. A few remember it. They're old enough. Or they have writings from long ago penned on yellowed paper in blood once red, now brown.

The story is this: Once upon a time a young girl collected berries in a bog. No telling how long ago this was: more than a century, maybe more than a thousand years, or two

thousand years. (Little girls have long collected berries, after all.) Ah, but the girl strayed too far from the path in search of the reddest, juiciest berries, those fruits so tart it puckers the mouth. And soon the sun was going down and evening was upon her—the dark, wine-stained fingers of twilight stretched overhead.

The girl knew the truth: at night the monsters awakened. The bog came alive. Tortuous roots twisted in brackish water. Berries popped and dripped fresh blood. Serpents crawled up out of the muck, and old caves opened up like yawning mouths.

Above all else, worse than all the monsters, was the Mother of Monsters herself, the Old Hag. Under the dark moon, the Old Hag hunted those bogs, and as she tried to find her way home, the girl knew she was only stumbling deeper into the mire. She could hear the Old Hag howling her name.

The Old Hag took her, of course. Snatched her up like an owl swooping down upon a scurrying little swamp mouse. Took the girl away and kept her for a time. She was meant to be just a toy, really. A thing of amusement. A doll to keep her company.

But something about the girl spoke true, and the Old Hag found something to admire. The girl had strength. She was a brave little thing, young and dumb. Didn't cry out. Even as the Old Hag fed the fool girl her black, muddy blood (pressing a foul old wrist to young fresh lips), the girl still had the spite to bite at the skin, or to spit in the wound, or to snarl like a spurned hound.

So the Old Hag chose to continue keeping the girl and feeding her. No need to discard such a contrary delight. When the girl was of a certain age, the Old Hag thought to take her as a daughter. She'd had daughters before, of course. Fool humans had long wandered into her many dark places, and there they became food, pets, or on very rare occasions, her childer.

Becoming childe to the Mother of Monsters was no easy feat. It was not as simple as killing the girl and pushing a fat clot of the hag's blood into her mouth. True monsters are made with great effort and care. The Old Hag cut into the girl with a hooked nail, opening pockets in her skin where the blood would drain out. When the girl's blood had all oozed into the bog water, the Mother made a shrill cry.

Birds appeared. Bloated crows, bellies full of meat and blood, landed on the girl. They nosed around those open

wounds with black beaks, and then pushed themselves inside of her, wriggling into the skin. As they did so, the Old Hag fed the girl one last time, one last mouthful of blood that tastes of old silt and long pain and veins of copper deep in the earth. The girl was now a woman, and the woman was now a daughter of the Mother of Monsters. She was truly Unholy.

I Am Your Lover, I Am Your Enemy

These years, the Unholy remembers. You might think of them as her “middle years,” a time when she was what she was, but maybe didn’t yet know it, or tried to be something else. Some part of her strained for that connection with others of her kind. She reached out, put herself about as part of the nocturnal society of the Damned. But it was as if she was cursed. Wherever she went, discord came in her wake. Never of her own direct making, of course, but it followed her like a pack of rabid dogs.

Then going by many names (Rebeka, Szilvia, Sarah, Anastazia), the Unholy was a drop of oil in a pan of water, a rogue element that did not belong. Those who took her as lover perished. Those societies to which she belonged soon surged in upheaval, collapsing in on themselves. Her childer went mad. Her ghouls never lasted, always dead within the year. It was as if she was cursed, though over time she came to realize it wasn’t a curse, not really. No divine punishment had been levied against her; she was merely different than all the others. The urges she had long repressed (she could always feel those dark birds writhing beneath her skin, their feathers wet with blood) cast her apart from the others. They played at being human, but she had nothing human inside her, not anymore. They were false monsters. She was the real thing. The Unholy was above them and beyond them.

I Am Your Awful Potential

The Unholy knows now what she is, and has known for nearly a century. She is the wakeup call. She is the reminder to the Damned of what they really are: blood-hungry monsters, *this close* to the Beast that lurks beneath the surface.

It was a painful revelation. Hard to say whether this is Golconda or it’s something altogether different and altogether worse, but giving in to this fact changed her. It pushed her to the edge, and it didn’t so much let the Beast within her out as it allowed her to *become* one with that sinister voice inside. Mentally, it honed her focus. Emotionally, it actually awakened feelings of joy and fear and the rush of blood to her cheeks (though such feelings are stirred only when she engages in truly monstrous, chaotic behavior). Physically, it almost crippled her: her arm bones snapped, the skin shriveled and became like chicken skin, and her hands grew into arthritic talons like what you’d find on the end of a hungry raptor.

These nights, her *modus operandi* is generally the same: she wanders, a true Nomad. Most times she sticks to the

darkest fringes: long stretches of highway, empty deserts, plateaus of moonlit wildflowers, vacant canyons, whatever. When she smells the blood of the Damned she swoops in. She takes what she wants, usually keeping one or two from turning to a greasy patch of ash on the asphalt. (Someone needs to tell the tale, after all.)

Sometimes, though, she gets an itch; the birds inside her gather and grow agitated. This happens once every five or ten years. She finds a town or a city where the Damned have gathered in their little bullshit cliques and groups and she tears it all apart. Often she shows up and feigns weakness, maybe even pretending to be someone else. But they always find out, and that’s what she wants. Maybe they see her bird arms, or maybe some Crone-suckling cultist smells it on her. When she’s outed, she goes peacefully. At first. But when it’s high time, when she can do maximum damage, she lets fly. She wheels upon them, a whirling cyclone of claws and feathers. Birds come calling, too—the sky darkens as a flock of crows or blackbirds swallows the moon. When need be she finds a target (a big target, too—a major Harpy, a Bishop, even the Prince herself) and swallows that poor sod’s soul along with all the blood in the prey’s broken body. She is a diablerist many times over.

Then, as soon as she’s come, she’s gone again. Most don’t ever see her go. She’s a force of nature, as damaging to the Danse Macabre as a hurricane is to mortal society; in her wake is wreckage and confusion and grief.

And all of it serves as a casual reminder: *this is what you could be*. For some, that’s a horrifying thought. For others, it’s powerful and liberating.

SNARLING FRACAS BETWEEN TRUTH AND FACT

Is this story of the Unholy true? Yes. It’s true. That is to say, it’s *authentic*. It speaks to the themes of the character: a woman born of monsters, a primal creature, an ancient horror. If you have **Savage and Macabre**, you might find a story in there that suggests the “Mother of Monsters” is Ekhidna, who may be the Crone spoken of in the stories of the Acolytes. Does that suggest that the Unholy is actually the child of the Crone herself? It does, indeed.

But is it fact? Not necessarily. Facts are meaningless. We don’t mean to get too “meta,” but on-the-ground during the nightly Danse Macabre the story is all that matters, just as much as the story is all that matters at your own gaming table. Fact cannot be discerned amongst a breed of blood-drinking fiends from thousands of years past, and it really doesn’t matter, because they are the only Artifacts from that time—and, thus, their memories and histories are *true*, even if they are not *factual*.

If you want to go ahead and use a different origin story for the Unholy—or, as is most appropriate, *multiple* origin stories—please do.



The Unholy in the World of Darkness

The Unholy is a *prime mover* kind of monster. Most of the Damned are caught in their circles: it's a cloud of congratulatory bullshit, a how-do-you-do with elite Traditions and giggling Harpies and false manners about who can drink what blood and when. The Unholy flies above that cloud.

She can ultimately be used as something all the more primal and horrifying than a society of cackling dead. Mortals—or, frankly, werewolves, mages, hunters, whatever—who witness her even in part are sure they've just seen something truly primeval. Most vampires pretend at being human. Even the ugliest ones sometimes put on the prettiest dresses. Not the Unholy. She's singular. A lawless frontier witch with crow-arms and limitless hunger.

And yet she seems completely disinterested in mortal society. She doesn't feed upon people. Those innocents caught in her wake die, but she isn't *targeting* humans left and right. Her ire—or, as it might be suggested, her "lessons"—are reserved for the Damned themselves.

Hence she cuts an interesting and contrary figure for groups like werewolves or hunters who may have some "issue" with the Damned of the city. Do the characters move in after she's gone, taking advantage of the chaos? Do they try to move against her as well, seeing her as a big prize or a momentous threat? Is she worse than the vampires she destroys, or by destroying them is she somehow... better?

Personality

A creature like the Unholy should be a hissing, malevolent thing. She should be inscrutable; inhuman in appearance and demeanor. Except she's not.

That's maybe the most unnerving part: for all her monstrosity, she walks the walk and talks the talk as far as acting human. She's not some icy matron or screeching bird. She's just as likely to sit down and talk to a vampire as she is to slit him from nuts to neck with a talon-tipped thumb. When she enters a city, she's often cordial, if sometimes dry. She's capable of humor, sometimes telling jokes or funny stories ("funny" being subjective to the teller, of course). She's got the wry sense of a cowboy whose fate is written in the stars and knows he's one high noon going to die bleeding at a dust-blown crossroads.

Of course, all that can turn off like a switch. The moment she needs to or wants to, the curtain drops and the monster is revealed in a whirl of motion, a rush of wings, and arc after arc of squirting blood.

Secrets

The Unholy's biggest secret—and it's a secret kept from herself, as noted—is that she's the daughter of the Mother of Monsters, and may be kin to such old and awful creatures as Baba Yaga (*the Jezibaba*).

The other secret the Unholy knows and doesn't want anyone else to realize is that once upon a time she tried to belong. In her mind, it suggests a place of weakness to note that she was once just a lost vampire girl trying to find a place in this world—far better to let everyone think she sprang forth from some decaying womb as a full-fledged urban legend.

Rumors

"You want to know who the Unholy is? She's the Count's daughter. That's right. She's the childe of Dracula himself."

Not true, as noted. That being said, when she was called Rebeka she did take the infamous Son of the Dragon as a lover and confidante, hoping that such a powerful figure could insulate her from the horror accidentally sown in her wake.

It didn't work. A schism grew in the earliest years of the Ordo Dracul between the three "brides" of Dracula, Anoushka, Mara and Lisette. The story goes that the three saw the schism rise out of competition between their branches of the Sworn, but one story suggests that the presence of Rebeka threw them into jealous disarray. They competed more strongly with Rebeka and with one another for the rights to please their master, and from this struggle grew the schism in the order.

Rebeka, sad and disturbed that once more she had cursed that which she touched, fled. In a few heretical Dracul tomes, she is referred to as the "fourth bride," though it would take a Herculean effort of research back through the centuries to connect Rebeka with the Unholy.

"I met this old sonofabitch. Haunts a rest-stop just north of San Francisco, near Bodega Bay. Just sits there, licking his fangs, staring out wistfully over the ocean at night—which looks like a giant puddle of oil, by the way—and he tells me a story. Says he used to 'run with' the Unholy, part of her pack. This was, what, hundred years back or so? He had a haunted look about him when he told the stories. It was rough stuff, the things they used to do. Travelin' around, just killin' folk and lapping up the blood from the asphalt, blowing the doors off

of roadhouses and swooping down on lost travelers or Klan meetings or, shit, anything. Just eating, fucking and killing. Said she changed, though. Started being interested only in other Damned. That didn't sit well with them. He won't tell me anything more than that, but here's the real kicker. Every story he told, more birds came up and started gathering around. Crows, mostly. Gulls, though, too. Gathering on a playground behind him, just sitting there, shuffling, cawing."

What the old man says is true. The Unholy used to run with a pack of seven or so others, a Nomad's coterie bringing Hell to wherever they went. Once she turned her attentions toward the Damned alone, though, the blood bounty went out, and some members of her pack thought to sell her out. She didn't take too kindly to that. They underestimated her. Didn't really know who she was, or what kind of strength she had. Those who betrayed her lost their souls to her, each adding a new black vein to her already fucked-up aura. The others, she cast to the wind. At least three of her old packmates are still out there, including the old vampire on the bench with his hungry birds.

"She ain't just a vampire. She's a whole phenomenon. Got herself an army. A wild-eyed battalion of yellow-eyed soldiers who follow her every lead. That's dangerous, you ask me. We don't work that way. They don't care, though. Don't care about no Masquerade, figure they can just take a red piss on all our long-cultivated Traditions. Somebody's got to put that army down."

True and not true. She has an army in the sense that she has a country full of disparate followers—coterie that travel from town to town looking for Unholy sightings the way some mortals might make a pilgrimage to Loch Ness or Nevada looking for Area 51. They're not organized into any army, though, and certainly don't comprise any kind of "battalion." Yes, they'd do anything for her. But she has no contact with them and if she thinks of them at all, it's as a cabal of clingy, weak hangers-on—though, maybe a few have potential to be something more than they are. At present she hasn't tapped into the apparent power of a sycophantic group of Unholy-worshipping fun junkies.

STORY HOOKS

- **The Lurker:** The coterie is put to the task by Prince and/or Primogen: investigate a strange woman lurking down by the docks. They do. They get that awful tingle at the back of their necks, and the Beast claws at the cage within. They see the crow arms. The low-brimmed cowboy hat. They *know* who it is. Are they being set up? When she offers to come willingly, and even makes small talk, what do they do? Do they flee, disobeying the Prince? Do they bring her in, knowing full well that *something* terrible is going to occur?
- **The Birds:** They get a call from an ally (or sire, or childe, etc.). It's a rough cell phone call, the voice breaking up. The ally and his coterie are outside the city somewhere. Along the highway. In the woods, or the desert. They're under attack. Over the phone, the characters hear the shrieking of birds. What to do? How do they find their ally?
- **The Compiler:** An anonymous individual (who may go by the initials V.T.) asks the coterie to compile something for them: a book of information on, you guessed it, the Unholy. V.T. either offers a big payout (not necessarily in money) or brings hard blackmail to bear against the characters. Where to start? Can they track down the members of her old pack? Certainly some other vampires exist who remember her from hundreds of years back. But do the characters really want to step into the lairs of such ancient creatures only to hear stories about a true monster?

The Unholy

Aliases: The Blackbird, Dracula's Daughter, The Mother's Daughter

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Unaligned

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Occult 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Claws) 5, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth (Ambush) 4, Survival (Desert) 5, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Language (Spanish, Cree) 2, Status (Kindred Legend) 5

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 2

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 9

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 14

Blood Potency: 7

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Celerity 4, Obfuscate 3, Protean 5, Resilience 5, Vigor 4

Vitae/per Turn: 20/5

Devotions: Unholy Skies

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Feral Claws	1 (A)			8

Armor

Type	Rating
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0

Legacy

Devotion: Unholy Skies

(Blood Potency 6, Animalism ••••, Protean ••••)

Some amongst the Damned, such as the Unholy, are practically forces of nature (though they are most certainly

not *natural*). With this Devotion, the vampire summons forth a veritable army of birds that choke the sky. In addition, she may move within the demonic flock as if she is one of them.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

The vampire shrieks, her tongue and throat mimicking the sound of some awful predatory or scavenging bird. She summons birds in a radius around her equal to 1/4 mile (approximately 400 yards) per success gained. Birds suffuse the air at a rate of about one bird per square foot (so, if you imagine a small bedroom in a house being 100 square feet at 10' by 10', you'll have a hundred flapping, screaming, frenzied birds in that small space). It takes a number of turns equal to 10 minus the vampire's Presence dots for the birds to manifest. The birds are usually of one or two types (crows and blackbirds, for instance), but may be anything (gulls, hawks, owls, sparrows).

The birds are violent, pecking and scratching. Those caught within the frenzied flock take 3 points of Bashing damage per turn—those hiding behind or beneath objects may be safe, but all objects of Durability 1 caught within the effects of this Devotion suffer 3 points of Structure damage. Something as meager as a blanket is sure to be torn to ribbons. A glass window is likely to break. A pantry (where one might hide) will take damage, but will likely survive the onslaught.

At the time of using this Devotion, the vampire may signify targets that remain unaffected by the birds (other characters, never objects). These targets remain unscathed by the furious flock.

While the flock remains, the vampire may literally disappear and reappear through any one bird in the flock provided that bird remains in her field of view. She must spend 1 point of Vitae every time she does this, and it takes two full turns (one to disappear, one to reemerge). Emergence is literal: she springs forth from the bird, and the animal itself ruptures in a *pop* of blood, feather and bone.

The squall of birds lasts for the remainder of the scene. At the end of it, the ground is sure to be littered with dead birds—as the flock flaps around in frenzy the birds are harming each other just as much as they're harming anybody on the ground.

This Devotion costs 24 Experience points to learn.

The Ancient Ghost: The Sightless Mother

"Come to me, childe. I will protect you."

Background

She stands before you, but you're not really sure whether she's there or not. She has the look of a special effect, fuzzy and indistinct, slightly translucent. And she glows; this faint warmth draws you to her fine features, her face as bright and clear as the moon against the midnight sky of her sable hair. Like the moon, her face has its craters: her mouth twisted into a symbol of utter agony, her eyes depthless orbs dripping dark red ichor down her cheeks. She turns those eyes on you, and you begin to cry.

She's an urban legend, a ghost story told in every Kindred domain in the Western world. The Sightless Mother, a blinded ghost of an ancient Kindred who has haunted the Damned since her own vassals rose up against her and her childe, casting them down and slaying them thousands of years ago. Everyone knows someone who knows someone whose sire or childe or sibling saw her once, decades ago in another city. She is the most compelling type of ghost story, full of pathos and tragedy. But she's also the most durable type of ghost story, because she's real.

La Llorona

Kindred, especially those of a skeptical bent, often compare the tale of the Sightless Mother to that of La Llorona, the crying woman, a figure in Hispanic folklore. Because evidence indicates that tales of the Sightless Mother existed among the Kindred long before the first recorded evidence of La Llorona, many Kindred claim the older tale inspired the younger. Hispanic Kindred, they say, spread the story to their mortal acquaintances, and the tale caught among the breathing populace like wildfire.

And why wouldn't it? It contains sex, violence, the taboo of infanticide and divine justice. While the details vary from region to region, the general story remains the same throughout the Americas:

A woman once fell in love with a man well above her social rank, and he, in return, lusted for her. They consummated their marriage in a secret union, and she bore him three children. Eventually, however, the man's father uncovered his secret family and demanded he leave them for an arranged marriage with a woman of proper

standing. At first the man refused, but when his father threatened to disown him and split his inheritance among his siblings he relented. He went to the woman and told her he had to leave her. She cried, begged and pleaded for him to stay, but he refused, turning his back on her and leaving her to her grief.

In anger, sadness and spite she turned upon the crying children she had been left to rear in the world alone. She examined them, seeing in each a feature that reminded her of her lover, and her rage swelled. She gathered them to her breast, speaking soft and comforting words to them before telling them she would take them to the river. The children, who loved the river, went eagerly with their mother, never noticing the knife tucked in her belt or the distance she kept behind them, weeping quietly. When they reached the river, the woman again took her children to her breast, whispered her love to them, and then slit each child's throat in turn. As the blood spilled into the river, the woman stood and, in a sudden moment of horrible guilt, plunged the blade into her own breast.

When the woman reached Heaven, she came before St. Peter and the closed gates of Paradise. He asked her where her children were, and she answered that she did not know. He shook his head in sadness and told her she could never enter Heaven without her children at her side. To this night she follows the banks of the river, crying in her anger, shame and grief, calling out for the children she murdered with her own hand.

Hispanic Kindred tend to speak of La Llorona and the Sightless Mother interchangeably. To them, they are one and the same. In the Kindred version of the tale (told not just in the Americas, but on the Iberian Peninsula and across the African shore of the Mediterranean), the father turns out to be a vampire, often the prince of an important city, and he Embraces the mother, providing their children as her first feast. Once she realizes what she had done, the woman runs to the river where she tries to drown herself. She fails to do so, but remains crying at the riverside until the sun breaks above the horizon. Now she wanders the earth, lamenting the loss of her babies and punishing those Kindred who would prey upon children.

The Goddess of the Underworld

Mediterranean Kindred have a long history with the Sightless Mother. Called Demeter Constantina, the ever-present, the Mediterranean, especially Greek and Italy, boast more records of sightings of the ghost than any other region. She has become a central figure in a number of Acolyte cults. Many Acolytes claim the Sightless Mother has displayed a strong knowledge of the blood sorcery Crúac, while others go so far as to claim she has *taught* them Crúac. Many of these Acolytes associate the Mother with Persephone and Demeter.

According to Greek myth, Persephone (Proserpina among the Romans), a beautiful maiden, was the daughter of Demeter, the mother goddess of fertility and grain. She attracted the attentions of Hades, god of the Underworld. Hades took Persephone against her will into the depths of the Underworld to serve as his queen, breaking her mother's heart. The world began to wilt under Demeter's duress, and eventually Persephone was returned to the world of the living in order to revitalize the land. Before she could go, however, Hades extracted a promise (or slipped her enchanted pomegranate seeds, depending upon the myth) that she would return to him for a period of time each year. The yearly descent into and return from the Underworld served as a metaphor for the cycle of the seasons.

Scholars among Kindred Acolytes posit that the tale spread among the Greeks may have been inspired by an actual historical figure. They claim the tale refers to Demeter Constantina, an avatar of the Crone in her guise as Demeter, who gave birth to a beautiful maiden. The beautiful girl drew the lust of a powerful lord of the dead (sometimes called the Prince of Athens, but more often given aspects that make him seem more ghostly than vampiric), who coveted her as his own. When he seduced her and made her into a creature of death like himself, Demeter Constantina became despondent, laying a curse upon the land. As the lands rotted, Demeter Constantina went to her daughter, offering to take her back and restore her to life. The daughter agreed, but only if her mother would lift her curse. Demeter agreed and restored the land and her daughter in one word. The restoration was only half complete, however. The world would no longer be the year-long verdant green it once was (and thus the cycle of seasons began) and Demeter's daughter was restored to only a half-life. (Some Daeva posit this as the origin of the Clan.)

Demeter Constantina's daughter eventually met Final Death, but not before establishing a thriving brood of Kindred who paid reverence to their founder's mother. Demeter graced this cult with her favor, delivering to them

the secrets of Crúac, the art of the gods. She watches over them to this night, a divine patron for all faithful blood sorcerers. Persephone, on the other hand, remains a potent symbol for faithful Kindred, especially those with an interest in overcoming torpor (due to her return from a descent into the Underworld).

The Oracle of Knossos

Some mortal scholars suspect the mythic goddesses Persephone and Demeter developed from an older Mediterranean mother goddess worshipped in numerous locations. Similarly, several reputable scholars among the Kindred trace the legacy of the Sightless Mother further, to the Bronze Age civilization of Crete, popularly called the Minoans after the mythical King Minos. These scholars place the origins of the Sightless Mother directly at Minos's feet, in the personage of Pasiphaë, wife of Minos.

According to these mythologists a legendary oracle once ruled the shadows of ancient Knossos. She was profound in her power and an immortal queen who had been gifted by the gods. She was Pasiphaë, the all-powerful high priestess of the Minoan Underworld, an entity to be feared and worshipped as a force of nature by the vampires of Crete. As a guardian and a gateway, she acted as an eternal womb that bled from the higher realms into the shadowy world of the undead, and in the labyrinthine caves that perforate Crete she established a

THE UNDERWORLD OF KNOSSOS

Before the reign of Pasiphaë, Kindred historians claim, the vampire society of Knossos revolved around a loose gathering of undead lords with little formal hierarchy. They inhabited the sacred caves and sulfurous grottoes known as the Underworld where mortals feared to enter or were unable to go without being overcome by the toxic vapors that emanated from them. Instead they left offerings and sacrifices at the caves to appease the ancestors who lived there or gave blessings to the wild hermits and sages who inhabited their entrances (many of whom, the historians suspect, were addicted to the heady wine of Vitae or the unrivaled passion of the Kiss).

The undead society that called the caves their home believed they originated from a chthonic dark Goddess who had first spawned the undead from the bowels of the Underworld after the forging of creation. Her symbol was a black snake devouring its own tail that later Greek scholars would name Ouroboros, a symbol that represented the immortal nature of the undead and the myriad endless cycles of nature.

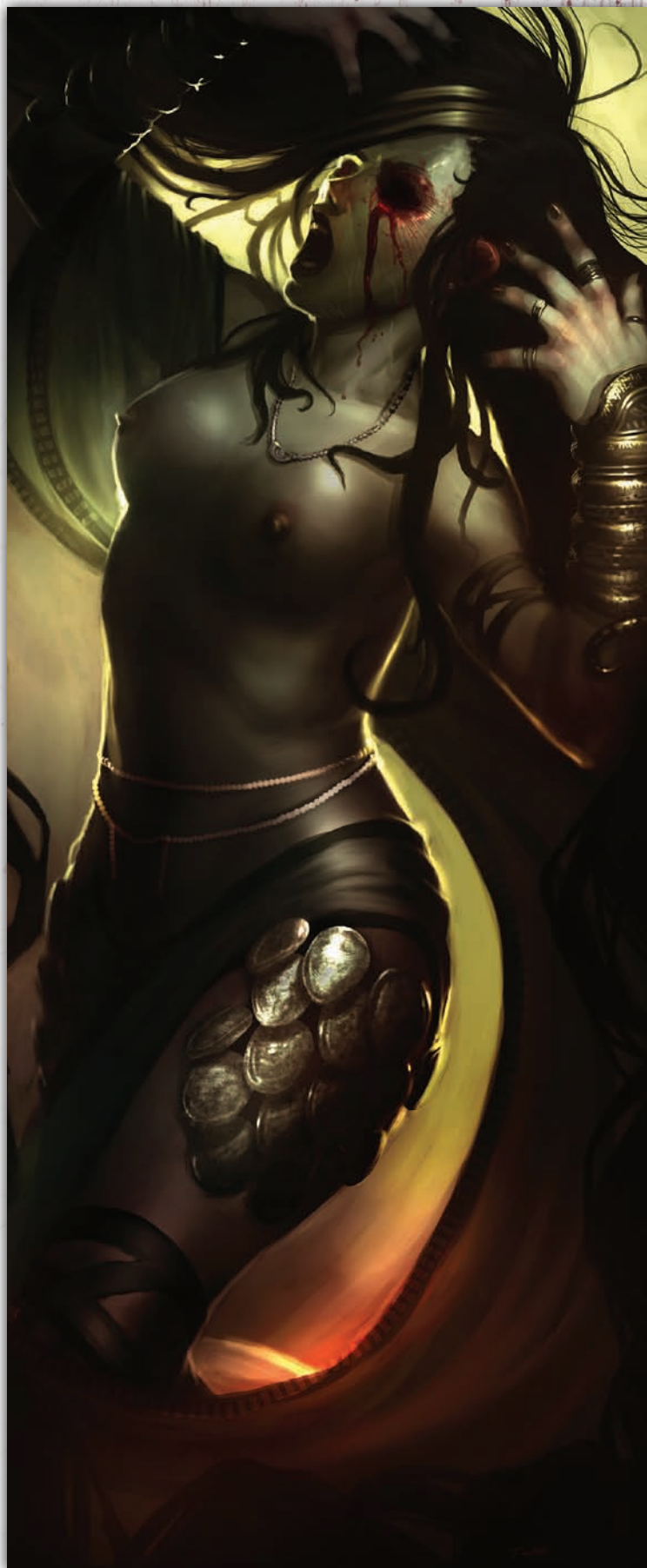
court of the wealthiest Kindred of the ancient world. Born from the shadows and vomited from Hades, they ruled by the power of her craft. Her divinity was such that many named her *Crone* not simply due to her power and age, but because they truly believed her to be an avatar of the chthonic Dark Mother who had first spawned the undead.

The golden age of her reign lasted for centuries, but in time Pasiphaë fell from the fickle favor of the gods. Bathed in the blood of bulls ritually slaughtered in her name, she blatantly favored her own childer, called the *Minotaur* (literally the “Bulls of Minos,” the bull being a particularly sacred creature to the Minoans). The hunger of the queen and her childer was so great that she reached to twist her once beloved king to a war of conquest, pressing him to subjugate Athens and extort a price in blood for peace. Pasiphaë had long since given up on feeding from humans, and the Athenian youth were Embraced and kept chained deep within the caves where Pasiphaë could sup upon them at her leisure. When, sometime in the sixteenth century BCE, the island of Thera erupted, the island of Crete was devastated. While little harm came to the land itself, the shock of the eruption destroyed much of the great trading nation’s merchant navy. The Kindred of Greece, seeing that Pasiphaë had lost the favor of the gods, took the opportunity to throw down their mad oppressor. They hunted her and bound her down in the ancient caves, blinding her with daggers and destroying her as she wept over the ashes of her fallen childer.

The Blind Queen

Many Acolytes who adhere to the Pasiphaë story as the origin of the Sightless Mother (and a few who refute it) uphold the Sightless Mother as the most likely individual to be the inscrutable Blinded Queen, a mythic founder figure revered among many of the Acolytes. They claim Pasiphaë is not only the Blinded Queen, but that the majority of those Kindred who have claimed to be the Blinded Queen in its bloody past have in fact been channeling Pasiphaë’s undead spirit.

Acolytes who purport this theory point out that the Sightless Mother does seem to have some inscrutable interest in the Circle of the Crone. The vast majority of tales regarding her



involve Acolytes in some way. Many stories speak of the Sightless Mother teaching Kindred Crúac, while others paint her as a hero and defender, protecting faithful Acolytes from the ignorant violence of the Sanctified. As is so commonly the case with legends, those who refute the connection between the Sightless Mother and the Blinded Queen have very little evidence in their favor. The strongest evidence against the connection is the fact that while the Sightless Mother purportedly met Final Death over three thousand years ago, the earliest record of the Blinded Queen dates to the Middle Ages.

The Sightless Mother in the World of Darkness

Whatever the truth of her origins, the Sightless Mother now haunts the World of Darkness, watching over the Kindred who name themselves her children through the study of Crúac. While she hardly maintains an interest in every vampire with knowledge of blood sorcery, those who practice the sorcery as she prefers, as a guiding rite toward spiritual enlightenment, draw her attention with their very faith. Sometimes she protects these blood magicians without them ever knowing. Other times she inspires them through their dreams or even speaks to them directly (though doing so is extremely taxing for her and possibly dangerous to her chosen). She occasionally possesses Acolytes, using them to fulfill her obscure will.

What does she want? Primarily to protect and guide her children (a group she defines more and more loosely as time goes on). Unfortunately for those who draw her attention, her mindset is that of a blood-drenched tyrant of the Bronze Age who has been left with nothing for company but her own grief over the last three and a half millennia. In short, she has become more than a little mad, and her idea of protection or guidance can be as deadly to those she hopes to help as her wrath is to their enemies.

The Sightless Mother stands as a threat to any group in the World of Darkness. Her prowess outstrips that of almost all other ghosts and is equivalent to a Rank 4 spirit (only with far more Numina). When she passes through a city it causes massive commotion in Twilight, sending spirits and ghosts fleeing from her malevolent shadow. Any character, whether Awakened, Uratha or hunter, who makes a habit of destroying vampires may draw the vicious attentions of the Sightless Mother.

Personality

The Sightless Mother died in grief over her failure to protect her children, and those emotions have been played and replayed nonstop in what's left of her tattered soul

over the last several thousand years. The Sightless Mother is, in many ways, pathetically single-minded. Like a child, she desperately wants to help those with a greater understanding of the modern world than she has and refuses to listen when asked not to involve herself. The problem is that her simple mind commands incredible power. She doesn't mean to do harm (necessarily), but, like the proverbial bull in the china shop, she's hard pressed not to. She's not *stupid* by any stretch of the imagination. She's simply driven.

Secrets

The Sightless Mother has been completely unable to locate any members of her Kindred line. An ancient line of shadowy Kindred rumored to hail from a once ancient King of Crete is said to have existed into modern nights, however it has now been scattered to the four winds. In myth, Pasiphaë's daughter Ariadne escaped the fall of the Minoan empire and traveled to ancient Greece (some say to die, others to marry Dionysus). What truly became of her, if she actually existed, none now living or undead can tell. Her blood and the blood of Pasiphaë's descendants however may be a key to finally laying the eternal Mother to her peaceful rest.

The fact that the Sightless Mother is tied directly to Crúac remains a secret to the Kindred. Given her ability to (unlike other ghosts) leave her anchors behind, no Kindred has made the connection between her and the blood sorcery specifically. Many suspect she may have some connection to the Circle of the Crone, but precisely what it is remains a mystery. The reason for this connection (her deep obsession with Crúac when she was an ancient undead queen) is likely lost even to the Mother's mind.

Rumors

"Yeah, we've all heard of the Sightless Mother. But have you heard she's not actually a ghost? Hell no, she's some absurdly potent elder from the Middle East or something who travels the world in her dreams while her body's in torpor. That's why she's so damn' crazy. But I guarantee you, if we could wake her up, we could do away with that ghost. But then what would we have on our hands?"

The common rumor about the Mother being the spiritual projection of a torpid Kindred has been circulating since she was first sighted. Whether or not this is the case is left in the hands of the Storyteller (see below for traits for her both as a ghost and a vampire). If her body has remained untouched after these many years, her mind certainly hasn't. Kindred who make to awaken her do so at their own risk.

"There's one sure way to stop the Sightless Mother in her tracks. I swear to god this is true. All you have to do is give her a baby."

Give her a baby and it'll keep her occupied for a while. At least as long as it takes for her... ministrations... to kill it."

This holds more than a shred of truth. The Mother is obsessed with her own failure to take care of her children.

Providing her with a baby or other young child to take care of will distract her from almost anything else save a threat to her or the child. Unfortunately, as a ghost she's hardly the ideal nanny.

STORY HOOKS

- **Run to Mother:** The character's enemies include a practitioner of Crúac. They learn, either through the rumor mill or from direct, painful experience that the Sightless Mother has taken up protecting the rival. How do the characters deal with such a powerful entity?
- **Soul Catcher:** A group of occultists, whether werewolves, vampires, mages, changelings or even hunters, have taken it into their heads that they wish to capture the spirit of the Sightless Mother and they need the characters' help to do so. Can the characters assist them? Can they get along with another supernatural group long enough to do so? And what does that group hope to do with the ancient ghost?
- **I Remember Mama:** Someone in the city (possibly one of the characters) has begun to dream of the Mother, sometimes spouting a torrent of wild prophecies and secrets about the city's many supernatural societies while in her sleep. Such information poses an obvious danger. How can the characters exorcise the Mother without destroying her host? Will they even want to when the group discovers the possessed is speaking prophecies that involve the characters themselves?

The Sightless Mother

As a ghost that has survived for over three and a half millennia, the Mother's spiritual power is formidable.

Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 10, Resistance 10

Willpower: 20

Morality: 1

Virtue: Charity. The Sightless Mother wants nothing more than to protect and teach her children, that she may make up for the selfishness of her past.

Vice: Wrath. But woe to those who harm her beautiful children.

Initiative: 20

Defense: 10

Speed: 30

Size: 5

Corpus: 15

Numina: The Mother has learned all of the Numina found in *The World of Darkness Rulebook* as well as any others the Storyteller deems appropriate. (She *could* have up to 350 Numina by the rules, but likely wouldn't remember most of them.) She also possesses the Numina Abandoning the Haunt and Sacrifice of the Dark Mother (see Legacy, below). Furthermore, she possesses Numina that duplicate the effects of the following Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 4, Dominate 2, Majesty 5, Obfuscate 3. All Vitae costs are instead paid in Essence and all rolls are Power + Finesse (contested or penalized as per each individual power's usual rules).

Essence: 20 (The Mother gains 3 Essence each hour from cultists invoking her name.)

Anchor: The Mother is anchored to Crúac, allowing her to travel to any Kindred with knowledge of that Discipline *in the world* with the expenditure of a Willpower point and an Instant action. Destroying the Mother's anchors (to send her to the next life) would similarly require murdering every Crúac practitioner in the world.

The Mother also knows countless languages from the ancient through to the modern.

The Sightless Mother's Kindred Traits

If the Storyteller decides the Sightless Mother's body was never destroyed or is interested in setting her chronicle in the past, the following traits represent her abilities as of the time she became a ghost. It further assumes the Pasiphaë story contains more than a mere glimmer of truth. It is left up to Storytellers to decide whether the Mother was once this woman and whether she has maintained her Blood Potency through her unsleeping millennia as a ghost (or if her corpse's long sleep has reduced it to one).

Clan: Unknown (Likely Daeva or Mekhet)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 7, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 5 (Philosophy), Crafts 4 (Weaving), Investigation 4 (Enigmas), Medicine 3 (Poisons), Occult 5 (Rituals), Politics 4 (Trade), Warfare 2 (Naval)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3 (Dance), Brawl 1, Larceny 2, Ride 3, Stealth 5, Survival 3 (Navigation, Weather), Weaponry 4 (Labrys)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 4 (Dreams), Expression 5 (Religious Ritual), Intimidation 4 (Angered Mother), Persuasion 5 (Command), Socialize 6, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: City Status 5, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fame 3 (High Priestess), Haven 5 (Temple), Holistic Awareness, Inspiring, Iron Stamina 3, Languages (Numerous Ancient Tongues), Meditative Mind, Retainer 5 (Ghoul Bulls and Snakes), Status 5 (Kindred Cult), Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 9

Humanity: 4 (Sanguine Animism, 5)

Virtue: Charity. The ancient queen was liberal with wealth and Vitae alike, especially for her valued childer.

Vice: Wrath. But those who crossed her felt the full brunt of her mystical prowess. Myth claims Pasiphaë cursed Minos so that he ejaculated scorpions when he slept with women other than her. Perhaps the myth reflects truth.

Health: 9 (11 with Resilience)

Initiative: 9 (14 with Celerity)

Defense: 5 (10 with Celerity)

Speed: 12 (15 with Vigor)

Blood Potency: 8

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Auspex 5, Celerity 5, Crúac 5, Dominate 2, Majesty 5, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 2, Vigor 3

Crúac Rituals: The Mother knows all the Crúac Rituals in the **Vampire: the Requiem Rulebook** as well as any others the Storyteller deems fitting.

Vitae/per Turn: 30/7

Devotions: Arcane Sight, Iron Façade, Quicken Sight, Touch of Deprivation

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Labrys Swipe	3	3	—	11
Vigor Swipe	3	3	—	14
Touch	—	—	Ignore Armor	6

The Mother's collection of rituals and Devotions makes her an incredibly frightening and unpredictable opponent. Touch of Deprivation allows her to blind opponents for the scene, which she will do with impunity if necessary. (When used against Kindred with Auspex of 4 or less, she can negate a single power of Auspex for the scene.) She's far more likely to try to avoid combat (with Majesty 5 or Obfuscate 3, for example) than engage in it, however.

Legacy

The Sightless Mother possesses a pair of unique Numina developed due to her former status as a vampire.

Ghost Numen:

Abandoning the Haunt

Just as the Sightless Mother could use Auspex to abandon her physical shell when alive, she has learned to leave her Anchors behind in death. The Mother spends 1 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. If successful, she can ignore the usual restrictions on movement to which ghosts are subject for the remainder of the night. A ghost *must* have known Twilight Projection (or a similar supernatural power) in life in order to develop this Numen.

Ghost Numen:

Sacrifice of the Dark Mother

As a bodiless ghost, the Sightless Mother cannot sacrifice the blood necessary to power her sacred magic. Through this Numen, however, she may force others to do so for her. The Mother expends 1 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse contested by the target's Resolve + Blood Potency. If the Mother garners more successes than the target, the target weeps 1 Vitae plus 1 per success that the Mother's roll *exceeded* the target's. This blood cannot be used in any way by the target (or other Kindred), but can be used to fuel Crúac rituals by the Mother. Wept Vitae becomes a pool from which the Mother can draw to use Crúac. The Mother's pool for using Crúac is equal to her Power + Finesse. Only Kindred can be targeted by this power, and only ghosts who were once vampires with a Crúac rating of 3 or higher can develop it.

Overview: This scene occurs when the characters (one of which should possess Crúac) have bitten off more than they can chew and face the very likely danger of being destroyed. Instead, things go haywire as the Sightless Mother protects her child (or children) from danger through a liberal use of her Numina. Can the characters stop her from destroying the enemies (or leveling the building, for that matter)? Do they even want to? If they allow her rampage to go unchecked (or fail to stop it), the characters are left with quite the mess to clean up.

Through the window bursts a cloud of black feathers and slashing yellow beaks. The crows descend upon your foe, tearing at his flesh and digging their beaks into his eyeballs.

The men slowly turn their guns from you, shifting them to one another. Their eyes open in fear. "What are you doing, man?" "I don't know!" Shots ring out.

“What? What are you looking at?” he growls as you see the glowing words appear on his forehead, letter by letter, as if traced by an invisible hand. **I’m here, my child.** And then the words erupt into flame. He screams as his head is engulfed.

You look around you as the deafening roar finally fades to silence. The twisted bodies of your rivals slowly decay into sticky gray ash. You look down to see yourself covered in their blood. What do you do now?



Appendix: Lands of the Damned

The following rules allow you to use the characters in this book in any World of Darkness game without a copy of **Vampire: The Requiem**. They're not the whole story, but should be enough for most Storytellers to portray these immortal sinners.

We've preserved the Vitae and Willpower economies built into the **Requiem** mechanics, as well as a number of other limitations on what Kindred can do. Frankly, though, you know the needs of your chronicle better than we do, and tracking every drop of blood may not make sense.

If you do choose to measure Vitae and Willpower usage in detail, it's often useful to start Storyteller characters at only half their full pools. This evens them out a bit with players' characters, who get more play time, and thus have more opportunities to use their resources.



The Blood

Vitae

Vitae is the blood of the living, stolen and transfigured into the life of the dead. Vampires use Vitae to counterfeit life, and to fuel their monstrous Disciplines.

Each vampire can spend only a limited number of Vitae per turn, listed on her character sheet.

Feeding

To replenish their Vitae, vampires must drink blood. Each point of Vitae drained inflicts one level of Lethal damage upon the victim.

Blood Potency

Over years, the blood of the dead grows thicker. Vampires with thin blood can subsist upon animals, whereas those with thick and potent blood must feed upon humans and then other vampires.

Vampires instinctively sense the potency of one another's blood, establishing hierarchies of damnation before even a word is spoken.

Faking Life

Each night, a vampire must spend 1 point of Vitae to rise.

For a point of Vitae per scene, the vampire may counterfeit living processes—automatic breathing, realistic blushes, sexual intercourse and so on. For an additional

point of Vitae, the vampire may counterfeit eating and drinking. After the end of the scene, the vampire bloodily vomits up the food so consumed.

Unholy Strength

The Storyteller may spend a point of Vitae to increase a dice pool involving the vampire's Strength, Dexterity or Stamina by 2 for one turn.

Damage and Healing

Vampires are never knocked unconscious by Bashing damage. They also suffer Bashing, rather than Lethal damage from firearms. Fire, sunlight and some magical abilities deal Aggravated damage.

The Storyteller may spend 1 Vitae to remove two levels of Bashing damage or one level of Lethal damage from a vampire. Aggravated damage may also be healed, but costs 5 Vitae. The Storyteller may do this only once per vampire per turn.

Frenzy

When a vampire is roused to rage, terror or desperate hunger, she sometimes loses control of herself... or, rather, of the Beast that lurks within her. During this frenzy, she flees or attacks without reason, desperate to escape or destroy the cause of her pain.

The blood of the Damned runs in five cursed lines, each with innumerable variations and perversions. When a vampire “Embraces” a mortal into undeath, the child inherits the clan of the sire.



Daeva The Succubi

Masters and victims of beauty and lust, the Daeva cultivate desire in their prey and perfection in themselves. Sensual hedonists and rapacious gluttons alike are members of the Daeva “family.” Many Daeva Embrace mortals with whom they have become entangled in a web of lust and hunger. Rare is the relationship that runs as hot as that between a Daeva and a newly Embraced child. Rare is the relationship that cools as swiftly.

Gangrel The Savages

Creatures of wild ferocity and animal cunning, the Gangrel hunt in the untamed places and show no mercy. Gangrel can come from nearly any former life, but all Savages possess a strong survival instinct. Gangrel loathe personal weakness and admire those whose greatest strengths are those of the self—self-awareness, self-confidence and self-reliance.

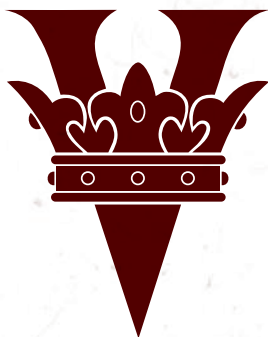


MEKHET THE SHADOWS

Quiet things that lurk behind masks and curtains, the Mekhet are keepers of secrets and thieves of whispers. They hunt from the shadows, preying secretly upon victims and unlocking secrets no one should know. All Mekhet share a metaphysical darkness, expressed as bleak melancholy or macabre fascination. Mekhet are tutored intensely by their sires, and often inducted into their own shadow cults. Some prefer to let their progeny discover the Kindred world on their own, but not even these sires stray so far that they can’t watch a protégé’s progress.

NOSFERATU THE HAUNTS

Subtle and unnerving, the Nosferatu wield fear itself like a surgeon’s knife. Their very presence disturbs others, whether by physical ugliness, foul stench or nebulous personal malignance. Nosferatu sometimes come from society’s dregs, but just as often from its peak. Either are dragged to new depths by the Embrace. Haunts learn to be self-reliant individuals, and often adapt to the curse of undeath better than their Damned peers.



VENTRUE THE LORDS

Youngest and hungriest of the clans, the Ventrue are the harsh Lords over the Damned. The Ventrue recruit professionals, the cream of high society, scions of old money or heirs to political dynasties. As new professions and new forms of power arise, the Ventrue bring them into the clan. By whatever means available, the Ventrue rise to the top.

Vampires' unnatural abilities are called Disciplines. From simple command over animals to grotesque blood sorceries, these dread powers grant vampires deadly advantages over their prey.

- ANIMALISM -

From the sniveling worm to the snarling wolf, some vampires commune with and command the beasts of the Earth.

• FERAL WHISPERS

The vampire speaks to the animal in its growling, bestial tongue.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism

Success: The vampire can fully communicate with the animal to whatever degree the animal is capable.

•• OBEDIENCE

The undead is a master of beasts. He demands, they obey.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism - victim's Composure

Success: The animal obeys the vampire's orders to the best of its abilities.

••• CALL OF THE WILD

Calling in a feral voice, the vampire beckons creatures from all around.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Success: All animals of a selected type attempt to make their way to the character. The area of the call is 100 yards for every success rolled.

•••• SUBSUME THE LESSER SPIRIT

Locking eyes with the beast, the vampire forces its soul into the unfortunate creature's body.

Contested

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism versus victim's Composure

Success: The vampire occupies the animal's body. It can use Animalism but no other Disciplines while doing so. Any injuries inflicted upon the animal affect the vampire's own body.

••••• LEASHING THE BEAST

The vampire can command her own inner Beast and those of others.

Instant (self) or Contested (another victim)

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Animalism (self); Manipulation + Empathy + Animalism versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency (another victim)

Success: The vampire calms the victim's Beast, or rouses it to frenzy.

- AUSPEX -

Having passed both ways through death's door, the seers among the Damned gain supernatural insights.

• HEIGHTENED SENSES

The vampire's senses sharpen to razor's edge.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: The vampire is able to perceive sensory information too subtle for ordinary humans. The vampire can see in pitch darkness.

•• AURA PERCEPTION

The dead eyes of the vampire see more than those of the living.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex - victim's Composure

Success: The vampire is able to perceive an aura around humans and supernatural creatures. This aura reveals the victim's emotional state, as well as supernatural activity.

••• THE SPIRIT'S TOUCH

Merely by handling an object, the vampire receives visions of the previous owner.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Auspex

Success: The vampire receives a sense of the previous owner or handler's identity, as well as a reliable vision or sense strongly associated with that person.

•••• TELEPATHY

The vampire invades your mind.

Instant

Cost: - (victim is mortal or willing supernatural); 1 Willpower (unwilling supernatural)

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Socialize + Auspex - victim's Resolve

Success: The vampire reads from or adds a thought to the victim's mind.

••••• TWILIGHT PROJECTION

The vampire sends her spirit, ghostlike, out of her body.

Instant

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Auspex

Success: The vampire separates her spirit from her physical body. Interacting with the physical or spiritual world is impossible. The vampire may communicate with ghosts or other projecting vampires.

- CELERITY -

Some vampires can move faster than the eye can see. They blur into nothingness, or simply disappear from one place and reappear in another.

CELERITY

With only a hint of motion, the vampire dodges your blow.

Reflexive

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: Automatic success (may be invoked only once per turn)

Success: For this turn, the vampire's dots in Celerity are subtracted from any and all attacking characters' dice pools. The vampire's Initiative also increases by her dots in Celerity. Finally, the vampire's dots in Celerity are added to her Speed.

- DOMINATE -

Some Kindred are able to overwhelm the minds of others through sheer force of will, influencing thought and action alike.

• COMMAND

A single word is spoken, and you cannot help but obey.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: – (victim is mortal or willing supernatural); 1 Willpower (unwilling supernatural)

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus victim's Resolve + Blood Potency

Success: The victim obeys the single-word command literally, but with appreciable self-preservation.

•• MESMERIZE

A suggestion worms its way from the vampire's lips into your helpless mind.

Contested (resistance is reflexive)

Cost: –

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Expression + Dominate – victim's Resolve + Blood Potency

Success: The victim obeys the suggestion to the best of his ability.

••• THE FORGETFUL MIND

Delving into your mind, the vampire steals and reshapes memories at her whim.

Extended (each roll represents five minutes of manipulation)

Cost: –

Dice Pool: Wits + Persuasion + Dominate – victim's Resolve

Success: The vampire partially alters a block of memories.

•••• CONDITIONING

A campaign of whispers, hints and lies breaks down your will and leaves you open to future manipulation.

Contested and Extended (each roll represents one week of mental manipulation)

Cost: 1 Willpower per roll

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Socialize + Auspex – victim's Resolve + Blood Potency

Success: For every 5 successes accumulated, the vampire receives a +1 bonus on any attempt to Dominate the victim. The vampire may accumulate up to a +5 bonus.

••••• POSSESSION

No longer relying upon subtle manipulation, the vampire forces her mind into yours, controlling your body and suppressing your thoughts.

Contested and Extended (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate – victim's Resolve; to succeed, the vampire must also accumulate a number of successes in excess of the victim's Willpower

Success: The vampire exerts complete control over her victim, possessing his body and mind.

- MAJESTY -

Most legendary among the powers of the undead, Majesty allows the vampire to attract and enthrall her victims.

• AWE

The vampire's charm draws you to her, like a moth to a flame.

Instant

Cost: –

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Majesty (to succeed, the number of successes must exceed the victim's Composure; failing against one victim does not affect any others; the vampire is assumed to victimize all characters with whom he is interacting)

Success: The vampire dazzles his audience with overwhelming charisma.

•• REVELATION

Alluring and reassuring, the vampire invites you to share your innermost secrets.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency

Success: The victim bares his soul to the vampire.

••• ENTRANCEMENT

The vampire warps your emotions, making you her willing servant and admirer.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: –

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency

Success: The victim falls under the vampire's sway for an hour or so, long enough to complete a single task or set of tasks.

•••• SUMMONING

Something deep within calls you, pulls you to seek out the vampire.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Empathy versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency (the vampire must personally know the victim)

Success: The victim is compelled to seek the vampire out. He uses any resources at his disposal to reach the rendezvous safely and punctually. He is aware whom he is seeking out, but does not necessarily know why.

••••• SOVEREIGNTY

Everyone around the vampire is filled with devotion, respect... and fear.

Instant, Contested and Reflexive

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Majesty versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency (each victim rolls separately)

Success: The victims revere and fear the vampire. They are not able to attack or act against her. If the vampire attacks physically, the effect is broken. Otherwise, Sovereignty remains active for the entire scene.

- NIGHTMARE -

Certain vampires possess the ability to strike fear into the hearts of mortals... and even those no longer mortal.

• MONSTROUS COUNTENANCE

You behold the true face of the vampire, and cower in fear.

Contested

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare versus Composure + Blood Potency

Success: The victim flees the vampire's presence entirely, using any means at his disposal to do so. He continues fleeing for one turn per success rolled on the vampire's behalf.

•• DREAD

Panic and paranoia rise within you.

Contested

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency (everyone within 3 yards per Willpower dot the vampire possesses is a victim)

Success: An atmosphere of fear persists until the vampire dispels it, or until the end of the scene, whichever comes first. Each victim suffers a -2 penalty on all actions.

••• EYE OF THE BEAST

Looking into the vampire's eyes, you realize the truth: she is the predator and you are the prey.

Contested

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Nightmare versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency

Success: The victim is paralyzed with fear, incapable of moving or taking any action. If attacked, he flees on the next turn.

•••• SHATTER THE MIND

The vampire shows you your greatest fear, plunging you headlong into madness.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare versus victim's Composure + Blood Potency

Success: The victim skips his next action and loses 1 Willpower point. He suffers a -1 penalty to all actions for the remainder of the scene. The victim is subject to a mild derangement (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 97) for one week per success rolled by the vampire.

••••• MORTAL FEAR

Wracked by fear of the vampire, your body begins to fail.

Instant

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare - victim's Composure

Success: If the victim is a vampire, he loses 1 point of Willpower per success. Otherwise, the victim suffers one level of Lethal damage per success.

- OBFUSCATE -

All vampires are masters of stealth, night-dwellers and keepers of the Masquerade. A few, however, can shape shadows and lies to conceal everything from minute objects to their entire identities.

• TOUCH OF SHADOW

The vampire closes her hand slowly around the object... and as she does, it disappears.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate

Success: Even a thorough search of the vampire's person fails to reveal the target object.

•• MASK OF TRANQUILITY

The vampire conceals the stain of undeath that taints her soul, even from other vampires.

No Action (always on)

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: Supernatural senses cannot reveal that the character is a vampire, nor does she rouse the territorial instincts of other undead.

••• CLOAK OF NIGHT

Hiding her person as thoroughly as her nature, the vampire fades from view.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate

Success: The vampire vanishes from sight.

•••• THE FAMILIAR STRANGER

The vampire appears to be someone else... whomever you would have expected to see instead.

Contested (resistance is Reflexive)

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Obfuscate versus victim's Resolve + Blood Potency

Success: The vampire appears to be someone else. If there is more than one onlooker, her appearance comes from the mind of the victim against whom her pool was rolled. She is aware of her new appearance, but knows only as much about the person as she can deduce from that appearance.

••••• CLOAK THE GATHERING

The vampire and her companions vanish in the blink of an eye.

Instant

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate

Success: The vampire and her chosen allies vanish from sight. She may hide one person per dot of Obfuscate.

- PROTEAN -

One of the most spectacular gifts of the Damned, Protean allows vampires to change their natures, both inside and out.

• ASPECT OF THE PREDATOR

The vampire projects a supernatural aura of predatory ferocity.

No Action (always on)

Cost: -

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: Other vampires cannot accurately sense the Potency of the vampire's blood. If she is weaker than another vampire, he still senses her as an equal. If she is stronger, this power has no effect.

•• HAVEN OF SOIL

Lying back against the ground, the vampire vanishes into the soil.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: The vampire becomes one with the soil. She cannot act, but can detect intruders. She may not be physically attacked.

••• CLAWS OF THE WILD

The vampire's nails grow into fearsome talons, the better to rend your flesh and bone.

Reflexive

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: The vampire gains a +1 bonus to unarmed attack pools. Her unarmed attacks inflict Aggravated damage. The claws remain until the vampire dismisses them, or until the end of the scene, whichever comes first.

•••• SHAPE OF THE BEAST

Hunching and growling, the vampire assumes the shape of a beast.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: The vampire assumes the form of an animal, usually a bat or a wolf. Her physical qualities become those of the animal, but her mind and temperament are unaffected. She may use any Discipline except Theban Sorcery, Crúac or Dominate.

••••• BODY OF SPIRIT

The vampire gently evaporates, becoming a cloud of fine and chilling mist.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Automatic success

Success: The vampire transforms into a mist. She is immune to all physical attacks and can control her own movement.

- RESILIENCE -

Legends abound of vampires who are able to withstand even the most brutal punishment of their unloving bodies.

RESILIENCE

Despite the force and brutality of your blow, the vampire simply shrugs and smiles.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: Automatic success (may be invoked only once per scene)

Success: The vampire's Health and Stamina increase by 1 per dot of Resilience.

- VIGOR -

Many vampires possess strength greater than any mortal could hope for.

VIGOR

The vampire lashes out with unnatural strength.

Instant

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: Automatic success (may be invoked only once per scene)

Success: The vampire's Strength increases by 1 per dot of Vigor.

Blood Sorcery

Crúac is the blood sorcery practiced by vampiric witch-cults. Tonight, knowledge of this Discipline is carefully guarded by the Circle of the Crone, but Crúac and its variations were widely practiced in more ancient nights.

All Crúac rituals cost a point of Vitae to perform.

Found in the nighted tombs of ancient Egypt, Theban Sorcery grants dark miracles to the Lancea Sanctum. Only members of the Sanctum may learn Theban Sorcery rituals but, once learned, the blood magic may be freely practiced.

All Theban Sorcery rituals cost a point of Willpower to perform.

A vampire's dots in either Crúac or Theban Sorcery dictate the highest level of rituals she may perform.

Allegedly devised by Dracula himself, the Coils of the Dragon are taught by his Ordo Dracul

THE COIL OF BLOOD

FIRST TIER: THE BLOOD SEEPS SLOWLY

The Storyteller must spend only 1 Vitae in order to wake for a number of nights equal to the vampire's Resolve.

SECOND TIER: BLOOD OF BEASTS

No matter how ancient or potent the vampire grows, she may subsist upon the blood of animals and humans.

THIRD TIER: PERSPICACIOUS BLOOD

The vampire gains 3 Vitae for every 2 Vitae she takes from a human. She receives double the normal Vitae when feeding from Kindred or other supernatural victims.

THE COIL OF BANES

FIRST TIER: CONQUER THE RED FEAR

The vampire more easily resists fear of fire or sunlight.

SECOND TIER: SURMOUNTING THE DAYSLEEP

For 1 Willpower point, the vampire may remain awake for an entire day. "Waking" that night still costs a Vitae.

THIRD TIER: SUN'S FORGOTTEN KISS

Sunlight at twilight and dawn causes Bashing, not Aggravated, damage to the vampire.

THE COIL OF THE BEAST

FIRST TIER: CHASTISE THE BEAST

The vampire resists the growling of her Beast as she chooses, at the cost of 1 Willpower point.

SECOND TIER: LURE THE BEAST

Even when she allows the Beast to rage, the vampire keeps it on a short leash.

THIRD TIER: EXHAUST THE BEAST

By giving herself over to the Beast for an hour here, an hour there, the vampire may ignore it for the rest of the night.



22

Whisper Down the Lane

He's at it again, didn't you hear? It's a thumb right in their eye, it is. The Black Bishop must be sick over it. Eating poor Emily like that? So crass. Wasn't Birch the one who woke him in the first place? Horrible to consider.

~

The Heretic bolts down the hallway of the old hospital; it's where he's been staying, where he's been holing up this last year. He's had the lights on and water running, but now the lights are flickering and the pipes are hissing.

His legs churn, carrying him across the cracked linoleum marked with stains of old brown (blood) and jaundice yellow (*who knows*), and in his hand he's got a wadded up piece of paper that he lets slip and tumble, an origami boulder. The note's what has him crazy, giving him a head full of yellow jackets.

It didn't say much, but what it said was enough.

We made a fucking mistake, didn't we? Letting Pope into our ranks? Goddamn Svengali. Doctor Illuminatus? Fuck. It's just, what were we supposed to do? The Cronies don't give a dick. Who can even talk to the Dragons? If we wanted to have a hand to show, a hand to play, we had to get an ace up our sleeve. Turns out he was a black queen instead. Or maybe a joker. Fucking Christ.

Pope's shoulder slams into the door just as the lights in the hospital go out for good in a rain of blue sparks. He tumbles down off the steps and into the hot summer night, the city's sky painted in an apocalyptic orange. Just across the street, he sees the car—it's Eddie. He called him, told him to come pick him up. No big thing, Eddie said, just happy to have a friend (*just happy to be Pope's blood-mouthed lapdog*).

It's a back street, no cars this late at night, so Pope fast-walks across the street, looking left, looking right, suddenly paranoid. He sees Eddie's shadow at the wheel, and Eddie turns and looks at him.

Door open, Pope sits, and he starts to say something to Eddie—"I got this note"—but then he sees why Eddie's head moved. Because a fat-bellied crow was tugging at the man's ear, jerking his head this way and that. In his chest is a splintered shaft of wood. A chair leg. It's a fucking chair leg. His face is a mask of scratches and blood. The bird pecks at the lip. It tugs hard; the lip peels off.

"Fuck," he spits, and throws open the car door.

Funniest thing is, you'd think Birch'd be pissed. Who knows what hell he went through to give Pope another shot at life-or-what-passes-for-it? But he's not. Someone mentioned it at the Museum last week, thought to piss in his cornflakes. He just shrugged, and said, "Not everyone works to be part of God's plan."

The streetlights go out. One by one. A flicker. A buzz. Then a faint imploding pop when the bulb goes totally south. It cascades down the street as Pope runs. It's only when he glances up that he sees the big black shadows—birds or demons or both—plucking wires out the back of each light.

He grabs his cell phone, the one Eddie got him, but he doesn't really know how to use it, and he fumbles with it just long enough for one of those birds to swoop and knock it out of his hand. It spins away; its light fades.

Pope wonders: *why am I scared?* It doesn't make sense. He's no small fish. With his bare hands he could tear someone apart. Birch, for instance—he could reach inside that fool's chest and tear out his dead guts and wreath them about his head like a ring of laurels. *Don't be scared*, he said to himself, but another voice reminded him: *it happened before and it can happen again, run, rabbit, run.*

And run, he does. Just long enough for a swift shadow to drop in front of him. Cowboy boots, dark and dirty, planting hard in the asphalt.

It's enough to make his heart beat. Almost.

Fuck that noise. Birch wanted this. What Birch wants, Birch gets. I don't know why, but that's something you can never peg about him. The prick's hard to read, like wallpaper.

He knows her.

He can't see her eyes. Can barely see her face, what with the way the low-slung hat hides it from the meager light of the fingernail moon above. But he knows her. It's those arms. Shriveled hooks. Raptor claws. Nails whispering as they rub together.

"Why me?" he asks.

And she just laughs.

He steels himself. He hopes its enough.

No, no, no, this is how it happened. Birch brought in the body. In a box, some special box engraved with all sorts of craziness. He dragged the body into the tomb, and he didn't even have to spill the blood. Whoever it was, it was enough that the Heretic wanted to eat the whole thing, heart and soul. One of the Brigmans said that the body came up out of that shroud like a cat on fire, clambering toward its "meal" like the hunger alone was enough to animate its lifeless bones. You know what else I heard? I heard Birch wasn't alone down there. No, I don't mean his people. I mean he met someone else. My bet? The Prince. Something's cooking, there. With this kind of upheaval, someone big has to win or it wouldn't happen at all.

Pope thinks he has the stuff. She strides forward as if this is going to be the easiest thing in the world, and the Heretic leaps for her but *sweet fuck* she's fast, and he's about to taste asphalt but rolls and suddenly he's up on his haunches—not that it matters, because she gives him a kick to his side that splinters ribs into dead organs which smash up into his spine, and next thing he knows he really is tasting asphalt as he watches his broken teeth bounce away.

In his hand he has a hunk of sidewalk curb, he thinks it was like that before they got here (of course, he doesn't realize that his head did that, oops). He pitches the broken concrete straight for her face, and mercy of mercies, it hits dead on. Her head rocks back and he hears the bones *creak*, but it doesn't matter. She just readjusts her skull with those awful bird hands, and it makes a sound like a millstone grinding.

He growls, eyes seeing red, and lunges again—but a sound fills the air like a heavy rush of wings and even though he doesn't see any birds he feels their feathers at his ears, and before he knows it, she's gone. Poof. Thin air.

Thing is, she hasn't gone far, he just doesn't realize it yet. He's cocky enough to think maybe he scared her off. *I'm no small fish*, he reiterates. *I just needed to earn that respect*, and he tongues his broken teeth and thinks of them as badges of honor, not as the signs of weakness they really are.

If he'd only look up, he'd see her. Perched atop one of those busted streetlights. Yellow eyes glinting above a broad, shit-eating grin.

Vines? Who the fuck is Eddie Vines?

Pope's heard the stories about her, and having sent her packing he feels like he's got a pretty big pair of balls on him. Sad about Eddie, but this was it. This was the thing that would make him famous, like Zagreus had told him. All the carnage he'd caused, all the arguments at Elysium and religious kerfuffle, that would all pale in comparison to this one thing. Nobody deals with her and gets away with it.

And he did.

It's his last thought as claws bury into the base of his neck.

You'd better be good, little fucker. If you're not good, she'll come and get you. Be nice to your Daddy, childe, or the Unholy's going to come, tear out your soul and shit it back down your neck. Writing's on the wall, the monster's in town.

She tears his head off. It's an awful sound, and he hears it. The head tumbles and the eyes catch sight of her latching her mouth onto the stump and feeding there like a drunk at a water fountain, just lapping and sucking and laughing.

Okay, he has *one more* thought, just one.

As the body shrivels in her grip and the blood in his veins turns to smoke and soot (both of which she inhales like she's taking a great hit off a fleshy hookah), a snippet of the Testament passes through his head—"the heartsblood cry unto them from the ground, that is the night when all hope for you is lost—and then all is dark and forever. Really, truly forever.

Oh, whatever. People break that one all the time. It's supposed to be the worst Tradition of them all, a crime among crimes. But think about who we are. You think we don't take the chance when it's offered? What? Whoa, no, I didn't say I'd done it, what are you, a fucking moonbat?

She sees him there. Saw him there the whole time, actually.

"Enjoy the show?" the Unholy asks.

Birch shrugs, walking out of the alley's mouth.

"It was grisly."

"I liked it," she said, wiping ash from her lips with the back of her arm. She felt a hot rush. She felt a voice within, chattering its philosophies. She silenced it. "You here to take me in?"

She offered a demure smile and held out her hands, together at the wrist, as if he could go ahead and cuff her.

"That seems unwise."

"I won't bite."

"Not now, no. But later, when I'd walked you into Elysium, you'll tear us all apart."

"So what is it you want then, Bishop?"

"Just to say thank you. We all got what we wanted, see how easy that was? You got to hunt like you should. Surely you enjoyed it."

"I did. What'd you get?"

"Besides a good show? Pope brought in enough chaos. It helped me solidify some of my base. The fundamentals are strong, now, and so are the fundamentalists. God is often revealed out of discord."

"If you say so."

"I do."

The two stood together in awkward silence. Somewhere in the distance, a siren wailed. A bird called. She licked her lips.

"You owe me, then, preacher."

And with that, she's gone—just feathers and a flurry of wings, an oily shadow and then nothing at all. Birch's seen a lot of things, but these ancient monsters were truly horrifying. He looked forward to the day he could become one.

...

It's all gone up through Hell's asshole and back out its mouth. Funny how it is, how things always go back to normal. I hear the stories—Birch sacrificed Emily, the Unholy was in town and killed a bunch of fuckin' people, the Prince has his face nestled in the crook of some neonate's neck, there's some holy-shit-crazy-old elder living in town and he's got a perfect memory—but they're all bullshit. What matters is the night to night. What happens tonight is all that matters, at least until tomorrow night. Then it's a whole new set of problems and blessings and bodies and blood.



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